

1569

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.

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1. Name of Property

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historic name Slana Roadhouse

other names/site number AHRS Site No. NAB-00356

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number Mile 1, Nabesna Road

not for publication n/a

city or town Slana vicinity n/a

state Alaska code AK county Southeast Fairbanks code 240

zip code 99586

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Slana Roadhouse  
Southeast Fairbanks, 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.)

*Joan M. Antonson*

*16 December 2004*

Signature of certifying official

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

*[Signature]* 2/2/05

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

*X*

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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>  4  </u>	<u>      </u> buildings
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> sites
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> objects
<u>  4  </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

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**6. Function or Use**

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**Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)**

Cat: Domestic Sub: hotel

**Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)**

Cat: Domestic Sub: single dwelling

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)**

No style

**Materials (Enter categories from instructions)**

foundation rock  
roof metal  
walls log  
other

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

Slana Roadhouse is located in east central Alaska. It is at mile 1 of the Nabesna Road, southeast of mile 262.8 of the Glenn Highway (Tok Cutoff). It is 60 miles east of the community of Gakona and 65 miles southwest of the community of Tok. The Glenn Highway connects the Richardson Highway at Gakona with the Alaska Highway at Tok. The 46-mile long Nabesna Road connects the Nabesna Gold Mine (listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979) with the Glenn Highway.

Lawrence DeWitt built the roadhouse in 1928 to replace a smaller one closer to the river. His son Angus DeWitt and daughter Mary Ann DeWitt Pet are now the owners. Lawrence DeWitt homesteaded (USS 2059) nearly one mile along the west bank of the Slana River at its junction with the Copper River and received patent to the land in 1932. Over the years, the small community of Slana grew around the roadhouse. Today there is a post office, elementary school, National Park Service ranger station for the north district of Wrangell-St. Elias Park and Preserve, State of Alaska road maintenance shop, a motel, a grocery store, several outfitters, and a bar and restaurant. The population ranges between fifty and one hundred persons.

The two-and-a-half story log building measures 32 by 45 feet. The foundation is rock with wood posts at the corners. Logs for the Slana Roadhouse were cut from spruce trees on DeWitt's homestead. The logs were

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8. Statement of Significance  
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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)

Commerce

Period of Significance 1928-1953

Significant Dates 1928

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder DeWitt, Lawrence

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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 Northwest Publishing Company. *The Milepost*. 1951.

Alaska Road Commission. Annual reports. On file at the Office of History and Archaeology, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Anchorage, Alaska.

Allen, Henry T. *An Expedition to the Copper, Tanana, and Koyukuk Rivers in the Territory of Alaska 1885*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1885.

Cohen, Stan. *The Forgotten War*. Missoula, Montana: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1992.

Day, Beth. *Glacier Pilot*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1957.

Hunt, William R. *Mountain Wilderness: Historic Resource Study for Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve*. Anchorage, Alaska: National Park Service, 1991.

Moffit, Fred H. *Geology of the Slana-Tok District, Alaska*. U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 904. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1938.

Naske, Claus-M. *Paving Alaska's Trails: The Work of the Alaska Road Commission*. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1984.

Tower, Elizabeth. *Icebound Empire*. Anchorage, Alaska: Privately published, 1996.

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**10. Geographical Data**  
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**Acreage of Property** 5 acres

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

	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>
1	<u>07</u>	<u>348551</u>	<u>6956041</u>	3		
2	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	4		
	<u>    </u>	<b>See continuation sheet.</b>				

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

The property is located in the SW ¼ of the NW ¼ of Section 29, Township 11N, Range 8E, Copper River Meridian. U.S. Survey No. 2059, patent issued June 1932.

**Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)**

The boundary includes the roadhouse, garage, storehouse, and cache, four buildings that historically served area residents and travelers as Slana Roadhouse. The property has a dog yard and fishwheel within the five acre boundary that are historic but not counted individually.

