

THE WISEMAN HISTORICAL DISTRICT  
A Report on Cultural Resources

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Wiseman is a small mining community on the west bank of the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk River at the mouth of Wiseman Creek (Fig. 1 and 2). It lies within the W 1/2 W 1/2 of Section 19, T. 30 N., R. 11 W., and the SE 1/4 NE 1/4 and the NE 1/4 SE 1/4 of Section 24, T. 30N., R. 12 W., Fairbanks Meridian.

Following a gold strike made on the Hammond River in 1911, the community of Wiseman developed around Wright's Roadhouse at the mouth of Wiseman Creek, reaching its peak of activity in 1915.

Until 1969, the residents and owners of the 38 standing cabins at Wiseman had an opportunity to file for land under either the Homesite Act or the Trustee Townsite Act. However, PLO 4382 (which withdrew all Alaskan lands pending settlement of the Native claims issue) and PLO 5150 (which created the Utility Corridor) withdrew these lands from appropriation by public land law.

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for management of the Utility Corridor, including the protection of historical and other cultural resources. The Bureau's Management Framework Plan for the Corridor (Step 3, Decision L-1.4) mandates that appropriate action be taken to resolve the unauthorized occupancy of cabins in Wiseman.

Prior to any action which may affect cultural resources, BLM is legally mandated to assess those resources and potential impacts upon them. This report provides background information on Wiseman's structures and the community's history.

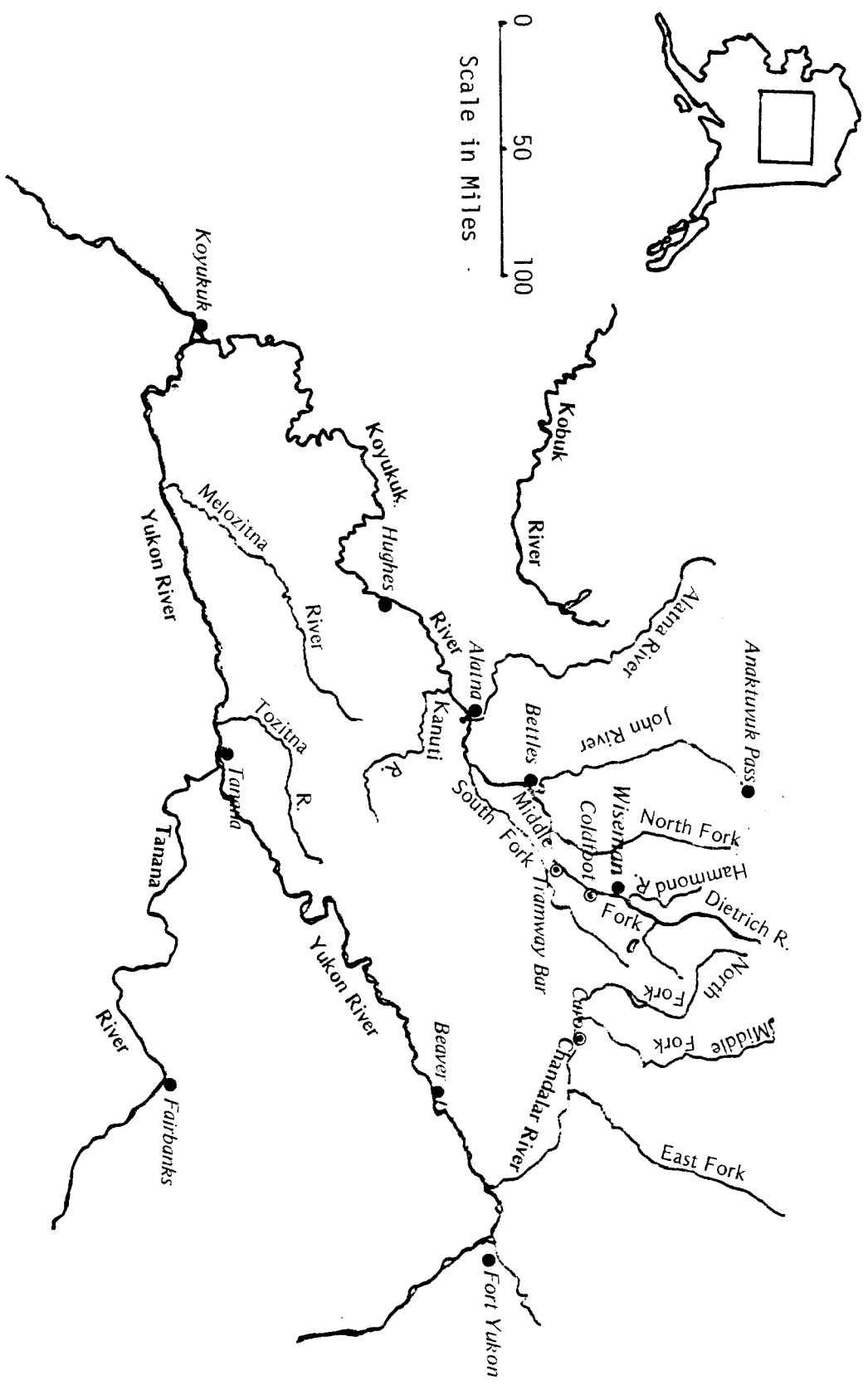


Fig. 1 The Koyukuk River country.

