



Four miners at the Lucky Strike Mine (McKinley Lake Mine), date and persons unknown. CORDOVA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PHOTO, DR. W.H. CHASE COLLECTION

Doctor Chase remained determined. In 1944, he reorganized again as the Alaska Lucky Strike Mine. His reputation as a doctor and mayor helped him sell stock to local businessmen and residents as he continued assessment and promotion work. Finally, in the 1960s, he let the claims lapse. No known records exist of sustained gold production in the district. Only 16 ounces of gold and 9 ounces of silver were ever produced! For nearly 70 years, claim holders and promoters, motivated by overly optimistic assay values, dumped money into a bottomless pit without knowledge of proven ore reserve quantities.



McKinley Lake Gold Mines, Ltd., Inc. stock certificate signed by W.H. Chase, President, and I.D. Bogart, Secretary, 1940. COURTESY OF THE STATE OF ALASKA DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES—ABANDONED MINE LAND PROGRAM

Regardless that this mining venture was a bust, the McKinley Lake Mine ruins provide an interesting glimpse of life in an early 1900s gold mining camp. Remember, this is a historic site. Some of the most important information learned about a historic site is found in architecture and archeology. **Please leave things the way you find them. Do not damage property that is not yours. Removing objects from a site, even those that look like trash, obliterates clues about the past. Vandalism is one of the worst things you can do to a historic site.** Please respect this area and be considerate to all who will visit after you. By doing so, you are helping to preserve and protect this historic site.

**Exploring abandoned mines can be dangerous. Be very careful. Never enter an abandoned tunnel or shaft under any conditions. Do not climb on equipment or buildings.** McKinley Lake Mine had numerous safety hazards prior to 2000. To eliminate these hazards, the Forest Service worked with the Alaska Office of History and Archeology and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Three mine shafts and one adit were closed. The unstable remains of the mill building were cut to hasten its settling. Efforts were made to make the site safer yet retain its character and integrity as an early mining camp. Even though safety work was done, please be careful as you explore the area. Enjoy your visit to the McKinley Lake Mine. This site helped shape Cordova's early history and helps us understand how miners lived and worked during Cordova's gold fever infection.

This brochure was a cooperative effort with the U.S. Forest Service, the Alaska Office of History and Archeology, and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources—Abandoned Mine Land Program.



# THE MCKINLEY LAKE MINE

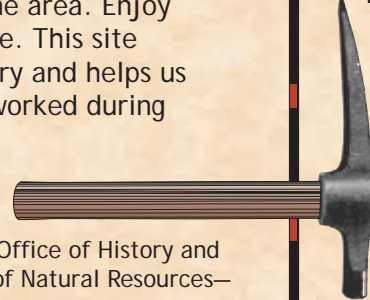
GOLD FEVER FIZZLE

**CORDOVA DAILY ALASKAN**  
CORDOVA, ALASKA, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1910.  
**ANOTHER RICH STRIKE AT MCKINLEY LAKE**  
A Big Ledge of Gold Quartz is Discovered, the Assays From Which Run From \$25.20 to \$176.80 to the Ton.

Gold fever infected the good judgment of many Alaskans and Cordova residents are no exception.

Remains of an abandoned mine and mining camp lie 20 miles east of Cordova. Collapsed adits and shafts, building ruins, small gauge rails, and rusting equipment tell the story of gold fever and deluded investors, mostly Cordova residents, who sank their savings into a profitless mine. For half a century, money was raised and spent to develop the McKinley Lake Mine with confident hopes that a mining boom would bring prosperity to Cordova. Discouragingly, that boom never came.

Gold was first discovered north of McKinley Lake in 1898. Prospectors worked the area sporadically until activity exploded in 1906. In the next three years, more than one hundred lode claims were filed. By 1910, the Cordova Daily Alaskan reported encouraging assay samples from the area. Prominent Cordova businessmen visited the McKinley Lake District and learned that the newly established McKinley Lake Mining Co. had driven over 600 feet of tunnels, spent over \$25,000, and was shipping ore to a Lower 48 smelter. Local investments helped speed up this development and by 1912, claim owners were hoping to attract outside capital and develop the properties on a larger scale.



McKinley Lake Mine became a most significant business endeavor for Dr. Will H. Chase, Cordova's mayor (for 24 terms) and doctor. Determined that a mining boom would enhance Cordova, Dr. Chase pursued this dream for years.

In 1915, he hired a mining engineer and assayer to study the district. Study results were cautious—expensive development and grand effort would be necessary to produce profit. Undeterred, Dr. Chase formed the Cordova Mining and Development Company. World War I halted his efforts. In 1925, promoting the (newly leased) Lucky Strike Mine, he states, "it is my belief that in a short time the McKinley District will rank high among the Alaska producers." Despite this optimism, success was limited. After another reorganization in 1933, now the McKinley Lake Gold Mines Ltd., Inc., Dr. Chase's company was stopped by World War II before any gold was produced.



