

PHO 36184X

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JUL 16 1976  
DATE ENTERED NOV 13 1976

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC Porcupine District (AHR Site SKG 015)

AND/OR COMMON

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Porcupine Cutoff (Mile 35, Haines Highway)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE Alaska

VICINITY OF

Alaska

STATE Alaska

CODE 02

Skagway-Yakutat Division 230

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED (4-5 mos. per year)	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Alaska Division of Lands (907) 279-5577

STREET & NUMBER

323 East 4th Avenue,

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Anchorage

VICINITY OF

Alaska 99501

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Alaska Division of Lands

STREET & NUMBER

323 East 4th Avenue

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Anchorage

Alaska 99501

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Alaska Heritage Resource Survey (AHR)

DATE September 1972

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Alaska Division of Parks, 323 East 4th Avenue

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Anchorage,

Alaska 99501

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Porcupine is located in Southeastern Alaska, about a mile southwest of the junction of the mouth of Porcupine Creek and the Klehini River that flows into the Chilkat Inlet at the head of Lynn Canal, and 32 miles west of Skagway.

The mining community founded in 1898 after the discovery of gold on Porcupine Creek was a seasonal town, occupied from May to October and almost deserted during the winter. During the summer of 1899, 200 people lived in Porcupine, the number of residents declining to 80 by the summer of 1903. The impermanent character of the mining town is reflected by the slow construction of permanent structures, by 1903 the town had twelve homes and cabins, a hotel and Dalton's trading store. Supplies were usually brought to Porcupine during the winter when the river and creeks were frozen.

Buildings built or standing during the years the Sunshine Mining Company was in operation, 1927 to 1936, included a saloon, mess hall, store, warehouse and other log or milled lumber buildings. Today, most of the buildings still standing were constructed during that time. Of the nearly 25 visible structures, eleven log or milled lumber buildings are in good condition, including the doctor's home, the only building remaining after the fire in 1915. Remains of collapsed buildings are still evident, as is the outline of the landing field.

Individuals still mine in the Porcupine region. In 1971, two miners found 15 1/2 ounces of gold, and in the summer of 1972 four miners--three men and one woman--lived in the town. The land, never changed from a status for mineral claims only, has been owned by the State since the claims were foreclosed on August 19, 1957. The site is accessible, with a 4-wheel drive vehicle, by following the Porcupine cutoff about a mile south from Mile 35 of the Haines Highway.

# 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 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SIGNIFICANCE

The mining industry was critical in demonstrating to the federal government and the American citizens the value of Alaska, and in attracting the first major immigration of whites to the territory. In every sense Porcupine was and is a mining town. The buildings constructed were for mining purposes, the population reflected the success of the mines, and no other industry was ever introduced into the town. The remains of the town of Porcupine, abandoned during the winter as it was in the early mining days, and its history and traditions, provide irreplaceable information for the study of mining camps in Alaska during the twentieth century. A mayor was never elected. Rather, the town was administered by the mining company president and when there was not a company in existence, by the United States Mining Code enforced by an elected committee of arbitration.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before gold was discovered several villages were located on Porcupine Creek, occupied by Chilkats who say they migrated from the Stikine River area. The Indians conducted an active trade over the Chilkat Trail (the present day Dalton Trail). Every tribe owned and operated a trail, and closely guarded and kept secret their trading route.

In 1880, Edmund Bean discovered the Chilkat route and John Dalton improved the trail in 1890 for the purpose of trading. Dalton Trail was the easiest, although longest, route to the interior and was heavily travelled by miners heading for the Klondike region following the discovery of gold. S. W. Mix, a miner from Walla Walla, Washington, and his partners Ed Fenley and Perry Wiley, returned from the Klondike region to Porcupine Creek in May, 1898 to prospect.

By their Boulder Creek camp the three miners found traces of gold and were mining about \$10 per day per man. Following the creek to where it joined with Porcupine Creek, in October the men found richer gravels and some small nuggets of gold. During the ten days after this discovery the three took approximately \$1150 from the creek. The men staked out claims and on October 22, called a meeting of the thirteen claim holders in the area to establish the Porcupine Mining District and to adopt the Mining Code to govern the area. 1000 prospectors were recorded in the United States Geological Survey of 1899 to have visited the area following the discovery of gold, some remaining. The size of the rush of placer miners to the area may be explained, in part, by the effects from the British Columbia Alien Exclusion Act in 1899 that, even when altered, removed many American miners from Canada. Also, the area was more accessible than the Klondike, and the Nome and Tanana River discoveries had yet to be made.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Eakin, H. M. The Porcupine Gold Placer District, Alaska. U.S.G.S., Bulletin 699, Washington, 1919.
- Hall, George A., Summary of Historical Development of Haines Area in Alaska, Anchorage: Alaska Division of Parks, 1971.
- Records of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office, Anchorage.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 40

