

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

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

For HCRS use only  
received SEP 16 1980  
date entered 3-17-82

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

**1. Name**

historic Chena Pump House (AHS SITE NO. FAI-202)  
and/or common The Pumphouse

**2. Location**

street & number 1.3 mile Chena Pump Rd. not for publication  
city, town Fairbanks vicinity of congressional district Alaska  
state Alaska code 02 county North Star Borough code 090

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Fairweather Inc. (907) 479-8452  
street & number Box 60570  
city, town Fairbanks vicinity of state Alaska 99701

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorders Office (907)452-1541  
street & number 604 Barnette St.  
city, town Fairbanks, state Alaska, 99701

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Alaska Heritage Resources Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date 2-20-80  federal  state  county  local  
depository for survey records Alaska State Div. of Parks, 619 Warehouse Avenue, Suite 210  
city, town Anchorage state Alaska 99501

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" 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 Pump House was once an unprepossessing, tin-sheathed structure which housed the equipment used to pump water from the Chena River, over Chena Ridge to the Gold Dredging operations of the Fairbanks Exploration Company on Cripple Creek, near Ester. It was around 1930 that the Chief Engineer of the Company, which was already operating on Creeks North Of Fairbanks, evolved a scheme for mining Cripple Creek and its tributaries by pumping water from the Chena River up over Chena Ridge. This provided enough pressure to operate the hydraulic giants which were used to strip the overburden. The Pump House was completed and began operations in 1933. It was constructed by the F.E.CO., a subsidiary of United States Smelting, Mining, and Refining Co.

The original building was 20' wide and 108' long, with a shallow gabled bay, 8' deep and 20' wide, projecting from the middle of the south side. A simple gable roof ran the length of the building. It was entirely sheathed and roofed in corrugated sheet metal. Five Skylights spanned the roof gable and gave access to the interior.

On the North side of the building were 5, 2'x4', 12 lite, barnsash windows, evenly spaced, and two, standard sized, wood panal doors, one in the middle of the wall, and one about 15' from the East end, positioned to service the sluiceway which ran along the North side of the building up to the midpoint. On the West end of the building was an 8' wide, sliding barn door at the SW, and a standard door at the NW. A 20' tall timber framed structure, probably supporting a flood gate, occupied the East end of the building, where it fronted on the Chena River. A sliding barn door was on the center of this wall. Simple, painted, 1x4 trimmed all of the openings.

Inside the building were ten, 14", double suction centrifugal pumps rated at 6000 gpm against a 220 ft. head and direct connected to 400 hp electric motors. These pumps were mounted in series, with two to each unit, making five units which delivered the water to the top of Chena Ridge through three, 26" pipelines against a total head of 440 ft. Water was delivered from there through a three mile ditch to the site of the mining operations where it was used for stripping and thawing and for make-up water for the dredge pond when needed.

The F.E.Co. ceased operations in the Ester area around 1958. The Pump House stood abandoned, surrounded by old pipe and mining equipment and overgrown by willows on the banks of the Chena until 1978, when it was reconstructed by its present owners as a restaurant and bar. The basic structure of the building remains unchanged, and the original corrugated siding has been retained. On the interior, the main portion of the original building remains as an unbroken space housing the restaurant and bar. From the inside, the original tin roof can still be seen. A false roof, also covered with metal roofing, has been added to provide space for insulation. The entrance to the building is now on the North side, where a gabled entryway has been added. To the south, a kitchen/service wing has been provided in a tin-covered, flat roofed addition. New doors and windows have been provided throughout. On the exterior, the grounds have been cleared and landscaped, but the sluiceway and equipment to the east and north side of the building remain.

# 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1930                      **Builder/Architect** Fairbanks Exploration Company

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

*See also 19 17/81 1077  
1901 2000 201000*

The significance of the Pump House rests in its association with the gold dredging operations of the U.S.S.R.&M.Co., and in its embodiment of distinctive characteristics of industrial construction of the period, and in the key role it played in the developing technology which culminated in the strip mining of the Cripple Creek area near Ester.

The U.S.S.R.&M. Co. , through its Fairbanks subsidiary, the Fairbanks Exploration Co., operated one of the few large dredging operations in the United States. The company was the largest operator in Alaska with 8 dredges in Fairbanks and an additional 4 at Nome. Between 1928 and 1964, the value of the gold recovered by the company from its Fairbanks operations was \$125,000,000, at a value of \$35 an ounce. Beginning in 1925, the company was the largest single contributor to the economy of the interior until WWII.

The dredging of the Cripple Creek drainage was one of the most complex projects undertaken by the company. The time, effort, and equipment put into developing the prospect suggest that it was probably one of the richest areas mined. The huge Dredge NO. 10, constructed for the project in 1940 was the largest ever operated by the company, and the walking dragline, specially constructed for the stripping of barren gravels unique to the area, was the largest in North America at the time of its construction. The Pump House can be considered a cornerstone of this project, as it was able to supply the water under pressure necessary for the stripping of the overburden, which in this area was up to 150 feet deep. The Parks Highway passes through 4-5 miles of the man-made canyon created by this operation between Gold Hill and Ester. The area still remains in the tailing piles created by the dredge, and the enormity of the topographic change is still evident.

The Pump House, though an unremarkable structure, is typical of industrial construction of the 1930's. A simple, functional design, it is wood framed and covered with the corrugated tin that was the most pervasive building material in the Interior for 50 years, until the Second World War.

Once hidden in overgrown willows, the Pump House is now a landmark on the bank of the Chena River to boaters and float planes in the summer, and dog sledgers, snow machinists, and skiers travelling along the river in winter. It should also be noted that Chena Pump Road was named after the structure and originally terminated at the site. It is the desire of the owners to maintain the Pump House as a reminder of an important era in Fairbanks history.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Boswell, J.C., and Crawford, J.D., "Dredging for Gold in Alaska," Mining and Metallurgy; October, 1948. (U.S. Smelting Co. Issue)

Boswell, J.C., History of Alaskan Operations of United States Smelting and Refining Co.; Mineral Industries Research Lab, Uof A 1979

# 10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreege of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_ (3)

Quadrangle name Fairbanks (D-2)

Quadrangle scale 1: 63 660

UMT References N.E. 1/4 of the N.E. 1/4 sec. 14, Township 1 South, Range 2 West, Fairbanks, Meridian Fairbanks recording district

A 

0	6	4	5	7	9	6	0	7	1	8	9	7	5	5
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

## Verbal boundary description and justification

This site is located on 1.3 Mi Chena Pump Rd. Fairbanks Alaska. The West Boundry is the Chena Pump Rd. The East boundry is the Chena River. The North, is Small Tract road, and the South is Cripple Creek

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

state \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

state \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jane Galblum for Bill Bubell and owners

organization Fairweather Inc. date Feb. 11, 1980

street & number Box 60570 telephone 479-8452

city or town Fairbanks state Alaska

# 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 Douglas R. Keizer

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date 9-2-80

For HCPRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Bruce M. Oring date 3/17/82  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: [Signature] date 12-2-80  
Chief of Registration