

(683)



The channel through the lagoon is narrow and tortuous, and local knowledge is required. In 1994, the USCGC IRONWOOD reported significantly greater depths once inside the river. The village of **White Mountain** is just above where the river forks, about 7 miles above the mouth. Above the village, the river reportedly becomes very shallow with several gravel beds. The village provides telephone, mail, fuel, stores, a Public Safety Officer, and daily flights to Nome. The village may be contacted on VHF-FM channel 5 by calling “City Office White Mountain.”

(669) For about 22 miles, from Rocky Point to Topkok Head, the land is high and bold, in many places rising abruptly. Beyond this to Cape Nome the coast is low, with high land farther back. Immediately behind this lowland is a large shoal lagoon with two small entrances, the W one called Port Safety. Between Rocky Point and Cape Nome the water is deep and the bottom regular; by giving the shore a berth of 1 mile a depth of 6 fathoms or more will be found.

(670) **Topkok Head** is 22 miles W of Rocky Point, and is the first highland close to the coast E of Cape Nome. Its seaward face rises abruptly from the water 586 feet and is a well-known and conspicuous landmark.

(671) A yellow bluff, 572 feet high, on the E side of **Bluff**, about 6 miles E of Topkok Head, is conspicuous, but not as much so as Topkok Head.

(672) In 1968, it was reported that small craft could find some protection from W winds in indifferent weather in a small cove W of Bluff. The cove can be recognized by a small low house somewhat back from a point. Caution should be exercised in this area to avoid being swept into the cove as a result of sudden wind changes.

(673) **Solomon** is an abandoned mining village at the mouth of the **Solomon River**, 11 miles W of Topkok Head and 17 miles E of Cape Nome. A road runs N to Council and W to Nome via a ferry at Port Safety. The depth on the bar at the entrance and inside Solomon River is about 3 feet, but local knowledge is necessary to keep in the best water. In 1968, it was reported that no lights were visible from offshore, and that there were no good marks for entering the river. A large steel warehouse and a few old steel oil tanks were reported to stand on the N side of the river W of the entrance.

(674) It was further reported in 1968, that small craft should make a straight-in approach to the river entrance from well outside. When once inside, however, the river to the W was particularly good, and that small craft could tie up to the shore on either the N or S sides; the N side appeared to be a little deeper.

(675) An anchorage approximately 2 miles offshore in 8½ fathoms, hard gravel and sand bottom, is on the following bearings: Cape Nome **254°**, largest house in village **358°**, Topkok Head **079°**. Use 45 fathoms of chain. The only protection against heavy winds is to stand out to seaward.

(676) **Port Safety**, about 8 miles E of Cape Nome, is a small anchorage for vessels of less than 7-foot draft. The channel is narrow and has a depth of 7 feet. Small vessels can anchor in the narrow sloughs that lead between the flats inside the entrance.

(677) A cable ferry travels across the entrance to Port Safety; minimum vertical clearance of the cables is 3 feet. Sheltered anchorage for several small boats can be had in the entrance outside of the ferry cables.

(678) **Cape Nome** is a bluff about 650 feet high, 1 mile broad, and rounded down to the water on either side, where the land at the shore is low, with higher land farther back. The water off this cape is quite deep.

(679) From Cape Nome to Cape Rodney, the coast, except abreast of Sledge Island, is a comparatively straight stretch of low sand beach, with no projecting points, and higher land some distance back. Abreast of Sledge Island for a distance of several miles the hills slope down to the beach, giving this part of the coast the appearance of a point. The stretch of beach is broken by a number of small rivers. The entrances to **Nome River**, **Penny River**, and **Sinuk River** have shifting bars, but there is generally enough water in the channel over these bars to permit boats of 3-foot draft to enter. When approaching the coast between Cape Nome and Sledge Island, the water shoals regularly and gradually until a depth of 5 fathoms is reached; inside this depth the bottom is irregular, especially near the mouths of the rivers.

