

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

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

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

For HCRS use only  
Received SEP 2 1980  
Date entered MAY 20 1980

**1. Name**

historic Ruby Roadhouse (AHRS Site No. RUB-008)

and/or common U.S. Commissioner's Office; Army Signal Corps Station

**2. Location**

street & number Olson Street \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Ruby vicinity of congressional district Alaska at large

state Alaska 99768 code 02 county Aleutian Islands Division code 010

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name James and Elizabeth Hart (907) 468-4400

street & number Olson Street

city, town Ruby vicinity of state Alaska 99768

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Fourth Recording District- Fairbanks Court house (907) 452-1541

street & number 604 Barnett Street

city, town Fairbanks state Alaska 99701

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title U. S. Survey No. 5088 Alaska has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date January 2, 1975  federal  \* state  county  local (AHRS)

depository for survey records U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management

city, town Washington, D.C. state

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	1935
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The present Ruby Roadhouse incorporates the old log cabin built soon after 1911 by "Doc" Frost; Ruby's first medical clinic; and the U.S. Army Signal Corps station; initially built in 1913 as the Oscar Tackstrom residence. This was only two years after the gold-rush camp of Ruby was established. The present roadhouse building, which once housed the First U.S. Army Signal Corps station, was moved by horses down the hill and joined to Doc Frost's old log cabin clinic during the World War I period; thus combining two of the oldest buildings in Ruby.

Doc Frost's log cabin measured 16' by 18'. It is now covered, both inside and out, with wall boards and synthetic sheathing. After the two structures were joined, holes were drilled and interior wall conduits installed to provide for the Signal Corps telegraph wires. These are still visible.

A dirt basement was excavated for the Tackstrom house (built out of untreated wood foundation posts) to provide a large root-cellars for meat and potato storage. This portion of the Roadhouse becomes very damp every spring from snow melt and run-off, and the timbers are rotting--with subsequent settling of above floors, doors and windows (which occurs annually in this area).

The 1935 Roadhouse building continues as a low, sprawling frame structure, with nine original multi-paned windows, each measuring 2' by 3'. The present interior ceiling is stucco, in the living room and dining room; and newer painted plywood in the kitchen. The original 1935 linoleum floor, now badly in need of replacement (but still able to take a wax shine), remains in place throughout; except in part of the kitchen where vinyl tiles were added in 1977.

A water well was drilled near the kitchen area, sometime in the 1920's. It was one of Ruby's first wells, and has served adequately since then. The roadhouse building, over the years, acquired a modernized hot and cold running water system. The old septic tank needs repair and modernization; as does most of the plumbing.

The roadhouse building, since 1935 has measured approximately 30' by 30', with attached 20' by 20' kitchen wing. The exterior is presently covered in red-brick asphalt sheeting; but when built (as seen in old photos) it appears to have been board-and-batten construction. The entire structure has a sound, sheet-metal roof and three fire-brick, insulated, chimneys.

An addition to house more guest rooms was added to the main section shortly after Sig Wiig and his wife Mame purchased the roadhouse. This measures 30' by 60'; with a full concrete basement underneath. The walls of this final addition (like those in the main structure) are both uninsulated, or insulated in the Sourdough tradition with sawdust (which has settled deep down in the wall cavity). The interior ceiling of the entire structure was re-insulated by present owners in 1979; except for the two back rooms of the guest area, where about two inches of air space exists.

## **8. Significance**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</b>							
<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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation				
1911-1912		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)				

**Specific dates** 1913-1918-1935

**Builder/Architect** Oscar Tackstrom, Dr. Frost, Wm. Growden,  
and Mame and Sig Wiig.

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

In its topsy-like sprawl the present Ruby Roadhouse incorporates significant physical fabric of Ruby's founding in 1911; namely, Dr. Frost's log clinic cabin, the first (in Ruby) Army Signal Corps station, and the original Oscar Tackstrom frame family residence. Moved from their original, nearby, sites to the more fortuitous river-front location--in the period between 1918 to 1923--these structures also served as the U.S. Commissioner's office and quarters, an updated second government Signal Station, the Territorial District Courthouse and, in close proximity, the existing storage-shed-barn. In 1935 the structure was enlarged and integrated into Ruby's first and oldest roadhouse by Sig and Mame Wiig. As such, it is a preservation's model, incorporating the fabric--and personifying the events and personages symptomatic of a frontier gold camp--all significantly epitomizing 67 years of Yukon River historiography and life-style.

