

MI-082-01

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11.

A NOTE ON THE OCCURRENCE OF COAL NEAR
NAPAMUTE, KUSKOKWIM RIVER, ALASKA

By J. A. Holzner
1926

SOU CREEK

Mr. George Fredericks of Georgetown, Kuskokwim River, Alaska, tells of the existence, in the early days, of an Indian villiage at the mouth of Sou Creek which flows north into the Kuskokwim ten miles above Napamute. At the time of the coming of the white man they were using a paint, to color their canoes and war implements, made of a mixture of powdered coal and blood. It is said that some of the first coal shipped into the Kuskokwim was stolen by the Indians for this purpose. Nothing remains of the Sou Creek villiage. An old Indian, near Napamute, who answers smilingly to the name of Whiskers, explains that the coal was gathered for this purpose from the banks and gravel bars along Sou Creek.

With this, the only information available, a stop was made, the afternoon of August 11, at the mouth of Sou Creek. ¹⁻¹⁸²⁻²¹
The bank of the Kuskokwim at this point is tundra extending about three miles south to the foothills. The creek flows from a narrow depression in the low hills across the tundra to the Kuskokwim. On the east bank of the creek and a short distance from the river a low ridge of altered granitic intrusive extends to the foothills. The general formation of the country is obscured by the heavy moss covering.

Coal float was found along the gravel bars in the creek for a distance of two miles from the Kuskokwim. The gravel was

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partly made up of sandstone and shale. The coal was well worn and was found in pieces not greater than three inches in diameter. Coal float was not found in large quantities nor in any well defined location on the gravel bars; its existence, however, could be definitely traced along the creek. There were few flat pieces, most of them being well rounded. The coal has a black streak and, with the exception of the flat pieces, has an uneven crumbly break. It has a dull luster. The pieces found had not slacked and were rather uniform in size no powdery fragments were found. A few of the pieces were burned in an open fire; the coal burned well leaving a small amount of grey ash. It is probably bituminous or sub-bituminous in character. No coal was found in place.

None

Mr. Hoffman, trader at Napamute, on hearing of this occurrence stated his intention of trying to locate the deposit. A can was left with him for a sample and it was reported later that he had sent a native to Sou Creek. Mr. Phil Power, prospector at Napamute, also expressed an intention of prospecting for the deposit. Mr. Power was met on the river below Napamute and stated that he felt he had exhausted the prospecting possibilities of the locality. He asked for a suggestion for the continuence of his work.

ANI¹¹²AK RIVER

Mr. Charles Swanson, employed on the Bear Creek dredge at Nyac, Alaska, furnished the following information regarding the

None

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occurrence of coal on the middle fork of the Aniak River. The coal was discovered by Jens ^{SVAMME} Squalmie, reindeer herder, about twenty miles upstream from Pickel's cabin on the Aniak River. Pickel's cabin is reported to be thirty miles from Napamute on the middle fork of the Aniak River. The coal is used by the reindeer herders and is said to burn well in the open fire. No other details were available.

It is interesting to note that there may be a connection between the deposit on Sou Creek and the coal on the Aniak River. The discovery of a commercial body of coal, were it accessible to transportation from the Kuskokwim, would be an aid in solving the fuel problem of the lower river. The population is not enough to warrant any extensive development but the occurrence may be of value at some future time. Napamute is located about two hundred miles upstream from Bethel. (See "Coal on Eek River").



"who answers to the name of Whiskers!"