

AUG 25 1988

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Tolovana Roadhouse
other names/site number Tolovana AHRS Site No. FAI-241

2. Location

street & number not for publication
city, town Nenana vicinity
state Alaska code 02 county Yukon-Koyukuk code 290 zip code 99760

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: Judith E. Bittner, Date: 8-16-88, State or Federal agency and bureau: Alaska

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official, Date, State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: entered in the National Register. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Hotel: Roadhouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Hotel: Roadhouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Pioneer log construction

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Log

walls Log

roof Metal

other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Tolovana Roadhouse is set on a triangular piece of land at the confluence of the Tanana and Tolovana Rivers. The Tanana River cuts through a broad valley, draining the northern slopes of the Alaska Range and the southern slopes of the Yukon-Tanana Uplands, and flows into the Yukon River. The triangle measures approximately 2,200 feet on the Tolovana River bank, 2,000 feet on the Tanana River bank, and about 1,000 feet at its base. Located at the tip of the triangle, with water on two sides, are the ruins of a small Native village. Only the eroded ruins of two cabins remain; other evidence has disappeared as the Tanana River has eroded about 150 feet of the bank. The roadhouse and its outbuildings are located about 200 feet from the Tanana River and form a compact cluster of buildings. About 300 feet up river are the ruins of a U.S. Army Signal Corps station that consisted of three cabins and a cache.

The only buildings at Tolovana with physical integrity are associated with the roadhouse. These buildings (see sketch map) are a clearly-defined group of structures. The roadhouse is separated spatially from the neighboring Native village and the Signal Corps station by strips of undeveloped land. The roadhouse is further isolated from its neighbors by distinctly different patterns of use and function.

The roadhouse commands excellent views of the Dugan Hills to the southwest and Mount McKinley to the south. It is on a remote 31-acre homestead about 65 river miles down stream from where the Tanana joins the Yukon River. The homestead was patented in 1946 and is an inholding within the Tanana Valley State Forest. Three of the thirteen buildings associated with the roadhouse have been lost by Tanana River erosion: a bunkhouse, the original trading post (ca. 1903-1911), and an outhouse. Seven are in ruins and no longer have physical integrity. Four remain standing: the roadhouse, storage building, power plant, and an outhouse. Approximately 100 feet of the riverbank has eroded since the roadhouse was constructed. It now sits some 200 feet from the Tanana River.

After the original roadhouse was destroyed by fire in 1910 and its replacement, the Tolovana Trading Post, burned in 1921, the existing Tolovana Roadhouse was built in 1924. A bedroom wing on the right side was added in 1926. At an unknown later date, a frame addition with a shed roof was added to the back, left side of the building. The roadhouse was constructed of peeled notched native white spruce logs, 10 to 14 inches in diameter. It measures 25 x 88 feet, and is rectangular in plan. It is divided inside into four main rooms, with an attached frame shed. The rooms, from left to right, are a kitchen, living room, store/post office, and bedroom. The single story roadhouse has a log sill foundation with extensions on either end that are

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Exploration/settlement
Transportation

Period of Significance

1924-1935

Significant Dates

1924, 1925

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Martin, Henry; Martin, Ida

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Tolovana Roadhouse, at the confluence of the Tanana and Tolovana rivers, is associated with events during the twentieth century in the exploration, transportation, and settlement of interior Alaska. It was a major stop for travelers on the Fairbanks to Fort Gibbon sled road, and a riverboat landing for steamboats plying the Tanana River. Later, the roadhouse serviced gold seekers heading up the Tolovana River. The major event in the history of the roadhouse is that it was an exchange station for the diphtheria serum run from Nenana to Nome in 1925.

In 1902 the U.S. Army began construction of the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System line along the Tanana River and completed the Tolovana station within the following year. This station, the ruins of which are 300 feet east of the roadhouse, operated until 1924. The telegraph route became the major overland trail connecting Fairbanks and settlements to the west such as Manley Hot Springs, Tanana, Nulato, and Nome.

