



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1948.

POST OFFICE OPENS, AIRMAIL SERVICE BEGINS ON ST. PAUL ISLAND IN THE PRIBILOFS

Civilization is closing in on remote St. Paul Island (population: 355) -- largest of the Bering Sea's five rocky, mist-shrouded Pribilof Islands, where North America's four million fur-seals come ashore each spring to breed.

Seton H. Thompson, chief of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Branch of Alaska Fisheries, revealed today that a U. S. Post Office was established and a bi-weekly airmail service was inaugurated on the island November 1.

Mrs. Ruth L. Anderson, a Fish and Wildlife Service-employed school teacher, has been appointed St. Paul Island's first postmaster. The Service hopes that a native-born Aleut will be eventually trained to replace her.

Weather permitting, a Reeve Aleutian Airways plane will land on St. Paul's tiny airstrip from Anchorage, Alaska, or Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands every two weeks with mail. It will depart with all classes of mail, bearing the new "Saint Paul Island, Alaska" postmark.

Until this month, all mail destined for the Pribilof Islands was addressed to Dutch Harbor or Unalaska, Aleutian Islands, the nearest U. S. Post Offices, or in care of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Seattle, Wash. The mail arrived on the Islands by sea five times a year. Infrequent military planes took outgoing mail away by air occasionally.

The first airmail flight to St. Paul on November 1 contained considerable second-class mail and parcel post, in addition to airmail. Included were letters postmarked October 29 (from Chicago), October 28 (from Minneapolis), and October 27 (from St. Louis).

December 1947's census reported 329 native-born Aleuts, 12 Fish and Wildlife Service employees, nine U. S. Coast Guardsmen, three U. S. Weather Bureau employees, and a Russian-born Orthodox priest and his wife living on St. Paul.

Thirteen-and-a-half mile long and about eight miles wide, the island is about 250 miles north of the Aleutian Islands and about 300 miles west of the Alaskan mainland. It has been inhabited since 1787, when its Russian discoverers began importing Aleuts from their native islands for work as sealers.

Since 1910, when the Pribilof Islands were declared a U. S. Government reservation, to prevent extinction of the fur-seal herds by commercial sealers, the Fish and Wildlife Service (and its predecessor agency, the Bureau of Fisheries) has governed the Island.

X X X