

United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only received FEB 29 1980 date entered MAY 8 1980

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

1. Name

historic Christ Church Mission (AHRS Site No. XHC- 016)

and/or common Anvik Mission

2. Location

street & number not for publication

city, town Village of Anvik vicinity of congressional district Alaska at large

state Alaska code 02 county Kuskokwim Division code 160

3. Classification

Table with 5 columns: Category, Ownership, Status, Accessible, Present Use. Includes checkboxes for building(s), private, occupied, commercial, etc.

4. Owner of Property

name Episcopal Church, Diocese of Fairbanks (907) 452-3040 (see attachment)

street & number P.O. Box 441 (1205 Denali Way, 99701)

city, town Fairbanks vicinity of state Alaska 99707

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior (907) 277-1561

street & number New Federal Bldg., 701 C Street, P.O. Box 13

city, town Anchorage state Alaska 99513

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS) has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date July 5, 1978 federal X state county local

depository for survey records Alaska State Division of Parks, Office of History and Archaeology 619 Warehouse Drive, Suite 210

city, town Anchorage state Alaska 99501

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" 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 first, or 1887 Mission site--which was very short-lived--was on a narrow peninsula of land between the Anvik and Yukon Rivers. The buildings there were two converted St. Michael warehouses, purchased by the Missionaries Chapman and Parker. There are no remains left of the first Mission site. These and two other log buildings were long gone when the Anvik River broke through to the Yukon, in 1935, to obliterate that site, long referred to as "Old Station". Because of the action of the river, even archaeological finds here are now doubtful.

The second, and long existing (nominated) site--to which the Mission was moved in 1888--is about two miles downstream, on the right bank of the Anvik River where it once emptied into the Yukon. This is just beyond the large bluff long known to the Athabascans as Deloi Gis, but now Hawk Bluff on USGS maps, which overlooks the present village of Anvik and the Mission site.

The remaining buildings which identify the once sizeable and important Mission, are Christ Church (originally built in 1892), the final large dormitory/school building (built in 1932), the last rectory (built in 1958) and two small, older outbuildings. Of previously existing buildings there is only the mute evidence of fire-destroyed ruins, old concrete walls, foundations and steps on the two acre site where several more buildings once constituted a larger Mission complex. An extensive cemetery on the ridges of the hill to the east of the Mission overlooks, and occupies part of the site. Some of the oldest graves here have slid into the river, but the more easterly section is intact and continues in use.

The oldest remaining Mission structure is Christ Church. It was first built of logs in 1892; facing north along the Anvik, and parallel to the nearby Yukon River. Because of continual river bank erosion, the church had to be moved to a new site (about 75 feet to the south) in 1927. The original church site is now marked by a white wooden cross. The moving and rebuilding of the Church is well remembered by older Anvik residents. It is also documented well in an article, "The Rebuilding of Christ Church, Anvik," by Mrs. John W. Chapman (The Alaska Churchman, Vol. XXI, July, 1930).

According to residents who helped, a new porch was then added, a base for the bell tower was built (it formerly sat on the roof) and a small room was attached, just behind the altar. The rest of the building was unaltered (with the exception of the bottom rows of logs) even to the wooden cross at the top. The exterior appearance was altered in 1927 as a result of these additions--but most strikingly because the wall logs were covered with shingles.

Christ Church is now used only rarely; there has not been a resident priest in Anvik since the 1960's. It is sadly deteriorating. The roof of the small room behind the altar has largely caved in; and the shingles of the main roof are rotted and moss covered. Roof water has leaked through to the interior tongue and groove ceiling. Even the concrete foundation (on which the church was set when moved) has cracked and separated in a few places. The main portion of the building is sinking, and it sags at the west end.

See continuation sheet 1.

## 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 checked="" 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Dr. John W. Chapman for

**Specific dates** 1892, 1926, 1958      **Builder/Architect** Domestic & Foreign Mission Society, Episcopal Church

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Anvik Mission, as it was popularly known (or officially, Christ Church Mission) was one of the most significant Native educational, medical and religious centers in all of Alaska during the long span of years before government began providing the welfare services. Persons and events associated with this Mission contributed materially to the cultural advancement of a vast region. In the broad span of Interior Alaskan history, this was a very special, memorable, and significant place.

### Early History

Anvik today is a typical Athabaskan Yukon River village, situated picturesquely on the right bank at the junction of the smaller Anvik and mighty Yukon Rivers, some 480 meandering miles from the west mouth of the Yukon, but actually only about 100 miles overland from Norton Sound in the Bering Sea. Its history is rich.