Within a year or so of the establishment of the Tolovana telegraph station, John and Annie Riley opened a roadhouse, post office, and store at the site. Structures included a 20 x 30 foot log store, warehouse, bunk house, stable, cabin, and several other buildings. About the same time, steamboats started to operate on the Tanana River. Tolovana became a regular stop where the steamboats would load wood necessary to fuel the engines.

The Northern Commercial Company, holder of the area's U.S. mail contract, upgraded the telegraph trail in 1906. The next year the Alaska Road Commission began improving the 115-mile trail to sled road standard, and completed the work in 1908. Particularly during the winter, mail and freight were carried over this road until the mid-1930s when airplanes began to take over much of the freight hauling between Fairbanks and points downriver.

In 1910, brothers Andrew and William John Vachon, who had come north during the Klondike gold rush, purchased the roadhouse and adjacent lands. The brothers were well-known entrepreneurs along the Tanana River. W. John Vachon, known as "Captain"

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Alaska Road Commission. Report of Operations for the Season of 1907. House Report 2, 60th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 2, p. 24.

_____. Report of Operations for the Season of 1909. House Report 864, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 131, pp. 18-19.

_____. Report Upon the Construction and Maintenance of Military and Post Roads, Bridges, and Trails . . . and Related Works in the Territory of Alaska. Annual Report of Operations for the Season of 1922. Part II, p. 51. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1922.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
 - previously listed in the National Register
 - previously determined eligible by the National Register
 - designated a National Historic Landmark
 - recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 - recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- N/A

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 5 acres

UTM References

A

0	6
---	---

3	6	7	0	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

7	1	9	4	2	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

B

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description Lands located within the NE 1/4 of the SE 1/4, T1S, R11W, Fairbanks Meridian, more particularly described as: a portion of U.S. Survey 2350, beginning at Witness Corner 4, a 3' iron post with brass cap, proceed S 55°55'W, 660' to TBM 4B, thence N 36°35'W, 330' to TBM 4C, thence N 55°55'E, 660' to TBM 4D, located on the eastern edge of U.S. Survey 2350, thence S 36°35'E, 330' to Witness Corner 4, U.S. Survey 2350, the true point of beginning, containing 5 acres more or less.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification The boundary includes the existing roadhouse and outbuildings that have historically been part of Tolovana Roadhouse. The original trading post ruins and the ruins of several other structures have been excluded because the riverbank where they stood has eroded away.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Peter M. Bowers, Consulting Archaeologist

organization _____ date August 27, 1986*

street & number P.O. Box 80532 telephone (907) 455-6528

city or town Fairbanks state Alaska zip code 99708

*Revised December 30, 1987 and August 2, 1988

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 25 1986

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2 Tolovana Roadhouse AHR Site No. FAI-241

defined by spliced lap notched log joints. The purlins and ridgepoles are joined by scarf joints. The log walls are doweled with square wooden pegs and chinked with oakum. The walls retain their original surface finish of varnish on the inside with cream-colored paint on the outside.

The original hipped roof was corrugated metal, fastened with lead-gasket nails. The sub-roofing consisted of rough-cut, locally milled 2 x 6 and 2 x 10 inch spruce boards, nailed directly onto the purlins and ridgepoles. Between the metal and lumber was a layer of tarred paper and rough cut 1 inch boards of various widths. Rough cut 2 x 4's on 4 inch centers were used as nailers.

All walls of the roadhouse are supported by sill logs resting directly on the ground. The bottom logs are bermed, and there has been some rotting of the lowest round. Several areas beneath doorways were found to contain poured concrete pads. The original floor consisted of rough cut 2 x 4 inch joists laid on edge directly on the ground on 24 inch centers. Underlayment of 3/4 inch tongue and groove boards was diagonal with a finished floor of 3/4 inch tongue and groove boards laid perpendicular to the joists. The floor "floats" in its location and is completely independent of the log walls.

