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A MAN OF MANY: MAINER FRANK LOWELL AND WHITE-NATIVE MARRIAGES IN TERRITORIAL ALASKA

BY SANDY BRUE

Born into a well-known and influential New England family, Frank Lowell left his home in Maine and moved to Alaska soon after the territory was purchased by the United States in 1867. His upbringing in a shipbuilding and seafaring family from Maine prepared Frank well for his new life. His life in sparsely-settled Alaska was quite different, though, from his old life in coastal Maine. During his more than fifty years in Alaska, Frank married three Native women and fathered fifteen children. There were practical reasons for Frank to form such unions, but it also demonstrates that racial boundaries were much more fluid in frontier Alaska than in much of the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The author is a retired National Park Service employee. During her career she worked in six park units across the country, including Kenai Fjords National Park in Seward, Alaska. In 2006, she completed a master's degree in history at Alaska Pacific University, under the direction of Polly Welts Kaufman. This article is extracted from her master's thesis, which examined the role of Alaskan Native women during the northwestern fur trade period.

THERE WAS a time when Maine family fortunes were made or lost through national and international shipping. Shipyards dotted New England's coastal harbors from Boston to Maine. With deep ocean ports and a vast, seemingly unlimited forest, Maine provided energetic citizens enormous economic opportunity. Born into an influential New England family, Franklin G. Lowell inherited and acquired the talents of his Maine relatives, who were well known in the merchant, shipbuilding, and seafaring society. Like his distant literary cousin, James Russell Lowell, Frank lived a life of adventure and travel. Nineteenth-century Maine was connected to the rest of the world by the sea, and Mainers participated in maritime trade. Such connections opened

the eyes of many Mainers to greater opportunities in the outside world. Born in West Bath, Maine, in 1849, by the age of fifteen Frank left his native state in search of opportunity elsewhere.

In the mid-1860s, Frank left Maine with some relatives, rounded Cape Horn and arrived in San Francisco, where his transplanted Maine uncle, Captain Samuel Snow, had established a shipping business. Maine sailors, no strangers to the Pacific coast, had whaled there for generations. As whaling became less profitable these New Englanders took advantage of the next opportunity, supplying Alaska and extracting furs. Like other adventurous New England men of his time, Frank Lowell headed to Alaska to begin working in the fur trade. Unlike most of these entrepreneurs, Frank spent the rest of his life in Alaska, living among the Native people on land that today bears his family name.

Once settled in Alaska, Lowell worked as an independent fur trader, employing Alaskan Native hunters to obtain the fur that he sold to the Alaska Commercial Company. Later, as the fur trade was exhausted, Lowell worked for the company as a manager and a fox farmer. Over the course of his life, Frank fathered fifteen children with three different Alaskan Native wives. He lived in Alaska from the late 1860s until his death in 1923. This was a period in U.S. history marked by the rise of scientific racism and social Darwinism.¹ Many states, for example, passed “miscegenation” laws, which barred whites from marrying people of color. These laws usually targeted relationships between whites and blacks, but some states also barred marriages between whites and Native Americans or Asian-Americans.² Such attitudes and legal barriers were not present everywhere in America, though. Despite a general hardening of racial attitudes in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century America, Alaska was still a frontier society, and white male American settlers like Frank Lowell often worked alongside and lived among the Native Alaskans, and even married Native women.

The Lowell Family in New England

The Lowell family has a long and storied history in New England. Percival Lowell was sixty-eight-years old when he moved his mercantile business, his wife Rebecca, and three of his adult children from Bristol, England, to Newbury, Massachusetts, in 1639. Percival and Rebecca’s first son, John, settled the Massachusetts branch of the family, and Richard, their second son’s offspring, brought the family to Maine.³ From Richard and his wife Margaret sprang a large and prosperous family of shipowners, designers and builders, merchants, sea captains, and

adventurers who lived in coastal Maine. In 1795, Frank Lowell's paternal great-grandparents, John and Martha Lowell, built the family house in West Bath that still stands today, on Berry's Mill Road. The house was passed on to Frank's grandparents and then to Captain Samuel Snow, who had married Frank's aunt, Eliza Lowell, and was the guardian for Frank's father when his parents died prematurely.⁴

