

Ouzinkie — Uusenkaa

NUNIAMEK AG'LLRIAKUT UUSENKAAMEN, PARAGUUTAKUN. – WE WENT FROM OLD HARBOR TO OUZINKIE BY BOAT.



Photo: Dories in the Ouzinkie harbor, ca. 1940. Photo by Hender Toms. Melinda Lamp collection.

Ouzinkie lies in the forests of Spruce Island, just ten miles from the city of Kodiak. Derived from the Russian word *uskiy*, meaning narrows, the name Ouzinkie refers to the slender strait that separates Spruce Island from Kodiak Island. It also reflects Ouzinkie's origin in the nineteenth century as a retirement community for Russian traders. Russians traders built ships and raised cattle on Spruce Island. Alutiiq people lived in the community, many as the spouses of traders, and in a tiny, nearby community located at Monk's Lagoon known as Elovoe. Twentieth-century residents continued to raise cattle, worked for a variety of local companies, and supported efforts to protect Kodiak during World War II. In 1964, the tidal wave associated with the Great Alaska Earthquake destroyed the community store, cannery, and some homes. Today, Ouzinkie is home to about 160 people, many of whom fish for a living.

Spruce Island is also known for its connection to Father Herman. This Russian Orthodox monk is beloved for his devotion to the Alutiiq people. In 1818, Father Herman moved from Kodiak to the southeastern end of Spruce Island. He established a school, an orphanage, and a garden in a place

now called Monks Lagoon. In 1970, Father Herman was recognized as a saint in the Orthodox Church. In commemoration of this event, the church leads a pilgrimage to Monks Lagoon every August, an event aided by Ouzinkie residents.