### III. PREHISTORY

Only general statements can be made about man's prehistoric use of the Wiseman area. Some specific information has come from studies of the archeological sites found along the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk by the Alyeska Archeology Project during construction of the Trans-Alaskan pipeline (Dekin in Cook 1977:305-463), but the majority of our early cultural data comes from the ethnographic literature.

#### A. Archeology

Seventeen sites were located across the river from Wiseman along the TAPS route by Alaska archeologists and eleven of these were excavated (Dekin in Cook 1977:305).

The topography opposite the town of Wiseman along the pipeline alignment is characterized by two large areas of glacial till, interpreted to be ground moraines....

Two concentrations of archeological sites have been found on these moraines.... The critical variables influencing site location seem to be: 1) visibility, usually in a particular direction; and 2) presence of a physical impediment to the movement of migratory animals.... (Dekin in Cook 1977:329).

Despite the number of sites found, most of them were surficial in nature with little stratigraphy and no datable material. The artifacts found included flakes, microblades, cores, spalls, bifaces, endblades, end-scrapers, and sidescrapers made of material ranging from chert to basalt and obsidian. No diagnostic artifacts were found which would lead to a definite cultural association for the people who utilized these tools.

The number of sites discovered within the limited area examined indicates that the Wiseman area was definitely important to man in the past, probably due to the presence of migratory big game.

#### B. Ethnography

Based on the literature, the argument for a Kutchin and probably a Dihai Kutchin occupation of the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk is strong. Hall (1969) argues for a Dihai Kutchin occupation of the Koyukuk River headwaters, including the Wiseman area, during the period from 1850 - 1880, on the basis of oral history, archeological, linguistic, and ethnological data.

According to Gubser (1969:44):

...the first accounts concerning the Kutchin refer to a village of a hundred persons or more between the heads of the Kobuk and Noatak rivers around Walker Lake, or perhaps a few miles north. According to the Eskimos, some of whom knew the Indian languages, these uyagamiut spoke a language different from that of the Koyukon Indians.

Gubser goes on to say that "The Chandalar or Kutchin are called uyagamiut (literally, inhabitants of rocks) by the Nunamiut because they often lived in stone houses." They referred to the Koyukon (historic inhabitants of the Koyukuk River) as "Tagagavik (travel by canoe)" (Gubser 1969:440).

Robert McKennan, who did field work among the Chandalar Kutchin at Arctic Village (1965:23) to the east, feels that:

The term Dihai Kutchin may be freely translated as "Those who dwell farthest away," or more accurately, "Those who dwell farthest away in a downriver direction".... The emphasis, however, should be on "farthest away" rather than on "downriver", for the Dihai Kutchin, like the Chandalar, were distinctly mountain people and not riverine.

The only actual references to protohistoric occupation in the Middle Fork Valley also come from McKennan (1965:23-25) and lead to the conclusion that the Dihai Kutchin may have been the earliest known inhabitants:

Their territory included the Middle and North Forks of the Chandalar River and the headwaters of the Koyukuk River. Like the Chandalar Kutchin the Dihai were in contact with the Eskimos, who gradually encroached upon the Dihai Kutchin, and forced the surviving Indians to take refuge in the Chandalar Kutchin territory, where they intermarried with the latter people. The Eskimo settlements of "Little Squaw" on the North Fork of the River are said to be in the heart of territory formerly inhabited by the Dihai Kutchin. Native tradition has it that the Dihai Kutchin originally came from the Tanana River, whence they made their way down the Yukon River as far as Nulato and thence up the Koyukuk River, establishing themselves on its headwaters.

Along with the influx of white prospectors to the Middle Fork country at the turn of the century came several Kobuk Eskimo, Nunamiut Eskimo, and Koyukon Athabaskan families. Although the Nunamiut traditionally made trips to the headwaters of the Koyukuk they had no need to travel as far south as Wiseman until the presence of a store and other goldrush related benefits made it worthwhile (Spearman, personal communications, 1982). It appears that the few Kobuk and Koyukon families that moved into the area did so for similar reasons.

## IV. HISTORY

A. Exploration

Lt. Henry Allen and Pvt. Fred Fickett are generally credited as the first white men to have explored the Koyukuk river. They traveled overland from Nuklukyet, near present day Tanana, on the Yukon across the headwaters of the Melozitna and Tozitna Rivers to the Kanuti, then down it to the Koyukuk (Fig. 1). From there they traveled by canoe up the Koyukuk to the mouth of the John River in 1885 (Allen 1885:455-460).