On September 15, 1848, Frank's parents, Nancy Jane Manson and Eliphalet E. Lowell, registered their intention to marry. Their wedding ceremony was held two weeks later, on September 29.⁵ Frank, the only child of this union, was born the following year. Frank's parents brought together two of the most prominent families in the shipping industry of West Bath, Maine, the Mansons and the Lowells. Since the Revolutionary War, the two families had built ships, commanded them, held shares in each other's shipping ventures, and intermarried. The story of Frank's maternal grandfather, Robert P. Manson, Sr., defying President Thomas Jefferson's embargo and running ships past the coastal forts under cannon fire is recorded in Maine maritime history books.⁶

Frank's father, Eliphalet E. Lowell, an agent for the family business, died during a voyage between West Bath and the booming southern port of New Orleans in 1851, when Frank was a young boy. Before the Civil War, Maine merchants shipped a steady supply of hay and ice to this southern port.⁷ It is uncertain how long Eliphalet had been away, exactly how he died, or if he had been present for his son's birth. As Frank was left without a father, his mother turned to her brother, Robert Manson, Jr., for her only child's guardianship and later his apprenticeship in the shipyard owned by the Mansons.⁸

Frank came of age in the 1850s and 1860s, a tumultuous time in the United States. Maine's shipping industry was hurt by the Civil War, but recovered soon after the conflict ended. It was during this period that some of Frank's relatives relocated to California. Frank's uncles were in and out of the Bath shipyards continuously between 1865 and 1880, as they built and captained ships that carried cargo from various shipyards in Maine to other ports.⁹ In 1866, there were more than a dozen shipyards in Bath, and in total they built and launched thirty-five vessels; in 1867 they built twenty-seven.¹⁰ Frank's relatives, the Snows, Mansons, and Lowells, were owners, builders, or masters of a large number of these ships. Besides being involved in the shipbuilding business, Frank's relatives were also involved in commercial ventures. They shipped supplies to various destinations. Some of their ships rounded Cape Horn and brought goods to California. In the 1860s, they established a business in San Francisco that supplied America's large new possession,

Alaska.¹¹ It was this family connection that ultimately brought Frank to Alaska.

After her husband's death, Nancy Lowell disappeared from the historical record, except for the publication of her obituary in a Bath newspaper on June 26, 1873.¹² She died of consumption in Boston, while working as a nurse, perhaps for members of her large New England family. Her body was returned home to Maine for burial in the Oak Grove Cemetery plot of her brother, Robert Manson, where it rests with the members of his family. Nancy Manson Lowell never remarried as her tombstone refers to her as "Aunt Nancy."¹³ Frank apparently lost contact with his mother after he left home. When she died, he was in Alaska, age twenty-four, with two children of his own.

The Move to Alaska

The United States was not the original colonial ruler of the territory now called Alaska. Plans to raise the Russian flag on the North American continent originated with Peter the Great as early as 1725. By 1741, Russia's involvement in Alaska's fur trade had begun when Captains Vitus Bering and Aleksei Chirikov landed on its coast. In 1799, Czar Paul I allowed the formation of a company that would have a monopoly over the fur trade in Russian America (Alaska). This company, the Russian-American Company (RAC), was, in essence, the true imperial ruler of the colony from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the sale of the colony to the United States in the 1860s. The RAC was a private enterprise but it was allowed to exercise many of the powers of a state.¹⁴ The Russians' treatment of the Alaskan Natives was initially brutal. During the course of the nineteenth century, though, the Russian Orthodox Church established civilized relations with the Native people and the RAC had embarked upon a conservation program to ensure a profitable fur harvest.¹⁵

The Russians brought the Orthodox faith to Alaska. The Aleuts, the Chugach, the Athabaskan, and the Tlingit readily adopted the Russian religion. The Russian clergy addressed the Alaskan Natives in their own languages and did not demand an immediate change in lifestyle. Russian-Native marriages and pre-existing common beliefs often helped to create a spiritual bond between the colonizer and the colonized. As historian Lydia Black has noted, "The Aleuts, like the Orthodox, prayed to the east...both religious systems used water as a medium of healing and purification. Fasting and public confession were common to both peo-

ples.”¹⁶ The monks were sent to convert Alaskan Natives to the Russian Orthodox faith and, in the process, brought relief from the brutal practices of the commercial traders. They confronted RAC officials and sent reports back to the Russian government, which did not condone such brutality.