It was here, in 1834, that Andre Glazunov came as the first Russian explorer to the Yukon wilderness. He travelled overland from Mikhailovskiy Redoubt, and after visiting the small Indian settlement of old Anvik, continued on his way to explore more of interior Alaska via the great river. Since that time Anvik--because of the significant Mission established here--has document a colorful and exciting history, entwined with exploration and development and cultural advancement.

Following Glazunov, Anvik was visited by other early explorers, traders and itinerent travellers, some of whom mention it in their journals. The Russian officer, Lt. Zagoskin, visited on his way downriver from Nulato, in 1843. When Capt. Raymond of the "Yukon"--considered the first steamer to fully ascend the Yukon River--passed by Anvik in 1869, he observed that there was already a trading post in operation here. E.W. Nelson, a U.S. Army Signal Service Observer, stationed at St. Michaels, in 1880 accompanied the local trader Fredericks to Anvik. Nelson wrote quite extensively about his experiences.

### The Mission is Established

A single event in the history of Anvik and in the lives of Natives in this vast primitive area, however, was the arrival of the youthful Rev. Octavius Parker and the Rev. John W. Chapman, commissioned by the Domestic and Home Missionary Society of the U.S. Episcopal Church, to establish a major mission--the first between Fort Yukon (near the Canadian border) and the Bering Sea coast.

Mr. Parker had purchased two buildings from Trader Fredericks of the Alaska Commercial Co., just previous to the two men's arrival at Anvik in early summer, 1887. Upon his graduation from seminary and ordination as a priest John Chapman had joined with Mr. Parker to fulfill the request of the Athabaskan people.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

Acreege of nominated property 2

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

Quadrangle name Holy Cross (C-3)

Scale 1:63 360

UMT References

A 

14	438460	6947470
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** The surface estate occupied by the Church school-dormitory building and other ruined facilities totalling approximately two acres; which upon transfer from Central Native Corp. (as ANSCA) to Fairbanks Episcopal Diocese, shall be re-surveyed and agreed upon (about 1980) by both parties with the boundaries then delineated.

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 Donna MacAlpine/ Assisted by Michael S. Kennedy, Historian  
State Division of Parks, Anchorage

organization Teacher, Anvik School

date Nov. 15, 1979

street & number General Delivery

telephone (907) 274-4676

city or town Anvik

state Alaska 99558

# 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

*William Stanable*

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 2/22/80

For HCRS use only

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

*W. Ray Luce*  
Keeper of the National Register

date 5/8/80

Attest: *Kristin O'Connell*  
Chief of Registration

date 5/8/80

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED	MAY 8 1980

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 4 PAGE

Anvik Mission, Property-Status,  
August, 1979, AHRS Site No.XHC -016

The property on which the second and long-time Anvik Mission was built and operated throughout its life span (1888-1959) was purchased from the local Athabaskan Natives by Dr. John W. Chapman for the Protestant Episcopal Mission, about 1889. The property as surveyed by a U.S. Deputy Surveyor, in 1906 (U.S. Survey 728), comprised 171.88 acres, lying south of the Anvik River near its confluence with the Yukon. (Patent 74280). This property over the years gradually diminished under the ownership of the Episcopal Diocese of Alaska to 63 acres.

On December 17, 1795 the Fairbanks Diocese conveyed the approximately remaining 63 acres back to the U.S. government (BLM) so that it could be available for Native Lands Claim (ANCSA) Village selection. The conveyed parcel was the northerly part of the original survey, but was the site on which the remaining cemetery, church buildings, as well as the present village of Anvik, now stands.

Prior to this conveyance by the Diocese, Doyon, Limited (the regional Native corporation) and Central Native Corporation (the Village) entered into an agreement (Dec. 15, 1975) which stated that the Village Corporation would reconvey:

back "to Diocese, without consideration, title to the surface estate of those lands occupied by the church, building and other facilities utilized by it, totalling approximately 2 acres, more or less (at which time) a more exact description of said land shall be agreed upon by (actual) survey."

This agreement and other records pertaining to the Mission property are located in case file No. F-14832A2 at BLM Alaska Headquarters, in Anchorage. The description of the land conveyed back to the U.S. government and thereby subject to the final agreement is contained on the serial register pages AA-10687, also at BLM, Anchorage.

It is expected that the Village selection will be patented by early 1980. The village corporation will thereafter reconvey to the Diocese the land on which the church buildings stand (the old Mission Site).

