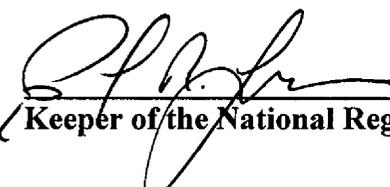




United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

The attached property, **Anvil Creek Gold Discovery Site** in Nome County, ALASKA, reference number 66000159, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places by the Keeper of the National Register on 10/15/1966, as evidenced by the FEDERAL REGISTER/WEEKLY LIST notice of Tuesday, February 6, 1979, Part II, Vol.44, No. 26, page 7421. The attached nomination form is a copy of the original documentation provided to the Keeper at the time of listing.



Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places

3/23/09
Date

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Revised

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

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|---|--|
| 1. STATE Alaska | 2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. XXI (Alaska History); XVI (Alaska Aboriginal Culture) |
| 3. NAME(S) OF SITE Anvil Creek Gold Discovery Site and Nome (Anvil City) | 4. APPROX. ACREAGE Gold Site - 2 acres |
| 5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) Nome is situated on the southern coast of the Seward Peninsula, and on the shore of Norton Sound and the Bering Sea. The Anvil Creek Gold Discovery Site is located on the east bank of Anvil Creek, approximately four and one-quarter miles north of the city of Nome. | |
| 7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant) | |

The discovery of gold at Anvil Creek on September 20, 1898, was the first large gold placer strike to be made in Alaska proper. The resulting rush to Nome in 1899-1900 was Alaska's greatest gold stampede, both in its yield of precious metals and in its influence in increasing the territory's population. The discovery attracted at least 12,488 gold-seekers to a region that had been previously inhabited by only a handful of whites and its gold fields yielded a total of \$57,360,000 from 1898 to 1910.

In 1897 a small expedition of three miners led by Daniel B. Libby was outfitted in San Francisco to prospect in the Golovnin Bay region of Norton Sound. Libby had been with the Western Union Telegraph Expedition in 1866, and had prospects on the Niukluk River at that early date. In March, 1898, his party discovered gold in Melsing Creek, a tributary of the Niukluk River. On April 25 they organized the El Dorado Mining District. Council City was founded in the summer of 1898 on the Niukluk River as the first mining camp on the Seward Peninsula. About \$75,000 in gold was produced by the 200 miners working at this camp in 1898.

Other prospectors continued the search, and on September 20, 1898, three Scandinavians--Jafet Lindenberg, Erik Lindblom, and John Bryateson--ex-reindeer herder, ex-sailor of a whaling ship, and a miner, respectively--struck the rich placer deposits of gold on Anvil Creek at a place located about four and one-quarter miles north of the future site of Nome. They succeeded in extracting about \$1,800 in gold from the gravels of Anvil Creek and Snow Gulch with their crude equipment. The news spread and 40 miners from Council City rushed to the new strike. On October 18, 1898, the Cape Nome Mining district was organized and claims were filed on 7,000 acres.* As rumors of the discovery continued to spread in Alaska, many men came.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works)

(Continued)

See page 8.

9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, or, NPS study, HABS, etc.)

Map Reference: U.S.G.S. Nome (C-1, B-1) Quadrangles, Alaska, 1950. Charles W. Snell, "Special Report on the Anvil Creek Gold Discovery Site near Nome, Alaska, together with a Brief History of Gold Mining and Mining Rushes in Alaska, 1865-1910."

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|---|---|------------------------------------|
| 10. PHOTOGRAPHS 2310, 2613, 2617, 2615 | 11. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) See above | 12. DATE OF VISIT July 20, 1967 |
| 14. NAME OF REORDERER (Signature) Charles W. Snell | 15. TITLE Historian | 16. DATE July 29, 1965 |

* COPY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-517a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS
SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

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| STATE Alaska | NAME(S) OF SITE Anvil Creek Gold Discovery Site and Nome (Anvil City). |
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7. Continued:

from St. Michael and even from Circle and Eagle on the Upper Yukon River. By the middle of May, 1899, Nome, then called Anvil City, had a population of about 250. By late June, with further arrivals from the Upper Yukon and Dawson, the population in the tent city of Nome reached about 1,700 and \$2,800,000 in placer gold was produced in 1899.