Windows were 4 x 4 casement and sliding sash; only one original window is intact. The jams remain intact for the window and door openings and are nailed directly onto the log ends. The original doors were of two types: plain, made from locally-milled lumber; or flush, with transoms.

The roadhouse has not been significantly altered since 1926. It has deteriorated since its abandonment 20 years ago, but remains in sound structural shape. Portions of the roof and some doors and windows have been stolen over the years. In 1986 the foundation, floor, windows, doors, and roof were repaired. Rotted logs were replaced and below-grade concrete pads were placed under the walls at intersections. The floors, rebuilt on concrete pads, retain their independence from the walls. The windows were replaced with 1920s windows salvaged from a building in Fairbanks; the sashes and muntins are virtually identical. The missing plain, tongue-and-groove 2 x 6 inch doors with transoms were reproduced. The 2 x 6 inch rotted decking on the roof was replaced; 2 x 6 inch rafters were added on 24 inch centers; insulation and a vapor barrier were also added. Missing steel roofing was replaced with in-kind metal roofing. This work met requirements for certification by the Secretary of the Interior on December 17, 1986, as part of a tax certification project.

The other buildings at the site are a storage building, a power plant shelter, and an outhouse. All were built between the late 1920s and early 1930s. The storage building (cache) and the power plant shelter are of native spruce logs approximately 6

AUG 25 1988

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3 Tolovana Roadhouse AHRS Site No. FAI-241

to 8 inches in diameter. The outhouse is framed lumber. Each of the buildings served as a secondary, support structure for the roadhouse. All three are associated with Ida and Henry Martin's ownership of the roadhouse between 1923 and 1945.

The 16 x 18 foot power plant building has a flat, shed roof planked with rough sawn 1 x 8 inch and 1 x 10 inch lumber, showing evidence of tar paper between two layers of wood. There is a 2 x 2 foot window opening in the south side, and a 2'-6" x 5'-10" door on the east side. Neither the door nor the window are in place. The building was built with a dirt floor. There are no special features or utilities.

The 4 x 6 foot, single-hole outhouse is constructed of rough-sawn 1 x 8 inch plank siding applied vertically on a 2 x 4 inch frame. The shed is roofed with galvanized iron.

The storage building was built to stand about seven feet above ground on four legs. The four support logs have collapsed but the cache remains in approximately the same location, standing on the ground. The 10x16 foot, notched log building has gable ends but no roof. The plank floor is in place, though no doors or windows remain. There are no special features or utilities.

While the outbuildings were present during the period of significance, due to changes over time the storage building does not have physical integrity and is considered a non-contributing feature. The power plant building and outhouse are considered contributing features.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 25 1988

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2 Tolovana Roadhouse AHRS Site No. FAI-241

from his stint as head of the Dawson City Fire Department, became proprietor of the roadhouse.

Within a year after the Vachons took possession of the roadhouse, it burned to the ground. "Captain" and Louise MacLellan Vachon's three youngest children died in the fire. The Fairbanks Daily News-Miner described the fire as by far the worst tragedy in the history of the Tanana Valley. The Vachons rebuilt their wilderness trading post. Between 1911 and 1921 many well-known Alaskans stopped at the roadhouse, including Titus Alexander, traditional chief of the Tanana Athapaskans, Hudson Stuck and Julius Jette, missionaries, Leonard Seppala, legendary Alaskan dog musher, and James Wickersham, Alaska's delegate to Congress. Virtually all winter travelers going between Fairbanks and points west stayed at the roadhouse.

When gold was discovered near the headwaters of the Tolovana River in 1914, that stream became an avenue for commerce. People and freight moved by steambot from the river's mouth upstream about 80 miles, then were portaged several miles, then were lightered the remaining 60 miles to the gold diggings. The roadhouse was at the crossroads for the activity.

