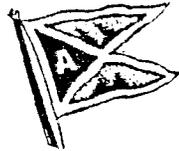


Captain Anderson
of the
Steamer *Nushagak*



Mention the name Alaska Packers to people and they will think of those big square-riggers beating their way to Bristol Bay for the summer salmon catch. The "Star Fleet," colorful and legendary, was but only a squadron in the entire Alaska Packers Association fleet. There were other ships, many of which did the very same work as did the "Stars," carry men and supplies to Alaska and bring back the men and tons of canned salmon to San Francisco. To earn their keep, some not only did the same work, they did a lot more. One was the steamship *Nushagak*.

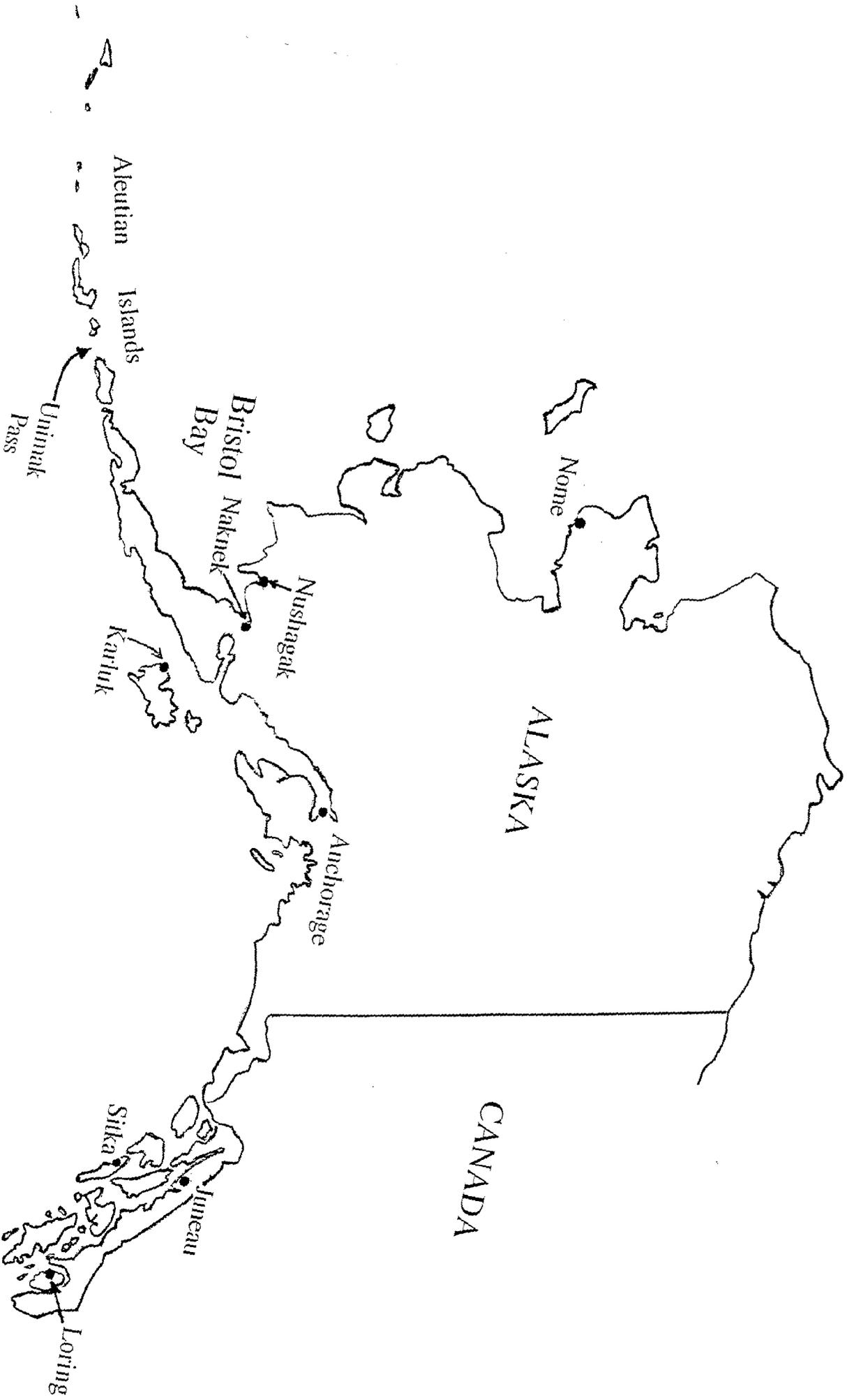
Nushagak was built in Alameda by the United Engineering Works and completed in the spring of 1904. Built of steel, she measured 739 gross tons, was 175 1/2 feet long with an ample beam (width) of 34 feet. A single deck vessel, *Nushagak* had a single screw propeller powered by a 700 horse power triple expansion (3 cylinder) engine with two boilers providing 180 p.s.i. of steam. Her owners, the Alaska Packers Association (APA), put her into service immediately and she sailed for Bristol Bay on May 3, 1904. Her maiden voyage, under the command of Capt. A. L. Larsen, was marred slightly by the fact that strong northwest winds forced her back to port and she did not get to sea again until May 7. In 1905 the steamer made her second voyage to her namesake port of Nushagak with Capt. Larsen as skipper.

