

Summary of Streams in the Tr'on d'ek Hwech'in Traditional Area:

A Search for Candidate Streams to Support a Program Based on a  
Klondike Area Central Incubation/Outplanting Facility

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Prepared for:

Yukon River Commercial Fishing Association

Box 552, Dawson City, Yukon YoB-1Go

Contact: Tim Gerberding

Tr'on dök Hwech'in

Box 599, Dawson City, Yukon YoB-1Go

Contact: Ed Kormendy



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This report has been prepared by J. Duncan of Duncan Contracting

**Researchers:**

Jody Cox  
Jake Duncan  
Sally Robinson

**Interviewers:**

Jake Duncan  
Marilyn Jenson  
Ingrid Johnson  
Sally Robinson

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Yukon Archives/Claude B. Tidd Collection

"Archie" holding a large King salmon at  
New Rampart House July 1918



Yukon Archives/Bishop Stringer Collection

Fishwheel on the Yukon River

The goal of this study is to determine the extent of historic spawning populations of salmon in the Tr'on d'ek Hwech'in traditional area, and to utilize this information for the identification of areas most likely to benefit from a restoration program based on an outplanting facility in Dawson.

As the focus of this study was on the search for historic information, most recent DFO knowledge regarding salmon stocks in the traditional area was not targeted or captured. Information should be evaluated in light of DFO's most recent knowledge. Notwithstanding the desirability of further study, this project clearly identifies several streams that would benefit from an outplanting program.

In addition to gathering DFO's most recent information, the continued work gathering both local and traditional knowledge has the possibility of identifying more candidate streams. If the pursuit of knowledge were to continue from these sources, the continued effort would greatly benefit from an education component as participation in interviews would be increased.

It is recommended that the Upper Klondike, McQuesten, Fifteenmile and Twelvemile rivers and Clear and Crooked creeks be considered as candidates for salmon restoration. They all have evidence of significant historic spawning populations. Evidence also suggests that present populations of salmon on these creeks are depleted well below historic levels. The McQuesten river and Clear creek on the Stewart system fall into this category, but presently have valid mining claims and some active mining operators working on them. Currently fish habitat protection standards provided in the Yukon Placer Authorization, under the Fisheries Act may provide adequate protection on the McQuesten river, however, Clear creek is more problematic.

There are other creeks that may be good candidates but further study on them is needed. Among these are Coal Creek, the Fortymile, Tatonduk, Eagle and Kandik rivers. These drainages all have good salmon habitat, little mining or other disruptions, and some evidence of spawning salmon populations.

There is also some evidence of historic salmon populations and negligible contemporary populations in some heavily mined creeks like the Indian River. Creeks and rivers which have consistently been heavily mined for many years are not considered candidate streams for outplanting. In the case of the Klondike River, from the mouth of Hunker Creek downstream, it has been heavily impacted by early mining operations but has sufficiently recovered to provide an excellent migration route for salmon to the upper Klondike river.

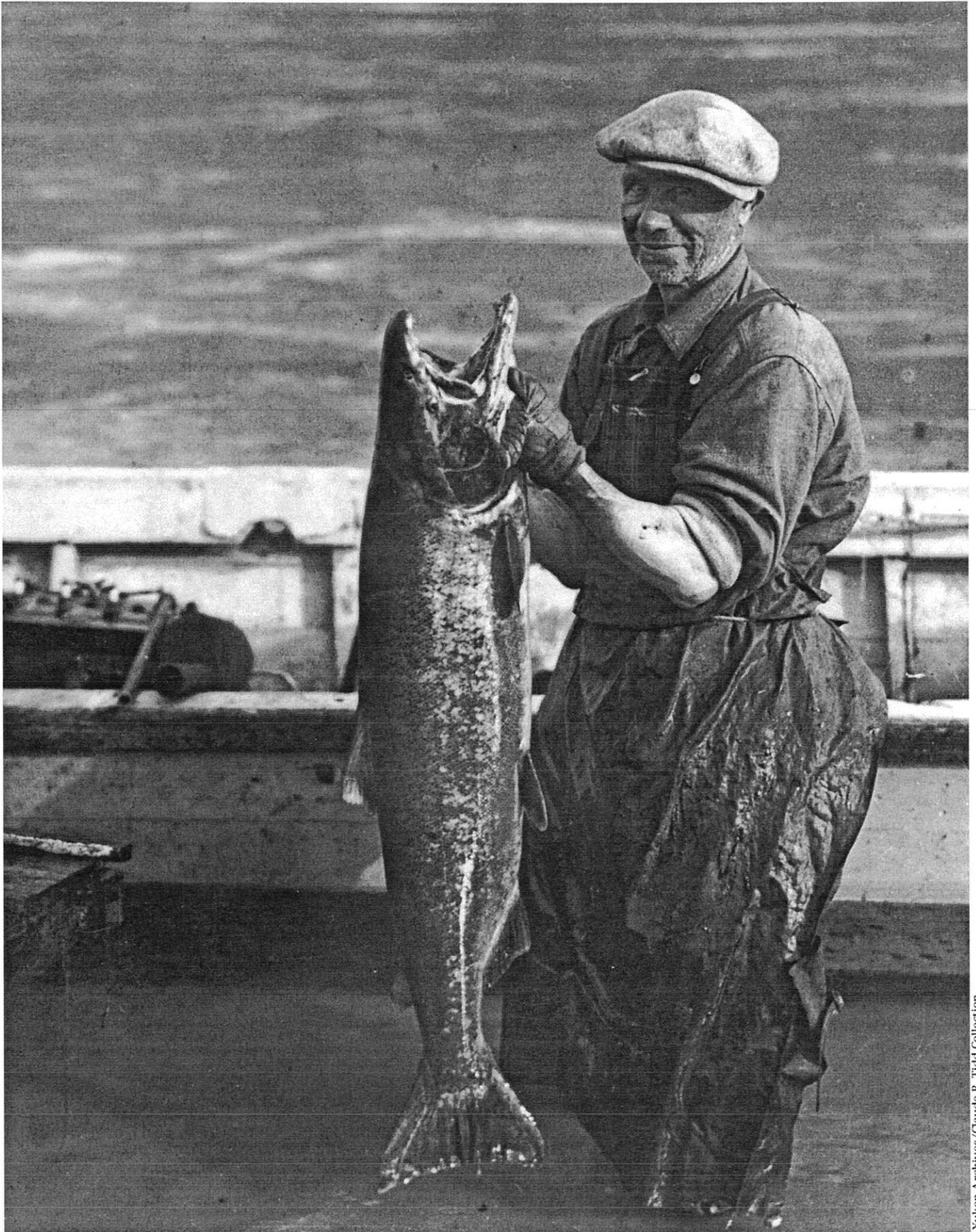
As part, and as a result, of this study, stream surveys were conducted on the Klondike, Chandindu, and Fifteenmile rivers and Coal creek during the 1997 open water season. It is recommended that the next step be the identification of available brood stock on the Chandindu and Fifteenmile rivers. This study should be conducted with enumeration weirs placed at the mouths of these rivers. Much information already exists on the Klondike regarding brood stock availability, available habitat, and its restoration potential, from the project's operation of a stream-side incubation box over the past 5 years. Not enough information was gathered on Coal creek to warrant a weir-type study on this creek, however more physical study would be desirable.