By the fall of that year, Nome's population numbered about 3,000. Its inhabitants were sheltered in a few score of frame and galvanized-iron buildings and in several hundred tents and low driftwood cabins. These buildings were irregularly distributed along both sides of a muddy street, a mile in length, which extended close to the edge of the tundra. Back of the settlement stretched the bleak tundra, and the front was bounded by the surf-swept beach. From 1898 until the middle of July, 1899, mining was restricted to the small area adjacent to Anvil Creek, which was completely claimed. As a result of this situation only about 700 of the 1,700 prospectors at Nome were able to mine. This threatening situation was suddenly relieved in an unexpected manner.¹ It was accidentally discovered that the beach sands on which the town was situated were also rich in placer gold. All the idle men went to work as fast as they could obtain crude rockers. As it gradually became known that the beach sands for several miles were gold-bearing and could be made to yield from \$20 to \$100 a day to the man, a veritable frenzy seized the people of Nome. A large part of the population went to work with shovels and rockers. During the height of the excitement it is estimated there were 2,000 men engaged in beach mining. The yield of the beach placers in 1899 is estimated to have totaled more than \$1,000,000, and this was practically all taken out with hand rockers in July and August. By January 10, 1900, about 4,500 claims were recorded in the Cape Nome District, but probably not more than 50 claims were developed and no more than 100 even prospected. These 50 claims, however, yielded about \$1,800,000 in gold in 1899. The beach mining operations were highly dramatic, but not of permanent commercial significance, for the richest part of the Nome beach was worked out in 1899.

¹In February, 1899, the U. S. Army rushed troops to Nome from St. Michael to help preserve order. In 1900 Fort Davis was established 2 miles southeast of Nome.

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| STATE Alaska | NAME(S) OF SITE Anvil Creek Gold Discovery Site and Nome (Anvil City). |
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7. Continued:

The news of the Nome strikes reached the outside world in the fall of 1899 and the big rush occurred in 1900. By June its population had reached 12,488, or more than one-third of the 30,493 whites reported by U. S. Census as being in Alaska in 1900. By July 1 nearly 50 ships had discharged passengers and freight on the beach, bringing an estimated total of more than 20,000 people to the Seward Peninsula. Nome was boom town comprised of a solid row of tents and huts stretched along five miles of the beach and also including some 50 frame buildings. Late in the summer of 1900, Charles D. Land constructed the Seward Peninsula Railway, a narrow gauge railroad, from Nome to the Anvil Creek area, thus making the rich placers accessible. The placers served by this railroad yielded gold in 1900 as follows: Anvil Creek, \$1,750,000; Glacier Creek, including Snow Gulch, \$750,000, and Dexter Creek, \$300,000. The Nome beach, in 1900, however, produced only \$350,000, and the high bench placers near Nome, \$145,000. Total yield of the Nome and Seward Peninsular placers in 1900 was \$4,750,000. By the fall of 1900 thousands of discouraged and disgusted miners had left Nome and the big rush was over.

Between 1900 and 1902 Nome unfortunately experienced a turbulent controversy over its mining claims, due in part to the activities of a corrupt federal judge. In spite of these difficulties, mining activities spread rapidly from Nome's beaches to the entire Seward Peninsula. By 1902 the readily worked surface placers had been completely exhausted and the remaining prospectors left. Mining companies with the large amount of capital and expensive machinery necessary to work the deep placers then took over Nome's gold fields. Gold production reached its peak in 1906, but thereafter began to decline gradually. Nome during this period developed from a mining camp into a city complete with schools, theaters, banks, churches and paved streets. With falling gold production, however, Nome's population also declined. With 2,600 in 1910, Nome was Alaska's second largest city.

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| STATE Alaska | NAME(S) OF SITE Anvil Creek Gold Discovery Site and Nome (Anvil City) |
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7. Continued:

Between 1899 and 1910, the Seward Peninsula placers yielded a total of \$57,079,000 in gold, of which \$46,436,500 came from the Nome goldfields.

