

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

=====  
1. Name of Property

historic name Whitney Section House

other names/site number Whitney Station  
AHRS Site No. ANC-00044

=====  
2. Location

street & number 3400 West Neuser Drive not for publication N/A

city or town Wasilla vicinity N/A

state Alaska code AK county Matanuska-Susitna code 170 zip code 99654

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Whitney Section House  
Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska

3. 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide X locally. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Judith E. Buttner  
Signature of certifying official

Aug. 24, 2004  
Date

Alaska  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall 10/6/04

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature]  
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Whitney Section House  
Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska

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5. Classification  
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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>  1  </u>	<u>      </u> buildings
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> sites
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> objects
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   0  

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)   N/A

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Whitney Section House  
Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: transportation Sub: rail-related

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: recreation and culture Sub: museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

no style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation concrete

roof metal

walls wood

other \_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

The Alaska Railroad constructed the Whitney Section House in 1917 at Mile 119.1, 4.8 miles north of the Anchorage Depot. It was named after a local homesteader. It was one of a number of duplicate buildings constructed by the railroad at approximately ten mile intervals between Seward and Fairbanks. The buildings were rectangular, one-story frame buildings with open platform porches. The roofs were gabled with eaves projecting and rafters exposed. The houses had double-sash windows evenly spaced around them. Most were altered in the 1930s and their basic plan became T-shaped when an addition was built on the back for a bathroom.

In the late 1930s the government reserved the land around the Whitney Section House for the military, and started construction of Elmendorf Field and Fort Richardson. During World War II, base construction workers and military personnel caught a ride to Anchorage from the Whitney Section House. After the war, the house was rented to railroad workers but they did not have the section worker responsibilities.

In 1976 the Alaska Railroad determined the section house surplus. It was to be demolished until the Alaska-Yukon Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society intervened. The City of Palmer took the building and moved it to the Alaska State Fairgrounds at Palmer. Later, the city transferred ownership to the Transportation Museum of Alaska which is now the Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry. The house moved a second time when the museum relocated to Wasilla in 1992. Today the Whitney Section House stands adjacent to tracks of a short spur off the Alaska Railroad. At its current site the house has been used for an office, heated storage, and caretaker's residence.

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Whitney Section House  
Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.) N/A

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation

Period of Significance 1917-1945

Significant Dates 1917

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Alaska Engineering Commission

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Whitney Section House  
Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

*Alaska Railroad Record.* 1916-1919.

Brown, C.M. *The Alaska Railroad: Probing the Interior.* Manuscript in the files of the Office of History and Archaeology, Department of Natural Resources, Anchorage, Alaska.

Carberry, Michael and Donna Lane. *Patterns of the Past: An Inventory of Anchorage's Historic Resources.* Anchorage, Alaska: Municipality of Anchorage, 1986.

Daugherty, Paula M. and Becky M. Saleeby. *Elmendorf Air Force Base Homestead Study.* Anchorage, Alaska: National Park Service, 1998.

Prince, Bernadine. *The Alaska Railroad in Pictures.* Anchorage, Alaska: Ken Wray Publishing, 1964.

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Whitney Section House  
Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Alaska Railroad Corporation

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing		Zone Easting Northing	
1	<u>06 365037 6829656</u>	3	_____
2	_____	4	_____
_____ See continuation sheet.			

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Whitney Section House is in the northeast ¼ of the southeast ¼ of Section 12, Township 17N, Range 2W Seward Meridian.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes only the section house, located east of the main building of the Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry and near a short railroad spur that connects with the Alaska Railroad's main line. In addition to the tracks, railroad rolling stock is near the building.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title H.J. Yost, Curator

organization Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry, Inc.

date October 15, 2002

street & number P.O. Box 870646 telephone (907) 376-1211

city or town Wasilla state AK zip code 99687

**USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form**

Whitney Section House  
Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska

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The Whitney Section House faces east. It originally measured 24 by 36 feet. The 1930s addition was added on the building's west elevation. The east façade has a door in the center and two double sash windows centered on either side of the door. The north and south elevations of the original house each has two windows similar to those on the front. The north and south elevations of the addition have one window each, smaller than those on the main house. A large window and door are on the west elevation of the addition. The 12 by 16 foot addition covers much of the west elevation of the original house. It has two windows similar to the others in the original house. The building now has a metal roof. The original railroad signs are located in the gables on the north and south elevations. The original open platform porch no longer exists.

The building's size, scale and massing have not been changed. Although moved from its original location, it is in a setting comparable to its original, with the same grasses, shrubs and trees surrounding it. It continued to have an orientation to railroad tracks and railroad rolling stock. Current plans are to rehabilitate and furnish the building as a railroad section house.



USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Whitney Section House  
Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska

Page 7

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property  
on one or more continuation sheets.)

