Kachemak Bay

Kachemak Bay was an important fishing and hunting area for people from the innkeeper as well as the coast.

Midden are piles of discarded shells, bones, artifacts and cooking materials. The food debris gives us insight into what people ate, when they created the midden, and what food was available in that region at that time.

Found in a midden at Outside Beach, the bone piece, splinter awl, barbed dart, tip of a slate point and worked bone fragments (dated A.D. 1450) date some inhabitants of Kachemak Bay to the Late Prehistoric Period. Outside Beach continues to be an important place to collect food.

Go ahead... explore!

The Seldovia Village Tribe, IRA has been serving the people of the Seldovia and the Homer area, enriching peoples lives with culture, traditions, health care, social services and economic development. We welcome you to enjoy this area that we’ve been blessed to call our home.

“Old” Village

A chief and other natives from the “old village” at the head of Seldovia Bay are shown in these photographs taken around 1892. By this time, their dress and traditional homes, known as “barabaras,” reflect changes from the outside world.

Barabara is a Russian word meaning native home. These homes based on Dena’ina traditions were built with logs placed horizontally around a pit excavated to a depth of 2-3 feet. Walls were built to a height of about 5 feet and secured with stout spruce root cord. Strips of moose between logs added insulation and shut out drafts. Gabbed roof poles were sheathed with split spruce planks and thatched with sheets of spruce bark and beach rye grass. At the turn of the century, a number of barabaras were nestled into the hill around the Orthodox Church. All that remains of barabaras today are the remnants of rectangular pits.

Our Homeland

People have made the sheltered waters of Seldovia their home for thousands of years. The Seldovia area was the meeting and trading place for the Kodiak Koniag, the Aleut from the Aleutians, the Chugach people of Prince William Sound, and the Tanaina Kenaitze people of Cook Inlet. Speaking Sugpiaq, Alutiiq and Dena’ina, people traded goods as well as ideas and traditions. People continued to rely on the ocean, rivers and land as they had before.

While there is no written history of our ancient people, archaeological studies have found stone and bone tools, the remains of fish and animals the people ate, and homes sites and graves. Our people relied on the waters and tidal flats of the Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay for food, clothing, and the tools necessary for life in the region.

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Photo courtesy of Michael Skipper, SVT. All other ingredients are materials owned by the Seldovia Village Tribe.

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Gold Strikes Put Seldovia on the Map

The discovery of gold in Turnagain Arm and up the Ventna and Susitna Rivers placed Seldovia on the map. Seldovia, one of the few Cook Inlet ports to remain ice-free throughout the winter, permitted year-round travel between Seldovia and the outside world. Thousands of prospectors from the lower 48 boarded steamers bound for Seldovia. From there they traveled on small steamers to the gold fields in the Upper Cook Inlet.

In addition to gold mining, traffic, railroad construction and other development brought even more shipping business to Seldovia. The newly established Cook Inlet Transportation Company met ocean steamers at Seldovia and carried men, livestock and freight north to Inlet ports.

EBB and FLOW OF LIFE IN SELDOVIA

From past to present, from subsistence harvesting to commercial exploitation, and from thriving fisheries to diminished resources, cycles of economic boom and bust have been a way of life in Seldovia. With great resilience, generations of people have adapted to these turbulent changes and through their reliance on the area's abundant resources found ways to survive and flourish. The boom and bust of industries in Seldovia and Kachemak Bay have had a profound effect on the life ways and traditions of people in Seldovia.

HERRING BOOM

In the 1920s, the herring fishery was bountiful, attracting herring fleets from the Pacific Northwest and California to the Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay. Two herring sallies were built in Seldovia and others at Tutka Bay and near Halibut Cove. Old sailing ships were caught in an absence of service for more than a decade. The herring fishery declined and by the 1930s was closed. Many men who came to Seldovia for the herring fishery stayed on fish salmon, halibut and crab. They nurtured native women and established families that are still the backbone of the town.

CANNERIES

Seldovia's biggest and most sustained economic boom began with the establishment of the Seldovia Salmon Company and the first cannery built around 1910. At the height of the canning industry, Seldovia had seven canneries. Eventually canneries diversified and began packing crab, clams, halibut and other fish. This diversification extended the life of the fishing industry, which ended after a disaster in the 1940's and 1950's.

MINING

Silver and chrome ore deposits at Red Mountain southeast of Seldovia have supported sporadic mining operations for years. In the 1940s and 1950s, chrome mining produced high yields, but mining operations were abandoned when the market fell.

LOGGING

Small logging operations have come and gone over the years. In the 1930s, a sawmill operated on Iower Island until it burnt to the ground in 1940. More recently, the Seldovia Native Association salvaged beetle-killed trees and potentially threatened trees in a timber sale.

We Live According to the Tide

We have a tradition of subsistence from the sea and land. We harvest fish, intertidal species, plants, birds, moose, black bears, goats and sea mammals throughout the year.

Fishing remains one of the most important pastimes for us throughout the summer. Depending on the species and time of year, we seine, seine, fish from the bridge, cast, troll, long-line, jig and set nets. We salt, can, smoke, dry, freeze, pickle and eat fish.

Because we are dependent on the bounty of the land and sea, we are very involved in the regulations, research and stewardship concerning Kachemak Bay, Seldovia Bay and Cook Inlet.