John Vachon died in 1920. The Fairbanks News-Miner's obituary hailed him as the "pioneer of the Lower Tanana" who "had been associated with upbuilding of interior Alaska since the earliest days of the mining camps, and in later years has conducted a Trading Post at the mouth of the Tolovana River, which was a stopping place for all who travelled the lower river trails." After her husband's death, Louise MacLellan Vachon left the roadhouse when she married Edward R. MacFarland, who had been stationed at the Tolovana telegraph station several times while he had supervised maintenance of the telegraph line.

In 1921 the Tolovana Trading Post burned to the ground, apparently the result of a fire deliberately set by a caretaker. Travelers, most frequently mail carriers, used a bunkhouse still standing at the site for several years.

In 1923 Henry W. Martin moved to Tolovana, and in 1924 he and his wife Ida built the existing Tolovana Roadhouse. The building was constructed behind the location of the old trading post and about 300 feet from the riverbank. Louise Vachon MacFarland sold the land and all remaining effects at Tolovana to the Martins in 1925. Throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, traffic through Tolovana continued to support a comfortable living for the owners. During the summers, U.S. Geological Survey exploration parties stayed at the roadhouse.

In January, 1925, the event of greatest historical significance to Tolovana took place, the world-famous Nome serum run. A 20-pound package of diphtheria antitoxin was rushed via dog team relays from the railhead at Nenana to the threatened city of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 25 1988

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 3 Tolovana Roadhouse AHRS Site No. FAI-241

Nome. The serum was taken inside the Tolovana Roadhouse to warm it up after "Wild Bill" Shannon, the mail carrier for the Northern Commercial Company and former soldier from Fort Gibbon at Tanana, made the 52-mile run between Nenana and Tolovana. Musher Edgar Kallands carried the serum from Tolovana to the next relay point at Manley Hot Springs. The package reached Nome in a record 12 days via the 674-mile Nenana to Nome trail. Each driver later received a medal and certificate from President Calvin Coolidge, and a statue of Balto, Gunner Kasson's lead dog, was erected in New York's Central Park. The Tolovana Roadhouse and the Cape Nome Roadhouse on the Seward Peninsula are the only structures that remain to commemorate this remarkable, internationally-recognized event.

Increased airplane travel beginning in the 1930s replaced much of the overland travel in interior Alaska. Traffic declined along the Tanana River and the Fairbanks mail trail. The Martins sold the roadhouse in 1945. From then to the present, the building passed ownership no fewer than five times. It was patented as a federal homestead in 1946, and operated on-and-off under various owners as a wilderness lodge, store, post office, and sawmill.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 25 1988

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2 Tolovana Roadhouse AHRS Site No. FAI-241

Esau, D. Interview, 1980. On file at University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Archives.

Esau, L. Interview with Dianne Gudgel-Holmes, 1984, Nenana. Interview with Pete Bowers, 1986, Nenana.

Esau, P. Interview with Pete Bowers, 1986, Nenana.

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. "Fire Victims Laid at Rest," November 20, 1910.

_____. Obituary, November 29, 1920.

Fairbanks District Recorder's Office. Bill of Sale Records, vol. 1, 1907-1910.

_____. Deeds, vol. 2, 1910-1927.

Jette, Julius. Correspondence, Vachons. Microfilm 96, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Archives.

New York Times. "Diphtheria Rages in Nome," January 28, 1925.

_____. "Dogs Rush Anti-Toxin for Nome Epidemic," January 29, 1925.

_____. "Nome Relief Dogs Speed 192 Miles," January 30, 1925.

Stuck, Hudson. Ten Thousand Miles With a Dog Sled: A Narrative of Winter Travel in Interior Alaska. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1914.

_____. Voyages on the Yukon and its Tributaries: A Narrative of Summer Travel in Interior Alaska. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1917.

Tanana Leader. "Vachon Brothers Go Into Business," July 7, 1910.