Between 1850 and 1860 the United States government restricted trade on the U.S. west coast to supply ships owned and operated by U.S. citizens. During this time Frank’s uncle, Samuel Snow, established shipping lines in San Francisco.¹⁷ Then came the U.S. purchase of Alaska. Although many Americans paid little attention to the U.S. acquisition of Alaska in 1867, it caused a stir in the lives of those involved in the maritime trades. New Englanders had mixed reactions to the purchase of this large new possession in the Northwest. Some New England newspapers, including the *Daily Times* of Bangor and the *Daily Union* of Manchester, New Hampshire, strongly supported the purchase, while others opposed it.¹⁸ Regardless of their political views some Maine shipbuilders, traders, and sailors took advantage of the expanded opportunities on the northwestern coast and in Alaska.

Following the Civil War the art of building wooden sailing ships was threatened by foreign competition and newer technology. Although some builders of wooden ships were encouraged by technological innovations, Maine’s shipyards could not keep pace with iron and steel steamships being produced in other locations. Thus, some of Frank’s relatives shifted their emphasis from shipbuilding to trade. An enterprising Captain Snow found a new opportunity. He moved to California, where he operated a shipping company that supplied the United States’ newly purchased territory of Alaska with life’s necessities. When Frank was about fifteen years old he left Maine, in 1864 or 1865, with a cousin or uncle, probably on one of the family’s trading ships. He arrived in San Francisco sometime in 1866 or 1867.¹⁹ The trip took more than a year, but once in California Frank most likely met his uncle, Samuel Snow. From there he planned to move to Alaska when he could.

Frank probably began his employment with the Alaska Commercial Company (ACC) while staying in San Francisco, for these were the years the company was organizing.²⁰ The ACC was founded in 1867 by Hayward M. Hutchinson. Hutchinson was originally from the east coast but, like many Americans in the nineteenth century, had moved west in search of economic opportunity. After the transfer of Alaska from Russia to the United States, Hutchinson purchased the remnants of the Russian-American Company. With his business partner, he created Hutchin-

son, Kohl and Company, which was soon thereafter renamed the Alaska Commercial Company.²¹ The ACC secured exclusive rights from the U.S. government to hunt seals in coastal Alaska for a twenty-year period beginning in 1870. The company, though based in San Francisco, would play a dominant role in the underdevelopment of Alaska for the remainder of the century. The company reaped huge profits, but Alaska remained a backwater. A census taken in 1880 showed that only 430 white men lived in the territory.²² Frank was truly a pioneer settler in a frontier area; he had left his home in Maine and a familiar society for something most New Englanders would have considered exotic.

Records are sketchy, but Frank seems to have taken employment on an ACC ship going north to Sitka in 1868, shortly after the Russian-American Company sold out to the ACC. For Frank, the deep waters off Sitka and Kodiak Island, the coastline, and the finger-like fjords of Alaska were similar to the New England coastal waterways, where he had learned to fish and sail. He was one of the first American citizens in Alaska, when the fur trade flourished, before the railroads, before law and order. Frank arrived during the first years of U.S. rule, when there was no political or legal structure. The withdrawal of Russian authority left a void. The ACC quickly established a trading network and provided some services to the people, such as mail delivery and transportation on company steamers. After the U.S. purchase of Alaska in 1867, but before the congressionally appointed government officials arrived in 1884 and the Klondike gold rush of 1897, the territory was ripe for the ACC to exploit the Alaskan Native fur hunters.

Family records and letters show that Frank spent his first year or so in Sitka, the territory's capital.²³ In Sitka, he married a Native woman, probably by the "custom of the country," meaning the customs of the local Natives. When he was twenty-one years old Frank fathered his first child, William (Vasili), born in June 1870, with his first wife, a Native Alaskan whose name is unknown. It is unknown why Frank chose to leave Sitka, what became of his first common-law wife, or where he landed immediately after leaving Sitka. He probably went to Kodiak Island, where he is recorded to have met his second wife, Mary.