Top photo: Dr. Chase (right) with unidentified miner, bottom photo: Mac McAllister, mayor of Allaganik, inspects entrance to adit, McKinley Lake District, dates unknown. CORDOVA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PHOTOS, DR. W.H. CHASE COLLECTION

McKinley Lake Mine's mill may have worked like this typical amalgamation-concentration mill.

## CRUSH

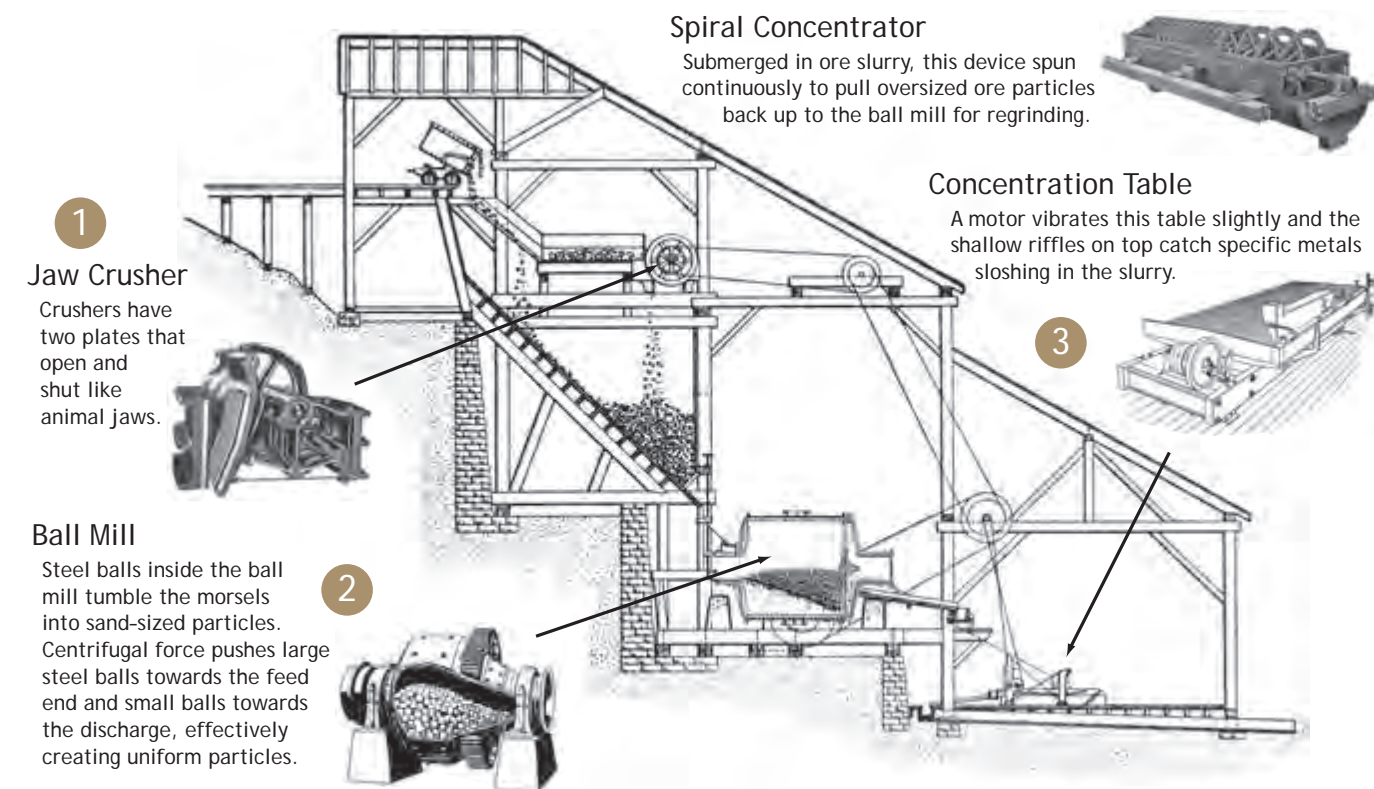
The milling process starts at the top. Rough ore is delivered in carts along a tram line and dumped over a screen. Large chunks go to a **coarse jaw crusher** 1 and are crushed into morsels. These morsels tumble down to the next stage, fine grinding.

## GRIND

The morsels are ground into sand-sized particles in the **ball mill**. 2 The particles are screened to assure a uniform size, then washed down to the recovery process.

