

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH066566 DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAR 28 1978

DATE ENTERED JUL 31 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

**

Central House (AHRs SITE NO. CIR-001)

AND/OR COMMON

Central House, Erickson & Stade's

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Mile 128, Steese Highway

AK 6

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Central

__ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Alaska at large

STATE

Alaska

CODE
02

COUNTY

Upper Yukon Division

CODE

250 ✓

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

 BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM (Proposed)

COMMERCIAL

PARK

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Homer O. and Jane N. Williams (907) 456-4979

STREET & NUMBER

333 Glacier Street

CITY, TOWN

Fairbanks

__ VICINITY OF

STATE
Alaska 99701**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

District Recorder (907) 452-1541

STREET & NUMBER

604 Barnett Street

CITY, TOWN

Fairbanks

STATE
Alaska 99701**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRs) (907) 274-4676

DATE

October 3, 1974

__ FEDERAL STATE __ COUNTY __ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Alaska Division of Parks, 619 Warehouse Drive, Suite 210

CITY, TOWN

Anchorage

STATE
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		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The original Central House was a low, sod-roofed one-story cabin with a large porch overhang at the front, located in a pleasant area of Crooked Creek on the South side of the old Circle City-Fairbanks Trail. By the time it was destroyed by fire in 1925, a number of outbuildings associated with the Riley Erickson homestead were in existence as well as the original structures which comprised the small settlement of Central.

When destroyed by fire it was almost immediately rebuilt as a much larger two-story log structure, on the same site, which is the subject nomination.

The large logs are spruce with saddle corner construction, it has a gable roof, insulated with dirt and then covered with heavy gauge galvanized roofing. It has a main bearing wall on each story but not one above the other. It is approximately 52' long 20' wide. Due to creek flooding throughout the years, the bottom three rows of logs have rotted quite severely and sections of the floor has rotted through to the dirt. The roof is fast deteriorating. The original galvanized, corrugated roofing is still in excellent shape and can be re-used. Vandals have broken all windows and torn out some doors. All windows and doors would have to be replaced and well secured. In the style of that day there was a front storm entry that no longer exists. The dry wood storage structure, the cold storage room and the meat cache which completed the structure when operating, are not repairable and would have to be replaced.

A 1926 description of the interior is not available. Today the ground floor is entered by two garage-type doors on the north end. Inside is a large storage area filled with roadhouse fixtures, automobile parts, other miscellany. A partial (off the ground about 10 feet) set of stairs on the west wall provides access to the second floor. At the south end of the ground floor an interior log wall separates the open area from the old kitchen. In the kitchen part of the floor is collapsed into the well. Other areas are strewn with kitchen relics. An opening in the east wall here leads into the remains of the cold storage leanto. The second story is divided into three parts. The stairs from the ground floor lead into the middle of three sections. This middle section is reported to have been the cook's quarters. To the south, over the kitchen, is a compartment screened by framing covered with cloth wallpaper. This was the separate "ladies section". To the north of the cook's quarters, separated by an interior log wall, was the general or "men's" dormitory. Two ropes running down the center of this larger room could be used to hang curtains which then divided the area into sections on either side of a central aisle. A few cot frames are still in this section. The structure sits immediately adjacent to the Steese Highway which is on the west. To the east a former stream bed of Crooked Creek occasionally floods and affects the building. As a result it appears that the exterior walls are sinking while interior walls and flooring are not. cursory investigation indicates that removal of the structure to an adjacent location with better soil conditions may be appropriate. The main roadhouse building had a number of outbuildings such as a barn, cold--storage log cabin, a blacksmith's shop, several protected stalls which housed wagons; and later a model T Ford, Johnny Palm's freight truck and the Circle-Fairbanks stage. None of the outbuildings stand today.

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 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1894, 1926

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Riley Erickson and John Stade

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Central House, beginning with construction of the original building in 1894 and continuing with reconstruction in the same location in 1926, served as the social locus for the miners of the Birch River drainage creeks. Today it stands as the Historical focus of the Central area for the residents, most of whom arrived as the last few original pioneer miners of the area were passing. In the words of the Circle District Historical Society "The times have changed within a short 50 years. Miners, with their large equipment and motor homes, still come into the area but have no need for a roadhouse. To preserve this roadhouse and stop the clock will remind us once again of the spirit, fortitude, and hope of an earlier time."

Historical Background

With the discovery of gold, in 1893, at Mammoth, Mastodon and Preacher Creeks--a centrally-located roadhouse between the diggings to the west and south and the major Yukon River supply center of Circle City, was a logical development. The original roadhouse on this site for this reason was named "Central House." It was probably built by early 1894; and was reported in existence by Spurr (USGS) in 1896. Within eight years, new gold discoveries north of Fairbanks, increased travel between the new camp of Fairbanks and Circle. Central House was a magnet which also attracted other settlers and slowly developed as the nucleus of the community of Central, with a postoffice being established in 1925. Plans were revealed for replacement of the Circle-Fairbanks pack-trail with a much improved "Steese Highway". Then, in 1925 this first Central House was destroyed by fire. It was replaced, on the same site, by the larger and "finer" two-story log structure which was in operation in 1926 and continued the tradition of hospitality and service for another four decades under the same name.

