



McKinley Station TRAIL

1 Welcome to McKinley Station

Journey back nearly a century to a time when a raucous and vibrant community existed here, to an era of gold prospectors, trappers, hunters, and pioneer rangers. McKinley Station was typical of Alaska towns of the era, booming overnight then fading into obscurity. Construction of the Alaska Railroad provided the original stimulus for the community and the development of the new park kept it going.

2 Park Road and Entrance

Until 1932, the boundary of Mount McKinley National Park lay a few miles to the west of here. Upon its completion in 1938, the Park Road led 92 miles from the railroad depot to the Kantishna Mining District, just outside the park boundary at that time. Much of the road was cut by hand by teams of laborers, at a finished cost of around \$1.3 million.

3 Mount McKinley Park Hotel

Maurice Morino's park hotel opened for business on Thanksgiving Day 1921. For almost two decades, people from far and wide gathered at this rustic hotel. Here, dog mushers and trappers mingled with miners and rangers, school teachers and itinerants, and once, a U.S. president.

4 Station Residents

The trail here traverses an area where Maurice Morino allowed people to build cabins, trading labor for free rent. Residents included Woodbury Abbey who came to conduct the park's first boundary survey, school teacher Louise Ann Fairburn, miner Elmer Hosler and his wife, Maud, the postmaster.

5 Riley and Hines

You are now standing on the south bank of Hines Creek. In the 1920s, your view would have been of a wide, treeless and rocky, flat area with two streams converging nearby. One enduring mystery is the identity of the people for whom these creeks were named.

6 Original Park Headquarters

The park's first ranger, Harry Karstens, arrived in early summer 1921, and began the pioneering work of applying the rule of law in the new park. Karstens began clearing land for his headquarters on the northwest bank of Riley Creek, upstream from the bridge. The location offered an ideal place to monitor people using the trail leading west to the park.

7 Railroad Trestle

The steel bridge looming high above you looks much the same as it did upon its completion in early 1922, with one exception. Gone is the football-field-length wooden trestle that originally connected the steel structure to the north bluff. In the 1950s, the railroad hauled hundreds of tons of rock and earth to extend the bluff to the edge of the first concrete and steel support.

Go online to learn more about Maurice Morino, Harry Karstens, pioneer scientists, early law enforcement, and a detailed history of each stop along the McKinley Station Trail:

<http://go.usa.gov/D58>

Photo: Harry Karstens, his family, and a friend, Helen Livingston, await the arrival of a train at the depot.

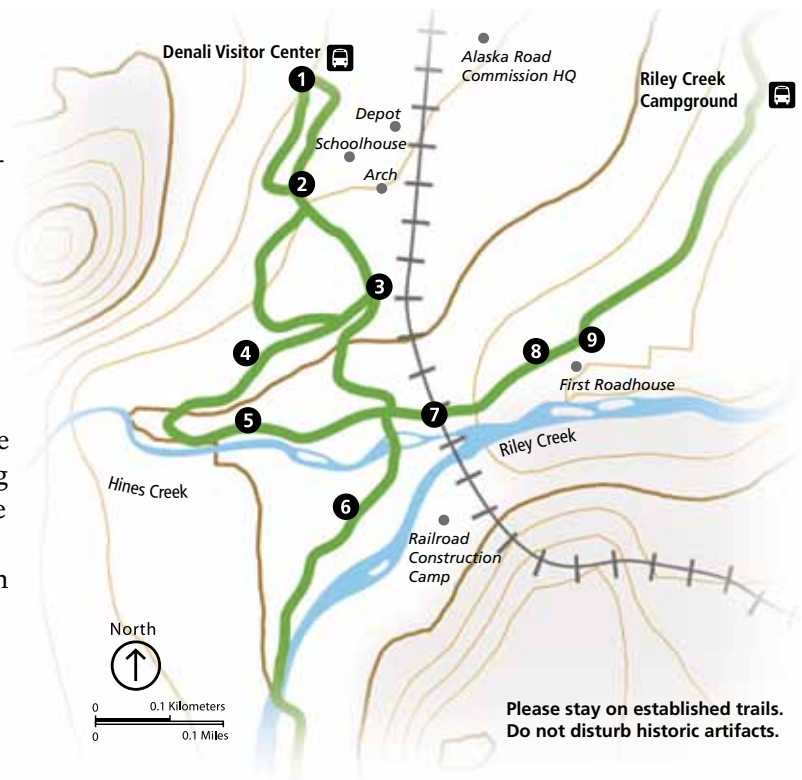
Credit: Henry P. Karstens Collection, 0297, Karstens Library

8 The Hole

You are now standing at the northwest corner of Maurice Morino's original roadhouse. Imagine the isolation here when Morino built his cabin in 1914: no road, no railroad, no easy over-land trail, and the Nenana River unfit for navigation. The area below the bridge and at the junction of two trails was known as "the hole," an area off limits to the local children. The illicit traits of the "Roaring 20s"—bootlegging, alcohol manufacturing, gambling, violence, and prostitution—were centered here.

9 Silver Fox Ranch

Until the 1920s, fox farming was a burgeoning industry. The cold, long winters here offered near ideal conditions for breeding foxes with luxurious fur. Silver foxes, an almost black color phase of red fox, were especially valuable and in high demand both in the U.S. and abroad. This is the former site of Duke and Elizabeth Stubbs' Mount McKinley Silver Fox Ranch, a business that sold furs both to tourists and fur buyers, and supplied breeding pairs of foxes to fur farms across Alaska.



End of an Era

On March 19, 1932, President Herbert Hoover signed an act expanding the park, moving the eastern boundary to the "natural boundary" of the Nenana River. The move placed the entire community within park boundaries. Conservationists hailed the extension as a long overdue move to protect the eastern boundary of the park, as well as sheep and caribou herds. Local residents viewed the changes with dismay because many cabins were without title and some claimed land was immediately in dispute. With the expansion, McKinley Station as a viable community came to an end.



The community gathers for a summer party in 1926. Henry P. Karstens Collection, 0636, Karstens Library.



Maurice Morino at his first roadhouse, called the "Park Gate Roadhouse." Credit: H.G. Kaiser, Alaska Railroad Collection; Anchorage Museum, AEC.G1444.



Morino's second business concern, the Mount McKinley Park Hotel, hosted a visit by President Warren Harding and a 65-person Congressional delegation in July 1923. Henry P. Karstens Collection, 1486, Karstens Library.



Denali Trails | McKinley Station Trail
Moderate
1.6 miles/2.6 km, 1 hr one way
Please stay on trails.

This trail guide was produced in partnership by the National Park Service and the Alaska Geographic Association.