UTM REFERENCES

D	0,8	4,2,9,6,4,7	6,5,8,7,5,7,2	A	0,8	4,3,0,0,50	6,5,8,7,5,65
	ZONE	EASTING <sup>650</sup>	NORTHING <sup>575</sup>		ZONE	EASTING <sup>650</sup>	NORTHING <sup>575</sup>
B	0,8	4,3,0,0,4,2	6,5,8,7,1,6,3	C	0,8	4,2,9,6,40	6,5,8,7,1,70
	ZONE	EASTING <sup>050</sup>	NORTHING <sup>200</sup>		ZONE	EASTING <sup>650</sup>	NORTHING <sup>175</sup>

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

59° 25' 15" N.; 136° 14' 10" W.  
Mouth of Porcupine Creek, north side

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

Joan M. Antonson, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Alaska Division of Parks

DATE

27 October 1975

STREET & NUMBER

323 East 4th Avenue

TELEPHONE

(907) 274-4676

CITY OR TOWN

Anchorage

STATE

Alaska 99501

## 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. Owner notified.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

*William Shanable*

TITLE

*Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer*

DATE

*July 13, 1976*

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

*11/13/76*

ATTEST: *Charles L. Page*  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

*11.10.76*

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Porcupine District, Alaska (AHRS SITE NO. SKG 015)

**CONTINUATION SHEET** Porcupine Dist. ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

In 1899, Dalton founded the Dalton Transportation Company to transport freight over his trail--charging four cents per pound per mile--from Haines to Porcupine. The town of Porcupine was laid out by Dalton the same year. 150 acres were surveyed and divided into lots that sold for \$100 apiece. During the first summer the population of the town was said to be 200, and the figure did not include the miners camped along nearby streams. A post office opened in Porcupine in 1901 and operated until 1918, but by 1903 the rush was over. When the Porcupine Mining District recorder, George W. Geston, resigned in 1903 the office was discontinued. The same fate awaited the United States Commissioner's office later in the year.

The production of gold was about \$460,000 between 1898 and 1903. However, to profit from gold mining in the region, claim holders were forced to form companies and operate on a large scale, or to lease their property. As early as 1899, Dalton and his partner, Ed Hanley, owned the controlling interest of the original Discovery claims ground. They established the Porcupine Trading Company, and with the aid of a small flume they constructed, mined \$150,000 worth of gold between 1903 and 1905. The company ceased operations in 1906 when flooding along the tributaries of the Klehini River destroyed many of the principal works. The Daily Alaskan lists a number of other companies, backed by eastern capitalists and residents of Juneau, that were operating in the Porcupine area in 1900: Wiley, Mix and Company, Findley Mining Company, McKinley Creek Gold Mining Company, Porcupine Mining Company, VanWinkle Mining Company, and Caledonia Mining Company. The same year negotiations were reported to bring the entire creek area under single management, but no results were realized. Following the flood in 1906 large operations were discontinued, and the only production of gold between 1907 and 1909 was from a few small claims worked by hand.

Financed by eastern interests, the Porcupine Mining Company headed by E. E. Harvey, with a plan to consolidate all claims along the creek, entered the area in 1908 and proceeded to buy a large portion of the claims and build a bridge from the Dalton Trail over the Klehini River. Transportation costs to move heavy equipment and supplies to Porcupine were reduced to 2 1/2 cents per pound the same year when the Haines Road from Haines to Klukwan reached Porcupine and Pleasant Camp. A large amount of hydraulic equipment was brought in to Porcupine, and construction was started on a flume to carry creek water past placer ground. When complete late in the summer of 1909, the 24 to 38 feet wide, 6 to 8 feet deep flume, 6,000 feet long, had required nearly a million feet of lumber and was supported by several thousand piles. Operations were begun in the fall at the lower end of the canyon and 80 men were employed to work the two 10-hour shifts. Until August, 1915, when the lower part of the flume was demolished by a flood, the average yearly output of gold was \$50,000. The same year, the Porcupine Mining Company is said to have gone broke, the Cahoon Creek Gold Mining Company also went broke, and the town of Porcupine--except the Doctor's cabin --reportedly burned.