Frank and Mary Lowell

Mary Forgal was born in 1855 in English Bay, which is located on the southwestern coast of the Kenai Peninsula, directly across Cook Inlet from Kodiak Island. English Bay was the original site of a Russian trading post first called Fort Alexandrovsk and re-populated by the Russians



When he moved to Alaska in the late 1860s, Frank originally settled in Sitka, located on the Alaska panhandle. He later moved to Kodiak Island, which is where he met his second wife, Mary. From Tappan Adney, *The Klondike Stampede of 1897-1898* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1900), opposite p. 460.

with Alaskan Natives removed from other coastal villages because sea otter hunting was better in this location. Census records indicate that Mary was of mixed Russian and Alutiiq ancestry.²⁴ Mary's mother could have come from any Native village along the Alaskan coast. Her father was likely a Russian fur trader, or possibly a coal miner because the Russians mined coal near her home village. Besides her Native tongue, Sugpiaq, she probably spoke Russian and some English. She was a member of the Russian Orthodox Church.²⁵ Mary's life, begun under Russian rule, changed dramatically when she was a twelve-year-old and the United States purchased Alaska. No records of a formal wedding between Frank and Mary have been found, so they were probably married by local Native customs. Together the couple had nine children, all of whom were baptized in the Russian Orthodox Church. They lived together, off and on, between 1871 and 1895, while he worked between Resurrection Bay and Kodiak Island as an independent fur trader.

As an independent fur trader, Frank had Alaskan Native hunters capture sea otters and seals. Frank then sold the furs to the ACC and paid the hunters and their families in goods ordered through the ACC. Frank was quite a successful fur trader for many years, until the otter and seal populations were hunted to near extinction. Like hundreds of



Mary Lowell's family on the beach at Resurrection Bay. From left: Frank's son William, William's wife and their two children, Mary, Eva, and Alice. Mary and Frank had nine children during their marriage. Courtesy of the Resurrection Bay Historical Society, Alaska.

other Russian, then American, men, he depended on the Alaskan Native people, especially the women who had access to the male hunters and the precious otter and seal fur, the “soft gold” that Americans hoped would make them rich.

Most of the Americans who went to Alaska after the purchase did not stay to make the new territory home. Frank, on the other hand, made his home within the Alaskan Native culture as soon as he arrived in Alaska. Although he depended upon the fur trade to make a living, he eventually built his family home at Resurrection Bay, a fair distance from the heart of the trade. Frank and his family dressed in white-man's clothing, which he ordered regularly through the Alaska Commercial Company. He did business in the white-man's world, but his home life was always within the Alaskan Native communities. He depended upon Native hunters, likely his wives' relatives, to bring in the furs he sold for goods the family used. This was an extremely successful enterprise until the fur trade began to collapse because of declining otter and seal populations.

Frank, Mary, and their children left Kodiak Island in 1883, shortly after the eruption of Mt. Augustine, a volcano located on the Alaska



Eva, one of the daughters of Frank and Mary Lowell, pictured here on the front porch of the family cabin, circa 1902. She remained in contact with her father even after he left her mother. Courtesy of the Resurrection Bay Historical Society, Alaska.

Peninsula just west of Kodiak. The eruption had spewed ash over the entire area of Kodiak Island and the coastal villages. Little is known about Frank and Mary's early years together, until they relocated from Kodiak Island to the shores of Resurrection Bay in 1883, less than a day's sail from her home village and the Kodiak Island offices of the ACC. Frank and his sons, along with some of Mary's relatives who were living nearby, built a large family compound with outbuildings on their land on Resurrection Bay.²⁶ The location of his new home allowed Frank to continue his fur harvest and to easily obtain modern supplies from the ACC on Kodiak Island.²⁷ The area on Resurrection Bay where Frank built their home would eventually become the city of Seward (founded in 1903) and the headquarters for Kenai Fjords National Park (in 1980).

Mary, Frank's second Alaskan Native wife, bore him sons to continue and expand his network of trade.²⁸ Like many of her contemporaries, Mary was the mother to a new generation of children with a cultural inheritance that combined Native Alaskan, Russian, and Anglo-American influences. All evidence leads to the assumption that Frank and Mary Lowell's marriage was one of convenience. By 1879, Congress decreed

that only Alaskan Natives, or whites with Native wives, had the legal right to hunt animals for furs.²⁹ Frank's marriage to an Alaskan Native woman gave him ready access to male Natives who could hunt for furs. Only the Natives could catch the fur-bearing animals, as neither the Russians nor the Americans had the skills to paddle the kayaks and capture the animals. The Native women were an important link between white American settlers and Native society. The fact that there were few white women in Alaska probably also pushed Frank into successive relationships with Native women. Mary also benefitted from their marriage. Under Russian rule, the Creole population, those of mixed Native and European blood, had certain privileges. After the U.S. purchase of Alaska, mixed-race Alaskans lost this special status.³⁰ Frank would have offered Mary security and access to a steady supply of American goods. Mary, like so many other Native women, continued the long tradition of marrying the fur traders, once Russian, now American.

