



Kachemak Bay

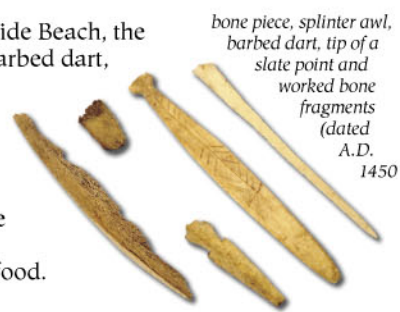
Kachemak Bay was an important fishing and hunting area for people from the interior as well as the coast.

Middens 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.

"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 moss between logs added insulation and shut out drafts. Gabled 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.



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.



Our logo represents the traditional animals, fish and birds that are significant in sustaining our life in Seldovia. Represented are the Harbor Seal, Sea Otter, Bald Eagle, Black Bear, Salmon, Halibut and Puffin.

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Photos courtesy of Michael Opheim, SVT, Brian McLaren and DKashecaroff.
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ALASKA NATIVE People OF SELDOVIA



Go ahead... explore!



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 Koniags, the Aleuts from the Aleutians, the Chugach people of Prince William Sound, and the Tanaina Kenaitze people of Cook Inlet. Speaking Sugpiaq, Alut 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 home 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.



ALASKA NATIVE

People



SELDOVIA HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT TRADE PORT FOR MANY PEOPLE THROUGHOUT HISTORY. IN 1740, SELDOVIA BECAME AN INTERNATIONAL DESTINATION.

RUSSIAN EXPLORERS-SETTLERS FUR RUSH

Russian traders who sailed the Arctic coasts first came to the Aleutian Islands in the 1740s. Reports of abundant furs brought about the "Fur Rush" which began in 1742. Soon after Russian influence extended to the southern Kenai Peninsula where sea otter stocks were abundant and the natives were skilled hunters. As Russians, and later Americans, moved in to exploit the otter, native people were pressed into service for the fur companies. Men were forced to leave their homes to hunt furs. Consequently families suffered separation and food shortages.

In 1852 Russian captain Archimandritov observed the spring herring run and named the bay "Zaliv Seldovoi", Bay of Herring. By the 1870's, Russians and natives had settled in Seldovia, making it one of the oldest settlements in the Cook Inlet area.

Indigenous people were unprepared for the submission demanded of them by Russian fur traders. Many battles were fought in an effort to resist Russian domination, however, natives did not have immunity to new diseases. In 1838, a smallpox epidemic decimated the population and crushed their ability to continue their resistance.

ORTHODOX MISSIONARIES

Missionaries exerted a tremendous influence over native peoples, but they also showed respect for the culture and traditions as they introduced the Orthodox faith. Orthodox missionaries learned Aleut and helped the Aleuts to develop written record of their language. To this day, the Orthodox faith is blended with traditional Aleut values and beliefs.

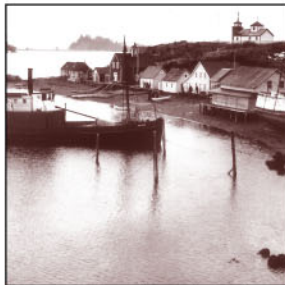


The Orthodox faith was an integral part of daily life for the Seldovian congregation. Social life centered around the church holidays and to this day festive celebrations are observed on Christmas and Easter.

Seldovia's landmark, St. Nicholas Orthodox Church was built in 1891. St. Nicholas is known as the protector of sea-going vessels.



Steel Trap



Russian sailing ships in the harbor.

GOLD STRIKES PUT SELDOVIA ON THE MAP

The discovery of gold in Turnagain Arm and up the Yentna 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 inlet 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 salteries were built in Seldovia and others at Tutka Bay and near Halibut Cove. Old sailing ships were converted to floating salteries. Need for more laborers brought scores of "herring chokers" and fisherman, many of them Scottish and Scandinavian, to work in the salteries.