Nushagak was not so much a port as it was a collection of structures forming a fish cannery on Nushagak Bay. The bay is located at the northeast end of much larger Bristol Bay and lies about 2,390 nautical miles (2,670 statute miles) from San Francisco. Bristol Bay is reached by sailing through the Unimak Pass, the first navigable break in the Aleutian chain.

Captain Ole Andreas "Andrew" Anderson took command of *Nushagak* in 1906, cleared his vessel on May 5, saw her loaded with fishing and canning supplies and a number of workmen, and had her underway for Nushagak Bay, making a long 24-day haul to their destination. The 1906 catch was said to be a little smaller than before, this reported in the *San Francisco Chronicle* at the time of Capt. Anderson's return. *Nushagak* required eleven days steaming to reach San Francisco (the fastest was about eight days) so they likely spent a bit of that time towing one of APA's square-riggers. Often the firm's steamers would assist a sailing vessel, giving them a "lift" out of port or through the Unimak Pass and a "boost" on the way home, when the big ships were heavily laden. Southbound voyages might take from 20 to 28 days for a windjammer sailing unassisted. Three APA vessels arrived on September 7 all loaded with workers and canned salmon:

<i>Star of France</i>	with 51,295 cases
<i>Big Bonanza</i>	with 43,295 cases
<i>Nushagak</i>	with 5,569 cases

And twelve more of the salmon fleet were en route, laden with canned salmon and hundreds more cannery workers and fishermen.



Another part of the job of an APA steamer was one that promptly took Capt. Anderson's attention, and kept him, his crew and ship busy for the next eight months. He was ordered to steam to Grays Harbor to load lumber and haul it back to the APA yard at Alameda. *Nushagak* was under way five days after her arrival from Alaska and would make thirteen coastal runs until she was tied up at Alameda in mid-May 1907. The lumber cargoes, loaded at sawmills at Hoquiam and Aberdeen on Grays Harbor and at South Bend on Willapa Bay, consisted largely of box shooks, from which cases are made, and dimension lumber, all to be hauled to Alaska for the 1907 catch. Capt. Anderson and his ship missed that season, except that in November he put *Nushagak* to sea for a chilly voyage to Karluk, on Kodiak Island, returning via Port Townsend and Seattle, with a mixed cargo of salmon and lumber which was discharged upon her arrival at Alameda on December 19.

April 30 began the 1908 season with *Nushagak* making a fifteen day run to Bristol Bay and an eight day return from Karluk on October 24.

1909 was equally uneventful, *Nushagak* departing on April 29 for Bristol Bay and returning in eight days from the Uyak River on October 1.

The 1910 season for Capt. Anderson and his ship began on April 27 with a voyage to Bristol Bay and a 10 day 17 hour return, via Karluk, on October 13.