In 1887, John Bremner and Peder Johnson, who had accompanied Allen from the Copper River to Nuklukyet in 1885, prospected on the Koyukuk and discovered gold (Marshall 1933:30). According to Marshall (Ibid.):

Johnnie Folger made his first journey to the Koyukuk (in 1891) and for four years with a series of different partners mined placers on the South Fork, Chapman Creek, and Tramway Bar. The first gold in paying quantities was discovered at the latter place in 1893.

Hulley (1970:228) claims that John Folger made a prospecting trip into the Koyukuk region in 1881 and that in 1893 N.V. Hendricks went up the Koyukuk with a small steamer and mined considerable gold.

According to George Bettles, a trader who established the trading post and community of Bettles, gold was first discovered at Tramway Bar, Evans Bar, and Hughes Bar in 1890 (Carlson 1973:2). Regardless of exactly who first discovered what where, Marshall (1933:30) estimates that between 1887 and 1897 there were approximately eighteen to twenty different prospectors in the Upper Koyukuk.

In 1898, the Koyukuk received an overflow of roughly 1,000 individuals from the Klondike. They rapidly established a series of transient communities along the river when they found themselves caught in the winter freeze-up. After break-up, probably fewer than 100 of these remained (Marshall 1933:31). In 1899, Knute Ellington made a strike on Myrtle Creek, a tributary of Slate Creek. Further discoveries of gold on Emma and Gold Creek resulted in a small rush on the Slate Creek Mining district, located some 70 miles upstream from the store at Bettles. Coldfoot sprang up at the mouth of Slate Creek as a result of this activity.

B. Early Days

The earliest mention of the name Wiseman is recorded in Orth (1972:1055) where the name is shown as assigned to the creek "on an 1899 fieldsheet by Gerdine, USGS". According to Balcolm (1965:2) and Thompson (1974:12), the name "Wiseman" came from a transient European prospector by the name of Peter Weisman or Wiseman.

Although prospecting was undoubtedly occurring in the Wiseman area by or before 1899, Marshall (1933:41-42) describes the first significant activity as occurring in 1907:

In the autumn of 1907 three Swedes, John and Louis Olson and John Anderson, were given a strip of ground 300 feet wide on Nolan Creek. They were supposed to prospect this ground and find if there was any gold deep down below the surface. If there was gold in paying quantities on this narrow smaple then it would be worth the owner's while to mine the adjacent claims. Actually there was almost unbelievable fortune. The three Swedes took out \$100,000 the first winter. In three years they recovered over a quarter of a million dollars from their narrow strip. No piece of ground in the whole country ever yielded so richly. The news of fortune, even with the slow communication of those days, speedily traveled all over Alaska. By the spring of 1908 there were over a hundred new men rushing into the Koyukuk, and half of them stayed. The lonesome valley of Nolan Creek throbbed with activity. Fifteen or twenty different outfits were sinking holes and a dozen boilers chugged away, day and night. Responding promptly to the stimulus of gold, half a dozen prostitutes had arrived before the end of the summer. A new boom was on in earnest.

More gold was taken from Nolan Creek and its tributaries in four years than had been taken from the entire Koyukuk in all the years before that. Then, just as the riches of Nolan Creek commenced to wane, Verne Watts finally located the deep channel of Hammond River in the spring of 1911. During the next five years over a million dollars come out of this valley. Food, clothing, machinery, and whiskey were unloaded for both of these diggings at the site of Wright's old roadhouse at the mouth of Wiseman Creek....

There is some confusion over the name of the community. The early name "Wright's" undoubtedly referred to the roadhouse located on the Wright's homestead at the mouth of Wiseman Creek (State of Alaska 1902-1915). The cabins and diggings located up Nolan Creek are now called "Nolan" although the post office located in the community at the mouth of Wiseman Creek was listed as "Nolan" from 1909 through 1923 when the name was changed to "Wiseman". The individuals listed as postmasters were all Wiseman resident's (Ricks 1965:46 and 71). These included William A. Wood, Agnes E. Plummer, Elizabeth S. Flower, C.E. Danforth, George W. Huey, and Daniel Webster. After the name was changed to Wiseman in 1923 the office was **served** by George W. Huey, Elmer J. Ulen, Harry B. Leonard, Oliver L. Chappel, and Fred Terrel. The post office at Wiseman was discontinued in 1956.

It appears that the name "Nolan" came about at Wiseman since goods and mail were probably off-loaded from poling boats or winter dogteam traffic along the river at Wright's roadhouse from whence they were destined for the diggings up Nolan Creek.