Enough information now exists to recommend the continuation of the project's studies into the feasibility of a Dawson Area Central Incubation/Outplanting Facility.



Yukon Archives/Claude B. Tidd Collection

A well-dressed young man posing beside an 85lb King salmon in front of Jimmy's Place in Dawson 1924.



Pete Anderson standing in the Yukon River near Fortymile holding up a large salmon c.1938

Written material was found in published and unpublished manuscripts in the Whitehorse libraries of the DFO and DIAND, the Dawson City Museum and the Tr'on d'ek Hwech'in land claims office and in the Yukon Archives and the National Archives of Canada.

Interviews were conducted in Eagle and Tanacross, Alaska, and Dawson City, Stewart Crossing and Pelly, in the Yukon, to gather traditional knowledge about the salmon populations. Interviews and conversations were held with long-term residents in Dawson City to gather some local knowledge about salmon. The area of local knowledge was barely scratched as some very insightful people were not interviewed due to time constraints.

A survey of the written source material and a summary of the findings are included in this report. The source material is organized in three parts with the longest section being all reports of chum and chinook salmon. The second section lists references to the salmon fishery and the third sections refers to the salmon run.

The resource material was gathered from Dawson City, Whitehorse and Ottawa. It is interesting that each area has unique material. Not all the known studies were available and some papers and diaries are lodged in areas not searched during this project. An asset to future projects of this nature would be the creation of a guide to the reference material. For example: it would be helpful if each institution could add their resource material to a list posted on the internet.

The information in this paper tells a bigger story than "what streams have spawning populations of salmon". The data illuminates the changing attitudes towards salmon, as well as the nature of salmon studies and their growing usefulness.

The difficulty of obtaining information from the early years of the gold rush points out the attitude of the government and the public about the welfare of the salmon stocks. In 1900, the official position was as follows:

"It does not appear that the salmon which ascend the Yukon River require protection to the same extent, for the reason that after entering the Rivers they are afforded little or no protection in the United States territory but are merely slaughtered in the lower portions of the river. There is no object in protecting king, or spring salmon, steelheads, dog-

fish and other kinds, in the upper waters when every effort is being made to exterminate them before they reach Canadian territory. The Alaskan canneries, fish-salting and preserving factories, secure all the fish they can regardless of the future. Hence all who wish to fish for salmon in the Yukon territory might be allowed to do so on payment of a licence fee."<sup>1</sup>

This attitude was a reflection of the local concerns about the health of the more economically important grayling stocks and a desire to establish a sport fishery. This attitude of neglect for the salmon stocks continued for too many years, as is evident from one 1988 study's conclusion:

"The fish resources of the Yukon are scarce and valuable. Increasing demand for Yukon fish has occurred against a backdrop of stagnant or declining resource availability."

"To date the fish resources of the Yukon have been managed in most cases as open access resources. With the recent increases in resource pressure, this management strategy is no longer tenable. The need to ration resource use and access has become compelling."<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to these comments is the attitude of the traditional First Nation people as related by Gerald Isaac in 1994: "Every year, June and July, there was always big celebrations when the first salmon were spotted coming up the Yukon River. The event would be celebrated by dancing, singing and feasting because it was bringing life back to the community."<sup>3</sup>

It is hoped that the present study and others like it, and the work which will develop from them, will aid the production of a rational plan for enhancing the Upper Yukon River salmon stocks. A successful program will be one that commits to "bringing life back to the community".

