

### JAPS HAD DESIGNS ON ALEUTIANS BACK IN 1927, SAYS DENVER MAN

One of Few Whites to Live in Islands Recalls 'Good Will' Visit Made by Nips and How They Took Pictures of Area.

Japanese war lords turned acquisitive eyes on the Aleutian islands off Alaska as many as sixteen years ago and ever since then had plotted military seizure of the islands, according to a Denverite who spent ten years in the area.

T. H. Wheaton of 1267 Trenton street, radio technician for Continental Air Lines, is one of the few white men to have lived in the arctic area which is now the scene of vast military activity and conflict.

When Wheaton "went north" in 1927, he arrived in the islands as an employe of a fur company and was one of only five "whites" living near Attu, the island recently wrested from the Japs by American forces.

Wheaton said his wife spent two years with him there and for a long time was the only white woman in the entire area.

Apparently concerned about Japanese activity in the islands, Wheaton said, the United States navy took



T. H. Wheaton.

a keen interest in the Aleutians in 1930, but Alaskans wonder, he says, why they abandoned a great naval base at Kiska in 1905.

#### JAPANESE MADE 'GOOD WILL VISIT.'

At one time, about 1930, the quiet radioman disclosed, a party of "high Japanese government officials," paid a "good will trip" to the island and with deft courtesy inquired detachedly, as tho "making conversation," about harbors, the terrain of the country and other pertinent military factors.

They took numerous pictures and sent planes over the area to "study weather to increase forecasting accuracy for fishermen," Wheaton said.

Three small villages on Attu and Kiska, totaling not more than 300 natives, probably have been wiped out by the Japanese, Wheaton speculated, and said, "The Eskimo always has had a deathly fear of the Japanese."

#### ALEUTIAN NATIVES DEEPLY HATE JAPS.

"The Aleutian natives have an old legend about men from the Japanese island plundering their villages and carrying off their furs and other treasures, and harbor a real, deep-rooted hatred for the little brown men whom they resemble," Wheaton said.

Kiska and Attu are "not bad places in which to live," according to Wheaton, who has traveled the chain from end to end. "Weather conditions there are not as bad as painted, and after we had become established we had steam heat and modern conveniences, which made living there a pleasure."

The temperature rarely drops below zero, he said, but the snow is heavy and there are no trees to break the wind, which at times "hits 100 miles an hour."

#### BLUE FOX TRAPPING IS BIG INDUSTRY.

Blue fox trapping, an industry that yields half a million dollars annually, is the only big activity except for cod fishing and sea lion hunting. Once a former naval officer obtained a lease on the whole of Kiska island from the government, Wheaton related. The former officer "planted" the island with foxes and each year would return to trap the year's yield at a neat profit.

Kiska has a terrain suitable for air bases but a heavy fog which almost always covers the island-dotted northland seas, makes operations from there uncertain, Wheaton says.

He believes, however, that for rugged souls who love the outdoors, the Aleutians far surpass the romantic tropical islands of the south Pacific as a spot to "make a stake," and believes they will be popular in the postwar era with soldiers who have been stationed there.