Donna MacAlpine  
Anvik, Alaska  
Aug. 20, 1979

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Christ Church Mission (AHRS Site No. XHC-016)

CONTINUATION SHEET

1

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE

The interior, however, retains all of its original charm, although the walls are much in need of paint. The carved and varnished wooden altar, until about ten years ago, held at its base, a brick--said to be from the first Episcopal Church in the United States. In 1978, however, it was discovered that someone had attempted to dig out the brick; and it was removed for safekeeping. A few paintings, the oldest bible, and some hymn books have been stolen in recent years. The small piano organ has had some parts removed, but yet displays a marvellous tone when played. The original hand-carved pews, made under Dr. Chapman's direction, are intact. Heat continues to be provided by an old barrel stove, although the stove pipes represent a severe fire hazard.

In all, five different rectories were built at the Mission after 1892. The first was near a bridge, surrounded by a cottonwood grove. The second and third were further up Hawk Bluff. (One apparently replaced the other, since only one concrete foundation remains). Both buildings burned. The fourth rectory was built (in 1926) right beside the church before it was moved. That rectory was torn down and most of the materials (ceiling beams, etc.) were used to rebuild the final one which is now a private residence (Mr. Chase).

From the earliest years, the most impressive and largest building was always the Mission school and dormitory. Initially, students (from the village only) were taught in the Rev. Chapman's residence, but over the years, at least three combination dormitories were built. Many of Anvik's present citizens attended classes in those buildings. Others came as children from various Yukon villages to attend the Mission school, and then remained to live out their lives in Anvik. Foundations remain from the two ruined school-dormitories. One, higher up the hill, built in 1920, was soon thereafter destroyed by fire. The latest (and existing) building was built in 1931 under direction of William Chase (who had come to the mission in 1902 and remained for many years as Chief Carpenter). Now known as "The Mission Building", this is the largest existing structure. Its condition is deteriorating rapidly, due to spring flooding and vandalism. It is a short distance south of the present Christ Church. This two-story building is most impressive. It is 36 feet wide and 72 feet long, with a full concrete basement, five floors and an altar. The first story is all log, with hand-hewn, dove-tailed corners. The upper story (like the Church) is shingled

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Christ Church Mission (AHRS Site No. XHC-016)

CONTINUATION SHEET

2

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE

over sawed lumber siding. The roof is of tin. The interior has hardwood flooring, brought from outside, but the ceiling beams are of local manufacture. Walls are covered with plasterboard. Since the Mission closed it has functioned as a pool hall and movie hall; and has provided offices and apartments. About a decade ago one third of the structure was turned into a gym by removal of the second story floor, opening it to the inside roof.

Original blueprints of the school-dormitory are believed to be among boxes of records stored in the Episcopal archives in Texas. Several Anvik people remember well the various rooms and their use: the main floor which contained a kitchen, dining room, bathroom, and pantry; a ladies' sitting room, housekeeper's room, small children's room, and chapel. Upstairs were four large bedrooms for both orphans and boarding children, a sitting room and a housemother's parlor-bed room. The basement contained storage rooms, a large coal furnace and the laundry. All original upstairs furnishings have been removed; while items stored in the basement (old roll top desk, a phonograph, etc.) have been ruined by flooding.

After the Mission was re-established on the 1892 site, the native people began to move closer to the Mission, and to build American-style log houses (instead of their traditional subterranean dwellings). This trend continued into the 1930's until there were no longer any houses on the old village sites of either Anvik Point or Thatchinot. All residences since then have been in the present Village of Anvik.

Although this historic Mission is far from its former glory--the presence of the church, cemetery, school-dormitory, and the remains and evidences of most other early structures--continues to impart an aura of the dynamic and humanistic facility that flourished here under the 66-year tutelage of the Reverends John and Henry Chapman and other pioneer administrators of the Episcopal Church. It is a place well remembered indeed--historic Christ Church Mission, at Anvik on the Yukon!

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Christ Church Mission (AHR Site No. XHC-016)

CONTINUATION SHEET

1

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

2 of 3

The St. Michael seaport warehouse buildings were transported and re-established on the right bank of the Yukon, about two miles above the mouth of the Anvik. Within a year, it was realized that they were on treacherous ground; and the Mission was moved down to the mouth of the Anvik below the prominent hill known as Hawk Bluff. By the time Mr. Parker left, later in 1889, a small log residence and school house had already been erected, and a portable sawmill established for future construction, and for refurbishing of the St. Michaels Warehouses. Chapman had already exhibited the dedication and skill that would exemplify the Mission for the next half Century.

In 1892 the first small log and frame Christ Church, was built for the Mission-- the first also between Fort Yukon and St. Michael. Christ Church still stands, although the location had to be changed in 1926. Older residents of Anvik, who helped with this move, recall that the building was totally dismantled and rebuilt.

