

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Discovery Claim on Pedro Creek

other name/site number: AHRS Site No. LIV-178

2. Location

street & number: Mile 16.5 Steese Highway

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Fairbanks

vicinity: X

state: AK county: Fairbanks North Star code: 090 zip code: 99707

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private and public-state

Category of Property: site

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. See continuation sheet.

Judith E. Bittner
Signature of certifying official

April 3, 1992
Date

Alaska
State or Federal agency and bureau

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 See continuation sheet.
determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
determined not eligible for the National Register
removed from the National Register
other (explain):

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: industry/processing Sub: extractive facility
extraction

Current: recreation and culture Sub: monument/marker

7. Description

Architectural Classification: N/A

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation N/A roof N/A
 walls N/A other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance. See continuation sheet.

Felix Pedro discovered gold at this site on July 22, 1902. He named the creek and hill above it for himself. The site is located twelve miles north of the center of the City of Fairbanks in the Tanana Hills at Mile 16.5 Steese Highway. Pedro filed his claim notice July 25, 1902, and his claim was recorded on October 20, 1902. In August 1924 a patent survey of the claim was prepared for G.A. Vedin and August Hanot, Sr.

The patent survey noted that the soil on the claim was a sandy loam from five to twenty feet deep with gravel fifteen to twenty feet below that. There was no timber on the claim. The creek adjacent to the claim provided water for sluice mining. At the time of the survey, a reported \$175,000 in gold had been extracted from the claim.

Today, willow, alder, shrubs, and grass have grown over the site obscuring all evidence of mining. A bronze plaque set in stone, a gift from the Italian Government, commemorates the discovery of gold on this site by Italian immigrant Felix Pedro. The Pioneers of Alaska erected the monument on the claim in 1952, when the first Golden Days celebration was held at Fairbanks in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of Pedro's discovery. Each July a rededication of the monument is held on the site by Igloo #4 and Auxiliary #8 of the Pioneers of Alaska. The monument is a non-contributing element on the property. The Alaska Department of Transportation has a highway right-of-way through the claim. Originally, the Steese Highway was north of the claim, but when it was realigned in the 1970s it cut through the northwest corner of the site. Across the highway from the monument is Pedro Creek. From the creek the road and monument are not visible. The intrusions have not destroyed the association of the site with the first gold discovery in the area.

8. Statement of Significance

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, B

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: exploration/settlement

Period(s) of Significance: 1902 _____

Significant Dates: 1902 _____

Significant Person(s): Felix Pedro

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: N/A

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

X See continuation sheet.

On July 22, 1902, Felix Pedro discovered gold in the Tanana Hills along a creek he later named for himself. His discovery lured others to the area and convinced E.T. Barnette to establish a permanent trading post on the banks of the Chena River at the site where the steamboat with his trading goods had gotten stuck the previous year. Thus Pedro's discovery is credited with leading to the establishment of Fairbanks and to the development of gold mining in interior Alaska. A commemorative monument honoring Felix Pedro is located on the discovery site. (The site, not the commemorative monument is being nominated). The Steese Highway separates the monument from the creek where the discovery was made. The majority of the nineteen-acre site, however, is in a natural state resembling its appearance when Pedro discovered the gold there.

As early as 1870 prospectors had found gold in other parts of Alaska--near Sitka in 1870 and at Juneau in 1880 in southeast Alaska, on the Fortymile River near the Alaska-Canada border in 1886, and on the Kenai Peninsula in southcentral Alaska in 1888. In 1894, prospectors discovered gold about 150 miles north of Pedro's discovery site and created the Circle Mining District. The 1896 discovery of gold in Canada's Klondike brought world-wide attention to the riches of the north. Prospectors fanned out over Alaska and the Yukon, finding gold in a number of places. What is important about Felix Pedro's discovery in 1902 is that it led to major mining development and permanent settlement of Alaska's interior.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8

=====
Felix Pedro was the Americanized name of Felice Pedroni, an Italian immigrant. The son of a coal miner, he left Europe in 1881 at the age of 23. He worked his way across the United States in coal mines before heading to Alaska in the mid-1890s. He claimed to have discovered a fabulously rich placer gold site along a creek in the Tanana Hills in 1900 that he never could find again. For two years after this discovery, Pedro worked at mines near Circle City; heading back to prospect in the Tanana Hills whenever he could get enough money to buy supplies.

On July 28, 1902, Felix Pedro made his third trip of the year to E.T. Barnette's supply cache at the mouth of the Chena River. He told Barnette's manager that he had "STRUCK IT." Pedro said he had been working twelve miles to the north with a shovel on a small creek below the hill where he had spotted the smoke of the steamboat the previous August. No one was with Pedro when he made his discovery, and he never talked much publicly about the strike for the remaining eight years of his life. He named the stream Pedro Creek, and called the hill above it Pedro Dome.

In the thirty days following his first strike, Pedro located other discovery claims on four creeks in the shadow of Pedro Dome. He struck it rich on the Pedro Creek Discovery Claim and on at least one other claim he staked in the area. He married in 1906, and after a tour of Europe, he and his wife, Mary, settled in Fairbanks. Pedro died July 22, 1910, eight years to the day from his Pedro Creek discovery, at the age of 52.