1911 saw *Nushagak* sail for Bristol Bay on April 29. Her return from Naknek, with the barkentine *Centennial* in tow, took 12 1/2 days. The pair entered port on September 7 and the scene at the quarantine mooring off Meiggs wharf on San Francisco Bay was described in the *Chronicle*. (and paraphrased as follows). The scene was a busy one when the Packers arrive from the Alaskan canneries and lie in quarantine. On September 7 already there were *Sintram*, *B.P. Cheney*, *Tacoma* and *Star of France*. They all had arrived in the space of a few hours with several hundred men of various nationalities aboard, all with money to burn, eager for a good drink, good food - and sex-starved, no doubt. Hovering about the anchored APA vessels are many small motor launches, boarding house runners and water taxis, eager to see the yellow flags flutter down from the foretops. Then they pounce, the first launch to reach a windjammer will take on a huge load of men and, with water lapping at the gunwales, carry the anxious men to shore. But before the signal that quarantine is over, the launches will swoop in close, enticing the hungry men, who will run wildly about the decks, following the launches whose teasing crews howl with laughter.

April 30, 1912 was the beginning of the next season for Capt. Anderson and *Nushagak*, starting with an eleven day run to Karluk to deliver supplies. That season ended on September 19 with the steamer's arrival at San Francisco following a 12 1/2 day run. Also making the homeward run was Capt. Larsen aboard the twin-screw steamer *Kvichak*. Both *Nushagak* and *Kvichak* had "boosted" their sailing ships through Unimak Pass on the same day while

heading home, *Nushagak* had *Llewelyn J. Morse* in tow and *Kvichak* having the *Star of England* in tow. There was a mean tale to be told, being conveyed by Capt. Larsen, and related in the *Chronicle*. A serious riot broke out at one of the canneries shortly before the vessels had sailed. A quarrel between the Chinese and Mexican hands erupted and culminated in the shooting of a Mexican named Gonzales by a Chinese workman. Gonzales was put aboard *Kvichak* and the Chinese man locked up in the brig on *Star of England*. Justice would be served upon reaching California.

1913 apparently was an uneventful year. *Nushagak* sailed on April 30 for her namesake bay, to make a passage of thirteen days, and returned on September 13, making a nine day run from Unimak Pass.

1914 was a near duplicate of 1913. She sailed on April 30, raised *Nushagak* on May 13, sailed from there on August 29, returning to San Francisco on September 15.

1915 was also uneventful and perhaps a light year because *Nushagak* and her running mate, the steamer *Kodiak*, both returned in ballast. There was likely plenty of room on the other vessels for all the salmon. She sailed for *Nushagak* on May 1, arriving on May 12 and departed early on August 22 and was home on September 3.

The 1916 season was notable for the amount of ice found in the early summer in Bristol Bay, so *Nushagak* and other APA steamers, referred to as "salmon tenders," were helping the big sailing ships negotiate their way through the pack. (This might have been a frequent condition, just seldom reported.) Capt. Anderson put his ship to sea on April 29, bound for *Nushagak*, spent two weeks en route and 2 1/2 months on the bay before sailing home from Karluk, via Semihamoo and Port Ludlow where she loaded 150,000 board feet of lumber on deck in addition to 30,500 cases of salmon in the hold below. She raised San Francisco Bay on September 23.

The following year, 1917, the steamer "performed valiant work," said the *Chronicle* when telling of how *Nushagak* was employed "to assist the sailing ships of the company caught in the ice pack. It was reported that many of the vessels have been damaged. The pack was heavy this year and exceeded that of last year."

In 1917 *Nushagak* sailed on April 28, arriving at Bristol Bay on May 9 for a four month stay, returning to San Francisco on September 14 with 160 workers aboard and a big windjammer in tow, laden with canned salmon and 91 workers. (Her name withheld by wartime censorship.)* They were the first arrivals that season, there being 44 vessels in that year's fleet, reported the

* It could have been *Star of Iceland*, *Star of Italy* or *Star of Lapland*. All three vessel are recorded as having arrived that day. *Star of Lapland* had her fore topgallant mast carried away in a heavy gale 450 miles east of Unimak Pass and may likely have needed a "boost" by *Nushagak* on the way home.

Chronicle. Customs and immigration officials were promptly aboard the ships as they lay in quarantine, checking the men for possible aliens and those U.S. citizens of draft age who could be ordered to report to their draft boards for registration.