Tewkesbury, D.B. and W. Tewkesbury. Tewkesbury's Who's Who in Alaska and Alaska Business Index. Seattle: Lowman and Handford, 1947.

U.S. Department of the Interior. Homestead Entry - Henry W. Martin. RG 49, Serial Patent File 1122911. Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1946.

Vachon, A. Correspondence. Tanana Collection, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Archives.

Vachon, M. Collection. University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Archives.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 25 1988

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____ Tolovana Roadhouse AHRS Site No. FAI-241

Photograph Identification

1. Tolovana Roadhouse (AHRS Site No. FAI-241)
Vicinity of Nenana, Alaska
Peter Bowers
1984
Douglas Bowers, P.O. Box 281, Nenana, Alaska 99760
View to the north
2. Tolovana Roadhouse (AHRS Site No. FAI-241)
Vicinity of Nenana, Alaska
Peter Bowers
January 1986
Douglas Bowers, P.O. Box 281, Nenana, Alaska 99760
Detail of bedroom wing
3. Tolovana Roadhouse (AHRS Site No. FAI-241)
Vicinity of Nenana, Alaska
Peter Bowers
January 1986
Douglas Bowers, P.O. Box 281, Nenana, Alaska 99760
Detail of original door
4. Tolovana Roadhouse (AHRS Site No. FAI-241)
Vicinity of Nenana, Alaska
Peter Bowers
January 1986
Douglas Bowers, P.O. Box 281, Nenana, Alaska 99760
View to the northwest
5. Tolovana Roadhouse (AHRS Site No. FAI-241)
Vicinity of Nenana, Alaska
Peter Bowers
January 1986
Douglas Bowers, P.O. Box 281, Nenana, Alaska 99760
View to the north
6. Tolovana Roadhouse (AHRS Site No. FAI-241)
Vicinity of Nenana, Alaska
J.B. Mertie (#442)
Circa 1920
U.S. Geological Survey, Denver, Colorado
View to the north

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

AUG 25 1988

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____ Tolovana Roadhouse AHRS Site No. FAI-241

Photograph Identification (continued)

7. Tolovana Roadhouse (AHRS Site No. FAI-241)
Vicinity of Nenana, Alaska
P.S. Smith (#1808)
Circa 1920-1924
U.S. Geological Survey, Denver, Colorado
View to the east

8. Tolovana Roadhouse (AHRS Site No. FAI-241)
Vicinity of Nenana, Alaska
P.S. Smith (#1810)
1924
U.S. Geological Survey, Denver, Colorado
View to the northwest

9. Tolovana Roadhouse (AHRS Site No. FAI-241)
Vicinity of Nenana, Alaska
J.B. Mertie (#1986)
1935
U.S. Geological Survey, Denver, Colorado
View to the northwest

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 25 1988

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____ Tolovana Roadhouse AHR Site No. FAI-241

