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1906

Department of Commerce and Labor
COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY

CH Fittmann

Superintendent

State: *Alaska*

DESCRIPTIVE REPORT.

Top c Sheet No *2804*

LOCALITY:

*Eastern part of
Sitkinax Island*

1906

CHIEF OF PARTY:

WC Hodgkins

U. S. C. & G. SURVEY,
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

CST 19 1907

cc. No.

2804

Descriptive Report

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to accompany Topographic Sheet No. 2804

Eastern part of Sitkinak Islands, Alaska.

COAST AND
GEODESIC SURVEY

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These islands are hilly and can be seen for a long distance off shore. The eastern island consists of a number of distinct hills separated by very low valleys, so that from a distance it often appears like several smaller islands. These hills often terminate on the shore in high rock cliffs.

Off the northeastern point of the eastern island, which is a bold headland, are two pairs of rocks, the outer pair a mile off shore. These rocks are visible at all stages of the tide, and at low water each pair becomes a single rock of considerable extent, with two summits. The outer rock may be approached with safety to a distance of two miles. After passing at that distance to the northward of it, a course may be steered for Sitkinak Strait, passing about a mile to the northward of Flat Point, the northern extremity of West Sitkinak Island.

The southern shore of these islands is thought to be foul and should be carefully avoided, but the northern side is comparatively bold and may generally be approached with safety to a distance of one mile. In approaching the shore closely, attention should be given to the lead, as the waters have not been thoroughly examined.

The western and larger of the Sitkinak Islands is separated from the eastern by a shallow lagoon of tortuous outline, which

is passable by boats at high water. At the entrance to the lagoon the tidal currents run with great velocity except near slack water, though the rise and fall in the lagoon is small.

The western island is higher than the eastern and is composed of two main ridges extending in a northeast and southwest direction. The valley separating them is not very low, the whole forming one mountain mass. The eastern of the two ridges is higher and longer than the western and has a number of separate summits upon it, the highest of which, called the "Dome", reaches an altitude of about 1500 feet.

On this summit, as on some of the others, there is an outcropping of rock, but the greater part of the island seems to be composed of glacial drift. The surface has been extensively sculptured by atmospheric agencies and, under suitable conditions of illumination, the appearance of the island is most striking. A marked feature of the northern shore is a succession of steeply sloping earth cliffs, several hundred feet high and broken at intervals by sharp and narrow ravines.

East of Valley Point, so called on account of a specially noticeable ravine which occurs there, the cliffs recede from the present shore, which seems to have been built up from the detritus falling or washed from the cliffs farther west.

Here, relieved from the undermining effects of the waves, the cliffs have assumed a more moderate slope and have become covered with grass and low bushes. The sides of the ravines have also been rounded off to some extent until they have reached the angle of repose.

The shore is usually a beach of heavy shingle but there are some considerable stretches of sand beach, especially eastward from Flat Point along the spit which forms the northern side of the lagoon and at the western end of the island, where another flat point has been built out. That is beyond the limits of this sheet.

As indicated above, the shore seems to be receding in some places and advancing at others. Off Valley Point is a reef of rocks, which would seem to indicate that the shore may have receded at that point.

The bight lying between Valley Point and Flat Point has a border of kelp at some distance from the shore for nearly its whole length but no outlying dangers were seen except the reef off Valley Point, already mentioned. Some rocky shoals lie some distance off shore in the bight east of Flat Point, but these are well out of the fairway and less than a mile off.

There are no trees on these islands, low alder bushes being the largest growth found. There is, however, always an abundance of driftwood on the beaches and from this the native inhabitants of this region supply themselves with wood for the various necessities of their existence. This supply of wood is of great importance for any one stranded or camping on this island for use as firewood.

There are no inhabitants on these islands, except temporarily in the summer time and the only works of man in evidence are a few sod huts used for shelter by hunters or fishermen.

Drinking water can usually be found in every ravine but there are few places where boats could take water unless in unusually quiet weather.

There is apt to be trouble in landing on these shores and when ashore it is not certain that a party can get off again, as the sea often makes very rapidly.

In moderate weather fairly good anchorage may be found in the bight between Valley Point and Flat Point and a better one in the bight between the two islands. The Patterson anchored several times about a mile to the northward of the entrance to the lagoon in six to seven fathoms, hard sand bottom. This anchorage is exposed to the northeastward but in moderate weather and especially with a southerly wind it is all right.

It should be noted that this survey was a compass reconnaissance, no positions being available at the time it was made. The field work was done by Mr. W. M. Steirnagle.

W. C. Hodgkins

Chief of Party.