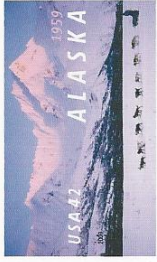
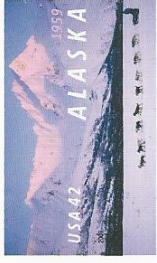


42
x20
\$840

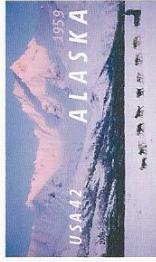
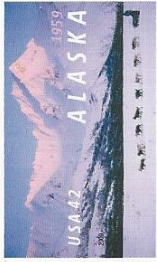
S111



S111



S111



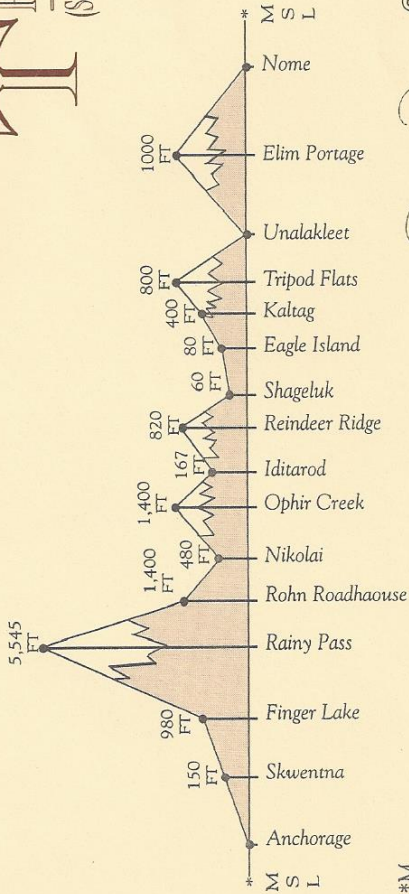
S111

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USPS

ELEVATIONS ALONG THE IDITAROD XXXIX

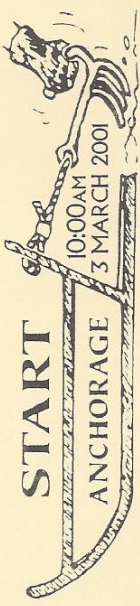
Nome Kennel Club 1907

TRAIL (Southern Route)



*M
S = Mean Sea Level
L

Richard Bowcock ©



Mail Carried By:

