

**LDIR#153**

**NATIONAL**

**PARKS**

The National Park Service Program in Alaska with  
Special Emphasis on Mt. McKinley National Park  
and Katmai National Monument

The history of efforts to preserve examples of Alaska's cultural and natural resources dates back to the last century. It is amazing to find that those early settlers, who were then principally concerned with mining and fishing, also actively concerned themselves with the need to conserve these other resources before they were altered or lost. An early example of this foresight was establishment of a small public park in Sitka in 1890 by Presidential Proclamation to commemorate the historical importance of Russian, American and Indian activities in the region. It was called Indian River Park.

In 1904 eighteen totem poles which were part of the Alaska Exhibit at the St. Louis Exposition were brought to Sitka for display at Indian River Park. A few years later, in 1910, there was sufficient interest to establish this area as Sitka National Monument by Presidential Proclamation.

In 1896, a gentleman by the name of Mr. W. A. Dickey was traveling through the central part of Alaska on a prospecting trip and noticed a mountain which he estimated to be 20,000 feet high. Through a subsequent magazine article he kindled the imagination of the world and gave the mountain its name---Mount McKinley. Subsequently the U. S. Geological Survey studied the geology of the Alaska Range and it is believed their field parties were the first white men to set foot upon the slopes of Mt. McKinley. Further interest in attempts to climb the mountain and discovery of placer gold along the Kantishna River brought numbers of people to the area. One of these persons, Charles Sheldon, noted hunter and naturalist, believed that the outstanding wilderness wonders of the area should be protected. He worked unrelentingly toward that goal and was the prime mover in having Mt. McKinley established as a national park by an Act of Congress in 1917.

In 1912 great volcanic activity in the Valley of 10,000 Smokes on the Alaska Peninsula created world wide interest. The National Geographic Society sent several expeditions to the Valley to investigate this scientific phenomenon and in 1915 Katmai National Monument was established to include the site of this great eruption. Subsequent enlargements of the original area have been made to protect some of the great wildlife habitat areas of the Alaska Peninsula, particularly that of the Brown bear. These enlargements have also included a series of large and beautiful lakes and small islands off the seacoast to protect the rich

# ALASKA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

TELEPHONE 6-1434  
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JUNEAU, ALASKA

December 23, 1960

Miss Celia M. Hunter  
Camp Denali, Inc.  
Box 526  
College, Alaska

Dear Miss Hunter:

Thank you for your letter of December 19.

The information with which you have supplied us is most complete and illuminating, and will be very helpful to us in compiling information for our current study. We also appreciated the brochures and information sheets which you enclosed--Camp Denali appears to be a well-planned Alaskan attraction.

If at any time in the future we may be of assistance to you, please feel free to call on us.

Sincerely,

John C. Doyle  
Executive Director

By

Harry J. Keats, Jr.  
Research Analyst

HJK/hp