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**11. Form Prepared By**  
=====

**name/title** Kirk W. Stanley

**organization** n/a

**date** October 21, 2004

**street & number** P.O. Box 200596

**telephone** 907-333-5639

**city or town** Anchorage **state** AK **zip code** 99520-0596

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sawed on three sides. The logs are nailed into corner boards. All dimensional lumber, including the flooring planks, were sawed on the property. The floor planks are 1 x 6 inches and 10 feet long. They are nailed to 2 x 6 inch joists spaced 24 inches apart. The second floor planks are nailed to joists supported by 5 x 6 inch x 8 foot posts from the first floor. The second floor joists protrude through the exterior wall. The rooms are paneled. The gable roof is supported by 2 x 10 inch joists and 1 x 6 inch boards covered with corrugated metal roofing. The first floor had window openings on all sides, originally with six over six light windows, many that remain. The second floor had window openings half the size of those on the first floor on all sides for six light windows. The attic had three half size window openings for six light windows in each gable.

The main entrance to the building is through a shed roofed arctic entry. The first floor has an open room, 19 by 44 feet, that served as a combination sitting and dining room. Wood stoves, including the cook stove, heated the building. The kitchen is at the rear. A hand pump supplied water to the kitchen and to a washroom. Four rooms open off the open room. One room has a stairway to the second floor. A room adjacent to it served as the post office. There is a rear exit centered in the back wall and a small shed roof porch. The second floor is divided into eight rooms, four on each side of a six foot wide hall. Each room has a door and a window. The attic is undivided. Toilets are out back.

There are three other buildings historically associated with the roadhouse and considered contributing. A 10 by 15 foot log garage is along the driveway, a 12 by 15 foot log storehouse is 110 feet east of the roadhouse, and a cache is near the storehouse. The property also has a dog yard with several small log shelters and a fishwheel is anchored to the bank of the Slana River. These are not counted separately as contributing features. (See sketch map.)

The roadhouse closed in 1953 when the Slana-Tok section of the Glenn Highway was realigned and moved a mile to the north. Today the building is a private residence. The roadhouse and outbuildings have been maintained and continue to be used.



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

Slana Roadhouse offered accommodations to travelers and workers in east central Alaska beginning in 1928 and through the 1940s. The roadhouse provided food and lodging for U.S. Geological Survey workers mapping the eastern Alaska Range and Wrangell Mountains, prospectors searching for gold, men building and operating Nabesna Gold Mine, and during the 1940s, U.S. Army troops and contractors building Northway airfield and the Alaska and Glenn highways. It was one of a series of roadhouses spaced about thirty miles apart to serve travelers initially on the Nabesna Road. Few of the old roadside stops still stand in the area. Slana Roadhouse exemplifies a business in a remote area of Alaska during the years preceding World War II. It was part of a small community that was a day's travel by truck from similar stops west and southeast of it. The roadhouse closed in 1953, when the Glenn Highway was realigned through the area and no longer passed by the building. The period of significance starts in 1928 when the roadhouse opened and ends in 1953 when it closed.

Historic background

Lieutenant Henry T. Allen wrote the first description of the Slana-Nabesna country after his Army exploring party traveled through the area in 1885. The men reached the junction of the Copper and Slana rivers in June. Allen spelled the site Sahlana. The party was out of food when the Athabaskan people of Batzulneta's village, near the headwaters of the Copper River a few miles from the mouth of the Slana River, found them. Chief Batzulneta guided the Allen party to White Mountain and then to the Tanana River.

In 1898, a few of the 4,000 Klondike gold rushers who chose to cross the Valdez Glacier Trail reached the headwaters of the Copper River. Some prospected in the area. Gold was discovered on Jacksina Creek, near the headwaters of the Nabesna River, and at White Mountain, about forty miles south of the junction of the Slana and Copper rivers.

A few years later, the U.S. Army constructed the 450-mile Trans-Alaska Military Road (more correctly, a trail) from Valdez on the southern Alaska coast to Eagle on the Yukon River near the U.S.-Canada boundary. The route passed the junction of the Slana and Copper rivers. The Army telegraph, the Washington-Alaska Military and Telgraph System (WAMCATS), followed the trail to connect Fort Egbert at Eagle with Fort Liscum at Valdez.