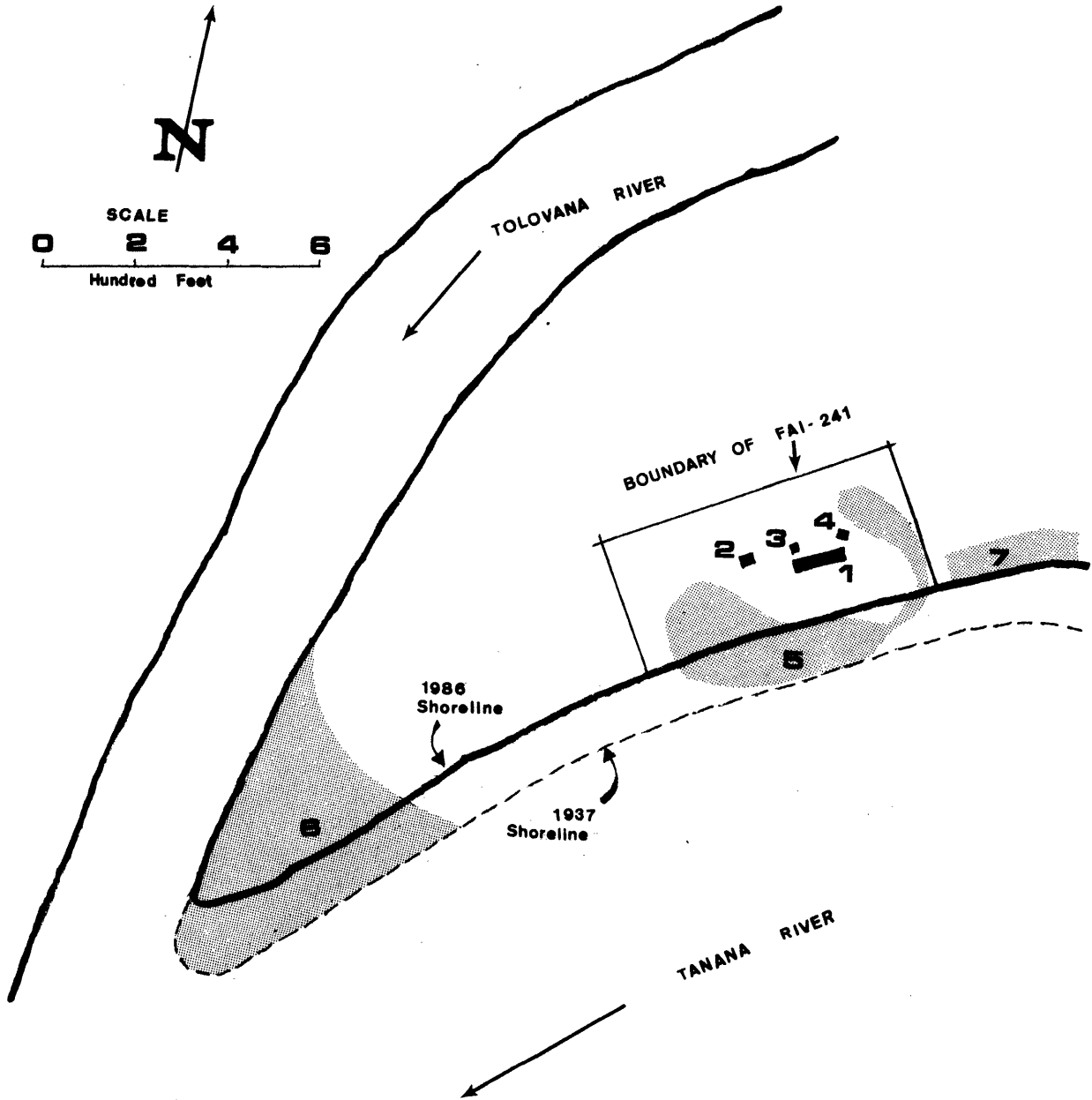
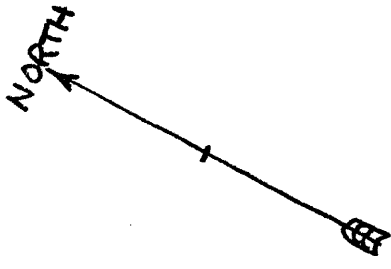


FIGURE 2: Survey data based on 1986 field survey by P. Bowers and original field notes and plat of U.S. Survey 2350, dated June 30, 1937. Redrawn by P. Chattey, June 1988.



TOLOVANA ROADHOUSE

SCALE: 1 IN. = 1 FT.