### C. Mining

The first production records for gold in the Wiseman area (Fig. 4) are listed from Hammond Creek in 1900 (Maddren 1910:292). The amount given is \$2,000. Paul Metz, a mining geologist, provided the information that the price of gold remained at \$20 an ounce until 1934 and also that the USGS reports concerning gold production were frequently inaccurate due to a reluctance on the part of miners to reveal their true take as well as the fact that many of them were illiterate and could not provide correct figures (1980, personal communication).. With this in mind, the true figures can be estimated as being higher than given.

In a 1913 USGS report Maddren (1913:70-72) states that the average value of gold from the Koyukuk region varied in value from \$18 to \$19 an ounce. He goes on to say that hand shoveling, ground sluicing and hydraulic mining were the most common means used to obtain gold up to that time. Hand shoveling, sometimes combined with ground sluicing, was used in shallow unfrozen streams and bench gravels less than six feet deep. Below that the deposits could not be mined profitably by hand so these shallow placer deposits were the most commonly sought because they provided the largest yield in return for the least investment of time and capital. Due to the excessive transportation costs, steam boilers and hoists were limited to only the most productive deep deposits such as those on Nolan Creek, Vermont Creek, and Hammond Creek (Maddren 1913:72). At Hammond Creek, Brooks (1913:45) gives a depth of 60 feet to 120 feet for the diggings. Brooks (1905:30) lists freight at \$90 a ton and wages at \$8 to \$10 a day which concurs with Maddren's later comments (1913:73) that, prior to the beginning of underground work, men were paid a dollar an hour.

In 1907, gold production decreased. This was undoubtedly due to low water which affected the actual mining operations and made it difficult for the steamboats to get upriver. In addition, discoveries of gold on the Chandalar moved activity into that country (Brooks 1908:45). The fact that two deep mines on Hammond Creek had produced an abnormal high yield the previous year (Brooks 1915:58) contributed to the apparent decline.

Population estimates for the Koyukuk region were 823 in 1910 (Maddren 1913:29). In 1914, Brooks (1915:58) states that 30 mines were worked with 130 men being employed. A single 137 ounce nugget came out of Hammond Creek that year and Nolan Creek dropped to the second largest producing area. By 1918, 20 mines were in operation with 150 men working during the summer and three mines with 10 men working during the winter (Martin 1920:47). Although the number of mining operations remained at 20 during the summer of 1921, the number of employees dropped to 55 men with 5 winter operations employing only 15 men (Brooks 1921:59). At this time one of the few successful hydraulic plants was operating on Nolan Creek.

### D. Transportation

After 1899 the most common means of transportation for the mining operations up the Koyukuk was by sternwheeler steamboat as far as Bergman, and



later Bettles (Maddren 1913:31). Murie offers a description of one of these vessels (1978:98) which was still in use in 1924:

The Teddy H. was one of the remnants of the stampede days, when small sternwheel steamers were nailed together for every new "strike". The ship was white, and neat, and was shaped like an oblong box. She was tall enough to be divided into two "stories" - the engine room, the wood storage room, the freight room, and the crew's quarters below, with the open bow protruding in front, the "second story" consisting of four staterooms fore and the galley aft with a fairly large open space behind that running all the way to the stern; and on top of all this, the little pilot house.

Passengers and freight were off-loaded at Bettles and transferred to horse drawn scows or poling boats for the remainder of the trip to Wiseman.

The poling boat was a long, shallow draft craft sometimes exceeding 30 feet in length. It had a relatively narrow flat bow curved gently upward. Construction was of whipsawed spruce planks usually made locally by the builder.

These early plank boats were moved upstream by poling or lining with dogs and/or men. Where the river had long flat gravel bars, huskies were often used to pull the boat upstream. Three or four harnessed huskies, trained for this work, walked along the water's edge pulling the boat. A man sat at the stern of the boat steering with a paddle. At the end of each bar the dogs were loaded into the boat and ferried to the next bar, usually just across the river. When encountering stretches of river without open bars the man pushed the boat along with long, slender spruce poles. Poles were also used to help guide the boat in shallow water (Nelson, Mautner, and Bane 1978:125-126).

For the heavier freighting larger boats were used which employed two to four horses to line the scows upriver.

In addition to the river traffic, overland trails existed which were used primarily in winter, for dogteam use. F.C. Schrader of the USGS describes the conditions of these routes in 1899 (1900:453):

The Chandlar (sic) and Koyukuk regions form no exception to the rule of Alaska travel.... The term "trail" as used in Alaska, refers more particularly to the passable condition of the country than to any foot-beaten path or well-worn line of travel. This is especially true of the Chandalar (sic) and Koyukuk region.

Prior to 1906 the winter overland route for mail ran from Fort Yukon to the Chandalar and across to Coldfoot (Fig. 2) (BOR 1977:151). After this, the major route was the winter trail which ran down the Koyukuk River from Wiseman to Bergman, then across the Kanuti River Valley to the upper Melozitna River Valley and across the low divide on the upper Tozitna River, down to Tanana and thence to Fairbanks on the Tanana-Fairbanks Trail (Maddren 1913:31). The Fort Gibbon - Koyukuk Trail ran 273 miles from Tanana to Wiseman (BOR 1977:144).

