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Report on the Old Harbor Archaeological History Project Pilot Survey
August 2018
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I. Introduction
This report details the activities and results of the Old Harbor Archaeological History Project (OHAHP) pilot survey that we conducted between August 13 and August 24, 2018. The goal of the pilot survey was to establish the most appropriate locations to initiate a doctoral study by Hollis Miller focused on Sugpiaq-Alutiiq social, economic and environmental change during the period of Russian colonialism (1784-1867 CE). Our aim was to locate houses and midden, which might yield information about foodways, daily activities, and the layout of living spaces and trash deposits. We made note of the integrity of the archaeological deposits and the types of materials present. We visited eight sites during our survey of the Old Harbor region: KOD-077, 085, 089, 092, 114, 548, 551, and 556 (Figure 1). We undertook the survey with the permission and partnership of the Old Harbor Native Corporation, the City of Old Harbor and the Alutiiq Tribe of Old Harbor, all of which are partners of OHAHP. Additionally, Miller and Fitzhugh obtained archaeological survey permits from the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As part of our community outreach efforts, we hired two youth interns from Old Harbor who assisted in the survey and learned more about their Alutiiq cultural heritage in their local area from the Russian period. Overall, the project was a success and our team was able to visit and evaluate each of the sites listed above. We describe details of each site and our activities at them in Section III.

II. Schedule and Visited Sites
Our Seattle-based survey team flew into Old Harbor on August 11, 2018, and began our survey on Monday, August 13, 2018. Our last survey day was Friday, August 24, 2018. This table shows our work schedule, and when we worked on each archaeological site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Site Number</th>
<th>Date(s) Surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Old Harbor</td>
<td>KOD-089</td>
<td>8/13-8/14; 8/16-8/17; 8/22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barling Bay</td>
<td>Ukshivik (unknown #)</td>
<td>8/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barling Bay</td>
<td>KOD-551</td>
<td>8/15; 8/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barling Bay</td>
<td>KOD-092</td>
<td>8/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barling Bay</td>
<td>KOD-548</td>
<td>8/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barling Bay</td>
<td>KOD-556</td>
<td>8/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiliuda Bay</td>
<td>KOD-077</td>
<td>8/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Saints Bay</td>
<td>KOD-085</td>
<td>8/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanginak Anchorage</td>
<td>KOD-114</td>
<td>8/21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. Site Reports
For each site surveyed, below is a description of the work done at that site, including methods, findings and preliminary interpretations.
a. **KOD-089 (Lighthouse Site)**

Our 2018 survey team spent five days working at KOD-089, otherwise known as the Lighthouse Site, located within the City of Old Harbor. During previous excavations run as the “Old Harbor Field School” in 1995 and 1996, Fitzhugh found that this site has two components (Fitzhugh 2001). The oldest component dates to the Ocean Bay period and is about 4000 years old, while the younger component is from the late Alutiiq-Russian period, dating to approximately 1855-1865 AD (Fitzhugh 2003: 164-169). For the 2018 survey, we were focused on this more recent occupation of the site. Our goal was to map the extent of the site and assess the severity of disturbance in the unexcavated portions of the site.

Our work at the lighthouse site began by laying a survey line northwest of the shore of the Sitkalidak Narrows and southeast of a gravel access road that connects the Old Harbor road system to the Sitkalidak Narrows. We used the northeast corner of the Coast Guard navigation signal light (“the lighthouse”) itself as a reference point anchoring the southwest end of the survey line (Figure 2). The survey line was oriented along the compass line bearing 220°/40° off of magnetic north and extended 80 meters from the lighthouse, ending just short of the valley and stream draining into this southern end of the Narrows. From that survey line, we were able to map several contours, pits and rises in the eastern end of the site, nearest the stream mouth, that we believe relate to uncontrolled excavations conducted in years past to collect artifacts. One or two of the features appear to have been rectangular archaeological test pits, perhaps made by earlier archaeological surveys, some even with old flagging tape near the corners.