(680) An isolated area with a depth of 7 fathoms, 4 feet is in 64°20'15"N., 167°09'46"W., and another area with a depth of 6 fathoms, 5 feet is in 64°18'03"N., 166°44'10"W.

(681)

Chart 16206

(682) **Nome**, the metropolis of NW Alaska, is on the beach at the mouth of the **Snake River**, 11 miles W of Cape Nome. A large dish-shaped communications antenna is on the beach at Nome. An aero radiobeacon is 2.5 miles E of Nome (shown on charts 16200 and 16206), and an aerolight is at the Nome Airport.

(684) The general anchorage for deep-draft vessels is in 7 to 8 fathoms about 1 mile from the beach abreast of Nome. Vessels of less draft anchor in about 6 fathoms a little closer to the beach. In strong S winds vessels should anchor farther offshore.

(685) The entrance channel to Nome Harbor leads NE between a causeway on the W and a breakwater on the E, both marked on the outer ends by seasonal lights. The entrance channel continues NE through the mouth of the Snake River and turns SE to an inner harbor. The entrance channel is marked by a **29.9°** lighted range and private, seasonal buoys. A barge ramp is in the inner harbor on the W side of the Snake River. The City Dock (south) and Westgold Dock (north) are on the causeway with 21 feet alongside. The City Dock, 200 feet in length, handles bulk cargo and fuel deliveries. The Westgold Dock, 190 feet in length, exports gravel and handles the loading and

unloading of heavy equipment. The Small Boat Harbor, South Dock, East Dock and Fish Dock are on the E side of the harbor. The Small Boat Harbor has a 120-foot floating dock with moorage for vessels with up to an 8-foot draft. The harbormaster can be reached on VHF-FM channels 12 and 16.

(686)

Tides

(687) The water levels are influenced more by the wind than tide. An offshore wind sometimes causes a level of from 2 to 3 feet below mean lower low water for days at a time; a level of 14 feet above mean lower low water has been noted as a result of storms.

(688)

Currents

(689) About 2 miles offshore in Nome roadstead the tidal current averages about 1 knot at times of strength. It is chiefly diurnal. The flood sets E, and the ebb NW.

(690)

Weather, Nome and Norton Sound Vicinity

(691) The moderating influence of the open water of Norton Sound is effective only from early June to about the middle of November. Storms moving through this area during these months result in extended periods of cloudiness and rain. The nearly continuous cloud cover during July and August results in an average of 45 cloudy, 12 partly cloudy, and only 5 clear days for the 2-month period. During the summer the daily temperature range is very slight. The freezing of Norton Sound in November causes a rather abrupt change from a maritime to a continental climate. Most low-pressure systems during this period take a path S of Nome, resulting in strong E winds, accompanied by frequent blizzards, with the winds later becoming N and reaching Nome across the colder frozen areas of N Alaska.

(692) Temperatures generally remain well below freezing from the middle of November to the latter part of April; February is usually the coldest month of the year. Temperatures usually begin to rise near the end of February and continue to rise until they reach a maximum in July. Occurrences of below zero (-18°C) temperatures have been noted in every month from October through May. An unusual aspect of the yearly temperature trend is the short period of thawing weather in January. Despite the generally low temperatures, the maximum during the month is often above freezing and the "January thaw"; generally expected by old time residents is a usual occurrence. The extreme maximum for the station is 86°F (30°C) recorded in July 1968 and 1977 while the extreme minimum is -54° F (-47.7°C) recorded in January 1989.

(693) Precipitation reaches its maximum during the late summer months and drops to a minimum in April and May. For a locality with better than 200 days a year with precipitation, average annual precipitation at Nome is light at only 15.8 inches (401.3 mm). Precipitation extremes have ranged from 24.25 inches (616 mm) in 1950 to 7.42 inches (188.5 mm) in 1962. Snow has fallen

as early as August, but usually does not accumulate on the ground until the first part of November. Every month has recorded snowfall except July. The accumulated depth increases during November, December, and January, reaching a maximum depth usually in late February or early March. The snow cover decreases rapidly in April and May, and normally disappears by the middle of June. The average annual snowfall is nearly 59 inches (1499 mm) with extremes of 102 inches (2591 mm) and 18.6 inches (472.4 mm).

