

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Leffingwell Camp

and or common

**2. Location**

street & number

\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Flaxman Island

\_\_\_ vicinity of

state Alaska

code 02

county Upper Yukon Division

code 250

**3. Classification**

**Category**

- district
- building(s)
- structure
- site
- object

**Ownership**

- public
  - private
  - both
- Public Acquisition**
- in process
  - being considered

**Status**

- occupied
  - unoccupied
  - work in progress
- Accessible**
- yes: restricted
  - yes: unrestricted
  - no

**Present Use**

- agriculture
- commercial
- educational
- entertainment
- government
- industrial
- military

- museum
- park
- private residence
- religious
- scientific
- transportation
- other: summer subsis  
tonce fishing

**4. Owner of Property**

name State of Alaska, Division of Land and Water Management

street & number P. O. Box 7000-5

city, town Anchorage

\_\_\_ vicinity of

state Alaska 99510

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Alaska State Office, Bureau of Land Management

street & number 701 C Street

city, town Anchorage

state Alaska

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Alaska Heritage Resource Study

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date January 15, 1971

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State of Alaska, Div. of Parks and Outdoor Recreation  
P.O. Box 7001

city, town Anchorage state Alaska

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date .....
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### ITEM 7. DESCRIPTION

Flaxman Island, the site of Leffingwell's Camp, is located in the Beaufort Sea fifty-eight miles west of Barter Island, Alaska. Three-and-one-half miles long, this small barrier island lies three miles offshore from the Staines River delta and varies in width from several hundred feet to a mile. Relatively flat, the island ranges in elevation from several feet on the west end to twenty feet at the eastern end. It is composed of sand and gravel and is covered with a luxurious growth of tundra grass in the summer. It is dotted with freshwater ponds, and the seas surrounding the island are shallow.

Leffingwell's Camp began to take shape in the early summer of 1907 when several members of the Anglo-American Polar Expedition built a house from lumber and part of a cabin salvaged from the Duchess of Bedford, the expedition ship, and canvas and wire netting (Map 2, #1). The exterior of the structure was banked with sod blocks, "Eskimo style." The remainder of the camp consisted of an above-ground cache constructed of poles, wooden crates scattered around, a lookout located behind the house that was constructed of the Duchess of Bedford's mast, and the area where the dog teams were staked-out. Several Inupiat Eskimo families lived nearby in sod houses. From 1907 to 1914 Leffingwell used this location for his base camp.

Several alterations have taken place at the site since Leffingwell's departure. In the 1930s trader Henry Chamberlin dismantled Leffingwell's house and moved the lumber to Brownlow Point where he used it to build a warehouse for his trading post.

In 1924, Samuel Panningona, a local Inupiat Eskimo, built a house at the site and moved his family in (Map 2, #3). In 1934 the house was moved to where it now stands (Map 2, #4). A state historic site sign placed over the door identifying the structure as Leffingwell's house has caused confusion (Hannable 1973, Libbey 1981:10).

Harland Okomailik, also an Inupiat Eskimo, built a house at the site in 1940 (Map 2, #6).

In the 1970s an Exxon oil exploration camp, including a drilling rig, several temporary buildings, and a gravel airstrip, was located nearby. The camp was removed in 1979, leaving only the gravel airstrip.

The Leffingwell Camp has suffered some losses of integrity through the removal of most of Leffingwell's cabin (in the 1930s before designation as an NHL), damage to the sundial, and loss over time of some ancillary

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Alaska History

**Specific dates** 1906-1914      **Builder/Architect** Anglo American Polar Expedition

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

### ITEM 8. SIGNIFICANCE

Leffingwell Camp is significant as the physical remains of Ernest de K. Leffingwell's scientific headquarters on the Arctic coast of Alaska, from which he conducted his pioneering scientific research and explorations.

In 1906, Leffingwell, a geologist, landed on the Arctic coast of Alaska at Flaxman Island. He and Ejnar Mikklesen, a Danish sea captain and explorer, were the co-commanders of a small privately financed scientific expedition with the impressive name of the "Anglo-American Polar Expedition." Their primary objective was to investigate the persistent rumors of land located north of the Alaskan Arctic coast. Although their search for the hypothetical landmass was fruitless, and the expedition disbanded the next year, Leffingwell stayed on at Flaxman Island to conduct his own research in geology, geography, and cartography.