Riley Erickson (who along with Henry "Old Man" Stade) owned and operated the old as well as the rebuilt Central House, had also acquired homestead patent to adjoining lands. He raised horses and productive vegetable gardens. For some years his chief gardener was Jack Diamond, a colorful retired circus performer. The garden produce, both fresh in season, and preserved, established an enviable culinary reputation for the roadhouse. Erickson was also postmaster from 1925 to 1942. With building of the Steese Highway in 1927, the two partners apparently favored a right-of-way fronting the homestead, so that Central House would not be by-passed, even by a few blocks.

Along with the outbuildings of the homestead, there gradually developed a score of other modest residences and business buildings occupied by Johnny Lake, Albert Bell, Jens Langlow, Tom Kennedy, Simon Soboleff, Mary and Joe Donnelly, Ed Quinlan, Jack Anderson, Heinie and Jet Carstens and the File family. Most of the residents were bachelors, as were the miners and trappers in the outlying districts, so not

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Central House (AHRs SITE NO. CIR-001)

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE

1 of 1

The roadhouse was heated by a large, wood-burning stove for the main room and dining area, and a large wood-burning kitchen range for the kitchen and downstairs bedroom. Heat rose to the upstairs through the stairway and/or was radiated from the metal stove pipes. It was lighted by kerosene and gasoline lamps. Water was brought in from the creek or pumped from the well in the kitchen.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1 of 1

infrequently, one or two cabins were occupied by "girls" of the line. As the Steese Highway developed automotive use, a filling station and garage replaced the horse barn and dog sheds. Transient motorists as well as Johnny Palm's freight truck and the Circle-Fairbanks stage were patrons.

Although the Steese Highway (first mostly corduroy and gravel, then partially paved in 1950) increased traffic through Central, it also decreased the necessity of overnight lodging. Travelers often went through from Fairbanks to Circle without a stop. Patronage became more localized as the roadhouse provided meals more than lodging and was more a social center than an imperative. Mining had become generally a larger scale venture, with bunkhouses provided at the dredges. In the winter, however, some of the idled crews, lived at the roadhouse. The early dredges were steam powered, which required extensive woodcutting for fuel. For a few winters, as many as 20 woodcutters lived and worked out of the Central Roadhouse, cutting the thousands of cords which the Berry Dredge alone would use as fuel the following summer. By 1950, this and other dredges had converted to diesel power. For social and recreational purposes the sumptuous spa resort facilities at Circle Hot Springs, only 9 miles away, were preferred. During the earlier years a hand-cranked phonograph, and later a large radio, provided dancing and listening music at Central House.

Shortly after the death of Riley Erickson in April 1948, the no-longer profitable roadhouse ceased operation. Executors of the estate was the Northern Commercial Company. The company put Les Stevens in to dispose of the stock and "Big Nick" Knutsen tried to operate the roadhouse for a short time but was not successful. At an undertermined time in 1948-49, the business was finally closed. In 1952, the patented homestead lands and all structures including the roadhouse were purchased by Homer O. and Jane Williams. With all other historic roadhouses in the area--Miller House, Tanana, Twelve-Mile, Jump-Off and Faith Creek, having been burned or destroyed, the Circle District Historical Society has developed plans to acquire the roadhouse and an acre of ground for preservation and restoration. It will be used as an historic landmark and museum, as a local historical library and records depository, and as a meeting place and community center.

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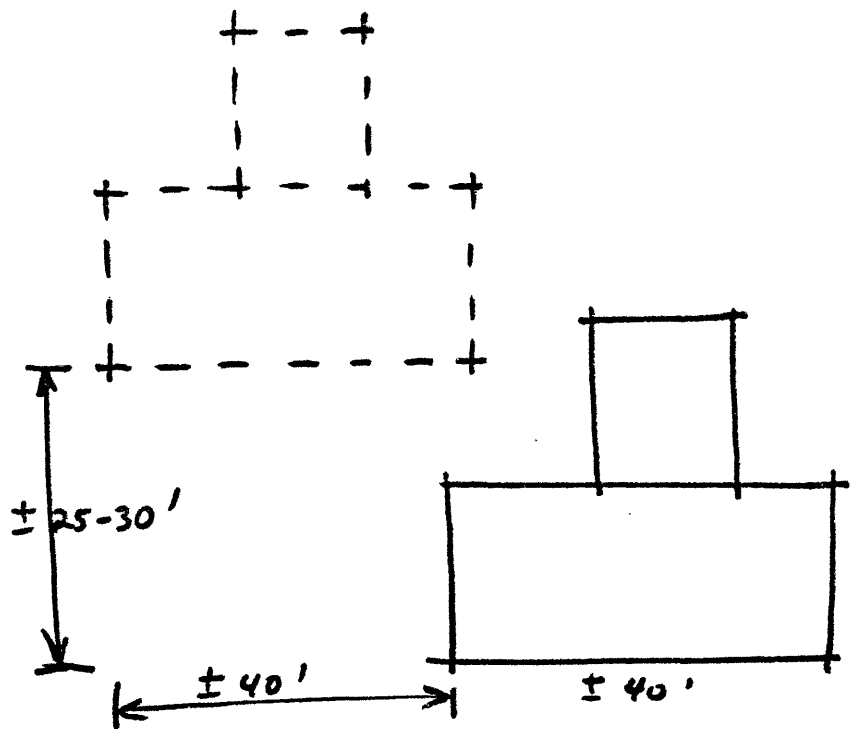
Central House (AHRS SITE NO. CIR-001)

