

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 82002072 Date Listed: 9/8/82

Wasilla Community Hall  
Property Name

Matanuska-Susitna Borough Census Area  
County

AK  
State

N/A  
Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*for* *Russell Ales*  
Signature of the Keeper

*10/2/95*  
Date of Action

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Amended Items in Nomination:

**Location:** Under county, the Anchorage Division (Borough) is changed to Matanuska-Susitna Borough Census Area.

This information was confirmed with Jo Antonson of the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office.

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DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only  
received APR 5 1982  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

Revised Aug. 10, 1982

**1. Name**

historic Wasilla Community Hall (AHRS SITE NO. ANC-135)

and/or common Wasilla Museum

**2. Location**

street & number 215 Main Street, Box 874 not for publication

city, town Wasilla vicinity of congressional district Alaska at large

state Alaska code 02 county Anchorage Division code 020

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name City of Wasilla

street & number 217 Main Street, Box 430

city, town Wasilla vicinity of state Alaska 99687

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Matanuska-Susitna Borough Palmer Recording District

street & number Box B

city, town Palmer state Alaska 99645

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Alaska Heritage Resources Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 10-12-78  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Alaska Division of Parks  
Office of History and Archaeology, 619 Warehouse Avenue, Suite 210

city, town Anchorage state AK 99501

## 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The present Wasilla Historical Museum--built in 1931 as the first (and only) Wasilla Community Hall--is a log building--rectangular in shape. The main portion of the original building is thirty feet wide and fifty feet long. It was built, as it remains, with a twelve by thirty foot porch insitu at the front entrance. This one-story log structure, with a sturdy concrete basement foundation, is located on Main Street, in the heart of the City of Wasilla. The building had a gable roof, which is now covered with modern asphalt roofing. Originally this was of tar-paper.

In 1967 the building's interior was fully refurbished. The exterior, however, has never been altered from its original appearance. The interior after 1967 had varnished fiberboard flooring, sheetrock ceiling covering the old rafters and paneled walls. The museum display areas, added in the past decade, are located along each wall and in the center of the one, large, original room interior.

At the time of the 1967 restoration, an outside entrance to the concrete basement was added--along with a twelve by thirty foot frame addition on the back of the building which contained a kitchen, office area, and restrooms. A well and piped in water system was also installed at this time. The building for years has been heated by an oil-fired hot air furnace. Photographs, taken in 1954, indicate that no change in exterior appearances came after 1931; nor are there any discernible other differences in the present appearance of the now-landmark structure--so fondly remembered by Wasilla pioneers as the social center of their community between 1931 and 1967.

This local landmark building is fully recognizable as being almost identical to the structure which was built through the impetus provided by the will, (and community pride) so strongly instilled by pioneer Alaskan miner and homesteader, Chris Stern. Because few log buildings were built in Wasilla after the 1920's--this structure has special significance for present-day, (as well as future generations of Alaskans). It is an exceptionally fine example of early 20th century arctic log work, and of traditional Alaskan rustic architectural design. The public accepts this excellent log structure as "a prime landmark example." Although nominated for its association in local and regional history; and for memorializing the late Chris Stern, Wasilla Community Hall might also have been designated for architectural merit--as was proposed by AIA representative, Edwin Crittenden (of the Review Board, AHRS) when they approved this for the National Register in 1981.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1930, 1967 **Builder/Architect** Voluntary Citizens

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Community Hall is the oldest remaining log structure in Wasilla. Its genesis stems from the first homestead established at Lake Wasilla by Chris Stern, pre-dating the founding of Wasilla. Threatened with razing in the 1960's, the Community Hall building was saved through efforts of the Alaska Territorial Centennial Commission. Restored in 1967, it became the home of the Knik-Willow-Wasilla Historical Society, and for the past decade has been a public historical museum. Much of the social history of the lower Matanuska Valley is associated with this landmark structure.

Chris Stern, a Swedish immigrant bachelor, came to Alaska about 1898 to pioneer Alaskan ranching and to mine and prospect for gold. He was among the first to homestead (318 acres) in what was then the Wasilla Wilderness on the shores of Lake Wasilla. This was early in the 1900's. Soon thereafter, the small community named Wasilla began to develop. Progress was slow until the building of the Alaska Railroad started in 1915. Wasilla then grew to be a thriving center--not only for the Alaska Railroad, but for miners and farmers arriving in the area. With the advent of the New Deal Matanuska Agricultural Relief Colony in 1935, the area really began to grow and develop from Palmer to Willow.

When Chris Stern died in 1927, his will stipulated that all of his property was to be sold, with the proceeds used for the benefit of the Wasilla community. Through the efforts of Garrit Snider--another pioneer homesteader, and executor of Stern's estate--these stipulations were carried out to build a community hall.

Thus in December, 1930, work was begun on the original Wasilla Community Hall. Virtually everyone living in Wasilla at the time participated in the volunteer project. Logs were cut locally and hauled to the building site. The Stern estate funds provided for manufactured doors, windows, and some other building materials. When this money ran out, local storekeepers were asked to donate additional materials in order to complete the ambitious effort. At this time there were only about 25 families living there.

Local women began to serve meals to the volunteer work crews when they resumed work during the summer of 1931. The cement basement was actually dug as a local WPA project. By late 1931 the Wasilla Community Hall was completed and in use.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Herning Diaries 1898-1947  
Probate Court Records  
A study of frontier town in Alaska 1959 Louise Potter  
Iditarod Trail Annuals. 1977, 1978 Dorothy Page

UNRECORDED  
UNRECORDED

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1/4

Quadrangle name Anchorage (C-7) Alaska USGS

Quadrangle scale 1:63 360

### UMT References

A	<u>0 1 6</u>	<u>3 7 1 0</u>	<u>6 5 1 0</u>	<u>6 8 2 9</u>	<u>1 5 1 0</u>	B					
	Zone	Easting	Northing				Zone	Easting	Northing		
C						D					
E						F					
G						H					

### Verbal boundary description and justification

One quarter acre in Municipal Reserve, Block 8, Wasilla Townsite, now 215 Main Street

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	NA	code	county	code
state	NA	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title James Ede/Manager

organization Wasilla-Knik-Willow Creek Historical Society date February 6, 1981

street & number Box 874 telephone (907) 376-2005

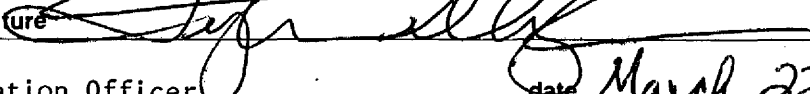
city or town Wasilla state Alaska 99687

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature  date March 22, 1982

title State Historic Preservation Officer

**For HCRS use only**  
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

 date 9/8/82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