## RECOVER

Ground ore slurry is processed over and over with different methods until every bit of valuable ore is recovered. One method is **flotation recovery**; ground ore slurry is agitated to create bubbles. Adding specific chemicals to the bubbles causes some minerals to float where they are skimmed off. Another method pulses water through a **jig**, a box-like device over a screen which separates minerals according to size and weight. Finally, at the end of the recovery process, **concentration tables** 3 collect any remaining valuable ore.



1 Jaw Crusher  
Crushers have two plates that open and shut like animal jaws.

2 Ball Mill  
Steel balls inside the ball mill tumble the morsels into sand-sized particles. Centrifugal force pushes large steel balls towards the feed end and small balls towards the discharge, effectively creating uniform particles.

3 Concentration Table  
A motor vibrates this table slightly and the shallow riffles on top catch specific metals sloshing in the slurry.



# The Inclined Shaft



STATE OF ALASKA DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES—ABANDONED MINE LAND PROGRAM PHOTO.

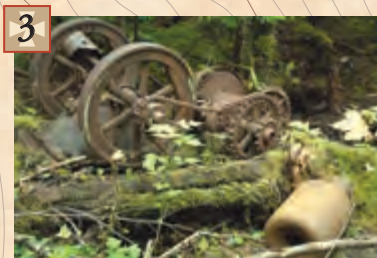
Before

Excavation of the Inclined Shaft began in 1938, one of the first areas mined at the Mill Creek site. Its full depth is unknown, however, in 1939 it reportedly was 20 feet deep at a 50-degree angle. Narrow gauge rails extended out of the opening and connected to a tram line between the log platform and the Trench Shaft. By 2000, rot had weakened the sidewalls of the shaft and deep water posed a drowning hazard. To eliminate these hazards, water was first pumped out of the shaft so it could be excavated by hand and an aluminum grate was placed over the opening to prevent persons from falling in.

After



US FOREST SERVICE CHUGACH NATIONAL FOREST



This winch powered a tram descending into the Inclined Shaft. CHUGACH NATL. FOREST PHOTO

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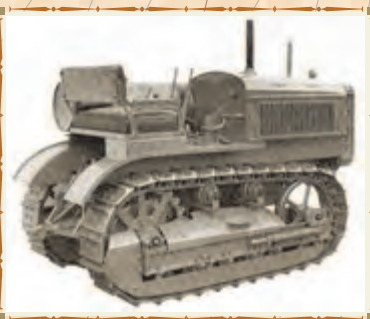
A miner pushes an ore cart on the McKinley Lake Mines, Limited, Inc. property, date and person unknown. A similar ore cart lies near the McKinley Lake Trail. UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE ARCHIVES PHOTO, DR. W.H. CHASE COLLECTION

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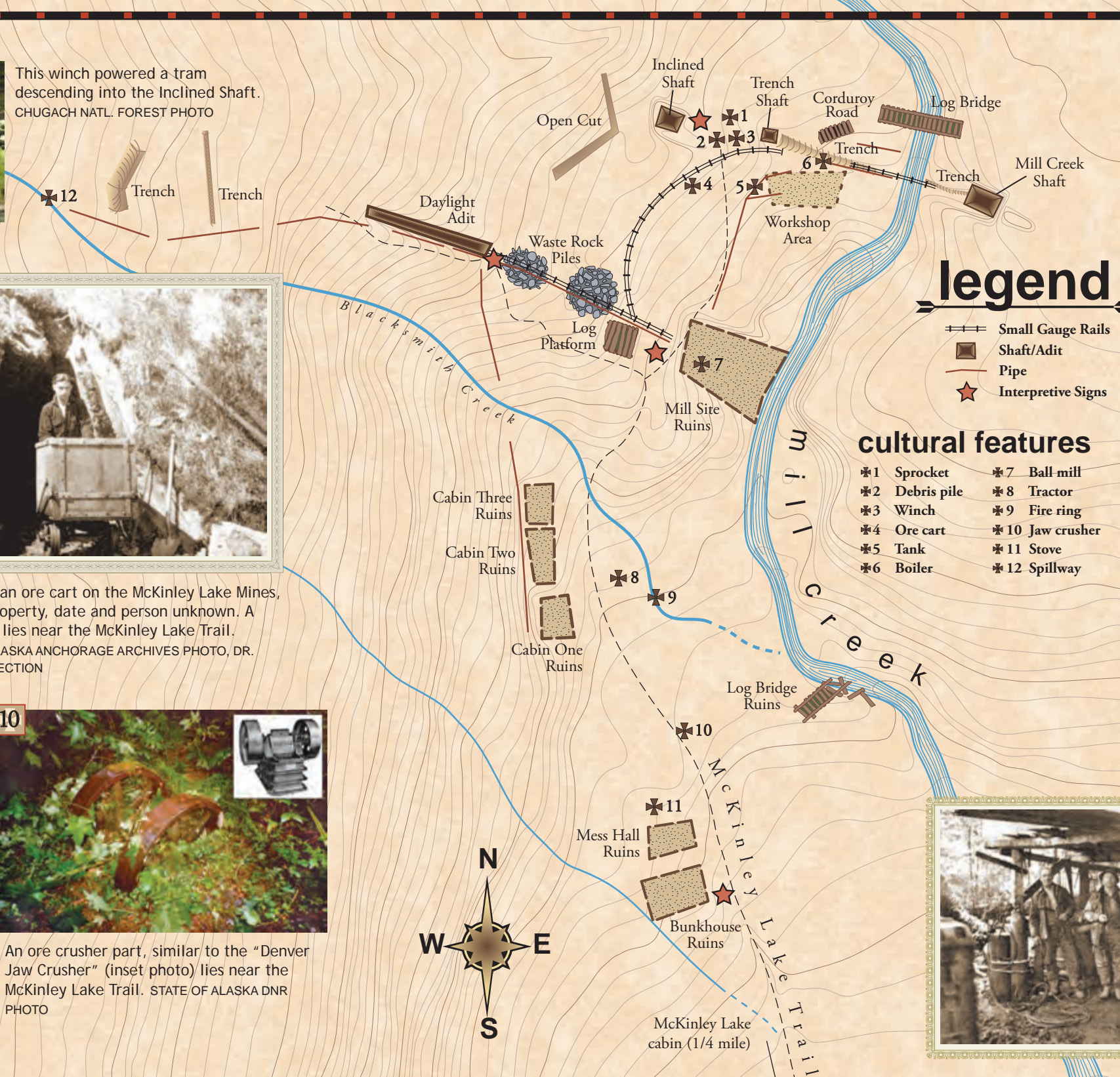


