

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH 0679976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

DATA SHEET

RECEIVED

FEB 24 1977

DATE ENTERED

JAN 9 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Palmer Depot (AHRS SITE NO ANC-089)

AND/OR COMMON

Palmer Station/Palmer Depot and Warehouse

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Mile 6.5 Chickaloon Branch, Alaska Railroad

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Palmer

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Alaska

STATE

Alaska

CODE

02

COUNTY

Matanuska-Susitna

CODE

170

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME The Alaska Railroad, U.S. Department of Transportation

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 7-2111

(907) 265-2411

CITY, TOWN

Anchorage

VICINITY OF

STATE

Alaska 99501

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

The Alaska Railroad, U.S. Department of Transportation

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 7-2111

CITY, TOWN

Anchorage

STATE

Alaska 99501

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS)

DATE

August 14, 1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Alaska Division of Parks, 323 E. 4th Ave.

CITY, TOWN

Anchorage

STATE

Alaska 99501

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<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 plan sheets for construction of the Alaska Railroad Depot at Palmer were approved on October 7 and November 1, 1935. It was designed as a combination depot and warehouse. In appearance its style differed only slightly from other functional structures built for the same purposes along the right-of-way of the railroad. While this structure is similar to many others, particularly to other depots, it is different in the materials of its construction.

This structure has no concrete base, such as that prepared for construction of the depot at Nenana in 1922. The utility basement of this structure is nine feet high, 48'2" in length and 39' wide. Under the remaining length of the structure is a crawl space, 45'8" in length. The total length of the building as constructed in 1935 was 93'10". While the building was of functional design, its harmonious proportions related both to its function and to the image of a railroad. Facing the structure from across the railroad tracks, to the left one observes the first segment of the structure, 28' 2" in length, approximately 24 feet to the peak of the medium gable roof. The roof is 18" longer than the structure at both ends of the building segment. This segment was designed as the main warehouse. At the center of the front was a sliding door, approximately eight feet in width by seven feet in height. The wall was sheathed in shiplap, as was the entire building. On the facing wall were two sliding doors abutting either end of the wall, twins of the one on the track side of the structure.

At this juncture the building silhouette lowered. While the structure and roofline retained the same configuration, the roof line was lowered to a peak of approximately 16'. This segment of the building extended approximately 66'8". The side of the building facing the tracks housed a large baggage room, the Agent's office and ticket counter, and a public waiting room. The other side of the structure, including slightly less than half the area, housed the Agent's living quarters, including three bedrooms, living room, kitchen and bath. The Agent's office on the track side of the building was extended outward 2'9" by a bay of five windows measuring 16' in length. Along the far side of the building, the kitchen was extended outward 4' by an enclosed porch measuring 4' deep by 5' long, with a flight of five steps to ground level. The enclosed porch and steps were covered over by a continuation of the roof line 14' in length. The kitchen was served by a capped metal chimney which extended to a height of 26 or 27 feet so as to top the high point of the roof peak.

At the end of the long roof level, the same roof line was repeated in a portico attached to the end of the building. The portico roof extended the lower half surface of the roof line on the tracks side peaking at a vertical height of approximately 12.25', so that the portico extended half the width of the building on the track side and extended the building length an additional 9'. This series of graduated roof levels, clean and functional, gave the building clean and functional lines, and provided, perhaps unintentionally, a pleasant symmetry of design.

Major renovations were carried out during the summer of 1948. The freight warehouse, the section covered by the highest roof section, was extended 49'11", giving that segment of the building a total length of 84'. The existing wide doors were closed off and windows installed in their place, while new rollup doors, each 8' in width,

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 type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES	Built 1935	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	A.M. Truesdell, Bridge Engineer
	Enlarged 1948		Alaska Railroad

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Construction of this facility in 1935 and its enlargement in 1948 reflect the significance of the Alaska Railroad as the main artery of transportation in relationship to two epochal occurrences in the life of the valley. The first event was the arrival of the Matanuska Valley colonists in 1935. The second event was the increasing role of the valley in relationship to Anchorage following World War II, both as a place of residence and as a source of agricultural products.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Land in the Matanuska Valley was opened for homesteading in 1914, including some in the area of what later became the town of Palmer. Most of those who filed claims did so on speculation that their land would be along the route to be chosen for construction of the Alaska Railroad. In the absence of a railroad the difficulty of transportation was virtually insuperable: the cost of bringing in supplies and equipment was ruinous, and there was no way to transport produce to market.