Nushagak was soon at work again, Capt. Anderson having the ship *Star of Russia* in tow for a ten day haul up the coast. They departed at five in the afternoon on October 2 for Loring, a small fishing village located 20 miles north of Ketchikan, Alaska. *Nushagak* saw 3,400 cases of salmon loaded in her hold and proceeded to make an 8 day 20 hour return voyage, with the big ship in tow, raising San Francisco on the afternoon of October 31. *Star of Russia* discharged 44,700 cases. A published report for the year 1917 stated that APA vessels had delivered nearly fifteen million dollars of canned salmon that year. Red salmon: 1,318,000 cases @\$20.00 a case and 20,000 barrels of salt salmon @ \$10.00 a barrel.

In 1918 Capt. Anderson had steam up on his vessel earlier than usual. She had been chartered to make a run to Honolulu for the Matson Navigation Company. Ships were dear in wartime and all available bottoms were pressed into service to bring Hawaiian sugar to the mainland. Other APA vessels too were making similar calls to Hawaii. *Nushagak* put to sea in the early evening of March 9 with the motorship *Oregon* in tow. It was an eleven day outbound voyage. *Nushagak* set sail for home with 5,052 bags of sugar aboard towing *Oregon*, with 1,669 tons of sugar aboard, for a nineteen day voyage. They arrived on April 11 and April 30 saw *Nushagak* under way for Bristol Bay where by May 11 she was at Naknek. Three months later she was en route to San Francisco, arriving home on September 17. Capt. Anderson and his crew had their ship ready on October 11 with the bark *Star of England* at the end of their towing hawser, pulling for the open sea and bound for Loring. Ten days later they were starting to load canned salmon and 9,300 cases were slung into *Nushagak's* hold. Within ten days the steamer and her "Star" charge were tethered together and headed for San Francisco with the very last shipment of the year. Off the island of Tatoosh at the entrance to the Straits of Juan de Fuca, the towing hawser parted. However, that posed no problem for *Star of England* which bid her towboat farewell. She could now make it home on her own. *Nushagak* proceeded to port, tying up at Alameda on November 20. The voyage of *Star of England* continued, first reporting that she was proceeding "at a lively clip" for home. She had 25 cadets aboard, having their first taste of being at sea in a windjammer. They got a more than a taste - when off the Oregon coast a storm blew them well out to sea and they spent a while longer aloft in the rigging before reaching port on November 25.

That was the last year of APA service for Capt. Anderson. He died at his home in Berkeley on December 29, 1918.

The year 1917 was called the high water mark for APA and the Pacific salmon industry. The fleet began a long decline due to overfishing - the catch

could not sustain so many men and ships. However, it primarily effected the the sailing ships as steam supplanted sail in the APA fleet. Subsequent Alaska runs saw fewer and fewer of the graceful sailers as the smaller and the older ones were laid up and sold in the 1920s and 1930s.

And so went the company's smaller steamers. *Nushagak* completed her last run to Bristol Bay in 1923 (from May 8 to September 2). She was laid up and sold on June 6, 1924 to the Remco Steamship Company who renamed her *Caspar*. She served in the coastal lumber trade, hauling redwood from the mill at Caspar on the Mendocino coast to San Francisco until 1939.

Interestingly enough, it was in Alaska waters that she found herself in World War Two, working for Uncle Sam. She was "conscripted" to join the Navy as a salvage ship (ARS-18) and renamed *Rescuer*. Assigned to the 13th Naval District in February 1942, the ship was converted at Seattle, sailed to the Aleutians and was engaged in salvaging the Russian steamer *Turksib* near Scotch Gap when *Rescuer* was carried ashore and wrecked on December 31, 1942. Scotch Gap lies at the mouth of Unimak Pass so perhaps it was a fitting location for her to end her days.

Letters Home

Thanks to Arden Keller we have three letters written by Capt. Anderson during the summer of 1918 and portions of them are included here. The first is from Naknek Station, Alaska, Sunday May 12, 1918:

"It is a cold, cold day, snowing and windy. Much drift ice is floating around and it is very hard for sailing vessels to get by, in fact none of them are here so far but several are stuck in the ice some sixty miles from here. We had the 'Stmr. Admiral Natson' on the wireless this forenoon and she reported herself due here at 4:00 P.M. so I thought it would be a fair chance to send a few lines.

