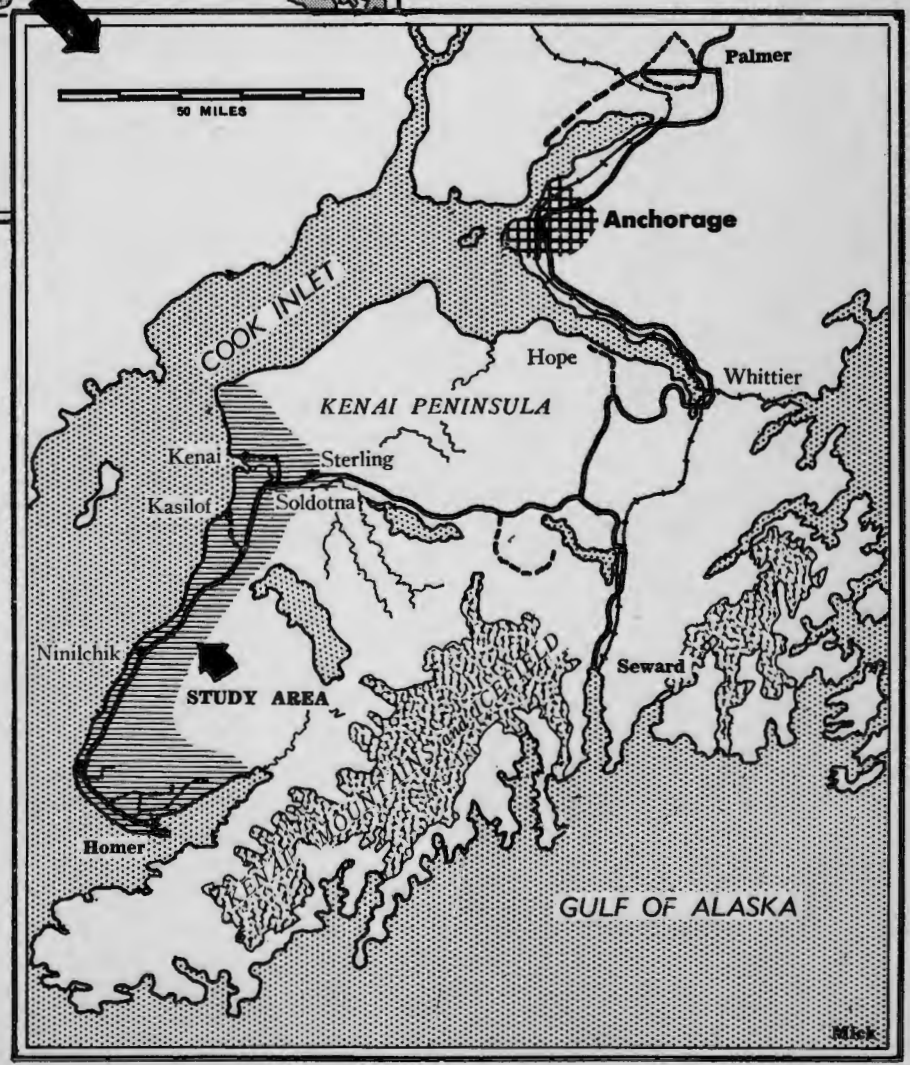
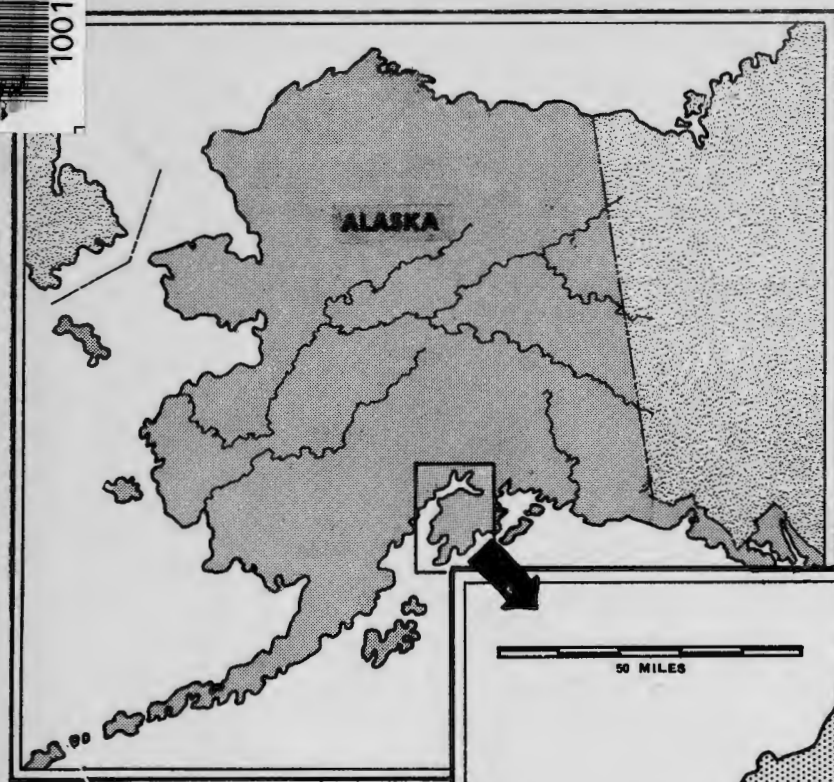


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AND OCCUPANCY

OWNERSHIP & USE

on Homesteads in the Kenai Peninsula Alaska 1955



ALASKA AGRICULTURAL
EXPERIMENT STATION
University of Alaska
Palmer Alaska

ALLAN H. MICK, Director

cooperating with the
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

Foreword

Field work for this study involved every homestead on the western side of the Kenai Peninsula. I. M. C. Anderson, of the Soil Conservation Service, made contacts in the Kasilof and Cohoe sections. Kelly R. Johnson, of the Bureau of Land Management, met homesteaders in the Homer area. Mr. John Weldon, of the Alaska Agricultural Experiment Station, surveyed the Sterling, Kenai, and Ninilchik sections. General observations and impressions of these enumerators were valuable in making the analysis of the compiled data.

Mr. Harold T. Jorgenson of the Bureau of Land Management contributed substantially to this study by making available certain land office records and by interpreting and analyzing much of

the compiled data. He has been particularly helpful in relating this information to present and proposed governmental policy regarding the disposal of federal lands for agricultural purposes in Alaska.

Mrs. L. E. Dhabolt is credited with the tedious task of preparing background information from Land Office records, compiling and tabulating materials from the field schedules, and typing the draft manuscript.

Mr. C. E. Watson, Territorial Climatologist of the Weather Bureau, provided climatic information. Acknowledgement is also made to many others who have revised certain portions of the manuscript and have made helpful comments and criticisms.

Hugh Johnson was formerly senior agricultural economist with the Alaska Agricultural Experiment Station, Palmer, Alaska. Robert Coffman is presently employed by the Bureau of Land Management, United States Department of the Interior. The views of the junior author as expressed in this bulletin are his own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of the Interior or of the Bureau of Land Management.—Allan H. Mick, editor.

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Land Occupancy, Ownership and Use on Homesteads In Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, 1955

HUGH A. JOHNSON AND ROBERT J. COFFMAN

THE Kenai Peninsula is an Alaskan Mecca for many venturesome families newly arrived from the States. They flock there each year searching for "free" land and fresh opportunity in a new country. Business at the Anchorage Land Office continues briskly as new frontiersmen apply for the right to enter the public domain. Numerous applications for homestead entry are still filed despite a recent change in the Homestead Act requiring cultivation by all entrymen, whether veteran or not, and despite the fact that accessible agricultural land along the Peninsula's roads has already been culled over. Most new arrivals know little about pioneering or Alaskan conditions. They often have no experience in rural living. All too many find that Alaska is a hard bargainer, taking their savings and their hopes and giving them in return a bit of land which they are powerless to use. Settlement continues to outpace farm development and even interest in farm development. On the other hand, interest in farm development is also definitely increasing.

The Peninsula has been the scene of considerable post-war settlement and development. It has received a more intensive private search for farm land and opportunity than other parts of Alaska. Governmental agencies have made detailed investigations in large sections of the area. These may have helped in a small way to guide recent settlement, but their effectiveness has been largely lost through a failure to provide sound supplementary plans and programs. Additional necessary aids include long term loans for entrymen, land clearing assistance, intermediate loans for livestock and equipment, and assistance in developing markets. Availability of land resources is a minor problem in the interrelated web of factors required for satisfactory homesteading.

On the brighter side, there has been a doubling of occupied tracts and nearly a doubling of agricultural land use since 1950. A few families have become self-supporting farmers by dint of their

own hard work. Many recent settlers are becoming firmly established, and with luck and perseverance they probably will develop significant farm enterprises. Others are developing non-farm businesses which add to the community and bolster its economy.

Problems of rural residents and part-time farmers differ from those of homesteaders trying to develop farms and markets. New programs are necessary to meet the needs of hundreds of families who now seem to be stranded in the Kenai Peninsula. Governmental agencies concerned with settlement and development of rural lands, and providing services to homesteaders and farmers, have been hard-pressed to meet even their rudimentary but urgent demands. New policies are needed to facilitate an orderly, economical, and more permanent settlement on the remaining agricultural lands there and elsewhere in Alaska.

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To ascertain the land use, occupancy, and ownership of homesteaded tracts in the western part of the Kenai Peninsula, all homesteads west of Chugach National Forest and Fox River at the head of Kachemak Bay were studied during the summer of 1955. Objectives of this investigation were:

- (1) to ascertain the use and production of settled land,
- (2) to study occupancy and ownership of homesteaded land,
- (3) to pinpoint successes and failures in public land policy,
- (4) to assess the agricultural settlement potential of the area,
- (5) to study other problems inherent in rural occupancy as it is developing in the western lowlands of the Kenai Peninsula.

Analysis of records so obtained emphasizes that acquisition of title to a homestead is no assurance of a financially independent farm. By implication it points out that many entrymen have not acted in good faith when applying for land under the Homestead Law. Some did not intend to develop farms when applying for land. The study also illustrates that many homesteaders, acting in good faith, eventually discover they are financially unable or are unqualified by training and experience to develop self-sustaining farm enterprises. The rising proportions of patented

lands lying idle and held by non-resident owners has become a growing concern. Abandoned homesteads add to public service costs without contributing any value in goods or services. Worst of all, they impede the development of a well-integrated community.

CLIMATE.—The climate of the Kenai Peninsula is generally moderated by its coastal position. Winters are about seven months long but not severe for the latitude. Most winters bring heavy snow falls. Summers are relatively short, cool, and quite cloudy. Autumn brings rainy weather. Average July temperatures range from 53° F at Kenai to 61° F at Homer and Sterling (Table 1). A maximum July temperature of 90° F was recorded at Sterling. Although five official weather stations are located in the western Kenai Peninsula, their coverage provides only general climatic information and fails to indicate important local variations. Rainfall, temperature, and length of growing season differ widely within short distances.

The period between freezing dates differs widely between sections and within the same locality. The average frost-free season is 72 days in Sterling, 92 days at Kasilof, and 144 days five miles northwest of Homer. In the Kenai-Kasilof area, the season has varied from 60 to 98 days, and in the Homer area, from 93 to 157 days. Low spring temperatures everywhere prevent rapid melting of snow and make the ground cold and wet until late in the summer.

Table 1.—Summary of climate for the western Kenai Peninsula, from unpublished data supplied by the U. S. Weather Bureau.

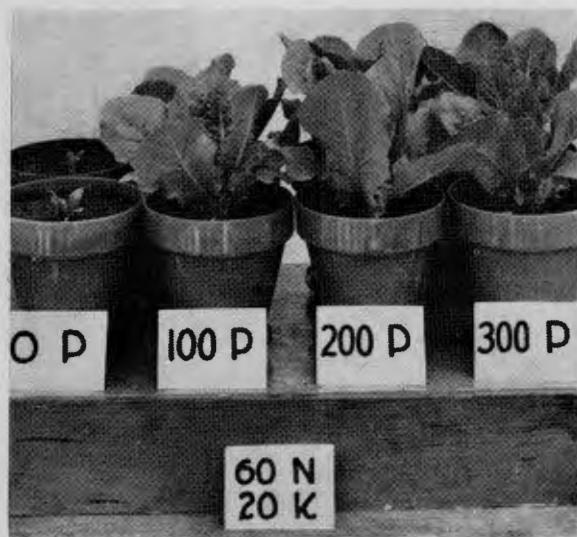
Station	Years of record	Temperature (°F)				Average dates of killing frost*		
		January average	July average	Max	Min	Last in spring	First in fall	Frost-free days
Sterling	5	6.5	61.2	90	-51	June 18	Aug 28	72
Kenai	25	10.5	53.2	89	-48	June 14	Aug 26	71
Kasilof	21	13.4	55.4	87	-43	June 6	Sept 6	92
Homer**	4	22.4	53.3	81	-10	May 9	Sept 30	144
Homer	21	29.3	60.9	80	-18	May 30	Sept 15	104

	Average precipitation (inches)												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
Sterling	0.7	1.1	0.9	0.7	0.5	1.3	2.1	2.4	2.3	1.6	0.9	2.1	16.7
Kenai	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.8	1.2	2.2	3.1	3.3	2.1	1.6	1.1	18.8
Kasilof	1.1	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.6	1.3	2.0	2.7	3.2	1.8	1.4	1.3	17.9
Homer**	1.7	2.6	1.6	1.3	1.1	1.3	1.9	3.3	2.7	4.3	3.2	3.0	28.0
Homer	2.2	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.0	1.1	1.6	3.0	2.7	3.0	3.4	2.2	24.4

*Beginning in 1953, the length of frost-free season was determined by the last 32° F or below recorded in the spring and the first 32° F or below recorded in the fall. An exception is the Sterling Station where 32° F or below has been reported every month during the past 3 years.