Tom Obman

1973
Iditarod XXIV

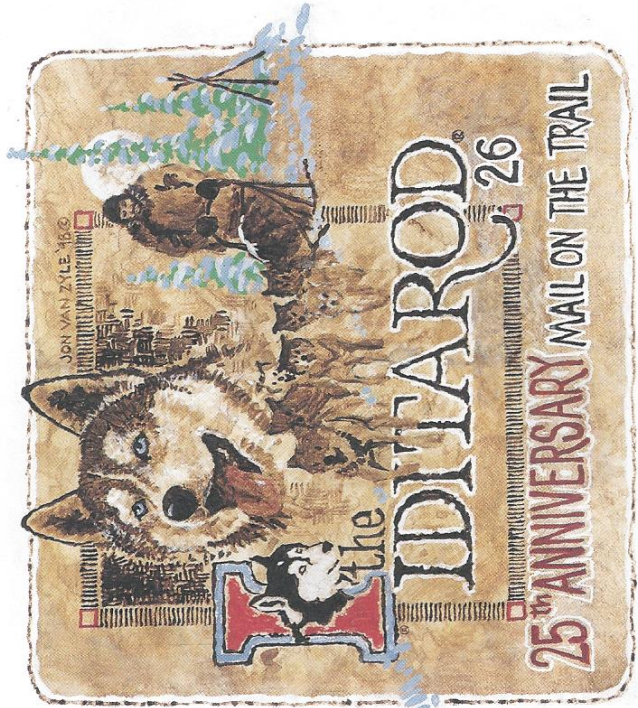


1907
Nome Kennel Club



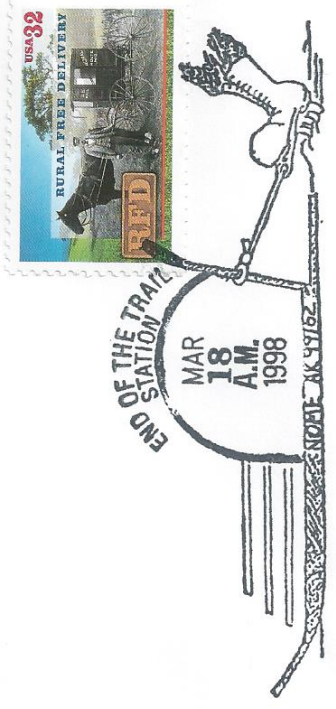
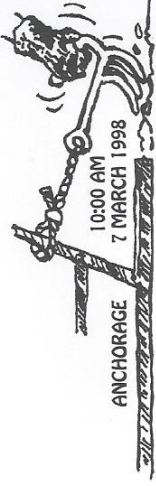
Carrier's
Signature

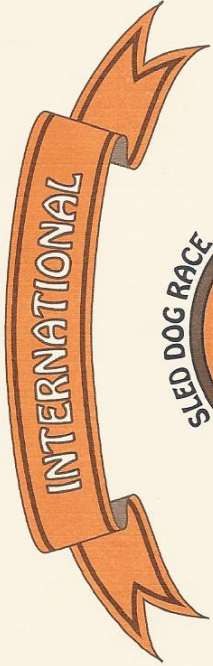




NOME KENNEL CLUB 1907
 This cache carried by Iditarod musher,

W. Holt





STED DOG RACE



NOME KENNEL CLUB 1907

CACHET CARRIED BY

Jim Co...

