Culbertson, Richard G. and Mary S.

Richard G. And Mary S. Culbertson Photograph Collection, ca. 1924-1945

PCA 390

10 folders
135 photographs

Processed by: Debbie Finley & India Spartz
Aug. 1998

Updated by: Gladi Kulp, Feb. 1999 & Aug 1999

Revised by: Jacki Swearingen & Sandy Johnston
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ACQUISITION: The collection was donated by Richard K. Culbertson, the son of Mary S. and Richard G. Culbertson, in 1998. (Accession No. 1998-22) World War II photographs were added to the collection in 1999. (Accession No. 1999-32)

ACCESS: The photos may be viewed, however, the images may not be photocopied.

COPYRIGHT: Request for permission to publish or reproduce material from the collection should be discussed with the Librarian.

PROCESSING: The photographs were numbered and placed in Mylar. The items were placed in acid free folders and then into an archival box. The collection has been inventoried at the item and folder level.
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Richard Guy Culbertson was born at Woodleaf, NC in 1895. He attended King Business College in Charlotte, NC and joined the Navy in 1917 when the U.S. entered World War I. He served first as a yeoman and then as a commissioned officer aboard the U.S.S. *Nanshan*, a supply ship, as supply officer. The *Nanshan* was ported in Seattle and regularly served ports on mainland Alaska and in the Aleutians.

After the war, in 1920, Culbertson went with the Bureau of Fisheries (Dept. of Commerce) as senior schoolteacher on St. George Island in the Pribilofs. He later became assistant agent and then agent there. Employees of the Bureau were given periodic furloughs of several months after long tours on the Islands. On a furlough in 1924, he got to know Mary S. Sandidge, a schoolteacher from Lynchburg, VA. She was born in 1897 and attended Farmville Teachers College in VA. Mary was teaching in Mooresville, NC where Richard was temporarily employed. They met while staying at the same boarding house, fell in love, and were married in Lynchburg on March 1, 1924; they left the same day by train for Seattle where they took the ship for St. George.

On St. George, they lived in "Government House" and took meals in the dining hall. There were only about 6-8 other non-Aleuts living on the island which, in the tradition of that time, limited social contacts. With limited social activities and not much to do during the short days, she organized and began teaching a kindergarten-age group of Aleuts.

In 1926, the Culberstons took a furlough and then went to St. Paul where Richard became the storekeeper, disbursing officer, jailer, “keeper of the spirits,” agent and U.S. Commissioner -- all at the same time. In 1929 he was reassigned to the Bureau in Washington, DC. Son, Richard K., was born on St. Paul in April 1928 and came to the states in October 1929 aboard the U.S.S. *Sirius*, a navy supply vessel.

Richard G. Culbertson left the Bureau in 1931 to go with the Dupont Company. He returned to active duty with the Civilian Conservation Corps from 1935 to 1939. He went back to Dupont in 1940. From December 1941 to September 1945 during World War II he went back to active duty.

During the war, he had two tours in Alaska, the first as supply officer at Sitka and then at Adak. He retired from the Navy as a Captain and then retired from Dupont in 1960. His final years were in Greenville, NC. He died there October 3, 1969 on his 74th birthday.

After her husband’s death Mary lived in Virginia Beach and Blacksburg, VA for several years. She died in 1988, two months shy of her 91st birthday.

Adapted from the account by Richard K. Culbertson
SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

The Richard G. And Mary S. Culbertson photograph collection primarily depicts life on St. George and St. Paul (Pribilof Islands) from 1924-1931. The Culbertsons taught Aleut school children in the Pribilofs. Richard also worked as U.S. Commissioner; this position included many different functions, such as storekeeper, jailer, and “keeper of the spirits.” The 1999 addition to the collection include 53 official U.S. Navy photographs taken during World War II in Sitka, Adak, Amchitka, and the Pribilof and Aleutian Islands.

Documents form a separate collection, Ms 4-22-9. Baskets collected while the Culbertsons were in the Pribilof were donated to the Alaska State Museum in 1989. Photographs and some correspondence were loaned to the St. Paul Bicentennial Commission in 1986. At this date they have not yet been returned to the Culbertsons.

INVENTORY

Photographs

Folder 1: Communities – St. Paul, Unalaska, other communities

1. Radio Station St. Paul – see the cows.
3. Heavy weather St. Paul 1920s.
6. Unalaska.
10. Dutch Harbor @ 1920s.
11. From an Aeroplane.
13. East shore, St. Paul Isld. HGS.

