



A Timeline of Human History



Prehistoric to Present

Tlingit (pronounced klink-it) Indians and their ancestors inhabited much of what is now Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, with both permanent and seasonal settlements. Food and other resources were abundant. The small population of Tlingits thrived, living close to the land, and a rich culture developed. Near the end of the Little Ice Age, about several hundred years ago, advancing glaciers forced the Tlingit people to abandon their villages and move to Hoonah, across Icy Strait from Glacier Bay. Today, Hoonah Tlingits still regard Glacier Bay as their ancestral home, and feel a special connection to it.

- 1741** Russian explorer Alexei Ilich Chirikof sights the Fairweather mountain range.
- 1742-1780's** Russian fur hunters probably access the outer Pacific coast.
- 1750** The Little Ice Age is ending and the glaciers are beginning to retreat.
- 1778** Captain James Cook of the H.M.S. Resolution names Mt. Fairweather. Also on board are crewmembers George Vancouver and William Bligh.
- 1786** French explorer Jean Francois Galoup de LaPerouse enters Lituya Bay. First known white man to land on the outer coast of what is now the park. He purchases Cenotaph Island from the Tlingits and claims it for France. While charting the entrance to the bay twenty-one crewmen are lost.
- 1794** Captain George Vancouver of the H.M.S. Discovery, along with Lt. Joseph Whidbey, describes Glacier Bay as "a compact sheet of ice as far as the eye could distinguish". Glacier Bay is a mere 5-mile indentation in the coastline.
- 1796** An English shipbuilder named Shields employed by Alexander Baranov gathers 1800 sea otter skins in Lituya Bay.
- 1797-1868** Little is known about the Glacier Bay region. From this time on, the recorded history of Alaska up to its transfer to the United States is dominated by Russian influence.
- 1799** Baranov establishes Sitka as a white settlement and capital of Russian America.
- 1867** William Henry Seward, Secretary of State, purchases Alaska from Russia for \$7,200,000. The deal draws criticism from the press. The New York World declares, "Russia has sold us a sucked orange". Ridiculed as "Seward's Folly" and "Seward's Icebox", acquiring Alaska would later prove to be a wise venture for the U.S.
- 1874** William Healy Dall, U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, aboard the schooner Yukon, anchors in Lituya Bay. Compares the bay to Yosemite Valley in California.
- 1877** Lt. Charles E.S. Wood explores the bay and climbs the mountains northeast of Mt. Fairweather. Though he does not realize it at the time, he is the first white man to see what will become known as "Glacier Bay"
- 1879** John Muir records his "discovery" of Glacier Bay. He enters the bay in a dugout canoe guided by Tlingit Indians from Fort Wrangell. Toyatte, a Stickeen nobleman, leads the group. S. Hall Young, a Presbyterian missionary, accompanies Muir. The glacial ice has retreated up into the bay 40 miles from where Whidbey saw it.
- 1880** John Muir returns to visit Taylor Bay, Dundas Bay and Muir Glacier. He is led by Tyeen, a Tlingit Indian and once again joined by Young. Stickeen, a small dog, becomes part of the expedition.
- 1880** Captain Lester S. Beardslee gives the name "Glacier Bay", and charts its ice-free waters for the first time.
- 1883** Captain James Carroll aboard the mail steamer Idaho, names the inlet and glacier bearing John Muir's name. Eliza Scidmore, an early visitor, reports a salmon saltery, store and trading post at Bartlett Cove.
- 1884** Captain Carroll pilots the side-wheel steamer Ancon to Muir Glacier. Carroll builds a boardwalk across the moraine to Muir Glacier for tourists. Tours to the glacier last until the 1899 earthquake.
- 1890** Muir makes his third visit to Glacier Bay. Constructs a cabin at base of Mt. Wright. Makes extensive glacial observations and explains interglacial tree stumps. Climbs and studies Muir Glacier.