We later cleared the vegetation from a portion of the 1995/1996 field school excavation and re-identified the Master Datum location from that prior work. We used those points to map the relationship of the new (2018) survey line to the old excavation units (Figure 3). In addition to mapping, we used a soil probe (at 5-meter intervals) and an auger (at 10-meter intervals) along the survey line to peek at the strata beneath the surface. We found an area along the survey line between 70 and 80 meters from the lighthouse that had distinct charcoal layers and a few metal fragments. This section was also amidst some thick salmonberry patches, which are often indicative of historic period archaeological sites. In that region, we decided to expand tests outward perpendicular from the survey line to create a small gridded area for more extensive testing. We added three perpendicular lines at 70, 75 and 80 meters from the lighthouse, each of which extended 5 meters towards the road and 3 meters towards the coast from the original line (Figure 3). In total we completed eleven auger tests at this site and approximately 30 soil probes. We also opened four ~50cm by 50cm shovel test pits. We collected historic ceramic fragments and some slate flakes from one of the test pits (STP 4).

Based on our surface survey, mapping and test excavations, it is clear that not much of the Alutiiq-Russian era site remains intact that would provide much information about the former residents of the location. Digging by artifact hunters a generation or more ago churned most of the site on the bluff edge between the Narrows and the road. Road construction, landscaping and erosion stripped much of the rest of the Alutiiq-Russian era site across the hill. Even so, we know from the 1995 and 1996 excavations that an older, ca. 5000 years ago, Ocean Bay II phase, archaeological deposit exists in good stratigraphic context below the disturbed hilltop deposits. It may be worth the effort to complete the excavation of the 19th
century Alutiiq-Russian structures dug in part during the 1995/1996 field school, but we feel that excavations in other areas of the site are unlikely to yield new information about that 19th century time period. The few artifacts recovered from STP 4 were taken to the Alutiiq Museum after the project, where they were cleaned, labelled, catalogued and added to the existing loan from the City of Old Harbor.

b. Barling Bay Sites (Ukshivik; KOD-092, 548, 551, 556)

Our second area of focus for the survey was Barling Bay (Figure 4). We spent three days working in this region (see table above). While there are no modern settlements in Barling Bay, previous archaeological surveys and historic maps show that there were villages and smaller seasonal camps there in the past.

We began our survey by looking for a site called Ukshivik/Ukshivikak, which is marked as an abandoned village in the Kodiak Island Borough Maps and noted in historic documentation from the 19th century (Clark 1987). The site is reported to lie somewhere between the Barling Spit and the inner bay. In previous work, Fitzhugh documented a relatively young (Koniag and/or Alutiiq of Russian era) site, KOD-094, on Barling Spit, which matches the location on Clark’s 1987 map, but not the Kodiak Island Borough’s map. We were not able to find any other information about Ukshivik in the literature or by talking to Old Harbor residents, so we were eager to see what we could find on the ground. Unfortunately, we found no archaeological features visible on the surface at the location of the village mapped by Kodiak Island Borough, and neither soil probes nor shovel tests turned up any cultural material there. It is likely that the site was plotted inaccurately on the Borough map.

We continued to survey by foot and soil probe in a northeast direction, into the bay. About 200 meters southwest of KOD-551, we located a thick charcoal deposit in a soil probe. To take a closer look, we opened a small shovel test pit (ca. 40 cm in diameter) and found a thick oily charcoal layer extending from 5 to 20 cm below the surface, suggesting a relatively recent occupation (within the past several hundred years, perhaps; Figure 9). This layer also contained abundant fire cracked rock. As no site was identified at this location before, we gave the site the temporary name New Site 1. The geographic context of the location, a single vague depression (possibly house pit) – on a sloping bank overlooking a short gully draining to the beach below – suggests it was a small and only seasonally occupied location. We did not gather enough data to make any other interpretations about the site regarding age, duration of use or function. We have since submitted the site location and information to the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology and the site now has the number KOD-01275. We do not think this site was Ukshivik, unless the “village” was very small. This site looks more like a seasonal use camp for a family.