"55 Naknek men were sent ashore to-day on the 'Stmr. Kodiak' so now our crowd is somewhat smaller. We have those gasboats to put in the water but being Sunday Williams thought it would not pay to pay extra for Sunday work to this amount of men, so now we are all resting. The trip up was fairly good, got started from S.F. that afternoon at 3 o'clock by the new time.

"That hour ahead I have had to put back to the normal time as it would hamper my navigation at sea. In going through Unimak Pass (a) gale of S.E. with thick snow was blowing and the *Nushagak* was just boiling along with no sails on.** We met severe drift ice as others but managed to get through

** "... boiling along with no sails on." Her sails were furled. She was schooner rigged with two masts and could carry sails when needed to conserve fuel oil, gain speed or help

by hook and crook. The Kvichak must have been at least 300 miles behind, she is due here to-morrow. I am feeling fine and can eat real well. We have 500 lbs. of meat extra this year and in this cold weather it keeps well. I put on my heavy underwear a couple days ago including those very heavy woolen socks and I tell you it feels good. On Tuesday morning May 14, I expect to sail for Nushagak, hope to get by the ice. I have had but little wireless news this year as our operators are very inexperienced in the business. I do not think they managed to get us reported to the office more than three times on the way up.

(At this point in his letter, Capt. Anderson scolds his wife for "having an unlimited amount of gall" by ignoring regulations and boarding the company launch to go out to see him on San Francisco Bay when he was leaving for Alaska. She had not had a chance to kiss him goodbye, and that was of utmost importance, rules or no.)

"It is now morning May 13 and the men are busy to put the launches in the water. The wind has changed to N.E. and wet weather and this may help to kill the drift-ice. The 'Admiral Natson' did not turn up at 4:00 P.M. yesterday so likely the ice is hindering her. Last night we got a report that no steamer could get into Nushagak yet so at present it is uncertain how soon we can get there. The steamer Kodiak had a very close call coming up by the ice. She got in a jam not far from the shore where the drift ice forced its way with the wind so the ice came in over the rails and up against the deck houses. The men had their kits packed and lifeboats swung out ready to leave the vessel. The Kodiak is leaking pretty bad right now after that experience. On the way up she had six cases of D.T. more than ever on any voyage before. So many men thought it would be well to take in a good load of Booze as long as it was forbidden to bring it along to Alaska. Mostly all those Booze fighters were Naknek men. This speaks very bad for Naknek. Otherways few of the men were under the weather on the way.

Naknek Station, Alaska
June 18, 1918

"A steamer is now in sight coming up the Bay and this boat is to return at once so I have a chance to write another letter.

"I am well as usual, the weather is now warmer and more pleasant, the ice is dying slowly and the snow is disappearing from the hills, even the grass is getting green in places so the worst of our troubles are nearer the end. The

steady herself in stormy seas. Note in the pictures of *Nushagak* that the foremast carries a cross yard to spread a square sail, which in the pictures is furled, and that on both the booms (the fore and main masts) there are furled sails and a furled jib is on the forestay at the bow.

Nushagak is toploaded ready to get to Ugashik this evening. The company is building a new cannery there and I am bringing material there (which) came up on the Star of Zealand now laying here off Naknek discharging. We have no salmon here as yet, but we expect the Fishermen will be out in a few days. Some stray codfish are around and we have had some of them on the table. The "Tacomas" shipwrecked men are now all accounted for. I brought the first as well as the last installment to Nushagak, their destination. Two men out of 151 men died and that was not so bad after all ... Everything is well now up our way and we may still have a good Season.

Nushagak Station, Alaska
July 9, 1918

"I have been working for Naknek up to now and was released from them after towing the Bohemia in from sea. To-day we have a real nice day, but how rotten it has been outside, cold air with sunshine makes fog and surely I have given my most ardent blessings to the whole thing. I ran into drift ice outside with the Nushagak only a few days ago so you see our summer here in Alaska does not count much. But I tell you we have lots of salmon at present, all our lighters are full and the canneries are working at record speed ... Half of our Season is now gone, but it has been so long - much discontent has been brewing among the Oriental help in the canneries over at Koggiong and many of those people are leaving on the Mailboat. Too bad that so many people find work so hard now that we are at war with Germany and need all the help the worst way."



Louis A. Hough
Oakland, Calif.
October 1995

Notes:

There were nine steamships in the APA fleet in 1915: *Alitak*, *Arctic*, *Chilkat*, *Jennie*, *Kodiak*, *Kanak*, *Kvichak*, *Nushagak*, and *Unimak*.