**This station is five miles northwest of Homer.

Roughly half of all precipitation falls between May and September with the peak rainfall for the year coming in late July and early August. Average annual precipitation varies from around 17 inches at Sterling and 19 inches at Kenai to 28 inches in the hill country northeast of Homer.



Soils in the Kenai Peninsula need nitrogen and phosphate fertilizers. This pot-test shows how lettuce responds to phosphates when sufficient nitrogen and potash are present. The pot on the left, without phosphate, will not grow a crop. About 200 pounds of available phosphate (400 to 500 pounds of treblesuperphosphate per acre) is needed to insure good yields, in addition to nitrogen and some potash. Some soils need lime. Fertilizers must be used on new land to grow a good crop.

SOILS.—In the northern part of the area soils are generally medium textured podsols. The land surface is a wind reworked mantle overlying glacial till or outwash materials. Soils supporting grass near Homer are darker and contain more organic matter than the leached forest soils further north. In many places lowlands are poorly drained and are covered with muskeg bogs of very raw organic material. Associated with muskegs are mucky soils which, though now wet most of the time, offer some agricultural promise if drained. Muskegs and other low sites are susceptible to early frost.

Forest soils on the Kenai Peninsula are inherently unproductive when first cleared. Even the dark colored grasslands in the south respond to good management. Fertilizers are needed to insure good yields. In some places crops have

grown better after lime has been added to the plow layer but this is not recommended as a general practice. Farming experience has shown that judicious use of commercial fertilizer, together with the continual return of manure and residues, helps maintain good crop yields.

Land capability surveys by the Soil Conservation Service have classified 323,250 acres in a broad strip four to six miles wide along the western shore of the Kenai Peninsula.* This area extends roughly from Boulder Point on the north to east of Homer, with a large indentation inland along the Kenai River almost to Skilak Lake. Nearly all lands presently being homesteaded or considered suitable for settlement in the region have been thus surveyed. These surveys disclose a wide range in land capabilities within relatively short distances. Variations are caused by differences in topography, soil materials, and drainage. In general, 34 per cent of the land surveyed falls in the Class II category (the highest class in Alaska), 9 per cent in Class III, and 10 per cent in Class IV. The remainder is unsuited for tillage and accounts for 47 per cent of the surveyed area. Much Class II, III and IV land is covered with heavy timber or is relatively isolated making it less desirable for settlement.

VEGETATION.—On the western lowlands of the Kenai Peninsula, white spruce, black spruce, birch, cottonwood, and aspen cover well-drained benches, ridges, and hillocks. Varying with soils, drainage, elevation and locality, timber stands range from some spruce large enough for commercial lumbering to patches of alder and willow brush. Undergrowth associated with these trees consist of alder, willow, buckbrush, high-bush cranberry, and wild rose. Open places in the woods often sustain a rank growth of grass.

White spruce is abundant on deep, well drained soils. Birch is the second most predominant forest tree. It ranges from near sea level to timber line (which is around 2,000 feet elevation) and occurs mixed with white spruce. These trees generally become smaller as thinner soils are encountered and are more stunted at higher altitudes. Aspen occurs as saplings or in burned areas, frequently in pure stands. Large trees are found on well-drained soils, mixed with white spruce or with white spruce and birch. Cottonwood, the largest tree on the lowlands, is commonly found on gravelly, sandy, and silty stream bottoms.

*See SOILS AND LAND USE IN THE KENAI-KASLOF SOIL CONSERVATION SUBDISTRICT, Alaska Soil Conservation District Publication, 1955.

On the open slopes and rolling lands of the Bald Hills north of Kachemak Bay are large natural meadows of redtop (*Calamagrostis sp.*) much of which grows from six to nine feet tall. Some native bluegrass also grows here.

Extensive muskegs are found on the western lowlands of the Kenai Peninsula. Leatherleaf, laborador tea, sedges and some grasses are found in open muskegs. In less boggy or in shallow muskeg, dense growths of small black spruce

and dwarf birch are interspersed with willow and alder.

Numerous fires have destroyed much timber, particularly in the Tustumena Lake and the Kenai River vicinities. Aspen and birch reproduce rapidly where forests have been devastated by fire. In some burns, spruce also reproduces but at a slower rate. Where not re-burned, spruce eventually crowds out aspen to give typical spruce or birch-spruce forests.

SETTLEMENT HISTORY

Kenai and Ninilchik have been settled for many years. Russian explorers found well established-Indian villages at or near these places and established their trading posts nearby. Kasilof was also the site of an early trading post. Homer was noted as a coaling and watering spot, but had no settlement of size until recently. Coal, gold and some other minerals were known to be in the western lowlands but no deposits of commercial value have yet been developed. Commercial fishing of salmon has been the major interest of residents. Declining salmon runs, construction of the Sterling Highway, an influx of families following World War II and the building of national defense establishments brought drastic changes in recent years.

Homesteading activity before World War II was insignificant, consisting primarily of developing fox ranches and trappers' headquarters. After World War II proposals for locating an agricultural colony, together with building a road to open the country, created extraordinary interest in the western Kenai Peninsula. Withdrawal of three areas totaling 191,998 acres for classification, anticipating legislation to foster group settlement, led many veterans and others to hope that they could get in on the ground floor of a government settlement project. When this failed to materialize, many settlers sought other alternatives. Some went elsewhere in Alaska, some took jobs on the Peninsula, and some entered homesteads outside the withdrawn areas.

Until June of 1954, veterans of World War II having 19 months or more of military service were allowed to acquire 160-acre homesteads after seven months of residence and construction of "habitable" dwellings. Hundreds of veterans entered tracts, with little thought of many problems inherent in developing farms or in making a living from the land. A high proportion of these tracts are now unoccupied. An ever-increasing number of homesteading families have turned to non-farm work for financial support. Most of them are not farmers and will never develop farms from their land.

Construction of the Sterling Highway has made it possible to ship farm produce to the Anchorage metropolitan market. Construction of Wildwood Station at Kenai and other defense outposts at several other locations have raised hopes for a

local market. The tourist trade also is talked about as a large potential market for local produce. By 1956 the local market demand for most farm products was larger than could be supplied by the few small-scale farms in the area.

LAND WITHDRAWALS.—Three areas in the Kenai Peninsula were temporarily withdrawn from entry, location or settlement in 1948 and 1949. This was done so the land could be examined for agricultural potentialities in advance of any group settlement that might be authorized by pending Congressional legislation. Group settlement did not materialize because the proposed enabling legislation failed. Withdrawn lands included the Kenai-Kasilof area embracing 160,974 acres, the Fritz Creek uplands north of Kachemak Bay involving 17,270 acres, and the hinterlands of Ninilchik containing 13,754 acres.

Subsequent examination by the Soil Conservation Service showed that 41 per cent of the Kenai-Kasilof, 60 per cent of the Ninilchik, and 25 per cent of the Fritz Creek withdrawals were Class II or Class III land suitable for cultivation.*

In certain parts of the Kenai-Kasilof withdrawal, cultivable soil accounted for more than 75 per cent of the total acreage. Especially good for agricultural settlement were four small areas: one near Moose River, another directly west of Soldotna, a third near Kenai, and the fourth in the vicinity of Coho. When it became apparent that a project settlement would not be authorized by Congress, these areas were laid out in four blocks of special homestead tracts. Most of these special tracts contained 160 acres and each was designed to contain at least 75 per cent cultivable land. This lay-out was thought to afford maximum land use, insure an adequate tillable acreage, and provide economical road access for each proposed farm.

Two groups of these special tracts, containing 62 homestead units, were opened to entry in the spring of 1952—one in the vicinity of Moose River, and one northeast of Kenai. Both groups contained a total of 62 specially planned homesteads containing 9,834 acres of which 7,765 were

*The Fritz Creek withdrawal, revealed to be largely unsuited for cultivation was restored to vacant public domain status on August 26, 1953, with no further study.



A homestead in the hill country northwest of Homer. Native grass covers thousands of acres in the Kenai Peninsula. Although this grass can be extensively grazed, it does not respond to intensive management. After late July its feeding value as hay rapidly drops off. Steep slopes in this country must remain in grass to control erosion.

Class II and Class III land. The Kenai group was heavily timbered while those near Moose River contained areas burned over or lightly revegetated with aspen and spruce. Only one of these selected homesteads was not entered and it still remains in vacant public domain status. A third group of 23 selected homesteads was opened in the fall of 1952 in the Cohoe area. Of 3,695 acres in these tracts, 2,999 were Class II and Class III land. Again, all but one of these homesteads were entered. These three groups of homesteads were claimed almost entirely within the 90-day veteran's preferential filing period.

A fourth group of 54 selected homesteads was opened to entry in the fall of 1955 just west of Soldotna. This group contained 8,871 acres of which 7,100 were Class II and Class III land. When the 90-day veteran's preference filing period expired on February 12, 1956, only 13 homesteads in this group had been entered. Although twelve of these were entered by veterans, the effect of changes in the land law to require cultivation is clearly seen in the lessened interest in claiming this group of selected homesteads. That part of the Kenai-Kasilof withdrawal not opened to selected homestead entry was restored to general entry in the fall of 1955. Extremely variable soil conditions precluded the planning of special homestead units on this land.

Certain parts of the Ninilchik withdrawal also were found to contain a high proportion of cultivable land. As in the Kenai-Kasilof withdrawal, a group of selected homesteads was opened in the spring of 1952. These units, 39 in all, contained

6,233 acres of which 4,628 were Class II and Class III land. Although each contained a high percentage of tillable soil, 15 homesteads (about 40 per cent) never were entered. The principal reason for lack of interest in these places was their inaccessibility, because most were between 1½ and 3½ miles from the nearest maintained road. Until a roadway opens up this area, little settlement will occur. Remaining lands of the Ninilchik withdrawal area were opened to general entry on August 26, 1953.

These specially designed homesteads, selected from withdrawn areas, have been settled too recently to have developed a stable ownership pattern, nor have they yet realized any significant advantage from their more favorable agricultural potential. In the Moose River, Kenai, and Coho vicinities 48 per cent of the selected homesteads were found to be still occupied in July of 1955. Only 15 per cent of the Ninilchik units were occupied. In comparison, 40 per cent of all 851 homesteads in the western Kenai Peninsula were found occupied in 1955.

Among owners of the selected homesteads at Moose River, Kenai, and Coho areas, 4½ per cent were farming in 1955. Of the selected tracts at Ninilchik, 3 per cent were being farmed. For the whole western Kenai Peninsula, 4 per cent of all homesteads were being used as full- or part-time farms in 1955. Slightly more than 1 per cent of the acreage in all selected homesteads was being cropped in 1955. Average cropland use for all homesteads on the western Kenai Peninsula was 1.3 per cent

These land withdrawals were criticized on the grounds that they frustrated normal homestead development and hindered orderly and compact settlement of the Peninsula. But at the time the withdrawals were made, distinct possibilities of group settlement existed and it was necessary to prevent further alienation of the lands until land and marketing studies were made.

After World War II until mid-1954, the majority of entrymen were veterans. Veterans having more than 19 months of military service could acquire patent to their homesteads in seven months with no cultivation requirement. In areas other than those withdrawn, experience has shown that this ease of homestead acquisition led to a high pro-

portion of absentee ownership and little agricultural development. It was thus argued that withdrawals actually helped hold the land from indiscriminate settlement by persons not interested in agriculture nor in permanent residence. Reduced homesteading activity since 1954, resulting from the cultivation requirement by all entrymen, is evidence supporting this contention.

Detailed studies of soils in areas thought to be most suitable for agriculture also showed that a high proportion (48.3 per cent) were not suited to even occasional cultivation. Thus while the withdrawals were subject to much unfavorable criticism, they saved many families from injudicious entry on submarginal lands.

LAND OCCUPANCY, OWNERSHIP, AND UTILIZATION

The census of 1939 reported 4,835 acres owned or homesteaded by 33 families in the western Kenai Peninsula. By 1949 the homesteaded acreage had gone up to 13,091 and the number of families to 108. Many homesteads showed little or no agricultural use. Several occupants were renting. Others were managing places for non-resident owners.

A survey in 1950 found 127 occupied homesteads containing about 15,600 acres. More land had been cleared between 1946 and 1950, than during the preceding 40 years. Although many new homesteaders said they would develop farms during the next few years, other families with more experience claimed they would reduce their agricultural operations.

In 1955 additional information was gathered for every tract that had ever been entered or filed upon. This survey included 851 homesteads with a total area of 109,629 acres (Table 2). Of these tracts, 59 per cent (containing 65,118) acres were then unoccupied. Another 31 per cent (including 30,572 acres) were occupied only as rural residences. The remaining 10 per cent was comprised of 38 homesteads (containing 5,682 acres) being farmed and 50 others (containing 6,655 acres) occupied by families planning to farm in the near future.