In 1910, the Alaska Road Commission "constructed" a trail from Beaver, on the Yukon, northwest 80 miles to the divide between the Hadweenzic River and over the Chandalar divide to Caro. At this point the trail forked with one section crossing the South Fork of the Koyukuk and down Slate Creek to Coldfoot (Maddren 1913:131). The trail was supposedly passable by dogteam in winter and pack horse in summer but the latter use was infrequent due to the trail's condition. In 1923 the ARC upgraded this trail to make it usable by dogs in winter and foot in summer (BOR 1977:151).

The result of this nebulous transportation system was the high cost of freight sent to the mines. Brooks gives the following costs (1915:59). Freight was \$90 a ton from Koyukuk to Bettles (by riverboat), \$140 a ton from Bettles to Wiseman (by poling boat or scow), \$100 a ton from Wiseman to the Hammond (by poling boat) and \$40 a ton by dogteam in the winter. It cost an average of \$300 to get a load of freight to the mines. Hay and oats for horses ran \$150 a ton, wood cost \$12 to \$16 a cord, and coal was \$350 a ton. No wonder the worthwhile gold deposits had to be rich and easily obtainable!

#### E. The People

By 1911, Wiseman had two stores, as the Northern Commercial Company, Plummer's General Merchandise, and other former Coldfoot ventures moved nearer to the richer creeks. During the period of 1910-1920, many buildings from Coldfoot were moved to Wiseman, including some of the cabins and the schoolhouse. The latter was dismantled, the logs were numbered, and the building was reconstructed at Wiseman. Mrs. Jonas' cabin was also moved to Wiseman at this time (Thompson 1974:12).

One interesting incident related to Wiseman emerges from this time period. Oscar Nictune (Madison and Yarber 1980:34-35), as a young boy, ran errands for the prostitutes at Bettles and mentions the following:

One woman they called Dutch Louise. She got scared. She was going to stay the winter, but she break the men, lots of them, before winter come. She got all their money. Then she got scared so she got to go back Outside. Man by the name of Captain Hayes, Captain of steamboat, happen to have dogteam. She hire that one for thousand dollars. That's pretty nearly dollar or two dollar a mile from Coldfoot to Beaver. That's where she want to get, see.

The Marshall find out and he go out and he go catch 'em up. The Captain say he wasn't going to charge that much it was just gossip. But that woman say she was going to pay how much he ask just to get away from Wiseman. Louise her name but she must have been Dutchman. They call her Dutch Louise. Them man that know her say she was nice looking.

Stuck (1917:316) relates another incident concerning a prostitute:

It was in one of these lonely reaches of the lower Koyukuk in the fall of 1912 that the "Blueberry Kid" is thought to have murdered "Fiddler John" (the discoverer of gold on the Hammond River) and "Dutch Marie," a notorious woman from Nolan, both going outside with "home stakes" from their respective occupations, and Frank Adams, whose death was necessary to the robbery and murder of the others. The last steamboat was gone from Bettles, and the Blueberry Kid took them as passengers for Nulato on his launch, the miner and the prostitute both drunk when they embarked. He alone reached Nulato, took a steamboat to St. Michael and so "outside," and in Seattle it is said cased thousands of dollars' worth of gold dust at the mint, and again in San Francisco. The launch was found two years later, swamped in a backwater but still tied to a tree - The Blueberry Kid having arrived at Nulato in a collapsible canvas boat he carried on the launch. Two years later somebody found a little heap of calcined bones at an old camp site near the submerged launch, but I do not think that nay effort was made to determine if they were human remains or not, and the Blueberry Kid is still at large.

And, finally, a third reference from the Koyukuk District Recorders Book (State of Alaska 1902-1915: No. 81015) adds even more to the mystery:

This is to certify that on or about September 15, 1912, I paid to Thomas Johnson, commonly known as "Blueberry Tommy," the sum of \$940 in gold dust, for services rendered on the scow,

(Signed) Jas. C. Stephenson

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 1st day of June, 1914

Frank E. Howard  
Commissioner and Ex-Officio  
Notary Public

Many questions arise. The three incidents seem related, at least in time and in the similarity of the distinctive names. Were "Blueberry Tommy" and **the "Blueberry Kid" the same person?** The same can be asked for the prostitutes named "Dutch Louise" and "Dutch Marie." Why was the payment made to "Blueberry Tommy" recorded and why wasn't it recorded until two years after the fact? Did "Blueberry Tommy" cash his own gold dust Outside (almost a thousand dollars worth) or was there more? Was he really a murderer and, if so why? If "Dutch Marie" was the same person as "Dutch

Louise" had she "earned" money from Tommy the same as she apparently had done from others on the Koyukuk? Although these questions can probably never be answered they certainly add an interesting note to events from the Middle Fork gold rush days.