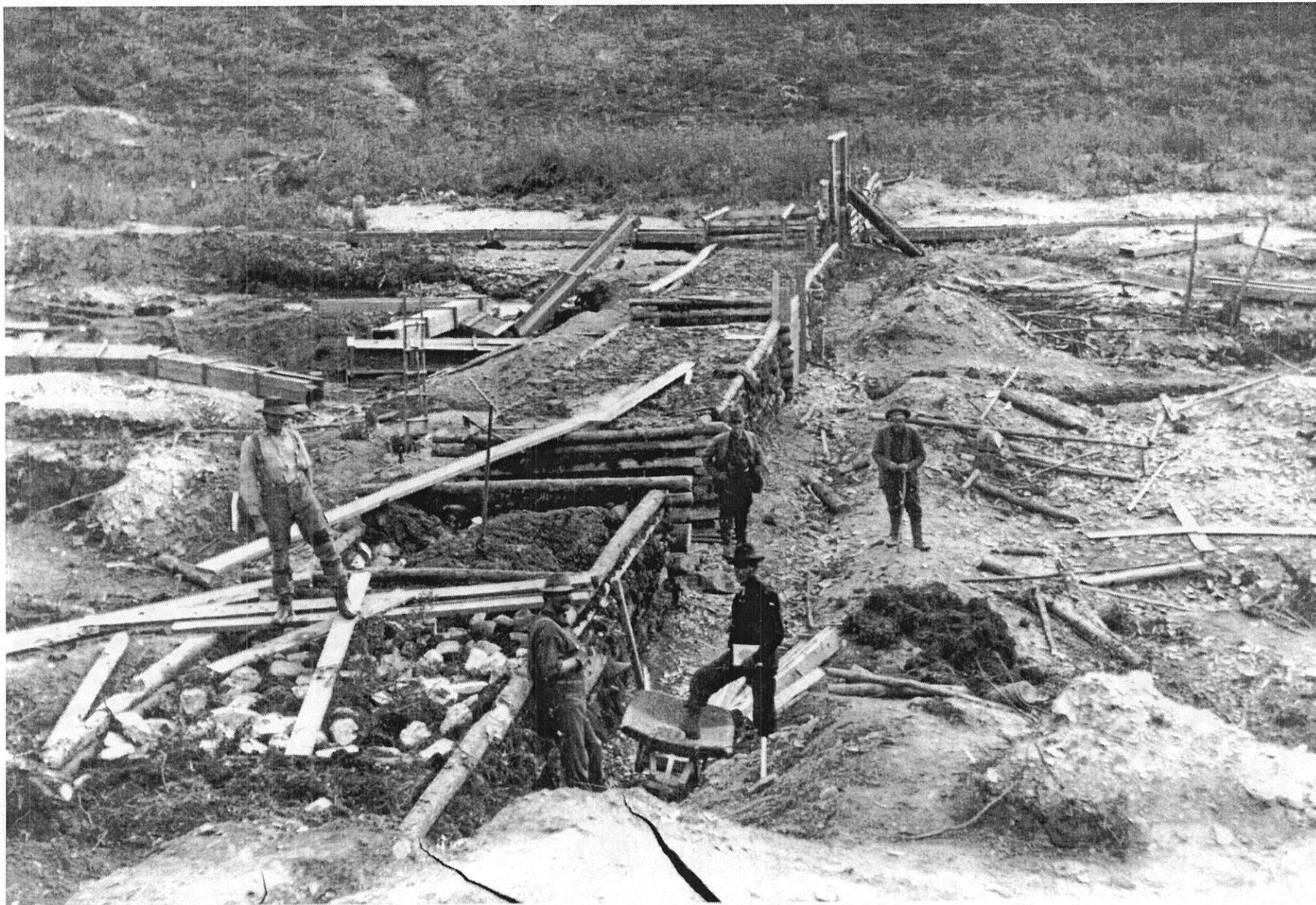
1. F. Goudeau, Deputy Minister of Marine and Fisheries. Correspondence to Theophilus Stewart, Inspector Fisheries, Dawson City. January 30, 1900. RG 23, vol. 328, File 2813, Part 1.

2. The DPA Group Inc., "Economic Potential of the Yukon Fishery", (Yukon Renewable Resources and Economic Development Mines and Small Business, March 1988), p. 1-1.

3. *Moosehide (Edha Dadhechan Ket'et): An Oral History*. Prepared by the Developmental Studies students of the Dawson Campus (Tr'odek Hatr'unotan Zho) of the Yukon College, (1994), p.37.



Fish Trap of George Carmack- Discovery of gold on Bonanza Creek



Building a dam on Eldorado Creek 1898

### **Baker Creek**

64'00 Lat., 139'38' Long.

In 1988 twenty-three juvenile chinook salmon were captured near the mouth in four traps.<sup>1</sup> There is no evidence of spawning populations in the creek or at the mouth. There is no indication that this creek would benefit from a restoration/outplanting program.

### **Bell Creek**

63'57' Lat., 139'42' Long.

In 1988 twelve juvenile chinook salmon were captured near the mouth.<sup>2</sup> There is no evidence of spawning populations in the creek or at the mouth. There is no indication that this creek would benefit from a restoration/outplanting program.

### **Caribou Creek**

63'58' Lat., 139'40'

In 1988 Forty-seven juvenile chinook salmon were captured at the mouth.<sup>3</sup> There is no evidence of spawning populations in the creek or at the mouth. There is no indication that this creek would benefit from a restoration/outplanting program.

### **Chandindu, Twelvemile or TThë dëk, meaning obsidian tools.**

63'13' Lat., 139'51' Long.

There has been both a subsistence fishery and a commercial operation at the mouth of this river. Percy Henry remembers a big camp at the mouth of the Chandindu, called Twelvemile. A "lot of people" lived there year round and there were "thousands of fish".<sup>4</sup> Rowena Flynn describes an island at the mouth and the presence of good big fish there in July. She recounts a method of fishing without a boat where two strings

were tied across the stream with one tied to the net. When one string is pulled, the net goes across and when the net is full the other string brings the net into shore.<sup>5</sup> Mabel Henry's grandmother lived at the Twelvemile with a few others, eating "fish, meat, berries and just some dried fish".<sup>6</sup> Martha Taylors's husband and brother built what might be the first fishwheel on this section of the river at the Twelvemile. Before that, her mother used a big dipper made of willow. She used to catch "lots of fish". Chlora Mason remembers getting 200 - 300 fish a day in the fish wheel.<sup>7</sup>

Percy DeWolfe and his partner set up here in 1898 and sold their catch to the Dawson City market.<sup>8</sup> In 1959 Jack Flynn operated a fish wheel on the opposite side of the Yukon from the mouth of the Chandindu. He sold to the N.C. Co. who, in turn, sold to the NWMP. The Old Crow Division wanted two tonnes that year and Flynn was talking about putting in another wheel.<sup>9</sup>

Members of the Takkudh Gwitchin travelled down the Chandindu from the Black City area every year in June or July. In 1922 and 1923, Annie Henry saw some king salmon about 40-50 miles up from the mouth.<sup>10</sup> Firefighters have seen fish up above Wolverine Canyon.<sup>11</sup>

In 1909 there were dams on the headwaters of the Little Twelvemile and the Tombstone rivers.<sup>12</sup> The Little Twelvemile dam may have stopped fish from ascending the river but the dam no longer exists.<sup>13</sup> The Little Twelve mile dam was reportedly ten feet high but contemporary photos dispute this. A prospector travelling in that area in 1991 looked for salmon fry but saw nothing.

