

LLAMA-SUPPORTED GEOLOGICAL FIELD WORK IN THE BROOKS RANGE, ALASKA

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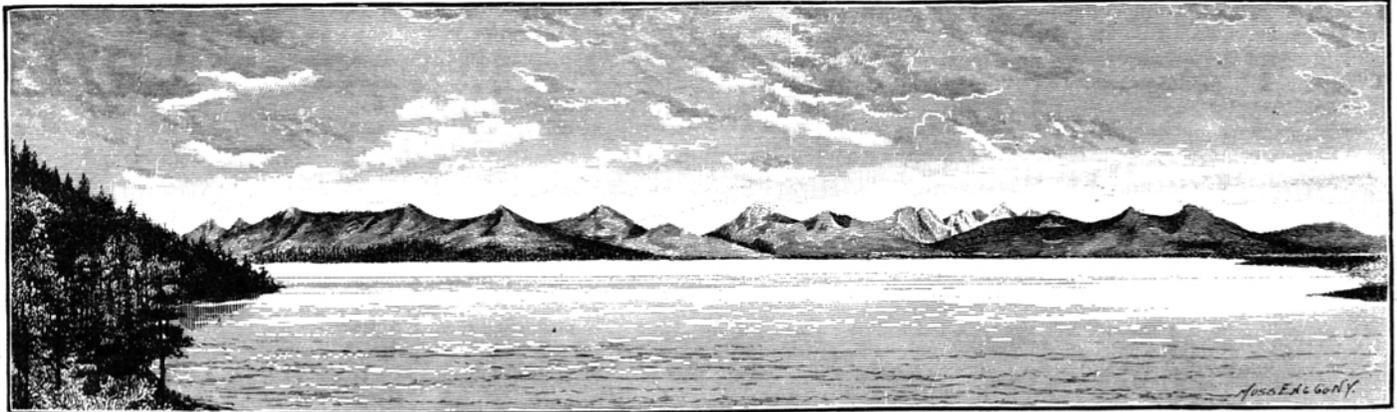
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ABSTRACT

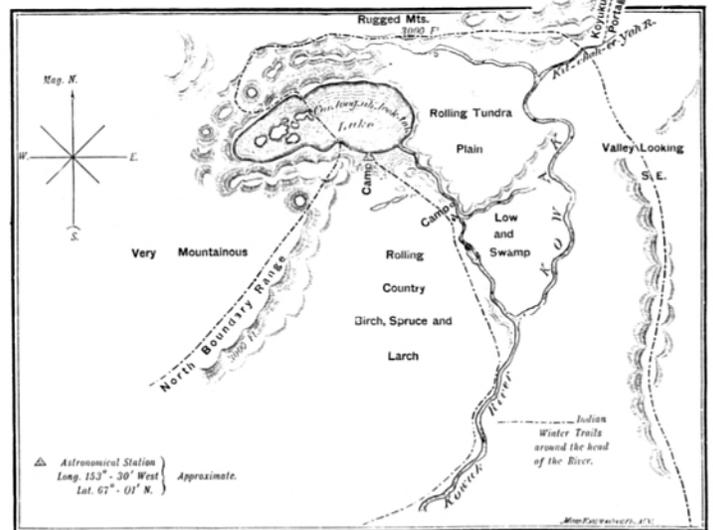
For the first time since their camelid ancestors migrated from Asia, across the Bering Sea Land Bridge, into the Brooks Range and eventually south to the Andes during the Late Pleistocene, domestic llamas trekked through Arctic Alaska mountains. During August of 1981, six llamas carrying 520 pounds of gear supported a field party of eight people which traveled 80 miles (125 km) over 11 days. The route followed left the Dietrich Trans-Alaska Pipeline camp on the Dalton Highway and went eastward over the 5,000-foot (1,500 m) mountains separating the Dietrich and Mathews Rivers, then north to the headwaters of the Mathews River, and finally west to the Dietrich River drainage north of Snowden Mountain.

The geologists, who split off on traverses paralleling the pack train route, mapped seven townships, located the bimodal Devonian Ambler volcanic belt, and traced it from near Dietrich Camp to Snowden Mountain. Farther west, this belt contains massive sulfide deposits valued in excess of \$12 billion.

Although none had packing experience, all of the llamas were friendly and easy to handle. They carried 60 to 100 pounds each, depending on their age. Only blocky talus and very steep slopes were obstacles. The llamas easily traversed fine loose scree, making ascents and descents as steep as 1000 ft/mi (190 m/km), bashed through alder scrub, slogged over muskeg, and forded rivers. Since they are avid foragers, minimal food was packed for the llamas. Bears were sighted during the trip, but none approached the group. Dall sheep and llamas puzzled at each other from a distance.



LAKE CAR-LOOG-AH-LOOK-TAH.



Cantwell, J. C., 1887, *Exploration of the Koyuk River, Alaska*, in Healy, M. A., *Cruise of the Revenue Marine Steamer Corwin in the Arctic Ocean, 1885: 48th Congress, 1st Session, Government Printing Office*, p. 36.
 Walker Lake, Survey Pass 1:250,000 quadrangle