Among these homesteads, 458 (54 per cent) were patented as of July, 1955, for a total of 57,348 acres. Less than half of all patented tracts were occupied. Of the patented homesteads, 11 per cent (49 tracts) were occupied by persons farming or intending to farm. Of the unpatented homesteads, containing 52,281 acres, 35 per cent were occupied. Ten per cent were held by families farming or intending to farm.

Full and part-time farms on the western Kenai Peninsula accounted for a total of 5,681 acres. Of this acreage, 75 per cent was patented and 25 per cent was unpatented. On the other hand, tracts on which residents planned to farm were 67 per cent unpatented. Most of these were occupied by new homesteaders. On the basis of the 1950 survey and observations five years later, it is expected that few prospective farmers among these inexperienced homesteaders will make progress toward actual farming.

Unoccupied homesteads contained 65,118 acres of which 51 per cent was unpatented. Some unpatented acreage had already reverted to vacant public domain status where it remains. Other unpatented tracts had been entered by persons who later left the Territory, having no intention of meeting homestead requirements. Patented unoccupied land is beyond governmental control. The 32,152 acres of such land, more than half in the Homer hill country, retards community development. It will continue to do so until a general property tax is levied or until local values increase sufficiently to induce transfer of ownership to persons who will develop the properties.

Homestead regulations require the entryman's residence on his homestead to the exclusion of a home elsewhere. He is generally required to live on his land at least seven months each year for three consecutive years. Regulations now require that one-sixteenth of the total acreage must be cultivated during the second entry year and one-eighth during the third entry year. Other than the showing of cultivation there is no rule that a homestead must be continuously farmed. A large proportion of unoccupied and unpatented homesteads will revert to public domain because of residence non-compliance by the entryman.

Table 2.—Homesteads of the western Kenai Peninsula by area, occupancy type and ownership status as of July 1, 1955.

Area and occupancy type	Patented*		Unpatented		Total**	
	Number	Acres	Number	Acres	Number	Acres
Kenai-Kasilof, total	137	18,020	127	17,545	264	35,565
Full-time farms	5	717	1	160	6	877
Will be full-time farms	1	160	0	0	1	160
Part-time farms	7	998	2	320	9	1,308
Will be part-time farms	1	120	4	640	5	760
Rural residences	57	7,107	60	8,468	117	15,575
Total occupied	71	9,092	67	9,588	138	18,680
Unoccupied	66	8,928	60	7,957	126	16,885
Ninilchik total	84	9,947	91	11,186	171	21,133
Full-time farms	1	28	0	0	1	28
Will be full-time farms	0	0	3	440	3	440
Part-time farms	2	320	2	275	4	595
Will be part-time farms	4	270	4	448	6	718
Rural residences	36	4,124	28	3,215	63	7,339
Total occupied	43	4,742	37	4,378	77	9,120
Unoccupied	41	5,205	54	6,808	94	12,013
Homer total	237	29,381	183	23,550	416	52,931
Full-time farms	9	1,397	1	320	10	1,717
Will be full-time farms	3	436	3	443	6	879
Part-time farms	6	837	2	320	8	1,157
Will be part-time farms	10	1,178	20	2,520	29	3,698
Rural residences	56	5,912	15	1,746	69	7,658
Total occupied	84	9,760	41	5,349	122	15,109
Subdivided	14	1,602	0	0	14	1,602
Unoccupied	139	18,019	142	18,201	280	36,220
GRAND TOTALS	458	57,348	401	52,281	851	109,629
Full-time farms	15	2,142	2	480	17	2,622
Will be full-time farms	4	596	6	883	10	1,479
Part-time farms	15	2,145	6	915	21	3,060
Will be part-time farms	15	1,568	28	3,608	40	5,176
Rural residences	149	17,143	103	13,429	249	30,572
Total occupied	198	23,594	145	19,315	337	42,909
Subdivided	14	1,602	0	0	14	1,602
Unoccupied	246	32,152	256	32,966	500	65,118

*A number of patented homesteads have been partially subdivided. This generally small acreage sold from the original homesteads is excluded from this table. In the Ninilchik area, five acres were sold from one homestead which is now a farm. In the Homer area, 973 acres were sold from 28 different homesteads; two were being farmed, two were prospective farms, 16 were rural residences, and eight were unoccupied.

**Eight homesteaded tracts were partially patented and partially unpatented. Because these were included in both the patented and the unpatented numbers, a summation of the two groups exceeds total numbers reported.

The number of full-time farms in the western Kenai Peninsula increased from 13 to 17 between 1950 and 1955 (Table 3). All of this increase took place in the Kenai-Kasilof area. There were also more part-time farms in both the Kenai-Kasilof and Ninilchik areas but less in the Homer area. Homesteads where occupants indicated future full-time farm intentions dropped off in all areas, while numbers of proposed part-time units increased, particularly around Homer. Rural residences increased from 47 in 1950 to 249 in

1955. This may reflect both an expansion in homestead settlement and a more comprehensive coverage of all occupied tracts in 1955.

Increased construction activity and the building of local access roadways have focused public interest on the Kenai-Kasilof region in recent years. Plentiful non-farm work and better recognition of problems inherent in farm development accounted for declining interest in full-time farming by a majority of homesteaders. Having faced realities, they then drifted toward part-time farming or gave up thoughts of farming altogether but retained their homes as rural residences.

This trend was revealed by the responses of 127 families first interviewed in 1950. Their farming intentions as expressed in 1950 were re-assessed in 1955. Of these families, 35 were farming in 1950 while 45 planned to farm full-time or part-time in the future (Table 4). By 1955 only 27 were still farming or planning to farm.

The number of full-time farmers increased from 13 to 14. Nine of them had full-time farms in both 1950 and 1955. Five others who were only planning to farm in 1950 had actually developed full-time farms by 1955. Part-time farmers decreased from 22 to 6. Two rural residents had meanwhile become interested in farming. Families who had earlier expressed farm intentions dropped from 45 to 9. Forty-five (35 per cent) of the 127 homesteads were unoccupied by 1955. Another 53 served only as rural residences.

Six per cent of these 127 families had accomplished more agricultural development than had been expected, while 62 per cent had not done as well as was expected. Poorest experience was

Table 3.—Occupancy type of homesteads of the western Kenai Peninsula by areas in 1950 and 1955.

Occupancy type* by areas	1950		1955	
	Number (light face) and acres			
Full-time farms, total	13	1,899	17	2,622
Kenai-Kasilof	2	325	6	877
Ninilchik	1	156	1	28
Homer	10	1,418	10	1,717
Will be full-time farms, total	33	4,659	10	1,479
Kenai-Kasilof	8	972	1	160
Ninilchik	14	1,941	3	440
Homer	11	1,746	6	879
Part-time farms, total	22	2,719	21	3,060
Kenai-Kasilof	3	328	9	1,308
Ninilchik	2	314	4	595
Homer	17	2,077	8	1,157
Will be part-time farms, total	12	1,220	40	5,176
Kenai-Kasilof	—	—	5	760
Ninilchik	4	280	6	718
Homer	8	940	29	3,698
Rural residences, total	47	5,622	249	30,572
Kenai-Kasilof	18	1,962	117	15,575
Ninilchik	9	996	63	7,339
Homer	20	2,664	69	7,658
GRAND TOTAL	127	16,119	337	42,909
Kenai-Kasilof	31	3,587	138	18,680
Ninilchik	30	3,687	77	9,120
Homer	66	8,845	122	15,109

*This classification was based on size of operation, source of income and intentions stated and evidenced by the resident. Some residents might have reported intentions to become full-time farmers but existing conditions indicated their plans would never materialize. In these cases, the homesteader was classified as a rural resident. Families were judged rather critically on their ability to carry through with their plans, particularly in the 1955 survey.

in the group which in 1950 had claimed interest in future full-time farm development. Thirty-five per cent of these tracts were vacant within five years.

Part-time units usually were more recently established and their operators were engaged in enterprises requiring less time, such as truck or vegetable growing.

A comparison of land use by the 27 families who were farming or planning to farm in both 1950 and 1955 shows that the total acres under cultivation on their places went up from 312 to 396 (Table 5). Plantings of vegetables and berries more than doubled. Hay and silage plantings also increased. Grain acreage went down some 75 per cent. Dairy cattle on these 27 homesteads increased from 34 to 59 head, beef cattle increase from 74 to 172, and chicken numbers rose from 2,639 to 4,662. Sheep, rabbits, and "other poultry" numbers declined noticeably. Horses (used as pack animals by sportsmen) increased in number.

Cropland other than garden tracts was reported by 62 families in 1950 (Table 6) and by 95 families in 1955 (Table 7.) During the five years cropland acreage changed as follows: (1) vegetable and berry plantings increased from 28 to 79 acres, (2) grain plantings decreased from 148 to 99 acres, (3) hay and silage plantings increased from 417 to 791 acres, (4) rotation pasture rose from 179 to 202 acres, and (5) idle cropland increased from 11 to 258 acres. Full-time farmers reported a cropland increase of 43 per cent and part-time farmers, 208 per cent. It is significant that as farms developed into full-time operations, livestock enterprises predominated.

Table 4.—Change in occupancy type of 127 homesteads of the western Kenai Peninsula surveyed in both 1950 and 1955.

Occupancy type	Kenai-Kasilof		Ninilchik		Homer		TOTAL	
	1950	1955	1950	1955	1950	1955	1950	1955
	Number of homesteads reporting							
Full-time farms	2	4	1	1	10	9	13	14
Will be full-time farms	8	1	14	0	11	1	33	2
Part-time farms	3	2	2	1	17	3	22	6
Will be part-time farms	0	1	4	3	8	3	12	7
TOTAL	13	8	21	5	46	16	80	29
Rural residences	18	17	9	14	20	22	47	53
Unoccupied	0	6	0	11	0	28	0	45
TOTAL	31	31	30	30	66	66	127	127

Table 5.—Cropland and livestock reported by 27 homesteaders of the western Kenai Peninsula who were farming or planning to farm in both 1950 and 1955.

Item	Kenai-Kasilof		Ninilchik		Homer		TOTAL	
	1950	1955	1950	1955	1950	1955	1950	1955
Number reporting	7	7	5	5	15	15	27	27
	Acres							
Land in homesteads	956	948	596	490	1,954	2,204	3,506	3,642
Vegetables and berries ...	2	17	—	2	10	9	12	28
Grain	—	—	1	—	56	15	57	15
Hay and silage	32	80	2	7	153	223	187	310
Rotation pasture.....	4	5	—	—	52	38	56	43
TOTAL cropland.....	38	102	3	9	271	285	312	396
	Number							
Livestock on homesteads								
Dairy cows	6	13	—	2	12	19	18	34
Dairy heifers	2	9	—	—	13	10	15	19
Dairy bulls	—	4	—	—	1	2	1	6
Beef cattle	—	5	—	—	74	167	74	172
Sheep	—	—	—	—	90	68	90	68
Hogs	1	1	1	—	—	2	2	3
Chickens	412	1,345	173	357	2,054	3,260	2,639	4,662
Other poultry	—	—	—	—	171	59	171	59
Rabbits	—	—	11	30	91	—	102	30
Horses	—	—	—	—	19	28	19	28

The largest gain in cropland was 412 acres in the Homer area, representing a 68 per cent rise between 1950 and 1955. About a third more families in the Homer area had cropland in 1955 than in 1950. In the Kenai-Kasilof area cropland went up by 236 acres or 227 per cent. More than twice as many families reported cropland in 1955 as in 1950. Crop acreages around Ninilchik remained small and showed no gains. Average acreages of tilled cropland per homestead was still far below the minimum needed to support a family enterprise.

Most settlers who intended to become full-time or part-time farmers showed little concept of many problems and aspects of developing a farm enterprise. Many reported plans for "diversified" or "livestock" farms. Several in the Soldotna-Sterling section were planning beef herds although this country seems poorly adapted to grazing enterprises.

In the Kasilof-Cohoe section, covered by light second-growth cottonwood or aspen and birch following fire and heavy moose browsing, new settlers were dozing off 20 acres per homestead as required for patent. Only about one in ten

had any immediate intention of farming this cleared land. Cultivation was expected to be minimal for one year or until their patents were acquired. The acreage of idle land in subsequent years will be larger. Most of this rough-cleared land will grow up in brush within a few years unless it is tilled.

* * *

Several basic problems in land utilization are evident from this survey. The Homestead Law does not get land into permanent production. Rural adult education programs should be adapted and expanded to meet specifically the peculiar needs of new settlers. Newcomers are avid for information but are often not aware that many agricultural services are available to them. Routine procedures of Land Office personnel following homestead entries should be extended to include information regarding available assistance on agricultural problems. Kenai Peninsula entrymen may obtain help and information from their local extension agent, from the Experiment Station at Palmer, from the Soil Conserva-

Table 6.—Cropland use of the western Kenai Peninsula by area and occupancy type as reported by 62 families in 1950*.