During this time, Leffingwell produced the first accurate map of the Alaskan coast between Point Barrow and Demarcation Bay near the Canadian coast. He was the first person to study the details of the ground ice that is known today as permafrost. Although considerable research on permafrost has been conducted since Leffingwell's time, many of the theories that he advanced have proved to be remarkably accurate (Mull 1971).

Leffingwell collected data on the physiography of the region, including past and present glaciation, and analyzed in detail the processes of erosion and deposition under polar climatic conditions. He also mapped the geology and topography of the Sadlerochit formation, the main reservoir of the Prudhoe Bay oil fields.

Leffingwell was born in 1876 in Knoxville, Illinois, and educated there. He then moved to Chicago where he studied mathematics and physics at the University of Chicago. He became a polar explorer in 1901 when he headed the scientific staff of the Baldwin-Ziegler Polar Expedition which worked out of Greenland. After the expedition, he studied geology at Washington State University and conducted some field work.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property 10

Quadrangle name Flaxman Island (A-4), 1955

Quadrangle scale 1:63,360

UTM References Limited Revisions 1981

A	0 1 6	5 3 5 6 1 0 1 0	7 1 7 8 1 6 3 1 5 1 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	0 1 6	5 3 1 5 6 1 0 1 0	7 1 7 8 1 6 8 1 2 1 5
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	0 1 6	5 3 1 6 2 1 5 1 0	7 1 7 8 1 6 8 1 2 1 5
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D	0 1 6	5 3 1 6 2 1 5 1 0	7 1 7 8 1 6 3 1 5 1 0
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E			
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F			
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G			
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H			
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## Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

## List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Morton

organization National Park Service

date 9/18/87

street & number 2525 Gambell St., Rm 107

telephone 907/271-2723

city or town Anchorage

state Alaska 99503

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

date 11/12/87

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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structures and objects. However, these losses are overshadowed by the high integrity of the physical setting and the historic scene, both of which remain essentially unchanged since Leffingwell's occupation. Flaxman Island is undeveloped and retains the qualities for which it was chosen as a wintering over site by Leffingwell's party. Modern Eskimos continue to use the island for subsistence hunting and fishing, as they did when Leffingwell occupied the site. Further, the potential for historic archeological research at the site is high.

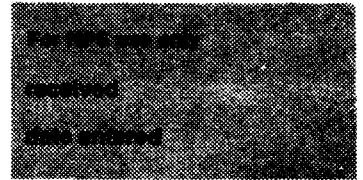
The Leffingwell Camp site was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1978.

**HISTORIC STRUCTURES (See Map 2)**

1. House foundation. The sod foundation of Leffingwell's house, built in 1907, indicates a dwelling with two rooms, 24' by 24'. A small building in good condition of tongue-and-groove lumber stands at the end of the house. This structure, the only standing remains of the original house, is of one of the cabins from the Duchess of Bedford. Twelve posts off the end of the house may represent another structure.
2. Sundial. Leffingwell's sundial has been damaged and the concrete supports have been moved.
3. House. Built by Samuel Panningona in 1923, this wood frame house originally stood on sod foundation No. 4. The house has an exterior measurement of 14' by 20' and a projecting entryway. A large iron tank from a ship is near the entrance.
4. House foundation. This was the original site of structure 3. Two iron tanks from a ship, are near the house. The two rooms were approximately 20' by 14' each.
5. Four broken posts mark the site of a cache and seal skin drying rack built by Panningona.
6. Sod foundation. This house was built around 1940 by Harland Okomailik. It had an interior measurement of 13' by 12' with an entryway to the west.

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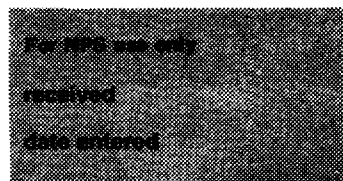
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7. Plank floor. Built by Panningona for an 8' by 12' wall tent.
8. Woodrack. Built by Panningona for storing and drying driftwood.

All features cited above contribute to the significance of the site.

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It was on the Baldwin-Ziegler Polar Expedition that he met Ejnar Mikkelsen. The two became friends and eventually planned an expedition of their own to explore the Beaufort Sea and investigate the theory that a land mass existed north of the Arctic coast of Alaska. Leffingwell and Mikkelsen raised the necessary private funding and the "Anglo-American Polar Expedition" was formed.

The expedition sailed from Victoria, B.C. in May of 1906 on a small schooner they had purchased and renamed The Duchess of Bedford in honor of one of their sponsors. They were able to round Point Barrow on the north coast of Alaska late in the summer and continue eastward. But by the beginning of September the little schooner had become trapped in the Beaufort Sea ice pack. On September 8, the decision was made to winter over at Flaxman Island on The Duchess of Bedford.

