



In 2009, Alaska celebrates 50 years of statehood. This is a great time to visit the Last Frontier. Below is a very brief summary that we hope you will enjoy. Please visit <http://www.gov.state.ak.us/ASCC/> for more information on the celebrations.



What U.S. president signed Alaska into statehood?

Alaska – from Land Bridge to Statehood *(Written by the Wise Old Hunter)*

More than **10,000 years ago**, the first people wandered across a land bridge from Siberia into Alaska. These people eventually established a population that remained isolated from the developing world for centuries. That all began to change when on **June 4, 1741**, two sailing ships, the **St. Peter and the St. Paul**, under the command of Captain Commander **Vitus Jonassen Bering**, set out from Avacha Bay on the southeastern coast of Kamchatka Peninsula, Russia. Although the southern areas of the west coast of North American had been explored, little was known of the northern coast. Bering's mission was to explore these northern waters. The voyage was in many ways a disaster, resulting in loss of life for most of the two crews, primary to scurvy. The two ships had become separated in bad weather early in the mission and never rejoined. The St Paul returned to Petropavlovsk in Russia, under the command of Captain Chirikov. The St Peter made landfall near Mt. St Elias, where **George Steller** was allowed only 10 hours to collect specimens, as Bering was anxious to start the return voyage. The St



Peter, with Bering in command, later crashed on Bering Island while sailing west. There the Captain Commander eventually died. However, this voyage is credited with the "discovery" of Alaska, and as a result the Russians quickly started a very profitable **fur business** and began the **occupation of Alaska**. [Where the Sea Breaks Its Back](#), Corey Ford, 1966, Alaska Northwest Books

While the United States struggled in **Civil War**, Russia found itself in difficult financial straits in the mid 1800's. The Russian, Emperor Alexander II, realized that Alaska would be very difficult to defend and decided to sell Alaska to the United States, rather than risk losing it by force, for example to England, and for no compensation. On March 30, 1867, an agreement was reached to transfer ownership of Alaska to the U.S., at the price of \$7,200,000, or **1.9 cents/acre**. The purchase was promoted by Secretary of State William H. Seward. The acquisition was called **Seward's folly or Seward's ice box** by those who thought it was foolish to spend so much money on so distant land, especially when the country was still recovering from the Civil War. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alaska_purchase

From 1867 to 1884, Alaska was considered a **military district**. These were very difficult times with inadequate law and order. In 1884, the first Organic Act established Alaska as a Judicial District with judges, marshals and controlled by the federal government. During this time, Alaska's resources were exploited with little local control. In 1912, the Second Organic Act made Alaska a U.S. Territory with an elected legislature. However, Alaska was still controlled by the federal government. The Jones Act in 1920 and the White Act in 1924 made matters even worse with more federal controls that economically crippled Alaska. On **January 3, 1959**, after much struggle and through the efforts of many, Alaska finally became the **49th state** of the United States of America after **President Eisenhower's** signing of the official declaration. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alaska_Statehood_Act

