



FANNIE QUIGLEY

The Kantishna area of Denali National Park and Preserve has a rich history of exploration and mining going back over 100 years. Fannie Quigley is one of the mining pioneers who came to the land to find their fortunes. Fannie was a veteran of the Klondike and other stampedes. She had made her way to the remote Kantishna Hills among the hundreds of hopeful prospectors in 1905. Fannie arrived with a portable stove and food supplies and quickly opened for business to feed hungry stampedes. The gold, however, proved too sparse and the population of prospectors and miners in the district, along with the hastily constructed community of Eureka (now Kantishna), dwindled to about 50 hardy souls. Fannie, however, stayed. She filed mining claims and built a life for herself. Fannie met Joe Quigley who was one of the first to pursue lode mining in the district and together they staked and mined their claims in the area. Fannie embraced this hardworking Kantishna lifestyle for nearly 40 years.



Fannie Quigley Collection, 80-46-222, Archives University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Fannie Quigley pictured at a mine portal in Kantishna. Born and raised on a Nebraska homestead, Fannie (maiden name Frances Sedlacek) was used to a hardscrabble life. With an independent and enterprising spirit, she made her way west cooking for railroad construction crews and Klondike gold rush stampedes.



DENA 29-7-4, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection.

A Self Sufficient Lifestyle

Fannie used a dog team for transportation and freighting, as seen in the above photograph of her packing supplies to a mine in 1915. In addition to the mining activities that provided an income, there was the endless work to provide the basics of life in such a remote location. In Kantishna, everyday life included hauling water and cutting and hauling firewood. Both Fannie and Joe hunted moose, caribou, and Dall sheep for their meat and trapped marten and other animals in the winter to get furs to sell and wear. Fannie maintained large vegetable gardens and used nearby prospect tunnels for cold storage of produce and meat. They also pursued trapping during the winter as a way to generate some cash.



Fannie Quigley Collection, 80-46-221a, Archives University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Fannie, seen in the doorway, with other mining folks at Quigley's Silver Pick Cabin at the top of Quigley Ridge. Fannie and Joe, married in 1918 and lived near their claims within the Kantishna district.



Fannie Quigley Collection, 80-46-244, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Joe Quigley and Fannie at Glacier Creek, Kantishna district. Joe prospected high on Mineral (Quigley) Ridge, where he located and claimed a number of lode deposits (metal-bearing veins in source rock) finding lead ore (galena) with high silver content, as well as zinc, silver, gold and copper-bearing veins.

“Up and at ‘em” Fannie

When Grant Pearson (park ranger and former superintendent) first met Fannie Quigley in 1926, she was 55 years old and had been mining and living in the Kantishna Hills for 21 years. He described her as

“up and at ‘em. She was a dog musher, prospector, trapper, hunter, woodcutter, gardener, and one of the best sourdough cooks I have ever run across. At a Christmas dinner once, Fannie served black bear roast, gravy, mashed potatoes, fresh cabbage, hot rolls, currant jelly, cranberry sauce, and fresh blueberry shortcake. Only the flour and sugar had been freighted in. The rest was from the country.”

In 1930, Joe suffered a mining injury that effectively ended his mining career. Several years later, Joe and Fannie permanently parted, splitting their income from the sale of their claims. Fannie stayed in Kantishna while Joe moved to Seattle. Just beyond Friday Creek is the yellow frame house where Fannie lived out her last years, passing away at age 73 on August 22, 1944. She was buried at the Birch Hill Cemetery in Fairbanks. Today the house, eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, serves as a vivid reminder of Fannie Quigley, Alaska pioneer mining legend from Denali Park and Preserve’s historic past.



Brooker Collection, DENA 5462, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection.

Fannie with gold nuggets at her Friday Creek cabin in the mid-1920s.

Sources: Bryant, Jane. *Snapshots from the Past: A Roadside History of Denali National Park and Preserve*, 2011. • Haigh, Jane G. *Searching for Fannie Quigley*, 2007.

For more information about Denali National Park and Preserve: <http://www.nps.gov/dena/historyculture/index.htm>