After gold was discovered at Shushana (Chisana) in May 1913, stampeders left the Valdez-Eagle trail at the mouth of the Slana River to head southeast to the new diggings 80 miles away. Reportedly, trader Lawrence DeWitt built a roadhouse at the site coinciding with the rush. It stood closer to the river and no longer stands. After the rush, business

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diminished. Then in 1922 Carl F. Whitham staked mining claims at White Mountain and started the Nabesna Gold Mine. The Nabesna Mining Corporation expanded operations and employed sixty to seventy men. Whitham petitioned the Alaska Road Commission for a wagon road from the Richardson Highway, the main road in southcentral and interior Alaska at the time. Lawrence DeWitt got the mail contract to carry mail by dog sled in the winter and by packhorse in the summer between Slana and Nabesna. He and his wife Belle (Ahtna Chief Nikolai's daughter), with four children, formally staked a homestead at the junction of Slana and Copper rivers.

In 1926, the Alaska Road Commission started to improve the Valdez-Eagle trail to wagon road standard from Gulkana on the Richardson Road to Slana. In 1933 the ARC began construction of the 46-mile Nabesna Road from Slana to the Nabesna Gold Mine. Before the Nabesna Road was completed, freight was hauled during the winter months by tractors and horse-drawn bobsleds often following stream beds. During that period gold was flown out by bush plane, mostly by pilot Bob Reeve. In 1934 the Alaska Road Commission changed the name of its project 65A from Gulkana-Chistochina Branch to Gulkana-Nabesna Road. The Alaska Road Commission report for 1936 noted that a 104 mile gravel road opened for "continuous summer traffic" after ten years of construction.

DeWitt hired Charlie Smelzer in 1928 to build a larger, three-story log roadhouse. DeWitt provided lodging and meals for travelers and workers and supplied horses. DeWitt kept a stable of 24 horses and 35 dogs. He carried the mail to mines, roadhouses, and camps from Slana Roadhouse to Nabesna twice a month. After leaving the Richardson Highway at Gulkana, travelers and freighters reached the first stop at Chistochina about thirty miles away. (Chistochina Roadhouse was listed in the National Register in 1997, but destroyed by fire in 1999). The next stop, Slana Roadhouse, was another thirty miles east. Territorial governors, the president and professors of the University of Alaska, U.S. Army officers, government engineers and geologists, and many others stayed at Slana Roadhouse. From Slana to the Nabesna Gold Mine was a day's travel. In its 1936 report, the Alaska Road Commission reported that the Nabesna Road could be used summer and winter, but it was a primitive access road. Although rugged, it was heavily used.

Lawrence DeWitt disappeared in 1937. His wife leased the roadhouse to Harry Heintz, who operated it until 1940. During the 1940s several others leased it, included Don Dehart and a man named Duffy.

In 1941, the U.S. Government extended its lend-lease program to supply airplanes to the Russians to help them fight the Germans who had invaded their country. The Alaska-Siberia route from Great Falls, Montana, through Fairbanks, Alaska, and across Siberia was determined to be the safest of

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four air routes to get planes to the Eastern Front. Construction began to upgrade or build primary and secondary airfields along the route. One, an interim airfield between Whitehorse, Yukon, and Fairbanks, Alaska, 600 miles apart, would be at Northway in east central Alaska. Men and equipment to enlarge the airstrip used Nabesna Gold Mine as a staging site. All equipment was trucked to Nabesna from Valdez. Slana Roadhouse was a busy wayside stop for the truckers.

A year later, construction started on the Alaska-Canada military road, also known as the Alcan or Alaska Highway. At the same time, work started on 70 miles of road to connect the Gulkana-Nabesna road from Slana north and east with Tok on the Alaska Highway. During construction, Army engineers lived at Slana Roadhouse and equipment was stored on the roadhouse property. The present highway from Anchorage to Tok, except for a 20-mile stretch between Glennallen and Gakona, is officially named the Glenn Highway, but from Slana it is commonly called the Tok Cutoff or Slana-Tok Cutoff.

