

SAILING
FOR SALMON

THE EARLY YEARS OF
COMMERCIAL FISHING IN
ALASKA'S BRISTOL BAY

1884-1951

TIM TROLL



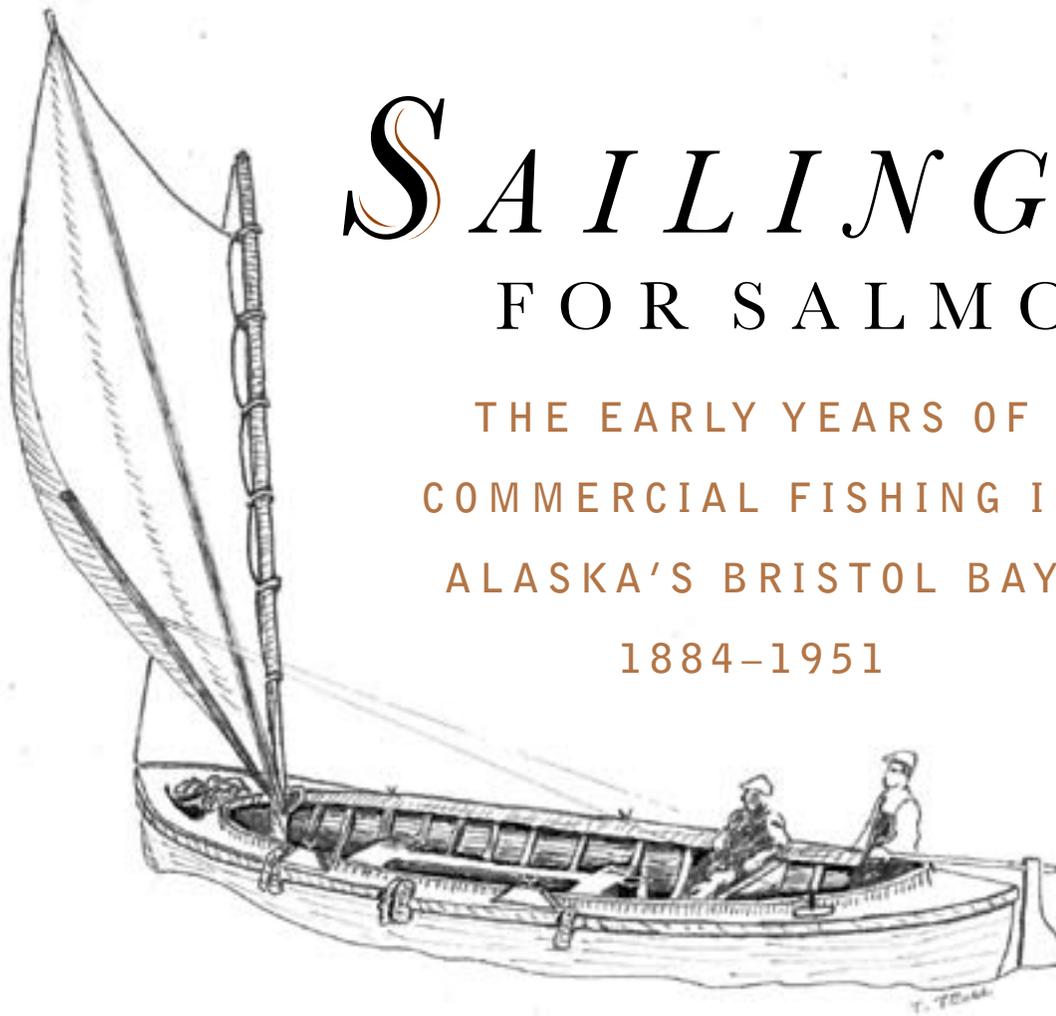
In the sailboat days, the professional, year-round fisherman was an expert and far superior to the modern “part-timer.” The present day school-teaching, moonlighting, gadget-depending, garage-mechanic type of fisherman did not appear until the sailboats were eliminated.

GUS DAGG

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*Dedication: To the fishermen and cannery workers
from Bristol Bay and around the world who pioneered
the greatest salmon fishery on earth.*

Edited and Illustrated by Tim Troll

Design by David Freeman

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P.O. Box 1388, Dillingham, AK 99576

(907) 842-2832 Email -nmwland@nushtel.com website -nmwlandtrust.org

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The Nature
Conservancy 
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™



God, how I wish I could live those days over.

AXEL WIDERSTROM, 1976



Bristol Bay in Southwest Alaska is one of the great commercial fisheries of the world. More than half of the earth's sockeye salmon return to "the Bay" every year. *Sailing for Salmon* is a nostalgic look back, through photographs and recollections, on the sailboat days, a time when these salmon were harvested from sailboats – a time still within living memory. These sailboats, called Bristol Bay double-enders, were well-crafted and beautiful, but obsolete for most of their history. The use of motorized fishing vessels was finally allowed in 1951. The Bristol Bay commercial fishery has changed much since then, but the sailboat remains the iconic image of a fishery born on the wind.



FORWARD

Robin H. Samuelsen
Bristol Bay Commercial Fisherman
CEO, Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation

Bristol Bay: The Salmon Capital of the World.

Over a hundred and thirty years ago, my great grandfather was a resident at Nushagak, a small village in Bristol Bay. His name was John W. Clark and he had a trading post. He was the one person you went to if you needed to get things done in Bristol Bay before the turn of the

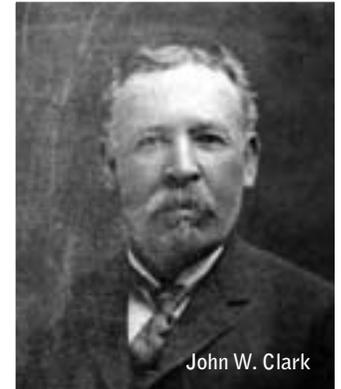


Robin H. Samuelsen and
his granddaughter Peyton

last century. John W. was one of the people responsible for starting the commercial fishing industry here in Bristol Bay. He helped build the first cannery at Kanulik in 1883. John W. then went down river and started a cannery at Clarks Point, a village named in his honor. The oldest cannery standing in Bristol Bay today is the Clarks Point cannery. It does not process fish anymore but it is an experience when you

walk around it. One can just visualize it operating and processing those salmon, with all those workers. John W. was always helping people. In 1891 he guided some newspapermen to an unknown lake in the Kvichak River drainage, a lake now called Lake Clark. Grandpa Clark was so close to the salmon industry at age 50 he contracted fish poisoning and died. He is buried at Nushagak village.

“Sailing for Salmon” is what the Bristol Bay salmon fishery is all about. Wooden sail boats were used with a total cost for each boat around \$200.00. These boats were crewed by two people who fished from Monday to Saturday. These men were made of iron. They slept under a canvas tent, cooked all their meals on small coal or gas stoves. Getting and staying wet from the seas was as common as seeing a seagull flying overhead. They pulled their nets in by hand, no hydraulics. My grandpa John W. Nicholson put fifty years in fishing a sail boat in Bristol Bay. He told me time and time again that we should have stayed with the sail boats.

