Marshall

People and Place

Location

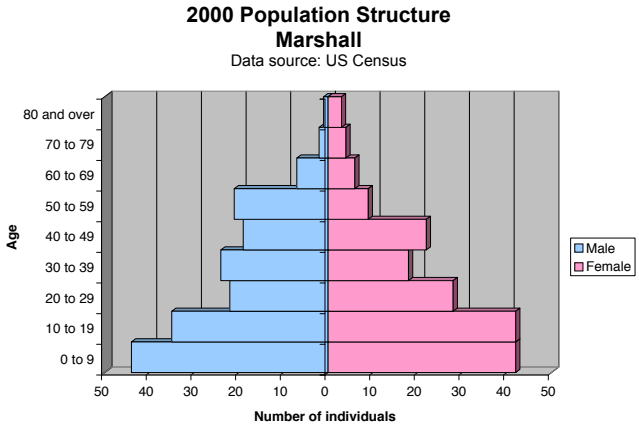
Marshall is situated on the north bank of Polte Slough and on the east bank of the Yukon River in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. It is north of Arbor Island and is located on the northeastern boundary of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. The community is in the Wade Hampton Census Area.

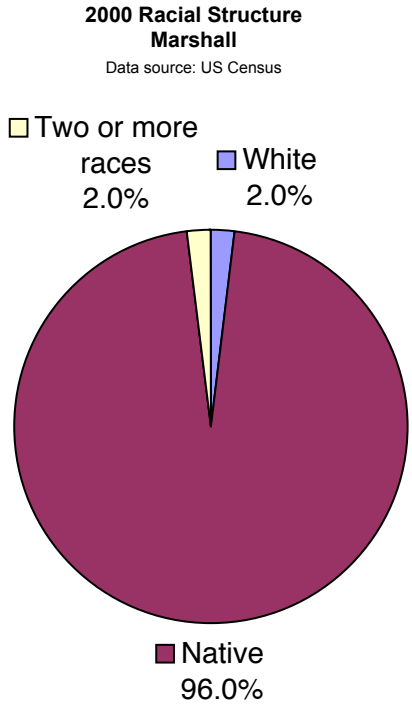
Demographic Profile

Marshall had a total of 349 inhabitants in 2000: 50.1% male and 49.9% female. Since 1940 the population of Marshall has grown steadily from a reported 91 inhabitants in that year. The racial composition of Marshall in 2000 was as follows: 96% American Indian and Alaska Native, 2% White, and 2% two or more races. A total of 97.7% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian. About 0.3% of the population (one resident) was Hispanic. The median age in the community was a very low 22.3 years of age versus the national average of 35.3 years. There were a total of 104 housing units in Marshall. Thirteen were vacant and of those two were vacant due to seasonal use. No one in the community lived in group quarters. Of the population 25 years of age and older, about 74.8% had graduated from high school or gone on to further schooling and about 7.4% had obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. About 1.2% had a graduate or professional degree.

History

According to the National Park Service, the Arctic Small Tool Tradition, "one of the most distinctive and widespread Arctic cultural traditions appeared around 4000 BP." Some investigators feel that the Arctic Small Tool tradition "marks the arrival of the ancestral Eskimo cultures" to the Arctic area (National Park Service 2003). Historically, the Native Eskimo people present in the area of Marshall have been the Yup'ik peoples. Because "southwestern Alaska lacked significant amounts of any of the commercially valuable resources that first drew non-Natives to other parts of the state", the Native people of the southwest region did not experience continual contact with the outside world until missionaries settled in the area beginning in the mid-1800's; initially with the Russian





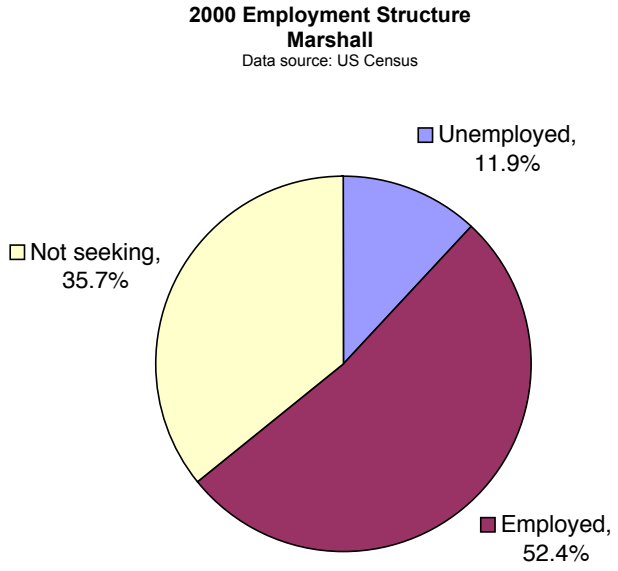
Orthodox, then the Moravians, and finally the Jesuits (Fienup-Riordan 2000, p. 115).