Five different rectories have occupied the mission site. All are gone except the fifth--and latest-- which dominates the site.

From the earliest years of Anvik Mission, one of its most important aspects was the education of the village children, and later of children brought to the mission from other villages up and down the Yukon River; and vitally-needed medical and public health services for Natives of all ages over a vast area. Only the final school-dormitory building, built in 1931 under the direction of William Chase, Sr., who had come to the mission in 1902 and remained as chief carpenter survives from at least three such buildings.

Among many notable events in the history of Anvik Mission, one concerns the first advent of a woman doctor in Interior Alaska. This occurred with the arrival of Dr. Mary Glanton in 1894. She was exceptionally qualified and much loved by the people. Many dedicated teachers also served the mission over the years and assisted Dr. John W. Chapman, who, finally in old age, was replaced by his son Henry. When the Anvik post office was established in 1898, Dr. Chapman was the first postmaster. Mail at that time was carried by dogteam, either through the seaport of St. Michaels and along the Yukon River; or over the Iditarod Trail, via distant Seward in the Gulf of Alaska.



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CONTINUATION SHEET

2

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

3 of 3

In his middle years of dedicated service (1923) Dr. Chapman built the first radio station for Anvik to broadcast public service messages and provided communication and entertainment for many bush listeners. In the 1920's the first airplane to land at Anvik brought smallpox vaccine, requested by Dr. Chapman to fight a threatened epidemic.

Along with education, medical care and religion, another contribution was made by Dr. Chapman through his intellectual interest, writing and investigation of the earliest history, ethnology, and cultural anthropology of the Athabaskan people. He hosted a number of scientists and scholars from Universities and the Smithsonian Institute, and despite a busy mission load assisted their research. He learned the Athabaskan language well, and recorded folk tales and considerable ethnographic material of much value today.

During the long years of the Mission it was always a bee-hive of activity. Although additional buildings were erected or rebuilt, there was never enough room, money or staff and some students had to be turned away. Lack of funds and manpower were continual problems which somehow Dr. Chapman always seemed to overcome. Despite all of this the Mission was the oldest, most successful and prestigious of any Episcopal mission west of Fort Yukon. Nevertheless, Anvik Mission made an enormous impact on the health and education of countless Native people in the vast area over a span of almost three-quarters of a century.

At the present time Christ Church Mission is no longer active. The old church is used occasionally for services, but is deteriorating rapidly due to flooding and harsh weather. The other remaining two buildings--the rectory and the large school-dormitory building--are all in the process of being transferred back by the Native Corporation to Church ownership. Because of its rich and singular history and association with people and events who contributed prominently to the broad pattern of Yukon life and culture, this, indeed is a worthy entry for the National Register of Historic Places.

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Christ Church Mission (AHRS Site No. XHC-016)

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

9

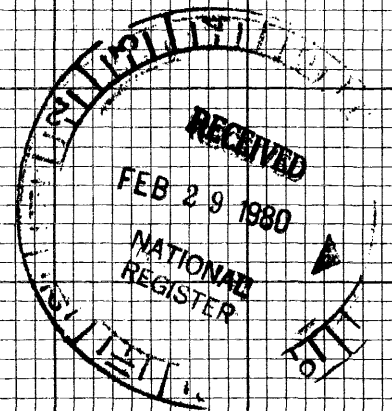
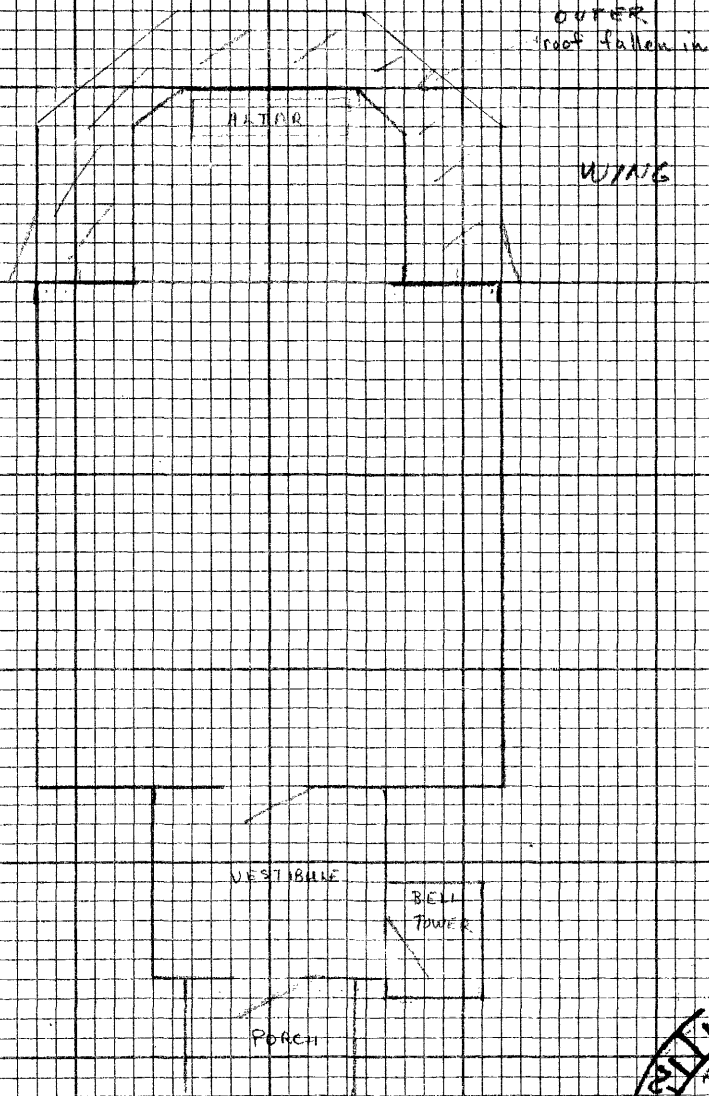
PAGE

