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IDITAROD HISTORIC TRAIL ALLIANCE
TRAIL ▪ STORY ▪ STEWARDSHIP

The Tripod

Summer 2026

The Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance (Alliance) promotes awareness of the Iditarod National Historic Trail and its gold rush and Alaska Native heritage by encouraging education programs and historical research, assisting in the protection, improvement, maintenance and marking of the Trail, and developing partnerships that foster stewardship, commitments, volunteerism and support.

Mosquitos and Really Bad Baseball



For America's 250th birthday, Alaska is showcasing its unique baseball history. To participate, in 2026 The Tripod *is featuring baseball stories from gold rush towns, as told in the* Iditarod Pioneer, *Iditarod's local newspaper that ran 1910-1919.*

July 11, 1914 - FLAT CITY'S CELEBRATION

Of a Fourth of July baseball game in Flat, Alaska, it was reported (emphasis added): "These teams were so well picked and the score so exceedingly high that **it would be an unkindness to publish the names of the participants as ballplayers**. Suffice it to say that although the game was not marked by any brilliant baseball plays, there were a great many amusing stunts pulled off by both sides, the audience being in an uproar most of the game. After the ball game there was a continuous performance of racing, jumping, etc., until 7 o'clock in the evening, when the tug-of-war teams were turned loose. ... After thirty minutes of constant pulling the Swedes were declared the winners. A noticeable feature about the match was the interest taken in the contest by the ladies, many of whom had husbands in one team or the other. **They were busy fanning the insects away from their favorite team** and heartily cheering them on to victory. In the evening the festivities were closed with a very largely attended ball in the Moose hall. ...

All went to their homes satisfied that while the population of Flat City is not as great as it was a few years ago, there is still enough of the patriotic holiday spirit among those that are left to make a creditable holiday." 🔹

This entire article can be viewed online, along with the Iditarod Pioneer *newspaper archive, at: https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn95060032/*

Flat City: Still There



What happens to an abandoned town in the middle of the Alaska bush? Alders grow, left-behind machines rust, buildings collapse. But in Flat, Alaska, there is also a quiet movement to preserve the history and at least some of the gold rush town's historic structures.

Flat started with Frank Stanley's roadhouse in June 1910, and by the end of that summer was a tent city serving up to 1000 people who had arrived in search of gold. By the following year, a full-blown town had sprung up, as seen in the 1911 photo above. Communities in Flat, Otter, Discovery, and Iditarod were connected to each other by newspaper, telephone, and tramway that was later replaced by a road). Their connection to the rest of the world was via a telegraph station in Iditarod, and by river for goods and post. In winter, the Seward-Nome trail (today's Iditarod National Historic


Flat Alaska, 2024

(continued last page)

Golden Tripod Stewardship Award: Lee Poleske



Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance is proud to announce Lee Poleske as the 2026 recipient of the Golden Tripod Stewardship Award. Poleske was a resident of Seward, Alaska, a teacher and a historian. He was dedicated to preserving and sharing the history of the gold rush and the Iditarod Trail's connection to his community.

In 1982, Poleske co-founded the Seward Trail Blazers. He also served as a long-time board member of the Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance, gave numerous public presentations on the trail's history, and helped create educational materials like the "Walk the First Mile" brochure for the Iditarod Trail in Seward. He wrote *The Tripod* newsletter, featuring articles and other primary sources to cultivate the historical connection to the trail. He received multiple awards for his historic preservation efforts from organizations like the Alaska Historical Society.

Poleske passed away in August 2023 at the age of 86. A bronze statue of Poleske lives on in Seward, part of the First Mile project he championed.

In June 2026, Seward Trail Blazers installed a sign near the statue illuminating Poleske's contributions. The Alliance also installed a sign commemorating him as a Golden Tripod Stewardship Awardee. 2026 was the second year of the annual award. 🔹



The Lee Poleske bench, statue, and signs can be found along the first mile of the Iditarod National Historic Trail in Seward. Photos by IHTA.

Celebrating New Miles, New Bridges

In August, partner organizations and trail enthusiasts gathered in Moose Pass to celebrate the new bridge over Ptarmigan Creek, installed last year as part of the ongoing significant upgrade happening to Iditarod National Historic Trail's "Southern Trek" through Chugach National Forest.



Ribbon cutting at Ptarmigan Creek's new bridge on the INHT: Moose Pass Trail. Photos courtesy Alaska Trails.

Other work by the US Forest Service in 2025 included new bridges at Victor Creek and Waterfall Creek, the addition of a separated pedestrian lane to Snow River bridge, and a new parking areas at Bear Lake. Five miles of new trail were added beteen Victor Creek Trail and Ptarmigan Creek Trail, plus two miles of trail reconstruction between Victor Creek and Snow River.