When the railroad construction did get under way, the main line ran about 6.5 miles from Palmer, and a branch line was built to Palmer. Some homesteaders continued to work their ground and ultimately took fee simple title to their claims. Most, however, found the going too tough, and departed for greener fields. In most cases it was not possible to produce enough from the land itself to survive and live. Anchorage did not itself develop and grow so rapidly as was required to produce a stable market for agricultural products. Growth in the area from 1916 until 1935 was slow.

In 1935 a social experiment of the New Deal changed the course of the Valley. In May 1935 an armada of colonists, selected and subsidized by the federal government, arrived at Palmer to take claim to land as cooperative homesteaders. This was one of several social experiments at the time, in which government agencies planned and executed relocation of groups of people from an economically depressed environment to one in which, hopefully, they could establish an economically successful life, individually and as a community.

The activity resulting from establishment of this experimental community created the need for a transportation depot at this place on the railroad. The depot and warehouse structure was constructed in the fall of 1935 in response to this demand. The structure is physical evidence of the development of Palmer in consequence of the Matanuska Valley colonization of 1935.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alaska Railroad, The: Probing the Interior. Anchorage, Office of Statewide Cultural Programs, History & Archaeology Series No. 15, Alaska Division of Parks, October 1975.
 Alaska Railroad Record, 1916-1919.
 Engineering Department Plans Files, Alaska Railroad Headquarters, Anchorage, Alaska.
 Prince, Bernadine, L., The Alaska Railroad in Pictures 1914-1964, Volume II. Anchorage, Ken Wray's Print Shop, 1964.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

388-100			990		
A	0,6	3,8,9,8,5,4	6,8,3,1,9,1,7	B	
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C				D	

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Not Applicable

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

Alfred Mongin, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Alaska Division of Parks

DATE

December 30, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

323 E. 4th Avenue

TELEPHONE

(907) 274-4679

CITY OR TOWN

Anchorage

STATE

Alaska 99501

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE *Michael Kennedy 2.24.*

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Russell Cahill

TITLE *SHPO*

DATE *2/8/77*

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
<i>Wm. M. ...</i>	DATE <i>1.9.78</i>
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
ATTEST <i>Chuck Osterington</i>	DATE <i>12.13.77</i>
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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were installed on the street side and at the end of the segment. This was termed the "new freight warehouse", and included all of the high roofed section of the building. The next segment of the building, which had formerly included the baggage room and a bedroom, stretching from one side of the building to the other, was altered to form a warm storage room. At a later date the open portico was walled in to provide an additional room.

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ITEM NUMBER 8

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Palmer and the Valley underwent another traumatic experience during World War II. With limited manpower available, the large number of military personnel unexpectedly gathered at Fort Richardson, to build it and to man the Fort and administer military operations throughout Alaska, presented an unprecedented market for all the produce that the Valley could produce. Some of this market disappeared with the end of the war and the return of peacetime shipping of produce from the West Coast. The military bases were by then a permanent fixture, and Anchorage had grown just a little in its permanent size, so a market of some size existed where there had been virtually none before the war. To accommodate this need, and the increased railroad shipping activity in Palmer, in 1948, the warehouse end of the warehouse and depot was enlarged.

During the years following 1948 the highway system between Anchorage and the Interior has been steadily improved, so that trucks have superceded the railroad for this type of freight movement. The depot no longer is the exclusive conduit as the prime means of shipment. It cannot compete with trucks on the highway either in timeliness or cost. The depot and warehouse at Palmer represent the pioneering era of growth and experiment in the valley, when the relatively few miles between Anchorage and the Valley entailed a major excursion into a wilderness area, with the railroad the only route of comfort and facility.

During recent years, as the railroad use of the depot has decreased, the community has begun to use most of the building for organizational space and social events. The use has been permitted by the Alaska Railroad without formal agreement. This attests further to the significance of the structure to the community. In one way or another it has been in continuous use since its construction. Though the structure is eight years short of the desirable fifty years of age, it has been of significance in its functions through all this period of time. Recognition of that fact will serve to reinforce the continued long-term compatible uses of the depot.