When news of Pedro's discovery spread in 1902, a small stampede to the Tanana Hills began. Trader E.T. Barnette, who had opened the temporary trading post on Chena Slough the previous fall when the steamboat, the Lavelle Young, hauling his supplies got stuck there, learned of Pedro's gold discovery when he returned in September. After confirming the news by visiting the site two days after his return, Barnette changed his plans to move his goods up the Tanana River. At the site on the Chena Slough, the town of Fairbanks developed as the major trading center and government headquarters for the area.

During Barnette's visit to Pedro Creek on September 10 a meeting was held in Felix Pedro's tent at Discovery Claim, Pedro Creek. Those attending organized the Fairbanks Mining District and elected Barnette temporary recorder. In a short time, larger, more-expensive mining techniques replaced shovels, gold pans, and sluice boxes to recover placer gold in the mining district. High pressure hydraulic thawing replaced the wood fire method of melting the permanently frozen ground to reach the gold that was six to two hundred feet below the surface. In the 1920s, gold dredges

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8

=====

began working in the Fairbanks Mining District. By 1924, owners of the famous claim had recovered \$175,000 in gold from the site using sluice boxes. At a later date, the U.S. Smelting, Refining and Mining Company, which had a virtual monopoly on gold mining in the area during the 1930s, acquired the claim and a dredge worked along Pedro Creek. On July 17, 1961, the company deeded the claim to Igloo No. 4, Pioneers of Alaska.

Grass and alders have grown at the site and today there is no evidence of mining. Except for a highway that cuts through the northwest portion of the claim and a monument to Pedro adjacent to the road, the claim resembles its appearance at the time of Pedro's discovery.

9. Major Bibliographical References

X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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 #

Primary location of additional data:

- X State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: 19.3 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
A 06 476250 7209520 B 06 476750 7209340
C 06 476370 7209140 D 06 476640 7209330

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

The boundary of Discovery Claim on Pedro Creek is shown on the accompanying drawing that reproduces the plat accompanying Mineral Survey 1750, surveyed August 24, 1924.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

The boundary of the site includes the land surveyed and patented in 1924 which was the 1902 discovery claim boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Oliver Backlund, Trustee

Organization: Igloo #4, Pioneers of Alaska Date: April 14, 1989

Street & Number: P.O. Box 50 Telephone: 907-479-2632

City or Town: Fairbanks State: AK ZIP: 99701

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 9

=====
Capra, Douglas R. "Felice Pedroni: Il Pioniere Italiano," 1984. Copy at
State of Alaska, Office History and Archaeology, P.O. Box 107001,
Anchorage, Alaska 99501.

Colby, Merle. A Guide to Alaska: Last American Frontier (New York:
Macmillan Company, 1944).

Cole, Terrence. E.T. Barnette: The Strange Story of the Man Who Founded
Fairbanks (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing Company, 1981).

Hulley, Clarence C. Alaska, 1741-1953 (Portland, Oregon: Binford & Mort,
1953).

Parker, Genevieve Alice. "The Evolution of Placer Mining Methods in
Alaska," 1929. Thesis prepared for the Alaska Agricultural College &
School of Mines, Fairbanks, Alaska.

Wickersham, James V. Old Yukon: Tales, Trails, Trials (Washington, D.C.:
Washington Law Book Company, 1938).

Wold, Jo Anne. Fairbanks: The \$200 Million Gold Rush Town (Fairbanks:
Wold Press, 1971).