Occupancy type and number reporting	Berries & truck	Grain	Hay & silage	Pasture	Idle	TOTAL
			Acres			
Full-time farms, total12	7	49	164	67	—	287
Kenai-Kasilof	1	1	29	4	—	35
Ninilchik	—	1	2	1	—	4
Homer	6	47	133	62	—	248
Will be full-time farms, total15	5	38	78	—	—	121
Kenai-Kasilof	3	—	6	—	—	9
Ninilchik	—	20	25	—	—	45
Homer	2	18	47	—	—	67
Part-time farms, total18	10	18	80	—	—	108
Kenai-Kasilof	1	—	16	—	—	17
Ninilchik	—	—	—	—	—	**
Homer	9	18	64	—	—	91
Will be part-time farms, total6	1	24	13	—	—	38
Kenai-Kasilof	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ninilchik	—	10	—	—	—	10
Homer	1	14	13	—	—	28
Rural residences, total11	5	19	82	112	11	229
Kenai-Kasilof, total	3	—	22	7	11	43
Ninilchik	—	5	10	—	—	15
Homer	2	14	50	105	—	171
GRAND TOTAL62	28	148	417	179	11	783
Kenai-Kasilof	8	1	73	11	11	104
Ninilchik	—	36	37	1	—	74
Homer	20	111	307	167	—	605

*These data exclude many home gardens reported for family use only.

**Less than an half acre

tion District, the Farmer's Home Administration, and others. Agricultural extension assistance is provided for them from both an Anchorage office and a field agent's office in Homer. Publications may be obtained on numerous crop and livestock problems and homesteading. Local agri-

cultural and home demonstration agents give on-the-ground assistance to settlers throughout the Peninsula area. Other basic problems not so well serviced include financing needs and the development of marketing channels adapted to the area.

FARM ENTERPRISES

Full or part-time farms found in the western Kenai Peninsula in 1955 were classified (Table 8) according to their major enterprise or primary agricultural characteristics. This was determined by livestock numbers, acres of cropland, farm product sales and sources of those sales, and relationship of farm sales to non-farm income. General livestock units were those having two or more important types of livestock. "Indefinite" enterprises were those which might be called

general farms, part livestock and part crops. Also included in the indefinite category were subsistence farms having little or no farm sales and insignificant numbers of livestock or crop acreages.

Half of the 17 full-time farms in 1955 were found to be primarily livestock operations. All but one of the full-time livestock farms were in the Homer area. More than half of the 21 part-time farms were in the indefinite category while most of the others had livestock enterprises.

Excluding "indefinite" farms, the largest number of full- and part-time farms had beef enterprises, followed in descending order by general livestock, dairy, poultry, truck, greenhouse or berry, and vegetable. Various livestock ventures accounted for some 80 per cent of those other than "indefinite" farms. A number of places raised both livestock and field or garden crops.

Information also was obtained on proposed farm enterprises from rural residents who planned to farm in the near future (Table 9). Among 50 who expressed an interest, 13 proposed general livestock farms, ten were interested in dairy operations, five planned beef operations and five planned other livestock ventures. Of ten prospective full-time farms, five planned dairy operations. These were located almost entirely in

the Homer area. Prospects for sending milk to the Anchorage market by tank truck have influenced these families' plans.

Only a tenth of actual farmers and slightly more than a tenth of the occupants planning farms were primarily interested in vegetables, potatoes, or greenhouse crops. Most local requirements for vegetables or truck crops were met by numerous home garden plots. This produce was usually not marketed but was consumed at home. Additional demands by military and construction camps and by the tourist trade for locally grown food were relatively new and unstable. Efforts to market produce from farms in the Kenai Peninsula must be directed toward integration with Anchorage marketing channels before much more of the local production potential can be realized.

Table 7.—Cropland use on the western Kenai Peninsula by area and occupancy type as reported by 95 families in 1955.*

Occupancy type and number reporting	Berries & truck	Grain	Hay & Silage	Pasture	Idle	TOTAL	
			Acres				
Full-time farms, total	14	27	13	284	38	50	412
Kenai-Kasilof	6	21	—	71	5	50	147
Ninilchik	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Homer	8	6	13	213	33	—	265
Will be full-time farms, total	8	2	16	59	43	—	120
Kenai-Kasilof	1	—	—	—	—	—	**
Ninilchik	2	1	8	—	40	—	49
Homer	5	1	8	59	3	—	71
Part-time farms, total	17	13	16	230	74	—	333
Kenai-Kasilof	6	5	—	66	5	—	76
Ninilchik	3	3	—	8	—	—	11
Homer	8	5	16	156	69	—	246
Will be part-time farms, total	16	10	37	53	2	14	116
Kenai-Kasilof	1	—	—	16	—	—	16
Ninilchik	2	1	—	2	—	—	3
Homer	13	9	37	35	2	14	97
Rural residences, total	40	27	17	165	45	194	448
Kenai-Kasilof	19	10	3	32	30	26	101
Ninilchik	2	4	—	5	—	—	9
Homer	19	13	14	128	15	168	338
GRAND TOTAL	95	79	96	791	202	258	1,426
Kenai-Kasilof	33	36	3	185	40	76	340
Ninilchik	9	9	8	15	40	—	72
Homer	53	34	88	591	122	182	1,017

*Almost 400 acres classed as hay, silage or rotation pasture was reported on 22 places where there were no roughage-eating animals. Several other families reported large acreages for small numbers of livestock. A number of families claimed as cropland areas burned over or relatively open grasslands which required little effort in clearing. There was a general tendency for settlers to overestimate acreages in crops and their productivity.

**Less than a half acre

Table 8.—Kinds of farm enterprises found in the western Kenai Peninsula in 1955.

Major enterprise	Kenai-Kasilof		Ninilchik		Homer		TOTAL	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
	Number reporting							
Vegetable or truck	1	—	—	—	2	—	3	—
Greenhouse or berry	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Dairy	1	1	—	—	1	—	2	1
Beef	—	1	—	—	4	1	4	2
Poultry	—	—	—	1	1	1	1	2
General livestock	—	—	—	—	1	3	1	3
Indefinite	4	6	1	3	1	3	6	12
TOTAL	6	9	1	4	10	8	17	21

LIVESTOCK.—Dairy cattle, beef cattle, sheep, and poultry numbers reported on the western Kenai Peninsula increased substantially during the five-year period. The average animal units per farm also showed a modest increase indicating the trend toward large production volume. This is essential in developing more stable markets and marketing channels, and important to the future stability and welfare of the rural families. The number of families keeping one cow, a few hens, or raising a beef for home use doubled between 1950 and 1955.

Dairy cattle (including heifers and bulls) increased from 69 in 1950 to 148 in 1955 (Table 10). One dairy herd of seven cows in 1950 and two herds with a total of 28 cows in 1955 repre-

sented the principal commercial dairy interests. Several other part-time farms had small numbers of dairy cows providing surplus milk for market. Excluding the full-time dairy farms, 22 other homesteaders averaged 1.4 dairy cows in 1950 compared to an average of 2.2 dairy cows on 26 homesteads in 1955. Likewise, dairy heifers were reported to average 1.8 head on 16 homesteads in 1950, compared to an average of 3.4 head on 17 homesteads in 1955. More than 66 per cent of all dairy cattle were found in the Homer area. Seventy-one per cent of the dairy cattle reported in 1950 were on farm units, and 81 per cent were on farm units in 1955. The other dairy cattle were reported by rural residents, some of whom planned to farm in the near future.

Table 9.—Intentions of 50 families in the western Kenai Peninsula who were not yet farming in 1955 but who were planning to farm.

Major enterprise	Kenai-Kasilof		Ninilchik		Homer		TOTAL	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
	Number reporting							
Vegetable or truck	—	1	—	—	—	3	—	4
Greenhouse or berry	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2
Dairy	—	—	1	—	4	5	5	5
Beef	—	1	—	—	1	3	1	4
Poultry	—	—	—	1	—	2	—	3
General livestock	—	1	2	2	—	8	2	11
Sheep	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Hog	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
Indefinite	1	2	—	3	—	5	1	10
TOTAL	1	5	3	6	6	29	10	40

Table 10.—Livestock on homesteads in the western Kenai Peninsula by area and occupancy type in 1950 and 1955*

Item	1950		1955	
Homesteads reporting (light face) and livestock numbers				
Full-time farms				
Dairy cows	8	21	9	39
Dairy heifers	7	14	5	37
Dairy bulls	1	1	3	5
Beef cattle	7	78	9	151
Sheep	2	90	1	68
Chickens	10	1,412	13	3,987
Will be full-time farms				
Dairy cows	6	6	4	7
Dairy heifers	5	5	3	6
Dairy bulls	—	—	2	2
Beef cattle	1	1	2	16
Chickens	14	1,666	5	175
Part-time farms				
Dairy cows	5	6	9	18
Dairy heifers	3	7	5	19
Dairy bulls	—	—	1	1
Beef cattle	—	—	5	24
Sheep	—	—	1	29
Chickens	12	1,223	9	1,471
Will be part-time farms				
Dairy cows	1	1	3	5
Dairy heifers	1	2	1	1
Beef cattle	1	3	1	3
Sheep	—	—	1	17
Chickens	7	546	14	1,118
Rural residences				
Dairy cows	4	6	3	4
Dairy heifers	—	—	3	4
Beef cattle	1	14	—	—
Sheep	—	—	1	40
Chickens	10	379	19	583
TOTALS				
Dairy cows	24	40	28	73
Dairy heifers	16	28	17	67
Dairy bulls	1	1	6	8
Beef cattle	10	96	17	194
Sheep	2	90	4	154
Chickens	53	5,226	60	7,334

*In addition the following were also reported in 1955: 53 goats on nine places, 14 hogs on seven places, 409 poultry numbers other than chickens on 23 places, 593 rabbits on 20 places, 21 fur animals on one place, and 19 horses on eight places.

Beef cattle were located almost entirely in the Homer area, including the Fox River basin to the east. Beef numbers rose from 96 in 1950 to 194 in 1955. In 1950 only two herds exceeded 11 in number and these accounted for a third of all beef cattle reported. By 1955 six herds ranging from 12 to 45 in number accounted for 84 per cent of all beef cattle.

Flocks of sheep increased from two to four while their numbers increased from 90 to 154. All sheep were found in the Homer vicinity.

Poultry numbers in the western Kenai Peninsula increased from 5,427 to 7,743 during the five-year period, and chickens accounted for more than 95 per cent of the total population. Eleven flocks, varying in size from 100 to 2,100 birds, accounted for 5,750 chickens, or 78 per cent of all laying hens in 1955. In 1950 there were 10 flocks of 100 or more laying hens, totalling 2,964, of 57 per cent of the laying hens that year. Seventy-seven per cent of all chickens in 1955 were reported on farms, compared with 51 per cent in 1950. This indicates a lesser proportion of all chickens were reported on rural non-farm tracts.

Experience on the western Kenai Peninsula shows that the local egg market is difficult to reach unless laying flocks are of sufficient size to allow guaranteed delivery date, quality, and quantity. Many eggs were marketed locally by direct contact with the consumer or to the few nearby retail outlets. Homer area poultrymen shipped their eggs across Kachemak Bay to Seldovia and along the Sterling Highway to Kenai, Seward and Anchorage. The military market was served by at least one poultryman on the Peninsula.

HOMESTEAD INCOME AND USE OF FUNDS

Estimates of homestead income and expenses were obtained in both 1950 and 1955. Total income for the period ending June 20, 1955, was reported as \$655,721 by 140 families (Table 11). Of the 140 families, 59 reported farm sales amounting to \$91,535. Average total income for these homesteaders was \$3,812, of which farm sales accounted for 14 per cent. Non-farm income contributed over six times more support to the average homesteader than did agriculture. Thirty-two other families, mostly newcomers, reported no income from any source during the period.

In comparison, total income for the period ending June 30, 1950, was reported as \$248,522 by 94 families. Farm sales of \$25,997 were reported by 32 families. Average income in 1950 was \$2,536, with farm sales making up 10 per cent of this. Four families reported no income from any source.

Table 11.—Income and expenses of homesteaders on the western Kenai Peninsula by occupancy type, for twelve months ending on June 30 of the year indicated.*

Item	Full-time farms	Will farm full-time	Part-time farms	Will farm part-time	Rural residences	TOTAL
Number of homesteads reporting (lightface) and value in dollars						
1950						
Crop sales	7 \$ 3,850	2 \$ 135	7 \$ 1,802	2 \$ 100	3 \$ 69	21 \$ 5,956
Livestock sales	8 8,975	2 415	1 125	1 50	—	12 9,565
Livestock products	6 6,231	1 3,000	3 445	—	1 100	11 9,776
Other sales	2 625	1 75	—	—	—	3 700
TOTAL farm sales	11 \$19,681	7 \$ 3,625	8 \$ 2,372	3 \$ 150	3 \$ 169	32 \$ 25,997
Non-farm income	9 9,054	25 59,766	16 47,770	9 22,930	29 83,005	88 222,525
TOTAL income	13 \$28,735	25 \$63,391	18 \$50,142	9 \$23,080	29 \$ 83,174	94 \$248,522
Living costs	13 \$12,800	24 \$29,590	19 \$23,500	8 \$17,300	25 \$ 34,090	89 \$117,280
Farm operations	8 11,500	15 6,925	9 3,755	1 350	3 1,500	36 24,030
Farm development	6 6,050	13 16,650	7 9,250	4 4,900	7 7,705	37 43,555
TOTAL expenses	13 \$30,350	25 \$53,165	18 \$36,505	8 \$21,550	25 \$ 43,295	89 \$184,865
1955						
Crop sales	8 \$13,983	8 \$405	6 \$840	3 \$342	8 \$1,475	28 \$17,045
Livestock sales	6 7,050	3 1,020	5 2,396	2 1,860	1 150	17 12,476
Livestock products	4 20,914	—	4 1,410	2 450	2 65	12 22,839
Egg sales**	4 20,035	4 365	5 9,190	3 1,370	7 975	23 31,935
Other sales	5 4,230	1 55	9 2,385	3 200	3 370	21 7,240
TOTAL farm sales	14 \$66,212	6 \$1,845	14 \$16,221	7 \$ 4,222	18 \$ 3,035	59 \$ 91,535
Non-farm income	11 31,693	8 39,550	15 62,549	29 88,787	77 341,602	140 564,186
TOTAL income	17 \$97,910	8 \$41,395	16 \$78,770	29 \$93,009	79 \$344,637	140 \$655,721
Living costs	17 \$26,787	8 \$19,600	18 \$41,690	28 \$54,460	95 \$219,805	166 \$362,342
Farm operations	11 30,920	6 7,250	13 17,062	14 7,302	28 35,954	72 98,488
Farm development	12 12,735	8 35,950	14 9,520	26 31,005	51 69,127	111 158,337
TOTAL expenses	17 \$70,442	8 \$62,800	18 \$68,272	28 \$92,767	95 \$324,886	166 \$619,167

*No financial information was obtained from 3 part-time farms, 11 prospective farms, or 151 rural residences in 1955. No financial information was obtained from 3 part-time farms, 8 prospective farms, or 18 rural residences in 1950. Five families in 1955 and 9 families in 1950 reported income information but not expenditures.