On government order, Nabesna Gold Mine did not operate during World War II and reopened for only a few months after. Although there continued to be some travel on the new roads after the war, with the mine closed and little military activity in the area, business slowed at Slana Roadhouse. When the cutoff was realigned in 1953 it bypassed Slana Roadhouse. The individual who leased the roadhouse, Duffy, built a café and filling station along the new road. The post office moved out of the roadhouse. Since 1962, Slana Roadhouse has been a private residence for Angus DeWitt, son of Lawrence DeWitt. It is little changed from when it was a busy roadside stop in rural east central Alaska.

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Southeast Fairbanks, Alaska

=====  
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 #

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository:

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**Additional Documentation**  
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**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** Angus DeWitt and Mary Ann DeWitt Pet

**street & number** Mile 1, Nabesna Road

**telephone** 907-822-3956

**city or town** Slana **state** AK **zip code** 99586

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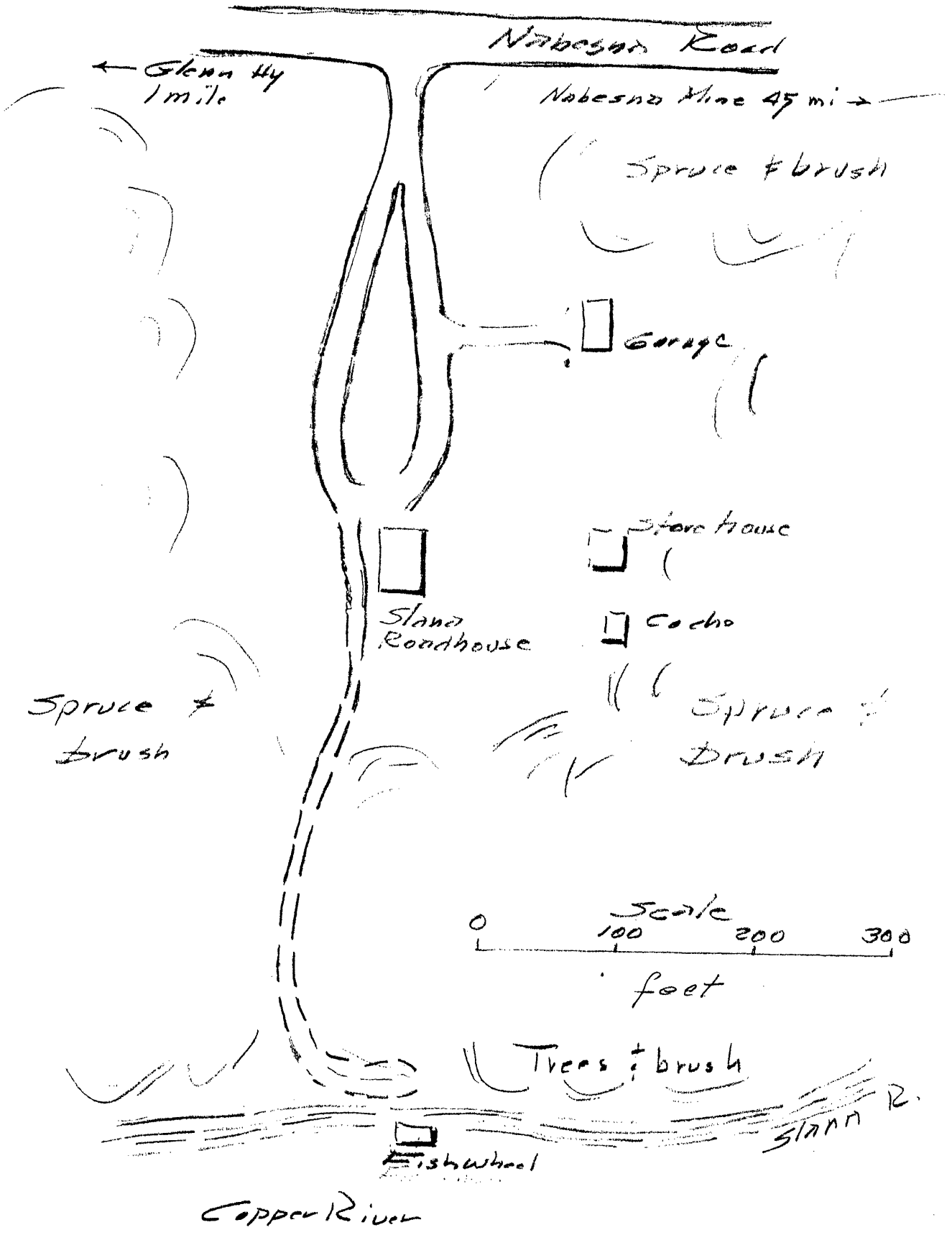
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**Section** Photograph identification  
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1. Slana Roadhouse  
Southeast Fairbanks, Alaska  
Kirk W. Stanley  
August 2004  
P.O. Box 200596, Anchorage, Alaska 99520-0596  
Looking south at the front and west elevations of the roadhouse
2. Slana Roadhouse  
Southeast Fairbanks, Alaska  
Kirk W. Stanley  
August 2004  
P.O. Box 200596, Anchorage, Alaska 99520-0596  
Looking north at the rear and east elevations of the roadhouse
3. Slana Roadhouse  
Southeast Fairbanks, Alaska  
Kirk W. Stanley  
August 2004  
P.O. Box 200596, Anchorage, Alaska 99520-0596  
Looking at the storehouse east of Slana Roadhouse
4. Slana Roadhouse  
Southeast Fairbanks, Alaska  
Kirk W. Stanley  
August 2004  
P.O. Box 200596, Anchorage, Alaska 99520-0596  
Looking at the cache near the storehouse
5. Slana Roadhouse  
Southeast Fairbanks, Alaska  
Unknown  
c. 1932  
in files of Kirk W. Stanley, P.O. Box 200596, Anchorage, Alaska 99520-0596  
Looking at the front of Slana Roadhouse





Sketch Map Slana Roadhouse Site  
Slana, Alaska





**MTP**

FOR ORDERS EFFECTING DISPOSAL OR USE OF UN-  
 IDENTIFIED LANDS WITHDRAWN FOR CLASSIFICATION  
 MINERALS, WATER AND/OR OTHER PUBLIC PURPOSES  
 REFER TO INDEX OF MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS.

- AA6188 Esmt Deed RCA 25'
- Sec 12: E1/2SE1/4
- Sec 13: N & W of Slana River
- Sec 14: SE1/4, N & W of Slana River, S1/2SW1/4
- Sec 15: S1/2S1/2
- Sec 16: S1/2S1/2
- Sec 18: S1/2, S1/2NE1/4
- Sec 20: N1/2, N1/2SW1/4
- Sec 21: E1/2E1/2, N of Slana River, N1/2NW1/4  
 SW1/4NW1/4, NW1/4NE1/4
- Sec 22: N of Slana River
- Sec 23: N of Slana River

PL 92-203 W& AA6716, L&s W/ AA6716-G,  
 AA6716-A2

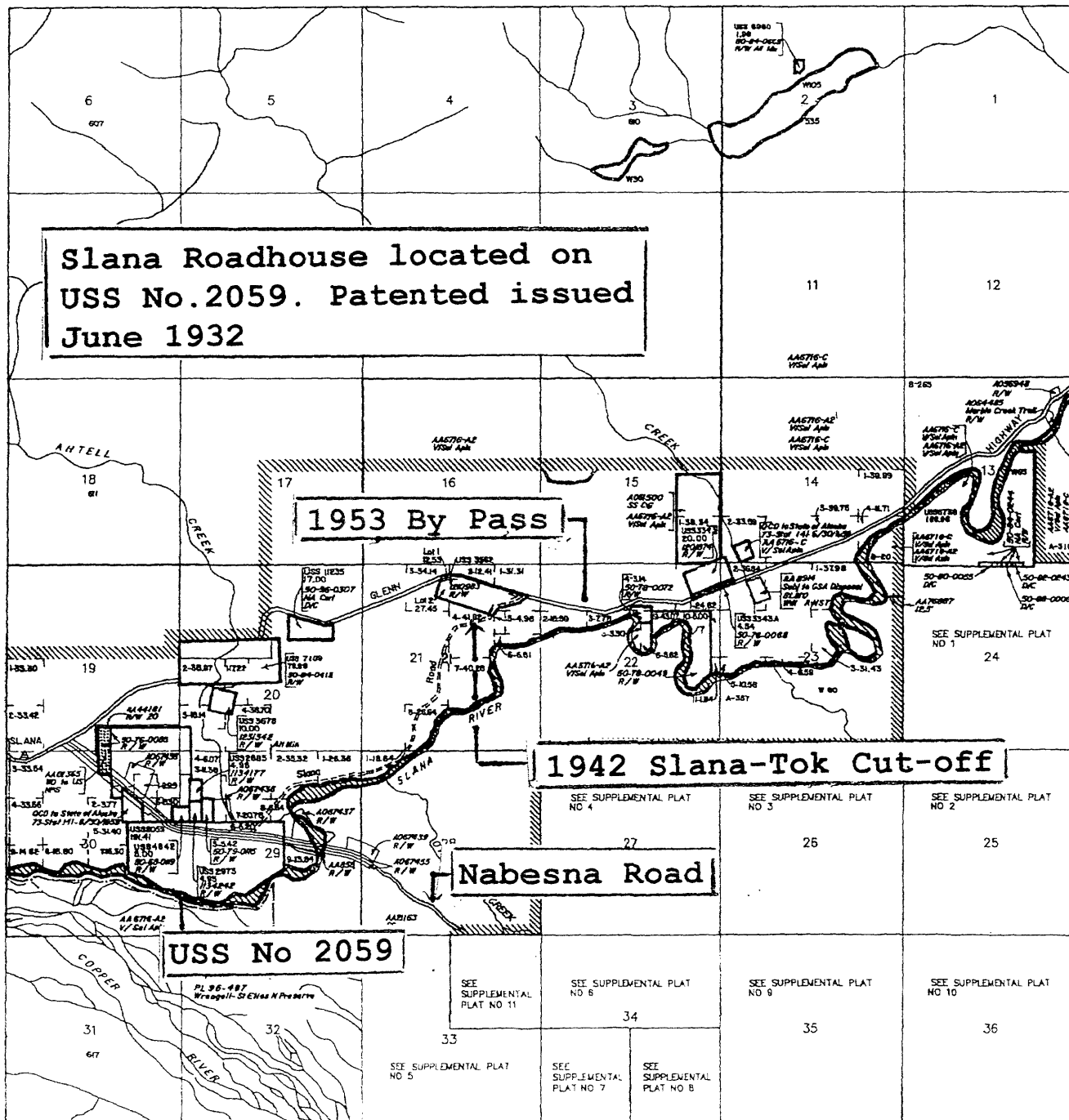
PLD 5184 W& CI affects L&s/Interests not conveyed

AA65127 Hwy Esmt Deed From U.S.:  
 Sec 4  
 Sec 7  
 Sec 13

AA21163 SS Amdt Pl. 96-487 Sec 906(a) Top Filed

AD61500 SS Amdt Pl. 96-487 Sec 906(a) Top Filed

AA74264 SS Amdt Pl. 96-487 Sec 906(a) Top Filed



Lat 62°41'03.00"N  
 Long 143°48'38.78"W

SCALE in chains  
 10 20 30 40

WARNING  
 This plat is the Bureau's Record of Title, and should be used  
 only in connection with a survey of the land shown hereon.

CURRENT TO	GLN, NPS, JWR	CR Mar
11-20-2007		T 11
		R 8