Reports and sightings have offered differing results but on the whole suggest a reliable spawning population. An aerial survey in 1972 saw no fish.<sup>14</sup> Willy deWolfe reported chum salmon spawning in the Chandindu River.<sup>15</sup> A study in 1977 documented salmon spawning<sup>16</sup> A number of studies were carried out in 1985. Low numbers of spawning chinook were seen during an aerial survey.<sup>17</sup> A beach seining project in the same year found chinook fry in the mouth of the river.<sup>18</sup> Again that year, spawning at the mouth was reported by Steve Kormendy and a redd was confirmed just below Ballarat Creek.<sup>19</sup> In 1996, Al von Finster reported on a mud slide at the head of the Twelvemile and concluded that it would probably degrade the habitat for the chinook but would enhance the area for chum, if they spawn in the river.<sup>20</sup>

During 1997, a stream survey was conducted as part of this project. On July 25, 1997 one chinook salmon was observed migrating above

German Creek and on July 27, twenty-two chinook were observed as high up as the Tombstone River. On August 3, 1997 one chinook was observed at Alder Creek.

Further study needs to be done in order to determine the availability of broodstock on this river. This stream is considered a good candidate for restoration subject to the results of a brood stock study.

### **Clear Creek, a Tributary of the Stewart River.**

63'37' Lat., 137'39' Long.

Martin Leinweber, ran a store at Clear Creek and in an article written in 1944 he described the native fishing method. After the high water, a runway, like a maze, ran across the stream with basket traps at each end. The men would clean out the baskets every few hours. The fish was dried in the sun and stored for the winter.<sup>21</sup> Chinook salmon historically spawned in a slough at the mouth of Clear Creek. A 1977 study found a minor degree of use by salmon parr and no chum. The First Nations fishermen did not fish for chum in that area.<sup>22</sup> During the summer of 1974, chinook salmon parr was found on Slough Creek (mile 39.2), a tributary of Clear Creek.<sup>23</sup> A 1983 study looked closely at Clear Creek for distribution and utilization.<sup>24</sup>

This creek may be a good candidate for salmon restoration but presently has active mining claims which will probably interfere with restoration efforts.

### **Cliff Creek**

64'32' Lat., 140'28' Long.

Shad Reid, living at Cliff Creek from 1898 to 1903, reported the presence of salmon but did not say if the fish were found in the Yukon River or Cliff Creek.<sup>25</sup> No evidence of spawning salmon was found to support identifying this creek as a candidate stream for outplanting.

## Coal Creek

64'29' Lat., 140'26' Long.

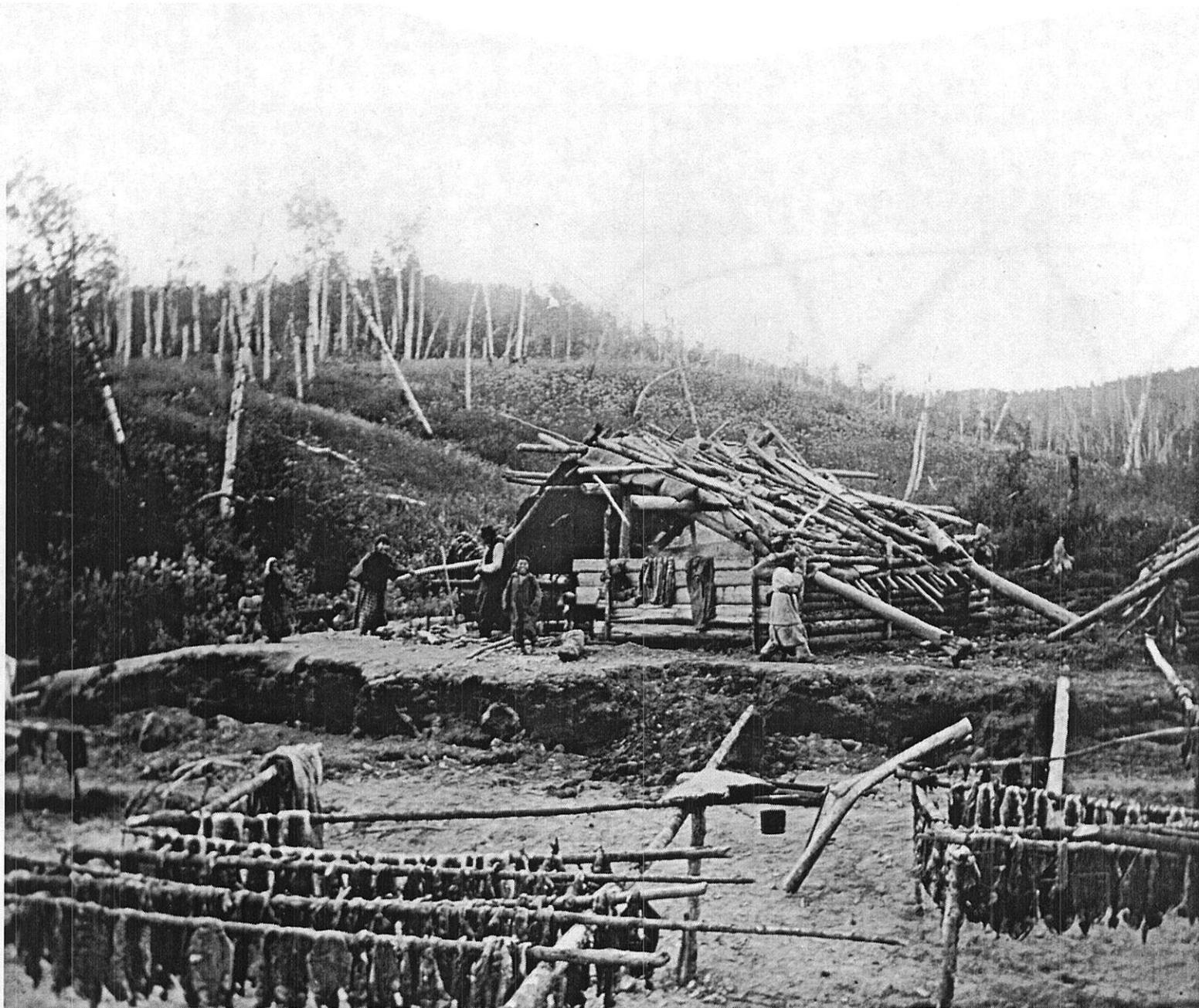
In 1896, RCMP officers at Forty Mile put fish traps in Coal Creek to catch chum salmon for their own, and their dogs, winter consumption. They put the traps in on Sept. 23 and they were still fishing on October 19, 1896.<sup>26</sup> The report mentions traps, versus nets, and so the fishing was probably in Coal Creek proper, rather than the Yukon River at the mouth. It is difficult to estimate the number of chum caught by the RCMP as the report does not note how many dogs were with the division. In 1912 a reduced Forty Mile Detachment had 6 to 8 dogs and on October 1st had the most dog food of the year on hand, consisting of 1,925 pounds of dried salmon, rice and tallow.<sup>27</sup> In 1915, well after the population of Forty Mile was greatly reduced, the Forty Mile Division bought most of 1300 pounds of salmon for dog food.<sup>28</sup> Allen Wright has noted that dog food was in short supply in 1896 as a result of a low salmon run, which he equates with low water.<sup>29</sup>