New trail miles and bridges are part of the contemporary recreation route for INHT, a trail that provides a vicarious historical experience and bypasses places where the historic trail overlaps with the railroad and highway today. 🔹

Submit your Nominations!

Do you know someone who deserves to be acknowledged for their contribution to the Iditarod National Historic Trail? Nominate them for the Golden Tripod Stewardship Award! This award was specially created to recognize and thank an individual, organization or entity which has significantly contributed to stewardship of the INHT. Nominations for the 2027 award are open now at https://tinyurl.com/trailaward

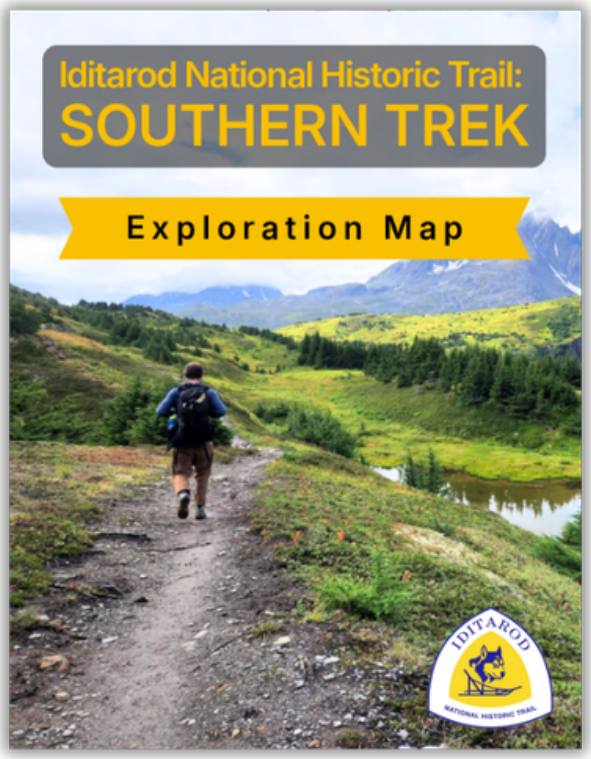
“Have you seen what’s new on the Southern Trek?”

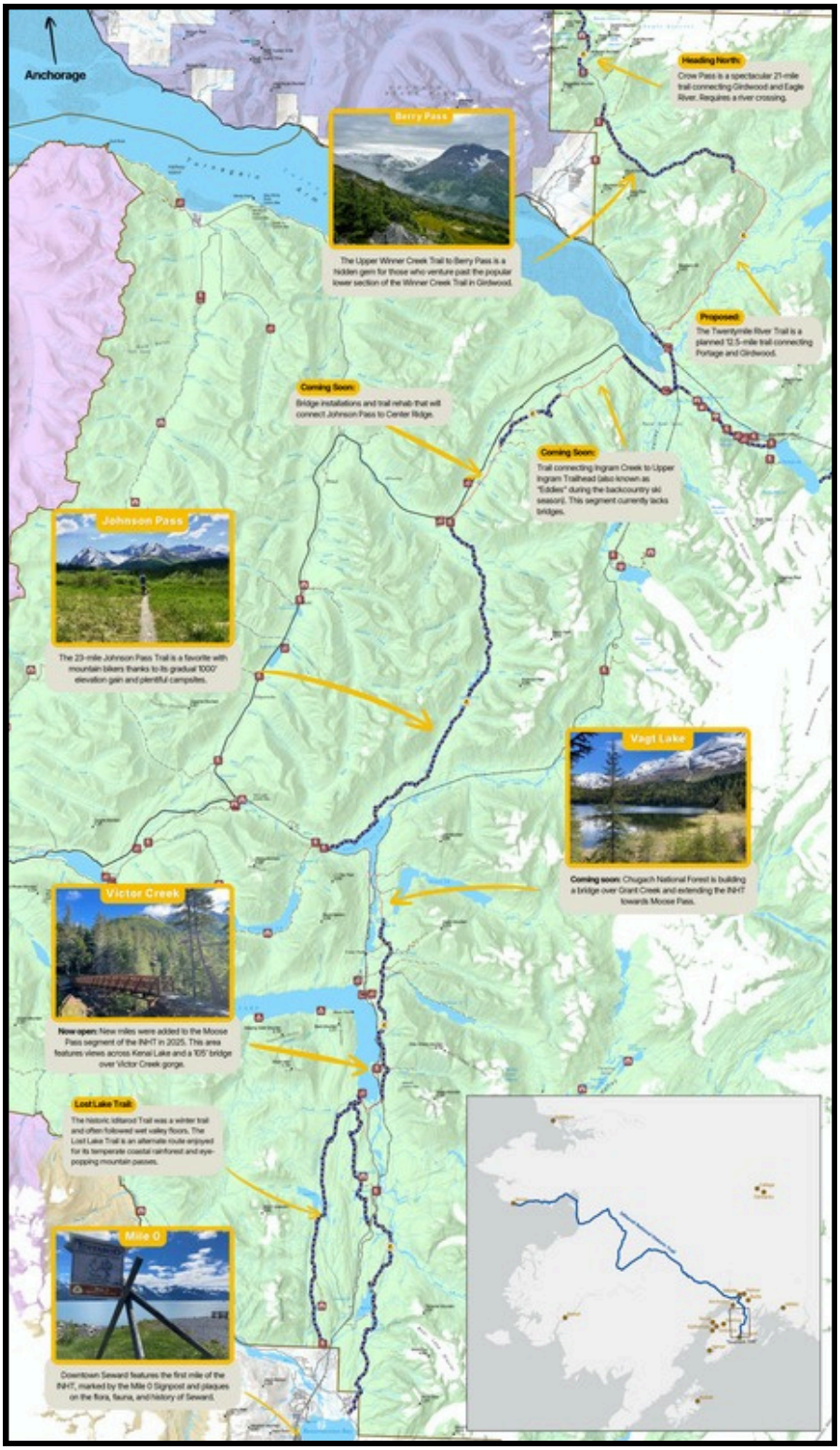
Get your copy of the **new map** that showcases newly completed and scheduled upcoming work on the Iditarod National Historic Trail in Chugach National Forest. The Iditarod Trail south of Anchorage, aka the “Southern Trek,” is rapidly progressing towards completion, meaning there will be a continuous* footpath from Eagle River to Seward, approximately 120 miles of trail (*or nearly continuous). Be among the first to conquer each new mile of trail as it opens!

