

Alaska State Library  
Historical Collections

**Guide to Collection**

**Reindeer Herding in Alaska**

**Papers and Correspondence, 1953-1959**

**MS 4-39-3**

3 Folders  
Letters and Papers

Processed By: Gayle Goedde  
April, 2011

**ACQUISITION:** This collection was transferred to Historical Collections from the Government Documents section of the Alaska State Library in March 2011. (Accession number: 2011-008)

**ACCESS:** The collection is available for viewing, and the papers may be copied.

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**PROCESSING:** When dates were available, the correspondence and papers were arranged chronologically.

## HISTORICAL NOTE

Reindeer were first introduced to Alaska in 1892 when Dr. Sheldon Jackson imported 171 deer from Siberia, with the goal to provide a stable food supply for Natives on the Seward Peninsula. In 1937, Congress passed the Reindeer Act, making it illegal for non-Native Alaskans to own reindeer (U.S. Congress, 1937). The majority of reindeer herds in Alaska are located on the Seward Peninsula and are owned by individual Native herders.

## SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

The collection contains papers from the BIA Alaska Native Service, including letters from BIA personnel to herders, contracts with herders, loans to herders, reindeer counts, partnership agreements between herders, contract terminations, purchase orders, receipts for repayment of reindeer loans, and an Individual Indian Accounts Application.

Descriptions of reindeer ranges include the following: Stalker Range (Noatak), Commack Range (Noorvik), Skin Range (Selawik), Sheldon Range (Selawik), Keats & Gray Range - Government Escholtz Bay Herd (Kotzebue), Hadley Range (Buckland), Clark Range (Deering), Karmun Range (Deering), Goodhope & Dimmock Range (Deering, at Cape Espenberg), Kakaruk Range (Teller), Sigfried Aukongak Range (Golovin), Kotongan Range (Unalakleet), Stebbins Range (Stebbins), Steve Range -Government Andreafsky Herd (Andreafsky), Nunivak Range -Government Herd, and St. Lawrence Range.

## SUBJECTS

Reindeer herding; Reindeer herders; Reindeer; Caribou; Reindeer tally sheets; Reindeer ranges; Seward Peninsula; Range conservationists; Administration of reindeer herding; Bureau of Indian Affairs; Alaska Native Service; Indian money

## INVENTORY

### Folder 1 of 3

- 1 [Booklet showing] Earmarks [of the] Shishmaref Company Herd
- 2 [Map]: Ranges used by 13 Mainland and 3 Island Reindeer Herds under administration of BIA; [Table]: Herd Owner or Operator, Address, Approx Sq. Miles [and number of] Reindeer in Herd, 12/31/63

- 3 [Tally of reindeer in the] Government Herd [and the] Keats-Gray Herd, Nov. 20, 1953; [count is divided into the following categories]: adult males, adult females, steers, male fawns, female fawns

**Folder 2 of 3**

Correspondence from July 7, 1953 through December 19, 1956, between the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska Native Service, and reindeer herders

27 documents

Letters from:

John B. Hakala, Range Conservationist, Alaska Native Service  
Dale Belcher, Assistant Director, Division of Resources  
Vern V. Hirsch, Assistant Director, Division of Resources and Land Operations  
Officer  
Salvatore DeLeonardis, Range Conservationist  
Sam Troutman, Procurement Officer, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
R. L. Davlin, Area Property & Supply Officer

Reindeer contracts with:

Lawrence Gray  
George E. Keats  
Ernest K. Loon  
Johnnie E. Coffin  
Louis Commack

**Folder 3 of 3**

Correspondence from May 8, 1957 through November 18, 1959, between the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska Native Service, and reindeer herders

19 documents

Letters from:

Lawrence Gray, reindeer herder

Vern V. Hirsch, Land Operations Officer  
Salvatore DeLeonardis, Range Conservationist  
R. L. Davlin, Area Property & Supply Officer

Reindeer contracts with:

Lawrence Gray  
George E. Keats  
Ernest K. Loon  
Edward Coffin  
Paul Hadley