At the end of our first day in Barling Bay, we re-located KOD-551, a known archaeological site with a historic (Alutiiq/Russian period) component. We found the site to be much more extensive than previously estimated. The site stretches from the shore up-slope for 50 or more meters, and we documented six large, multi-roomed houses there. Despite heavy overgrowth of ferns, salmonberries and pushki, the sod walls were crisp and still quite visible at the surface, and we could walk easily from main rooms into the side rooms. The multi-roomed houses and their well-preserved forms lead us to suspect that the site was used in the last two hundred years, possibly during the mid-19th century. It may have been the village of
Ukshivik, discussed above. We completed four test pits at this site, both inside and outside of houses. We found significant amounts of charcoal and fire-cracked shale/slate, but little else in the way of cultural material. One of our interns, Jennifer Alexanderoff, located a slate-lined hearth box in the middle of one of the houses (Figure 10). The hearth box was barely overgrown, with vertical slate slabs peeking from behind overhanging moss and with thin vegetation covering the surface of the hearth fill (Figure 11). The deposits in the house with the hearth box were particularly shallow, perhaps indicating a recent and brief occupation.

We cleared much of the vegetation from the walls and floor of the house, made a simple scale drawing and took both ground and aerial drone photographs (Figure 12). The front door opens towards the shore and has two or three side rooms of unequal size that extend from the west and south walls of the main room. We also found four small holes in the floor set at even intervals around the hearth. These may have held posts for supporting the roof. If this is true, then the structure for this house is quite similar to other Kodiak historic houses that were illustrated or photographed during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

On later visits to Barling Bay, we focused on sites closer to the head of the bay, where there is a productive salmon stream. A few tens of meters from the stream mouth, we visited the location of a site first identified by Fitzhugh in 1994. The site, designated KOD-556, was probably a salmon fishing camp from the Alutiiq-Russian period (Clark 1974: 7-9). At the site, we conducted several soil probe and small shovel tests around high spots with pushki growth. While we were able to find a little bit of charcoal immediately below the surface, there were no artifacts or surface features that might indicate a significant site. KOD-556 is unlikely to be productive for a future excavation.

Site KOD-092 is on a low bluff about half a kilometer south of the stream at the head of Barling Bay. We noted seven multi-room houses at the site, some of which had hearth boxes. The team completed four auger tests, all of which turned up charcoal and fire cracked shale/slate, and fifteen soil probes, of which nine revealed charcoal stained soil. In a few soil probe tests, we recorded two distinct layers of charcoal, indicating younger and older occupational periods. At the north end of the site, on a bluff ringed with nettles, Fitzhugh dug a 40x40cm test pit, which contained mammal and fish bones, fire-cracked shale, a nonlocal serpentine rounded cobble and a barnacle shell. We took charcoal samples from the test pit but reburied the fauna and artifacts. Further examination of this bluff suggests that the whole features is a midden deposit, as charcoal, fire cracked rock and a few artifacts were eroding out of the beachward face. This site is a good candidate for excavation, although the depth of cultural deposits compared to those at KOD-551 suggest that the site may be older than the Alutiiq-Russian period (of interest to Miller’s dissertation project) –dating instead to the Koniag period.

The final Barling Bay site, KOD-548, was overgrown with a thick salmonberry patch, but we bushwhacked through it to take a couple auger and soil probe tests, which yielded no cultural material despite the presence of a house pit about 50m from the shore. This site is both difficult to access, due to the salmonberries, and unlikely to be productive for a future excavation.

c. KOD-077 (Kiliuda Site)

On the morning of August 21, we boated out to Kiliuda Bay, located to the northeast of Old Harbor. There are numerous archaeological sites in Kiliuda Bay, but we were interested in
just one - a site that was occupied from before Russian contact through the late 1830s. In the literature it is usually referred to as simply ‘the Kiliuda site’ (KOD-077; Figure 5). This site was visited by Russian explorer Yuri Lisiansky in 1805 and is mentioned in Church records through the 1830s when the village was depopulated following a smallpox epidemic. After this epidemic, the Russian American Company consolidated the remaining Kodiak Archipelago population into seven villages, leaving many sites, such as Kiliuda, abandoned.

