

Roy Fure's Trapping Cabin
Katmai National Park and Preserve
King Salmon Vicinity
Bristol Bay Boro Division
Alaska

HABS No. AK-18

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

APPENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Addendum to
Roy Fure's Trapping Cabin
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Alaska

HABS No. AK-18

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
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Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

ADDED BY TD:

ROY FURR'S TRAPPING CABIN

Katmai National Park and Reserve
King Salmon ⁷² 22500L BAY
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ROY FURE'S TRAPPING CABIN

HABS NO. AK-18

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AK
4-KISAL.V
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Location: Katmai National Park & Preserve, King Salmon, Alaska, 99613

USGS, Katmai, Alaska Quadrangle: Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 05.359250.6505700

Significance: The superbly crafted cabin illustrates the early Alaskan non-native trapper's way of life, a syntheses of their personal heritage, modern technology, and traditional values, and the conflict that arose between the modern and the traditional interpretation of ownership and resource management.

Description: Situated on a narrow isthmus between the Bay of Islands, Naknek Lake and Lake Grosvenor in Katmai National Park and Preserve, the one-room 15'x 20' log cabin constructed of hand-hewn fourside logs exhibits excellent craftsmanship. The site includes a windmill tower, outhouse and shed.

History: Constructed in 1926 by Roy Fure a trapper of Lithuanian heritage, the cabin became the subject of conflict between Roy Fure and the National Park Service in 1931 when the boundaries of the park were expanded to include the Bay of Islands. Fure continued to use the cabin until his death in 1962 at which time the cabin became the property of the National Park Service.

Source: Fure, Roy, Cabin. National Register of Historic Places Nomination form, revised 1988.

Historian: Bonnie S. Houston, HABS, December 1, 1988.

Alaska's early trappers created a bridge between two worlds that transported Alaska into the 20th century. Heralded as pioneering heroes or condemned as social misfits, these men and women created a viable way of life that integrated their individual heritage, modern technology and traditional Bush values. Roy Fure, a Lithuanian immigrant, was one of these individuals. Fure's cabin on the Boy of Islands in Katmai National Park and Preserve is the physical embodiment of this synthesis and the resulting conflict.

Fure's cabin illustrates the synthesis of his European heritage, modern technology and self-sufficiency. It also depicts the clash between modern concepts of ownership and resource management, strictly regulated by laws and dependent on legal documents and traditional Bush interpretation defined by usage and need. Roy Fure upheld the traditional interpretation of ownership and resource management, while the National Park Service enforced the modern standard. This conflict created a struggle that would continue long after Fure passed on.

Katmai National Park and Preserve encompasses a scenic region on the Alaska Peninsula in southwestern Alaska. Although traversed by 18th century Russian explorers and 19th century prospectors, the area was virtually undocumented until the eruption of Mt. Novarupta in 1912 brought the region to the attention of the scientific community. In 1918, as the result of extensive exploration by the National Geographic Society, President Woodrow Wilson by virtue of the power vested in him by the 1906 Antiquities Act set aside 1700 acres of land filled with volcanoes and fumaroles as a national monument. In 1931 and 1978 the monument was expanded in an effort to protect and preserve the historical and scientific features of the region as well as the bountiful wildlife.¹

Fure's cabin on the Bay of Islands tells the story of his life that written materials fail to provide. Situated on a narrow isthmus between Naknek Lake and Lake Grosvenor, the site provided access to the bountiful natural resources that supplied Fure with food and a cash income. The site consists of a small 20'x15' one-room cabin, a woodshed, and outhouse and a windmill tower. Furnished with spartan simplicity, the cabin reflects the ingenuity and the creativity that enabled Fure to succeed in the Alaska Bush. The single metal bed, hand-built wooden shelves, traps used for procuring furs, fishing gear for acquiring food, skis and boat for transportation, all speak of a simple life.

The lamp shade crafted from birch bark and the old bacon can masquerading as a shower head, illustrate Fure's creativity. Fure's ingenuity can be seen in the outhouse covered with flattened gas cans and the walls covered with old maps and cardboard boxes. The kerosene lantern and the electric light bulb, the wood cook stove and the kerosene stove illustrate the integration of the modern work and the subsistence lifestyle.