(694) Average wind speeds for each month are not excessive, ranging from around 9 to 10 knots. Severe windstorms do occur with winds over 61 knots recorded several times. Velocities exceeding 61 knots have been recorded during all months from October through March. The strongest gust recorded at Nome was 62 knots in December 1977. These strong winds during the winter when there is snow cover produce blowing snow conditions that severely hinder transportation in the area.

(695) (See Appendix B for **Nome Climatological table**.)

(696) Navigation is difficult because of the ice from early December to early June and is usually suspended from late December to mid-May.

(697) The National Weather Service maintains a weather station at the Nome Airport and monitors VHF-FM channel 16 and 2182 kHz.

(698)

Quarantine

(699) Quarantine is enforced in accordance with regulations of the U.S. Public Health Service. (See Public Health Service, chapter 1.) A hospital is in Nome.

(700)

Supplies

(701) Water and some provisions can be obtained. Diesel oil is not available in large quantities.

(702)

Communications

(703) Nome maintains radiotelephone and radiotelegraph communications with other parts of Alaska and the world. Air service for passengers, mail, and freight is available the year round. Steamship service is available during the summer. From Nome, roads extend to Council, Teller, and to the Kobuk River S of Taylor.

(704)

Chart 16200

(705) **Sledge Island**, 31 miles W of Cape Nome and 4.5 miles offshore, is a rocky flat-topped island except near the S extremity where the highest point, a 760-foot jagged mountain, exists. Ruins of abandoned habitations are on the sandspit on the N end of the island and along the beach about midway of the E side. These are probably ruins of the former village of **Aziak**. Except for the sandspit, the shores of the island are rocky and steep.

(706) **Sledge Island Light** (64°29'46"N., 166°11'56"W.), 32 feet above the water, is seasonally shown from a

skeleton tower with a red and white diamond-shaped daymark on the N point of the island. The island may be safely approached from any direction except the E where a depth of 3 fathoms is 1 mile E of the light. Small vessels seeking shelter close in on the N side are cautioned to stay clear of the submerged bar making off NW from the spit. It was reported that the cove just W of the spit provides a good anchorage. A depth of 6½ fathoms is about 3.7 miles offshore and about 7.5 miles E of Sledge Island. The passage between Sledge Island and the mainland has irregular bottom but has depths of 5 fathoms or more. Tide rips have been observed in the passage and on the E side of the island during heavy weather.

(707) With heavy S winds, vessels at anchor in the Nome roadstead usually seek shelter behind Sledge Island. Ice is reported to hang on longer in this area than to the E toward Nome.

(708)

Current

(709) Current observations were made in the passage between Sledge Island and the mainland for a period of 6 days in 1950. The tidal current is diurnal with average velocity at strength of NW current of 1 knot and average velocity at strength of SE current of 0.5 knot. Maximum velocity observed during the period of the observations was about 1.5 knots setting NW. (See Tidal Current Tables for predictions.) Vessels when in this vicinity should give special attention to the currents. Above Cape Rodney there is no perceptible current S or E; the general set is N and W.

(710) From **Cape Rodney** to **Cape Douglas**, the shore is a low sand beach, and the high land is farther inland from the beach than E of Cape Rodney. This coast is seldom approached close-to; the water is comparatively shallow and dangerous, shoals and ledges are found between Cape Douglas and Point Spencer.

(711) Vessels are cautioned to exercise care when approaching the shore S of Cape Rodney and to give the shore off Cape Douglas a berth of at least 15 miles; an irregular bottom with depths of 6 fathoms has been found by reconnaissance lines off this cape with indications of lesser depths inshore. From a point about 8 miles NE of Cape Douglas the area to the N, covering the approaches to Port Clarence, has been surveyed.

