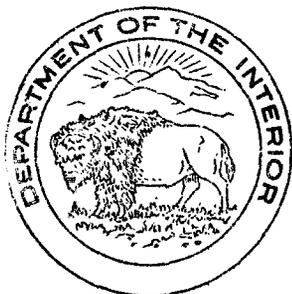


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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

For release to PMS, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1945

COAL AND OTHER MINERALS IN SOUTHERN ALASKA

As part of the Geological Survey's war program, geologists were sent to Alaska in 1944 to investigate deposits of critical minerals in the Alaska Railroad belt, on Kenai Peninsula, and on one of the Aleutian Islands, according to a report made to Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, by W. E. Wrather, Director of the Geological Survey.

In the Alaska Railroad belt, where military needs have greatly increased the demand for coal, most of the work was directed to the investigation of coal deposits. Detailed examinations were made of deposits in the lower Matanuska Valley coal field, about 10 miles north of the Government-sponsored agricultural community of Palmer, and in the valley of Healy River, about 80 miles southwest of Fairbanks.

The lower Matanuska Valley coal field contains one of the most valuable reserves of bituminous coal in Alaska, and much of the coal mined in Alaska has come from this field. The present investigation is a resumption of detailed examinations started by Ralph Tuck in 1934, and it has furnished much additional information on the location, extent, and structure of the coal beds. A map has been made on a scale of 1 inch equals 400 feet, covering an area of about 10 square miles extending from Moose Creek to Eska Creek. The coal beds in parts of the area were traced by hand augering and stripping. An important result of the investigation is the correlation of coal beds mined in one part of the field with coal beds mined or exposed in other parts of the field. The investigation in the western part of the field was carried out by T. G. Payne assisted by D. M. Hopkins, and that in the eastern part by F. F. Barnes assisted by F. M. Byers, Jr. Dr. Barnes was formerly geologist for the Alaska Railroad.

Healy River flows within a coal-bearing tract that extends more than 100 miles along the northern foothill belt of the Alaska Range. The coal is in thicker beds than that in the Matanuska field, but its heating value is somewhat lower. The total thickness of minable coal in the valley of Healy River ranges from 160 to 300 feet. The thickest bed is as much as 55 feet thick in places. An area a quarter of a mile to 2 miles wide extending 7 miles up Healy River from the Suntrana coal mine was mapped on a scale of 1 inch equals 400 feet to show the distribution of the coal beds and the structure of the coal-bearing formation. Reserves within 3,000 feet vertically of the surface are estimated at about 1,000,000,000 short tons, of which about 100,000,000 tons are above drainage level and about 400,000 tons could be mined by stripping. The present investigation, conducted by Clyde Wahrhaftig, assisted by Jacob Freedman, C. K. Currey, and M. S. Horsing, is a resumption of earlier Geological Survey investigations on coal in this general area.