

Port Graham — Paluwik

PALUWIGMEK TAIGUA. – I AM COMING FROM PORT GRAHAM.



Photo: Residents of Port Graham, ca. 1889. Albatross Collection, National Archives.

Port Graham is one of three communities located on the southern tip of Alaska’s Kenai Peninsula. This small village of about 178 people rests on the inner coast of a narrow fjord, also known as Port Graham. The communities of Nanwalek and Seldovia lie to the west and the north respectively.

Russian settlers from a trading post at nearby Nanwalek formed Port Graham. In 1850, the Russian American Company established a coal mine in the area, but it was not profitable and lasted only a few years. Alutiiq families began settling in Port Graham in the late 1800s and early 1900s, moving to the area from Yalik and other villages on the outer coast of the Kenai Peninsula. The community grew in the early decades of the twentieth century as job opportunities at a local cannery attracted people.

Today, the residents of Port Graham continue to work in the commercial fishing industry. A cannery provides employment for many residents, including some from the nearby village of Nanwalek. Other people make their living fishing or working in the timber industry. Whatever their jobs, the residents of Port Graham continue to feed their families from the land and sea. Harvesting wild resources remains an economically, socially, and spiritually important activity for people of all ages.