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Photograph Identification

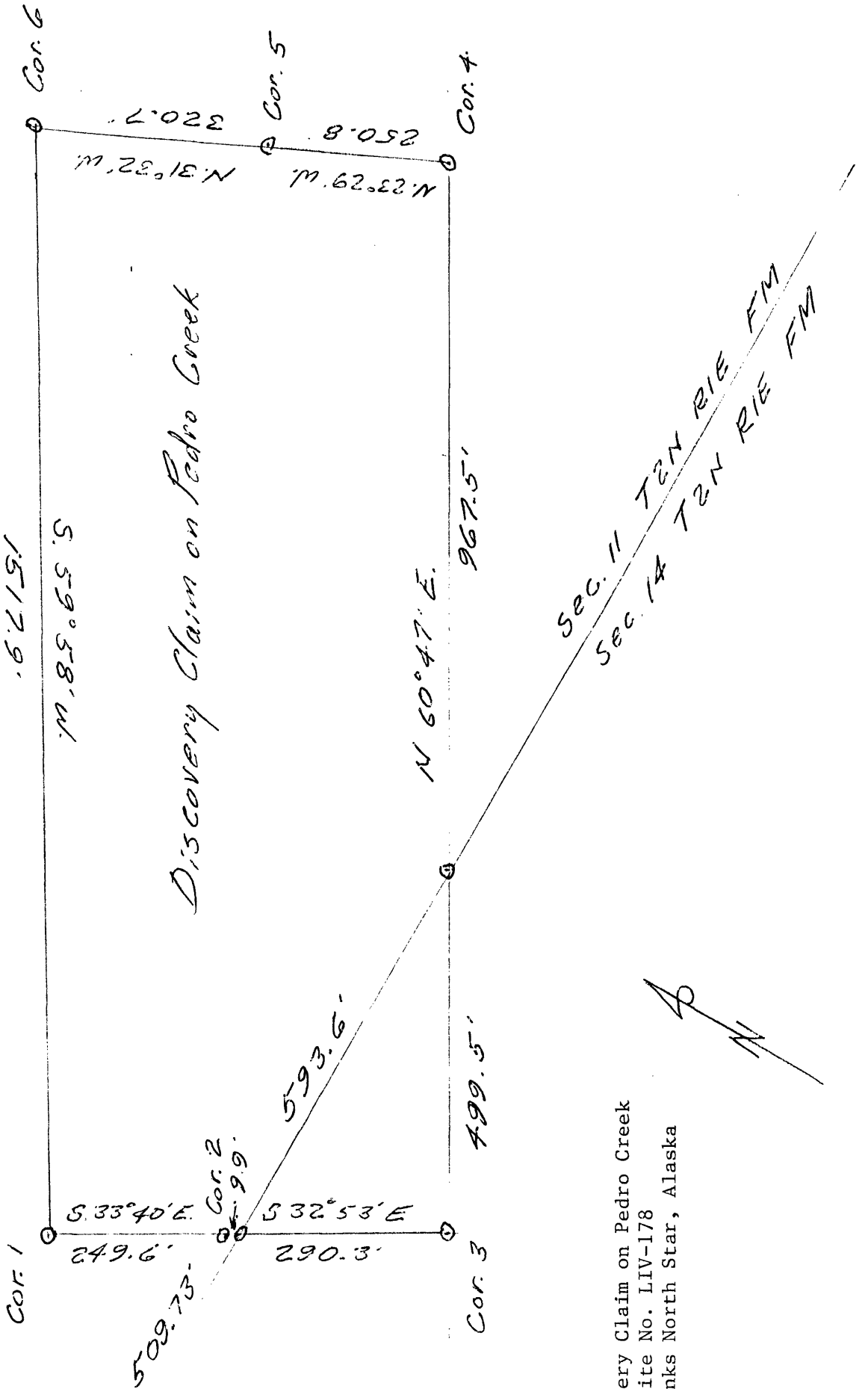
=====

1. Discovery Claim on Pedro Creek (AHRS Site No. LIV-178)
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska
Joan M. Antonson
July 1992
State of Alaska, Office of History and Archaeology, P.O. Box 107001,
Anchorage, Alaska 99510-7001
looking northeast along Pedro Creek at the Discovery Claim site

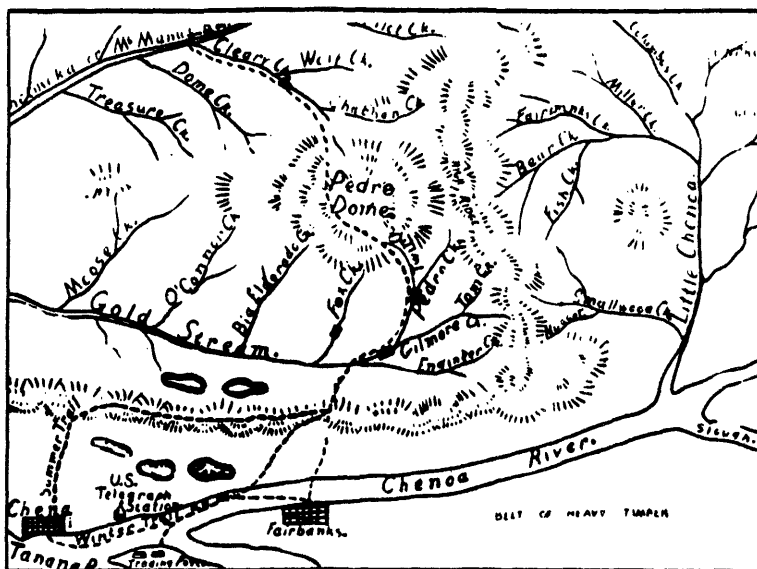
2. Discovery Claim on Pedro Creek (AHRS Site No. LIV-178)
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska
James E. Moody
July 1990
State of Alaska, Office of History and Archaeology, P.O. Box 107001,
Anchorage, Alaska 99510-7001
looking north at Pedro monument, a non-contributing object on the
Discovery Claim site; Pioneers of Alaska member Kathleen "Mike" Dalton
is standing by the monument

Plot of Mineral Survey 1750

Surveyed Aug 24, 1924



Discovery Claim on Pedro Creek
AHRS Site No. LIV-178
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska



A crude map shows Fairbanks and the gold fields. Stampeders used this sketch in 1903 to guide them in their staking. (Dawson Daily News, April, 1903)

Discovery Claim on Pedro Creek
AHRS Site No. LIV-178
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska