

Alaska Heritage Resources Survey

Alaska Office of History and Archaeology

For further information contact the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology at (907) 269-8721

Compiled: Wed Nov 13 04:31:41 AKST 2019

This document contains restricted information. Unauthorized circulation is prohibited by law!

AHRS Number: AMR-00001

Site Name: Onion Portage Archaeological District

Site Description: The district encompasses 1600 acres at the northern limit of the Arctic woodlands, situated on land enclosed on three sides by a meander of the river. A large herd of caribou cross the river near Onion Portage on their seasonal migration between tundra and taiga. Drawn by these herds, ancient hunters stationed themselves to await their coming. The principal site is a 60m x 40m tract containing a deeply stratified series of river-edge occupation layers. The oldest levels have been dated to circa BP 11,000 and it appears that people camped there more or less continuously until about BP 300 (with the exception of a hiatus circa BP 8000 to 6000). Nine different cultural complexes have been isolated at the site. There are several smaller sites in the district, representing each of the nine cultures found at the main site.

Site Significance: Onion Portage is very unusual among Arctic archaeological sites, in both its deep stratigraphy and its age. Coastal sites which were contemporaneous with Onion Portage's older layers have almost all been destroyed by erosion during a rise in sea level, circa BP 8000 to 3000. Interior sites usually have been eroded or buried by shifting rivers. The deep stratification at the site provides a clear picture of the succession of cultural change. The other sites of the district have not yet been extensively tested. Though they are much smaller, they are important as well. While Onion Portage site reveals the chronological relationship of the cultures represented, the smaller sites will reveal a great deal about the content of each culture. Sites within this district are AMR-00007, AMR-00058, AMR-00060, AMR-00169 and AMR-00170. 10/7/04 part of the Onion Portage Archaeological District NHL Cultural Landscape (DOE) AMR-00162.

Associations: The district was listed in the NRHP in 1971.

Informal Associations:

Location Info: Upper Kobuk River, in the vicinity of the mouth of Jade Creek, approx 35 mi. NW of Shungnak.

Location Reliability: Location vague, but site existence verified (2)

Mapsheet(s): AMBLER RIVER A-5 (AMRA5)

MTRS(s): 38 found; see bottom of card

Point Representation: Lat: 67.10877537, Long: -158.27603589

Geometry Accuracy: No

AHRS Resource Nature: District (A district is some contiguous collection of sites, buildings, structures or objects)

Resnat Subtype: Default District

Resource Keywords: Archaeological, Settlements, Camps

Acreage: 1600

Period(s): Prehistoric

Associated Dates: BP 9857ñ155

Cultural Affiliation: Multiple

Current Function(s): Vacant/Not in use

Historic Function(s): Domestic

Condition Code: Partially excavated (C4)

Danger(s) of Destruction: Unknown

Destruct Year:

Property Owner: NPS, KOVA, Multiple

Source Reliability: Professional reports, records and field studies (A)

Assigned To:

Date Issued: 01-06-1971

Card Status: Complete

Alaska Heritage Resources Survey

Alaska Office of History and Archaeology

For further information contact the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology at (907) 269-8721

Compiled: Wed Nov 13 04:31:41 AKST 2019

Other Number(s): Giddings 18

Repository / Accession #: University of Alaska Museum of the North / UA1-1941(28)(30)
Brown University /

Attachments: none

Determinations of Eligibility: none

National Register Nominations: 1

National Register Status: Listed - National Historic Landmark (NHL)

Keeper Action:

Keeper Action Date: 06-20-1972

Keeper Action Comments:

Distinctive Features:

Period of Significance: BP 12000-300

Area Significance(s):

Criteria: Yielded or may yield important relevant information (D)

Considerations:

Filed As: 3330-5 Onion Portage Archaeological District

Comments: NHL 6/2/78

Document Repository References: 5

(01/01/1975) Brown University/Brown, I.

Title: The Norton/Ipiutak Assemblage, Lower Band 2, Onion Portage: Coastal-Interior Relationships

Document Repository Record ID = 16264000, (1 attached files)

ctg794.pdf

(05/01/1988) UAF/Anderson, D.D.

Title: Onion Portage: The Archaeology Of A Stratified Site From The Kobuk River, Northwest Alaska, Anthropological Papers Of The University Of Alaska, Volume 22, Numbers 1-2, U Of A Press, Fairbanks, AK.

Document Repository Record ID = 4948, (1 attached files)

0000164B.pdf

(06/12/1990) BLM/Smith, H.L.

Title: Review of Easement Staking Project on Kobuk River (FF014818-EE, FF014887-EE, FF014935-EE) 1990 BLM

Document Repository Record ID = 5879, (1 attached files)

00001854.pdf

(10/01/2004) NPS

Title: NPS Cultural Landscapes Inventory 2004, Onion Portage Archaeological District, Kobuk Valley National Park, ADP Files 3130-1R NPS, 3330-6 ONION PORTAGE ARCH DIST CLI.

Document Repository Record ID = 4450, (1 attached files)

000011FF.pdf

Alaska Heritage Resources Survey

Alaska Office of History and Archaeology

For further information contact the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology at (907) 269-8721

Compiled: Wed Nov 13 04:31:41 AKST 2019

(01/01/1972) ARCTIC ANTHROPOLOGY/Anderson, D.D.

Title: An Archaeological Survey of Noatak Drainage, Alaska (Reprinted from The Arctic Anthropology, Vol 9: 1, 1972)

Document Repository Record ID = 16223902, (1 attached files)

smw14-22.pdf

References: 5

ADP 3330-5 file

Anderson, D.D. 1968b, 1968d, 1968g, 1970a, 1971b

Giddings, J.L. 1967:340-368 (Ancient Men of the Arctic)

Giddings, J.L. 1961a, 1962f

Giddings, J.L. 1952b

Related MTR(s)/MTRS(s): (see above)

K020N002E34,K020N002E23,K020N002E14,K019N002E01,K020N002E24,K020N003E31,K020N003E18
K019N003E04,K020N003E27,K020N003E23,K020N003E26,K020N002E25,K020N003E22,K020N003E17
K020N002E15,K019N002E02,K019N003E06,K020N003E21,K020N003E20,K020N003E19,K020N003E14
K020N003E15,K020N003E16,K020N002E13,K020N002E27,K020N002E22,K020N002E35,K020N002E26
K020N002E36,K020N003E30,K019N003E05,K020N003E32,K020N003E29,K020N003E33,K020N003E28
K020N003E34,K020N003E35,K019N002E03