The RCMP at Forty Mile did not rely solely on Coal Creek for a supply of chinook salmon in 1896. A report refers to salmon brought in from down-river, probably meaning the Yukon River proper.<sup>30</sup> There were chinook salmon in Coal Creek as far up as the forks. Charles Sheldon, hunting in the area, noted that the run was starting on July 11, 1904 and that there were many salmon in the creek just after August 7th.<sup>31</sup>

In 1958 when the US Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service flew over the creek on July 17, they concluded that the creek was "of little value as a salmon spawning stream due to the presence of mine tailings".<sup>32</sup> In July 1960, Percy Henry was told that fire fighters saw fish about fifteen miles up a small tributary on the left, going upstream.<sup>33</sup>

David Kains, of the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans, travelled from the mouth to the forks in 1972. He saw no fish but noted that the stream appeared much like the Fifteenmile and Twelvemile rivers which have spawning populations.<sup>34</sup> A 1977 Department of Fisheries and Oceans file documented chinook spawning in Coal Creek.<sup>35</sup>

During the course of this project, Coal Creek was flown over from the mouth to the second fork on August 3, 1997 but no chinook salmon or redds were observed. Coal Creek may be a good candidate stream for salmon restoration. The main creek is in a broad flat valley. A tributary, about 15 miles up the creek, has a canyon navigable by fish.<sup>36</sup>



Alaska State Library/Charles Medcalf Collection

A Fish camp down river from Dawson c.1900



An operating fishwheel on the Yukon River near Fortymile c.1930

There are some concerns about the reason for the decline in fish population. A coal mine on the south fork started in 1903 and began shipping coal in 1904. The mine operated until 1909.<sup>37</sup> The resident fishers may have interfered with the runs or the mine tailings may have changed the acidity of the creek. In any case, Coal Creek warrants further study.

### **Coffee Creek**

62'55' Lat., 139'05' Long.

Coffee Creek was a traditional gathering spot for the Tr'on dök Hwech'in, Selkirk and White River people.<sup>38</sup> The Tr'on dök Hwech'in used to go there to gather flint or copper.<sup>39</sup> Stanley Jonathan, of Pelly Crossing, recalls a village before the highway construction and good fishing "around there someplace".<sup>40</sup>

The good fishing probably occurred in the sloughs and along the sandbars in the Yukon River near Coffee Creek and not in the creek itself.<sup>41</sup> No evidence was found to support identifying Coffee Creek as a candidate outplanting stream.

### **Chris Creek**

63'22' Lat., 139'34' Long.

Three minnow traps were set in 1988 and no juvenile chinook were captured in the upper creek. Eighteen juveniles were captured near the mouth.<sup>42</sup> There is no evidence of spawning populations in the creek or at the mouth. There is no indication that this creek would benefit from a restoration/outplanting program.

### **Eagle River** or Dhäl Tsul dök meaning Little Dome Creek.

64'47' Lat., 141'00' Long.

A local resident has seen a few kings and chums on this river, and a couple of carcasses on the banks.<sup>43</sup> Percy Henry questioned an elder and the answer did not indicate a large salmon population.<sup>44</sup> No evidence was

found to support identifying this creek as a candidate stream.<sup>45</sup> This river needs more study before it can be considered a candidate for outplanting.

### **Excelsior Creek**

63'26' Lat., 139'42' Long.

Six minnow traps were set in 1988 and no juvenile chinook salmon were captured in the upper stream. Seventeen juveniles were captured near the mouth.<sup>46</sup> No evidence was found to identify this creek as a salmon spawning stream.