Capt. Anderson may have begun his service with APA in 1905 and there is a "hint" that he first served aboard the sailing vessels. No second source as yet been unearthed to confirm this.

Alaska Packers Association was formed in 1893 through a combination of 28 salmon canning firms. California Packing Corporation (Calpak) was incorporated in 1916, acquiring 75 percent of APA stock that year. Calpak, famous for its Del Monte label, officially became the Del Monte Corporation in June 1967.

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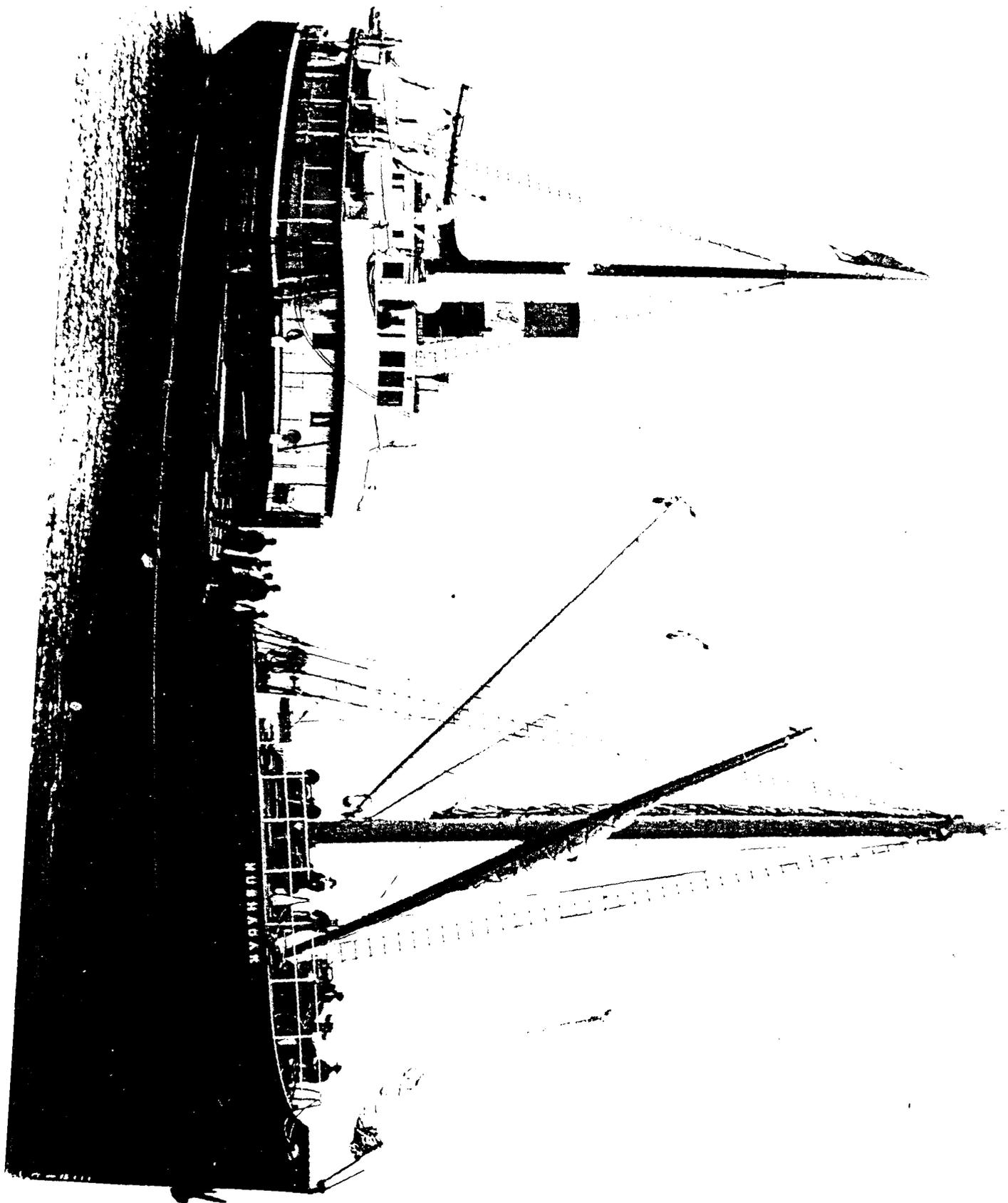
Photographs:

Nushagak under way - courtesy of The National Maritime Museum Association.