In 1880 an expedition came upon an Eskimo village at this site which was called "Uglovaia." In 1913 gold was discovered at Wilson Creek, which is located nearby to the site of the village. The site became a placer mining camp and was named "Fortuna Ledge" after the first child which was born at the camp, Fortuna Hunter. The site of the camp was convenient for riverboat landings, as it was located on a channel of the Yukon River. In 1915 a post office was established in the community. At that time the population soared to over 1,000 occupants. The village was named "Marshall's Landing" later for Thomas Riley Marshall, Vice President of the U.S. under Woodrow Wilson from 1913-1921. The village became incorporated as a second-class city in 1970 and at that time was named Fortuna Ledge; however, it was commonly called Marshall. In 1984 the name was officially changed to Marshall; in some places, however, it is still referred to as Fortuna Ledge. Those from the village of Ohogamiut live in Marshall as well.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

The economy of Marshall is very seasonally based and includes fishing, fish processing, and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) fire fighting positions, all of which are for the most part performed in the summer months. In 2000 there were 41 commercial fishing permits issued to residents of Marshall/Fortuna Ledge, and 60 residents which were licensed crew members. Some income is also provided by trapping. Income is supplemented for community members by subsistence activities. Of the population age 16 years and over in 2000, 52.4% were employed, 11.9% were unemployed, and 35.7% were not in the labor force (i.e. not employed and not seeking work). Of those residents who were employed, about 59.1% were classified as government workers. In 2000 the median per capita income in Marshall was $9,597 and the median household income was $32,917. About 28.6% of the population lived below the poverty level at the time of the Census.



Governance

Marshall was incorporated as a second-class city in 1970. The city has a Mayor form of government which includes the mayor and a six-person city council, a five-person advisory school board, and a few municipal employees including a police and fire chief as well as a police officer. The city has a 4% sales tax, but no other taxes. Marshall is not part of any organized borough. The regional Native corporation for the area is the Calista Corporation and the Native village corporation is Maserculiq Inc. There are two tribal offices located in the community: the Native Village of Marshall and the Native Village of Ohoghamiut. The nearest Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) office is located in the city of Emmonak, but is a seasonal office which is open from June 1st to August 31st. The closest Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) office is also located in Nome. A National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) field office is located in Bethel and a larger office is located in Anchorage.

Facilities

Marshall is accessible for the most part by both air and water; there are no roads which connect it to other communities. Recently a 4,000 foot gravel airstrip owned by the state was completed. The approximate cost to travel by air roundtrip to Anchorage from Marshall via Bethel is $483. The city receives barge services. Local residents have boats, but in the winter months they are reliant upon dog teams and snow machines. There are no hotels or accommodations in the city for visitors. There is one school in the

community, which teaches grades K-12. The Marshall School had a total of 118 students and eight teachers in 2000. There is also a school building with a Head Start Program that serves children aged three to five. Health care is available at Theresa Elia Memorial Health Clinic, which is owned by the City and operated by the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC). Police services are available from the State Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) and the City Village Police Officer (VPO). The electric utility for the area is AVEC, which is operated by REA Co-op and the city with a main power source of diesel. The water system, sewer system, and landfill are all operated by the city. The city is also the refuse collector. About 70% of the homes in the city have full plumbing which includes piped, circulating water and a sewer system, whereas the remaining houses use honeybuckets and haul water.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing*

A total of 41 commercial fishing permits were issued to residents of Marshall/Fortuna Ledge in 2000 (38 fished). There were 60 residents of the community who were licensed crew members in 2000 as well. No one in the community owned a vessel which was involved in either the federal fisheries or the salmon fishery.

The following is a brief description of permits issued to Marshall residents in 2000. Two permits were issued for herring roe using gillnets in Norton Sound (none fished). A total of 39 permits were issued for salmon, all using set gillnets in the Lower Yukon (38 fished).

There were no landings of any sort in Marshall in 2000 because no processor was present in the community.

The community of Marshall was recently granted $500 in salmon disaster funds by the federal government. These funds were granted because of the recent falling salmon prices largely due to competition with foreign aquaculture fish.

Sport Fishing

Sport fishing does appear to be an important industry in Marshall; 17 sport fishing licenses were sold in the community in 2000, all of which were sold to Alaska State residents. There also was one business in Marshall which was listed as both a saltwater and freshwater fishing guide business in 2002, according to the ADF&G.

Subsistence Fishing

Little data was available about the exact subsistence harvests for Marshall in regards to which species were harvested and exact amounts. The Alaska Department of Community and Economic Development mentions that residents use subsistence to supplement their incomes and harvest salmon, moose, bear, and waterfowl. According to the ADF&G's Division of Subsistence, the established annual wild food harvest for those in Marshall is 691.6 lbs per person. The daily wild food harvest is 1.9 lbs per person. Also according to the ADF&G, 68 household permits were issued for subsistence salmon to residents of Marshall in 1999 for an estimated harvest of 4,775 total salmon. Residents of Marshall are not eligible to apply for halibut subsistence certificates.

* Commercial fishing permit data from the CFEC is given for the communities of Fortuna Ledge and Marshall