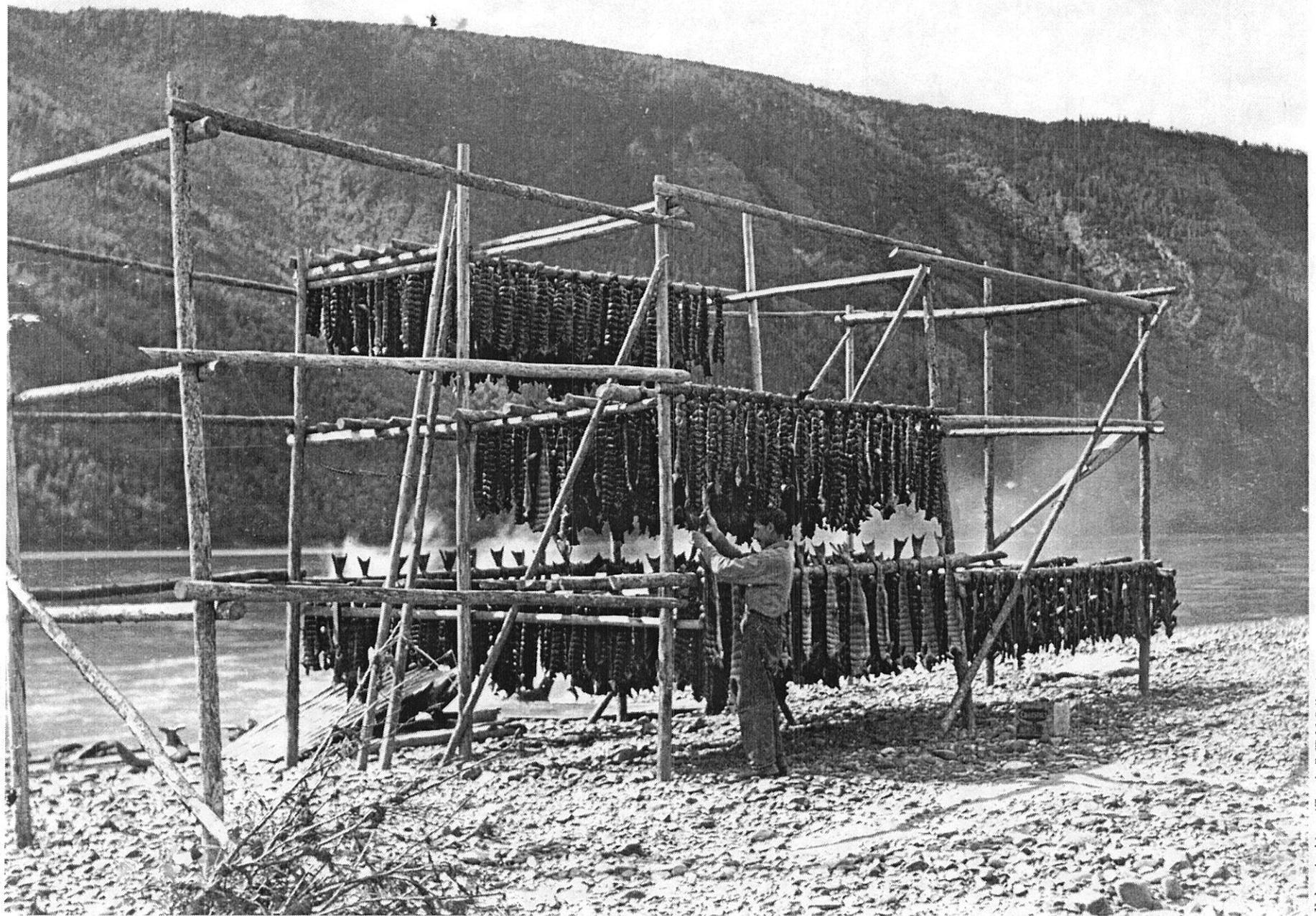
### **Fifteen Mile River**

64'17' Lat., 139'48' Long.

This river was surveyed twice in 1972, once by boat and once by air, but no fish were spotted.<sup>47</sup> A spawning population of chinook was documented in 1977.<sup>48</sup>

Documentary support is scarce for the Fifteenmile to identify it as an important spawning stream. However, the terrain is similar to that of the Twelvemile, with perhaps less volume of water, and conditions are favourable to a resident stock.<sup>49</sup> The river was studied during the course of this project. On July 26, 1997 one chinook salmon was observed 18.5 miles up the river. On July 27, seven chinook were observed three miles above the Forks. On August 3, 1997 four chinooks were observed as high as N 64'31'49.4" and W 139'42'35.9" and seven redds were counted from the headwaters to the forks. Fry traps were set and the stream observed from the ground between August 5 and August 7, 1997. A total of 14 adult chinook salmon, 12 salmon redds and 57 chinook fry were counted during this time.

There is no mine or habitation for the length of the river and there would be, therefore, limited disruption of a restoration program. The Fifteen Mile maybe a candidate stream but needs a weir to determine the availability of brood stock.



Arthur Anderson hanging fish on the Anderson's dry rack by the Yukon River near Fortymile c.1930



Yukon Archives/Claude B. Tidd Collection

Pete Anderson cleaning a fish while standing in knee-deep water near Fortymile c.1938

## Forty Mile River

64'26' Lat., 130'32' Long.

Finding hard evidence for a stable population of spawning salmon has been difficult. The Forty Mile is a well documented grayling stream and the early local miners easily caught enough to feed them through the winter.<sup>50</sup> The Tanacross people may have travelled and trapped in the upper Fortymile area and caught fish there for their dogs.<sup>51</sup> Stray chinook have been reported periodically on the American side in the Forty Mile River and in 1960 there were reports of chinook and chum spawning near the Taylor Highway.<sup>52</sup> In 1987, surveys on the American side observed a live adult female chinook moving over a redd in the North Fork.<sup>53</sup>

The earliest records do not indicate that the Forty Mile was a good river for salmon. In 1896 during a poor salmon run, the NWMP fished downstream on the Yukon River.<sup>54</sup> The native fishers occupied traditional spots on the Yukon River near the Forty Mile townsite and along the Yukon at the mouths of the smaller streams.<sup>55</sup> The Anglican missionary, Rev. Canham, noted that a commercial fishery on the Klondike River c1895 was selling salmon to the Forty Mile miners. Although the fisherman charged a high price, he made money.<sup>56</sup> The historical evidence suggests that the Forty Mile salmon run was small at best.

The heavy mining in the Forty Mile River before the turn of the century may have had an adverse affect on the salmon population. Gerry Couture has speculated that the earliest mining methods, called skim digging, would have occurred in the thawed gravel river banks and bars where the redds would most likely be located.<sup>57</sup> In 1913 a miner diverted the North Fork and created a 23' waterfall which prohibited the passage of any fish until erosion corrected the situation.<sup>58</sup>

The Clinton Creek mine tailings were not found to have affected the viability of the river.<sup>59</sup> In 1975 a chinook salmon was reported in the Forty Mile during a Clinton Creek assessment.<sup>60</sup> In 1988 chinook juveniles were found in the mainstem at Clinton Creek and in Clinton Creek itself.<sup>61</sup>

Chum salmon were reported near Steele Creek and chinook carcasses near Joseph's village in 1978.<sup>62</sup> There were enough reports of adult fish and juveniles in the Forty Mile that L. Jaremovic and A. von Finster, Senior Habitat Biologist for DFO, recommended further studies to find the redds and establish the size of the run.<sup>63</sup> No spawning salmon have been located as a result of more recent studies.<sup>64</sup>

Adult and juvenile salmon continue to be reported in the Forty Mile River and its tributaries; the Sikinni, Clinton Creek, Moose Creek, and Mickey Creek.<sup>65</sup> The Fortymile River was surveyed in 1988 and juvenile chinook salmon were found in Browns Creek, Bruin Creek and the lower 35 km. of the main river.<sup>66</sup> The presence of salmon fry above the canyon, and over 30 km upstream, has been used as evidence that spawning populations are present.<sup>67</sup> The only radio tagged fish to enter the river left again without spawning.<sup>68</sup> The dark water of the creek has inhibited study but there is no established evidence of redds or of the customary predators or scavengers.

