

# Competition for Cultural Images

Fisherman versus Logger in Southeast Alaska

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*ABSTRACT* The literature dealing with conflicts among user-groups in the coastal zone usually focuses on competition over marine resources or territorial use rights. Occasionally, however, competition is for a more subtle prize. With the rise of tourism in Alaska, the old competition between fishermen and loggers for social preeminence has taken new forms. Which occupational group best symbolizes the 'frontier' history and spirit of Southeast Alaska, at least which is the better advertising image? The struggle for cultural dominance reaches its crescendo each Fourth of July, when towns sponsor public logging contests with no comparable forum for fishermen. The paper discusses the role each occupational group plays in town life, focusing especially on the symbolic messages conveyed in the Fourth of July celebrations. [Southeast Alaska, occupational cultures, symbolic conflict, tourism.]

In the popular imagination, Alaska is America's last frontier. It conjures a complex image of anachronism, nostalgia, ruggedness, vitality, naturalness, adventure, and individualism. Residents of the 'lower 48' states tend to regard someone who has been to Alaska in a very different way than a person who has traveled, for example, to Europe, the Caribbean, or Hawaii. Whereas European travel signifies *savoir faire* and financial wherewithal, Alaska connotes intrepidity and strength of character.

The image is not altogether lost on residents of Alaska, either. Although most of the non-Native population lives in cities with indoor plumbing, public sewage and power, paved streets, network news, and the full complement of modern amenities, a friendly frontier ambiance permeates social life. While few have actually shot a bear, skinned a moose, driven a dog team, or panned for gold, people who have done such things live nearby, and at least the opportunity is close at hand.

Not surprisingly given the geographical size and diversity, different regions of the state support different versions of the general Alaskan image. The northern and central portions give rise to the 'frozen North' image, with dog sleds, frigid winter temperatures, midnight sun, and so forth. In stark contrast, the southeastern region is a rainforest with mean annual temperatures warmer than central Illinois. Geographically and culturally, Southeast Alaska resembles Oregon and Washington, with fishing and logging being the principal colorful occupations.

Just as there are different 'Alaskas,' so, too, the culture of the southeastern region is not a simple melody sung in unison, but rather a polyphony of voices. Southeast Alaska is home for a number of peoples,<sup>1</sup> and ethnicity is a prominent aspect of social relations. Yet, one's ethnic heritage is but one among many

important social identities. There are other cleavage planes in Southeast Alaskan life that cross-cut ethnic distinctions.

This paper is about the competition between two occupational groups – fishermen and loggers – for cultural dominance in Southeast Alaska. Both groups exploit renewable resources and thereby provide a stabilizing influence on Alaska's historic boom-or-bust economic cycle. Both industries have figured prominently in long range plans for economic development of the state. And, both are predominantly male occupations that involve physical isolation from centers of population. With the rise of tourism and a larger neutral audience, the historic rivalry between the two occupational groups has only increased.

The competition for cultural images is rooted in Southeast Alaska's regional economy, so the first section provides a review of trends in the targeted industries. The second section describes the town of Ketchikan, Alaska, one of the places where fishermen and loggers meet and compete with one another. The third section compares and contrasts fishing and logging as occupational cultures. Finally, I analyze the annual Fourth of July celebrations as a form of symbolic conflict, a conflict aggravated by the increasing self-consciousness of these two groups as tourist attractions.

### Regional Perspective on Southeast Alaska

Southeast Alaska is a land of blues and greens and grays. In sunshine, the spectrum is about equally divided into blues (the sky and ocean) and greens (the forests). Most of the time, however, the cloud cover and drizzly rain transform everything into varying shades of gray.

The coastline is formed by mountains shooting up to heights of several thousand feet, enveloped most of the way in a cloak of evergreen trees, and numerous small streams cascade down to the ocean. From a passing boat the forest appears inviting, but hikers soon find the terrain a formidable challenge. What looks like solid ground is just as often decaying vegetation, and it takes several months to learn to walk in the woods of Tongass National Forest. The difficulty of overland travel coupled with the omnipresent rain and slate-colored skies contribute to an overall feeling of isolation and closeness.

Indigenous peoples used the forest resources to fashion elaborate plank houses, sea-going canoes, and totem poles. The abundance of salmon supported a dense aboriginal population and a comfortable subsistence economy. With the arrival of the White Man, however, these same natural resources, along with precious minerals, gave rise to large-scale and somewhat colonial industries.

Attracted initially by gold strikes and seasonal work in the salmon fishery, the influx of non-Native peoples has resulted in a substantial population increase in Southeast Alaska during this century (see Table 1). Especially since statehood in 1959, the demographic profile is increasingly losing its frontier characteristics, i.e., the sex ratio is becoming more balanced and the age distribution has greater variance. Today, approximately half the region's population live in two smallish cities: Juneau, in the north, and Ketchikan, in the south.