The Alaska Corporation took control of the property and holdings in 1915 and immediately began to repair the flume and began construction of a new high-line flume. Mining

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**CONTINUATION SHEET** Porcupine District ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

operations were begun in 1916 but because of repair work needed on Porcupine and Glacier Creeks, and the almost 60-foot thick layer of glacial till on McKinley Creek, operations were limited. In 1918 the area was again flooded, and the large operations closed.

In 1926, a miner-businessman named August Fritsche obtained a patented claim to land in the area. He organized the Porcupine Gold Mines (the name was changed to the Alaska Sunshine Gold Mining Company in 1935) and, establishing himself as president and bookkeeper of the company, bought old claims and built a store, stable, bunk house and his home. From Fritsche's records, \$1,700,00 was mined by his company between 1927 and 1936. During this time two other mining company operations were recorded in the U.S. Geological Surveys, but no records remain of their activities.

By local accounts, the last \$25,000 was mined by the Sunshine Company from a "glory hole" in 1936, packaged and delivered to Fritsche to deposit in the company safe. When he never arrived at the community dinner that evening, the miners went in search of him thinking he had run away with the money. Instead Fritsche was found dead, apparently of natural causes, at his table. As the sole administrator of the business, he was the only one with the combination to the safe. It was broken open, but no gold was found. A search ensued that produced nothing. The members of the company decided to disband and sold the equipment to pay the 110 employees. Area residents recount that a miner, Cliff Lenhan, found the lost gold in 1956 when he was tearing down some unoccupied buildings in town to build a shelter beside his trailer home. Supposedly Lenhan found the lost \$25,000 in a secret compartment built in the wall of Fritsche's home. At any rate, he left his trailer, door open, and was last seen that year in Haines.

Individual or small groups continue mining in the Porcupine area, but less than 100 ounces has been taken from the area since 1930. All gold mining operations were ordered to close at the outset of World War II, and no population was recorded for Porcupine during the war years. If the town was really abandoned during this time can not, however, be verified. After the war several individuals, less than ten in 1953, worked in the area. The residents, for unknown reasons, agreed to build a landing strip near the town. The field was too short and very bumpy; hardly, if ever, used. Annually, a few miners still work in the area.

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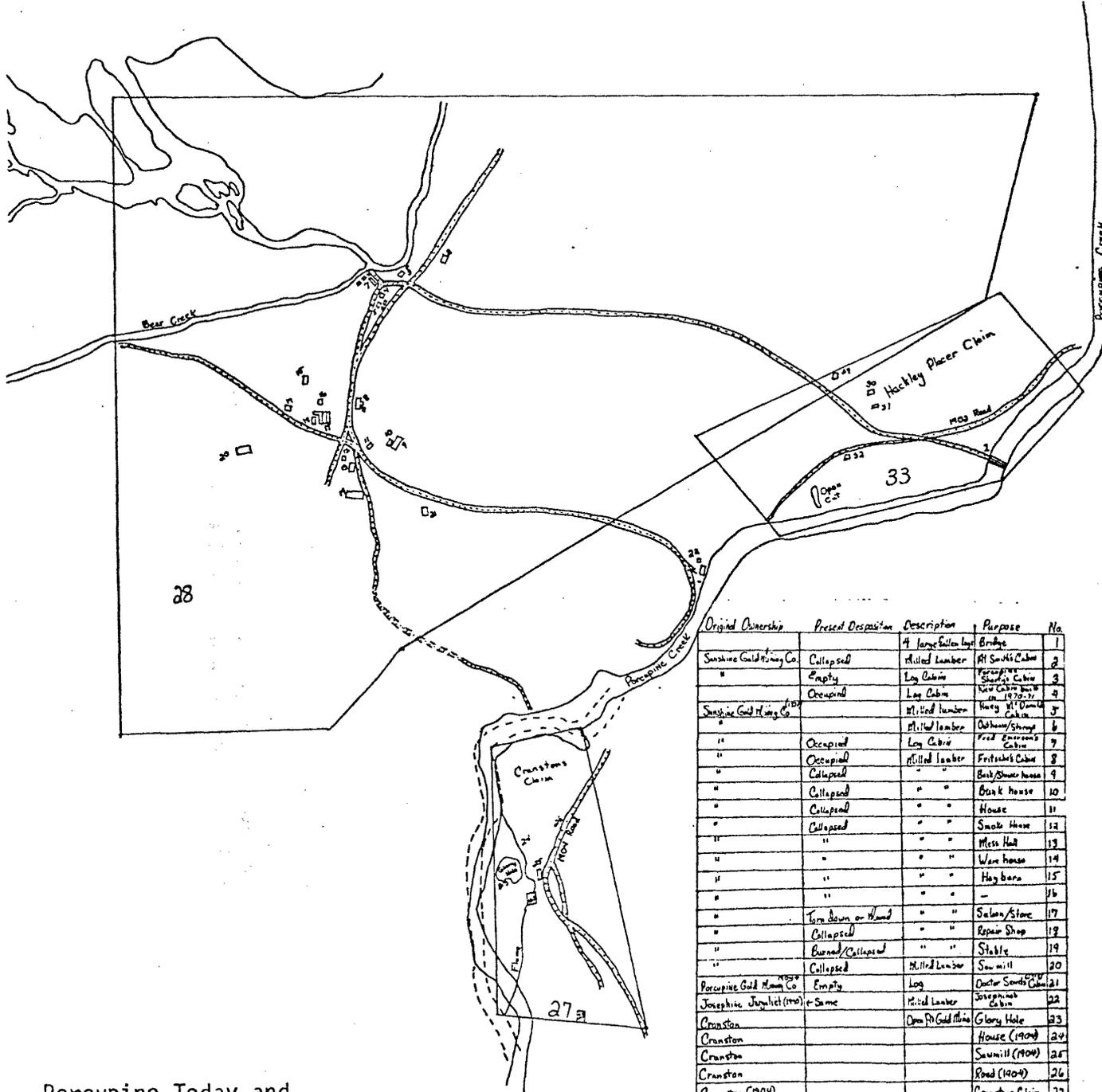
AHRS Site No. SKG-015