**Eggs were included in livestock products in the 1950 study.

Between 1950 and 1955, average homesteader incomes went up 50 per cent. Farm product sales, as a percentage of total income, rose from 10 to 14 per cent. Reported farm sales increased from \$25,997 to \$91,535 (or 3½ times while the number of families reporting farm sales almost doubled. Average farm sales for those who sold farm products increased from \$812 to \$1,551, or 91 per cent. Crop sales alone nearly tripled and the number of families reporting crop sales increased by a third. Livestock sales rose a third, as did the numbers of families reporting such sales. Beef was the predominant source of livestock income. Sales of livestock products rose from \$9,766 to \$31,935 or about 200 per cent,

and the number of families reporting these sales more than doubled.

By 1955 eggs, milk, truck crops, and beef in descending order were the most important sources of farm income. Although 23 families reported egg sales in 1955, only 11 had flocks of 100 or more hens. Five reported egg sales of more than \$1,500. Three families selling milk accounted for nine-tenths of the \$22,839 livestock product sales reported.

Among full and part-time farmers in 1955, ten reported farm product sales of \$2,500 or more (Table 12). While this indicates a small number

of commercial farm units, it is significant that only three farmers made this much in 1950. Five others reported farm sales varying between \$1,200 and \$2,499 in 1955 compared with only two in 1950. Milk and eggs predominated in the larger farm sales. Slightly less than a fifth of all homesteads reported no farm sales. These were either subsistence units or places on which stock or cropland was being increased for larger future production.

The average value of farm sales reported by homesteaders in the western Kenai Peninsula was \$534 in 1955 and \$254 in 1950 (Table 13). Thus over the five-year period, average farm earnings more than doubled. Average sales on full-time farms rose 2½ times, while the number of full-time farms increased from 13 to 17. Income from farm sales exceeded non-farm earnings only on full-time farms. Of these places, 69 per cent of their income was from produce sales in 1950. In 1955 one full-time farmer reported large real estate sales. Excluding this farm, no other full-time farmer reported more than \$600 of off-farm earnings. In 1955, farm sales accounted for 86 per cent of their average income.

On part-time farms average produce sales rose from \$125 to \$501, an increase of 621 per cent. On these places, non-farm earnings accounted for 79 per cent of their 1955 income. On homesteads other than full- or part-time farms, average sales were \$60 in 1950 and \$66 in 1955. On these places, non-farm earnings accounted for 98 per cent of all income.

Table 12.—Sales from full- and part-time farms of western Kenai Peninsula for 1950 and 1955.

Sales volume per farm	1950		1955	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
	Number reporting			
\$17,500 or more	—	—	1	—
\$10,000 - \$17,499	—	—	1	—
\$5,000 - \$9,999	1	—	3	—
\$2,500 - \$4,999	2	—	3	2
\$1,200 - \$2,499	2	—	2	3
\$250 - \$1,199	5	5	3	6
\$1 - \$249	1	3	1	3
None	2	11	3	4
Not reported	—	3	—	3
TOTAL	13	22	17	21

Table 13.—Average income and expense on homesteads of the western Kenai Peninsula by occupancy type and by years.

Item	1950	1955	Increase
			Per cent
FULL-TIME FARMS			
Farm sales	\$1,514	\$3,895	157*
Non-farm income	696	1,865	168
TOTAL INCOME	\$2,200	\$5,760	162
Living costs	\$ 985	\$1,576	60
Farm operations	\$ 885	1,819	106
Farm development	465	749	61
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,335	\$4,144	77
PART-TIME FARMS			
Farm sales	\$ 125	\$ 901	621
Non-farm income	2,514	3,475	38
TOTAL INCOME	\$2,639	\$4,376	66
Living costs	\$1,306	\$2,316	77
Farm operations	209	948	354
Farm development	514	529	3
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,029	\$3,793	87
ALL OTHER HOMESTEADS			
Farm sales	\$ 60	66	10
Non-farm income	2,511	3,430	37
TOTAL INCOME	\$2,571	\$3,496	36
Living costs	\$1,397	\$2,226	59
Farm operations	151	383	154
Farm development	485	1,031	113
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,033	\$3,640	79
ALL HOMESTEADS, TOTAL			
Farm sales	\$ 254	\$ 534	110
Non-farm income	2,282	3,278	44
TOTAL INCOME	\$2,536	\$3,812	50
Living costs	\$1,308	\$2,200	68
Farm operations	270	933	246
Farm development	499	597	20
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,077	\$3,730	80

*These ratios were calculated by dividing the 1955 value by the 1950 value, expressing the result in per cent. Thus \$3,895 divided by \$1,514 equals 257%. Defining the 1950 value as 100%, the increase is thus 257 less 100 or 157%.

OFF-FARM EARNINGS.—Non-farm earnings made up 86 per cent of all homesteader income in 1955 (Table 14.) Five years earlier it had accounted for 90 per cent of the area's total income. At that time, nearly half of all settlers were receiving institutional on-the-farm training for which they were paid a subsidy under Federal legislation channeled through the Veterans' Ad-

Table 14.—Sources of homesteader's non-farm earnings on the western Kenai Peninsula in 1955, by occupancy type.

Source	Full-time farms	Will farm full-time	Part-time farms	Will farm part-time	Rural residences	TOTAL
Number of homesteads reporting (lightface) and value in dollars						
Real estate*	3 \$28,700	1 \$ 2,250	1 \$ 6,000	3 \$ 3,900	5 \$ 17,200	13 \$ 58,050
Pension**	2 1,080	1 2,600	— —	2 4,522	3 4,330	8 12,532
Private business	— —	2 15,000	2 6,900	1 7,200	10 51,000	15 80,100
Professional	— —	1 7,800	1 3,600	4 17,460	2 14,450	8 43,310
Lumbering	— —	1 2,250	— —	3 5,700	3 37,500	7 45,450
Fishing	— —	— —	2 5,200	2 3,120	9 25,725	13 34,045
Construction	1 268	— —	4 20,749	6 16,100	20 81,250	31 118,367
Mechanical operator	— —	1 3,400	2 7,000	1 2,500	12 53,777	16 66,677
Laborer	3 1,100	1 3,250	4 13,100	10 28,285	13 32,670	31 78,405
Other	2 550	1 3,000	— —	— —	5 23,700	8 27,250
TOTAL	11 \$31,698	8 \$39,550	15 \$62,549	29 \$88,787	77 \$341,602	140 \$564,186

*Includes returns from investments other than in the homestead.

**Includes retirement annuities, gifts, and so forth.

ministration. Many worked for the Alaska Road Commission, the Homer Electric Association, and in local salmon canneries. Fishing provided a major source of non-farm income for many families.

Institutional on-the-farm training had ceased to play a role in homesteader incomes by 1955, being available only to disabled veterans who were few in number. Construction work was providing 21 per cent of non-farm earnings, followed by 14 per cent for private business, 14 per cent for common labor, 12 per cent for mechanical operations, and 10 per cent for real estate and investment income. Less common off-farm sources of funds included wages from fishing, lumbering, or professions, and income from pensions, gifts, or retirement annuities. While fishing was still an important source of non-farm earnings it was no longer a major vocation. Fewer homesteaders were employed in fishing, and a smaller number were working for Territorial or governmental agencies such as the Civil Aeronautics Administration, the Alaska Road Commission, and the Alaska Railroad.

Although the non-farm income received by eleven full-time farmers in 1955 amounted to \$31,698, only \$1,918 (reported by six persons) required off-farm work. The rest included earnings from real estate and investments, or income from retirement annuities, gifts, or pensions.

EXPENSES.—Expenditures of \$619,167 were reported by 166 families for the year ending June 30, 1955 (Table 11). They averaged \$3,730, or \$82 less than cash incomes. Five years earlier, expenditures of \$184,865 were reported by 89 families. Average expenditures at that time were \$2,077, which was \$459 less than cash incomes.

In 1955, 59 per cent of all expenditures went for living costs such as heat, food, and clothing, as compared to 63 per cent in 1950. Development costs—including buildings, land clearing, and dozing trails—took 16 per cent in 1955 and 24 per cent in 1950. Farm operational costs amounted to 25 per cent in 1955 compared to 13 per cent in 1950.

By 1955 average family expenses were almost as high as incomes. Many families reported expenses in excess of income. This was not surprising since a large number of families had recently begun homesteading and were still using their reserve funds. A number of relatively new families in the area were building homes, clearing land, and simply living on savings until they could find jobs. It was difficult to see how some of them could buy groceries for subsistence. Others admitted they were dipping into savings or had borrowed the money they were using. Several had crafts or skills not being utilized because no demand existed for their talents.

During the period between 1950 and 1955, average agricultural operating costs for all homesteads increased 246 per cent while their farm sales went up only 110 per cent (Table 13). These costs in 1955 were almost twice farm sales. Two conditions probably account for this difference. First, many families not interested in commercial farming were growing crops only for home consumption. Although they reported operational costs they were receiving no cash returns from farm sales. Second, a smaller but significant number of families was attempting to reach economically commercial production. They were buying feed, seed, and fertilizer but these costs were not yet being offset by farm sales. These families were either maintaining and building up their farm inventories of livestock or crops, or they were unable to market their produce. Small-scale production posed critical marketing problems which were being faced and resolved by a few prospective farmers.

Full-time farms were in a much better position. Examination of data from 17 full-time units in 1955 shows that farm sales amounted to \$66,212 compared to farm operating costs of \$30,920. Between 1950 and 1955 average farm sales on these places went up 2½ times while operational costs only doubled. By 1955, less than 50 per cent of the income from farm sales was needed to cover cost of operation. A part of the remainder provided better living, the costs of which rose 60 per cent. Farm development expense also increased 61 per cent showing that full-time farmers were continuing to improve their places. Supplemented

by an average of \$1,865 in non-farm earnings, net cast surpluses on full-time units averaged \$1,616 in 1955.

Living costs on all homesteads in 1955 averaged \$2,200, ranging from \$100 to \$7,200. Full-time farms reported the lowest living costs, where expenditures averaged \$1,576. Farm-grown food lessened cash expenditures on these places to a considerable degree.

LOCAL PRODUCT USE. — Local products helped reduce cash living costs on 82 per cent of all homesteads. Home gardens, wild game, seafoods, wood, and coal have all been sought and used. The value of these local products consumed on 146 homesteads in 1955 was \$99,602 (Table 15). On the other hand, 31 families, or 18 per cent, reported using no local products. No information was obtained from 160 families.

Average rural living costs of \$2,200 were thus supplemented by local products valued at \$563. Reported use ranged from a few berries or fish worth perhaps \$15 to a few families who estimated their consumption of these resources was worth about \$1,000 to them. Moose meat accounted for a third of the total, followed by 18 per cent for home-grown vegetables, 14 per cent for wood fuel, and 9 per cent for coal fuel. The average value of local products consumed on full-time farms and on homesteads whose occupants planned to farm exceeded \$750. On part-time farms the average was \$551 and on rural residences, \$443.

Table 15.—Value of local products consumed on homesteads of the western Kenai Peninsula in 1955, by occupancy type.*

Item	Full-time farms	Will farm full-time	Part-time farms	Will farm part-time	Rural residences	TOTAL
Number of homesteads reporting (lightface) and value in dollars						
Wild berries	9 \$ 554	8 \$ 815	13 \$ 695	21 \$ 1,254	57 \$ 2,315	108 \$ 5,633
Moose	8 4,460	6 2,590	10 3,370	13 5,940	47 16,529	84 32,889
Fish	11 696	6 344	9 506	14 2,490	55 2,651	95 6,687
Other seafoods	6 310	4 125	6 189	15 801	35 1,309	66 2,734
Wood fuel	10 1,570	5 1,060	7 960	23 5,095	45 5,288	90 13,973
Coal fuel	8 1,395	5 715	7 675	15 1,503	43 5,045	78 9,333
Lumber (own)	4 1,370	3 280	1 150	7 3,820	8 2,570	23 8,190
Home vegetables	11 2,448	6 1,145	10 2,575	16 3,793	44 8,349	87 18,310
Other	1 56	—	1 800	2 295	4 702	8 1,853
TOTAL	15 \$12,859	8 \$7,074	17 \$9,920	25 \$24,991	81 \$44,758	146 \$99,602

*Information on local product use was not received from 160 families. These included residents of 3 part-time farms, 9 prospective farms, and 148 rural residences.

HOMESTEAD FAMILIES AND HOMES

Family size remained nearly steady between 1950 and 1955. The proportions of bachelors (28 per cent) and couples with one or two children (25 per cent) were exactly the same in both years. The proportion of couples without children was seven per cent higher and the proportion of families containing five or more persons dropped seven per cent. Although this distribution is abnormal for a settled community, where single persons and childless couples usually comprise a much smaller share of the population, it is characteristic of areas being settled rapidly. Large families are more stable and less adventuresome. The frontier historically draws the unmarried and small families who possess more freedom of movement.

Family heads appeared older in 1955 than in 1950, although averages and modes of the age distribution were still at approximately 40 years. In 1950, 19 per cent of the homesteaders were less than 30 years old and another 19 per cent were past 50. In 1955, only 10 per cent of them were 30 or less while 29 per cent were past 50. The proportions in their 30's and 40's remained practically the same as in the previous study. The reason for this change in age distribution is that most settlers arrived before 1950 and the number of pre-1950 settlers responding to both surveys was sufficiently large to reflect normal aging. World War II veterans were five years older in 1955. The 1955 study also included a larger proportion of elderly rural residents, a few of whom joined their married children in Alaska after 1950.

The youngest homesteaders in the 25- to 30-year age group were found to be mostly rural residents although some were farming or planning to farm on a part-time basis. Homesteaders over 60 years were either rural residents or full-time farmers. No significant differences between the three areas of the Peninsula were noted.

The age distribution of family heads throughout the Kenai Peninsula was excellent for developing a stable, substantial community. Nearly all were in the child-rearing age. The influence of economic conditions during the next few years will have a far-reaching effect upon the attitudes and actions of a new generation now arising on this frontier.

THE HOME.—Almost all degrees of quality and size of housing were encountered in the survey. Extremely crowded conditions offering no privacy for parents or children was the rule rather than the exception. Family quarters ranged from small, tar-papered frame or pole shacks to two-story log or frame dwellings standing on full basements. The general practice of quickly building a small, cheap residence gave the family temporary shelter until more substantial homes were built later. Several house-trailers provided temporary homes.

Where in 1950 homestead housing was about equally divided between log and frame construction, about three frame buildings were found for each log house in 1955. Several small sawmills throughout the Peninsula were cutting rough lumber for frames, floors and siding. This rough lumber was used commonly throughout many of the first homes built by new settlers. Others were built from rough lumber frames covered by plywood.

Even though much of the area is timbered, many tracts do not contain good house logs. Log construction is difficult for the novice who is seldom a woodsman or carpenter. Log buildings usually cost as much or more than the easier frame construction. Logs are heavy and several men are usually needed to raise a cabin. Frame members are relatively light and can be handled by the family alone.

Electric service expanded after 1950 with extension of the Homer cooperative lines to Clam Gulch. Small diesel plants were built at Soldotna and Kenai. In 1950 about a quarter of the families interviewed near Homer had electricity while only home light plants were found at Kenai. By 1955 over half of the families in the Homer area were using REA power. Additional families were within the range of the power line but had not yet connected because they still were building their homes, because they thought the cost was too great, or for some other reason. REA financed power facilities had limited coverage near Kenai by 1955. Sixty-four per cent of families had no electricity and 25 per cent had home light plants, while 11 per cent enjoyed REA power.

Many families were using surface water because they had not yet found the time or money to dig wells or because they considered that the

spring, creek, river or lake they were using was safe. A third of all families were using water from springs. In both the Soldotna-Sterling and the Homer area, springs along the road had been piped and several families hauled water from the same source. Creeks, rivers and lakes were used by 30 per cent of the homesteaders. With dispersed settlement and relatively permeable soils in most areas, their families were probably

temporarily safe from water-borne epidemics. Shallow, hand-dug wells were subject to pollution from local run-off. Construction of adequate wells was moving along as homesteads became established on a more permanent basis. Over a third of all families reported they had adequate wells. Whether these wells were hand dug or drilled depended upon the area and upon the initiative and finances of the individual.

THE HOMER AREA

The 1955 survey revealed that 59 per cent of all entered tracts in the western Kenai Peninsula were then unoccupied, while 37 per cent were rural residences (including 6 per cent whose occupants planned to farm later), and only 4 per cent were full- or part-time farm units. Of a total 109,629 acres homesteaded, 65,118 were unoccupied, 38,830 acres served rural residents, while only 5,681 were in farm tracts. Cropland was reported to be 1,429 acres and most of this was not intensively used. It is obvious that little use of any kind was made of a large proportion of homesteaded land.

To determine the reason for this lack of homestead development, a more detailed background examination was made of the Homer area. It was apparent that the extremely slow homestead development was closely associated with the general lack of stable and permanent settlement, and that the social and economic factors impeding both settlement and land use were probably the same.

THE EARLY YEARS.—Prior to the Russians' arrival in Alaska, the Homer country was occupied by Indians. This area was visited by Russians trappers and explorers who, it is said, raised vegetables successfully both along Kachemak Bay and the Cook Inlet coast. Although the villages of Kenai, Ninilchik, and Kasilof were firmly established during the Russian regime, it was not until after the United States acquired Alaska that Homer emerged as a settlement.

Gold and coal have been the basis for numerous settlements in Alaska. This also was true of Homer. Gold was found in 1890 along the beach at Anchor Point. Six years later Homer village was founded at the end of Homer Spit when the Alaska Gold Mining Company brought a crew there to prospect. At the same time, three coal companies were organized. Local prospecting and mining stimulated the growth of the new village. In a few years it boasted several hundred residents, a post office, a warehouse, and many other

buildings. A dock was constructed where regular steamers stopped to receive coal and to discharge passengers bound for the gold fields.

Table 16.—Homestead activity in the Homer area by specified periods as reflected by number of entries and their subsequent disposition.

Period	Entries during period	Eventually patented	Eventually relinquished*
	Number (light face) and acres		
Up to 1920 ..	17 2,305	8 1,110	9 1,195
1921-1930	61 7,325	36 4,082	25 3,243
1931-1940 ...	165 21,191	65 7,984	100 13,207
1941-1945	86 11,031	24 2,621	62 8,410
1946-1950 ...	172 21,543	98 12,201	74 9,342
1951-1955 ...	237**29,803**	19 2,365	82 9,833
TOTAL ..	738**93,198**	250 30,363	352 45,230

*Includes entries lost by the entrymen by relinquishment contest action or other means.

**At the end of 1955, there were 136 entries containing 17,605 acres awaiting disposition. Presumably entrymen of these tracts are still complying with requirements leading to patent of their lands.

A decade later the new community languished. Local gold had not been found in commercial quantities. Two of the coal companies were forced to terminate operations when Congress withdrew entry to coal lands in 1907. The original community of Homer and its dock were destroyed by fire. The townspeople rallied from these misfortunes and rebuilt on the beach at the present village site. The third mine shipped coal to Sunrise, Hope, and Anchorage by barge until 1924.

Farming started in 1915 at Miller's Landing east of Homer when the Alaska Railroad wintered 95 horses there.* Besides several farms near Homer, livestock and crops were reported in 1915 both at Anchor Point and at the mouth of Fox River.

*Fox farming had begun in 1914. For a short while there were 15 fox farms and several mink ranches. Fur farming was short-lived, however, because of excessive production costs, lack of sufficient feed, and a declining market.

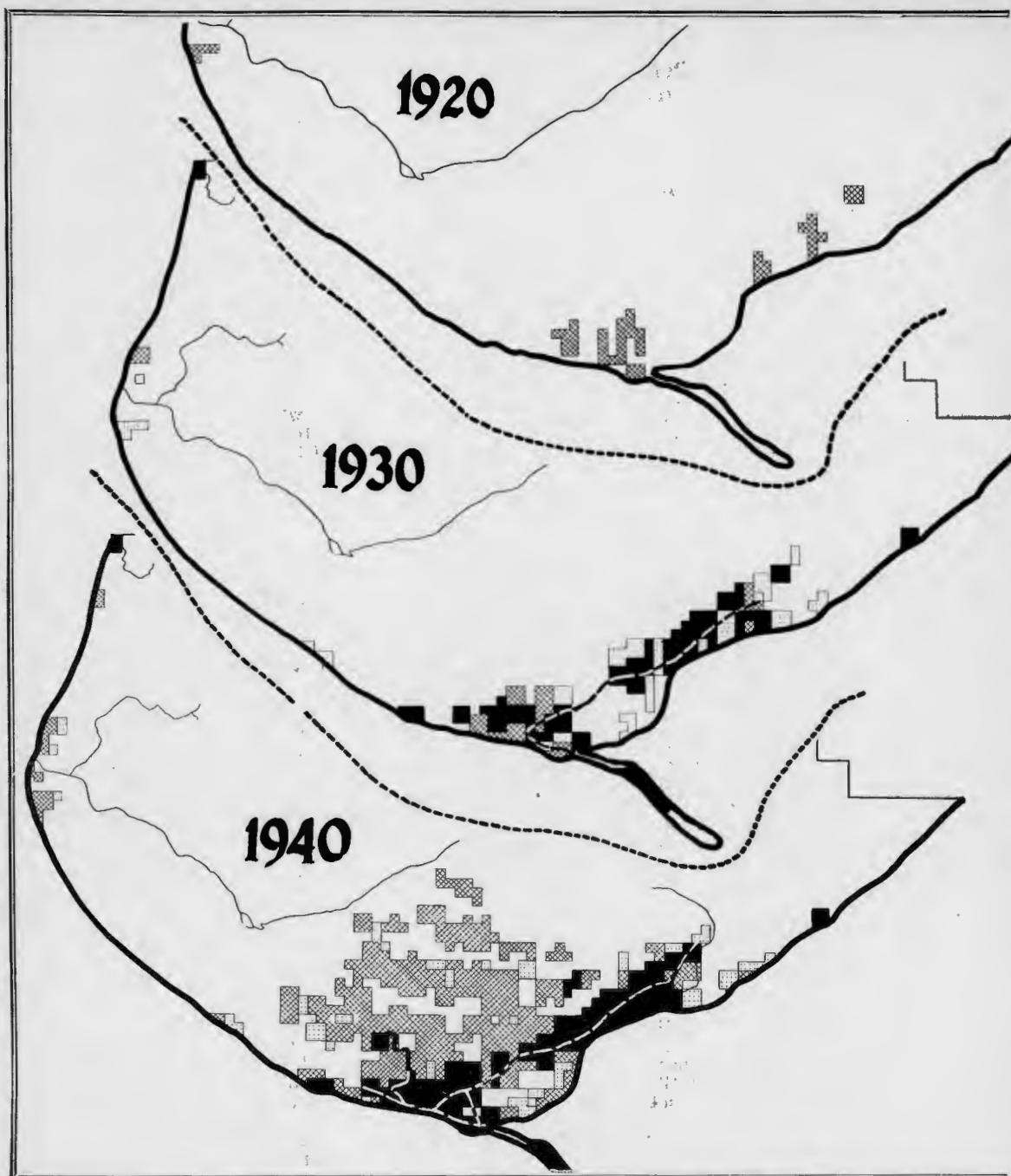
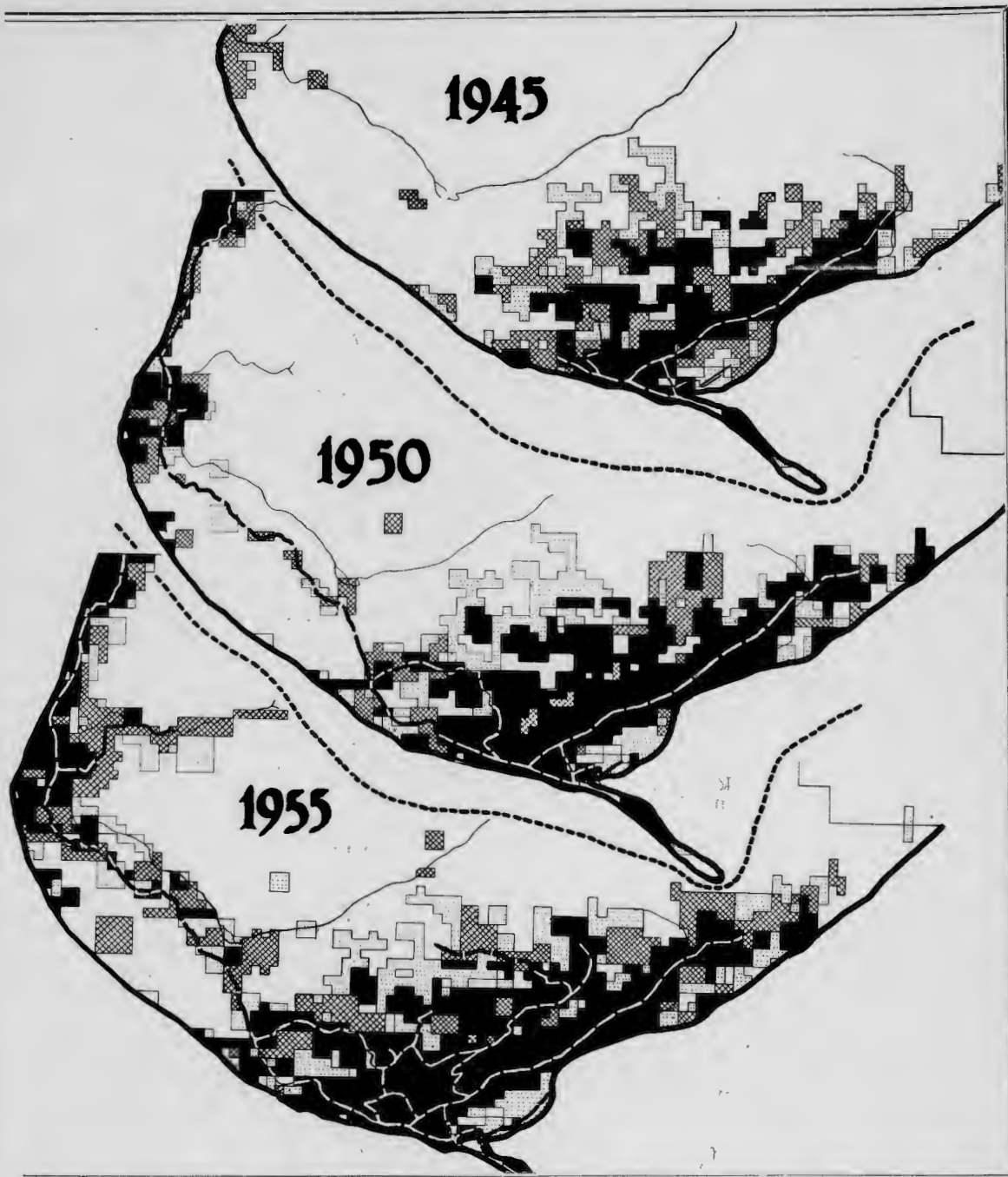


Figure 1.—Settlement pattern in the Homer area. The village proper was first established on the Spit projecting to the lower right. The 1940 diagram reflects interest of the previous decade in the rolling hill country. By 1950 homesteads were appearing along the new road, first linking Homer to Anchor Point and later to the Alaska highway system. See Figure 2 for soil resource pattern and Figure 3 for the occupancy status of this area in 1955.



LEGEND Crosshatched areas are unpatented entries. Dotted areas are holdings once entered but subsequently relinquished and presently in vacant public domain status. Solid black areas are patented holdings. White areas have never been entered for homestead use.

Scale of these sketches is about $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches to the mile. The small cross-hatched square under the "1950" date is a 160-acre homestead.

Although several settlers were living in or near Homer before 1900, the first official homestead filing was made in 1915. Seventeen homesteads had been entered by 1920 (Table 16, see also Figure 1). These homesteads were grouped at three places—Homer proper, Miller's Landing, and Anchor Point. Cadastral surveys were extended over the Homer area in 1917 and 1918, from the Cook Inlet coast eastward to Cottonwood Creek on Kachemak Bay.

Fishing boats owned by local canneries began plying Homer's waters around 1920, offering a major and long-lived source of income to area residents. Ten years later the first private fishing boats came into use and they have taken a large part of the fish since that time. Salmon, crabs, clams shrimp and halibut are still found there. Some are still processed in local plants.

The fishing industry fostered local boat building and dock facilities. Until 1938, when a permanent dock was constructed on the Spit, freight was landed on the Homer beach by lighter and thence distributed over the beaches. The first road was constructed in 1925. By 1930 roads extended from Homer eastward some eight miles beyond Miller's Landing and from Homer to Spit.

By late 1930 a total of 78 homesteads had been entered. Of these, 34 had been patented, while 30 had been relinquished or otherwise dropped (Table 17). Disposition was still pending on the remaining 14. Increased homestead activity between 1920 and 1930 occurred almost entirely in the vicinity of Homer and near Miller's Landing (Figure 1). During this period, almost half of all entrymen lost their homesteads before they were able to obtain patents. Few residents were able to make much from their land. Fishing provided a major source of income for local residents after gold mining had subsided and the three coal mines had closed.

AFTER 1930.—Abundant publicity about the Matanuska Valley colonization, stories of good climate and fine soils, and widespread unemployment in the States influenced 165 new settlers to file on homesteads around Homer during the next decade. Most activity occurred on the Homer benchland from some two miles west to eight miles east of town. Numerous new entries were made on Diamond Ridge and the hills north of town. Although 60 per cent of these new entrymen eventually failed to fulfill their requirements, homesteads in Homer proper were almost all patented as were most of the tracts along the road to Miller's Landing.

The census of agriculture for 1940 reported 27 crop or livestock farms in the Homer area, including one near the mouth of Fox River. Cropland was found on all but one, while 17 farms reported more than five acres each. The 1940 census also reported two fur farms. The 1940 population census of the Homer area reported 358 persons, including 20 at Anchor Point and 13 along upper Kachemak Bay. The area's population was thus nearly 50 per cent greater than

Table 17.—Homestead activity in the Homer area as reflected by number of entries, number of patents, and number of relinquishments during specified periods.

Period	Entries in period	Number (light face) and acres		
		Patented in period	Relinquished in period	
Up to 1920	17 2,305	0 0	1 160	
1921-1930	61 7,325	34 4,393	29 3,761	
1931-1940	165 21,191	26 2,460	51 6,904	
1941-1945	86 11,031	37 5,506	72 9,227	
1946-1950	172 21,543	84 9,889	95 12,473	
1951-1955	237 29,803	69 8,115	104 12,705	
TOTAL	738 93,198	250 30,363	352 45,230	

*Includes entries lost by the entrymen by relinquishment, contest action or other means.

in the early 1900's, when gold and coal mining occupied villagers on the Spit. A sharp population drop following declines in gold and coal activity had by this time been offset by new arrivals.

By the end of 1945, 86 more homesteads had been entered (Figure 1). Only slightly more than a fourth of these were finally patented. In addition to new homesteads around Homer proper and along the east Homer road, a number of others in the hills directly north of town were patented. A total of 97 homestead patents had been issued by 1945. Another 153 entries had been cancelled, relinquished, or otherwise closed.

The local road net had been expanded. Roads now led from Homer some nine miles east, several miles west, three miles out to Homer Spit and some six miles northwest into the hill country. In all there were approximately 24 miles of local roadway.

A 1945 survey found 33 farms in the vicinity of Homer established within the preceding decade. Dairy and cash crop enterprises provided a living on full-time farms. Three-fourths of the homesteaders found it necessary to supplement their farm incomes by off-farm work. This consisted of fishing, logging, mining, trapping, construction and cannery work. Incomplete farm development and lack of markets or adequate marketing facilities were principal deterrents to full-time farming and larger farm incomes.

Of all homestead entries in the area up to the end of 1945, 60 per cent were cancelled, relinquished, or closed by decision. Abandonment of homesteads, in the sense that the homesteader failed to carry through to patent status, increased from 44 per cent of all entries up to 1930 to 72 per cent for the entries made in the five-year period ending in 1945. In considering this trend, it should be recalled that most early entrymen (excluding a small number of World War I veterans filing in the early 20's) were non-

veterans required to cultivate an eighth of their tracts. Early entrymen had often lived in the area several years before filing on their homesteads. Generally they were familiar with the lands they sought.

During the late 1930's many entrymen had been influenced by Matanuska Valley colonization publicity. They heard widespread references to the fine climate and soil at Homer. These stories, some not well-founded, led to indiscreet selection of sites. Many settlers were unfamiliar with farm living, having come to Alaska from city life where they had endured the early depression years. These settlers did not appreciate the need for familiarizing themselves with farm problems. They could not foresee the technical revolution in farming, then gathering momentum in the States, nor its competitive impact on frontier living which also required mechanization and markets. Cash requirements for homesteading were unappreciated. As the depression faded away and more opportunities arose for non-agricultural employment in the Kenai Peninsula, many found they could not live without off-farm earnings.

AFTER 1945.—From 1946 to 1950, 172 new entries were filed in the Homer area. Many were made near Anchor Point and along the new highway between Anchor Point and Stariski Creek, the northern limit of the Homer area. During the later part of this period the Homer road net was connected through the Sterling Highway with upper Peninsula towns, and eventually with Seward and Anchorage.

Even with this influx of homesteaders, the 1950 census population was reported as 372 (including 65 in the Anchor Point community), only 14 more persons than in 1940. Ten full-time farms and 17 part-time farms were found in the Homer area in 1950. This was six fewer than reported five years earlier. The increase in homesteading activity had not resulted in more farms nor in a larger farm population.

Table 18.—Frequency of entry on homestead tracts in the Homer area from 1917 through 1955.

Entries per tract	Number of tracts
1	217
2	104
3	48
4	23
5	10
6 or more	7

Between 1950 and 1955, an additional 237 entries were made in the Homer area. During this period there occurred a third of all entries filed since 1915. Most of these new entrymen were veterans either of World War II or the Korean conflict. Although many entries had not yet been concluded,

three-fourths of those which had received final action by the Land Office were relinquished, cancelled, or terminated otherwise than by granting title.

The expansion of homestead settlement in the Homer area is graphically shown in Figure 1. Outstanding in the years 1920 to 1945 was the settlement of homesteads around Homer and along the east Homer road. Following construction of the Sterling Highway, homestead activity spread rapidly along the west coast of the peninsula northward from Homer.

In 1955 ten full-time farms and eight part-time farms were in the Homer area. This was a decline of nine farms since 1950 and 15 since 1945. Acres in farms dropped from 3,495 in 1950 to 2,874 in 1955. This did not, however, mean a decline in farm development because cropland increased from 339 acres in 1950 to 511 in 1955. Livestock in 1950 included 40 dairy cattle, 78 beef cattle, 90 sheep, and 1,824 chickens. By 1955, numbers had increased to 75 dairy cattle, 168 beef cattle, 97 sheep, and 3,480 chickens. Also, a larger number of non-farm homesteads in 1955 had smaller acreages of cropland and smaller numbers of dairy or beef cattle, and chickens than in 1950.

Since the first general store was opened in Homer around 1918, business establishments had grown to some 30 in number, providing a variety of services to residents and tourists. Other public service facilities and institutions found in 1950 included the C.A.A. and local air strip (completed in 1941); the Homer telephone exchange and the bank both established in 1950; and a radio station which began full-time operations in 1952. A rural electrification system was organized in 1947 and by 1950 nearly all village homes were connected, as were some outlying residences. A public utility district established in 1949 provided local government services.

In addition to the Sterling Highway terminating in Homer, approximately 35 miles of local roadway serviced the area. These roads were all being extended, allowing access to new lands. The Alaska Road Commission had a road maintenance and construction facility in Homer.

RE-ENTRIES.—Of the 738 homesteads entered in the Homer area between 1915 and 1955, not all were made on separate tracts. Many tracts were entered, abandoned, and re-entered, some as many as five or more times (Table 18). An area-wide average number of entries per tract was 1.8, including 136 entries not finally concluded. Recent trends indicate that many of these will be relinquished. This will push the average entry per tract to two or more. No definite pattern has emerged to show specific areas where the number of entries per tract has been significantly large. Either physical characteristics or inaccessibility account for the turnover of tracts.

A homestead east of Homer, entered nine different times, is a good example. This land is on a low bench overlooking Kachemak Bay and is itself low and wet. Poor access from the main road through extensive muskeg has proved a

serious obstacle. Although entered first in 1922, this homestead tract was finally patented by a religious children's home organization following the ninth entry. Only one of the nine entrymen ever resided on this land. The organization now holding it has made no improvements nor has yet occupied it.

Re-entries were also common on the steep hill slopes north of Homer. Often covered by deep snow during much of the year, their summer appearance has proved deceptive. One tract has been entered seven times and is presently back in vacant public domain status. It lies on both slopes of a fairly deep stream valley, almost a mile from the nearest road passable during winter.

Numerous tracts near Beluga Lake east of Homer have been re-entered repeatedly. Here large acreages of muskeg occur just inland from

the Kachemak Bay Bluff. Casual or inexperienced observation has misled some people into planning drainage improvements which usually proved beyond the average homesteader's scope.

Many tracts west of Homer were initially entered and then relinquished before the Sterling Highway existed. Access by rough trails or along the beach proved too difficult. A good road finally brought new homesteaders who went on to patent their places.

"VETERANS" HOMESTEADS.—Table 19 shows occupancy and patent status for 416 homesteads in the Homer area. This table does not necessarily reflect the veteran status of the original entryman because some homesteads have been sold since being patented.

About 57 per cent of the 416 tracts had been patented by 1955. Slightly more than a third were occupied. This represents a lower proportion of occupancy than for other areas in the western Kenai Peninsula. A small number had reverted to vacant public domain status, having been relinquished or otherwise dropped by their entrymen, and had not been re-entered at the time of the survey. Many more of the unoccupied, unpatented tracts eventually will be returned to vacant public domain status, to be taken by new entrymen.

Figure 2.—Soil conditions in the Homer area, are shown in this map. Natural soil patterns are extremely variable. Square land parcels laid out arbitrarily within the cadastral survey system mean that most homesteads must contain some non-tillable land.



Compiled from Soil Conservation Service soil survey data by John H. Miles, Alaska Agricultural Experiment Station

Table 19.—Ownership, occupancy, and patent status of homesteads in the Homer area as of June 30, 1955.