Table 1. *Population Figures, 1900-1980*

Census	Total in Southeast	Ketchikan Borough
1900	14,350	2,170
1910	15,216	3,520
1920	17,402	5,670
1929	19,304	6,781
1939	25,241	8,226
1950	28,203	9,485
1960	35,403	10,070
1970	42,565	10,041
1980	53,794	11,316

*Note:* Data for 1960, 1970, and 1980 are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Characteristics of the Population*; other years are from Rogers (1960:358-67). The area included in 'Ketchikan' before 1970 was somewhat larger than what is now included in the Gateway Borough.

Prior to World War II, the primary industries in Southeast Alaska were, in rough order of importance, fishing, minerals, and logging (Rogers 1960:71-124). Today, the region's mineral industry is all but defunct, although sand-and-gravel production totaled \$2.28 million in 1985 (Anonymous 1985:32). Fishing and logging continue to be mainstays of the region's economy, but both have a history of cyclic ebb-and-flow.

Salmon fishing reached its peak production during the 1920s and 1930s. Over-exploitation resulted in dwindling harvests from the 1940s onwards, prompting Rogers in his 1960 assessment of the region's economy to call fishing a "fading future" (Rogers 1960:93). With stringent regulatory schemes in force the past two decades, recent catches are increasing, but the maximum sustainable yield is likely to be well below the peak production years (see Table 2).

One of the major changes in Southeast Alaska's salmon fisheries occurred as regulatory control passed from federal to state jurisdiction. Company owned fish traps, which caught up to 70% of the salmon in a season, had become symbolic of the rampant absentee capitalism that drained away Alaska's resources with little or no return to residents (Rogers 1960:12). Preparing the way for statehood, the Secretary of the Interior declared fish traps illegal in 1959. Since then, salmon are harvested only by purse seines, gillnets, and hook-and-line.

In comparison with fishing, logging got off to a slow start in the region. Prior to 1954, the volume of timber cut was very small – ranging from 20 to 70 million board feet per year – and it was used mainly for local construction, such as docks, fish traps, and houses. In 1954, however, \$52.5 million of outside capital built Ketchikan Pulp Company, and the U.S. Forest Service entered into a series of large-scale timber sales to facilitate the development of an export industry. Logging operations to supply this new pulp market began in earnest, and timber

Table 2. Ten-Year Annual Averages of Salmon Catch in Southeast Alaska

Period	Number of Salmon Caught
1905-14	19,857,000
1915-24	40,720,000
1925-34	35,385,000
1935-44	39,242,000
1945-54	24,710,000
1955-64	15,571,000
1965-74	15,166,000
1975-84	21,558,000

Note: Data to 1954 are from Rogers (1960:96); 1955-1959 are from U.S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, *Statistical Digest* No. 50, 1960; 1960-1984 are from Alaska Department of Fish and Game worksheets and reports.

production jumped to around 190 million board feet in just a couple of years (Rogers 1960:74-75).

In 1971, as part of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, Native corporations regained ownership of approximately 464,000 acres of forest lands in Southeast Alaska. Because timber harvested on these lands is not subject to the primary manufacturing requirement of the U.S. Forest Service, the Native corporations have been able to develop an export business in round logs (unsawed, unpulped trees) with Japan (Anonymous 1986a:7). In general terms, however, the logging industry is slacking off in recent years (see Tables 3 and 4), as a result of international competition (Anonymous 1986b:10).

From a regional economy perspective, logging and its related processing industries provide more benefits than fishing because there is a greater return to resident labor (Tuck & Huskey 1986). Loggers work most of the year, and the pulp and sawmills hire workers year round. By contrast, the seasonality of the

Table 3. Timber Harvests in Southeast Alaska by Major Ownership (Million Board Feet, log scale)

Owner/Agency	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Tongass National Forest	452	386	345	251	250	265
State of Alaska	5	5	6	6	5	3
Native Corporations	70	122	209	232	202	263
BIA/Annette Island	15	3	3	3	1	1
TOTAL	542	516	563	492	458	532

Note: From Anonymous (1986a:10).

Table 4. Forestry and Related Industry Employment, Wages, and Export Value, 1980-1985

Year	Annual Average Employment	Annual Total Wages	Wages Per Employee	Total Export Value
1980	3,556	\$112,565,284	\$31,655	\$339,474,000
1981	3,192	\$103,749,116	\$32,503	\$278,278,000
1982	2,924	\$ 97,567,622	\$33,368	\$277,593,000
1983	2,632	\$ 93,816,570	\$35,645	\$272,954,000
1984	2,354	\$ 82,863,447	\$35,201	\$219,034,000
1985	2,300	\$ 86,000,000	\$37,400	\$215,138,000

Note: From Anonymous (1986a:17-18). Figures reflect statewide statistics, but virtually all exports are from the Southeast Region.

salmon runs creates a demand for short-term, migrant labor both in terms of manning the boats and working in the canneries. Thus, although the value produced from fishing generally exceeds that from forest products, a higher proportion of fishing revenues is siphoned away to non-resident companies and laborers.

From the viewpoint of Native peoples, however, fishing is generally better than logging. Northwest Coast Indians have exploited and depended upon marine resources for several millennia, and fishing, even in today's industrialized commercial fisheries, provides a certain continuity with indigenous culture patterns. By contrast, logging is clearly White Man's work. Thus, although the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act restored ownership of forest lands to Native corporations, making it possible for indigenous peoples to gain from logging activities, few actually work as loggers (an exception is the village of Klukwan)<sup>2</sup>.

The last major industry in Southeast Alaska is a relative newcomer: tourism. Records for this emerging industry - e.g., the number of out-of-state visitors, their expenditures, and jobs created - are not as good as for other industries, but statewide tourism is clearly gaining in importance (see Table 5).

In summary, the principal industries in Southeast Alaska today, in order of dollar value, are fishing, tourism, and logging. Unlike the early and now faded mineral industry, all three exploit renewable resources. Of the three, tourism offers the best chance of continued growth, increasing at an annual rate of approximately 7% (Anonymous 1986b:35). While fish and timber production are constrained by natural replenishment rates, the growth potential of Alaskan tourism is relatively unbounded and the industry is still in its infancy.

The serendipitous aspect of this triadic economic structure is that tourism can actually build on the other two. As an activity, tourism often has complex motivations, and researchers increasingly emphasize that tourist behavior can only be understood in terms of "how it relates to the individual's long-term psychological needs and life-plans" (Cohen 1984:377). In addition to the short-term

Table 5. *Non-Resident Tourism Statistics, 1980-1986*

Year	Number of Visitors	Total Sales to Tourists	Primary Industry Employment
1980	570,600	\$360,400,000	7,925
1981	596,300	\$416,200,000	8,280
1982	623,100	\$480,700,000	8,900
1983	646,000	\$551,700,000	9,160
1984	672,000	\$620,000,000	9,875
1985	700,000	\$659,400,000	10,565
1986	787,000	\$700,000,000	n.a.

*Note:* From Anonymous (1986b:30-31 with corrections). In 1979, 1983, and 1986, actual surveys were conducted; other years are estimates. Figures reflect statewide tourism.

quest for recreation, tourists often view their sojourns to distant places as a search for "authentic experiences" that, owing to the alienation of modern life, are thought to be elsewhere (MacCannell 1976:3). The occupational cultures of fishing and logging in Southeast Alaska exude just the sort of unreflexive, uncomplicated, genuine qualities that urban tourists find appealing. Thus, fishing and logging are not only productive in their own rights, but by contributing to the distinctive cultural ambiance of Southeast Alaska – its 'authenticity' – they help attract tourists to the region. As colorful forms of production, they, along with the region's natural beauty and indigenous peoples, contribute to the growing tourist industry. Both fishermen and loggers are aware of this, at least subliminally.

### Portrait of a Town: Ketchikan, Alaska

Ketchikan, at the southern end of Alaska's southeastern panhandle, is one of the towns where fishermen, loggers, and tourists meet. It stretches along the western edge of Revillagigedo Island for about three miles, overlooked by snow-topped Deer Mountain rising up three thousand feet from the sea. At the northern edge of town is the Alaska Marine Ferry dock, just across Tongass Narrows from the modern jet airport. Cruise ships dock near the center of town about two and a quarter miles south, and small seaplanes land and take off almost constantly amidst a variety of fishing and pleasure boats. The number of cars is surprising given that the highway only goes about thirty or so miles around the island then just stops.

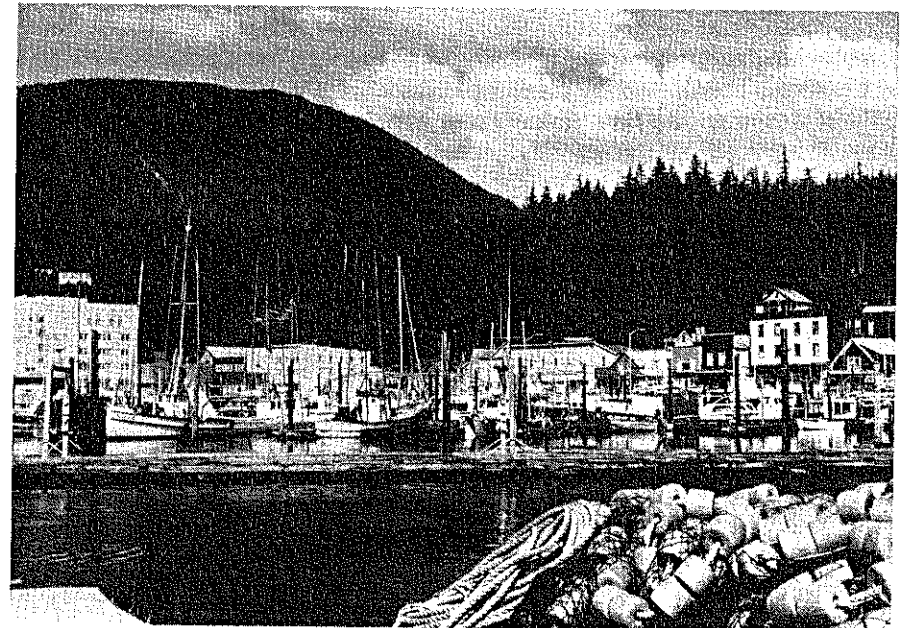
In the 1930s, during the heydays of fish production, Ketchikan was billed as 'Salmon Capitol of the World.' Today, it is billed as 'Alaska's First City,' meaning the first one people encounter when traveling up from Seattle and the lower 48 states. Tourist shops, selling 'Indian bracelets,' soapstone carvings, miniature totem poles, fur coats, and Kodak film, line the city's central dock and down-