Constructed of hand hewn spruce logs harvested from the site, Fure's cabin exists as a silent reminder of Fure's heritage. The four-sided logs hewn to a consistent dimension of 8" thick with a horizontal width of 10" to 18" and joined with dove tail corners represent Fure's European background. The care and precision displayed in the wall logs notched to insure an air tight fit and the vertical logs at all doors and windows channeled to receive structure to survival. When renovation work on the cabin began in 1985, the overall dimensions of the cabin varied less than one half an inch. The logs, although beginning to rot on the bottom layers, still fit together snugly. The original chinking of moss or hemp and old Russian newspapers remained intact. To reduce the threat of deterioration Fure had painted the whip sawn roofing planks and the ends of the wall timbers with red paint. In the 1930's corrugated metal roofing replaced the original sod exterior shutter to keep out the cold and the animals. Screen covered the windows on the north and south end of the cabin, while the east window contained fixed pane two-over-two light sashes and the west window three-over-three light sashes. Due to deterioration of the sill logs and roofing planks, restoration work began on the cabin in 1986 and was completed on the summer of 1988.²

Born on January 1, 1885, Roy Fure arrived in Sandpoint, Alaska on August 30, 1912 from Vladivostok, Siberia aboard Ivanoff. On a 1938 Alien Registration form, Fure listed his place of birth as Kiniki, Lithuania. On papers filed with the Immigration and Naturalization Service in 1947, Fure stated that he was born in the area of Alaska known now as Fairbanks to Lithuanian parents who took him back to Lithuania in the summer of 1886. In 1947 immigration officials accepted Fure's statements and declared him a citizen of the United States by birth.³ This position served to complicate the conflict between the National Park Service and Fure.

Fure spent the first two years after his return to Alaska on Unga Island and the southern end of the Alaska Peninsula. Although Fure listed his occupation as a prospector on immigration documents there is no evidence to support this statement. In 1914 Fure traveled north to the Naknek Lake region witnessing first hand the devastation caused by the eruption of Mt. Novarupta just two years earlier.⁴ He spent the winter of 1914-1915 at an unknown location in the Naknek Region.⁵

Although Fure listed his occupation as "prospector" on immigration documents, no evidence exists to support this statement. Personal papers, including work receipts, found in Fure's cabin at the Bay of Islands and immigration records indicate that Fure trapped or fished as the season dictated. Fure held an alien trapping license from the inception of the Alaska Game Commission in 1925 until at least 1938. A seasonal occupation best pursued during the winter months when animals' pelts are in peak condition, trapping occupied Fure during the winter months.⁶ Commercial salmon fishing, another

seasonal activity, occupied the summer months and provided a cash income. Beginning in 1917, Fure worked as a seasonal cannery worker for various canneries on the Alaska Peninsula. In later years Fure worked on a Fishing boat and operated a set net site in addition to being employed by the canneries as night watchman and a maintenance worker.⁷

In 1919 while working for Alaska Packers Association in Ugashik, Alaska, Fure met and married Anna Johnson, a Native woman from Bethel. After the fishing season, Fure and his wife made their home in the Naknek region. On October 7, 1921, Roy and Anna Fure had their first child, a son named Joseph. On November 17, 1922, they had their second son, "Roy or Ray". In March 1924 both children died at the family residence on Smelt Creek up river from the village Naknek. This cabin lay outside the boundaries of Katmai National Monument. Later the same year, October 8, 1924, a third son Alexander James was born to the couple in a small cabin near the Naknek River rapids.⁸ a commercial fisherman and World War II veteran, Alexander worked briefly for the Alaska Railroad and the Alaska native Service hospital in Anchorage. Alexander drowned in Becharof Lake on August 6, 1968, and was buried in Egigik, Alaska.⁹

The year 1926 marked the birth of another child and the construction of a new home, the cabin at the Bay of Islands that still stands sixty years later. On January 5, 1926, a daughter, Marian May, began life at the Bay of Islands cabin. The details of Marian's life are unknown. Neither Marian nor her brother Alexander attended the territorial schools in Naknek. In 1929 Anna Johnson Fure died and Fure married seventeen-year-old Fanny Olson, an Aleut woman from Naknek. In 1930 Roy and Fanny had daughter, Nola Lillian, at Kanatak near Becharof Lake.¹⁰ Although Nola would eventually inherit her father's property, the record of Nola's life is unknown. In 1980, Nola died on Kodiak Island.