There is no apparent reason why the Forty Mile would not have a spawning population of salmon but the size and location of such a population has yet to be confirmed. The Forty Mile is an important rearing stream and more study should be done before determining if it could be a candidate stream for outplanting.

**Fresno Creek** or Jeu dök, meaning Island Creek.  
64'16' Lat., 139'48' Long.

Possible spawning areas have been identified in the Yukon mainstem near Fresno Creek.<sup>69</sup> Fresno Creek itself, is quite steep and cold. Percy Henry has described the mouth as unfavourable for spawning as there are big rocks, swift current and too fine gravel.<sup>70</sup> There is no indication that this creek would benefit from a restoration/outplanting program.

**Indian River**  
61'04' Lat., 134'13' Long.

During the summer of 1896 Robert Henderson met a bear with a salmon in his mouth where Dominion Creek meets the Indian River.<sup>71</sup> While one fish does not make a spawning run it indicates the presence of a salmon population before the creek was heavily mined.

An investigation in 1972 understandably reported lots of mud and no fish.<sup>72</sup> There was a report of rearing salmon seen in c1990, close to the mouth.<sup>73</sup>

The Indian River has been mined almost continuously since 1898 and a resident salmon population has had no chance to recover. The classification of the river allows mining at deferred effluent standards and therefore is not a candidate for salmon restoration.

### **Kandik River**

65'50' Lat., 141'00' Long.

Excellent spawning gravels were observed but no salmon were found in 1958.<sup>74</sup> One local resident, Randy Brown, has seen chums and chinooks in the river and another man, living 75 km up the Kandik, caught 23 chum during July 1976. Brown considers this unusual and has himself never caught chum salmon at that time of the year up any of the side creeks.<sup>75</sup> The Kandik warrants more study before being considered a candidate stream for outplanting.

### **Kirkman Creek**

63'00' Lat., 139'33' Long.

There is no evidence of salmon in the creek. Salmon fishing in the area is probably limited to the Yukon River.<sup>76</sup> Hazel Maloy, who used to live on Kirkman Creek, talked about the movement of First Nations people. They would come from raftering on Wellsley Lake to fish for king salmon in the Yukon River.<sup>77</sup> They would probably fish in the Yukon River from Coffee Creek to Kirkman.<sup>78</sup>

Dan Mann lived on Kirkman Creek from 1938 to 1950. He was able to catch grayling and king salmon there.<sup>79</sup> The creek is too small but the slough at the mouth would be a good place to find salmon. Percy Henry observed that it was pretty hard for the fish to spawn in the steamboat days as the wake was always washing the gravel. They could spawn in the slough, however.<sup>80</sup>

Although Kirkman Creek is not a candidate stream for outplanting, the slough near the mouth could bear more study.

**Klondike River - KI'o dëk, meaning grassy creek.**

63'58' Lat., 138'41' Long.

Before the Klondike Gold Rush there was a well established fishing camp at the mouth of the Klondike River, used by generations of Tr'on dëk Hwech'in ancestors.<sup>81</sup> The camp included the Tr'on dëk Hwech'in and their visitors. In 1896 Spurr reported about 200 Indians fishing at the mouth of the Klondike.<sup>82</sup> In 1887, a traveller saw the large drying and smoking racks made of poles.<sup>83</sup> In the same year, William Ogilvie saw the mouth of the river, and for some distance up, was full of salmon traps. He commented that "the Indians catch great numbers of fish there".<sup>84</sup>

The people camped at the Klondike used various methods of fishing. Archie Roberts was told stories by the oldtimers of spearing fish in the shallows of the mouth.<sup>85</sup> Rev. Canham, Anglican missionary, reported that both traps and nets were used in the Klondike.<sup>86</sup> An anthropologist working with the Tr'on dëk Hwech'in was told that people got 50 to 60 fish at a time out of a trap when the salmon were running - more than they got from nets.<sup>87</sup> Annie Henry speaks of Mary McCloud and Lucy Wood using sticks to steer the salmon into funnel shaped traps.<sup>88</sup> The weirs and traps were so efficient that they could stop the fish going upstream.<sup>89</sup> The whole village would participate in netting salmon at the mouth of the Klondike. A 150' net would be hauled into the river by the men, and the women and children would chase the fish into the net.<sup>90</sup>