town area. The forty to fifty bars provide haven from the rain and recreation for fishermen and loggers as well as the occasional tourist.

The town is more than just a watering hole for transients, however. It is a regional center of retail businesses, banks, schools, hospitals, and government agencies. Townspeople play in summer softball leagues, go to movies, watch television, and buy their groceries in modern supermarkets just like residents in any other American town. In all, Ketchikan feels like a very compact, bustling city. There is a lot of movement, a lot of coming and going for an urban center of only 7,000-11,000 people, especially during the summer months when the population swells with seasonal workers following the migrating salmon back to Alaska.

Coming from a small town in the Midwest, I was struck by the easy acceptance of transients, particularly the fishermen and loggers, and the firm place they have in rhythm of Ketchikan life. Although relatively few fishermen or loggers actually live in Ketchikan, they are an integral part of the town's self-image, as evidenced by the following quote from a Chamber of Commerce tourist brochure.

Ketchikan is a haven for suburbanized visitors who want to bask in the 'real' Alaska. ... Mingle with down-to-earth Alaska types such as fishermen, miners, and loggers at a rinky-tink bar, rub shoulders with a celebrity viewing Alaskan artifacts at Ketchikan's modern museum (Anonymous n.d.).



*Fishing boats figure prominently in visitor's first views of Ketchikan*

Perhaps the most significant categorization of people in Ketchikan is one based on their diurnal habits, that is, the distinction between 'day' people and 'night' people. Day people typically get up early, go to work, come home, and are asleep by 11 o'clock. They tend to be respectable, solid citizen types, very likely with families. By contrast, night people may or may not be working, but if they are, it is likely to be in jobs having alternating shifts (such as the pulp mill), geared toward entertainment, or episodic such as fishing, logging, or construction. The favorite pastime of night people is 'partying,' which means getting drunk and chasing members of the opposite sex.

The transition of the town from day to night folks occurs about 5:00 to 9:00 p.m., which is still broad daylight in the summer. During this time, day people leave their shops and offices, go home to eat dinner, and relax in front of their television sets or chat with spouses and children. Night folks leave their boat, hotel, apartment, or boarding house, eat at a restaurant, and begin cruising the downtown streets where they run into friends and acquaintances and plan their activities for the evening.

This, then, is the general context or locale in which fishermen and loggers encounter one another. The two groups show some remarkable similarities as well as differences in their use of and orientation toward the town.

### Fishing and Logging as Occupational Cultures

The salmon runs around Ketchikan last roughly four months, starting in June or July and ending in October. Salmon are caught by three principal means - seining, gillnetting, and trolling - each with its own lifestyle and work cadence.

Gillnetting and trolling can be done from relatively small boats (25-45 feet) by one or two people, and the associated deck work is not too demanding physically. It is common to find husband and wife teams running trollers and gillnetters. Seining, however, requires crews of five or six, and the boats are about 55 feet long. Although several women work as cooks on seine boats, there are few female deckhands.

Both gillnetting and seining involve fairly short trips. Gillnetters generally return to port after each fishing day to unload their catches. Seine boats stay out a bit longer. Usually, they leave port a day or two before legal fishing periods (which are determined by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game), unload their catches each evening during the opening to company tender boats, and return to port only when the opening is over (see Gatewood 1984). Thus, seiners usually stay out on the water less than a week at a time and sometimes only a couple of days. By contrast, trollers stay out a couple of weeks before coming back to port to unload their iced fish, to fill their fresh water tanks, and to buy groceries and fuel.

In terms of work pace, seining is psychologically intense, hectic, and dangerous and puts a premium on well-coordinated social labor. By contrast, gillnetting and trolling are leisurely and 'laid back' forms of fishing.

For a variety of reasons (Gatewood 1989), seining is higher in the local prestige

ranking than either gillnetting or trolling. Seining is regarded as 'real fishing' (Houshower 1982, indicates that gillnetters, also, accept this view), and it engenders a pronounced 'hard work, hard play' ethos with strong in-group loyalties. Also, the labor requirements of seining attract a large number of seasonal workers to Alaska, i.e., seining draws on a large non-resident population who tend to view their work as a personal adventure. Seiners constitute the most outspoken, visible, and prideful group of fishermen, and they dominate the night spots of Ketchikan when the fleet is in port.

Irrespective of the differences in gear types, virtually all commercial fishing takes place several miles from town, far from the view of townspeople and tourists. Thus, although the visual aspects of fishermen, their boats, and gear are quite familiar and figure prominently in photographs of the town, few townspeople and almost no tourists have seen fishermen plying their skills or understand what fishing really entails. In consequence, the public image of fishermen is based on their town behavior, which consists of mending gear during the day and heavy drinking and general rowdiness at night.

Seine crews, in particular, tend toward flamboyance and attention-getting public behaviors. Bars provide the social forum for developing both intra-crew solidarity and inter-crew prestige rankings. Crews tend to drink together, often competing with others in ostentatious spending. Nearly every tavern in Ketchikan has a bell prominently positioned near the bar. When someone rings the bell, it means he or she is buying a round of drinks for everyone there, which depending on the time of night may easily cost a couple of hundred dollars. Nonetheless, drunken seiners stagger up and ring the bell rather frequently,<sup>3</sup> in this way demonstrating their otherwise invisible fishing prowess and laying claim to diffuse bragging rights.

Like seining, logging is a dangerous and physically demanding activity accomplished by people working together, and it fosters strong in-group loyalties. Unlike fishermen, however, who receive shares of their boat's catch, loggers work for wages, and different jobs receive differential pay. Most importantly, loggers live in rather remote camps close to the stands of timber being cut. This physical isolation is one of the biggest drawbacks from most people's viewpoint, because the camps offer little variety to work, work, and more work. Nonetheless, those who manage to stay in the camps and keep working day after day can accumulate considerable amounts of money with virtually no expenses.

Some loggers take their families out to the camps, but many leave their wives and children in Ketchikan or even in Washington and Oregon. In any event, logging camps have little to offer single men in the way of female companionship. Similarly, drinking in the camps, although permitted, is somewhat frowned upon because hang-overs only increase the risk of accidents on the job. As the claustrophobia of logging camps becomes increasingly oppressive, loggers look forward to a trip to town where they can gratify pent up desires.

Unlike their counterparts, who spend about as much time in port as out on the fishing grounds, loggers come to town infrequently, spending maybe one or two days a month in Ketchikan. Also, whereas the seine fleet tends to be either

out fishing or in port together, loggers arrive in town individually or with a couple of buddies. Often, they have to charter a seaplane to come and get them, and their time away from the camps is counted as personal vacation days.

Fishermen and loggers, normally isolated from one another through their exploitation of complementary niches, encounter one another in Ketchikan's many bars, i.e., in public settings where it is the custom of both groups to make status claims by loud, overbearing, macho behavior. Some establishments cater to loggers, some to fishermen, and others provide more neutral turf. Wherever the encounters occur, however, the rivalry is thinly veiled. Each group threatens the other's masculine pride, and the competition for female attention is direct and open.

Townspeople, if they take sides at all, tend to favor loggers over seiners. The pulp and spruce mills employ about 1,000 of Ketchikan's 7,000-8,000 permanent residents, and many seiners are clearly migrant workers. This usually subtle prejudice sometimes becomes blatant, for example, when young women refuse to drink with seiners, then turn around and warmly greet stray loggers who wander into the same bar.

The balance of power in the town shifts on an annual cycle. In the summer months and especially once the seine season has started, fishermen outnumber loggers. In the fall, when the migrant seiners leave, loggers reclaim Ketchikan's night life from the more sedate and year-round trollers and gillnetters, and relatively peaceful co-existence sets in. During the summer, however, at least when the seine fleet is in town, the newspaper's Police Report mentions one to three bar fights per night, many of which seem to involve conflicts between fishermen and loggers.

Bar fights in Ketchikan almost always take the form of fist fights and are limited in the extent of physical damage inflicted on the loser. Although virtually everyone carries knives, an unspoken John Wayne etiquette governs the situation. Fists, chairs, bottles, walls are all acceptable implements, but knives and guns seldom come into play. Rock bands keep playing when a fight breaks out, and the audience seldom gets involved other than perhaps to clap and cheer.

Loggers, in particular, seem to regard bar fighting as a desirable recreational activity. As one young logger told me, his goals in coming to town were, in temporal order, "to get drunk, have a fight, and get laid." Toward these ends, he began drinking in one of the logger bars, then strolled into a fisherman's bar and began insulting those present. I was unable to ascertain whether his third wish was also fulfilled.

The scale of barroom extravagance is hard for sober people to appreciate. The most extreme case I witnessed was by a logger. He had been out in the camps three months, and he was taking a whole week off for his big blow out. When I first saw the fellow, he was struggling up from the floor to ring the bell and buy the house another round. After ringing the bell and yelling at the top of his lungs how great loggers are, he collapsed again, not stirring for an hour or so. When he regained consciousness, he spoke to the bartender, and she opened a wall safe and handed him two \$100 bills from a two to three inch stack. He

rang the bell once more, drank his shot of 100-proof Yukon Jack, and staggered off into the night, falling over our table as he went out the door. The bartender hurried over to us, saying not to take offense, and explained that he was just celebrating. When he first got to town, he had given her \$6,000 in \$100 bills and asked her to monitor his spending. She was to let him have no more than \$500 per night and to tell him when he was down to his last \$1,000.

