

Lobdell



A
FWLB
1415

IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE OF COHEN AND HESKETH ISLANDS
AND ADJACENT REGIONS OF KACHEMAK BAY, ALASKA

ARLIS

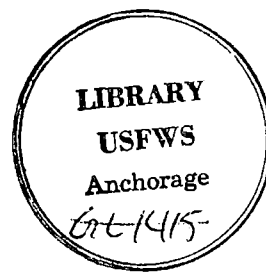
Alaska Resources
Library & Information Services
Anchorage Alaska

by
John E. Lobdell

Submitted to:
State Archaeologist
State of Alaska
Division of Parks
July 16, 1976

3 3755 000 54414 8

FWLB
1415



AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE OF COHEN AND HESKETH ISLANDS
AND ADJACENT REGIONS OF KACHEMAK BAY, ALASKA



by
John E. Lobdell

Submitted to:
State Archaeologist
State of Alaska
Division of Parks
July 16, 1976

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for permission to survey Cohen and Hesketh Islands as granted by Phylis Abbott and John Dalgleish respectively. Gretchen and Peter Bersch were gracious in permitting me to stay on Yukon Island during most of the survey and the use of some of the facilities of the island is appreciated. I also thank Mike McBride for permitting me to stay on his property at China Poot Bay and for indicating the location of several possible sites.

I thank Doug Reger, State Archaeologist, for his help in making the funds and information available for this project and Greg Dixon, Staff Archaeologist, for aiding in the writing of the final report with many helpful suggestions. The manuscript was typed by Maurine Simpson of Anchorage Community College.

Finally, the survey was facilitated by the field assistance of my spouse, Glinda Sturges Lobdell.

Abstract

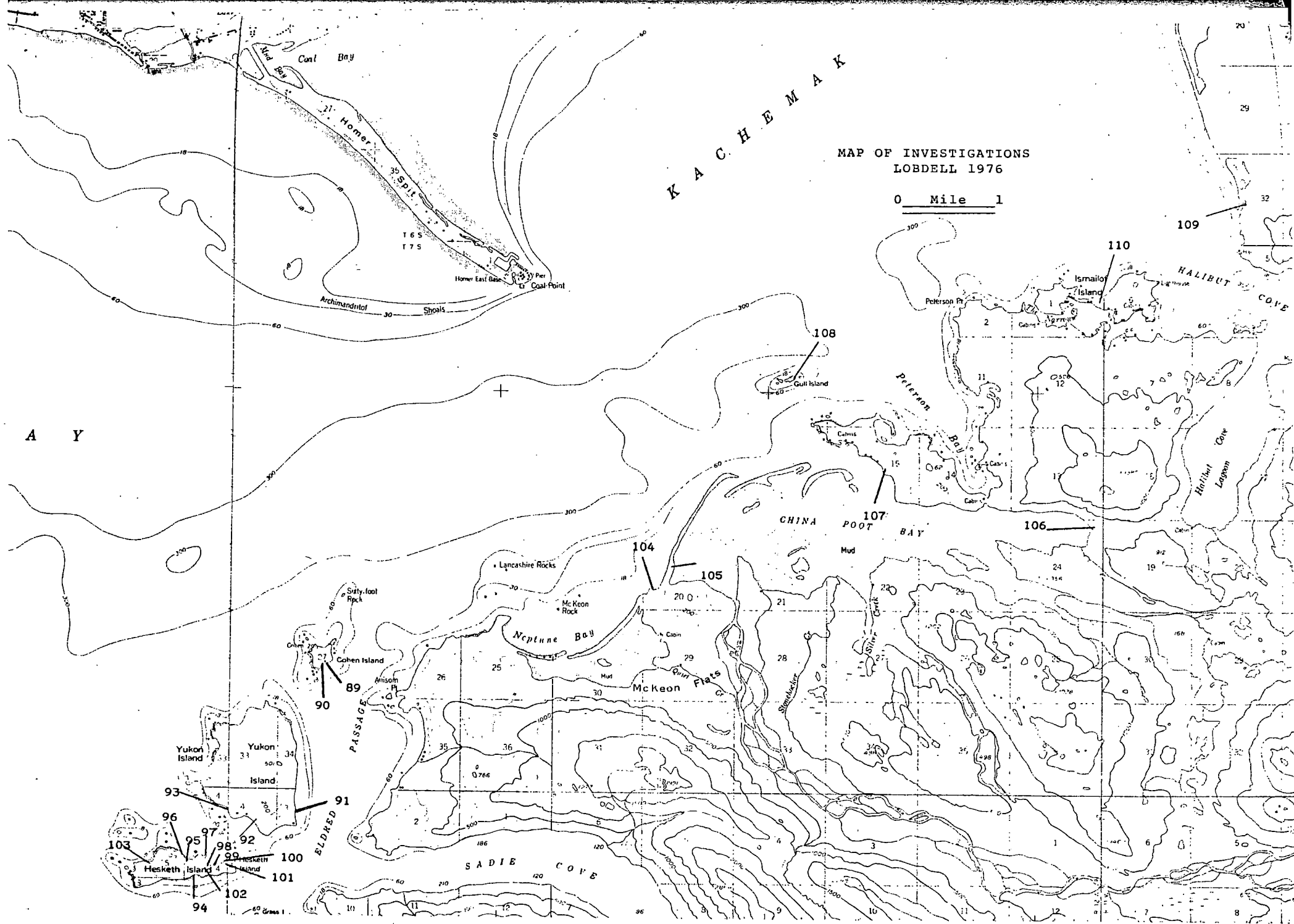
John E. Lobdell and Glinda S. Lobdell performed a reconnaissance of Cohen and Hesketh Islands and other selected areas of Kachemak Bay during late June of 1976. A total of 22 sites were found in various states of disrepair and damage. The sites have been assigned state registry numbers, are described, and photos have been made of relevant subjects.