Although the prostitutes were probably not all that numerous in the country they definitely had an impact. Marshall (1933:43) adds to the picture:

Some of the veterans of those days estimate that at least half of the money taken out of the ground went for booze and prostitutes.... John Bowman once squandered between \$10,000 two weeks around Wiseman, most of it on a single prostitute. Half a dozen men must have lavished at least \$25,000 on the prostitutes.... One fellow "gave a hooker \$2,500 to get an education, and she knew too much for him already."

Arthur Hill, whose parents owned the roadhouse at Wiseman from 1912 to 1926 (State of Alaska n.d.) said that"....there were four 'respectable' woman and about eight others prior to 1927 .... But in times of need, all social barriers were dropped and we utilized whatever was available to help anyone who needed help, ..." (Zwingleberg 1973:11).

Several of the prostitutes eventually gave up their trade. According to Marshall (1933:44) "The last prostitute left in 1919, and none has ever returned for more than a few weeks."

When Margaret Murie visited Wiseman in 1924, Judge Huey (Boyle) told her "...there are seven white women here, but they are nearly all up at Nolan Creek now, at the mines" (1979:170).

Marshall's (1933) description of incidents and individuals from Wiseman provides one of the best pictures of the community but Murie adds several views from her trip to Wiseman in 1924. Among those is a description of Sam Dubin (1979:99); who owned the Trading Company at Wiseman:

When we returned from our trapline in the afternoon we met the Teddy H.'s owner, Sam Dubin, the principal trader of the Koyukuk River country and one of the northlands' famous characters. As he came up the gangway to the store, I thought of a black bear. His short stout body was clad in a huge turtleneck sweater of black wool and black breeches of some blanketlike material laced below the knee; he had thick lips and heavy jowls, and he was smoking a big black pipe. But he was very kind. He told in a rumbling heavy voice with a Russian kind of accent of the hard trip they had had and of the many delays, and trouble with the motorboats they used as the head of the river. He hated "gez boats," but they got some "geeze" and would we come aboard for dinner? We certainly would.

Whites were not the only residents at Wiseman. Marshall gives the following statistics for 1929 - 1930 (1933:73).

Eskimo	34	Eskimo-Japanese	2
<b>Indian</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Eskimo-White</b>	<b>4</b>
Eskimo-Indian	1	Eskimo-Japanese-White	3

He also relates the following incident about Mrs. Oscar Jonas (Florence Nictune), the sister of Oscar Nictune, from Alatna, and Kitty Siverly, wife of William Siverly who owned property in Wiseman and Coldfoot (Marshall 1933:85):

She is the most powerful woman I have ever known. When the store burned down four years ago, and all the people around carried out everything they could in the few minutes before they were driven out, Kalhabuk emerged several times with a hundred pound sack of flour on her shoulder and a fifty pound sack under one arm. I am sure she could beat three out of four men in Wiseman in a fight. But the test could never come off, because she is the most placid of mortals, and takes everything as it comes along in the greatest good humor,....

Mrs. Jonas had arrived there from Anaktuvuk in 1924 so her children could attend school, and was still living in Wiseman in 1974 (Thompson 1979:22).

Murie also describes individuals such as Frank Smith, who had owned the saloon and dance hall in Wiseman during its early days; Frank's native wife, Mary; David Tobuk; Ludie Hope; Jack Hood and one of his horses; Martin Slisco; Jack Holzer; Hans Cristianson; and numerous other individuals.

#### F. After the Goldrush

Marshall (1933:43) relates that 1916 was the beginning of Wiseman's decline. In that year the richest claims on Nolan Creek and the Hammond were almost exhausted, men were attracted Outside by the high wages offered by the war, and Prohibition went into effect. He lists the country's "permanent white population" at 350 in 1902, 200 in 1917, and 71 in 1931. (1933:38).

The following quote by Albert Ness, a long-time Wiseman resident, sums up the individuals who remained in the country although it perhaps falls short in describing the strength of their character (Marshall 1933:47):

Always, after any stampede, it's not the successes who build up the country. They go home with the stakes they made. It's the failures who stay on, decade after decade, and establish homes.

Wiseman acquired its first telephone in 1912; this only ran between Nolan, Wiseman, and the Hammond River and offered little in the way of increased "civilization" (Marshall 1933:131). The year 1925 was a significant one for the community. In May of that year, Noel Wien flew the first plane in. Tishu Ulen, who witnessed the event, described it thus (Marshall 1933:132-133):

They had wired the plane was coming in here, and we were all sitting out in front of the old store waiting for it....

Suddenly Martin Slisco, (the roadhouse proprietor) jumped like he was crazy, and he shouted 'I see it! I see it! After awhile we saw something way down the river, looked like a mosquito hawk....