The competition between fishermen and loggers is ultimately over cultural images, over who belongs in the public limelight. Each group represents a different aspect of Southeast Alaska's history and its hopes for the future. At the same time, they are very similar with respect to leisure time lifestyles; hence, their mutual 'after hours' context is where the rivalry is played out. Fishermen and loggers are locked into a symmetrical schismogenesis, in Bateson's (1936) sense, where reciprocal barroom potlatching is the communicative medium. Each public act by members of one group motivates a similar but escalated response by the other. Their exaggerated generosity in a public setting demonstrates which group is the more successful, the more rugged, the more manly, the best symbolic embodiment of regional culture.

There is one time during the summer months, however, when the 'everyday' town behavior of fishermen and loggers, described above, is held in check. This special time is Ketchikan's annual Fourth of July celebrations, which may be regarded as the principal social drama of the year.

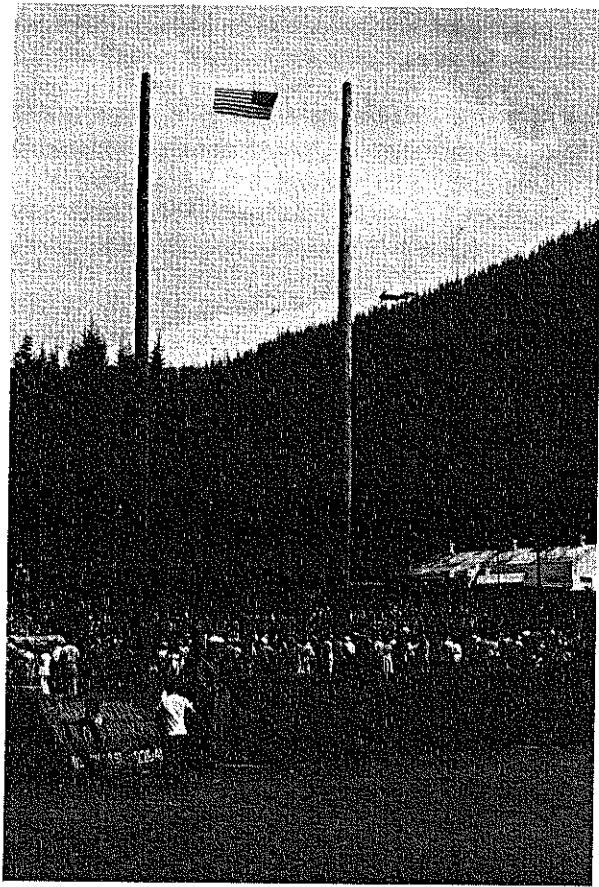
#### **Ketchikan's Fourth of July Celebrations**

Unlike Christmas, Easter, or even Thanksgiving, Independence Day (July 4th) is a thoroughly secular, community-oriented holiday, and Ketchikan turns out in force to celebrate the nation's birthday. Shops and businesses lock up, the pulp and spruce mills work skeleton shifts, logging camps shut down, and the fishing grounds are closed to seining and gillnetting. The town's population swells to its maximum, and the streets swarm with eager, frivolous crowds. The day-long celebration contains three principal acts.

The parade is usually a mid-morning affair. The high school band, Scouting Troops, veterans organizations, Coast Guard, and social clubs march through the streets surrounded by camera-clicking tourists, townspeople, fishermen, and loggers. The highlight is a professional parade band, bought up from Vancouver or Seattle by the Chamber of Commerce. By noon, the first communal activity comes to its end, and the crowds disperse to lunch at home or in the restaurants and bars.

The second act begins in mid-afternoon, lasting until early evening. Ketchikan stages an annual "Southeast Logging Carnival" as part of its Independence Day festivities. Each year since 1971, when the carnival idea started, the Alaska Loggers Association gets some civic group to sponsor the event, and the Chamber of Commerce endorses and advertises it.

The carnival consists of a series of events in which loggers compete with one another for cash and material prizes in a variety of occupational skills, such as



*Vertical poles used for the 'speed climbing' event in Ketchikan's Independence Day logging carnival. Note the American flag hung in between.*

ax throwing, speed climbing, tree topping, choker setting, and so forth. Some of these are anachronistic reminders of logging's past, others are made-up competitions,<sup>4</sup> but to the large audience such subtleties are inconsequential.

Several thousand people gather around Ketchikan's central recreational park and softball field to watch the spectacle. Two or three tall poles, 80-100 feet high, are placed upright in the center of the field, and several other logs lie scattered about in various positions. Beer stands dispense libations to adults, and children scamper under the bleachers and around lawn chairs. Many bring small barbecue grills, and the smell of hot dogs, sausages, and hamburgers fills the air as the public announcer describes the events, names contestants, and awards the prizes.