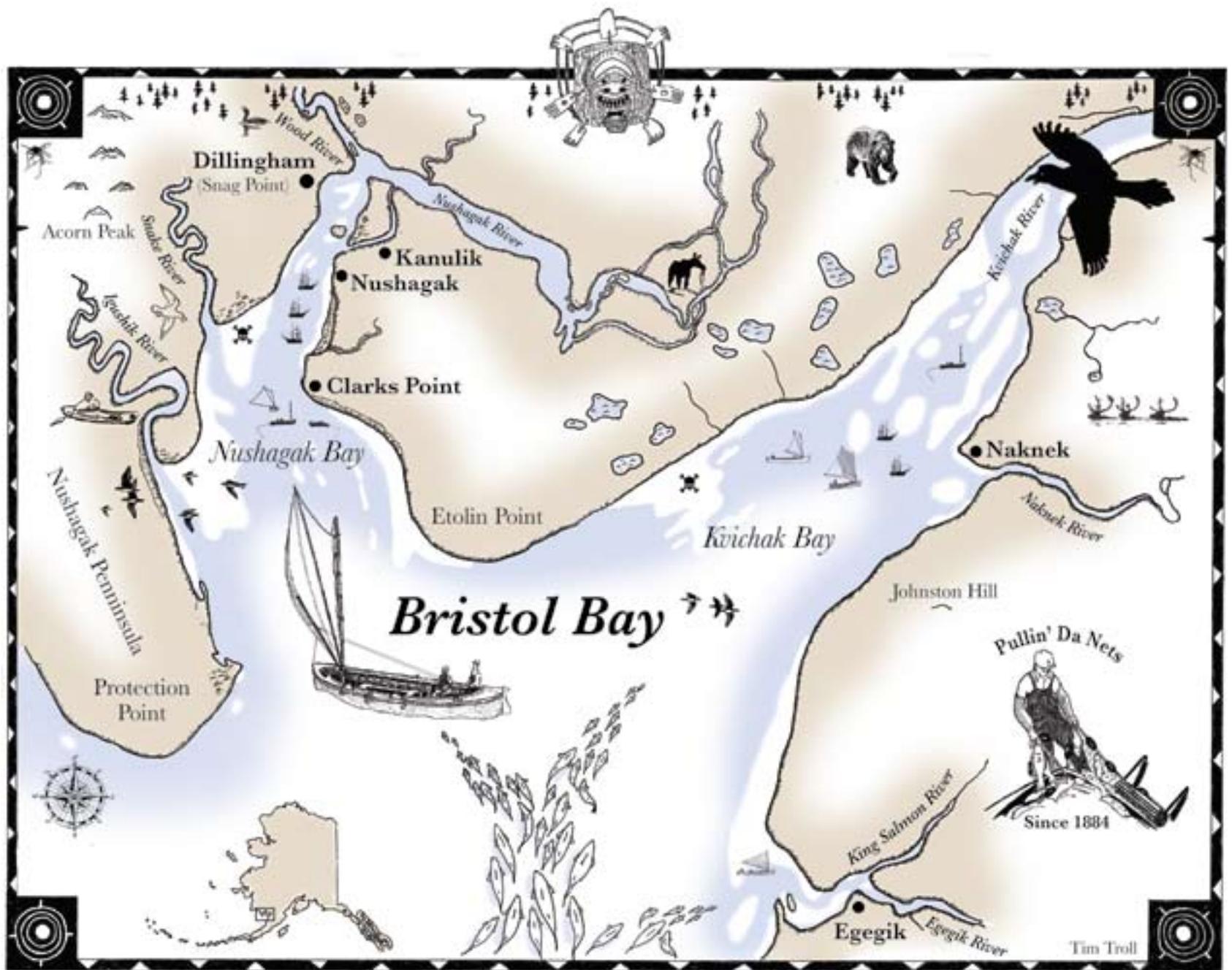


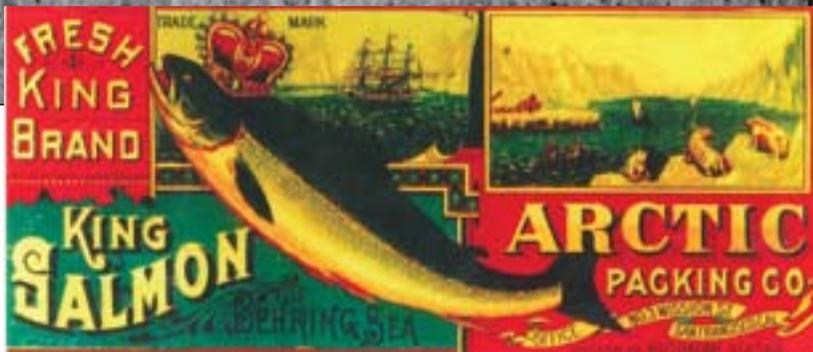
John W. Clark

I especially want to thank my father Harvey Samuelsen, who taught me how to fish and how important these salmon are to us in Bristol Bay and the nation. Harvey fished Bristol Bay for fifty years, starting in sailboats, and was a leader for local fishermen up until his death.

Our salmon enjoy the pure clean waters in our lakes and streams. They return every year in the millions and our fishermen and subsistence users look forward to the spring of each year, setting nets and processing those salmon. The salmon stocks of Bristol Bay provide thousands of jobs for the men and women of Bristol Bay, not to mention folks from the lower 48 and around the world. We must make sure that nothing ever disrupts or pollutes the lakes, rivers and streams that these salmon need to survive on.

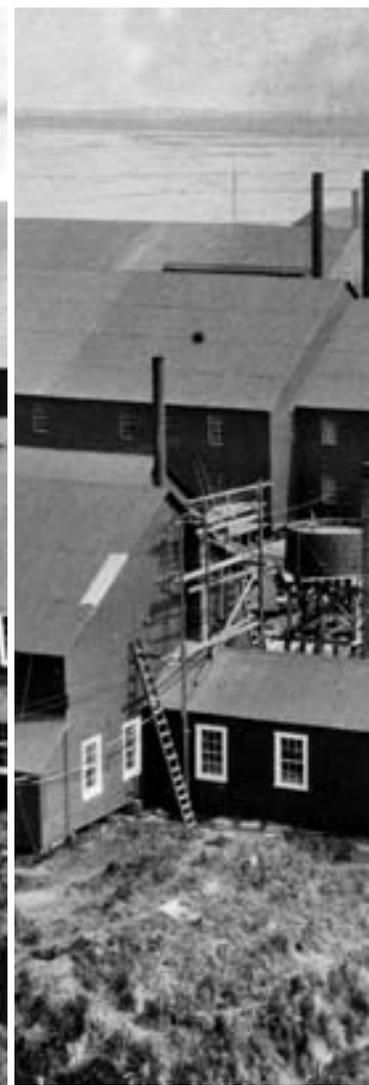
The Lord has blessed the land and waters of Bristol Bay, providing us with this sustainable resource second to none—salmon. Hopefully, five hundred years from now we will still be “Sailing for Salmon” here in Bristol Bay with the pride that past and present folks have, providing a healthy source of protein to the people of the world.



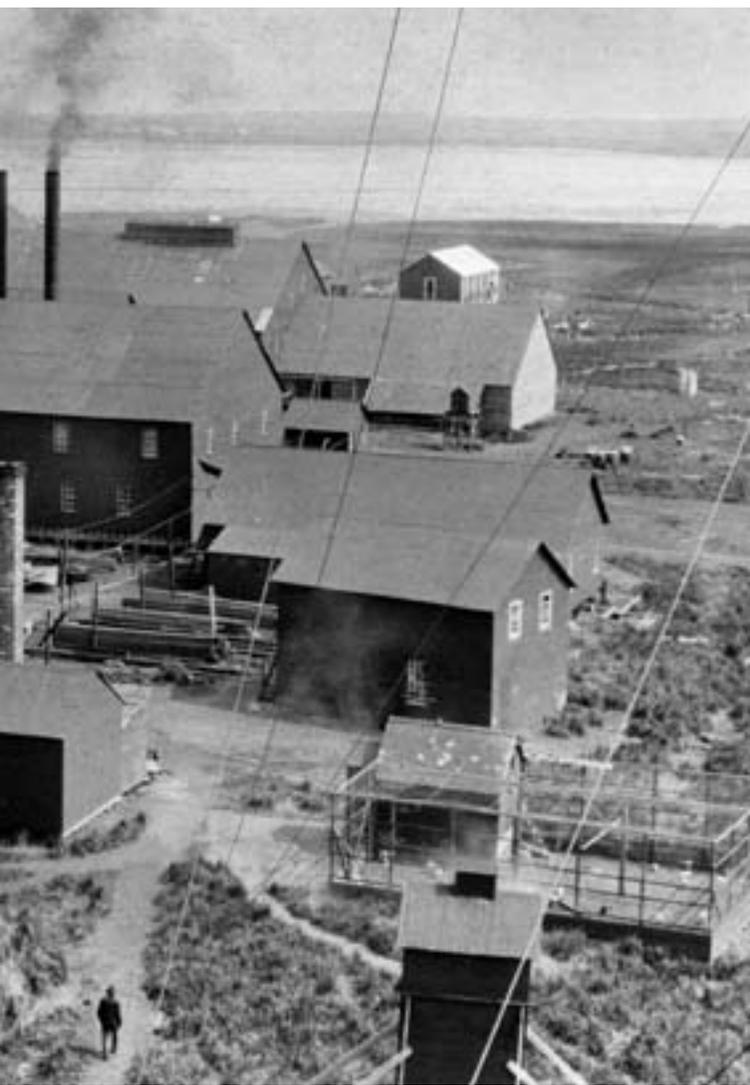


The first cannery in Bristol Bay was built in 1883 at the Yup'ik Eskimo village of Kanulik on the Nushagak River. The cannery was built by San Francisco businessman Carl Rohlffs. It began operation in 1884 as the Arctic Packing Company.

This photo, passed down through the family of John W. Clark, shows the cannery not long after it was built. It is provided courtesy of his granddaughter Elizabeth Nicholson Butkovich.

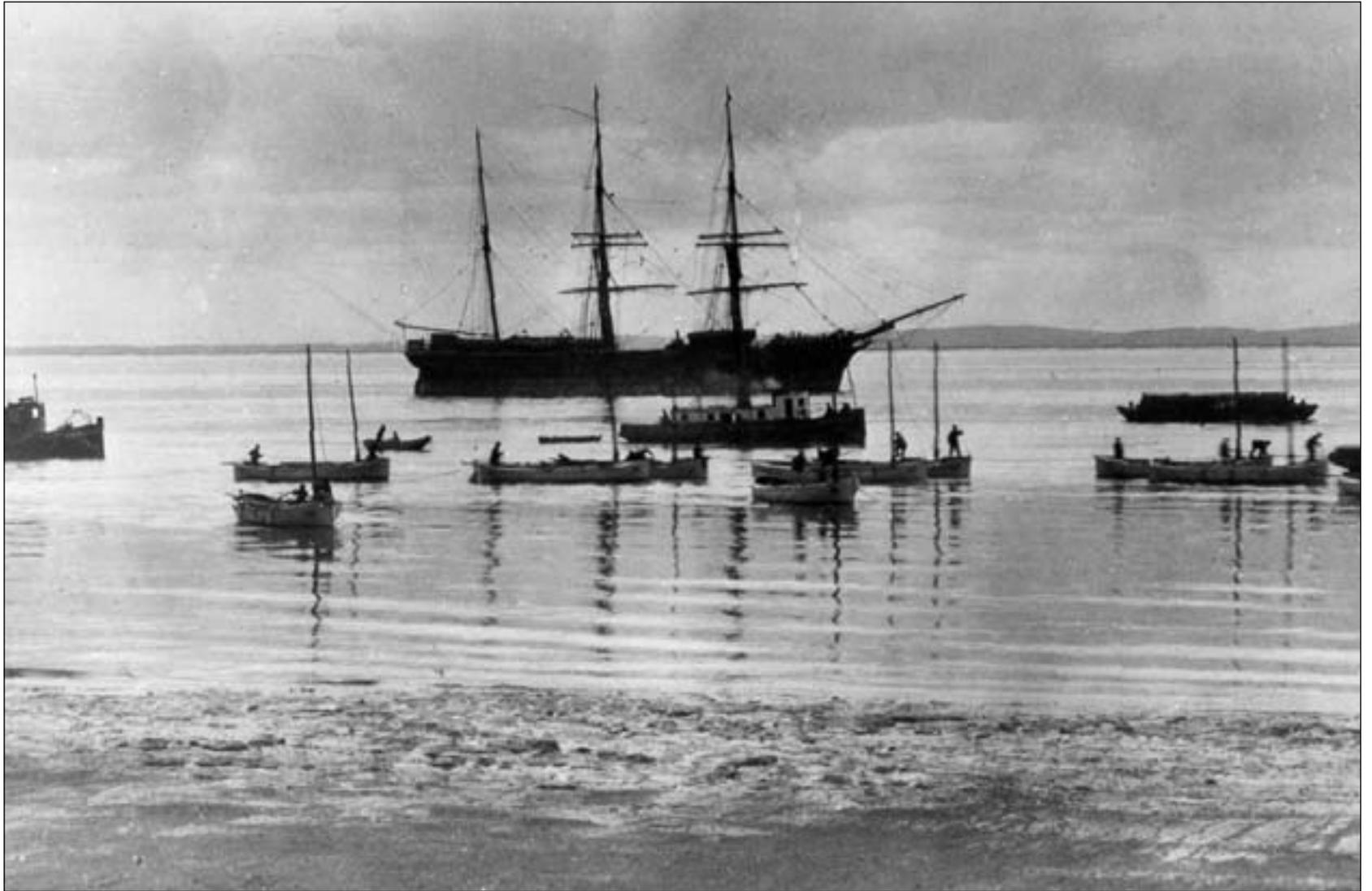


The oldest surviving cannery in Bristol Bay is located at Clark's Point. It was founded by John W. Clark. The fourth cannery built in Bristol Bay, it began operation as the Nushagak Canning Company in 1888. This photo panoramic was taken in 1917 by John Cobb from the cannery water tower looking north toward Nushagak Point. Cobb worked for The Alaska Packer's Association and founded the fisheries program at The University of Washington.