At this site, located between Santa Flavia and Shearwater Bays, we opted not to probe the subsurface with the auger or soil probe because it was quite obvious from pedestrian survey and visual inspection that the site had preserved fauna and housepits (Figure 6). We found several large and deep house pits in a line along the shore in addition to an extensive midden deposit (Figure 13). A distinguishing feature of this site was the plethora of sea mammal and fish bones strewn along the beach. Some of these eroded out of the archaeological site, but others were probably more recent and naturally deposited on the beach by waves. Having such good preservation on the surface is an indicator that more bones will be preserved in the midden itself. There was evidence of earlier uncontrolled pit digging in some of the house features, though the disturbance was not fresh.

We recorded the locations of the houses and middens and then took drone footage of the site. This site is a good candidate for excavation due to its preservation and age. It could help tell the story of communities that were already in existence at the time of Russian contact and how they responded to newly imposed demands while maintaining their original settlement location.

d. KOD-114 (Tanginak Anchorage)

After visiting the Kiliuda site (KOD-077, on August 21 our team traveled across the Sitkalidak Strait to Tanginak Anchorage. Fitzhugh had previously led a University of Washington and Old Harbor Native Corporation-affiliated archaeological field school in Tanginak Anchorage from 1998-2003 and was aware of several prehistoric and historic sites in the area. Our main interest was in KOD-114, a late Koniag-era village that was inhabited until the 1830s (Figure 7). This village, known in the Russian documents as Ezopkinskoe, was visited by Lisiansky in 1805 and is recorded in his ethnohistoric account. During our brief pedestrian survey of the site, we noted a midden deposit that contained shell and animal bone fragments. We did not disturb the ground at this site nor collect any archaeological materials. The presence of a shell midden signals that the site may be fairly well preserved and would be a good candidate for future excavations.

e. KOD-085 (Three Saints Bay Artel)

On our final day of fieldwork, the team headed west from Old Harbor to Three Saints Bay. Three Saints Bay is infamous in the history of Kodiak as the place where Grigorii Shelikhov built the first permanent Russian settlement in Alaska, after orchestrating a massacre of Alutiiq people at Refuge Rock (known in the Alutiiq language as Awa’uq) in 1784 (Black 1992). Russian construction in Three Saints consisted of a main fort (or krepost) and a separate settlement or work camp for Alutiiq hostages taken after the massacre. It was this separate work camp (or artel) that our team was looking for during our survey of Three Saints Bay.
Prior to re-locating KOD-085, our team walked up the beach, crossing a stream to enter a forested area. In this forested area, we noticed several small house pits. It would be anomalous for Alutiiq people to build houses in such a low, wet, forested area, so we surmised that these Alutiiq houses were not placed here by choice. Later research at the Alutiiq Museum suggests that these houses were part of an American period settlement associated with a cannery (KOD-607).

We found KOD-085 by its extensive midden deposit, which was piled on top of the bluff above the beach (Figure 8). There were numerous shells and animal bones eroding out of the bluff, in addition to charcoal staining, fire cracked rock and at least one slate artifact. We cleaned off a 20 cm wide section of the bluff face to get a better look at the stratigraphy (Figure 14). There was FCR and charcoal in the first 10 cm and a possible older component below. The midden extends at least 20 meters to the southwest along the erosion face cut, with some areas more densely filled with artifacts and fauna than others. On top of the bluff, we noted a couple vague house depressions, but the entire area appears to have been disturbed, perhaps by gardening, bear activity or slope erosion. We did not do any further ground disturbance nor collect artifacts at this site, but we did take some aerial photos and video with the drone.

The site is part of an important story of the early interactions between Alutiiq and Russian fur traders and is also the beginning of the community known as Old Harbor (originally Stariy Gaven), which was the name given to this artel site following the move of the Russian administrative center to St. Paul Harbor in 1792. Unfortunately, the context of site is significantly disturbed, although it would yield more artifacts and faunal material to contribute to the story of the region.

