



Kiska: The Japanese Occupation of an Alaska Island

Brendan Coyle

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Alaska's windswept Aleutian Island chain arcs for over a thousand miles toward Asia from the Alaska Peninsula. In this remote and hostile archipelago is Kiska Island, an uninhabited sub-arctic speck in the tempestuous Bering Sea. Few have the opportunity even to visit this island, but in June of 1942 Japanese troops seized Kiska and neighboring Attu in the only occupation of North American territory since the War of 1812.

The bastion of Japan's possessions in Alaska, Kiska was soon fortified with 7,500 enemy troops, their equipment, and a labyrinth of tunnels. For thirteen months Japanese troops withstood constant bombardment from American forces while retaining a tenuous hold on the island. Finally forced to abandon their position, the Japanese occupiers evacuated without their equipment and personal effects, leaving behind a trail of artifacts.

Brendan Coyle spent fifty-one days on the island searching out the tunnels, the equipment, and the objects, all frozen in time. *Kiska* brings together the images Coyle amassed during his exploration and his archival research. Accompanying explanations put the images in historical perspective, opening a window on a little-known battlefield and shining a rare light on a shadowy occupation.

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