Flaxman Island was chosen for wintering quarters for the Anglo-American Polar Expedition due to the lateness of the season and problems with the Beaufort Sea pack ice. When the original plan to reach Minto Inlet was abandoned, Flaxman Island seemed a suitable alternative for winter quarters. It was located in the vicinity of interesting areas of the Beaufort Sea to explore that were accessible by sled over the sea ice, and it was also well situated for research on shore. The fact that it was the home of some Eskimos who could be of assistance also made it attractive.

In the spring, a two-and-a-half month sled trip was made over the ice in search of the reported land. The conditions were incredibly harsh, and even though Leffingwell and his companions failed to find the hypothesized landmass, they accomplished one of their objectives by locating the edge of the continental shelf.

On their return to Flaxman Island they found that the Duchess of Bedford was no longer seaworthy. It was dismantled, and a small house was built on Flaxman Island from the interior woodwork and a cabin of the ship. The expedition disbanded, and most of the members returned to civilization.

Leffingwell stayed on to make the scientific observations that he had come to get and began what was to become a demonstration of intense scientific dedication and personal courage. Between 1906 and 1914 he spent nine summers and six winters on the Arctic coast of Alaska.

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He made thirty-one trips by sled and small boat in the course of his field work, traveling 4,500 miles (Brooks 1919). During this period he worked basically alone and financed his research out of his personal funds (Leffingwell 1919).

The Eskimos living on Flaxman Island played a vital part in Leffingwell's life and research. For centuries the Inupiat Eskimo had been drawn to the area for hunting, fishing, and trading. When the Anglo-American Expedition arrived, the Inupiat hunted for the expedition, providing much needed meat. They also shared their knowledge of the Arctic and their survival skills, provided Leffingwell with companionship, and acted as his guides during the seven years he spent on Flaxman Island.

Leffingwell left Flaxman Island in the spring of 1914 for Washington, D.C. There, he spent a year and a half writing a professional paper on his research, The Canning River Region, which was published by the U.S. Geological Survey (Leffingwell 1919).

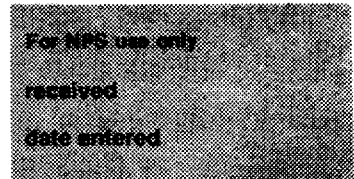
Prior to Leffingwell's explorations and research in the Canning River Region, this area was virtually unknown. It represented an almost complete hiatus in the scientific knowledge of Alaska (Brooks 1919). Leffingwell may have been the least known of the Arctic explorer/researchers who gathered so much acclaim at the turn of the century. However, the contributions that he made in scientific research and exploration in Arctic Alaska were invaluable at the turn of the century and continue to play an important role in science and the economy of Alaska today.

Leffingwell used his headquarters on Flaxman Island as a permanent residence, a basecamp, an Arctic research station, a library, and a laboratory. The Leffingwell Camp site possesses outstanding significance as the primary site associated with Leffingwell's scientific contributions.



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ITEM 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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1919

Preface in "The Canning River Region, Northern Alaska". Professional Paper No. 109, USGS, Washington.

Hannable, William S.

1973

Leffingwell: Prudhoe's Pioneer Scientist. Exxon USA 1st Quarter.

1976

Leffingwell Camp. National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form.

Leffingwell, Ernest de K.

1919

"The Canning River Region, Northern Alaska". Professional Paper No. 109, USGS, Washington.

Libbey, David

1981

"Cultural Resource Identification" in Cultural Resources of the Mid-Beaufort Sea Region. A report for the North Slope Borough's Coastal Zone Management Plan, Barrow.

Mikkelsen, Ejnar

1909

Conquering the Arctic Ice, George W. Jacobs and Co., Publishers, Philadelphia.

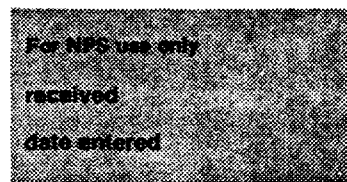
Mull, Charles G.