IV. Conclusion: A Model of Alutiiq Settlement History in the Russian Era

The modern village of Old Harbor traces its name, and perhaps aspects of its ancestry, to the Alutiiq and Russian occupation of Three Saints Bay. Grigori Shelikhov and ranking members of his company recruited and enslaved Alutiiq people, and established a multi-ethnic settlement in Three Saints Harbor between 1786 and 1793. When they moved the headquarters of the new Russian American Company to St. Paul’s Harbor at the modern location of Kodiak city, they left an artel settlement for procuring resources to help supply the company. Other Alutiiq villages persisted around southeast Kodiak and Sitkalidak until the smallpox epidemic of 1837-1839 devastated populations around Kodiak, and in 1840 the Russian American Company decreed a consolidation of villages around pre-existing artels. While Old Harbor (Star’yi Gaven) was one of these, we know of no historical documents recording the location of the village between this time and modern settlement on the Sitkalidak Narrows.

Through the Old Harbor Archaeological History Project, we hope to augment the written and oral histories of Old Harbor by investigating KOD-551 in Barling Bay, which is a likely candidate for the location of the Old Harbor community in the period between 1867 and the modern settlement. We have also heard stories from community members about a settlement with a church on the eastern side of the mouth of Barling Bay, as well as the settlement at the Lighthouse site, which was occupied at the end of the Russian period. Archaeological
investigation will be able to add more depth to the story of both the region and the enduring Alutiiq community of Old Harbor.

Additionally, Miller’s dissertation project will address questions about how Alutiiq women and men navigated the landscape of Russian colonialism by focusing on the household as a site of resistance, persistence and change. She plans to study diet, food preparation, disposal patterns, labor and spatial organization in houses to learn about Alutiiq daily practice during the Russian occupation of Kodiak. The site at Tanginak Anchorage (KOD-114), coupled with data from the Lighthouse site and KOD-551, would provide a window into household life throughout the Russian period. Miller hopes to return to study these sites further in the summer of 2019.

V. References


VI. Appendices
   a. Collections (redacted)

   b. Maps (redacted)

Figure 1 [redacted]: Overview map of the survey region with visited sites marked. Base map from USGS Map View (1.0).

Figure 2 [redacted]: Aerial view of KOD-089 (Lighthouse Site).

Figure 3 [redacted]

Figure 4 [redacted]: Map of the locations of surveyed sites in Barling Bay. Base map from Google Earth (Digital Globe ©2018).

Figure 5 [redacted]: Location of KOD-077 in Kiliuda Bay. Base map from Google Earth (Digital Globe ©2018).

Figure 6 [redacted]: Aerial view of KOD-077.

Figure 7 [redacted]: Location of KOD-114 in Tanginak Anchorage. Base map from Google Earth (Digital Globe ©2018).

Figure 8 [redacted]: Location of KOD-085 in Three Saints Bay. Base map from Google Earth (Landsat – Copernicus).
c. Additional Images from the OHAHP Survey

Figure 9: Oily, charcoal-stained soil uncovered in a shovel test at New Site 1, now KOD-01275. (Photo credit: Angel Christiansen)
Figure 10: OHAHP intern, Jennifer Alexanderoff, standing next to the slate-lined hearth box she located at KOD-551. (Photo credit: Ben Fitzhugh)
Figure 11: Slate-lined hearth box at KOD-551, with moss removed. (Photo credit: Ben Fitzhugh)
Figure 12: Aerial photo of the house with defined hearth box at KOD-551. House is outlined in flagging tape, including two side rooms. Note the four post holes arranged around the hearth box. (Photo credit: Ben Fitzhugh)
Figure 13: Shell fragments eroding from midden deposit at KOD-077. (Photo credit: Ben Fitzhugh)
Figure 14: Cleaned erosion face of the midden at KOD-085, showing the stratigraphy. (Photo credit: Hope Loiselle)