Unfortunately, concentrations of rotting fish and offal discarded by the salteries robbed the water of oxygen, killing vegetation necessary for spawning herring. The salt herring fishery declined and by the 1930s was closed. Many men who came to Seldovia for the herring fishery stayed on to fish salmon, halibut and crab. They married 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 cannery industry, Seldovia had seven canneries. Eventually canneries diversified and began packing crab, clams, halibut and other bottom fish. This diversification extended the life of the fishing industry, which ended after the 1964 "Good Friday Earthquake".

Kachemak Bay supported thriving populations of Bairdi Tanner Crab, Red King Crab and Dungeness Crab thru the 1970's. It is controversial whether over harvesting or climate shifts caused the

"BOARDWALK TOWN"

The original settlement in Seldovia was built along the waterfront. Access to homes and businesses was by way of the beach at low tide and by boat at high tide. In the late 1920s and early '30s, a wooden boardwalk was built to connect homes, shops, canneries, and other waterfront buildings and made it possible to walk from one end of town to the other, regardless of the tide.



The boardwalk was the center for social gathering.

GOOD FRIDAY EARTHQUAKE - URBAN RENEWAL

Friday, March 27, 1964, 5:36 PM, the land had dropped 5 feet due to the Good Friday earthquake. This massive earthquake, a 9.2 on the Moment Magnitude Scale, was the strongest ever recorded in the Western Hemisphere. At high tides, seawater flooded over the boardwalk and poured into buildings along the waterfront. Awash, businesses and homes drilled holes in the floors to drain water. Sandbags, hip boots, and moves to second floors were only stopgap measures against constant tidal floods. In the fall, severe storms and the highest tides pounded the boardwalk town and people realized the waterfront was doomed. The town had to be rebuilt.

After heated debate among residents a town referendum agreed to accept the Alaska State Housing Authority's offer for an urban renewal project. Waterfront buildings and the boardwalk were demolished, seawalls were constructed, and Cap's Hill in the middle of town was leveled. Ten years passed before the town got on its feet again. However, the town would never again be the center of commercial fishing in Kachemak Bay. With the exception of the Wakefield Cannery, other canneries never rebuilt in Seldovia and a new road connecting Homer to Anchorage made Homer the new hub of Kachemak Bay's fishing fleet.

MINING

Sizeable chrome ore deposits at Red Mountain southeast of Seldovia have supported sporadic mining operations for years. In the 1940's and 50's, chrome mining produced high yields, but mining operations were abandoned when the market fell.



Miners Lamp

LOGGING

Small logging operations have come and gone over the years. In the 1920s, a sawmill operated on Powder Island until it burnt to the ground. More recently, the Seldovia Native Association salvaged beetle kill trees and potentially threatened trees in a timber sale.



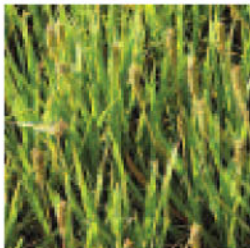
*Bidarki, Black Leather Chiton
Katharina tunicata
13.0 cm*



*Kelp
Fucus*



Images top to bottom, left to right: Salmon Strips drying in a smoke house. Myra Mumchuck harvests Bidarki during low tide at Outside Beach. High Bush Cranberry, Petrushki, and Goosetongue.



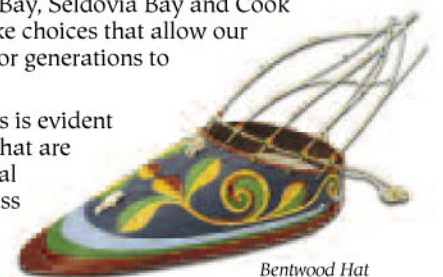
WE LIVE ACCORDING TO THE TIDE

We have a tradition of subsistence from the sea and land. We harvest fish, intertidal species, plants, birds, moose, black bear, 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, snag, fish from the bridge, cast, troll, long-line, jig and set nets. We salt, can, smoke, dry, freeze, pickle and eat fresh 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. We hope to make choices that allow our traditions to continue for generations to come.

The diversity of cultures is evident in the variety of crafts that are made in Seldovia. Local artists bead, weave grass baskets, sew skins, build boats, are fine carpenters, and make bentwood hats.



Bentwood Hat