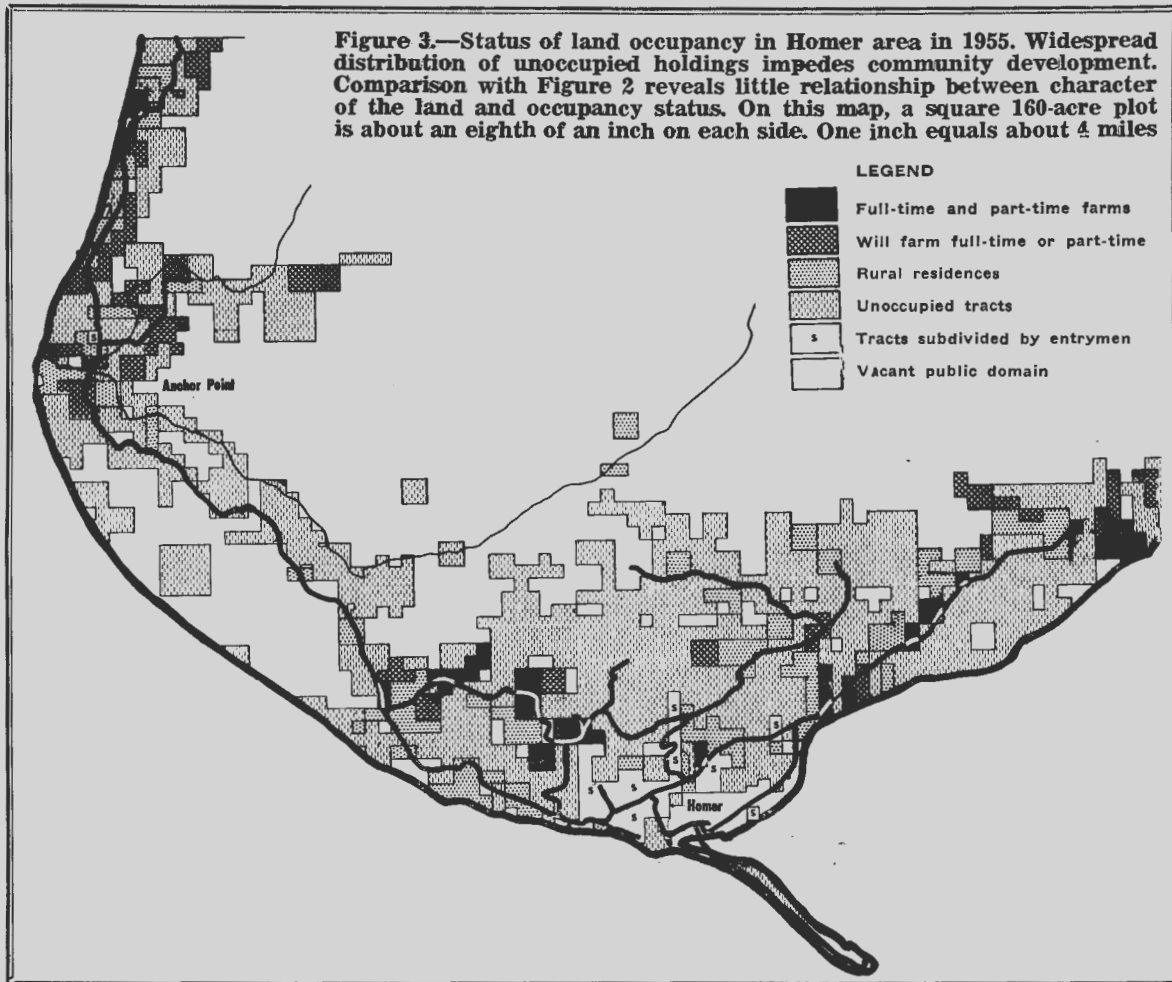
Occupancy	Patented by-		Unpatented by-		Total*
	Veterans	Others	Veterans	Others	
	Numbers				
Occupied	49	35	23	18	122
Unoccupied	70	69	104	38	280
Subdivided	0	14	—	—	14
TOTAL*	119	118	127	56	416

Some three-fifths of all tracts in the Homer area had been claimed or purchased by veterans. More veterans than non-veterans were residing on both patented and unpatented homesteads. About the same number of veterans and non-veterans had

left patented homesteads to reside elsewhere. Of the 142 unoccupied and unpatented tracts, 104 had been abandoned by veterans compared to only 38 by non-veterans.

Most veteran entrymen could obtain patent with no cultivation whereas non-veterans had to cultivate. Even so, nearly as many non-veterans as veterans obtained patents on their places. This occurred although veteran entrymen have far out-numbered non-veterans in recent years. Many veterans had filed on lands which they had never seen. Few had any conception of the many problems encountered in developing frontier lands. Some had little real intention of ever complying with homestead requirements. Moreover, many "veteran" entrymen were unable or unwilling to reside on their homesteads for the required seven months. Economic and social conditions persuaded many veterans to give up their homesteads without obtaining patent, or to become absentee owners after they acquired patent.

MAP BY BILL ELMORE



SUMMARY.—The Homer area contains a total of about 103,900 acres suitable for general cropping, dairying or livestock farming. Its climate is favorable for growing grass forage, cool-season vegetables, and barley. Some 71,000 acres are well suited for forage crops and grazing. But despite this favorable combination of land and climate only 1,429 acres grew crops in 1955.

Rising general prosperity in the late 1930's mainly meant for this area the loss of many older settlers and shorter stays by the many newcomers. Poor subsistence from the land, together with lagging market development, did not supply the standard of living available elsewhere. When war-time construction and defense activities generally by-passed the area, more settlers departed.

Following the war, governmental programs on roads and defense activities, the prospect of group settlement, and increased interest in recreational assets brought new settlers. Many new homesteaders, most of whom were veterans, were sincerely interested in farming. But fundamental knowledge of modern-day farming was scarce

and provisions for marketing their products was generally overlooked. Costs of establishing commercial agricultural enterprises proved prohibitive.

Another strong settlement influence was speculation on rising land values, thought to follow new roads, defense installations, and recreational developments. For example, a highway linking the area with Anchorage markets was viewed as a boon to agriculture. But completion of the Sterling highway did not automatically bring new demands for foodstuffs. Most farms were still geared to small local markets. Both knowledge and finances were inadequate to develop sufficiently large commercial enterprises to support the 250-mile truck haul to Anchorage. Many settlers, disappointed by the static market demands, left their homesteads or devoted their time to better non-farm occupations which gradually appeared in the area.

Recent oil and gas leasing over the entire area has brought new hopes for an industrial bonanza in the near future. This has stimulated a new flurry of homestead entries.

For whatever reason, the increasing number of homestead entries cancelled, relinquished, or otherwise dropped cannot be lightly brushed aside. Administrative costs probably average around \$30 per entry, or nearly \$10,560 for canceled entries in the Homer area alone through 1955. More than half of these costs have occurred within the last decade. Filing fee losses by Homer entrymen have amounted to nearly \$5,000 in aggregate. It is not known how great were the cash expenditures made by the entrymen of these defunct homesteads, but they have been substantial. To these should be added the social costs and the loss of alternative incomes obtainable elsewhere.

Some of these costs resulted from irresponsible action by entrymen. Some filed on homesteads without first examining or even seeing them, without giving earnest thought to the problems of homesteading, and with little or no background for homestead life. Many entries were filed on inaccessible lands or places physically unsuitable. Other entrymen did not acquire and use available information such as Soil Conservation Service data, Extension Service information, economic studies of the area, or the past experience of other settlers and homesteaders in the area.

The government must also assume its share of responsibility in not providing suitable informational material and references. Good public relations require an information center or clearing house where prospective settlers can obtain the accumulated knowledge from land, agricultural and social agencies. Moreover, the complete lack of land classification legislation makes it easy for prospective farmers to enter sub-marginal land where they have no chance to make a living. Many such entries account for a large number of abandoned homesteads.

The current homestead law does not assure development of agricultural enterprises even where land is physically capable of such development. This is seen in the fact that less than four per cent of suitable agricultural land was cropped in 1955. Much waste is attributed to the old custom of dividing land into square quarter-sections regardless of soil capabilities. Although some progress had been made in breaking away from this traditional pattern, great opportunities for improvement lie ahead.

That four of five homesteads claimed since 1950 in the Homer area have already been relinquished demonstrates that present agricultural settlement policies probably should be reoriented.



To find better adapted forages, the Alaska Agricultural Experiment Station has conducted many field tests in the Kenai Peninsula. Here the Territorial Conservationist and two members of the Soil Conservation District Board in company with a University Extension agent examine experimental plots on the Newman Farm near Miller's Landing east of Homer. This site is on the low bench land along Katchemak Bay. In the background rises the rolling hill country.

Changes are needed to protect the unwary prospective settler and also the public interests, since tax-supported funds are used for servicing rural areas. There is a strong public argument for guiding settlement into certain selected areas where soil and climatic conditions conducive to profitable agriculture are known to exist and where markets for products exist or can be developed.

Surveying in advance of settlement and guiding homesteaders to areas of good soils and good markets are both essential to a sound program. Both will serve the best interests of the nation and the individual prospective settler. Prospective settlers should first be guided to areas already being developed, as long as these areas contain unclaimed undeveloped tracts suitable for farming.

A real tax or other means of discouraging speculative, non-resident ownership of good, assessable land seemingly should be enacted by appropriate civil organizations. This would eventually force much of unused and vacant rural land into new hands or return it to vacant public domain status, making it once again available to new entrymen. Under new ownership and altered economic conditions many now vacant properties might be put to good use. No community can be prosperous and function adequately when it is dispersed by large unoccupied, unproductive areas.

Need for guidance in selecting specific tracts is further illustrated by the large numbers of vacant holdings and by the numerous families who have had to change their plans from agriculture to non-farm work in order to support themselves. Need for post-settlement assistance and the almost universal absence of such assistance are both evident. Lack of intermediate and long-term credit resources, lack of help in farm planning, and lack of marketing assistance are major roadblocks holding back farm development by those families having the will and desire to become farmers. This study indicates that struggling families, without finances and without farm experience or training, make very slow progress in using their land.

It is estimated that between 20,500 and 33,500 additional acres of cropland are needed to supply south-central Alaska with agricultural commodities physically and economically capable of being grown in Alaska. Land capability studies indicate that the western Kenai Peninsula should contribute significantly to this agricultural economy, although the distance to the major market (Anchorage) is between 150 and 250 miles. Competition with the Matanuska Valley must be anticipated and met.

Small-scale farmers on the Kenai Peninsula are now beset with problems—few sources of loan funds, limited local outlets, and lack of marketing organization or facilities. They can make little headway toward tapping larger market potentials. Their distance from Anchorage requires efficient marketing organization and facilities before many

more families can make their living from agriculture on the Kenai Peninsula.

Many new settlers arriving in Alaska during the past ten years come from cities rather than farms. They have been accustomed to high living standards. Few are mentally or morally prepared to live as "homesteaders" in the sense that the term was applied to their grandfathers during the opening of the West. Three or four generations ago, the transition from life at home to life as a pioneer involved no great change except an escape from old neighbors and the rigors of a tedious journey. Mechanization was unthought of in either place. Outdoor plumbing served its purpose in Oklahoma as in New York. Horses and oxen furnished transportation and power at home and in the wilderness.

Today's homesteader leaves a highly mechanized, highly regimented social structure for semi-isolation in Alaska's wilds. A few settlers successfully make this transition—successful to the extent that they may depend largely on their own land for food. Many homestead families are considered ill-housed, ill-clothed, and rather backward members of their communities. Their neighbors usually take for granted Stateside standards of housing, clothing and services. It is generally not appreciated that surfaced highways, daily air and truck service, rural electrification, modern schools and many other niceties of modern farm communities are not compatible with "homesteading". New farms fostered by current homestead legislation cannot afford these expensive services. Yet without them, people can no longer be persuaded to live on the land. The burden of all these services cannot be borne by non-productive land. Thus, for at least a generation, these services must be provided from other sources. Failing in this, land will not be utilized because early utilization demands too much family sacrifice.

The need for policies fostering new settlement and development of agricultural land—so evident in what is happening on the Kenai Peninsula—is necessary for all of Alaska. The Kenai Peninsula is only a variant of the Alaskan landscape. Other agricultural areas of the Territory do not greatly differ in social and physical environments. Obstacles to land settlement and development found in the Peninsula are similar to those prevailing in other underdeveloped farming regions of Alaska.



The most significant facts about homestead land use, occupancy, and ownership on the western Kenai Peninsula are as follows:

1. Of all patented or entered homestead land, 59 per cent was found unoccupied and abandoned in July, 1955.
2. Of all patented or entered homestead land, 31 per cent was being used solely for rural residences by persons not interested in farming and having no intention of farming their land.
3. This left only 10 per cent of the homesteaded land on which the owners or entrymen were farming or planning to farm.
4. Of 851 homesteads, containing 109,629 acres, only 38 were being farmed on a full or part-time basis. These 38 homesteads contained 5,682 acres.
5. Although 80 homesteaders were farming or planning to farm in 1950, only 27 of these still were interested in farming in 1955.
6. Of the 109,629 acres of homestead land, only 1,429 acres were cropped in 1955, an increase from 783 acres in 1950.
7. Only 14 per cent of all income reported by homesteaders came from sales in 1955. In 1950, farm sales accounted for 10 per cent of total income.
8. In 1955, average homesteader incomes were \$3,812 and average expenditures were \$3,730, including living costs, farm operation, and development. In 1950, average incomes were \$2,536 and average expenditures were \$2,077.
9. Livestock enterprises predominated in the limited agricultural economy.

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