Within two years after the founding of Ruby, Oscar Tackstrom--bookkeeper for the Paddy McCahey Sawmill--used locally sawed lumber to build the single-room unit, which about 1918 was acquired (and incorporated with a larger structure) to accommodate the U.S. Commissioner's office, Government Signal Station and District Courtrooms by Judge William Growden of Nome (later a mayor of Fairbanks). "Doc" Frost's first cabin was also incorporated in the rambling structure at this time. Frost was the first, and for many years the only medical practitioner in the vicinity. The original Frost cabin, undoubtedly one of the first and oldest surviving structures in Ruby, is intact but undistinguishable underneath a facade of interior wall-board and exterior siding. It presently serves as the bedroom for the latest owners, (Mr. and Mrs. Hart) within the Roadhouse.

Since 1935, the building known as "Ruby Roadhouse" has been a popular lodging and gathering place for mail carriers (dog sled), miners, prospectors, geologists, public officials, Yukon River travellers, and airplane bush pilots and their passengers. It is well remembered as both the original and second U.S. Army Signal Corps station; and since the 1920's as the U.S. Commissioner Office for a large Gold Mining District extending to Poorman, Iditarod, Flat, Cripple Landing and Ophir in the extensive Innoko-Iditarod Mining Districts.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Newspaper files: The Ruby Record 1912-18; Fairbanks News-Miner, 1903-1930.  
Heiner, Virginia Doyle, Alaska Mining History, H&A Series 17, Anchorage, 1977.  
Chase, Will H. The Sourdough Pot, Berton Pub.Co., Kansas City, 1943.  
Hulley, Clarence C., Alaska: Past and Present, Binfords & Mort, Portland, 1958.

## 10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property 1/2 acre

Quadrangle name Ruby (C-5) USGS

Quadrangle scale 1: 63 360

UMT References

A	0 5	3 8 1 4 5 0	7 1 8 1 6 4 0
Zone	Easting	Northing	
C			
E			
G			

B			
Zone	Easting	Northing	
D			
F			
H			

### Verbal boundary description and justification

U.S. Survey 5088 Tract A, Block 20, Lot 2

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

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title James and Elizabeth Hart/Assisted by Michael S. Kennedy, Historian, ADP, Anchorage

organization Ruby Roadhouse (owners) date May 30, 1980

street & number Olson Street telephone (907) 452-1541

city or town Ruby state Alaska 99768

## 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

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date 8/20/80

For NHCPS use only

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

*James M. Adams* date 5/20/80  
keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
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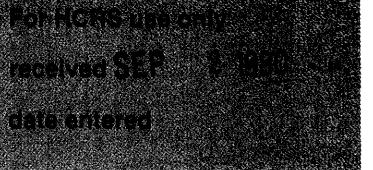
Ruby Roadhouse (AHRS Site No. RUB-008)

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TITLE      Alaska Heritage Resources Survey\*  
              ADP-Office History and Archaeology-Anchorage

DATE      May 1, 1980

CITY, TOWN 619 Warehouse Avenue, Suite 210  
              Anchorage, AK 99510

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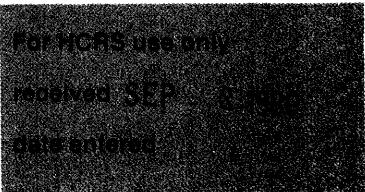
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between roof and ceiling. All windows in this part of the building are similar to those in the main room, and the present exterior sheeting is red-brick asphalt.

The large barn-warehouse, built out of framed lumber cut from Ruby's own sawmill, measuring approximately 50' by 30', stands adjacent to the Roadhouse. This building, with a recent steel roof, is in good condition except for foundation and floor. It is an attractive, weathered, brown wooden building, quite tall, with three double barn doors and hand-forged iron hinges.

The electrical system is now in bad condition. It was not built to hold more recent peak load demands. Originally there was a generator room; but the Roadhouse was hooked up to Ruby City Electric in 1978 and this is now a storage area.

The building is attractively sited on a large half acre river-front plot in the lower elevation section of Ruby, surrounded by mature birch trees, with grassy front and rear lawns. Most of the guest rooms overlook the picturesque, but often rampant, Yukon River.

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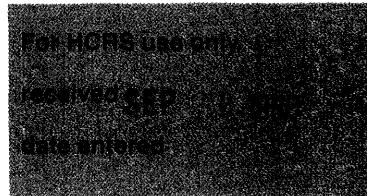
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**EARLIER HISTORY**

The Camp of Ruby developed in 1911 following the first placer gold discovery in 1907, on Long Creek. A "stampede" developed three years later; and a substantial town had grown by 1912. For the next several years the population of Ruby exceeded 1,000 people. Ruby immediately became a supply and communications center for the mines at Long Creek and Poorman (50 miles south), receiving freight by river barge on the Yukon in the summer, and mail by dog team in the winter, and relaying it to the many mines by horse-drawn wagons, dog teams and tractor trains. In 1980 Ruby continues to serve a vast interior gold mining and fur-trapping area.