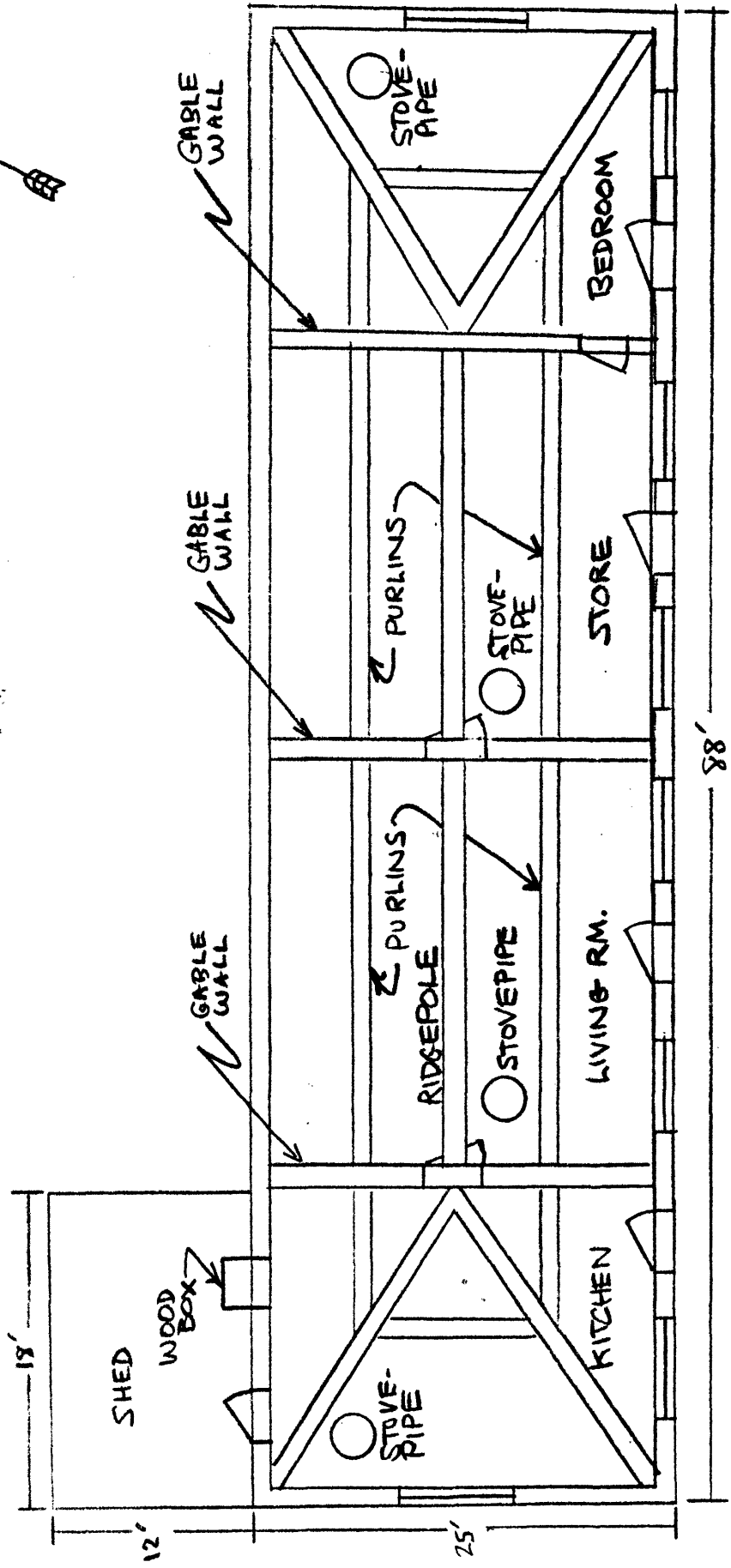


Fig. 1 Plan view of Tolovana Roadhouse (FAI-241).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

AUG 25 1988

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____ Tolovana Roadhouse AHRS Site No. FAI-241

Table No. 1

(Refer to Figure 2)

<u>Feature No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
1	Roadhouse	Contributing
2	Log Power Plant	Contributing
3	Outhouse	Contributing
4	Storage Building (Cache)	Non-contributing
5	Location of ruined buildings	Non-contributing
6	Site of former Native village/ camp	Outside boundaries of nomination
7	Site of former telegraph station	Outside boundaries of nomination