The Southern Trek is also included in the Alaska Long Trail project. The Alaska Long Trail is an effort led by Alaska Trails to connect existing trails to form a continuous route from Seward to Fairbanks. It envisions a “world-class trail system connecting 500+ miles of Alaska’s iconic terrain and diverse communities from the Pacific to the Interior, embracing the many ways Alaskans recreate outdoors and bolstering the Alaska economy by attracting visitors from all over the world.” Alaska Long Trail website

The Exploration Map was produced through a partnership with the Alliance, US Forest Service, Alaska Trails, and Bureau of Land Management. The inspiration came when Forest Service staff brought a similar map to the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race Ceremonial Start event at BLM’s Campbell Creek Science Center this past March. The Alliance’s Betsi Oliver saw the map and asked if she could have it after the event to put on her wall. Then she realized everyone would want a copy for their wall, or glove box, backpack, or bike pannier.

The 17"x27" map is available to the public for free. Copies are available at several locations from Anchorage through Seward. It can also be ordered through the IHTA webstore for just a $3.00 shipping & handling fee. 🔹





Flat City Archeological Survey, *continued*





Photos provided by Alaska State Office of History and Archeology

Trail) connected the mining district over land to the port in Seward.

In 2024, historians funded by the Alliance traveled to Flat to record the state of the ghost town. Previous official documentation occurred in 1993. Much of the structures that remain have aged as expected, such as this greenhouse photographed in 1993 (left) and 2024 (right). However, the team also documented some surprising details, like a classic car still in its garage, and the 100-year-old Moose Hall, which has been maintained in its historic condition by local volunteers.


Moose Hall interior, Flat AK, 2024

The original Moose Hall, the site of many town dances reported in the *Iditarod Pioneer,* was destroyed by fire in 1924. The current Moose Hall, or Community Hall, was built to replace it in 1925. "Many of the original aspects of construction [are] still preserved in the interior of the building. Many of the buildings in Flat were constructed in a utilitarian manner with 'rough and ready' or salvaged materials, [thus the special] care in the construction and choosing of materials for Moose Hall are evident" (Flat Historical Building Survey, State of Alaska, 2025). Families who still own land and mining claims near Flat have maintained select historic buildings, including Moose Hall. They recently gave it a fresh coat of butter yellow paint.

The team of historians that surveyed Flat's remaining structures is using their research to document Alaskan-American architecture traditions. Through a partnership with the Alliance, Alaska State Office of History and Archeology, and the Bureau of Land Management, a determination found the overall Flat Historic District, plus 51 individual sites, eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. ◆

Details and photographs for this article sourced from Flat Historical Building Survey Revisit, Yukon- Koyukuk Borough, Alaska *by Adam Brinkman and team, Alaska State Office of History and Archeology*


Figure 152. Flat residents gather for a race during 4th of July in front of the Community Hall, 1937. Paul E. Keller photograph. Flat and Iditarod Collection, Alaska State Office of History and Archaeology.


Moose Hall exterior, Flat AK, 2024

The Tripod is released quarterly. Look for Alliance news updates, upcoming events and meetings, and more on our Facebook page and via email.
To be added to our email contact list, please send a request to iditarodHTA@gmail.com

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