1971

Leffingwell Camp, National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination

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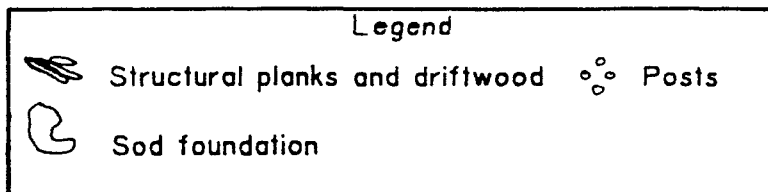
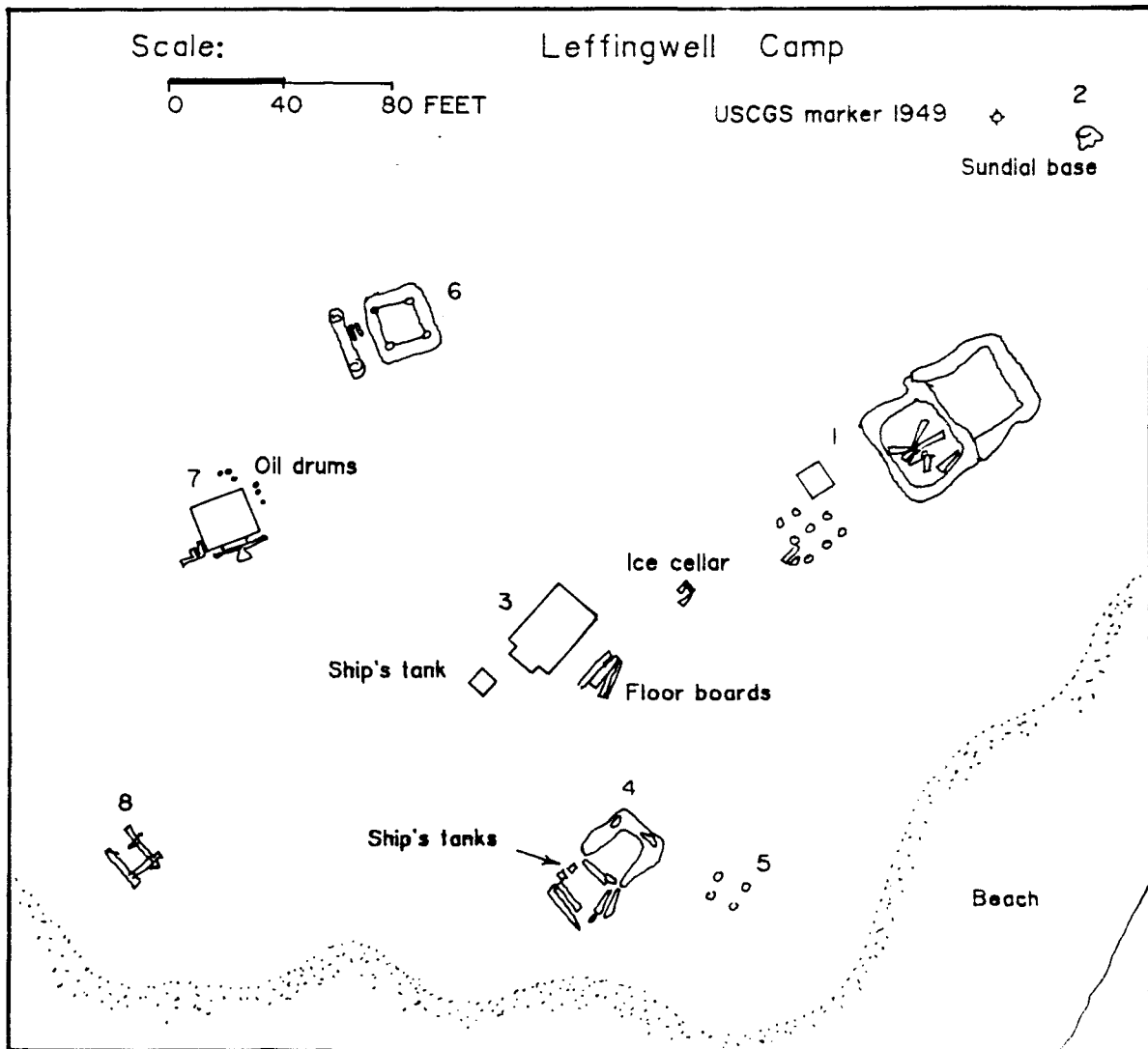
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ITEM 10. VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