Table of Contents

Purpose and Methodology	1
Sites Encountered	2
Cohen Island	3
Yukon Island	3
Hesketh Island	4
China Poot Bay	7
Gull Island	9
Halibut Cove	10
Summary	10
Bibliography	12
Plates	13

List of Plates

<u>Site</u>	<u>Plate</u>	<u>Page</u>
SEL 089	1	13
SEL 091	2	14
SEL 092 Terrace Garden	3	15
SEL 092 Beach	4	16
SEL 093	5	17
SEL 094	6	18
SEL 095	7	19
SEL 096	8	20
SEL 097	9	21
SEL 098	10	22
SEL 102	11	23
SEL 103	12	24
SEL 104	13	25
SEL 105	14	26
SEL 107	15	27
SEL 109	16	28
SEL 041	17	29



An Archaeological Reconnaissance of Cohen and Hesketh Islands and Adjacent Regions of Kachemak Bay, Alaska

Purpose and Methodology

The number of sites reported from Kachemak Bay indicates that the area is presently one of the best-known regions of Alaska. Reger (1973) performed the most widespread search for archaeological site, but areas had been discovered earlier by de Laguna (1934) as well as being reported by the local inhabitants. Test excavation had been carried out by de Laguna (1934) at Yukon Island and Cottonwood Creek, again at Cottonwood Creek in 1974 (Workman 1974) (Lobdell 1975), and most recently by Karen Workman (1974) at Chugachik Island. Another excavation is tentatively planned for the summer of 1977 at Chugachik. In order to render any final statement on Kachemak Bay complete, it was felt by this investigator that areas that had not been surveyed be considered. The two islands adjacent to Yukon Island had never been considered in detail. As Cohen and Hesketh Islands are part of the gateway islands to Kachemak Bay they constituted the major search areas. Both islands had not previously been surveyed as permission to do so had been difficult to obtain. As time permitted, the reconnaissance was expanded to include the western shore of China Poot Bay, the beach between China Poot Bay and Neptune Bay, Gull Island, the western shore of Halibut Cove just south of Glacier Spit and a reappraisal of Yukon Island. Additionally, sites in Kachemak Bay have been subject to serious erosion since the tectonic lowering caused by the 1964 earthquake and it was felt that if sites were present in the aforementioned areas, then they should be noted regardless of their present condition. As suspected, many of the

sites found during our survey were being lost to storm tides. I was also concerned with areas that might hold the potential for extensive testing by a future field school crew, and possible nomination to the National Register of Historic Sites.

The methods employed for the search of Cohen, Hesketh and Yukon Islands consisted of a site potentiality study of aerial maps and the firsthand examination of these and other areas. The heavily forested areas of the islands were not examined except where historic structures were found. We concentrated on the coastal beach areas likely to have been inhabited and those rock outcrops that might have served as refuge sites. The other areas examined included those areas where sites had been known to exist but no reconnaissance had taken place. As most of the survey was aided by a canoe or boat, coastal areas were easily reached dependent on weather and tides. Extensive testing of sites was not permitted on Cohen or Hesketh Islands under agreement with the landowners. In all cases it was considered whether or not the site was important enough to test, as tests might attract attention to collectors, and testing could realistically be attempted.

Sites Encountered

A total of 28 sites were visited of which 6 were previously listed in the state registry. Of the 22 sites discovered, 18 are probably of aboriginal affinity albeit the date of occupation is not known. Three (3) other localities found are historic cabin-like structure relating to the old fox farm at Hesketh Island. Site numbers SEL 089 to SEL 110 have been tentatively assigned.

Cohen Island

SEL 089 (N. 59°32'24"; W. 151°28'17")(76 Cohen A)

This kitchen midden is located at the westernmost end of the sandy beach on the southeastern part of Cohen Island facing Eldred Passage. The site is approximately 10 by 30 meters and in excess of 40 centimeters in depth (the actual depth of the site cannot be determined without further testing). Midden material includes clams, whelks, urchins, mussels, and bird bone. No artifacts were found. The midden is now subject to disturbance from wave action and the landowners have three buildings on the site. I would estimate that this site was once the most important area of habitation on Cohen Island. (Plate 1)(Slide 1)

SEL 090 (N. 59°32'22"; W. 151°28'22")(76 Cohen B)

The site consists of a localized 3-5 centimeter thick lens of mussels and clams found in the tree roots of a spruce on a trail near the cliff edge on southeastern Cohen Island, 30-40 meters above high tide line. No artifacts were found or pictures taken of this trace of midden. Artifacts have been reported to have been found in a garden plot near this site but I could not locate any other midden areas.

Yukon Island

SEL 091 (N. 58°31'00"; W. 151°28'50")(76 Yukon A)

This midden is 300 meters north of the southeastern tip of Yukon Island facing Eldred Passage. It is a 25 centimeter thick lens of clams, mussels, whelks and cockles that extends about 10 meters along the shore. The site has been almost totally destroyed by wave action. Artifacts include one boulder spall, one relatively thick crude semi-circular

beveled slate flake with use retouch, and numerous fire-cracked rocks.

(Plate 2)(Slide 2)

SEL 092 (N. 59°30'54"; W. 151°29'32")(76 Yukon B)

This midden (undetermined depth) is located in the same cove as and 250 meters southeast of SEL 001. Midden material extends from the beach up to the gentle slope above the beach. Wave action is eroding the front of the midden. The midden upslope was discovered when the residents planted a terrace garden. It is thought that the site extends about 30 meters along the beach and 20 meters upslope. Clams, whelks, mussels, and cockles make up the midden. Only fire-cracked rocks were found. (Plates 3 and 4) (Slides 3-5)

SEL 093 (N. 59°30'58"; W. 151°30'00")(76 Yukon C)

A very shallow (3 cm.) lens of midden is located atop a rocky cliff adjacent to a small very rocky beach on southwestern Yukon Island approximately 1000 meters north of SEL 001. This site faces Elephant Island and Hesketh Island. The midden appears to be predominantly clams. We were unable to climb to the locality as technical climbing gear would have been necessary. (Plate 5)(Slide 6)

Hesketh Island

SEL 094 (N. 59°30'23"; W. 151°30'35")(76 Hesketh A)

This is by far the largest site on Hesketh Island, located on the only long sandy beach bight on the south shore. There are several modern buildings that have been built atop the site and two boats are dry docked there. The midden (depth undetermined) consists of clams, mussels, cockles, and both bird and sea mammal bone. Many fire-cracked rocks are in evidence.