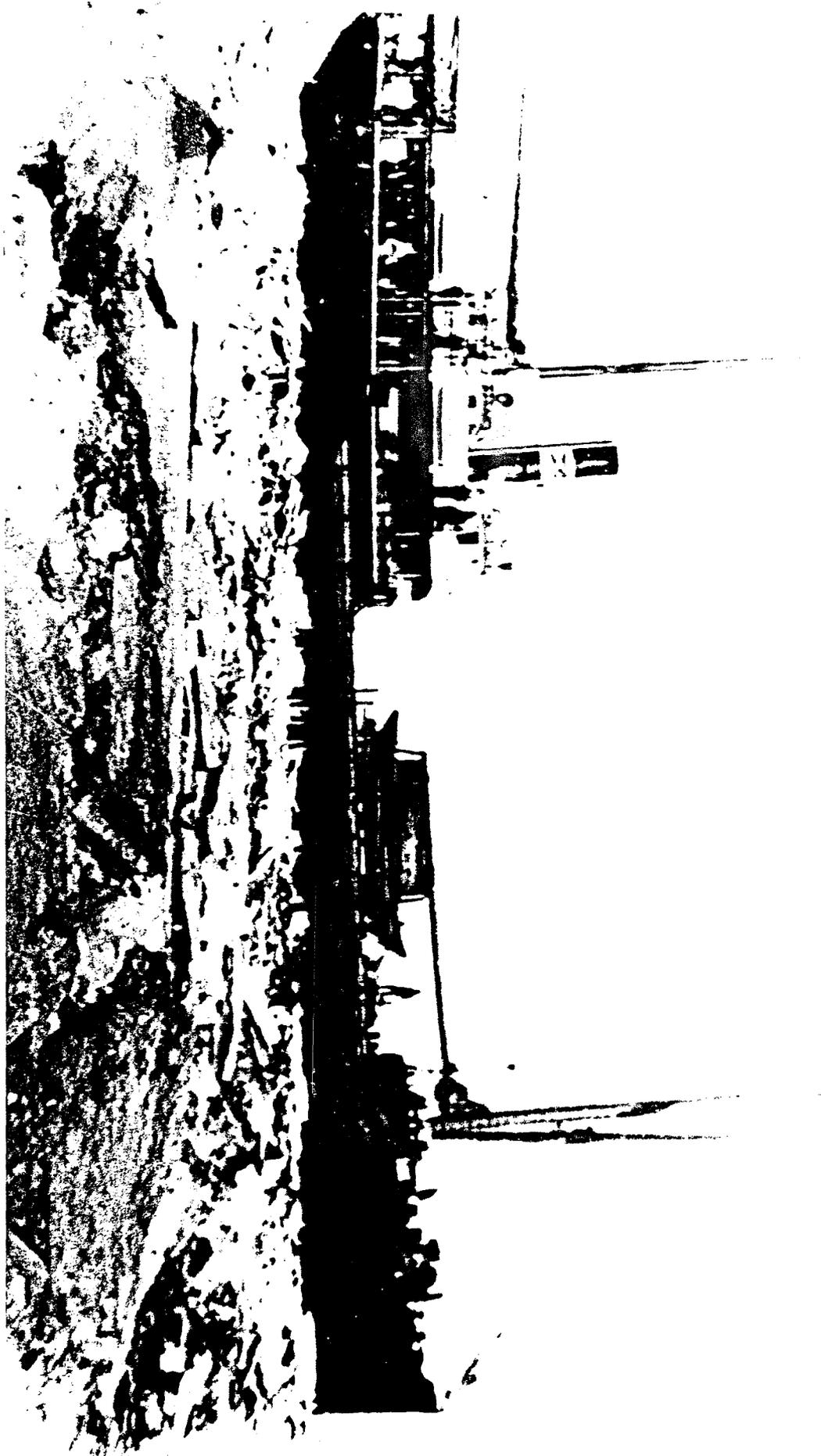
Captain Anderson on the bridge with sextant - courtesy of Arden Keller.