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 1 of 1

Tewkesbury, Who's Who In Alaska, Tewkesbury Publishers, Seattle, Wash., Vol. 1, 1947.
Ricks, Melvin B., Alaska's Postmasters and Postoffices, Tongass Publ., Ketchikan, Ak.,
1965.
Personal interviews and local research by Jane O. Williams, Circle and Fairbanks, 1970-
1977.



Photos Oct '83 Pat Oakes

Central Roadhouse
Proposed Relocation
(see Williams 11/2/84)

State of Alaska
Department of Transportation
& Public Facilities
Interior Region

Computations

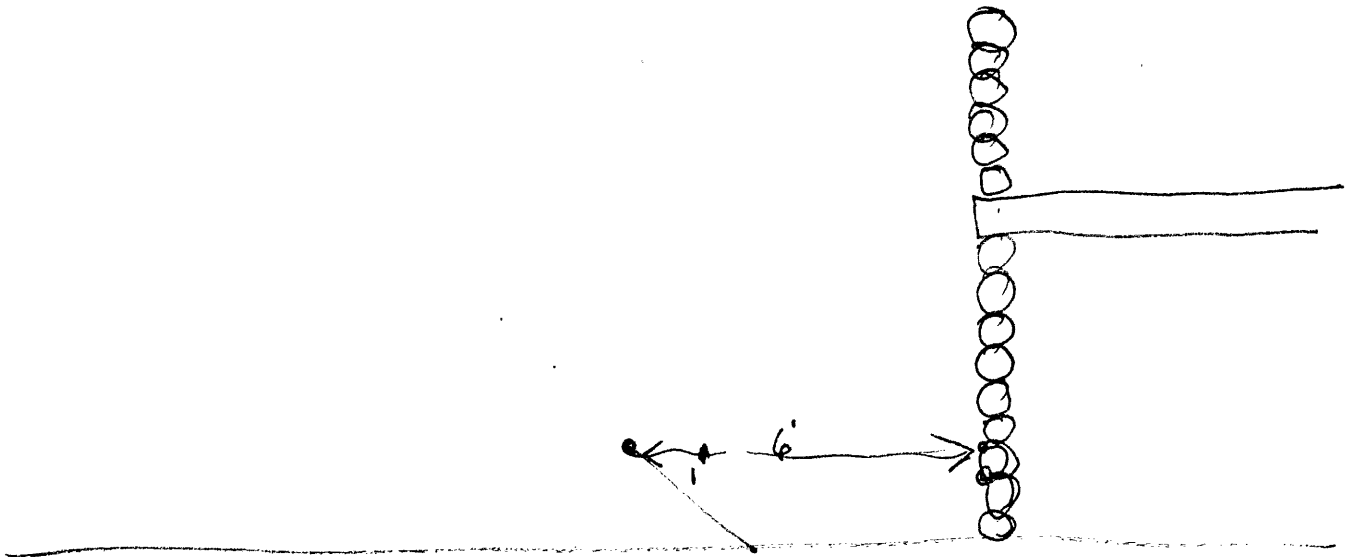
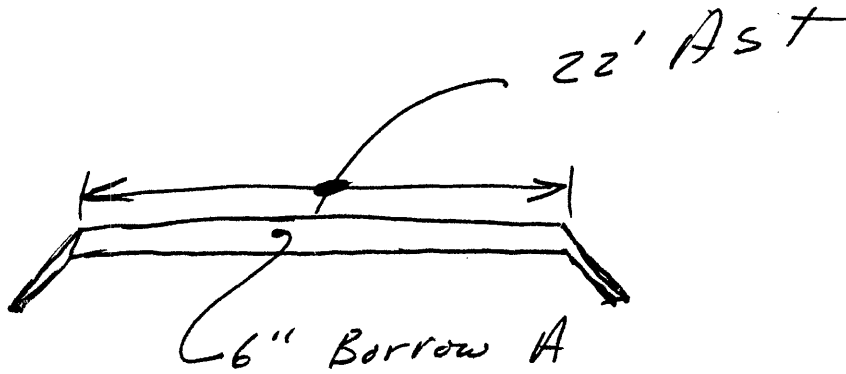
Project No. _____

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Calc. by _____ Date _____

Checked by _____ Date _____

For _____



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