CONTINUATION SHEET Porcupine District ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

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- Roppel, Patricia, "Porcupine", The Alaska Journal, 5:1 (winter, 1975), 2-10.
- Thompson, Linda Kay. "Alaska's Abandoned Towns," History and Archaeology Series No. 2: Miscellaneous Publications. Anchorage: Alaska Division of Parks, September, 1972.
- Wright, C.W. The Porcupine Placer Mining District, Alaska, U.S.G.S., Bulletin No. 255. Washington, D.C.: 1904.

Status Plat Map, from Alaska's Abandoned Towns, History & Archaeology  
 Series 2, Misc. Publication, Alaska Div. of Parks, Sept., 1972



Porcupine Today and

Yesterday

AHRS Site No. SKG-015

Scale: 30 chains to inch (reduced)

Original Ownership	Present Disposition	Description	Purpose	No.
Sunshine Gold Mining Co.	Collapsed	Milled Lumber	At Smith's Cabin	1
"	Empty	Log Cabin	Porcupine Cabin	2
"	Occupied	Log Cabin	Porcupine Cabin	3
Sunshine Gold Mining Co.	Collapsed	Milled Lumber	Porcupine Cabin	4
"	Occupied	Milled Lumber	Porcupine Cabin	5
"	Occupied	Log Cabin	Porcupine Cabin	6
"	Occupied	Milled Lumber	Porcupine Cabin	7
"	Collapsed	"	Porcupine Cabin	8
"	Collapsed	"	Bank House	9
"	Collapsed	"	House	10
"	Collapsed	"	House	11
"	"	"	Smoke House	12
"	"	"	Mess Hall	13
"	"	"	Wagon House	14
"	"	"	Hay Barn	15
"	"	"	"	16
"	Torn down or Ruined	"	Sales Store	17
"	Collapsed	"	Repair Shop	18
"	Burned/Collapsed	"	Stable	19
"	Collapsed	Milled Lumber	Saw mill	20
Porcupine Gold Mining Co.	Empty	Log	Dexter Smith's Cabin	21
Josephine Jewell (no)	Same	Milled Lumber	Josephine Cabin	22
Cranston		Open Pit Gold Mine	Glory Hole	23
Cranston			House (1904)	24
Cranston			Sawmill (1904)	25
Cranston			Road (1904)	26
Cranston (1904)			Cranston's Claim	27
August Fritsche (1912)			Fritsche Claim	28
Huckley			Shuff (1902)	29
"			Cabin (1902)	30
"			Cabin (1902)	31
"			Shuff	32
Huckley-Placer Claim				33