An ore crusher part, similar to the "Denver Jaw Crusher" (inset photo) lies near the McKinley Lake Trail. STATE OF ALASKA DNR PHOTO

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The remains of a Model Thirty Caterpillar tractor, like the model shown above and at right, can be seen at the McKinley Lake Mine site. Manufactured between 1925 and 1932, it was probably very useful for building the jeep trail to the mine, for skidding logs, and many other uses. CATERPILLAR INC. CORPORATE ARCHIVES PHOTOS



## Legend

- Small Gauge Rails
- Shaft/Adit
- Pipe
- Interpretive Signs

## cultural features

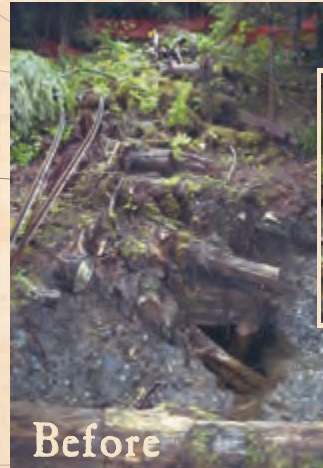
- \*1 Sprocket
- \*2 Debris pile
- \*3 Winch
- \*4 Ore cart
- \*5 Tank
- \*6 Boiler
- \*7 Ball mill
- \*8 Tractor
- \*9 Fire ring
- \*10 Jaw crusher
- \*11 Stove
- \*12 Spillway

# The Trench Shaft



After

The Trench and Mill Creek Shafts were dug in the late 1930s to access the Little Fissure Vein. The Trench shaft, a small vertical shaft reportedly 20 feet deep, exposed the center area of the vein. The Mill Creek shaft, described by Dr. Chase as an "inclined shaft" 20 feet deep, exposed the east end of the vein. Inside the shaft, notched timbers suggest a pulley or winch system may have hoisted rocks to the surface. Over time, the steep sidewalls of both shafts rotted and filled with water and in 2000, the shafts were filled in to prevent their collapse.



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# The Mill Creek Shaft



Before



After

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Crew members of McKinley Lake Mines, Ltd., Inc. stand in front of the Mill Creek bunkhouse, circa 1940. Behind the bunkhouse, at right, is the mess hall. The bunkhouse was constructed in the fall of 1939. CORDOVA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PHOTO, DR. W.H. CHASE COLLECTION

The McKinley Lake Mine mill building was under construction in the early 1940s. Today, much of the abandoned equipment at the mill site can tell the story of what happened there. UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE ARCHIVES PHOTO, DR. WILL H. CHASE COLLECTION



Opposite the bunkhouse and mess hall ruins, on the east side of the trail, is the possible site of a blacksmith shed, built in the early 1910s. Remote camps needed a blacksmith shed to recycle salvaged iron into new tools, equipment, and parts for repairs. CORDOVA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PHOTO, DR. W.H. CHASE COLLECTION



This log bridge, circa 1930, connected to the corduroy road branching off the McKinley Lake Trail and extending north toward Bear Creek. CHUGACH NATIONAL FOREST PHOTO