The site probably extends most of the length of the entire bight and beach. Midden can be viewed in several outcrops and tree throws throughout the bight. No artifacts were found. There has been extensive wave action damage. I would estimate that this site constituted a major multi-component occupation on the gateway islands. (Plate 6)(Slide 7)

SEL 095 (N. 59°30'30" W. 151°30'42")(76 Hesketh B)

Less than a small 3 centimeter lens of midden is all that remains of the site. It is located at the middle bight on the north shore of Hesketh Island, facing Yukon Island. The rest of the site has been washed away by storm tides. No artifacts were found in the shallow clam and mussel outcrop. (Plate 7)(Slide 8)

SEL 096 (N. 59°30'35"; W. 151°30'50")(76 Hesketh C)

This possible refuge site is located on the top of a rocky knob northwest of SEL 095 about 75 meters above high tide. It was evidenced by a massive tree throw, exposed mussels, clams, cockles and whelks. Some fire-cracked rocks were noticed. The depth of the site remains unknown but bedrock is approximately less than a meter below ground surface. (Plate 8)(Slide 9 and 10)

SEL 097 (N. 59°30'35"; W. 151°30'20")(76 Hesketh D)

This probable refuge site is located on a rocky island pinnacle about 15 by 15 meters. The site covers the entire top of the pinnacle. There is midden including all the aforementioned varieties of marine shells. Two suspicious pits are located on top of the pinnacle, and I suspect the largest rectangular shaped pit to be a barabara. This site is much like the site described by de Laguna on top of Elephant Island to the north-east. Although difficult logistically, this site might be interesting to test in detail. (Plate 9)(Slide 11)

SEL 098 (N. 59°30'28"; W. 151°30'18")(76 Hesketh E)

Only a thin (3cm.) lens of midden remains at the very back of a coastal bight on northeastern Hesketh Island, 300 meters southeast of SEL 097. The midden consists of mainly finely ground mussel shells. No artifacts were found. (Plate 10)(Slide 12)

SEL 099 (N. 59°30'29"; W. 151°30'10")(76 Hesketh F)

Discovered in a small tree throw, this midden of clams and mussels is located 100 meters east of SEL 098. Again, there is only a scant amount of shell, the rest of the shallow site apparently having been destroyed by wave action. (Plate 10)(Slide 12)

SEL 100 (N. 59°30'30"; W. 151°30'05")(76 Hesketh G)

Also discovered in a tree throw at the rear of a pebble beach on northeastern Hesketh Island is a scant amount of shell. This locality is similar to SEL 099 in thickness and fauna and may at one time have been part of a very shallow mi, that covered much of the same beach. The site is 200 meters east of SEL 099.

De Laguna (1934:21) refers to several small sites on this side of Hesketh Island. Although it is impossible to infer any exact provenience, she was probably referring to the sites I have labeled as SEL 098, 099, 100, and possibly 095. She probably did not investigate the areas of SEL 096 and 097, the two probable refuge sites.

SEL 101 (N. 59°30'29"; W. 151°30'00")(76 Hesketh H-historic)

A small log cabin structure, only about 2 by 2 meters, is in good condition with a partial roof intact. It appears to be a fox farm pen. The structure is located on a gentle forested slope 200 meters southeast of SEL 100 and 20-30 meters above the beach. No photograph was made of this structure. It is very similar in construction and size to the two

other historic structures on Hesketh Island.

SEL 102 (N. 59°30'27"; W. 151°30'20")(76 Hesketh I-historic)

Another probable fox farm pen, this cabin structure is now only about 4 logs tall. The ruins are located on northeast Hesketh Island on a low bench behind the beach only 15 meters southwest of SEL 098. Round nails were used in its construction. (Plate 11)(Slide 13)

SEL 103 (N. 59°31'25"; W. 151°31'25")(76 Hesketh J-historic)

This was the last of the historic structures that were located. It is on the northwestern corner of Hesketh Island on a gently sloping beach behind a rugged and rocky beach. The structure is in ruins as it is now only 3 logs tall. Again round nails were used to construct the building. It shows a trough-like entrance, used as a fox entrance to the pen. It is interesting to note that no aboriginal activity was found at this beach, probably because the northern exposure to the open ocean made any watercraft landing difficult and the small cove has little protection from oncoming storms. (Plate 12)(Slide 14)

As the primary purpose of the expedition did not focus on historic localities, none was examined in any detail.

China Poot Bay

SEL 104 (N. 59°33'08"; W. 151°22'05")(76 China Poot A)

This site is located on the south shore of Kachemak Bay between China Poot Bay and Neptune Bay on a ledge hanging to the cliff about 10 meters above the high tide line. I did not climb to this locality. It appears that much of this 3 centimeter lens has slumped and been washed away. No artifacts were found. The lens consisted of mostly clam shells. (Plate 13)(Slide 15)

SEL 105 (N. 59°33'21"; W. 151°21'47")(76 China Poot Bay)

This fairly thick midden is located on the eastern portion of the spit of sand enclosing China Poot Bay, approximately 700 meters northeast of SEL 104. The site consists of a slumped shell midden 75+ centimeters thick about 10 meters above the high tide line on a large solitary rock outcrop of folded radiolarian chert. Clams, whelks, mussels, and cockles were found, but no artifacts. Probably prior to the earthquake this locality may have been a major site. The lens of midden appears to be grossly slumped and some has likely been washed away. (Plate 14)(Slide 16)

SEL 106 (N. 59°33'43"; W. 151°13'58")(76 China Poot C)

Located at the easternmost cove of China Poot Bay, one mile east of SEL 040, this site consists of a surface scatter of midden and artifacts. The entire site is under water at high tide in a shallow lagoon at the back of the cove. Although under water, it is somewhat protected from storm wave action by a natural dike that has formed the lagoon. The midden consisted of all the aforementioned marine shells and urchin. One artifact of significance, in addition to fire-cracked rocks, was found -- a distal portion of a faceted slate blade, either part of a knife or projectile point. A color slide has been made of this artifact. (Slide 17 and 18)

SEL 107 (N. 59°34'14"; W. 151°17'53")(76 China Poot D)

An undetermined amount of midden was discovered shortly before my arrival on the property of Kachemak Bay Wilderness Lodge. A fairly heavy concentration of mostly clam shells was found while excavating for an outhouse. The locality of midden is atop a rocky bluff in eastern China Poot Bay, 200 meters southeast of SEL 069. It was graciously

reported to me by the proprietor, Mike McBride. No artifacts were found. (Plate 15)

Gull Island

Gull Island is a group of rock islands located north of the entrance to China Poot Bay. They are most famous for the bird colonies of gulls, puffins, murre and cormorants. De Laguna (1934:21) states that the island was probably used as a refuge site.