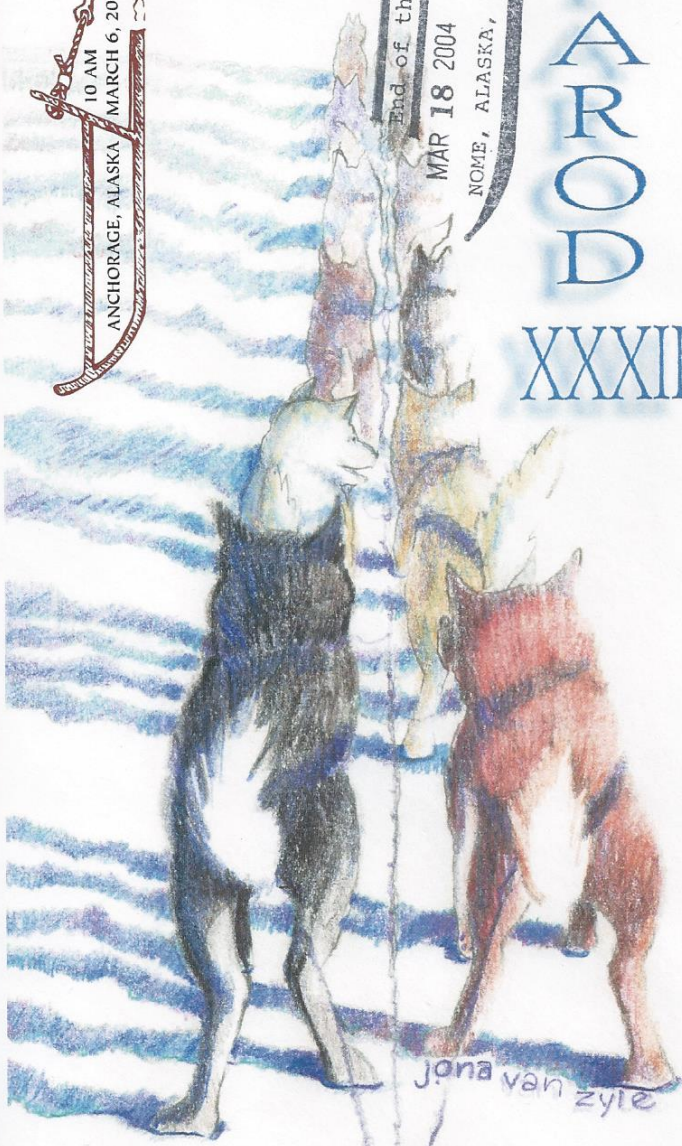
Dog Sled 1920s

17 USA



End of the Trail
MAR 18 2004 AM
NOME, ALASKA, 99762

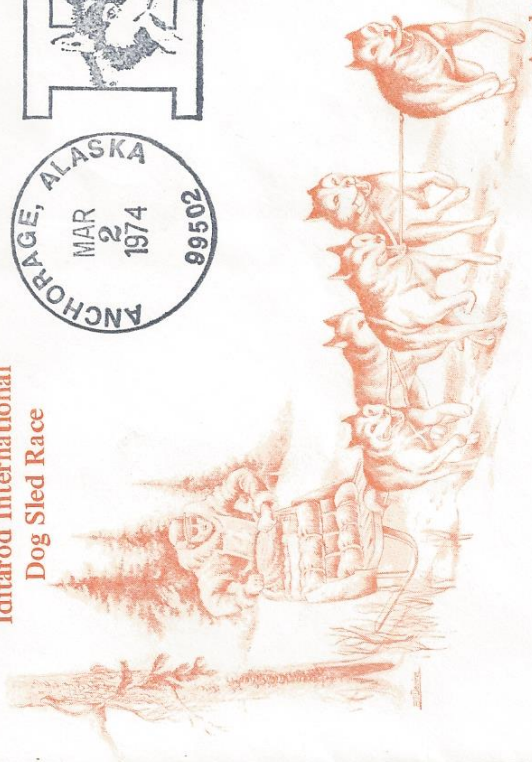
IDITAROD XXXII



This cachet carried by Iditarod Musher:

H. A. N. [Signature]

Iditarod International
Dog Sled Race



Anchorage to Nome, Alaska
1049 Miles



12

Delivering the mail in Alaska has always presented a formidable challenge to the U.S. Postal Service. Letters, parcels, and supplies from the "lower 48 states" often took weeks or months to reach their destinations. Steamships transported Alaska bound mail north from Puget Sound in Washington to southeastern coastal towns. After reaching these towns, mail was carried to some sections of interior Alaska by river steamers and, later, by Alaska Railroad trains for delivery to smaller, outlying villages.

Dogteam Delivery

Sled Dog Mail

U.S. Mail being delivered by dogteam. Photo by Harry T. Becker.
Harry T. Becker Photograph Collection P67-0376 Alaska State Library



Alaska State Library - Historical Collections

The harsh Arctic weather and limited trail and road system also made mail delivery extremely difficult. In the more isolated sections, carrying the mail required methods far different than those traditionally used elsewhere in the United States. Dogs proved superior for the winter transport of mail. Dogs were capable of covering long distances, day or night, and could travel over frozen lakes and rivers and pass through dense forests.

The native Alaskan malamute or husky was the most valued dog for teams, as having been born and bred in the north, they were strong, with thick coats and furry paws, and thrived on dried salmon and needed no special housing. Because of the high demand for sled dogs during the gold rush era, other breeds such as Newfoundlands, St. Bernards, setters, spaniels, and collies were also used. As in earlier frontiers, horses were also used in Alaska, but they posed special problems, as feed was costly and hard to supply and horses required special care in the extreme cold temperatures of winter.