Built in 1917, the Whitney Section House is a building from the early years of the Alaska Railroad. It is significant for its historical association with the railroad, one of the major early transportation options in Alaska. For almost thirty years, the Whitney Section House was occupied by a railroad worker and his family. The section house worker did minor roadbed repairs, maintained the railroad bed, and responded in case of trouble for around ten miles of track. Railroad passengers, freight, and mail loaded and unloaded at the section houses. Today Whitney Section House is one of five of the railroad's section houses in existence. It was moved in 1978 to prevent its destruction, and moved again in 1992. The house is now on a permanent foundation at the Alaska Museum of Transportation and Industry. All five of the existing Alaska Railroad section houses have been moved. The Whitney Section House stands next to railroad tracks, one of only two of the remaining section houses to do so today. The period of significance starts in 1917, the year the Alaska Railroad built and began using the Whitney Section House, and ends in 1945 when it was no longer used for its original purpose.

Background

Transportation in Alaska changed dramatically during the first quarter of the twentieth century with the construction of the Richardson Road (later highway) from Valdez to Fairbanks and the Alaska Railroad from Seward to Fairbanks. The combination greatly improved access, especially during the winter, to Interior Alaska.

In 1915, the federal Alaska Engineering Commission created a series of construction districts and started building the Alaska Railroad in 1915. Sites were selected along the rail route for buildings to house construction workers, usually at critical junctions or points accessible to food and necessary construction materials. After the track passed a construction camp, a few men remained to maintain the section of track.

Whitney Section House, named after an early homesteader in the Ship Creek area, John Doran "Bud" Whitney, was at the site of a construction camp with a workers' bunkhouse. It was 4.8 miles north of Anchorage, the major construction camp for the southern half of the railroad. In October 1917 the railroad constructed a house for the maintenance foreman and called it Whitney Section House. The railroad used several standard plans for the section houses. Whitney Section House was initially a rectangular, one story wood structure with a gable roof. The section house workers maintained the railroad bed and track between the Anchorage depot and Kuney Section House at Eagle River. Fire destroyed the bunkhouse near the Whitney Section House in 1934 and it was not rebuilt.

The railroad eventually had section houses every ten to fifteen miles along its 486-mile route. The section foreman and crew were responsible for a designated length of track. The length between sections varied depending upon

**USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form**

Whitney Section House  
Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska

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snowslide hazards, the terrain, grades and the like. The foreman typically had a crew of six to eight people working for him. During the summer, the crew worked on grading, alignment and similar maintenance functions. Year round a track walker made sure the track was clear of boulders, snow and other obstructions. Along with a role as maintenance worker's quarters, a section houses served as a flag stop. Local residents could get on and off the railroad and ship and receive freight and mail at the section house.

During the early years of the railroad's operation, there were section houses north of Anchorage at Whitney, Eagle River, Birchwood, and Eklutna. The Potter Section House, about eleven miles south of the Anchorage Depot, is the only Alaska Railroad section house listed in the National Register of Historic Places to date. Only five of the Alaska Railroad's section houses exist. All have been moved and only two, Potter and Whitney, are next to railroad tracks. Two of the five have been extensively remodeled.

In the late 1930s, the U.S. Government reserved land north of Anchorage, purchased area homesteads including Whitney's, and built Elmendorf Field and Fort Richardson. During the 1940s, soldiers and construction workers caught the train to Anchorage at the Whitney Section House. After the war, the railroad rented the house to railroad employees, but no longer used the building as a section house.

In 1976 the railroad declared the Whitney Section House, along with its other remaining section houses, surplus. Improvements in transportation, communication, and railroad maintenance made the houses unnecessary to the railroad's operations. They also were expensive to staff and maintain. Plans were to demolish the Whitney Section House until the Alaska-Yukon Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society stepped in to save the building. The railroad transferred ownership of the house to the City of Palmer and the house was moved to the Alaska State Fairgrounds. The City of Palmer transferred ownership to the Transportation Museum of Alaska which is now the Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry. In 1992 the museum moved to its current location at Wasilla. The section house is now on a permanent foundation on the museum's ground. It is next to railroad tracks, on a short spur off the main line of the Alaska Railroad. It is about thirty miles north of its original location.

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Whitney Section House  
Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska

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Additional Documentation  
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====  
Property Owner  
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry, Inc.

street & number P.O. Box 870646      telephone (907) 376-1211

city or town Anchorage                      state AK                      zip code 99687

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Whitney Section House  
Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska

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

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OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Photograph identification  
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1. Whitney Section House  
Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska  
H.J. Yost  
August 2002  
Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, 550 West 7<sup>th</sup> Ave., #1310,  
Anchorage, AK  
99501-3565  
Looking northwest
  
2. Whitney Section House  
Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska  
H.J. Yost  
August 2002  
Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, 550 West 7<sup>th</sup> Ave., #1310  
Anchorage, AK  
99501-3565  
Looking southeast