Native women often straddled two cultures and provided the supplies and services fur traders needed for survival. Native wives were relied upon as part of the labor force.³¹ There were many fur trading commuters, men who came and went from fur-trading centers. These men often maintained families in both their home town and in the fur trade center, although the Native families were usually abandoned when the white men returned home permanently. Some white men, like Frank, made a home within Native society and married Native women. Either way, relationships between white men and Native women have been common throughout North American history. Children fathered with Native partners in most cases remained with their Native families.³²

From the early years of European colonization through the later U.S. westward expansion, white men took Native women as wives or mistresses as a way of becoming connected with the Native people upon whom they most often depended for survival in a new land.³³ Thus, the marriage of an Anglo-American from Maine, Frank Lowell, and a Native woman from Alaska, Mary Forgal, was not unusual in the long history of native-Euro-American relations. Such relationships were most common during the initial phase of contact and white settlement. Thus, despite a hardening of racial attitudes in late nineteenth-century America and the presence of anti-miscegenation laws in many states, Frank had long-term relationships with Native women in Alaska. America's newest northwestern possession was still a frontier region during Frank's life and this allowed for such unions to form.

Frank's personal relationship with his extended Alaskan family and

his many children is all but impossible to assess. There is only one written record of any comment that he made about his family. In a short note he wrote to a colleague, he mentioned that while he was away for an extended time, his family at home on Resurrection Bay was fine and that they had provisions for the next eighteen months.³⁴ He apparently was often away from Resurrection Bay for long periods during which Mary and the children fended for themselves. What he might have thought about this or events such as the death of infant children is not known. Only Frank's business correspondence has survived to this day.

One of Frank and Mary's children, Eva, was particularly responsible for maintaining knowledge about the family. She kept in contact with her father's New England cousins, Eva Ham Snow and Ada Manson. Family was everything to Eva. This is evident in her letters to her father, which were full of Alaskan family news and news from her correspondence with the Maine family. Eva Lowell was born in September 1885 and the only Lowell family member remaining on Resurrection Bay according to the 1910 census.³⁵ After the death of her mother in 1906, and her brother Edwin in 1907, her two sisters married and moved away. Her oldest brother, William, a half-brother, lost his home on Resurrection Bay and his four children to the Kodiak Baptist Orphanage after his wife and another daughter died during an epidemic in 1907-8 that swept the area.

Eva was bed-bound with a sick child of her own when William's wife and young daughter became ill. Eva poured out this story in a letter to her father, who was working on a distant fox farm for the Alaska Commercial Company. Eva was recovering from this illness and struggling to keep her own children at home as sickness threatened. Although Frank had left her mother when Eva was quite young, he sent supplies and goods ordered through the ACC. She felt a strong connection to him and implored him to come visit her. Eva was drawn not only to her father, but also to his Maine relatives. This was, after all, a time when Alaskan Natives were expected to shun their own culture, stop speaking their native tongue, and become "proper" American citizens.

Eva corresponded with her father, but we only have snippets of information regarding their relationship. In the summer 1906, Eva met the pioneer school teacher Hannah Breece, who had been sent to Alaska by the Department of the Interior in 1904. During their visit, Eva told Hannah that she had recently heard from her father, and that he was either in Karluck or somewhere on Kodiak Island.³⁶ In a June 1908 letter to her father, she told him that she had found some of his "folk" in Maine, and that his cousin, Eva Ham Snow, wrote to her every month and sent her a



Three of Frank's grandchildren. Their father was William Lowell, Frank's first-born child. Mary, the eldest, died in 1906. Alexandra and John were sent to the Kodiak Baptist Orphanage when their mother died in 1907. Courtesy of the Resurrection Bay Historical Society, Alaska.

family photo. She told her father that they ask about him and noted that his uncle, Captain Snow, had recently been to Seward, but she was too ill to visit with him.³⁷ She also reminded her father that "you must remember I am the only child you got [who] think[s] of you very much so that is the reason I always ask you to come over to see me."³⁸