SEL 108 (N. 59°35'11"; W. 151°19'30")(76 Gull Island A)

Mike McBride reported to me that when he planted a young tree adjacent to the only other tree on Gull Island (now dead) he unearthed the site. He found an uncommon artifact -- a proximal portion of a slotted or fluted slate projectile point. It is most similar to de Laguna (1934) Plate 34, number 5, but apparently much thinner with a narrow slot or flute. A color slide has been made of the artifact. (Slide 20)

I photographed from a distance the location of the site, but was unable to land there. Large ground swells made landing on the beachless island impossible. Another consideration was at the time of visitation, the sea birds were nesting and I had been advised by many local residents of the bay area not to disturb the nesting process by walking the island. The exact location of where the artifact was found is at the new tree on the highest part of the eastern end of the major island in the Gull Island rocks. The dead tree (adjacent) can easily be seen for a good distance when approaching the islands. (Slide 19)

Halibut Cove

SEL 109 (N. 59°36'48"; W. 151°11'05")(76 Halibut Cove)

The approximate location of this site had been reported to me by Doug Reger prior to the reconnaissance, although he did not view it. The exact location of the site is the eastern side of the water entrance to a large tidal lagoon in northeastern Halibut Cove. The site is about 300 meters north of the lagoon entrance on a small sandy spit terminated by a rocky knob. There is an old cabin that appears to be occasionally still used directly behind the site. The site itself consists of marine shell midden in excess of 50 centimeters thick. It appears that this site has been frequently visited by collectors who search the eroding face of the site for artifacts. From some foot prints it also appeared that two collectors had collected some artifacts just prior to my arrival. Thus, I found none. (Plate 16)(de 21 and 22)

SEL 110 (N. 59°35'53"; W. 151°13'45")(76 Halibut Cove B)

A small amount of midden exposed by heavy equipment while excavating for a new house foundation was observed in brief. The spot is located just east of the narrow neck of pebble beach that connects the two larger areas of Ismailof Island together. It is 1/3 of a mile east of the most well known site in Halibut Cove, SEL 043. Clem Tillion reported the site to me. No photographs were taken.

Summary

The survey was beneficial in that 22 localities were found. Luckily these sites could be noted before their final destruction, an occurrence

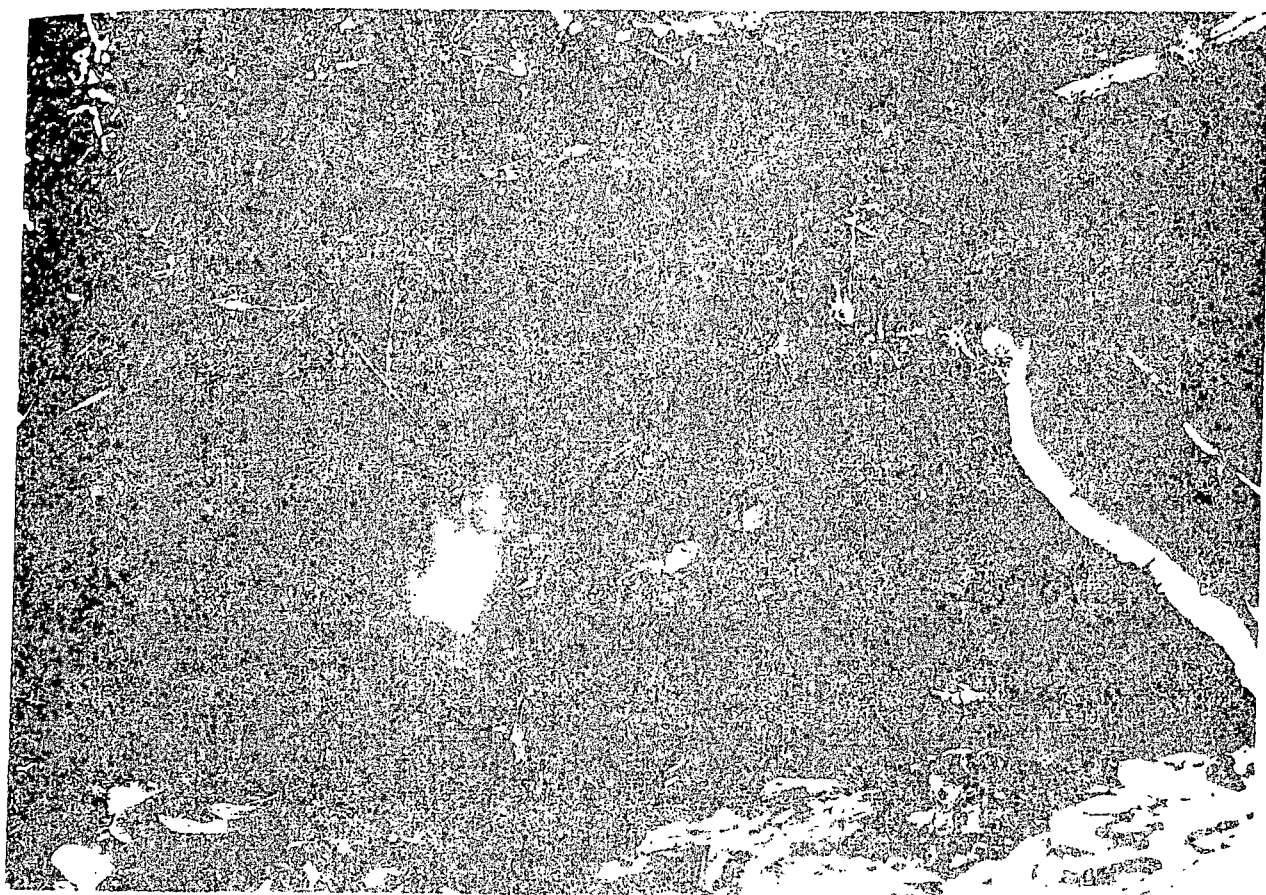
that should be expected in the very near future due to tectonic changes and wave action in the area. The major localities of aboriginal activity were probably located at SEL 089 (Cohen Island), SEL 094 (Hesketh Island), SEL 105 (between China Poot Bay and Neptune Bay), and possibly SEL 109 (Halibut Cove). These sites have been disturbed by wave action and eroded so badly that controlled excavation would probably not be worthwhile nor is nomination to the National Register of Historic Sites indicated. Nevertheless, knowledge of the site location should aid population distribution studies of Kachemak Bay. Of the 6 sites previously recorded by archaeologists that I visited all were in a similar state of destruction, save for SEL 041, the Yukon Island fox farm site described by de Laguna (1934:27). This site was the only one that indicated that further testing might be of value. The site is apparently Late Kachemak Tradition and later. It is this later time period prior to historic contact that is not well known. The owners of the land wish to someday use the site area and were receptive to the idea of further testing to gain knowledge of this late time period. The site is located, contrary to the present state records, 200 meters west of the southeastern point of Yukon Island. Its excavation would not be hampered by insurmountable logistic problems. I feel that the owners are aware of the scientific value of the site and an appropriate group could be invited to excavate. I have photographed the site (Plate 17)(Slide 23), the outlines created by rich vegetation indicating its limits. At present the site is not threatened.