1 of 1

Interviews with long-time Anvik residents by Donna MacAlpine, 1977-9.  
Episcopal Church archival records, Fairbanks, Alaska and Austin, Texas, 1878-1960.  
Wm. R. Hunt, Alaska, a bicentennial History, W.W. Norton Co., N.Y., 1976.  
Chapman, Mr. John W., "The Rebuilding of Christ Church, Anvik" The Alaska Churchman,  
July, 1930.  
Donna MacAlpine, "Anvik Mission," The Church in Alaska's Past; proceedings, ADP,  
Pub. 23, 1979.  
Files: Yukon Press, Circle City, 1894-1905. The Alaskan, Sitka 1885-1907.  
Chapman, J.W., Rev., A Camp on the Yukon, Idlewild Press, Cornwall-on-Hudson,  
N.Y. 1948.

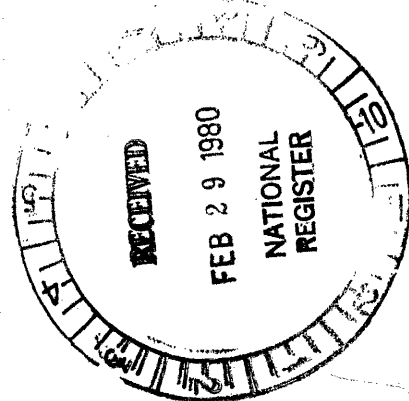
CHRIST CHURCH, ANVIK, FLOOR PLAN

Donna MacAlpine, 1978.



5  
Square 11.1.1.1

CHRIST CHURCH ANVIK MISSION, Site locations



(Hawk Bluff)

Cemetery

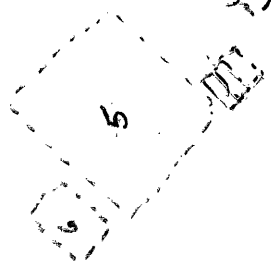
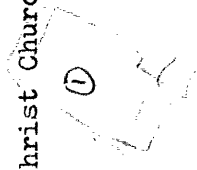
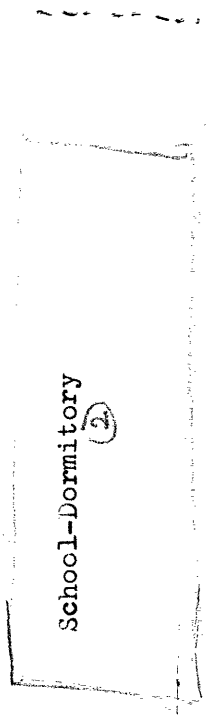
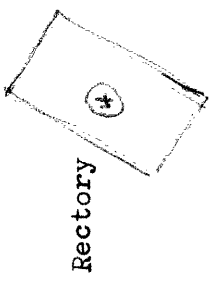
Bluffs

Fuel tanks

Christ Church

Present road

Older houses



1. Christ Church
2. Mission Building (school-dormitory)
3. Generator House
4. Last Rectory
5. Concrete walls of previous school buildings
6. Site of log cabin - Miss Lucas's House

Anvik Slough

E

S

W

N

to Yukon

at near village of Anvik