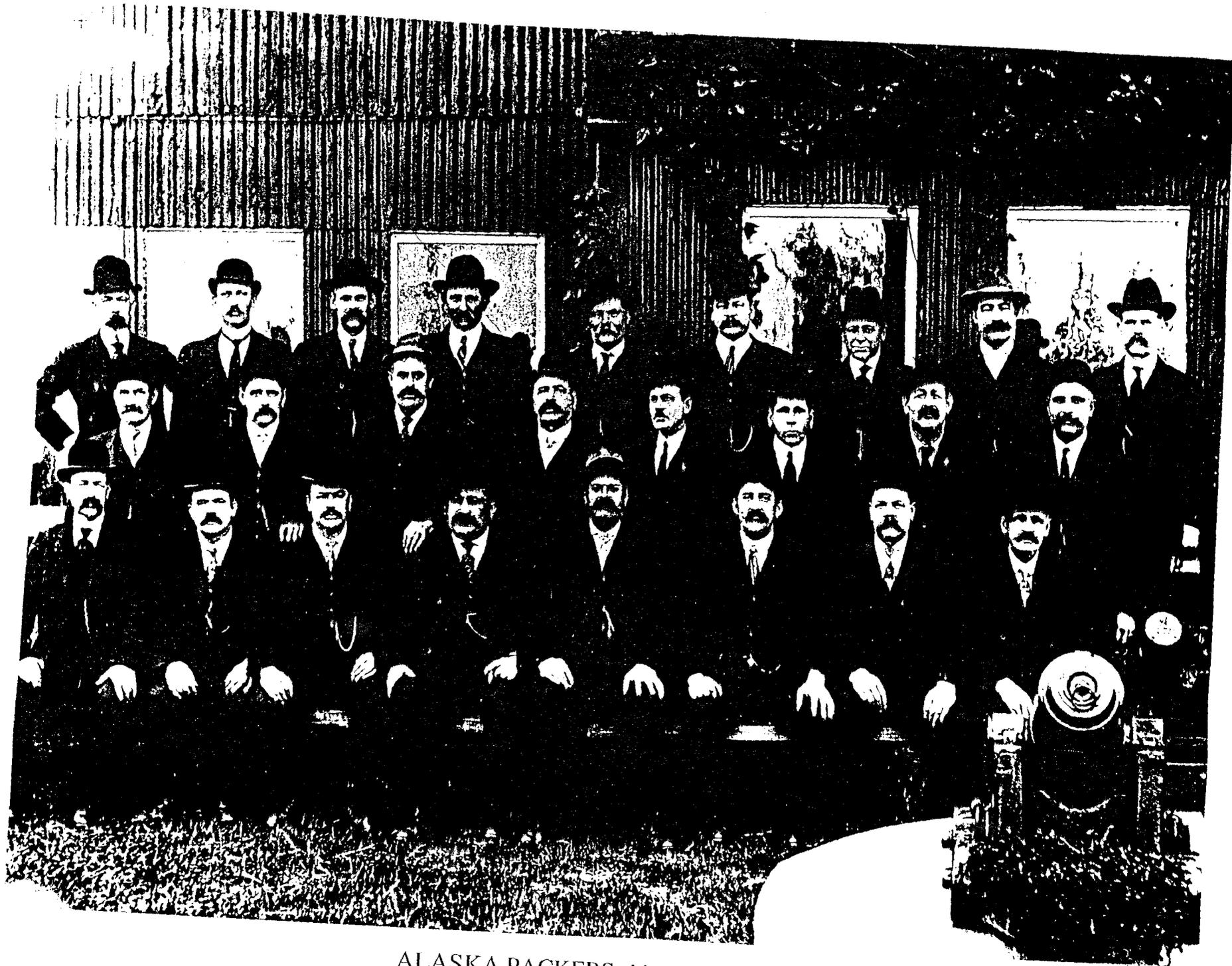
Nushagak in drift ice - courtesy of Arden Keller.

Alaska Packers shipmasters, 1915 - courtesy of The National Maritime Museum Association.









ALASKA PACKERS shipmasters, 1915.
(Capt. Anderson top row, 3rd from the right)