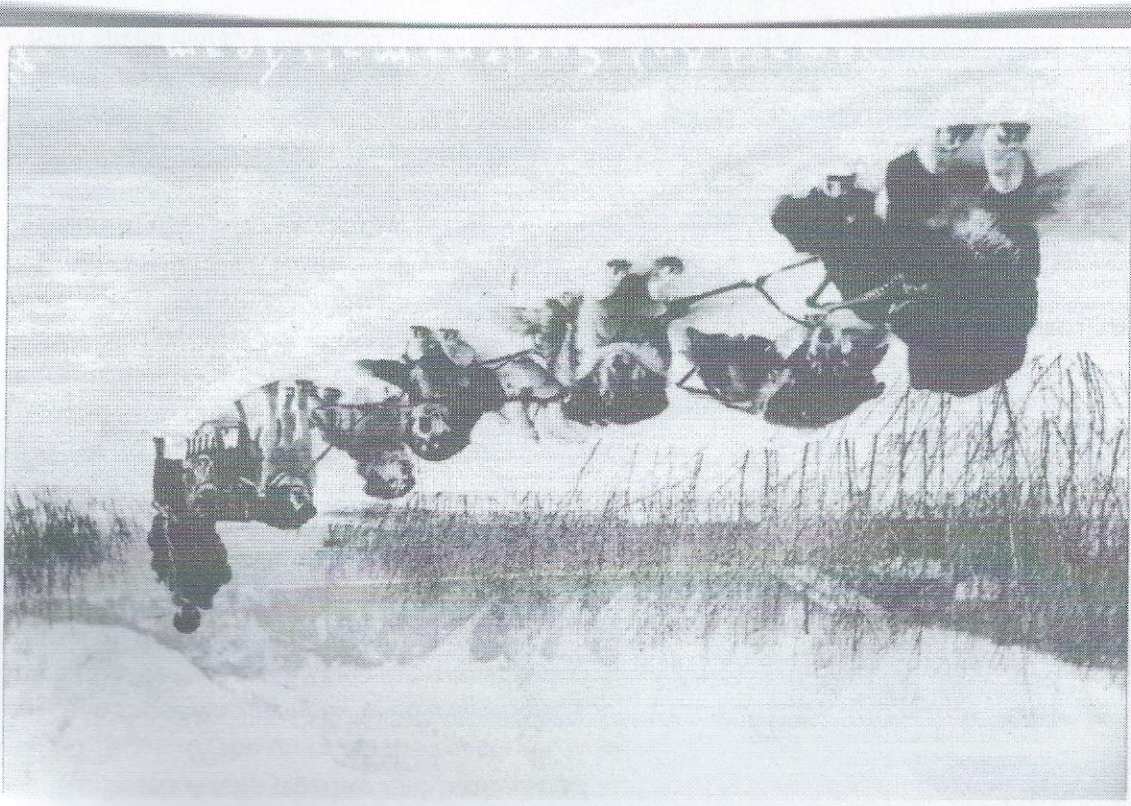
By 1901, a network of mail trails throughout Alaska was in use, including a system following almost the entire length of the Yukon River. The historic Iditarod Trail was the main dog trail that carried mail from Seward to Nome, with over-night roadhouses along the route which served mail carriers, freighters, and other travelers who used sled dog teams.

Mail dogteams varied in size, with eight to twelve dogs the most common number for pulling a mail sled, which was often heavier and longer than a typical basket-style sled. On average, dog teams pulled sleds containing between 500 – 700 pounds of mail, which meant that each dog had a load of up to 100 pounds (although they hauled less on the more challenging trails). Mail sacks usually weighed 50 pounds each. Rubber-lined waterproof bags were used to



U.S. Mail Dog Team on Yukon River in Winter.

U.S. Mail dogteam on the Yukon River. Photographer P.S. Hunt.
John Zug Album UAF 1980-68-252 University of Alaska Fairbanks



Seward and Susitna mail team, 1913. Photograph by Louis H. Pedersen.
National Postal Museum, Curatorial Photographic Collection

protect precious mail from snow, rain, and mud; the dogs often wore moosehide moccasins to protect their feet as much as possible from jagged pieces of ice.

In the 1930s airplanes became the most popular means for mail transport, but

dogteams were still used to make "feeder" deliveries to remote locations in bush Alaska.

Postmasters were also still allowed to use dogs for "emergency mail service" to rural points, and the Postmaster General had the authority to build and maintain trails and facilities and to hire contracted mail teams without going through a lengthy bid process. In the 1940s cachets were produced reading "Alaska Dog Team Post" and depicting adventurous-looking artwork of