New Employment and a New Family for Frank

Eventually, when the fur trade faded Frank returned to employment with the ACC. In 1892, he left his family at their home on Resurrection Bay to manage the Wrangel trading station on the Alaska Peninsula. The Wrangel station was located at the base of Chiginagak Mountain on Chiginagak Bay, where there was an Alaskan Native village. In his new position he managed groups of Alaskan Native hunters who brought in fur for the ACC, kept company records, and ordered supplies. According to local Seward historian Mary Barry, Frank and Mary were divorced

some time before August 1895, which was when he married another woman.³⁹ After leaving Mary and their family on Resurrection Bay, he married twenty-year-old Aakilina Koshon, another Alaskan Native woman. Frank was forty-five-years-old. Aakilina was the daughter of Iliia Koshon, chief of the Aleuts on the Alaska Peninsula. Russian Orthodox records show that theirs was a Christian ceremony and Frank listed this as his “first marriage.”⁴⁰ The couple had four children: Anna (b. 1898), Emma (b. 1901), John (b.1905), and Arthur (b.1907). Aakilina apparently died between the birth of Arthur and the census of 1910 because her name disappears from all records. Frank and his new family lived in the Native village near the Wrangel station.⁴¹ An epidemic, perhaps measles, killed most of the people in the village in 1908; afterward the entire village was burned.⁴² Aakilina possibly died during this epidemic, though no record of her death has been found.

The Wrangel outpost closed in 1900, so Frank sought new employment.⁴³ By June 1903 Frank had signed a three-year contract with the Semidi Propagating Company, a subsidiary of the Alaska Commercial Company, to manage a fox farm on South Semidi Island. The terms of the contract required him to care for foxes and other stock; do all manual labor that the manager may direct; give his whole time, attention, and capacity to the business; and to do no labor or trading for his own profit. Frank signed this contract, which offered him a \$2,500 salary for three years of service.⁴⁴ This was a total three-year salary; the word *annually* was crossed off. After this contract was signed, Frank Lowell disappears from any records yet found, except for his obituary, which was published in a local newspaper in August 1923.⁴⁵ When Frank died on July 5, 1923, he was living with his daughter (from his third marriage), Anna Benson.⁴⁶

There are a few Lowell family graves in the Woodlawn cemetery in Seward, but otherwise there is little evidence of Frank’s family there today.⁴⁷ There are several natural and man-made features that carry the family names surrounding the sprawling city of Seward, land that was once their homestead. Lowell Road leads one along the shoreline of Resurrection Bay, south to the tiny town of Lowell Point, where Frank and his sons maintained a hunting camp. High in the Harding Icefield, Lowell Glacier stands among the frozen peaks, and Mount Alice, wild and home to numerous animal species, stands directly across from the town of Seward. Often in the pre-dawn hours of frigid winter nights the northern lights can be seen hovering over Mount Alice and dancing across Resurrection Bay.



Frank and Mary's cabin on Resurrection Bay about 1902, after Frank had moved to the Alaska Peninsula and had remarried. Courtesy of the Resurrection Bay Historical Society, Alaska.

What brought men like Frank Lowell from the comforts of New England civilization to the harshness of the Alaska wilderness? Perhaps it was the search for riches, a desire to escape the pressures of a stifling society, or an inner longing for adventure. There were practical reasons besides the lust for adventure that drew men from Maine, like Frank Lowell, his uncle Samuel Snow, and other relatives, to the Pacific coast. In the mid-nineteenth century, seafaring offered an attractive career for any ambitious young man, especially those with at least an elementary education. After the U.S. purchase of Alaska in 1867 most goods that entered Alaska came through San Francisco in ships built and crewed from the east coast. Whatever the reason Frank Lowell left West Bath, Maine, to make his home in Alaska, there never seemed to be a reason for him to return.

The search for what brought men to Alaska is also the study of their relationships with the Native people on whom they often depended for

the success of their adventure or even for their survival. Today, the descendants of white-Native unions search for their ancestral heritage and often uncover both white and Native families fathered by the same fur trader, explorer, or adventurer. Currently Alaskan Native people, especially women who have always bridged white and Native cultures, are reclaiming their history through archeology, piecing together their past, and rediscovering their languages, dances, and traditions. Because Frank was related to the famous New England Lowell family, the stories of his three Alaska families can be pieced together. Unfortunately, the lives and stories of many other Alaskan Native women who married white fur traders have been lost or forgotten.⁴⁸

Frank exemplified the boundless spirit of nineteenth-century America and took advantage of America's indomitable westward march across the continent to make a new life for himself far from his birthplace in Maine. But his life story is not just the story of his move from Maine to Alaska. It is also the story of his relationships with Native Alaskan women from the 1870s to the 1920s. Frank's three marriages to Native women demonstrate that racial mores were not universal throughout the United States and its possessions during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. Although much of the country shunned interracial relationships during this period, life in territorial Alaska was quite different from the more-settled regions of the United States. Alaska was still a great frontier and, like other colonial frontier settings, the boundaries and mores concerning race were fluid.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), pp. 92-132.