- 1890-1899** Sporadic placer mining takes place in Lituya Bay area. 1896 is the banner year.
- 1890** Harry Fielding Reid, a geologist with USCGS, measures movements of glaciers and maps glaciers positions.
- 1898** The Klondike Gold Rush is underway in Alaska and the Yukon.
- 1899** The famous Harriman Alaska Expedition visits Glacier Bay and Lituya Bay. It's prominent members include Muir, Dall, Grinnell, Washburn, Fernow, Gilbert, Keeler, Burroughs, Merriam, Brewer and Edward Curtis.
- 1899** On September 10 an earthquake centered in Yakutat Bay measuring 8.4 on the Richter scale leaves Glacier Bay choked with ice, due to rapid and extensive glacier calving.
- 1915 or 1917** James Todd Huscroft arrives on Cenotaph Island, Lituya Bay. For 22 years, he is the only human to permanently inhabit the 150 mile-long coastline from Cape Spencer to Yakutat.
- 1916** William S. Cooper, ecologist from the University of Minnesota arrives in Glacier Bay. Begins studies of plant succession. He returns in 1921, 1929, 1935 (with W. O. Field), 1956 and in 1966.
- 1922** Cooper suggests national monument status for Glacier Bay to the Ecological Society of America.
- 1924** April 1, President Calvin Coolidge temporarily withdraws Glacier Bay area at request of Interior Sec. Work.
- 1924** Joe Ibach stakes two gold mining claims near Reid Inlet.
- 1925** President Coolidge establishes Glacier Bay National Monument on February 26.
- 1926** William O. Field, American Geographical Society, begins mapping and photographing terminus positions of the glaciers.
- 1939** Glacier Bay National Monument doubles in size through a proclamation by President Franklin Roosevelt.
- 1953** Covering 3,593 square miles, the monument is larger than any of the national parks in the U.S. Canadian Pacific Steamship Company brings the first modern cruise ships into the area.
- 1955** Gustavus forelands and the east portion of Excursion Inlet are removed from the monument. National Defense (Gustavus airstrip) and a boundary error (Excursion Inlet) are cited as reasons for the exclusions, although local opposition to the monument was also a significant factor.
- 1958** An earthquake measuring 8.0 along the Fairweather Fault produces a massive wave, devastating Lituya Bay.
- 1960's** Cruise ships are now entering Glacier Bay regularly.
- 1963** Park Superintendent L.J. Mitchell gathers information to re-designate Glacier Bay as a national park.
- 1966** Glacier Bay Lodge is built. William S. Cooper, "Father of Glacier Bay National Monument," speaks at the dedication.
- 1980** The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act is signed into law. Glacier Bay becomes a national park now covering 3.3 million acres, much of it designated wilderness. A national preserve is also added, comprising 57,000 acres.
- 1986** Glacier Bay National Park, along with Admiralty Island National Monument, is designated an International Biosphere Reserve.
- 1992** Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, together with Wrangell/St. Elias National Park (Alaska), Kluane National Park Reserve (Canada) and Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park (Canada), becomes part of a 24 million acre World Heritage Site, the largest internationally protected area in the world.
- 1995** The National Park Service and Hoonah Tlingits sign a Memorandum of Understanding, establishing a working relationship.
- 1998-1999** Congress passes legislation regarding the management of commercial fishing activities in Glacier Bay National Park. In 1999 the National Park Service regulations are finalized. Passage of the 1998 legislation, in one sense, brought to culmination at least two decades of effort by the National Park Service, the State of Alaska, commercial fishermen, Native leaders, Alaskan representatives of local, regional and national conservation groups, and hundreds of other citizens to resolve the commercial fishing issue in the park.
- 2000** About 390,000 people visited Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve.

Photographs page 1:
top left - Tlingit canoe, Lituya Bay
center - Cruise ship "Queen" 1899
right - Dundas Bay Cannery 1912
background - Overlooking Muir Glacier 1890

Photograph page 2:
background - Tlingit group portrait 1904
(American Museum of Natural History)
Page 1 photographs from the Bohn Collection