The activities are leisurely paced, and small groups mill around visiting, shar-

ing beverages, and watching the loggers perform. Clumps of fishermen and loggers are distinguishable in the crowd by their rather distinctive dress styles, but no hostilities break out. Everyone participates in the jovial, festive atmosphere. The day and especially the afternoon clearly belong to the loggers, and everyone enjoys their public display of strength and skill, finding in it a source of regional pride.

When the carnival ends, the crowds disperse to homes, to the bars, or to private parties on fishing boats and prepare for the final, third act.

Around 10:00-11:00 p.m., when the sun goes down, semi-sober crowds line the docks and main street area to watch the evening's display. A sea-going barge is towed into Tongass Narrows a few hundred yards from the main cruise ship dock, and fireworks light up the sky from this floating platform. By midnight, the show is over, and the loggers, pulp mill workers, and fishermen settle down to serious drinking and revelry.

An anthropologist looking at the whole day's celebration would classify it as a rite of solidarity. Parades and public fireworks are part of Independence Day all across the United States. Their function is to build community pride as well as strengthen national identity. Logging contests, however, have a very limited geographical distribution, and their inclusion in Ketchikan's Fourth of July festivities focuses attention on and celebrates the region's distinctive cultural heritage. As a result, visitors and residents alike feel they have witnessed something special, something peculiarly Alaskan.



*Captains and crews take considerable pride in how fast they can retrieve their seine. This is one of several fisherman's skills that could be turned into a spectator event, but no one has done so.*

Yet, this account does not really explain why logging contests are part of the day's events. For example, if the idea were simply to make Independence Day a celebration of regional culture, one might suppose there would also be a series of competitions among fishermen, such as mending nets, splicing rope, assembling sections of a purse seine, or races between crews to set their nets in the water and retrieve them. But, references to fishing and its role in the regional culture are conspicuous by their absence. While loggers occupy center stage all afternoon, there is no comparable public display of fishing skills.

This asymmetrical representation in the public limelight suggests that there is more to the Fourth of July logging carnival than just promotion of regional solidarity. Presumably, it would foster the same sense of regional pride if it were held separately, for example, in April, June, or September. Does logging, then, have some special connection with Independence Day that fishing does not?

A first point to note in addressing these issues is that logging and its related processing industries dominate the economic life of the region from October to July. Once the summer salmon seine season begins, fishing takes over as the principal industry. The timing of the logging carnival, thus, coincides with a shift in the balance of power between the region's two major occupational groups. In a symbolic sense, it marks the end of the 'logging year' and the beginning of the 'fishing year,' and loggers put on their major show of strength just before relinquishing the mantle of leadership to the influx of summer fishermen.

The contests bring loggers to town en masse, reversing their normal pattern of isolated trips, and during the festivities, loggers outnumber fishermen in Ketchikan. This, plus their active role in the civic holiday, back up claims to social preeminence. Whereas fishermen routinely move back and forth between town and sea, spending about equal time in each context, loggers are virtually invisible most of the time, especially so during the summer when seine crews take charge of the night life. Once each year, however, the tables are turned, and balance is restored. Instead of isolated loggers buying drinks for the house, hundreds of them put on a show for an audience numbering in the thousands. When the loggers come to town for the Fourth of July, Ketchikan welcomes them with center stage.

Thus, the annual logging festival not only contributes to regional solidarity, it is also a rite of transition and a rite of reversal. It marks a key point in the economic seasonality of Southeast Alaskan life, when loggers dramatically remind everyone of their otherwise invisible presence then yield the summer months to fishermen. And, by reversing the two groups' normal presence in town, the carnival restores balance between them.

Of course, these transitional and restorative functions could be achieved were the festival held in October, i.e., at the end of the fishing year and the beginning of the logging year. So, the question remains: Why is the logging festival incorporated into the Independence Day celebrations?

There are several practical reasons why July 4th is a good day for the carnival. For example, the logging camps only shut down on national holidays, and there are no holidays in October. What I want to highlight, however, are the symbolic

dimensions of logging, those intangibles that make its conjunction with Independence Day meaningful. Insofar as these contrast with fishing, they will also help us understand why fishing is *not* a featured part of the spectacle.

As mentioned previously, few Native peoples work as loggers, but many participate in commercial fisheries. Logging, thus, is viewed as White Man's work and contrasts with fishing in this respect. It follows that loggers represent the 'all-American' segment of the population (or, as the Native peoples would say, the 'haole's' culture). Equally ironic is the symbolic opposition between loggers as year round residents and fishermen as outsider transients, for the Native fishermen are much more committed to long-term residence in the area than the White loggers. In each case, however, the ethnic and geographical heterogeneity of fishermen contrasts with the relative homogeneity of loggers, making loggers the more appropriate group to participate in the 100% American, Fourth of July celebration.