2. In the 1860s, only five states had laws banning "miscegenation," or interracial marriage. By 1924, the year after Frank died, thirty-eight states had miscegenation laws. The laws changed over time in various states, but at least forty-one states at some point had laws banning interracial marriage. See Barbara C. Cruz and Michael J. Berson, "The American Melting Pot?: Miscegenation Laws in the United States," *OAH Magazine of History* 15, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 81; Peggy Pascoe, "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of 'Race' in Twentieth-Century America," *Journal of American History* 83, no. 1 (June 1996): 49-50; Roger D. Hardaway, "Race, Sex, and Law: Miscegenation in Tennessee," *Journal of East Tennessee History* 74 (2002): 24.

3. Delmar R. Lowell, *The Historic Genealogy of the Lowells of America, From 1639-1899* (Rutland, VT: The Tuttle Company Printers, 1899), pp. 121, 386-388.

4. William C. Purington, *A Look Into West Bath's Past* (unpublished pamphlet, 1976).

5. Vital Statistics taken from Maine Historical and Genealogical Recorder, #485; hand written statistics recorded in journals, Journal of Vital Status, Bath, Maine, for 1848, Pat-ten Free Library, Bath, Maine.
6. William Avery Baker, *A Maritime History of Bath, Maine and the Kennebec River Re-gion*, Vol. I (Bath, ME: The Research Society of Bath, 1973), p. 190.
7. Lowell, *Historic Genealogy of the Lowells*, p. 388; Henry Wilson Owen, *The Edward Clarence Plummer History of Bath Maine* (New England History Press: Bath Bicentennial Committee, 1976), p. 199.
8. U.S. Census, 1860, West Bath, Maine; U.S. Census, 1900, Resurrection Bay, Alaska. The 1860 census lists Frank as living in the household of Robert P. Manson, Jr., shipbuilder.
9. Purington, *A Look Into West Bath's Past*.
10. Baker, *A Maritime History of Bath*, 2:841-843
11. Ship Masters Card File, Maine Maritime Museum (MMM), Bath, Maine. These files list the builders, owners, and captains of ships, built and launched from Bath's shipyards.
12. *American Sentinel* (Bath), June 26, 1873, p. 3.
13. Records from the Oak Grove Cemetery, Bath, Maine. Lot owner George F. Manson and Robert P. Manson, lots 39 and 40.
14. Claus-M. Naske and Herman E. Slotnick, *Alaska: A History of the 49th State* (Nor-man: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), p. 36.
15. Lydia T. Black, *Russians in Alaska 1732-1867* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2004), pp. 39, 59, 107, 123, 199.
16. Michael Oleksa, "The Russian Orthodox Inheritance in Alaska," *Alaska Geographic: Russian America* 26, no. 4 (1999): 50-58; quotation is from Black, *Russians in Alaska*, p. 230.
17. Lowell, *Historic Genealogy of the Lowells*, p. 388; Ship Masters Card Files, MMM.
18. Richard E. Welch, Jr., "American Public Opinion and the Purchase of Russian Amer-ica," in Stephen W. Haycox and Mary Childers Mangusso, eds., *An Alaska Anthology: In-terpreting the Past* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), p. 107.
19. Mary J. Barry, *History of Seward, vol. 1: Prehistory to 1914* (Anchorage: M.J.P. Barry, 1986), p. 377.
20. Mary J. Barry, *Seward, Alaska: History of the Gateway City, vol. 3: 1924 – 1993, Growth, Tragedy, Recovery, Adaptation* (Anchorage: M.J.P. Barry, 1995), p. 377; Molly Lee, "The Alaska Commercial Company: The Formative Years," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 89, no. 2 (1998): 59-64.
21. Stephen Haycox, *Alaska: An American Colony* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), pp. 176-177.
22. Naske and Slotnick, *Alaska: A History*, p. 68.
23. Barry, *History of Seward*, 3:377-378.
24. Barry, *History of Seward*, 3:377; U.S. Census, 1890, Resurrection Bay, Alaska; U.S. Census, 1900, Resurrection Bay, Alaska; Frank Lowell to Max Cohen, Alaska Commercial

Company (ACC) Records, Box 10, folder 116, Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks (hereafter UAF).