(712) **Cape Rodney Light** (64°38'35"N., 166°23'47"W.), 24 feet above the water, is shown seasonally from a skeleton tower with a red and white diamond-shaped daymark on the point.

(713) **King Island**, 1,196 feet high, is about 34 miles W of Cape Douglas. It is triangular in shape, about 1.5 miles long and about 1.2 miles wide, rugged and rocky, and has nearly perpendicular cliffs, deep water, and generally rocky bottom on all sides. **Ukivok** is a native village on the S side, the houses being built in the sides of the cliffs some distance above the water. Off the village, but close inshore, vessels may anchor in about 15 fathoms, muddy bottom, with good protection from NW winds. In clear

weather the island is an excellent landfall for vessels coming from S and bound to Port Clarence.

(714) **Cape York** (65°25.0'N., 167°30.0'W.), is a high, rocky, nearly vertical cliff, with numerous ravines and a range of high rugged mountains immediately back of it. The cliff is about 10 to 12 miles in extent. There is no distinct promontory, and no exact point along the cliff that can be defined as the cape.

(715) The area from Cape York to Port Clarence has been surveyed with no depth less than 6 fathoms being found 1.5 miles from the shore. The general depths fall off to a submarine valley about 2 miles offshore, extending E, with depths of not less than 10 fathoms, to within 6 miles of the entrance to Port Clarence. A rock is reported about 0.8 mile from the shore SE of **York** village.

(716) Between Cape York and the high land of Cape Prince of Wales is a bight, with comparatively low rolling land back of it, that extends across the peninsula to the N shore. The beach is low, and the water shoals gradually when approaching the shore. The E part of the bight is slightly shoaler than the W part; about 6 fathoms will be found 1 mile offshore; in the W part of the bight 8 fathoms will be found at the same distance from the beach. When standing W alongshore, and when abreast of Cape Mountain, the water deepens suddenly to 20 fathoms.

(717)

Chart 16204

(718) **Port Clarence**, a large bay indenting the Seward Peninsula about 35 miles SE of Cape Prince of Wales, provides the only good harbor close to the Bering Strait. The bay is formed by a low sandspit which extends from the mainland in a N direction for about 10 miles to **Point Spencer**. The highest elevation on the spit is a round knoll near the S end, 24 feet above sea level. This knoll is inconspicuous except at close range. An airstrip is on the northern end of the spit.

(719) **Point Spencer Light** (65°16'38"N., 166°50'56"W.), 22 feet above the water, is shown seasonally from a skeleton tower with a red and white diamond-shaped daymark on the N end of the point at the entrance to Port Clarence. The light is the only conspicuous landmark to aid the navigator in making the entrance into Port Clarence.

(720) The channel between Point Spencer and **Point Jackson** is 4 miles wide and free of dangers, with depths of 7 to 8 fathoms. The N half of the bay has a general depth of 7 fathoms as close as 1 mile from shore with depths shoaling gradually to the beach. The S half of the bay shoals gradually to the bars and flats along the low shoreline at the S end. Along the W side of the bay the sandspit may be approached fairly close except for the shoal 2 miles S of Point Spencer which makes into the bay from the spit with depths of 2 fathoms, 1 mile off. To the E the water shoals to the entrance to **Grantley Harbor**, which is connected with Port Clarence by a narrow channel marked by a seasonal daybeacon and light.

Grantley Harbor Light (65°16'36"N., 166°20'52"W.), 15 feet above the water, is shown from a tower with a green and white diamond-shaped daymark on the N side of the entrance to the harbor. The channel is subject to continual change; local knowledge is advised. The current is strong with many eddies and tide rips.

(721)

Anchorage

(722) Anchorage with good holding ground is available anywhere in Port Clarence with the best holding ground on the eastern side. Being very careful in the entrance, shallow-draft vessels will find greater protection in Grantley Harbor.