When Oscar Tackstrom built his residence (out of local lumber) in 1913, he was a bookkeeper for Paddy McCahey's sawmill, and one of Ruby's first families. In 1918 Tackstrom left Ruby, only to be lost with his entire family in the sinking of the "Princess Sophia" on her way to Seattle. This house, the original structure of the later Commissioner's Office and U.S. Army Signal Corps office, was described as "the biggest, nicest home in town" by one of Ruby's old-time residents.

After 1918 William Growden, a judge from Nome, arrived as U.S. Commissioner to run the District Courthouse and the U.S. Signal Corps station as well. The Signal station was connected to the main line on the north bank of the Yukon River by heavy cable strung across the water. All wireless (and later telephone communication) between Nome and Fairbanks was handled through this station. After World War I, Commissioner Growden had the combined structures and services moved down the hill by winches and horse teams to the present location: "A new station employing vacuum tube transmitters established in Ruby in October 13, 1922 (The Army's Role in the Building of Alaska, 4th ed., 1 April, 1969).

It was Judge (and U.S. Commissioner) Growden who combined the old Trackstrom residence with the 1911 log cabin built and used by Doc Frost, (who delivered babies and performed some emergency surgery in Ruby's first clinic). The Frost cabin, which appears in the earliest photos of Ruby, now serves as the owner's cozy interior bedroom in the present Roadhouse.

Alaska District Territorial Court was later held here with Judge Dimond hearing important cases while Commissioner Growden attended other Territorial hearings in Poorman, Flat, Kokrines, Galena and Ophir. Important visitors to the Commissioner's Office (after it became the Ruby Roadhouse) included Julien Hurley, Fairbanks District Attorney; Lynn Smith, 4th Division Territorial Marshall; Pioneer bush pilots Carl Ben Eilson, Jim Dodson, Noel and Sig Wien, and Dr. Bert LaRue, "the flying dentist". After leaving the Commissioner's Office "Judge" William Growden went on to become a Mayor of Fairbanks.

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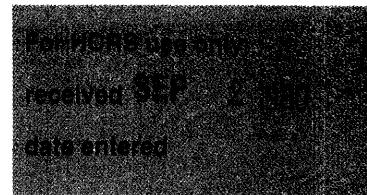
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Since Sig and Mame Wiig, well-known local gold miners, purchased and restructured the Roadhouse in 1935 it has served bush pilots and their passengers, and most other travellers arriving by riverboat, winter trail or dog teams. The large barn adjacent to the Roadhouse, built in the 1920's for accommodation of wagons and dog teams, and later as a storage and freighting station for supplies from Ruby to the mining camps also continues in service.

The Roadhouse has functioned fully as the community social center. Here colorful (and sometimes influential) guests and travellers from Fairbanks, Nome, up and down the Yukon River from Canada continue to gather to with local residents for nightly games, gab sessions, discourse, food, lodging and sometimes riotous ribaldry.

Still on hand and displayed are the Roadhouse guest books (covering a span of more than 50 years). Many of these original furnishings and antiques--some of which were brought to Alaska through the Panama Canal--or up the Yukon River came from the East Coast and New England. The artifacts exhibited in a large display case include original insulators used on the Army telegraph line; three brass hose-nozzles from Ruby's first Fire Department (about 1917), a brass and wicker scale that "Doc" Frost used to weigh newborn babies on; bottles, china, crystal, and a heavy brass lock with keys carved with the Greek Orthodox cross, believed to be from old Russian Mission.

Mame (Wiig) Olson sold this building to John May in the early 1970's. May sold it to Jim and Betsy Hart in 1979. It is still operated as a Roadhouse, continuing its traditional hospitality, which prior to 1935, included legal and business dealings in the Commissioner's Office in the 1920's--and drinks, medical attention, meals, and "bunking down", beginning in 1911. Some of the descendants of the original aviators, miners, and public figures continue as guests.

The historic Iditarod Trail passed through Ruby--and even today (just as it was more than 50 years ago) the Roadhouse yard, in winter abounds with yelping sled dogs and heavily-laden sleds. The long dining table, summer and winter alike, is crowded with men, still extolling the dangers and thrill of the mines , river and winter trails. Arctic and Mining history for Alaska continues to unfold here at Ruby Roadhouse, "The Pride of the Middle Yukon".

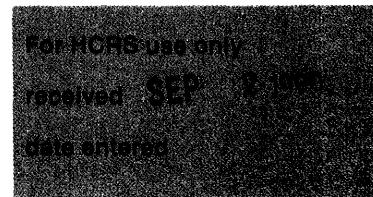
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Polk, R. L., Alaska-Yukon Gazeteer, Polk Pub. Co., Seattle, 1923.