25. *Seward Daily Gateway*, May 25, 1906. As noted in her obituary, when Mary Lowell died in Seward, Alaska, in 1906 she was given a full Russian Orthodox funeral.

26. Robert P. Porter, *Report on Population and Resources of Alaska* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1894), p. 68.

27. Alaska Commercial Company records show that Frank Lowell regularly ordered tobacco, shoes, clothing, flour, salt, sugar, hairbrushes, and other supplies from the company and paid for them with furs. See ACC Records, Box 10, folder 115 and Box 8, folders 94 & 95, Archives, UAF.

28. U.S. Census, 1890, Resurrection Bay, Alaska. The census for Resurrection Bay discussed the stalwart boys of Frank Lowell who helped in fishing and trapping. There was no mention of any female children.

29. Linda Cook and Frank Norris, *A Stern and Rock-Bound Coast: Kenai Fjords National Park Historic Resource Study* (Anchorage: National Park Service, 1998), p. 66.

30. Stephen Haycox, *Frigid Empress: Politics, Economics, and Environment in Alaska* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2002), p. 51.

31. Patricia Partnow, *Making History: Alutiiq/Sugpiaq Life on the Alaska Peninsula* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2002), p. 53.

32. Laura Peers, "Fur Trade History, Native History, Public History: Communications and Miscommunication" in Jo-Anne Fiske, Susan Sleeper-Smith, and William Wicken, eds., *New Faces of the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the Seventh North American Fur Trade Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1995* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998). Peers reminds us that the history we know has been told from the white man's perspective and only what they are comfortable telling.

33. On this topic see, for example, Bethany Ruth Berger, "After Pocahontas: Indian Women and the Law, 1830 to 1934," *American Indian Law Review* 21, no. 1 (1997): 22-28.

34. Frank Lowell letter, April 25, 1892, Incoming Letters, Box 10, folder 116, ACC Records, Archives, UAF.

35. U.S. Census, 1900, Resurrection Bay, Alaska.

36. Jane Jacobs, *A Schoolteacher in Old Alaska: The Story of Hannah Breece* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), pp. 58-59.

37. Eva Lowell to Frank Lowell, June 18, 1908, ACC records, box 118, folder 107, Archives, UAF.

38. Eva Lowell to Frank Lowell, June 18, 1908, ACC records, box 118, folder 107, Archives, UAF.

39. Barry, *Seward Alaska*, 1:26.

40. Index to Baptisms, Marriages, Deaths of Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic church in Alaska, 1890-1899, Kodiak Parish vital statistics, 1895, o. 25 (mf 139 reel 386).

41. Patrica Partnow, *Making History*, p. 213.

42. Patrica Partnow, *Making History*, p. 215.

43. Letters Incoming from Wrangle, Box 119, Folder 1099, ACC Records, Archives, UAF.
44. "Contract for Service," with the Semidi Propagating Company, June 8, 1903, ACC Records, Box 8, Folder 1703, Archives, UAF.
45. *Seward Daily Gateway*, August 4, 1925, p. 4.
46. Anna married John Benson, who was a partner with her father in a fox farm business. At the time of his death, his sons from his third marriage, Arthur and John, were attending the Indian boarding school at Chenewa, Oregon.
47. When the city of Seward developed the site where the Lowell cabin once stood Mary Lowell's body was moved to the Woodlawn Cemetery along with her daughter-in-law, her son Edwin, and Frank's son Arthur, who died in 1937 in Seward. Eva Lowell's two children, Rita and Frank, Jr., corresponded with local Seward historian Pat Williams in the mid-1970s during her effort to record the Lowell family history. These letters are held in the collections of the Seward History Museum in Seward, Alaska.
48. At Kenai Fjords National Park, archeological work has been conducted to unearth the foundations of the original cabin. Research has also been done to document their time spent on Resurrection Bay. Currently the park is in the planning and design phase of constructing a new visitor center that will be named the Mary Lowell Center.