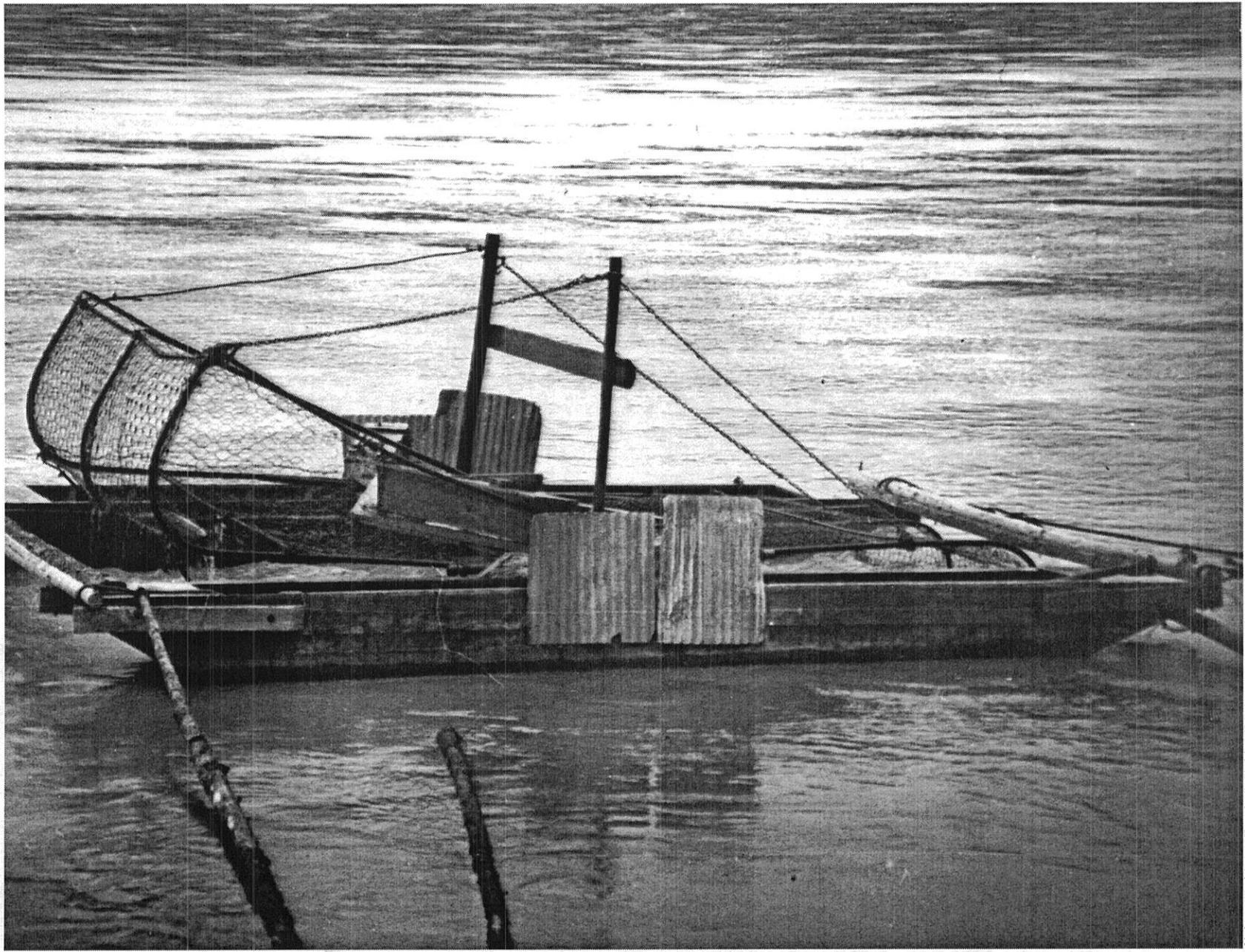
The white fishermen used nets by preference. When one fisherman was fined in 1909 for stretching his net across more than two thirds of the Klondike, he replied that fishermen had fished like that since the early days of the gold camp.<sup>91</sup>

Rev. Canham mentions the fishery of an ex-miner who set up a fishery at the mouth of the Klondike, because the salmon were so plentiful there. He sold salmon in barrels to the miners at Forty Mile.<sup>92</sup> Even George Carmack was first drawn to the area with a dream of riches to be made from catching salmon.<sup>93</sup> The market for dried fish was good that year and Carmack decided to go to the Klondike, which was known as one of the best salmon streams in the Yukon.<sup>94</sup>

The Klondike Gold Rush produced a huge market for fish in the Dawson City area. Lulu Grace Craig remarked that "fishing is a lucrative business with the Indians as well as others, and it is interesting to see the King Salmon caught..."<sup>95</sup>



The Anderson's large 3-tiered drying rack with thousands of fish hanging to dry near Fortymile c.1930



Yukon Archives/Claude B. Tidd Collection

An operating fishwheel on the Yukon River near Fortymile c.1930

By 1903 there were 17 commercial fishing licences issued and 40 men working in the Dawson area.<sup>96</sup> Many of these fishers were also catching grayling in the Klondike and there was a good market for them in Dawson.<sup>97</sup> In 1907 a special guardian was hired for the Klondike to cut down on poaching.<sup>98</sup> Legal and illegal mesh commercial nets, baited with quantities of salmon eggs were used in September and October for some thirty miles up the Klondike.<sup>99</sup> The 1909 catch figures show that while the emphases was on grayling, salmon was also caught in significant numbers: 19,500 pounds of grayling compared to 5,450 pounds of salmon.<sup>100</sup>

Poaching and other illegal fishing practices were not the only cause for concern in the Klondike drainage. The Yukon Gold Co. built a dam on Bonanza Creek, although it was probably too far upstream to affect the salmon run.<sup>101</sup> The Granville Power Company's hydro-electric power plant, finished in 1910 and operational in 1911, was a different matter.<sup>102</sup> The intake for the plant was on the North Fork of the Klondike and there was no screen across the channel. The Inspector of Fisheries was not concerned about the salmon, as he said grayling are practically the only fish to frequent this stream. The loggers and prospectors depended on grayling for subsistence and the infrequent sale.<sup>103</sup> In April 15, 1911 there was a report of quantities of fish destroyed in the Klondike River ditches but the inspector ignored the situation until November 2, 1912.<sup>104</sup> The dam constructed in conjunction with the power plant also caused problems for the salmon and with low water in the fall, the fish were unable to pass. Hundreds of fish crowded below the dam attracting fishers who easily caught their winters supply.<sup>105</sup> This area has since become known as a spawning area for chinook salmon.<sup>106</sup> The establishment of large dredges in the Bonanza basin in 1913-14 coincided with a marked decline in Klondike fish.<sup>107</sup>

Salmon are known to inhabit the upper reaches of the Klondike River. In the mid-1950s, Weigo Christiansen saw chinook salmon in O'Brien Creek (now Brewery Creek) numerous enough to spear.<sup>108</sup>

The spawning areas of the Klondike have been extensively studied in the past few years.<sup>109</sup> Chinook salmon have been observed spawning near the old dam site on the North Fork;<sup>110</sup> and as far up as Lee Creek.<sup>111</sup> Chinook also spawn at many locations upstream of Hunker Creek;<sup>112</sup> near the Dempster Highway Bridge and the North Klondike ditch crossing;<sup>113</sup> and in the vicinity of Goring Creek.<sup>114</sup> In 1996 a total of 222 redds were counted in the Klondike from Rock Creek to Hamilton Creek.<sup>115</sup> This would