(723)

Routes

(724) In approaching Port Clarence from the S in fog or misty weather, the low sand and shingle spit forming the W side of Port Clarence is not visible until close-to. The best procedure is to make a landfall on King Island from the E keeping in depths greater than 10 fathoms to avoid the foul ground N from Cape Rodney. From King Island a course may be set a little E of Cape York to within 3 miles of the coast, thence on course **096°** through the entrance into Port Clarence, where good anchorage may be obtained.

(725)

Tides

(726) The diurnal range of the tide at Port Clarence is subject to radical changes due to meteorological conditions. Moderate to strong S or SW winds of several days' duration will raise the height of the tide in the area without appreciably increasing the range. This is actually a datum change and is appreciable along the entire S coast of the Seward Peninsula. It is reported that continued strong N winds produce a lowered datum, but to a lesser extent.

(727)

Currents

(728) Along the outside coast W of Point Spencer and S of Cape York there is a general W set of 1 to 2 knots. This velocity is appreciably affected by direction, force, and duration of the wind.

(729) Current observations in the entrance to Port Clarence indicate that the velocity seldom exceeds 0.5 knot 2 to 3 miles N of Point Spencer. One mile E of the point, velocities up to 1 knot were observed, the larger velocities generally setting W or N.

(730)

Weather, Port Clarence Vicinity

(731) The weather, in general, is better than in the Aleutian Island area, with less fog and fewer bad storms during the short summer navigation season. Fog and high winds are generally of short duration so that it is seldom that planes cannot land at Teller at least once a week. The winter weather is generally better than the summer for plane service, as there is little or no fog during cold weather.

- (732) The first surface fog appears after the spring break-up and is of an intermittent character, generally local, and forming and disappearing at intervals as short as one-half hour. As the season advances, the fog is more prevalent, of greater density and longer duration, but in general it offers no serious obstacle to surface navigation.
- (733) **Brevig Mission** is a small village on the N shore of Port Clarence about 9.5 miles NE of Point Spencer. Approaches to the village are easily made from any general direction, but approach from the SW is best. There is deep water all the way to the shore at the village, and the gravel beach makes a good landing spot to beach a skiff. The beach at Brevig Mission is steep. The water depths hold fairly consistent until within close proximity to shore. The beach is exposed to winds and weather coming from the S. In these conditions, a beach landing is difficult due to storm surge. Services available in Brevig Mission include telephone, mail, and a store. The village has a Public Safety Officer and volunteer Search and Rescue teams. Several airlines provide daily flights to Nome.
- (734) **Teller**, a village about 12 miles E of Point Spencer, is on the base of the S spit at the entrance to Grantley Harbor. The village can be seen from Port Clarence, however, most small vessels and skiffs beach or tie-off to shore on the Grantley Harbor side. Enter Grantley Harbor by heading to the NE corner of Port Clarence until the N and S spits are visible. A seasonal light is near the end of N spit, and a daybeacon is at the end of S spit. In 1994, the USCGC IRONWOOD reported the best water was in the N part of the entrance maintaining a distance of about 100 yards from the N shore. When inside Grantley Harbor, good approach to the village was made by continuing E for another 500 yards then turning S.
- (735) There are no piers, wharves, or docks along the shore at Teller. The village has a Public Safety Officer and volunteer Search and Rescue teams. Services available at Teller include telephone, fuel, mail, and a store. The village has airline service which offer daily flights to Nome. In addition, the village has a road that connects with Nome, but is only passable during the summer months.
- (736) **Imuruk Basin** (see chart 16200) is a shallow body of water SE of Grantley Harbor; the two are connected by narrow, difficult **Tuksuk Channel**.
- (737) **Kuzitrin River** rises in the Seward Peninsula and flows in a W direction about 75 miles to Imuruk Basin. The anchorage for oceangoing vessels is in Port Clarence, the head of navigation for powerboats and other vessels up to 12 feet in draft in the mouth of Kuzitrin River. Shallow-draft lighters can navigate the Kuzitrin for about 15 miles to **Shelton**. The river is open from June to October.
- (738) <Deleted Table>