"Star of Alaska" sailing for Bristol Bay ca 1910 with cannery workers and fishermen aboard.



The "Star of India" at anchor off Dillingham (Snag Point) ca 1906.



The gill net boats used on the Nushagak and the Ugashik are regular Columbia River boats, built in San Francisco at an average price, complete, of \$200. The usual dimensions are: Length, 25 feet 1 inch; Beam, 7 feet 8 inches; Depth, 2 feet 6 inches; Capacity, 300 cubic feet. They have a centerboard and spritsail, and will carry, as an extreme, 1,400 redfish. The boats used on the Kvichak, and Naknek, and Egegik are flat-bottom double-enders, about one foot longer than the Columbia River boats, but have the same rig and capacity, and on the water resemble them very closely. Their value is about \$100, complete.

JEFFERSON S. MOSER, 1900

As the season commenced the boats and nets were readied, fishermen tried to find the lightest weight masts, booms, sprits and oars. Sometimes we shaved our mast down to make it even lighter. Then we'd oil it by rubbing it with a beef knuckle, which would make the sail rings slide easily and drop promptly when released.

AL ANDREE





"Yarrayulli," Scandanavian fisherman ca 1917. Yup'ik name for Scandinavians - "the ones who always say Yaa."

Fishermen were mostly Italians, Scandinavians and Finns hired at Seattle and San Francisco. The canneries liked Scandinavians from the Lofoten Islands off the coast of Norway, where sailing boats similar to those in Bristol Bay were used, or Italians from Sardinia or the Messina Straits for the same reason.

A cannery superintendent preferred to have a mixture of nationalities for fishermen, and he would deliberately hire Finns, Italians or Scandinavians, telling them, "I know you Finns (or Italians, or Scandinavians) are the best fishermen. I expect you to show those Italians and Scandinavians (or Finns) how to catch salmon."

During the season everyone kept track of which nationality made the best catches. Insults sometimes almost got serious. National pride was an incentive to fish hard.

AL ANDREE

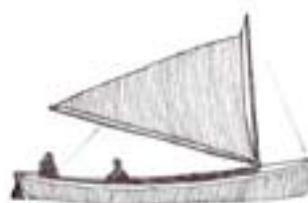
*"Yugngalnuq," Yup'ik name for Italians - "the ones who who are darker like us."
Ralph Angilesco, Italian fisherman from San Francisco, 1940.*





An experienced sailboat fisherman who wanted to fish one of these cannery-owned sailboats tossed his fish book to a cannery superintendent as proof of his ability. Invariably the super looked at the catch record toward the end of July. If the fisherman had missed that last week of delivery, he'd ask, "how come you didn't make any deliveries after July 20th? We're you up the Naknek River on a drunk?"

The super didn't want fish on July 4th, which is when the run peaked. He had fish coming out of his ears then, and likely boats were on a limit. But late in the season he wanted every boat to bring in salmon daily, even if it was only 200 or 300 fish.









Sailboats were often towed to and from the fishing grounds.





They were great sea boats – center-boarders. If it blew too hard they would dispense with the sprit that peaks up the sail. If it was still blowing too hard, they would reef the sail by lashing several of the mast hoops together. Also, there were holes in the sail above the boom that a reefing line could be rove through.

AXEL WIDERSTROM



A PEEK AT THE PAST

Helena (Bartman) Andree

I crewed in a Bristol Bay double-ender sail boat with my Dad in the mid 1930's. I was his only crew on the boat. In those days there was only room for a captain and one crew member.

My brother, who normally fished with Papa, got sick during the middle of the fishing season. Papa couldn't find a man to replace him so I was taken on as crew. In those days very few women, if any, went drift gillnet fishing in sail boats. At that time I was an eager teenager and proud to go as I knew that Papa was one of the most dependable and experienced boatman in Bristol Bay.

In those days the sail boat was the only water transportation used in Bristol Bay. Papa left his home in Rotterdam, Holland at the age of 14, hired on as cabin boy. He sailed around the world on freighters seven or eight times arriving in America in 1905 as a very experienced sailor. At the Port of San Francisco he met some Alaskan fishermen, who convinced him to go to Alaska and fish in the Bristol Bay fishery, where they used 30 ft. sail boats.

Not only did Papa become a fisherman but his career also included carrying freight, mail and passengers by dog team in Southwestern Alaska. Papa married a Yup'ik lady, my mother, and raised three sons and two daughters.

Papa taught each of us children how to mush dogs and sail.

I recall my fishing season with Papa in the mid-1930's – not a “push button” experience. Our anchor was thrown and pulled manually. We erected the sail, sprit and boom by hand. I remember hearing and enjoying the sail rings as they clickety-clacked up the mast. I learned the importance of the centerboard.

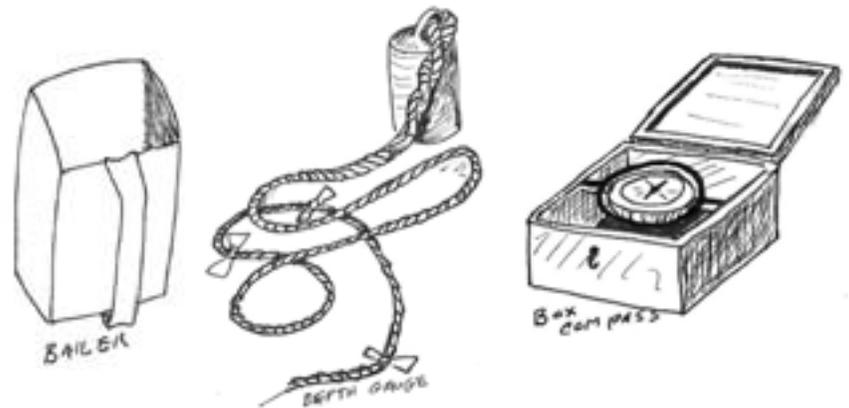
The foc'sle with a fitted tent was our kitchen and bunk room – which hardly had room enough for two large fishermen. Since Papa was only a very slight 5 ft. three inches, and I not much bigger, we made out just fine. A Swede stove was our cook stove and heated our tent.

We had no CB or radios to use in an emergency. A rain slicker on the end of an oar stuck up was the recognized distress signal. Our “john” in the stern, was a bucket with hunk of rope tied to the handle so we could empty it overboard and clean.

Our mattress was a reindeer skirt, which we rolled up when not in use and stowed in the bow of the sail boat along with our clothes and feather sleeping bag that Mom made. Papa, a true sailor, kept everything “ship shape” and we all learned how to keep order early. Anchor line and any other line had to be coiled appropriately, as well as any nets aboard.

We got ten cents a fish for our catch, which we had to deliver to tally scows where we then peughed the fish on board by hand. Peughs are illegal now, and modern fishermen use commercially made brailers to hold their fish, which are weighed and sold by the pound. We also had a bucket to bail water out of our boat. Some sailboats did have hand made bilge pumps.

The twelve foot oars were always handy, in case of an emergency. Commonly these were called “Scandinavian kickers.” The oars were quite awkward and large for me to use, but Papa managed them quite well. We had to use the oars when there was no wind to sail, and used to assist our delivery of a large load of salmon to a tally scow. We used the oars also to help make turns. An oar was also used for a ridge pole to hold our tent, in the bow. Oars were also a fathometer. Our real fathometer was a 3/16 line with a 3 or 4 pound lead weight on the end. Our only navigational aid was a compass and Papa never left home without one.