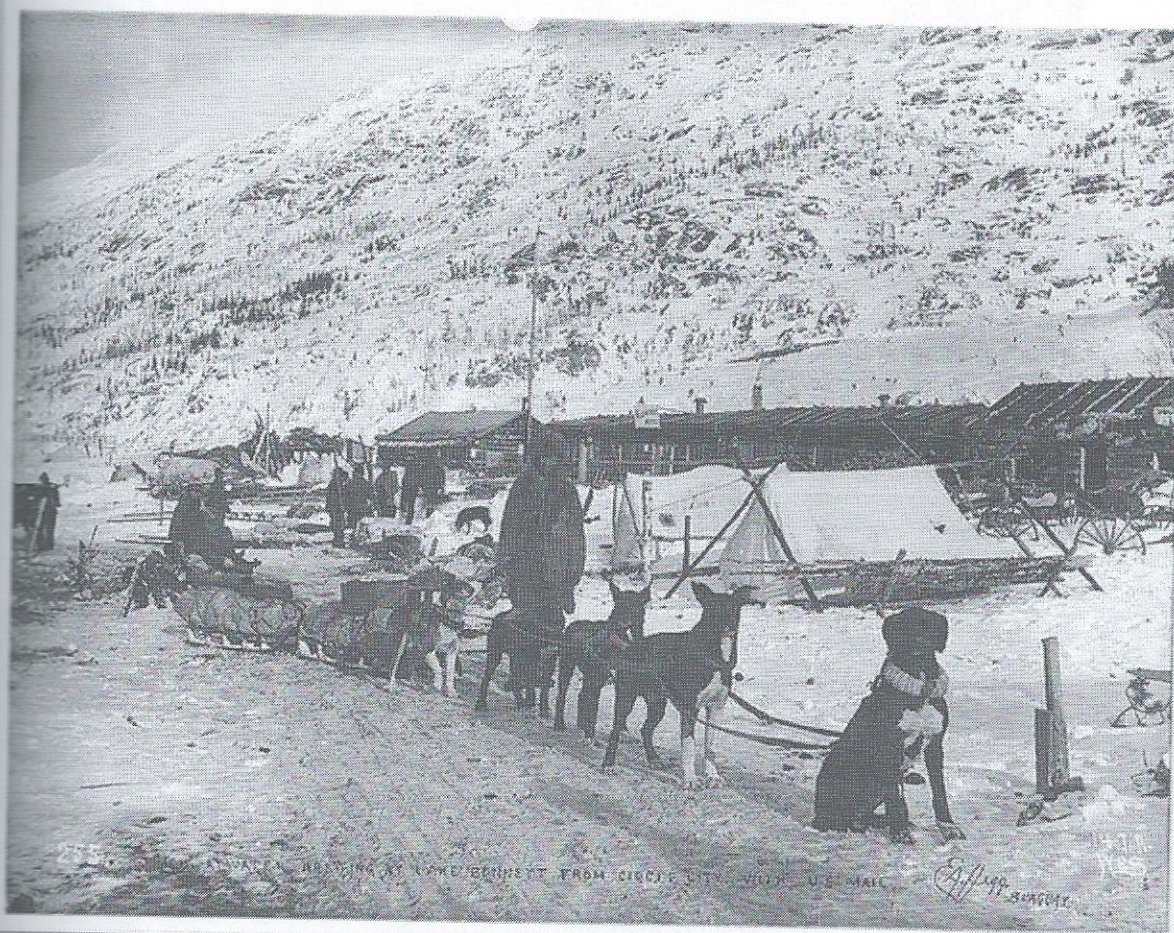
dogteams in action. These beautifully illustrated cachets, which were fairly common during the WWII years, are prized today by collectors of sled dog memorabilia.

In 1963, the U.S. Post Office Department honored Chester Noongwook of Savoonga, on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea, as the last driver to officially deliver the U.S. Mail via dogteam. With his retirement, regular sled dog mail delivery ended in Alaska. A photo by early Alaskan photographer Ward Wells depicts fur trader Ed Shepherd and Nathan Noongwook shaking hands above a flag which reads "The Adventurers Club," in front of a sled in the village of Gambell, on St. Lawrence Island. The sled is being prepared for last U.S. mail run by dogsled in Alaska, to be driven by Chester Noongwook, son of Nathan Noongwook, from Gambell to Savoonga, also on St. Lawrence Island. In January 1995, Chester Noongwook donated the mail-delivery sled he used on that historic final run to the National Postal Museum in Washington, DC. The last official U.S. Mail sled dog driver, Chester Noongwook passed away only one

month after making the delivery.

In 1986 the U.S. Postal System issued a seventeen-cent stamp as part of its transportation series, in recognition of the important role the dogsled played in early mail delivery in the north. A simple image of a basket sled, the type often used for transporting mail across Alaskan trails, is under the words "Dog Sled 1920s." Iditarod champion Susan Butcher took part in the first-day issue ceremony in Anchorage when the stamp was released.

On January 2, 2009 the U.S. Postal Service issued a new First Class stamp commemorating Alaska's 50th anniversary as a U.S. State (Alaska became an official U.S. territory in 1912 and the 49th state on January 3, 1959). The image selected, which was photographed by official Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race photographer Jeff Schultz, depicts veteran sled dog racer Dee Dee Jonrowe on the Iditarod Trail at sunset, near Rainy Pass in the Alaska Range, during the 2000 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. It was a fitting scene for an Alaskan commemorative stamp, evoking images of the dogteams which covered the Iditarod Trail and many others to bring letters, cards, and news of loved ones to those in far away places. ~•~



Postcard printed for the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition held in Seattle in 1909:
"Ben Atwater, arriving at Lake Bennett from Circle City with U.S. Mail, Alaska."