Bibliography

- de Laguna, Frederica. 1934. The Archaeology of Cook Inlet, Alaska.
University of Pennsylvania Museum.
- Lobdell, John E. 1975. Cotton Creek: A Late Kachemak Occupation
In Southcentral Alaska. Paper presented at the 2nd Alaska
Anthropology Association Conference, March 14-15, 1975, at
the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.
- Reger, Douglas R. 1974. Report of Archaeological Survey, Summer 1973.
Report to the State of Alaska, Division of Parks, Office of
History and Archaeology and to the Homer Society of Natural
History.
- Workman, William B. 1974. The Prehistory of the Southern Kenai Peninsula.
In The Native, Russian and American Experiences of the Kenai Area
of Alaska. Kenai, Alaska.
- Workman, Karen Wood. 1974. Chugachik Island (SEL 033): Test Excavations
at a Middle Kachemak Tradition Site in Kachemak Bay, Alaska.
Report to the State of Alaska, Division of Parks.



Plate 1 : SEL 089



Plote 2 : 371 090

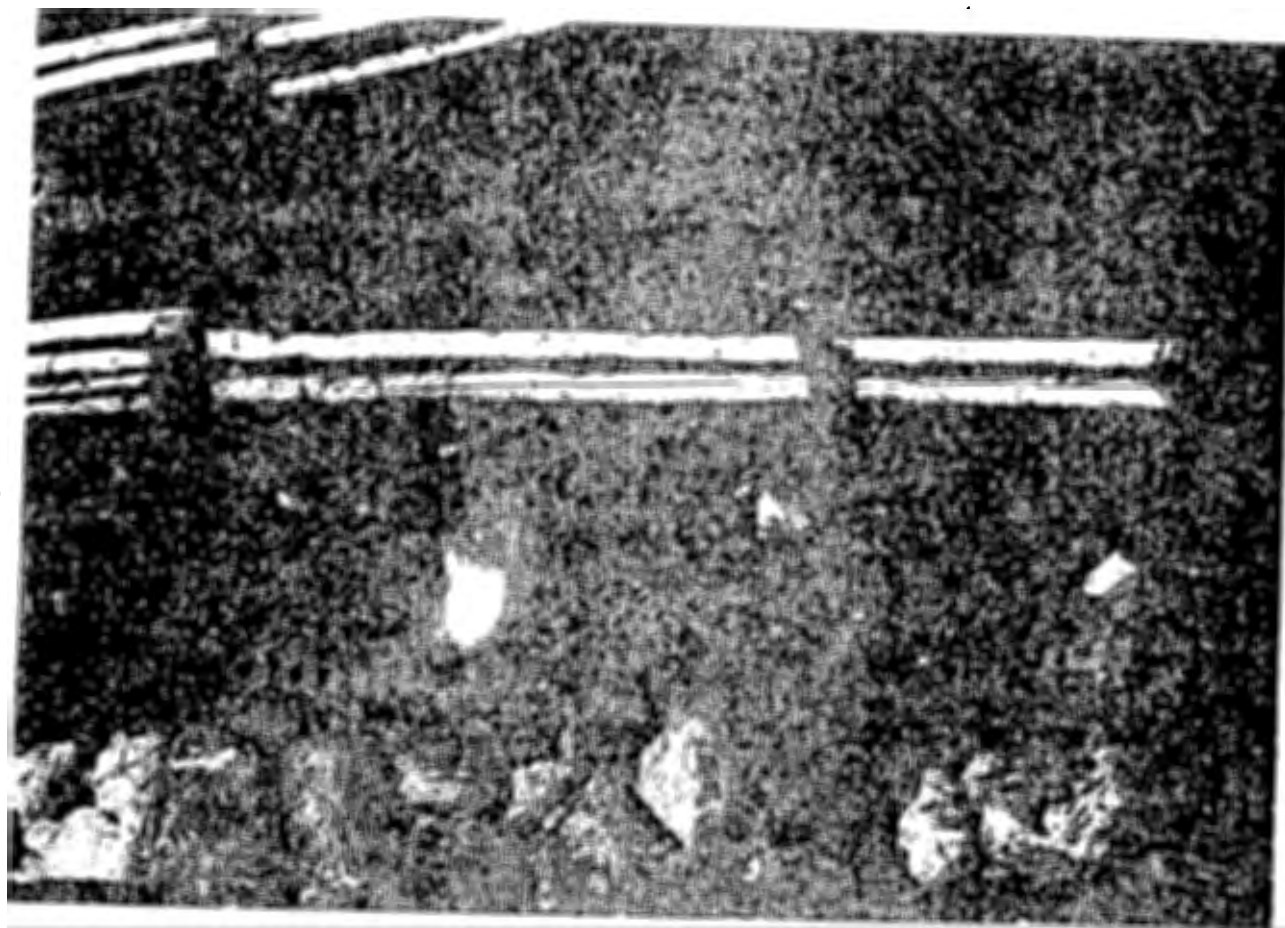


Plate 3 : SEL 092 Terrace Garden



1961/12

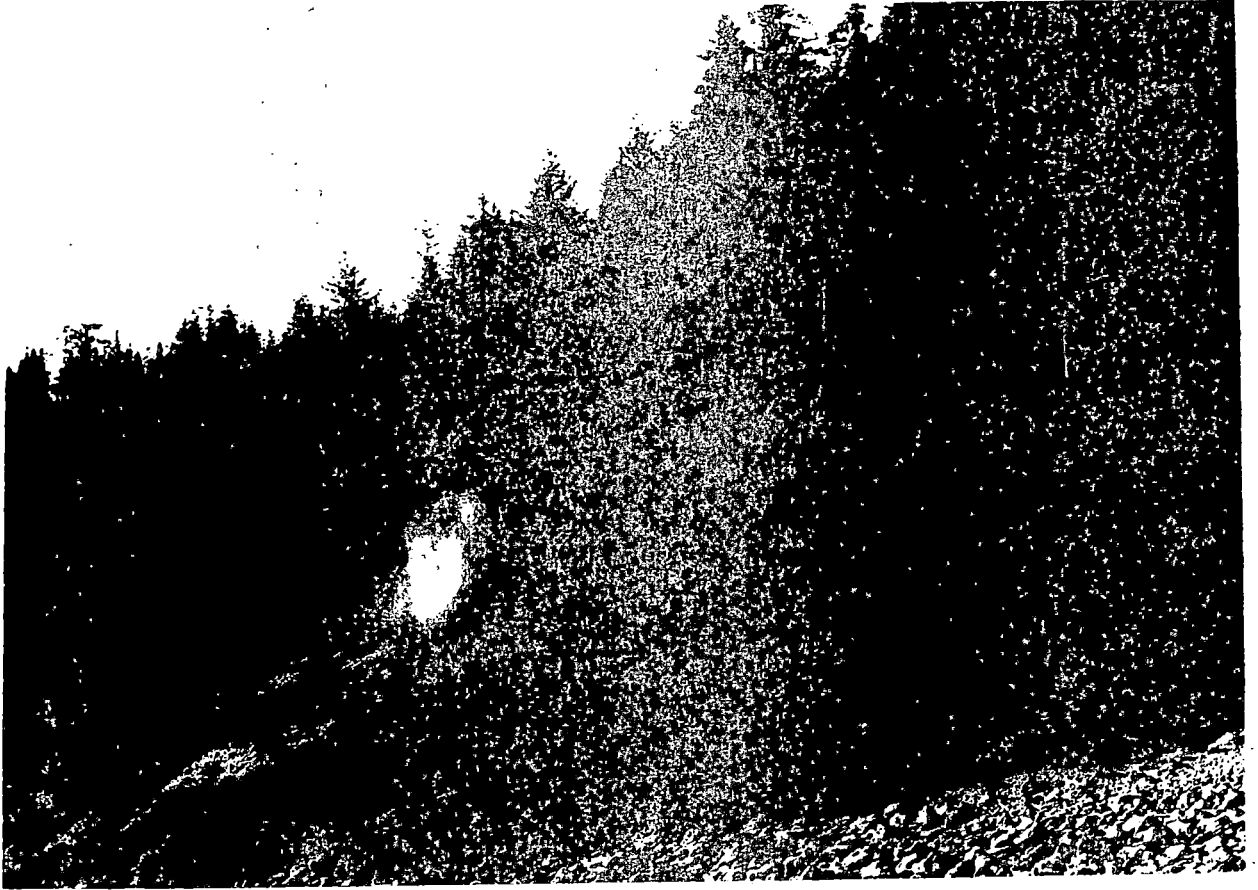


Plate 5 : SEL 093



Plate 6 : SEL 094

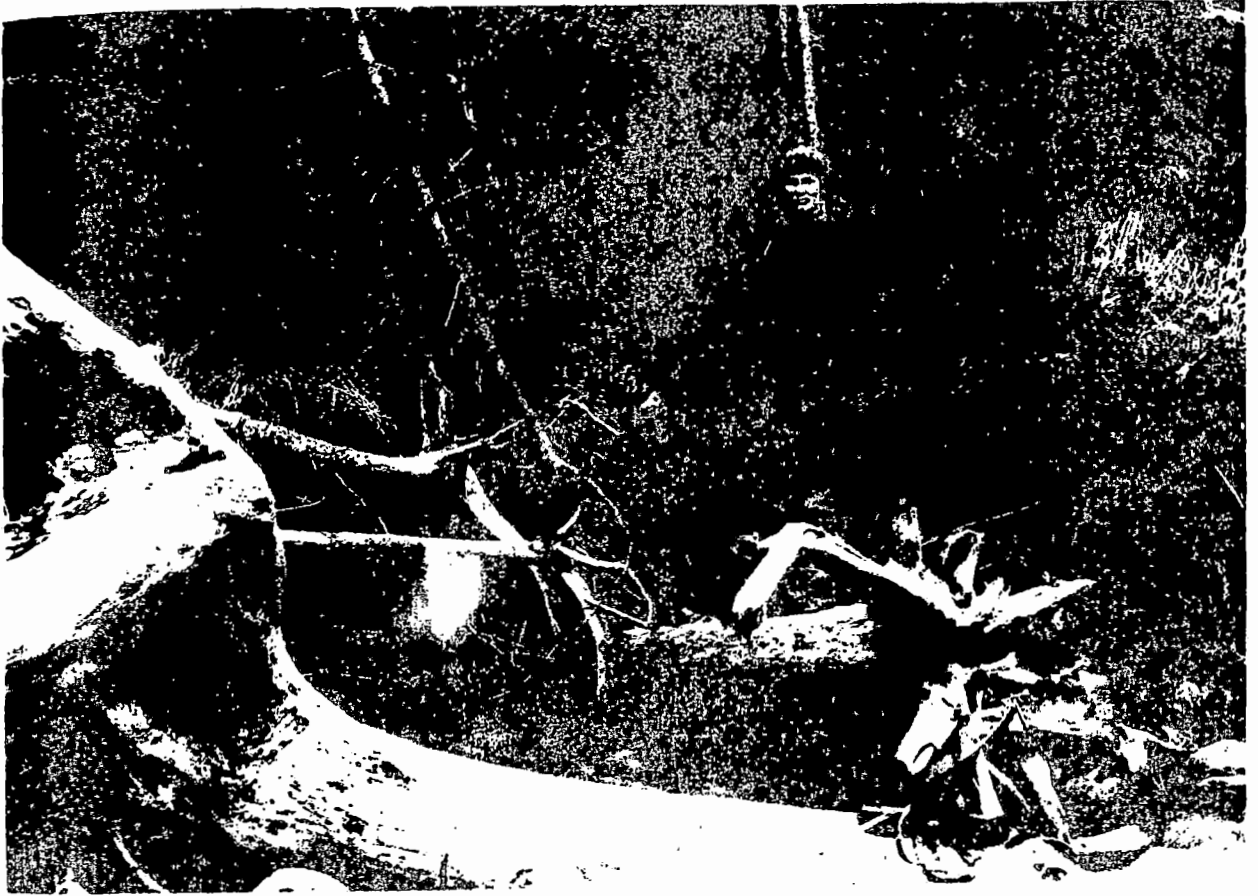


Plate 7 : SEL 095



Plate 8 : SEL 096



Plate 9 : SEL 097