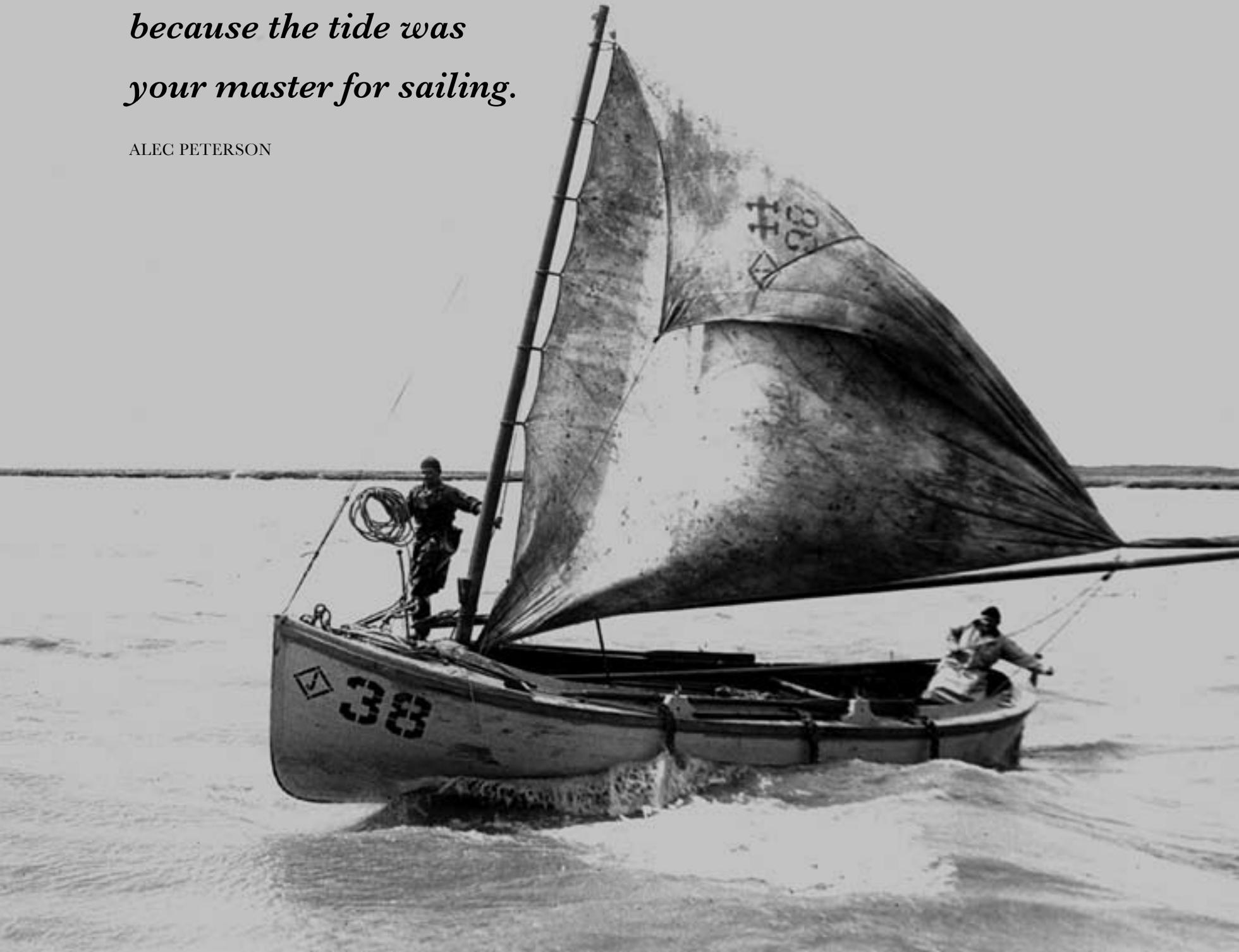
Helena (Bartman) Andree is the daughter of Dutch seaman “Glass-eyed” Billy Bartman a legendary dog team mail driver and fisherman who settled in Bristol Bay in the early 20th century

The fisherman's trade was no game for a greenhorn. Every move had to count and immediate execution was necessary. The "skipper" was senior man in the boat. The "puller" was the deckhand with equally important duties. When the fishing boat approached a fish scow to unload, it was imperative that there be absolute unity between the two men as there was no margin for error. When the skipper dropped the sail and yelled "let her go," the puller had to throw the tie-up line at the instant the sail was lowered or the boat would be carried past the scow causing no end of delay and lost fishing time.

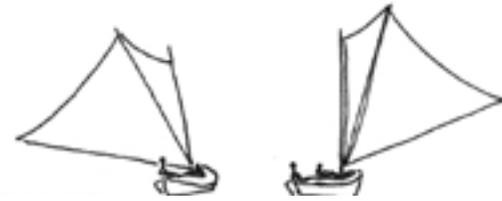
RAY PADDOCK

*You had to use the tide
because the tide was
your master for sailing.*

ALEC PETERSON



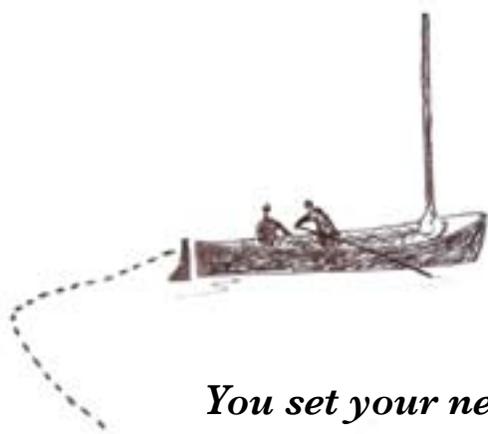




*A big storm could blow us off course.
A sudden strong wind could rip the sails.
In those days, clear skies and a strong
wind were welcomed by all fishermen.*

CHARLEY NELSON



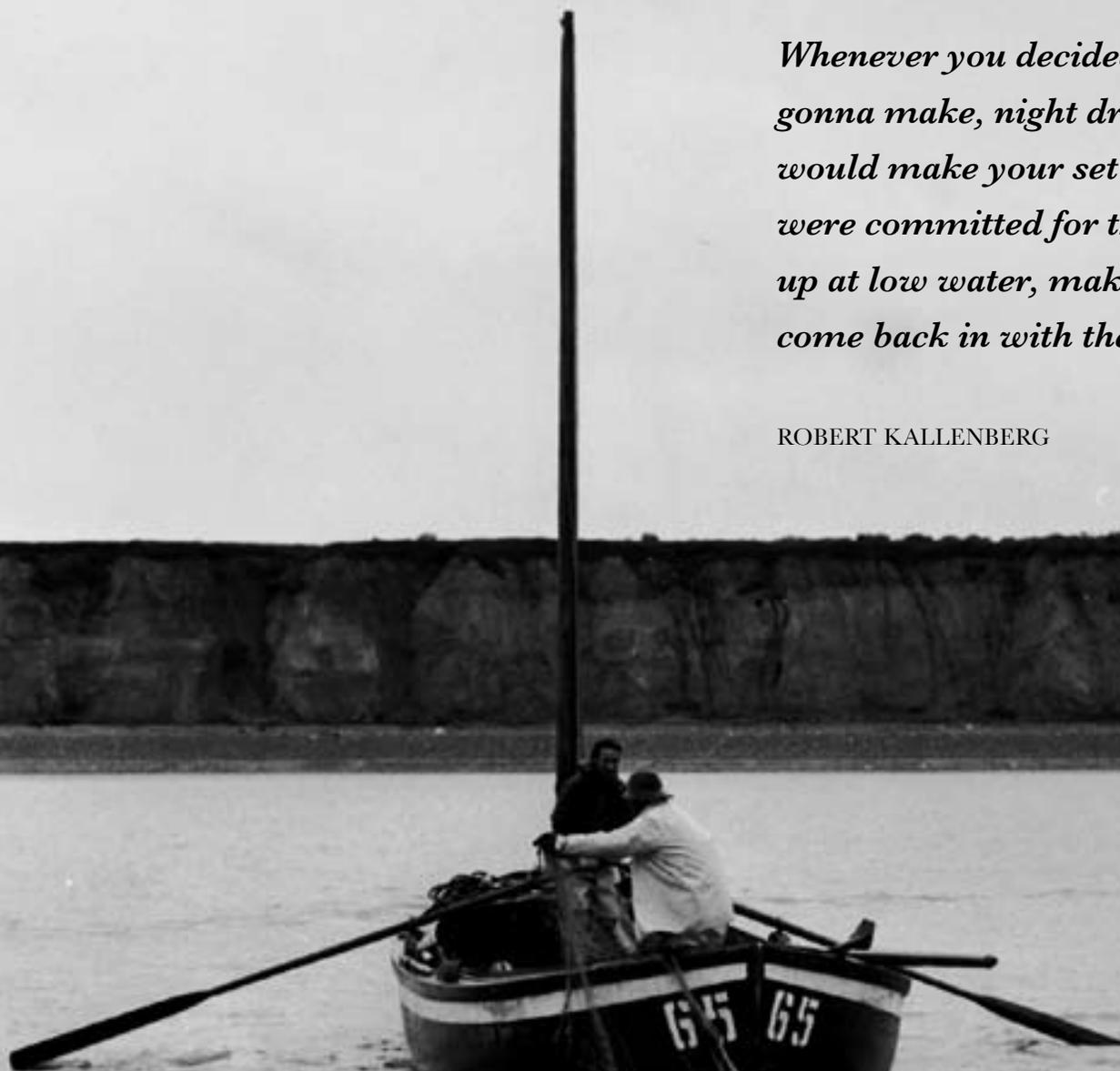


You set your nets off the stern or sometimes off the bow. Then we got hand rollers. It made it easier on either side. You had roller cleats all over the boat on both sides. You could put the roller around to shift the weight. You would pull from the bow for a little bit and could use the wind and swells. You would pull with it, go ahead and pull again with the next swell. You could go ahead of it or on top of it, and you'd tangle the nets. You had to work all the time.

ALEC PETERSON

Whenever you decided what drift you were gonna make, night drifts in particular, you would make your set and that was it. You were committed for the drift. Usually pick up at low water, make another set and come back in with the flood.

ROBERT KALLENBERG





Carl Johnson standing in boat in the foreground. Scandinavians pulled the net with the mast down. Italians, like those in the background worked with the mast up.



*We pulla da net
to make da mon
to buya da bread
to getta strength
to pulla da net*

Lament of the Italian fisherman



You'd get all the wealth of fish that you could. You'd shove them underneath the mast, in the cabin, everywhere.

ALEC PETERSON



Two well known stalwarts of the sailboat days "Hardworking Tom" Overwick (left) and Butch Smith (right) ca 1940. Overwick was an Icelander who sailed the world and came to Alaska as crew on a cannery ship. Smith came to Alaska during the Nome gold rush. Both adopted a lifestyle of prospecting in the fall, trapping during the winter and fishing in the Summer. Observant local Natives who came to know Tom gave him the Yup'ik name "Nacayuilnguag," which means "He never wears a hat."





Ed Gjosund ca 1940

I always stopped as skilled oarsmen passed; it was one of the most beautiful sights I've ever seen. Usually the captain or the tillerman steered the boat with the rudder and rowed with one oar, while his helper would push two oars.

AL ANDREE



One guy I fished with in Squaw Creek swamped me five times in one season. He got so hoggy. He couldn't control himself, he just kept pulling the net and pulling the net in even though the boat was sinking to the bottom. Luckily it was shallow. The monkey boat came and picked us up.