In 1931, when President Herbert Hoover extended the boundaries of National Monument, Fure's cabin on the Bay of Islands lay within the new monument boundaries.¹¹ Thus began the clash between two concepts of ownership and resource management. In 1937, S.M. Scott, a fellow trapper within the new monument, wrote to the Honorable Anthony J. Dimon, Alaska Delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives stating that he and other trappers, including fure, had been ordered to move out of Katmai National Monument.¹² The trappers maintained that they had a valid claim to the land on the basis of prior usage. the National Park Service maintained that the trappers would have to be prove their status as bona fide settlers under the settlement laws. In 1938, in the process of investigating these land claims, Special Agent for the Department of the Interior Division of Investigations, A.C. Kinsley, discovered Roy Fure's alien status. Under the settlement laws, an alien did not have the right to make entry of a settlement or

homestead claim.¹³

In 1940 when the National Park Service began to actively encourage the prohibition of trapping within the monument, Fure was arrested for violation of the game laws. As the result of these two events, Fure constructed a new cabin on American Creek outside the monument boundaries. Fure's compliance with the law appears to have been only superficial. In 1953 Victor Cahalane, a National Park Service biologist doing field work in the Naknek Lake region, frequently visited Fure at both cabins.¹⁴ At the time of his death Fure's personal belongings at the Bay of Islands cabin included a number of traps.

When Roy Fure passed away in October 1962 in Portland, Oregon, he willed his property to his youngest child, Fanny's daughter Nola.¹⁵ In addition to the cabin at the Bay of Islands, Nola's inheritance included the cabin on American Creek and the cabin on Naknek River Alexander's birth place. The National Park Service rejected Nola's inheritance claim on the basis that as an alien Fure had not had the right of entry on public lands.¹⁶

Roy Fure's Cabin in Katmai National Park and Preserve is a physical reminder of Alaska's past and the life of a colorful and unique individual who braved the wilds of the Alaska Bush and survived. A fine craftsman, Fure maintained the Bush traditions of self-sufficiency and occupancy by right of usage. In the final analysis of the struggle between the modern and traditional, the modern interpretation of ownership would eventually win but not until after Fure had passed on. In 1978, when President Carter expanded the boundaries of Katmai National Park and Preserve, the cabin on American Creek became the property of the National Park Service.

In 1985, Roy Fure's Trapping Cabin was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Restoration of the cabin necessitated Historic American Buildings Survey mitigation.

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- Field Notes #481, US Geological Survey, Branch of Alaskan Geology, US Department of Interior, Anchorage, Alaska,

1922.

----- Field Notes #482. US Geological Survey, Branch of
Alaskan Geology, US Department of Interior, Anchorage, Alaska,
1923.

----- Field Notes #549, US Geological Survey, Branch of
Alaskan Geology, US Department of Interior, Anchorage, Alaska,
1924.

ENDNOTES

1. Presidential Proclamation #1487.
2. For more information on Fure's Cabin refer to Historic Structure Report, Fure's Cabin Bay of Islands, Naknek Lake, Katmai National Park and Preserve; Joaquin Estes, Cultural Resources, Alaska Regional Office, National Park Service, Department of the Interior.
3. Keifer L. Gray, District Director, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Anchorage, AK to Hon. E.L. Bartlett, U.S. Senate, (File A08-914-030, Immigration and Naturalization Service, U.S. Department of Justice, San Francisco, CA.).
4. Wilber A. Davis and James W. Leach, "Archaeological Investigations of Inland and Coastal Sites of Katmai National Monument, Alaska", (Unpublished Manuscript, National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office, Anchorage, March 4, 1954), p. 69.
5. 1947, Application for Registration of An Alien, (File #A08-914-030, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Department of Justice, San Francisco, CA).
6. 1938 Application for Alien Special, License #868, (Park Files, Katmai National Park and Preserve, King Salmon, Ak.).
7. Fure's Personal Papers, (Park Files, Katmai National Park and Preserve, King Salmon, Ak.).
8. Apparently constructed by Fure, this cabin was one of the three cabins that Roy Fure willed to his daughter Nola in 1962.
9. Anchorage Daily Times, August 10, 1968, p. 2.
10. 1938 Application for Alien Registration, (File #A08-914-030, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Department of Justice, San Francisco, Ca.).
11. Presidential Proclamation #1950.
12. Arno B. Cammerer, Director of National park Service, Department of the Interior to Anthony J. Dimond, House of Representatives, October 8, 1939, (Park Files, Katmai National Park and Preserve, King Salmon, Ak.).
13. A.C. Kinsley, Special Agent, Division of Investigations, National park Service to Commissioner, General Land Office, Washington, D.C., January 18, 1940, (Park Files, Katmai National Park and Preserve, King Salmon, Ak.).

14. Victor H. Cahalane, Field Notes of Katmai National Monument, 1954.
15. Roy Fure, letter "To whom it may concern", September 4, 1962 (Park Files, Katmai National Park and Preserve, King Salmon, Ak.).
16. Jerrol G. Coates, Acting Superintendent, Mt. McKinley National Park, National Park Service, November 29, 1963 to Nola L. Hoffman, (Park Files, Katmai national Park and PReserve, King Salmon, Ak.).