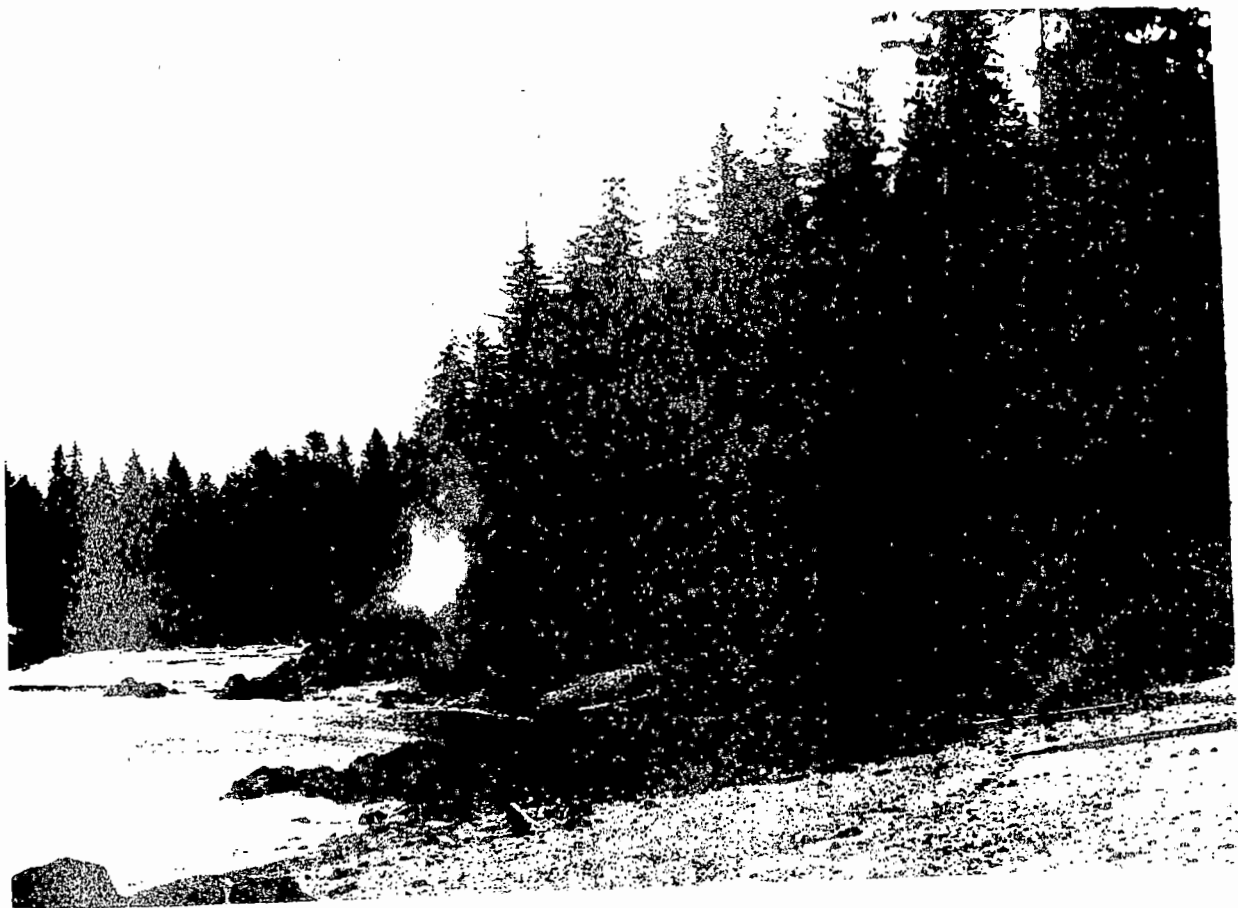


Plate 10 : SEL 098

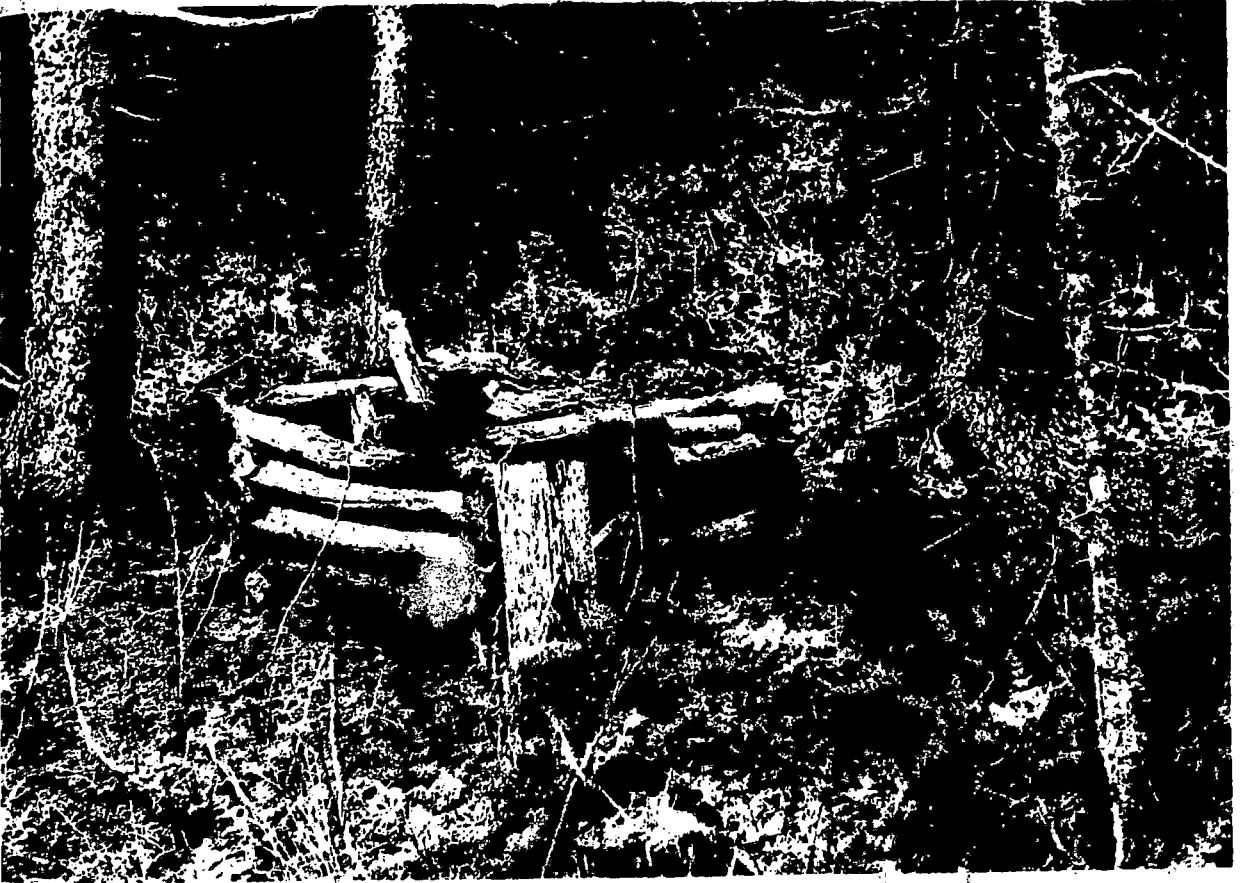


Plate 11 : SEL 102



Plate 12 : SEL 103



Plate 13 : SEL 104

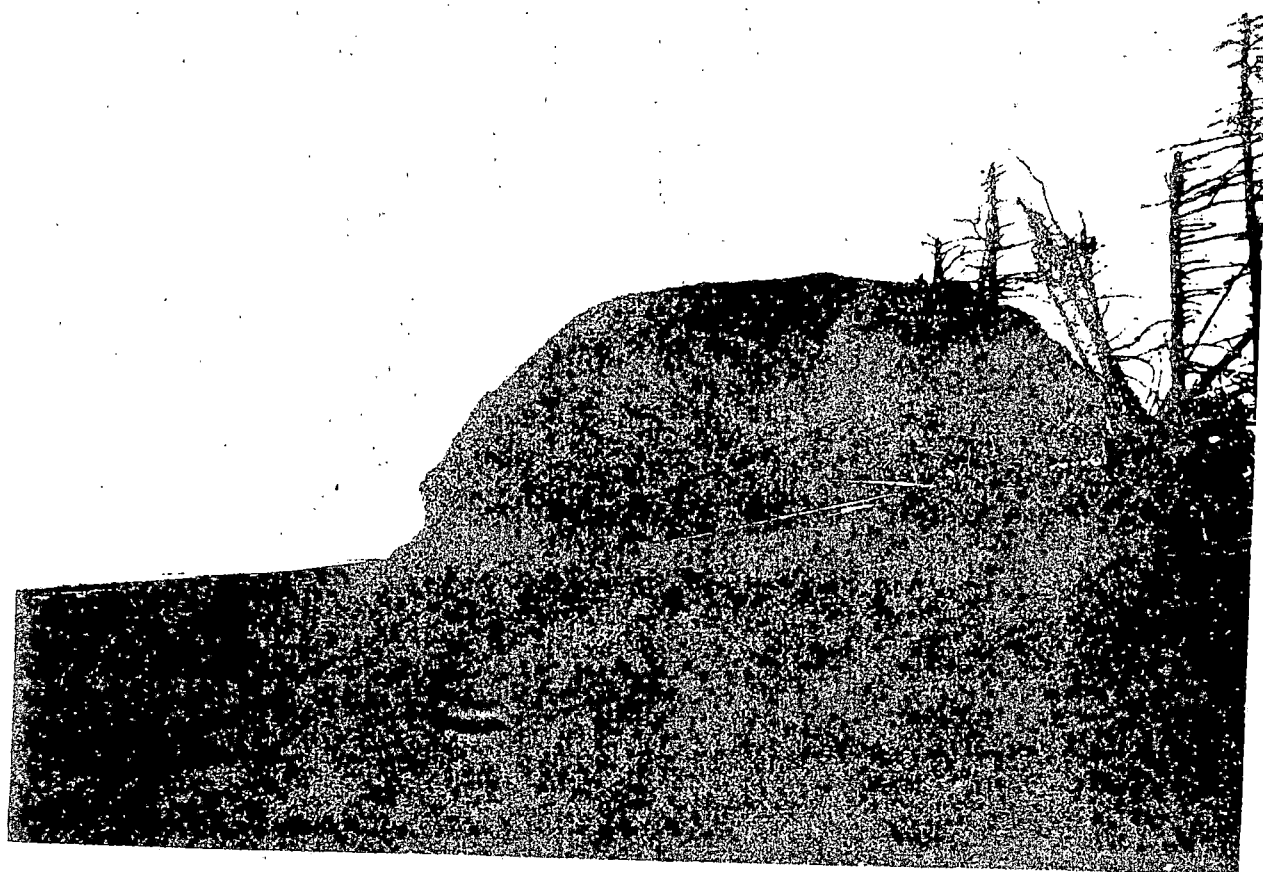


Plate 14 : SEL 105



Plate 15 : SEL 107



Plate 16 : SEL 109



Plate 17 : SEL 041

Lit. Serv. Merged With Service
U.S. F.A.R.L.I.S.
10 ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99503
Anc. Est. 1997