EARL "PAT" PATTERSON





Alec Alvarez and Paul Chukan of Naknek delivering to talley scow, ca 1940



The way it worked was the boat would come alongside the scow. You would tie them up. There was a narrow walkway around the scow where you could stand. You had a tally machine the size of a large watch in your hand. As the fishermen peughed the fish you would punch the machine for every fish that went up into the air and into the scow. When you reached a hundred you would sing out “tally.”

Sometimes they would come alongside to be tallied. You would ask them if they had any dog salmon. They’d say no. You’d tally them up for reds. But at night, by a coal lantern, the tallyman couldn’t tell. Next morning you’d go out at daylight and there would be all these dogs in the scow.



AXEL WIDERSTROM



For heating and cooking purposes the sailboats had two different types of stoves, depending on the nationality of the fisherman. The Italians had coal stoves and the Nordics had a gas primed Swedish stove. It was easy to tell the different kinds of boats, because a Nordic boat would have a white sail and an Italian boat's sail would be dark from the smoke of the coal stoves. When it was dry weather you would have to be very careful with a coal stove because if a spark got on the sail, it would go up in flames.

ELMER "RED" HARROP

We had a little Swedish stove to cook on. You had to hang on to the coffee pot with one hand and the stove with the other - those boats would rock so hard.

SUERRE GJEMSO

In 1928, no Italian would be caught dead using a Swede stove and no squarehead would use what we called a dago stove. But toward the end of the sailboat era, a lot of guys from either side, including myself, used both. We found that the Italian stove was much better for heating and drying out the tent than the noisy, kerosene-smelling Swede stove, but the Swede stove was better for cooking.

GUS DAGG

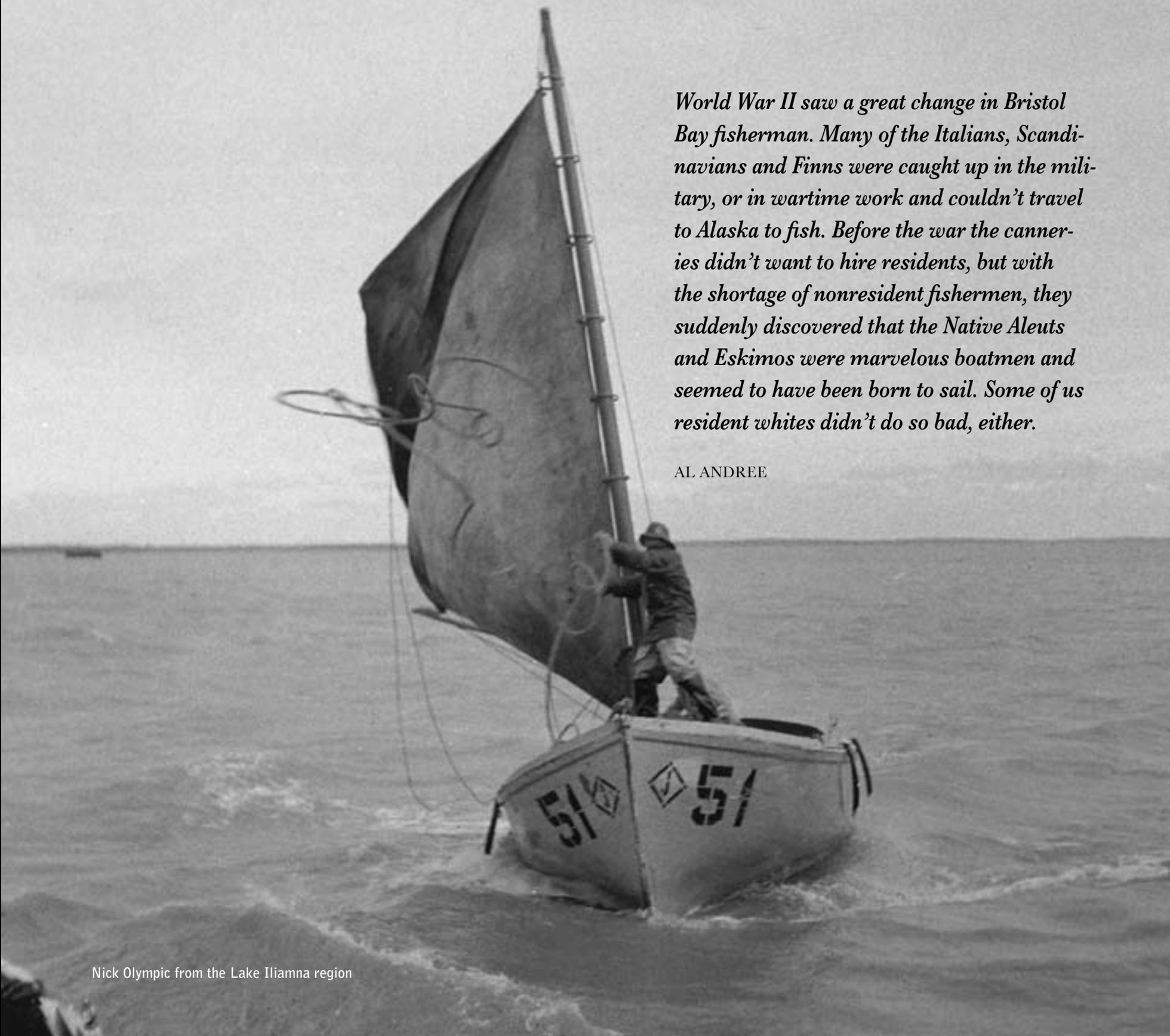






I was a cannery worker for nearly ten years, until the early 1930's. At this time Native people were allowed to fish, the kind of work we did normally at home. We also had become much more comfortable with English and Gasht'ana life in general. As fishermen we finally had the chance to make more money, and our life at Bristol Bay greatly improved.

PETE KOKTELASH



World War II saw a great change in Bristol Bay fisherman. Many of the Italians, Scandinavians and Finns were caught up in the military, or in wartime work and couldn't travel to Alaska to fish. Before the war the canneries didn't want to hire residents, but with the shortage of nonresident fishermen, they suddenly discovered that the Native Aleuts and Eskimos were marvelous boatmen and seemed to have been born to sail. Some of us resident whites didn't do so bad, either.

AL ANDREE

I was first assigned to a boat operated by an old man named Hank. Hank and his regular partner Mike lived on the Alaska Peninsula. Hank and Mike were a breed that does not exist anymore. They were remittance men. Remittance men were usually incurable alcoholics, but Hank was not. He only got drunk twice a week, on Tuesday and Friday and was very proud of the fact that he never touched a drink on any other day. Mike was more or less drunk all the time. ...The mast fell down and hit Hank on the head the last day of fishing. He died happy. It was Friday, his day to get drunk.

GUS DAGG

Oh, there was whiskey. My brother was making whiskey on Ekuk Point. He had a container and a Swede stove, he had everything. Those old fellers, they sure liked their whiskey. They was a rugged bunch. But good-natured fellers. Drunk, but tough out on the water.

SUERRE GJEMSO





We were sailing in and got stuck on a sandbar outside of Libbyville. One of Alaska Packers tugboats was stuck out a little ways. A deck hand, his name was Andy, played one of those Swedish chromatic accordians with three rows of keys. He was playing all the Swedish music on the accordion and all these fishermen were out dancing all over the sandbar out there and the tide was coming in. Everyone was happy because it was the last day of the season.

EARL "PAT" PATTERSON



Fishing. It's what's done in Bristol Bay. Some seasons are a bust. In others, the nets are smokin'. Reds everywhere. Canneries plugged. Boats on limit. Biologists scratching their heads. It's been life in "the Bay" for more than one-hundred-twenty-five-years. One hundred and twenty-five years of the good and the bad.



The Bristol Bay commercial fishery began in 1884 when San Francisco businessman Carl Rohlffs organized the Arctic Packing Company and built the first cannery on the Nushagak River. The first commercial pack of canned salmon produced on the Bay was only about 400 cases, or 6,000 fish. Soon the firm red flesh of Bristol Bay sockeye salmon became a consumer favorite and launched a commercial fishery that would become one of the most productive on earth.

By 1910 the Bay was inundated with canneries and became an international melting pot. Cannerymen recruited Scandinavian and Italian immigrants to catch the fish and contracted with a "China Boss" to supply the labor – mostly Chinese, Japanese, Filipino and Mexican immigrants – to process the fish. Some of the local Yup'ik, Aleutiq and Athabaskan residents also found work in the canneries, but it would not be until the labor shortages of World War II that they would become a significant part of the industry.

One curious feature of the Bristol Bay commercial fishery that has become the iconic image of its fascinating history is the sailboat. The 1880's to the early 1950's are known as "the sailboat days," a time when the salmon of Bristol Bay were harvested primarily by the Columbia River type double-ended sailing gillnetter. The boat is commonly known as the "double-ender" because the shape of its bow and stern were similar. It was powered by a single masted sail with a diagonal sprit. The

double-ender was a craft of beauty. The Bristol Bay version was about 29 feet long, and constructed of rot resistant Port Orford cedar planking shaped by ribs of white oak and an iron bark keel. The beamy but sensual lines of the boat were complemented by the winged shape of its sprit rigged sail. They were seaworthy boats that could pack a load of fish, frequently 1,500 to 2,000 of the five to seven pound "money fish" – the sockeye. The charm of the double-ender sharply contrasts the iron clad, big power, gadget and gizmo driven gillnetter that dominates commercial fishing in the Bay today.

Charm, however, is generally not the first thought that comes to the mind of those who actually fished in them. They were work boats and in those days fishing was extremely hard, miserable work. The double-enders were open and exposed to the often cold and wet weather of the Bay. Catching fish in them was arduous. Nets were set and pulled by hand; and the nets, made of water absorbent linen and wax coated wooden floats, were heavy even without fish in them. During most of the sailboat days fishing was generally a twenty-four hour a day - six day affair every week. Six days in the rain and the wind. Six days rolling on the waves. Six days sleeping among the scales and fish slime. Six days with only an unshaven, unbathed partner for company. Fishermen got a break on Sunday, but tide willing, it was back out on Monday for another six days.