Everybody was running, old men, old women, little children. Seemed like they were all crazy...

Jimmy Tobuk and I were the first to reach the plane, but everybody else was right behind, never nobody stopped... Some of the old natives, they just shook their head, didn't seem to know what to make of it.

The wireless station, which the government installed earlier the same year, was the real connecting link to civilization, particularly for getting medical advice, as well as being essential to making the airplane practical (Marshall 1933:135). Joe Crosson established a route from Fairbanks to Barrow in 1927 with Wiseman as the stop-over but traffic was irregular (Thompson 1974:17).

Due to the facts that gold remained at \$20.67 a pure ounce, that no outside capital was invested in the region at the time, and that the fur cycle was at a biological low, the Great Depression had little additional impact on Wiseman (Marshall 1933:113). In 1937, a total of 150 airplanes had stopped in Wiseman throughout the year (Thompson 1974:17). This necessitated the building of a newer and safer airstrip in 1941 through the efforts of the Wiseman residents, the Department of Aviation and the Alaska Road Commission.

The following account of Wiseman during the 1940's is taken from Thompson (1974:21). The U.S.'s entry into World War II in 1941 brought Wiseman into an economic depression. Many young men left for the war. The resulting lack of mining activity collapsed the economic base and sent others to Fairbanks in search of jobs. Construction jobs on the Alcan drew others. By 1944 both the store and the school closed. There were 21 people living in the Wiseman area in 1952 and two decades later the population was down to nine.

## V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

### A. Historic Structures

Since there are no known prehistoric archaeological sites in the immediate Wiseman area, we must next consider the historical values. At Wiseman, as at any historical site, the question arises as to where the actual history lies. Is it the people, the place, the time, or the activities which occurred in the past? At Wiseman, the history undoubtedly rests with all of the above. The three factors which made Wiseman significant as a historical district are (1) the northernmost gold rush in the United States occurred there in 1915, (2) Robert Marshall wrote a book about the community in 1933 which remains a classic today, and (3) It is one of the few communities where structures are still standing that attest to and illustrate the early days of Alaskan history.

In all cases, the location of the historic community makes it important, and this element still remains significant today. The activities which made the community significant are a bit more difficult to analyze. Wiseman is no longer the site of a gold rush and, although active mining in the area still goes on, fluctuating with the rise and fall of gold prices, it will probably never see the level of activity with related economic support systems that it saw in 1915. Two other activities have brought more people into the area, though. The first was the construction of the Trans-Alaskan pipeline system and preparation for construction of the Alaskan Northwest Natural Gas Transportation System. The second was opening the Dalton Highway to the public and designation of Gates of the Arctic as a National Park. This latter has resulted in a small but increasing flow of visitors into the area.

Robert Marshall spent time in Wiseman during 1930-31, after the community's peak, and identifies the primary economic activities of the community as being mining, hunting and fishing, and freighting. With the exception of the few people who are employed by the State Department of Transportation or Northwest, most of the present day Wiseman residents mine, hunt, trap, fish, garden, and cut wood.

As for the time element of significance, it is impossible to step back into the past but one sometimes gets that feeling in Wiseman, at least more so than in most remote communities in the United States. Airplanes, trucks, three-wheelers, generators, and radios are evidence of the present but the cabins, water obtained from the community spring, the talk of weather and gardens, and the endless preparation for winter are as much a part of the past as the present. The isolation, climate, population, and lifestyle are more significant in maintaining Wiseman's historical integrity than the inroads of modern technology.

However, things have changed and the people who inhabit Wiseman today are not those who lived there sixty-seven or even fifty-two years ago. Although some of the old timers are still alive, they no longer live on the Koyukuk. The only tangible evidence of the past is the buildings.

There are a total of 38 standing structures in Wiseman today and several small outbuildings. Fig. 5 provides a summary of these features. Photographs and descriptions of them are provided in Appendix A.



Structure No.	Year Constructed	Historical Description
1	1951	Cabin built by A. Ness, when in his 80's.
2,3	1951	Cabin built by V. Knorr.
4	1923	Cabin built by Ike Spinks or Hughie Boyle.
5-8	1930's	Harry Leonard homesite.
9	prior to 1944	Henry and Lousia Pingle residence.
10	1908 or 1919	Was possibly the Smith/Nelson Saloon, Jim Kelly store, Carl Frank store.
11	prior to 1940	Possibly the J.H. Flowers home.
12	1934	Cabin built by Pete Haslem.
13	1940	Cabin built by Pete Haslem.
14	prior to 1912	Flowers Roadhouse, Wiseman Roadhouse, Slisco Roadhouse.
15	prior to 1913	Siverly & Bowker Saloon, Pioneer Igloo #8.
16	prior to 1925	Signal Corps building.
17	1910	Two-story building was N.C. Co. store Wiseman Trading Co. store.
18	1910	N.C. Co. mess house.
19,20	prior to 1928	Mary Williams' residence.
21-24	prior to 1940	Possibly home of Ase Wilcox.
25	1910	N.C. C. gashouse, Wiseman Trading Co.
26	1940	Cabin built by Gus Larson.
27	prior to 1926	Jack Holzer cabin, used as schoolteachers' residence.
28,29	prior to 1915	Schoolhouse moved from Coldfoot in 1915.
30	1929	Frank Miller Native allotment.
31	prior to 1932	N.C. Co. caterpillar storage house.
32	prior to 1930	Jess Allen cabin.