The Nome Gold Rush's influence on gold production and population are shown on the following charts:

Chart 1. Nome's Gold Production, 1899-1910.

| Year | Nome Fields | Total Seward Peninsula |
|---|--------------|------------------------|
| 1899 | \$ 2,800,000 | \$ 2,800,000 |
| 1900 | 3,433,500 | 4,750,000 |
| 1901 | 3,520,000 | 4,130,000 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Subtotal: Rush, - 1899-1901 | \$ 9,553,500 | \$ 12,680,000 |
| <hr/> | | |
| 1902 | \$ 3,150,000 | \$ 4,560,000 |
| 1903 | 2,900,000 | 4,465,000 |
| 1904 | 2,864,000 | 4,164,000 |
| 1905 | 3,400,000 | 4,800,000 |
| 1906 | 6,100,000 | 7,500,000 |
| 1907 | 5,559,000 | 7,000,000 |
| 1908 | 5,120,000 | 5,120,000 |
| 1909 | 4,290,000 | 4,290,000 |
| 1910 | 3,500,000 | 3,500,000 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Totals | \$46,436,500 | \$ 57,079,000 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Total Placer Gold Production in Alaska, 1880-1910 | | \$128,180,500 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Total of Placer & Lode Gold | | \$178,609,876 |

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| STATE Alaska | NAME(S) OF SITE Anvil Creek Gold Discovery Site and Nome (Anvil City) |
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7. Continued:

Chart 2. Seward Peninsula White Population, 1890-1910.

| | 1890 | 1900 | 1910 |
|--------------|-------|--------|---------------------|
| Fort Davis | 0 | 0 | 180 |
| Nome | 0 | 12,488 | 2,600 |
| Council City | 0 | 0 | 289 |
| Total | 0 | 12,488 | 3,069 |
| Total Alaska | 4,298 | 30,493 | 36,400 ¹ |

Present Appearance of the Anvil Creek Discovery Site and Related Sites Located in Nome.

The Gold Discovery Site is located on the east bank of Anvil Creek, about four and one-quarter miles north of the city of Nome, near the point where the creek emerges from its valley and enters the coastal plain. The Discovery Claim was one of the richest placer sites found in Alaska and yielded more than \$5,000,000 during the first five years. This area, set in a valley, with the low, treeless Anvil Peak lying to the east, has been abandoned by man and the setting has largely returned to nature as it was in 1898.

The first beach line, on which Nome was built and gold was accidentally discovered in July, 1899, has been largely covered by a large stone breakwater constructed to protect Nome from erosion by the powerful currents of the Bering Sea. The second and third beach lines, which are located to the north of Nome, have been deserted and have returned to a state of nature. Only two or three gold dredges are still active.

Remains of the narrow-gauge Seward Peninsula Railroad, built in 1900 and abandoned in 1922, are to be found on the slopes of Anvil Mountain to the north of the city. The remnants of this railroad, which ran from Nome to Taylor, 97 miles in the interior, include a few rusty rails still in place, an engine cab, several extremely battered flat cars, and two badly dilapidated frame shacks or "stations".

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7. Continued:

With but three exceptions, all gold rush period buildings in Nome have been destroyed by the various hurricanes and fires that have several times swept the city.

The three surviving historic structures are:

1. The Erik Lindblom Cabin, located at 431 Main Street. This one-story log cabin was the home of Erik Lindblom, a miner and one of the three Scandinavian prospectors who discovered gold at Anvil Creek in September, 1898. The house is in very poor condition.
2. The Methodist Church. Erected in 1902, this frame church was still used for its original purpose in 1961, but was soon due to be replaced by a new church structure being built across the street.
3. Former Roman Catholic Hospital. This large, four-story frame structure was erected in 1906 and utilized as a Catholic hospital. The building now serves as the offices of a mining corporation.

The former site of Fort Davis, 1900-1921, is located two miles east of Nome on the coast. All traces of the military buildings have disappeared.

Here in the vicinity of Nome are also to be found the summer settlements of the King Island Eskimos. These people appear to have been greatly altered in their traditional way of life, due to the close proximity of the city, but still carry on extensive ivory carving, which is produced chiefly for the tourist trade.

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| STATE | NAME(S) OF SITE |
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| Alaska | Anvil Creek Gold Discovery Site and Nome (Anvil City) |

8. Bibliographical References:

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