Providence made Bristol Bay the motherlode of the world's salmon fisheries, but it did so with a devilish touch. Bristol Bay is one of the most dangerous fishing grounds in the world. To catch fish a Bay fisherman must negotiate a maze of shallow waters, shifting sand bars, wind-swept waves and rapidly ebbing and flooding tides that can range twenty feet or more. The task was especially difficult in a double-ender. Without power or a radio to call for help, a fisherman had to rely on his skill at the sail and tiller or on the strength of his back at the oars to avert tragedy. Many fishermen failed, a good number giving their lives in the effort. No

wonder, in the lore of fishing in Bristol Bay the sailboat days represent a romantic era – the time of “iron men in wooden boats,” in contrast to the motorized period of “wooden men in iron boats.”

As romantic as the double-ender may have been, it was a craft of servitude. Each cannery owned a fleet of double-enders, decided who would get to fish in them, and towed the boats they owned with the fishermen they chose to the fishing grounds. The politically powerful canneries preserved the double-ender long beyond its obsolescence by securing a Federal law that prohibited the use of motorized fishing craft in Bristol Bay. The law was sugarcoated as a conservation measure to protect the salmon, but in reality it was an industry protection measure. Canneries feared the independence that could come to fishermen who had their own power boats. The emotional issue for fishermen, however, was safety. Motorized power was finally legalized in 1951 after a gale in 1948 swept dozens of sailboats onto a huge sandbar known as Deadman’s Sands, causing the loss of many fishermen.

Power did bestow a measure of independence on Bristol Bay fisherman, but not without a price. Motorized power also made the Bay accessible to a lot more fishermen; and they came. Twenty years after the legalization of motorized power Alaska enacted a limited entry law to protect the Bay from overfishing. Thirty years after limited entry the Bay is still crowded. For these reasons some old fishermen lament the loss of the double-ender. John Nicholson of Dillingham was one of them. He fished for more than a half century in the Bay. He published a book called *No Half Truths* and in it he was not shy about his opinion. He wrote:



The reason I was against power boats was because every Tom, Dick and Harry might fish. After legalization of power and the establishment of Limited Entry it seems there are now twice as many fishermen. These include doctors, lawyers and other professionals; it seemed all the pencil pushers started fishing. During sailboat days, they wouldn't have been able to fish, because they might have been afraid to sail. The rigors of sailing and living in an open boat would have been overwhelming. I may be old fashioned, but I still feel that it's only those guys who know how to harness the wind who really know how to fish.

In the sailboat days everybody fished the same gear. The bounty of the fishery went to those with skill, courage and knowledge. Today better gear, comfortable boats and electronics can make-up for a lack of these qualities.

Sailboats may be one answer to the woes of overcrowding in Bristol Bay, but it is not one of the choices available. Perhaps in time market forces or the tenacity of the salmon to defy all predictions will weed out some of the Toms, Dicks and Harrys. Certainly a balance is needed. In the meantime, I can't help but wonder what it was like to fish in a double-ender. I imagine the sounds that have become extinct – the ripple and snap of the sail as the wind brings it taught, the clack of wooden corks spilling over the gunwale, the slap of waves against the cedar hull, or the creak of a bent mast sailing before a brisk wind. Or imagine the sounds that weren't heard - the chug of a diesel engine, the clatter and chat of the VHF radio, and the echo of waves rapping an aluminum hull. Fishing in a double-ender must have been a quiet undertaking. And what about smells like damp wood and wet canvas, or even the smell of the sea itself. All gone, replaced by the odor of diesel fuel and gasoline.

Finally, there is the vision of sails on the water, dozens of sails, if not hundreds of sails. A sight never to be seen again.

Tim Troll





Dillingham Beacon, Thursday, August 3, 1950
Power Boats and Bristol Bay

THE BEACON has been asked to publish the following telegram so that all interested parties may read it:

The following information was received from Cook Inlet District in a wire this date. This information should be of great interest to all Bristol Bay citizens.

Quote:

Situation here on Cook Inlet indicates conclusively that Bristol Bay citizens, fishermen, setnetters, cannery workers and packers will make a tragic mistake if they permit power boats in the Bay area. There are from six to eight hundred power boats drifting in Cook Inlet with the following results:

First: Less than ten percent of the power boats are owned or manned by residents of Cook Inlet.

Second: The other ninety percent are from Columbia River, Puget Sound, Southeastern Alaska, Prince William Sound, Kodiak Island and other points with more arriving daily. None of them expect to live in Cook Inlet or spend their earnings here.

Third: The power boat catch has resulted in a sharp decrease in the catch of setnetters and has so prejudiced the escapement that the Fish and Wildlife Service has imposed a midweek closed period of 36 hours and a week end closed period of 48 hours in spite of the admitted fact that the run is good and that Cook Inlet has previously enjoyed the most stable fishery in Alaska.

Fourth: Perfect weather has permitted the power boats to fish without serious accident or loss of life but, nevertheless, a good many boats have been adrift because of engine trouble, nets in wheels, broken shafts, etc. Many were so far from shore that several hours, and in some cases days, were required to pick them up and get them in and under repair.

Fifth: A great deal of the catch is being taken out of Cook Inlet.

Sixth: The Tyonek setnetters whose situation is similar to that of the setnetters in Bristol Bay because of their fixed location have had no catch at all and have no hope of one. Their fish are being caught by the power boats and like Bristol Bay residents they have no prospect of migrating to another area for another season.

Seventh: Kodiak and Cordova power boat owners are already planning to take their boat over the portage to Iliamna Lake next year after the red season on Copper River and Kodiak.

Eighth: The catch is divided among so many fishermen that no one is making anything.

Ninth: There seems no doubt that the use of power either in Cook Inlet or Bristol Bay will result in a depletion of the run before the Fish and Wildlife Service can devise proper safeguards unless they elect to so shorten the season that no resident of the area can hope to make a payday. In light of the two bad seasons on the Nushagak this means quick economic death for the Dillingham area and severe financial losses, and ultimate disaster, for the rest of the watershed.

Tenth: In view of the circumstances cannery operators in Bristol Bay cannot justify an investment of many millions in power boats for that season alone and will either have to continue with sail or be compelled to utilize existing power boats received from other areas and manned by their owners or crews from other districts who can fish elsewhere before and after the Bristol Bay season.

ALASKA SALMON INDUSTRY , INC.
KING SALMON, ALASKA

Number of Boats Fishing	Year	Power	Sail
	1951	86	631
	1952	895	223
	1953	1108	62

New Bryant power boat belonging to Chief Ivan Blunka of New Stuyahok at Pacific Alaska Fisheries cannery dock, Dillingham, ca 1955.







The worst thing that could happen to a gill-netter was to go aground at the height of a storm. The shoal water that is found throughout the bay has cost many a fisherman his life. The old-timers were an ingenious bunch and they figured out a ploy to prevent the surf from captizing the boat. Swiftly, the fishermen would strike the mast and lay it athwart ship. There they would lash it by passing lines under the hull and securing inboard. In this manner some sailors fashioned a 'jerry-rigged' outrigger and were able to survive until the tide returned and floated the boat. If the boat turned over in the surf, the fishermen seldom survived the cold water and the silt dragged them down.