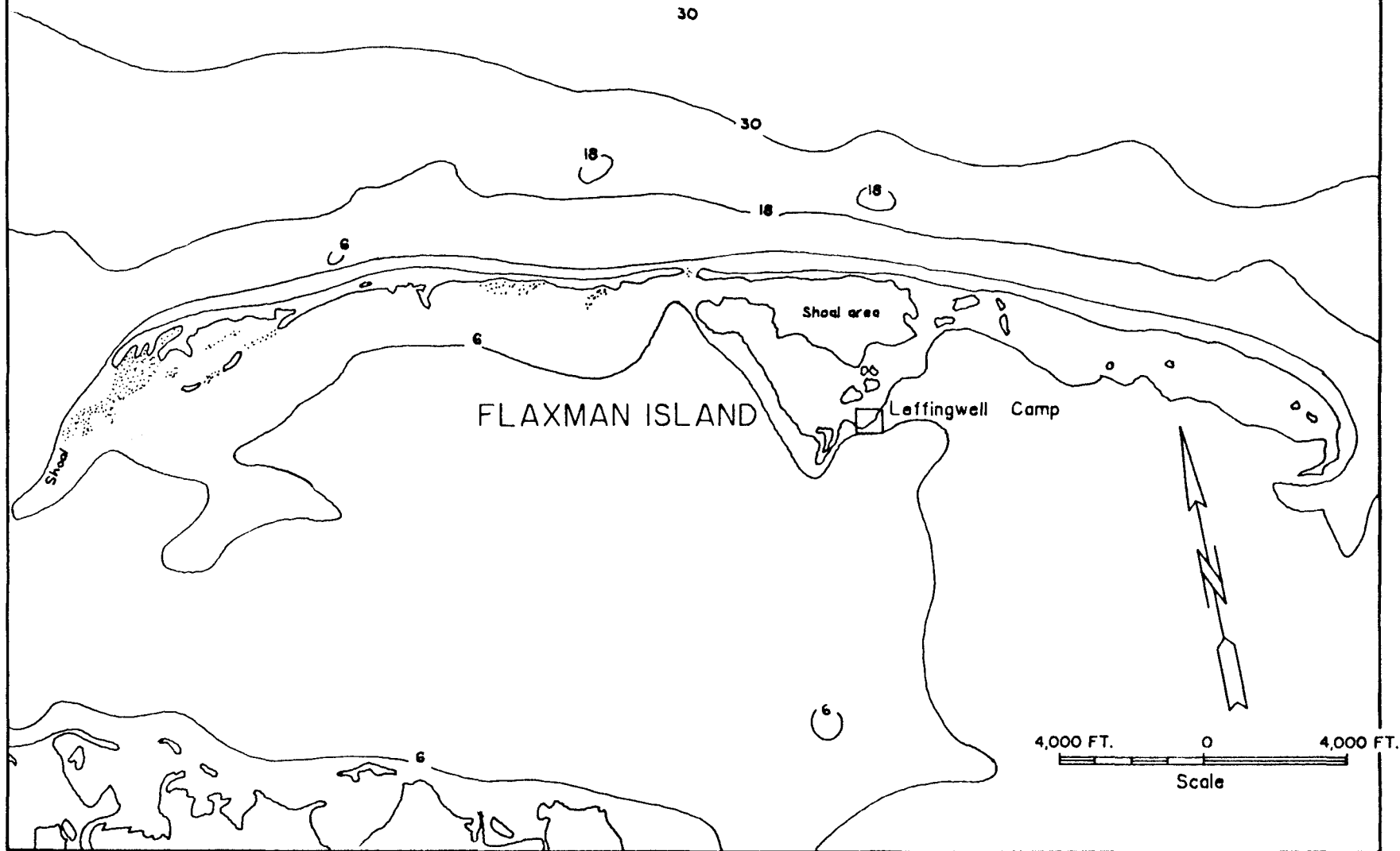
The boundaries of the Leffingwell Camp site have been set to include all of the historical structures and activity areas. Beginning at the point of beginning, at a point 235° and 550 feet from the USCGS marker dated 1949; thence 360° and 550 feet; thence 90° and 630 feet; thence 180° and 550 feet; thence the mean high tide line back to the point of beginning.



MAP 2-AFTER LIBBEY 1981

All features contribute to the setting of the site.

*Beaufort Sea*



MAP 1-AFTER LIBBEY 1981

FLAXMAN ISLAND (A-4) QUADRANG

ALASKA-NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH

1:63 380 SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

146°

520 000 FEET | 50'

B E A U F O R T

S E A

Leffingwell Camp National Historic Landmark

UTM References:

A	06 535600	7786350
B	06 535600	7786825
C	06 536250	7786825
D	06 536250	7786350