There are other, more peripheral contrasts that also favor loggers over fishermen as patriotic symbols. Firstly, fishing maintains continuity with the pre-United States, Native history in the region, whereas logging is a recently transplanted industry with close ties to the contiguous 48 states. Secondly, fishermen exploit a watery resource, which has no clear boundaries and property lines, instead of making a living on solid ground like most Americans. Thirdly, logging is inextricably involved in the nation's cash economy, but many of the Native fishermen also engage in subsistence fishing. Thus, although the dollar value produced from fishing exceeds that from logging, the fact that some people subsist from fishing colors it as an isolationist, slightly anti-social way to make a living. Fourthly, whereas loggers ply their skills as rugged individualists, fishermen (especially seiners) work in groups, and even worse they are paid shares of a communal catch instead of earning wages or salaries individually. Finally, whereas loggers forcefully extract a living from the environment - by exertion of will dominating nature - fishermen lack the same degree of control over their affairs.

In each symbolic opposition, loggers side with clearly American values, while fishermen reflect ethnically tainted, marginal, outdated, or aberrant patterns

Table 6. *Symbolic Contrasts between Fishermen and Loggers*

Fishermen	Loggers
Mixed Ethnicity	'Pure' American
Outsider	Local
Mixed Origins/Outdated	American Origins/Modern
Water Resource/Marginal	Land Resource/Central
(Potentially) Subsistence Economy	Strictly Commercial Industry
Suspect Method of Payment	Honest Work for Honest Wages
Lack of Control	Forceful Domination



(see Table 6). Thus, it is entirely appropriate for a logging carnival to be sandwiched in between the parade and the fireworks in Ketchikan's Fourth of July agenda, while fishermen's participation is limited to that of passive spectator.

At least in the richly symbolic context of Independence Day, loggers represent a thoroughly American way of life, and their featured role in the celebration adds regional color without challenging or undermining national ideals. In this sense, the logging carnival is one last 'Hurrah for the good guys' before the slightly un-American and uppity fishermen take their turn as the dominant group in Ketchikan's night life.

### Conclusions

The tension between fisherman and logger in Southeast Alaska is rooted in occupational pride and amplified by cross-cutting issues of ethnicity and residency status. Economically, both groups are necessary to sustain the region's urban centers, and development of one is good for all. Socially, however, the two groups are competing for the same limited prize – the prestige associated with being the most authentic representative of Southeast Alaskan culture.

Although the competition occasionally erupts into physical conflict, outbursts of violence remain personal in scale, involving individuals as such. More often, representatives of the two groups engage in symbolic conflict. Just as indigenous societies of the Northwest Coast converted property into social status by giving it away in potlatches, so do modern fishermen and loggers vie with one another in barroom generosity. Beer and booze have replaced blankets and coppers, but fighting with property is still an alternative to physical confrontations.

Overall, the rivalry is beneficial to the region's economy. Not only does the extravagant spending support local trade and service businesses, but when handled creatively, as in the annual logging carnival, the rivalry feeds a growing tourist industry. In this last respect, Southeast Alaska provides an unusual twist to the comparative study of tourist-local interaction patterns: fishermen and loggers are primary producers whose occupational cultures are also marketable. Fish, timber, and the 'authentic' cultures that produce them are Southeast Alaska's major commodities.

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### Notes

1. In the southeast region, a partial listing of ethnic categories would include Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Inupiat (Eskimo), Norwegian, Slavic, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino as well as the

more general labels White, Indian, Asian, and Black.

2. Klukwan, Inc. (a native corporation near Haines, Alaska) has been hiring its Tlingit youths to work as loggers. This direct involvement of Natives in logging is the exception rather than the rule, as evidenced by the feature story in *Alaska Native Magazine*, April 1987, 5(4):16-18.

3. Fishermen's barroom behavior is contingent to a large extent on the strength of the salmon runs in a given season. When the season has been good or even average, bell-ringing in the bars is a common occurrence. If, however, the season has been dreadful, barroom drinking as a whole seems to slack off.

4. Ax throwing, ax chopping, and speed climbing are virtually irrelevant to modern logging operations, but they make good spectator events and hearken back to logging's past. On the other hand, 'obstacle pole bucking' requires contemporary logging skills, but is a contrived event. Its description, taken from a flier distributed to the audience, is as follows: "Contestant stands behind starting line. On sound of gun, carrying chain saw, runs past the pole to line marked on pole. Contestant then can step up onto pole and runs back towards elevated end. Contestant cannot start power saw until crossing white line. Then contestant cuts approximately one-half way through from one side of log, removes saw and completes cut from other side, stops saw and returns to starting line. Saws provided."

5. Whereas Native Americans in other parts of the United States and Canada often refer to Whites as 'honkies' (borrowed from the rhetoric of Black Power), Native Alaskans generally prefer 'haole' as their pejorative ethnic label for Whites. This reflects the affinity Indians of Southeast Alaska feel for Hawaiians, whom they regard as not-so-distant relatives.

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