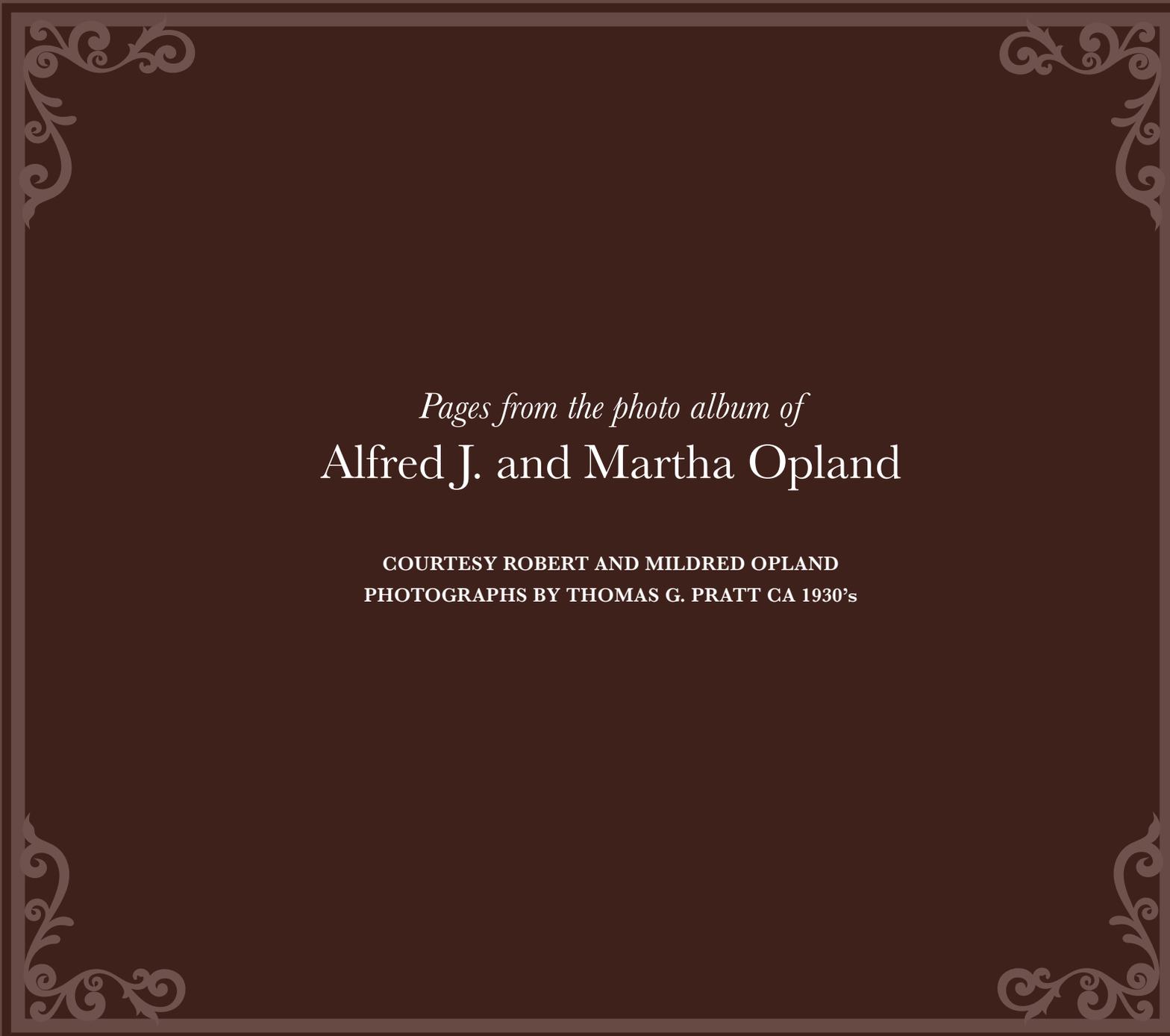
RAY PADDOCK





With power boats the range was altogether different because you weren't at the mercy of the tides and particularly the lack of wind. You could be far more mobile. At the same time communications began to pick up. In the last of the sailboat days many of the sailboats had radio receivers and they would listen to the talk between the superintendents and the receiving stations and get some news as to where the fish were and gossip like that. But there was no two way communication and no communication between the boats. When two way radio communications set in with the boats that was what changed the picture again. Because they could talk with each other and friends would tell friends usually by some kind of code or other where they were. But anytime you saw several boats of one company pick up and head in one direction you'd be pretty sure that they were tipped off and everybody else would pull in their gear and take off after 'em, and so what little dabs of fish there were had far more intensive fishing pressure than they ever had during the sailboat days.

ROBERT KALLENBERG



Pages from the photo album of
Alfred J. and Martha Opland

COURTESY ROBERT AND MILDRED OPLAND
PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS G. PRATT CA 1930's



The First Load Of Cannery Workers To Arrive



Out Before 6:00 a. m. To Begin Drift



The Tide Is Out And We're Still On The Beach



Calm Weather Makes A Tow Necessary - Early Morn



It Looks Good Today - We'll Get Out Early



Bristol Bay Fairly Bristles With Masts At Dawn



The Eve Of A Fishing Holiday - Towed In By A Scow



We Didn't Do Much Today But We'll Give Em Hell Tomorrow



The "Tally Man" Records The Salmon # 60



Red Salmon In The Boat - Dago Red In The Man



Sorting The Catch From A Well Loaded Fish Boat



By The Aid Of Ample Water The Scows Are Unloaded



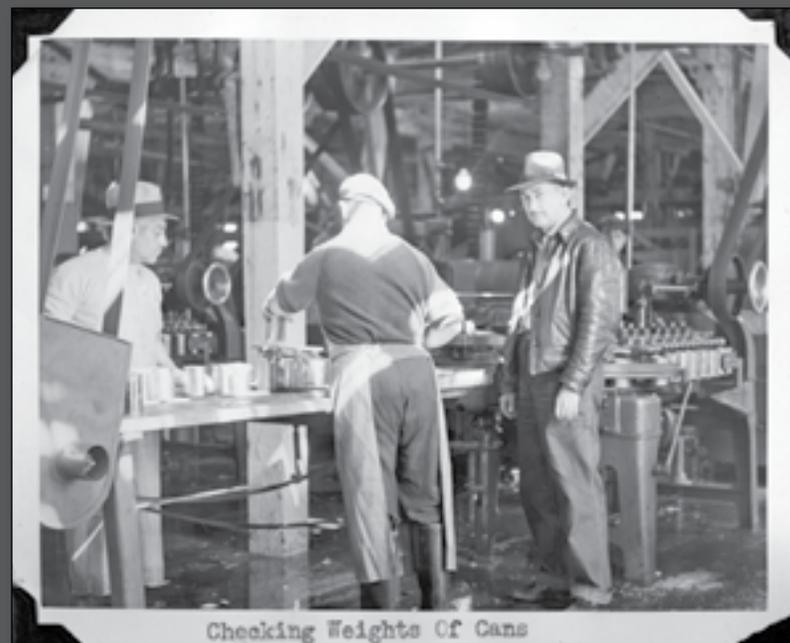
The "IRON CHINK" Removing Salmon Heads



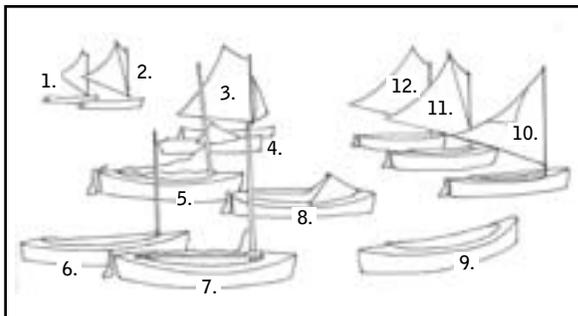
Trays Out Of The Retorts



Filled Cans Coming From The Lines To Fill Trays



Checking Weights Of Cans

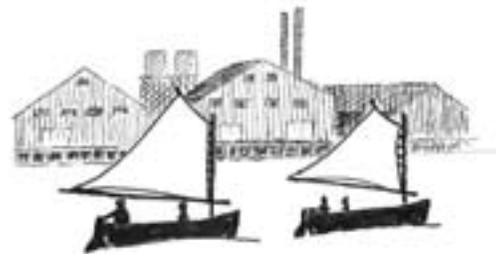


Bristol Bay double-ender colors near the end of the sailboat days

1. Alaska Packers Association (APA), Diamond J, Kvichak
2. Libby, McNeil & Libby, Libbyville
3. Red Salmon Canning Co., Naknek, Ugashik
4. Bristol Bay Packing Co., Hungry's Cannery, Pederson Point
5. Libby, McNeil and Libby, Graveyard Cannery, Koggiung
6. Alaska Packers Association (APA), Diamond NC, Clarks Point
7. Intercoastal Packing Co. (IPC), Naknek Point
8. Red Salmon Canning Co., Naknek, Ugashik
9. Pacific American Fisheries (PAF), Warren, Nornek (Naknek) and Dillingham
10. Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Co. (A&P), Nakeen
11. Columbia River Packers Association (CRPA), Bumble Bee, South Naknek
12. Alaska Packers Association (APA), Diamond NN, Diamond O and Diamond M at Naknek, and Diamond E at Egegik

Different companies had somewhat different styles of sailboats. Fisherman liked both the Nakeen and Carlisle Packing Company boats for they were narrow in the bow and fast under sail. Libby boats also had a sharp stern and a fairly sharp bow. Columbia River Packers boats, with a sharp bow and a sharp stern, were also among the best sailing boats. Red Salmon boats were also good sailers. Alaska Packers boats had a fat bow and a fat stern, and many fishermen referred to them as “barnacle boxes” and didn’t think much of them as sailers. However, they were marvelous for packing a big load of fish. I’ve seen 3,000 fish that average close to six pounds each come out of a Packer’s boat.

AL ANDREE







Credits, Sources and Historical Notes

Inset San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Harry Hoyer Collection G11.23304n. Sailboats of the Diamond NN cannery on the beach at South Naknek looking downriver to the Columbia River Packers Association, the Diamond O and Diamond M canneries, ca 1940.

Introduction Hand tinted photo by Louis Gjosund Sr. courtesy Louis Gjosund Jr., Libby, McNeill and Libby cannery sailboat, Egegik ca 1935

Opposite Page 1 Sailing off Flounder Flats, Nushagak Bay ca 1935, Photo by Dave Carlson, Dave and Mary Carlson Collection, Samuel K. Fox Museum, Dillingham. The letter “A” painted on the side of the boat at the stern indicates the boat is manned by fishermen who are residents of Alaska. For a period of time canneries distinguished resident fishermen from non-resident fishermen because privileges like higher prices, better sailboats or delivery preferences were extended to non-resident fishermen. Often this discrimination was required by the fisherman’s union in the labor contract with a cannery. Most fishermen were non-residents.

Page 1 Photo of Robin Samuelsen by Clark James Mishler. Photo of John W. Clark courtesy Elizabeth Nicholson Butrovich.

Page 3 The cannery at Kanulik was short lived. The Nushagak River was changing course and silt accumulation at the site probably made continued operation impractical. The Kanulik cannery closed around 1910 and its equipment transferred to the Diamond NC cannery at Clarks Point.

Page 4 – 5 University of Washington Library, Special Collections, John Cobb Collection 4294-1, 4294-2 and 4294-3.

Page 6 San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, John Olmi Collection P83-034a. The *Star of Alaska* survives and is on display at the San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park.

Page 7 Photo courtesy of Samuel K. Fox Museum, Dillingham, AK. The *Star of India* survives as an active sailing vessel at the Maritime Museum of San Diego.

Page 8 Photo: Harry Hoyer Collection, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, G12.6496n. Sailboats on the beach at Northwest Fisheries Co. cannery at Nushagak ca 1910 *Fisheries of Alaska: Report of the Alaska Salmon Investigations of the United States Fish*

Commission Steamer Albatross in 1900 and 1901. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office 1902).

Page 9 All quotes from Al Andree taken from *I Sailed for Salmon in Bristol Bay*: Al Andree as told to Jim Rearden, Alaska Magazine, July, August 1986; Reprinted and Tim Troll eds., *Our Story: Readings from Southwest Alaska*, (Alaska Natural History Association, 2006) pp 180 – 190.

Photo of sailboats at the P.H.J. “Scandinavian” Cannery looking East to the Alaska Portland Packers Cannery, Snag Point (Dillingham) 1917. University of Washington Library, Special Collections, Cobb 4136. The Scandinavian cannery was built in 1885, the second in Bristol Bay. Local Yup’ik Eskimo people called the cannery workers at this cannery the Atanvamiut meaning “the people with a big boss” (i.e. the cannery superintendent). This cannery ceased operating around 1955. The cannery in the distance is still operating as the Peter Pan Cannery in Dillingham. Built in 1901 it has continuously processed salmon for 110 years, a record unequalled by any other cannery in Alaska.

