Seam Stitches:
The Yup’ik style of seams contains a running stitch partially piercing the skin on top and an overlapping stitch on the inside with a grass insert.

“The skins that are joined together would be sewn on the edge of the skin. They would put the two skins together, holding both of them. They would poke the other one on the edge inside the skin, and those sewing the skins would no [poke their needles] though the other side but would poke into the skin. When the stitches are tightened, the sinew goes in and holds it. And the [stitch] that is inside would also pull it [inward]. Then they would dew the part that is visible, the part that is closed on the inside, using a grass insert to waterproof it.” (Fienup-Riordan 2007:99)

The King Island/Inupiaq has two major seams, the transverse which runs under the kayak, and the deck ridge seam running longitudinally down the back. The transverse seam also comprises a running stitch only partially piercing the skin, but contains an overlap with another running stitch in the same manner. The deck ridge seam has another partial running stitch with the excess on the outside, which is then tucked and sewn with another partial running stitch.

The E419041 kayak’s seams fall in two categories: those running transversely under the kayak connecting the major skins, and the seam along the deck ridge. These follow the characteristics of the NMNH Kayak E419041A

Research Notes compiled by NMNH-ACL Pre-Program Intern Dawn Planas 2008-2009
characteristics of the King Island kayak. As well, where the stitching has come undone on the transverse seam under the cockpit on E419041, there is no evidence of grass being inside the seam, which would have been typical of a Yup’ik kayak.

Skins: The Yup’ik Norton Sound/Hooper Bay kayaks consisted of 5-6 young seal skins stretched for the covering. The King Island style traditionally had a split walrus skin on the stern and a bearded seal on the bow, resulting in only one underwater transverse seam. Sometimes only bearded seal skin was used if walrus skin was not available, but still arranged in a similar manner: the cuts on the belly of the skins along the top of the kayak and then sewn along the deck ridge, with smaller pieces of skins filling in on the top of the kayak fore and aft of the cockpit. This pattern for the skin more closely matches the covering of the E419041 kayak.

Lines/Shape/Build: The Yup’ik style of kayak is similar along the Bering Sea, including Norton Sound and Hooper Bay, comprising of a “broad and deep hull with rounded bilges and a flattened, but not flat, bottom. A sharply ridged deck not only expanded the interior, it also helped shed waves. The beam of approximately 30 inches gave the kayak excellent stability… The wide cockpit facilitated storage of game and also allowed two people to ride back to back with ease” (Zimmerly 1986:41). The southern Hooper Bay/Nunivak style had a slight humped line, while the St. Michael’s Norton Sound was distinguished by its strait line of the deck ridge. The Norton Sound also included hand holds, although much smaller than the Hooper Bay/Nunivak, on both the stern and bow by extending the deck stringers.

The Inupiaq Bering Strait/King Island was similar to the Bering Sea kayaks in its build, such as its multi-chine hull, sharply ridged deck and wide cockpit. However, several differences identify the King Island away from the previous designs and towards the northern styles. Compared to the Bering Sea kayaks, which were lashing rib to rib along the stringers, the King Island kayak have more closely spaced ribs and are lashed stringer to stringer down ribs. The bow has an upward sweep leading to handhold which is carved into the purposely wider front of the fore deck ridge beam, rather than just extending the beam and creating a hole in the gap like that of the St. Michael Norton Sound style. Also, the overall dimensions of the King Island are shorter and narrower than the larger Bering Strait kayaks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kayak Type</th>
<th>Collection #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Beam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bering Sea - Norton Sound</td>
<td>LM 2/1674</td>
<td>c1895</td>
<td>17’ 1.8”</td>
<td>28.3”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bering Sea - Hooper Bay</td>
<td>NMM IV-E-1071</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>15’ 1.4”</td>
<td>30.1”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bering Strait - King Island</td>
<td>RTW 1</td>
<td>c1928</td>
<td>14’ 10.1”</td>
<td>25.3”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASC M.M. Post Kayak</td>
<td>E419041A</td>
<td></td>
<td>14’ 8.5”</td>
<td>23”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Compiled from David Zimmerly’s website "Arctic Kayaks"
Research Notes compiled by NMNH-ACL Pre-Program Intern Dawn Planas 2008-2009
These characteristics of the King Island style more closely match the E419041 kayak, along with the comparative designs and measurements of the different styles. This was also discussed with Yup’ik consulters Chuna McIntyre and Vernon Chimegalrea, who noted:

“This kayak has more of a “northern feel.” The hole on one end of the kayak is used for lifting, and the shape of this hole is different in northern and Yup’ik kayaks. Yup’ik is more circular, while northern holes are more oval, elongated. Yup’ik kayaks have a large round hole at the bow of the boat.” (McIntyre and Chimegalrea 2007)

After comparing E419041 with styles of kayaks in the Norton Sound area, to which its location is attributed, it is most closely related to the Inupiaq King Island style.

“Arctic Kayaks” by David W. Zimmerly. Website: www.arctickayaks.com
Chimegalrea, Vernon. Central Yup’ik Linguist. Personal communication, 10 October 2007.
McIntyre, Chuna. Traditional Yup’ik Eskimo Dancer, Artist, Story Teller. Personal communication, 10 October 2007.
Figure 180

Nunivak Island Kayak, Alaska, 1889, in U.S. National Museum (USNM 160345), showing painted decoration of the mythological water monster Paflrayuk.

Figure 181


Figure 182