

Odiak's Odyssey  
By Cadi Wren

Do you know Odiak Pond? Odiak Pond is the water body next to the Hollis Henrick's Park, or more commonly known as the grassy field. Many Cordovans know that Odiak Pond is a fine place to explore and that it has a variety of wildlife in its marsh. Yes, many people know the Odiak Pond we see today. But many years ago, Odiak Pond wasn't the same pond. In fact, over 5 decades ago, it wasn't even a pond. Before the epic 1964 earthquake, Odiak Pond was not a cut off lake, but it was part of the ocean.

In 1887, Odiak Pond was much larger and was known as Odiak Slough. The hospital had not yet been built and in its place was a cannery run by the Pacific Steam and Whaling Company. Fishing boats could bring the salmon harvest into Odiak Slough. They could travel in and out of the slough with the tide. In the next year, 2 other canneries were built in Cordova. The 1900's came with the building of the Copper River Northwestern Railway. Copper was mined from the Kennecott Mine, located about 163 miles into the interior near MacCarthy. The railway's job was to haul the copper from Kennecott to Cordova where it would be shipped out by boat. Workers in Cordova built a trestle that cut across Odiak Slough. This prevented many larger boats from entering Odiak Slough, but small boats could still go into lake. But 1912 came and the cannery shut down.

Less than 30 years after the cannery shut down, the railroad was taken up. The valuable ore in the mine ran out and the last train ran in September of 1938. During World War II, the path that was once the railway was paved and turned into a road leading out to the Cordova's airport, the (Mudhole) Smith Airport. On March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1964, the most powerful earthquake in U.S. recorded history hit Alaska. It was known as the Good Friday Earthquake, the Great Alaskan Earthquake, and the Portage Quake. The earthquake shook much of Prince William Sound and distorted the land. The Million Dollar Bridge that used to be part of the railway collapsed. The earthquake's trembling effects on the earth caused land to raise and block the tide from coming into Odiak Slough. Odiak Slough was cut off from the ocean and turned into a small lake. The trestle was replaced with the road to Whiteshed.

A section of the pond soon became a landfill. Old cars and a bunch of other garbage were dumped into a pit near Odiak Pond. The hospital was built in 1985 next to the pond. The 1990's brought about the filling and capping of the landfill.

Grass was also laid out producing the large grassy field we see today.

Now its 2011, the present day. From fishing port to railway to the pond we see today, Odiak has changed in both appearance and how it is used. Today, the pond is home to waterfowl, insects, and various types of fish. It contains a peaceful boardwalk and picnic area. Unfortunately, there is little defense to outside threat. Our 7<sup>th</sup> grade class is working to find out more about Odiak. Odiak

Pond has experienced the history of Cordova and is older than the town itself. If we nurture this natural monument, Odiak Pond could be part of Cordova's future to come.

*To share your stories or pictures about Odiak Pond, contact the Copper River Watershed Project at 424-3334, or [kate@copperriver.org](mailto:kate@copperriver.org)*

Bibliography:

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/>

The Cordova Museum