Page 10 Photo of Scandinavian fisherman by Sue Brown French courtesy of Dr. Charles Black and family.

Page 11 Photo by Al Andree, Helena Andree Collection 1997-48-40, Pratt Museum, Homer, AK. (hereafter Al Andree) According to Al Andree a year after this photo was taken Ralph Anglesco died from blood poisoning after he accidentally struck himself in the wrist with a fish pick.

Page 12 San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Harry Hoyer Collection, G11.3059n. Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (A&P) cannery at Nakeen, Kvichak River ca 1920s.

Page 13 Anchorage Museum, Lu Liston 204, Snag Point (Dillingham) ca 1942. During World War II many canneries combined operations. This photo features boats from Red Salmon, Libby’s Nakeen, A&P and PAF canneries.

Page 14 Photo Ward Wells ca 1946. Ward Wells Collection, Anchorage Museum 83.91S0159-R01. (hereafter Ward Wells).

Page 15 Photos: Al Andree 1997-48-13 (top); The A&P tug *Nakeen* and the power scow *Teddy* shuttling

boats to the fishing grounds ca 1938. Anchorage Museum (bottom).

Page 16 Both photos ca 1906 by John Thwaites, a clerk on the mail boat *Dora*. P18-118, Alaska State Library, Thwaites Collection (top), Sailboats off Clarks Point, Nushagak Bay. University of Washington Library, Special Collection, PH Collection 247.393 (bottom). Sailboat with a rarely seen jib sail deployed. Italian fishermen sometimes used the jib sail.

All quotes from Axel Widerstrom taken from an unpublished manuscript entitled *Axel Widerstrom’s Book of the Alaska Packers*: as told to Karl Kortum, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Axel Widerstrom Estate Collection, HDC 565.

Page 18 All Quotes by Ray Paddock taken from Robert Parrish, *Of Wooden Boats & Iron Men*, Alaska Fish and Game Magazine, May-June 1986. Ray Paddock a Tlingit from Tenakee Springs, Alaska began fishing in Bristol Bay in 1940. He was a pioneer of “Fishing to the Westward” for other Alaska Natives from Southeast, Alaska who followed him to fish in Bristol Bay. See also, Robert Parrish, *Golden Years, Williwaws and Waves: Ray Paddock Marks 50th Year of Gillnetting in Bristol Bay*, Alaska Fish and Game Magazine, January-February, 1990.



Page 19 Photo Al Andree 1997-48-29 ca 1938.

All quotes of Alec Peterson taken from *The Tide Was Your Master for Sailing*, Uutuqtwa, Bristol Bay High School, Naknek, AK. Vol. 7, No. 1 (1982) p.24.

Page 20 Al Andree 1997-48-15.

Page 21 Al Andree 1997-48-21.

Page 23 All quotes from Robert Kallenberg taken from a transcript of an interview with Mike Davis, March 12, 1995.

Photo Ward Wells 83.910156-R0. ca 1946 Sailboat from Columbia River Packers Association below Diamond M cannery on the Naknek River.

Page 24 San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, John Johannesen Collection, G.6.7.879. ca 1920. Carl Johnson, standing in the boat pushing off with oar fished for “Whitehead Pete” Nelson who had a saltery at Squaw Creek on Kvichak Bay.

Page 25 Lament quoted in Andrews and Larssen, *Fish and Ships*, Superior Publishing, Seattle, Washington, 1959.

Page 26 Al Andree 1997-48-30 (left). Dave and Mary Carlson Collection, Samuel K. Fox Museum (right).

Page 27 Photo by Louis Gjosund, Sr. of his partner and brother Ed Gjosund when they fished for Libby, McNeil and Libby at its Ekuk Cannery in the 1940s. Photo courtesy Louis Gjosund, Jr.

Page 28 San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Harry Hoyer Collection, G7.19.941n.

All quotes from Earl “Pat” Patterson taken from Beverly Patterson, *Earl “Pat” Patterson* Uutuqtwa, Bristol Bay High School, Naknek, AK. Vol. 12, No. 2 (1989) p.47.

Page 29 San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Harry Hoyer Collection, G11.2.503n ca 1920s.

Page 30 Ward Wells, ca 1946, WWS-156-R14.

Page 32 All quotes from Elmer “Red” Harrop taken from Mel Coghill *Slime Time*, Uutuqtwa, Bristol Bay High School, Naknek, AK.

All quotes from Gus Dagg taken from Gus Dagg, *Bristol Bay Sailboat Salmon Fishing, 1928*, The Fisherman’s News, September 1975, Second Issue. All quotes from Suerre Gjesmo taken from *Bristol Bay: Sail, Moonshine and Killing Pigs*, Pacific Fishing, May 2011.

Page 33 San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Harry Hoyer Collection G12.30.264n. Fishermen rafted up waiting for high tide ca 1920’s. Photo shows the tent provided fishermen that was set up in the bow to provide some reprieve from the usually wet weather of the Bay. In this period fishermen used leather hip boots (called Finn boots) softened with linseed oil or Kingfisher and Blue Ribbon brand rubber hip boots.

Page 34 Alaska Native cannery workers ca 1917. University of Washington Library, Special Collections, John Cobb Collection, COB 214. Quote from Pete Koktelash taken from *Nuvendal’in Qaht’ana: The People of Nondalton*, Linda J. Ellanna and Andrew Balluta, Smithsonian Institution Press 1992, p. 260.

Page 35 Al Andree 1997-48-3.

Page 36 Thomas G. Pratt *ca* 1938. From the photo album of Alfred J. and Martha Opland, courtesy Robert and Mildred Opland. Alfred Opland came to Bristol Bay to supervise the reindeer herds and later established the Opland Hotel, a landmark in Dillingham. His son Robert worked in canneries and fished in Bristol Bay. Later he practiced law in Anchorage.

Pages 37 Thomas G. Pratt *ca* 1938. From the photo album of Alfred J. and Martha Opland, courtesy Robert and Mildred Opland.

Pages 40 and 41 Ward Wells, *ca* 1946, B83.91. S156.R17A.

Page 43 *Natalia*, Steve McCutcheon 1955, Anchorage Museum McCutcheon Collection, 26733.

The designation on the side of the *Natalia* – “NI” – indicates Chief Ivan Blunka was a Nushagak Independent fisherman. BIA financed the purchase of many new power boats for Native residents of Bristol Bay.

Statistics taken from John B. Parker and the Dillingham High School History Class, *The History of Dillingham and Nushagak Bay*, 1973.

Page 44 Karl Ohls. 1980. Discarded sailboats at the Diamond J cannery.

Page 45 Clark James Mishler, 2007. Wooden grave marker in Dillingham cemetery.

Pages 46 and 47 Clark James Mishler, 2007. Roland Moody's old cannery building and sailboat on Lake Aleknagik.

Page 54 Illustration courtesy Tim Troll. Information on sailboat colors provided by Melvin Monsen Sr., Hjalmar Olsen and John Branson.

Page 56 Fishermen taking a coffee break *ca* 1930, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Harry Hoyer Collection P78-026a (2)p.

Page 57 Fishermen and women taking a coffee break 2007 in the Dillingham harbor. Clark James Mishler 2007.

Page 60 Allen Marquette, 2002. Restored PAF sailboat on dock of Peter Pan cannery in Dillingham looking south down Nushagak Bay.

Back Cover Quote by John W. Nicholson from his book *No Half Truths: Reminiscences of a Life in Bristol Bay, Alaska, 1906-1995*, Anchorage, Publication Consultants, 1995.

FURTHER READING

In addition to the publications cited in these notes, the following publications are recommended to the reader who wishes to explore more of the history of commercial fishing in Bristol Bay:

Branson, John. *The Canneries, Cabins and Caches of Bristol Bay*, United States Department of the Interior, Nation Park Service, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, November 2007.

Ketchum, Robert Glenn and Hampton, Bruce. *Rivers of Life: Southwest Alaska, the Last Great Salmon Fishery*, Aperture 2001.

Van Stone, James. *Eskimos of the Nushagak: An Ethnographic History*, University of Washington Press 1967.

Freeburn, Laurence. *The Silver Years of the Alaska Canned Salmon Industry*, Alaska Geographic, Vol.3, No. 4, 1976.

Lesh, Terry, *Bristol Bay Boats – Then and Now*, National Fisherman, May 1982.

You haven't lived until you've pulled a loaded gill net over the stern of a rolling and pitching double-ender in a strong wind. The wind pushes the boat away from the net, and you have to pull the boat upwind and drag the net aboard all at once. Often we had to brace one foot against the splash rail and pull with all our strength. Bristol Bay fishermen had a lot of hernias in those days.

AL ANDREE



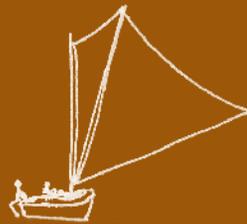
Tim Troll came to Alaska in 1978 as a VISTA volunteer lawyer in Bethel. He is currently the Program Director for The Nature Conservancy's conservation efforts in Bristol Bay. He also serves as the Executive Director of the Nushagak-Mulchatna/Wood-Tikchik Land Trust, a non-profit conservation organization in Bristol Bay. The material for this book originates in research and interviews he conducted for a radio program called "Our Story" that he produced for KDLG Public Radio in Dillingham.

I look back on the sailboats as foolish, hateful and dangerous, romantic and beautiful. Nothing will ever compare with the lovely sight of those great-winged graceful boats scudding with the wind across Bristol Bay.

AL ANDREE



Pacific Alaska Fisheries sailboat restored by Harold Andrews in 2001 for the Samuel K. Fox Museum to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Peter Pan Cannery in Dillingham.



*When the dogs show up
the season is over.*

RAY PADDOCK



*I may be old fashioned,
but still believe that it's only
those guys who know to
harness the wind who really
know how to fish.*

JOHN NICHOLSON