**Folder 2:** Fox Farming

17. Blue foxes St. Paul 1920s
18. Blue Fox Cubs St. Paul

**Folder 3:** People

19. [Woman? Standing next to Russian Orthodox cross – St. Paul?]
20. Somewhere in the Aleutians 1920s. [Unalaska-Jesse Lee Home in background *per Anne Rowland, Dir. Mus. Of the Aleutians 04/04]*
22. A native man and his squaw. Just married- Ioniky and his wife Agrippina.
23. Aleut Children 1920s.
24. RGC w/ salmon 1919.
25. RGC-1919 aboard USS *Nanshan*.
27. RG Culbertson St. Paul @ 1927.
28. Aleut Youngsters 1920s.
29. Spring Flowers on St. Paul 1929.
30. Halloween Party St. George @ 1924.
32. St. Paul (St. George) 1923-1928. Names??
33. St. Paul 1928. My mother, Mary Culbertson, in middle. Guess I was in the buggy!
34. The priest in all his finery. Taken inside the church during the Christmas Celebration [Father Gregory Prosoff (?) maybe].

35. Halibut [two men carrying several halibut suspended on a pole].

36. Someone’s B-day St. George 1923-4. RGC second from Rt.

37. “Whites” @ St. George 1920s. RGC-far left.


39. Senior School, Sept. 12, 1921. Students of RGC on St. George, 1921.

**Folder 4:** Ships

40. “Elvira” icebound.

**Folder 5:** St. Paul, Alaska: Seals, whales

41. St. George. [Colony of Murre perched on top of rocky cliff]

42. Murre Rock, Pribilof Islands, Alaska. (Look closely! All the little specks on top of the rocks are murres, thousands of them).

43. Seal Rookery 1920s. [?] of seals, St. Paul, Alaska.


45. Bull & Harem 1920s.

46. Bachelors- 3 gen old seals being isolated prior to being killed and skinned 1920s.

47. Beachmaster & Harem, St. Paul?

48. Whaling station in the Aleutians.

49. Whaling Fleet At Sitka, Alaska.

50. Pribilofs. [Seals on rocky cliff]

**Folder 6:** Photographs from photo album

51. An Eskimo kid who doesn’t want his picture taken.

52. An Arctic village in summer.

53. Eskimos in a skin boat.

55. [Sailboats on beach].

56. *Star of Falkland* wreck.

57. The *Elvira* lost in Arctic ice.

58. Packing furs off the doomed *Elvira*.

59. *Elvira*

60. Arctic Ice

61. Mr. Clark’s chickens.

62. Horses and cow on Allis and Clark ranch.

63. Folks gone berry picking [skiff tied at shore].

64. Docks and part of village, Unalaska. Unalaska, Alaska. 1299 Thwaites.

65. Akutan, Whaling Station.


67. Eskimo dogs on board S.S. *Victoria*.

68. Akutan Village.

Summer 1926 (#69-74)

69. Mickey and Cuffy. [Child with bear cub on a leash]

70. ‘Fessor and Cuffy learning to climb up on his house!

71. Livestock. Cottage Daud office.

72. Sitting on the old Russian cannon.

73. Mickey Messner.

74. “Fessor” and Mr. Messner chasing ch.

75. Going to Garden Cover for picnic.
76. Michael gets caught by a wave.

77. Mrs. Proctor, Mr. Proctor, Mrs. Peterson, Mr. Aller, Dr. Murphy, Harry A. Peterson, and C.E. Crompton. In front of old Company House, St. George.

78. Small section of a fur seal rookery showing several bull seals and their harems.

1999 addition (Accession #1999-32)
World War II official photos taken by the U.S. Navy
Many photographs stamped “Confidential - Official Photograph, Not To Be Used For Publication By Order Of Chief Of The Bureau Of Aeronautics.”

Folder 7
79-95. Sitka; Nov. 1943 - Mar. 1945; Unit: U.S. Naval Air Station, Sitka, Alaska. [Includes Halloween party, Christmas party, Group Portraits, Buildings - Interior and Exterior]

Folder 8
96-123. Adak and Amchitka; Feb. 1944 - Aug. 1945 [Includes many aerial views of Adak]

Folder 9
124-129. Pribilof Islands; Feb 1945 [Includes seals and mosaic map of St. Paul Island]

Folder 10
130-135. Aleutian Islands [Includes aerial views and volcanoes:] Kasatochi Island, Great Sitkin, Pavlof [Pablof], and volcano near Tanaga Island.