Structure No.	Year Constructed	Historical Description
33	1924	Florence Jonas Native allotment.
34	prior to 1930	Marshal V.O. Greene's residence, V. Neck's residence.
35	prior to 1930	Stanich brother's residence.
36	1967	Built by Ross Brockman.
37	prior to 1940	Built by Nick Ikovich.
38	prior to 1940	Cabin built by Wes Etherington.

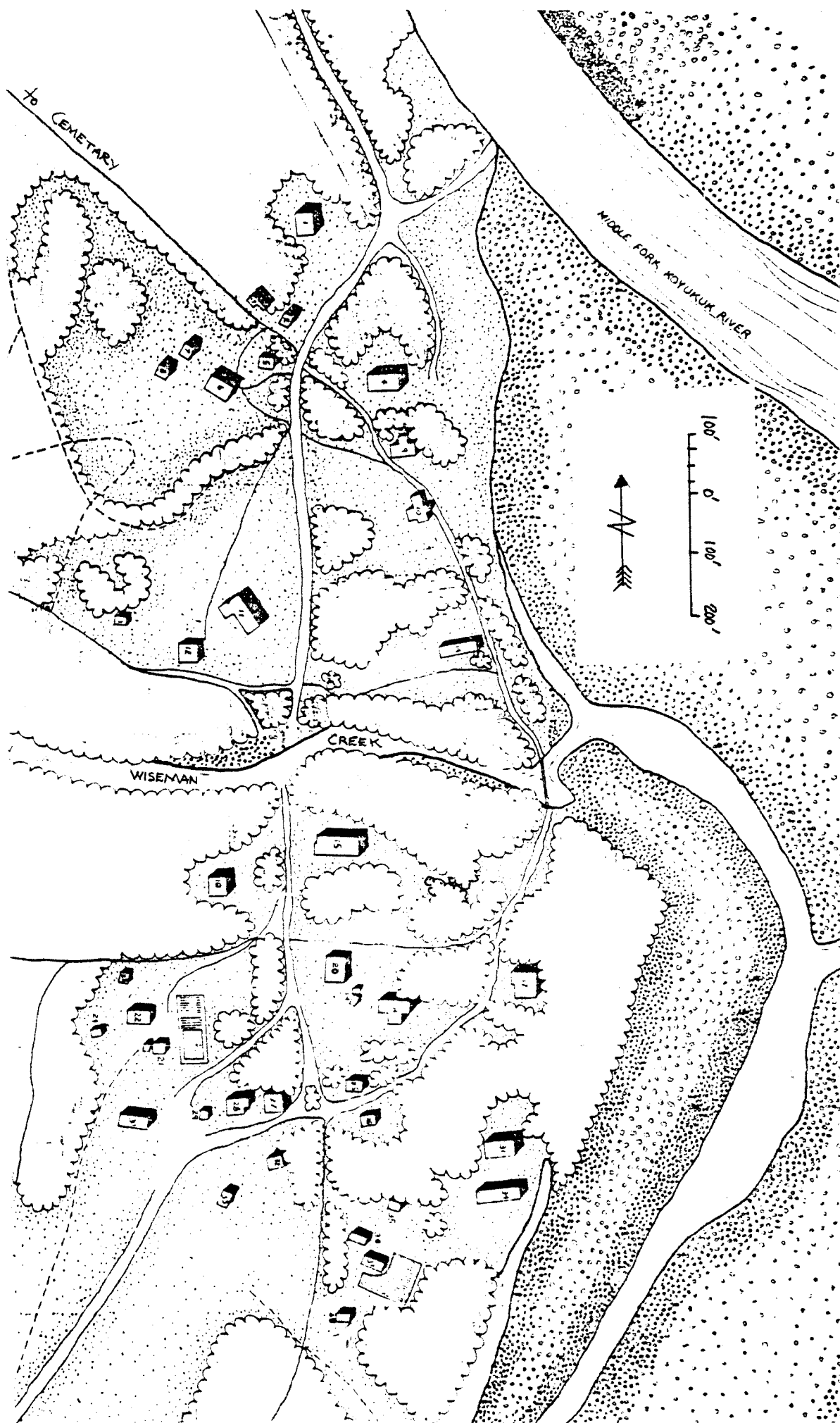


Fig. 5 Wiseman.

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