

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0675342

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 16 1979
DATE ENTERED	25

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC Nabesna Gold Mine (AHRS NAB-011)
(Historic District)

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Base of White Mountain, end of Nabesna Road
in Nabesna Valley, North Wrangell Mountains

CITY, TOWN

Nabesna

---NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Alaska, at large

STATE

Alaska

--- VICINITY OF

CODE

02

COUNTY

S.E. Fairbanks Division

CODE

240

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME The Ptarmigan Company, Inc.

(907) 279-4222

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 3-3956

CITY, TOWN

Anchorage

--- VICINITY OF

STATE

Alaska 99501

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

District Recorder
State of Alaska

(907) 274-8611

STREET & NUMBER

Alaska Court Bldg.

CITY, TOWN

Anchorage

STATE

Alaska 99501

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS)

DATE

May 1, 1978

(907) 274-4676
---FEDERAL STATE ---COUNTY ---LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Office of History & Archaeology, Alaska Div. of Parks, 619 Warehouse Dr.

CITY, TOWN

Anchorage

STATE

Alaska 99501

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Backdropped by towering white cliffs, Nabesna Gold Mine and the old ghost town sit snugly in one of Alaska's most enchanting mountain valleys. Spreading outward and below the camp is the lush, lake-dotted drainage of Jacksina Creek and the Nabesna River. On the far side, alpine greenery climbs upward to the snow-capped peaks of the Alaska Range, north of the towering Wrangells.

The road approaching Nabesna is now canopied by high brush. One first sees an old log brothel, half concealed. Built before 1912 as a prospector's cabin, it acquired its lively reputation much later as the "Do Drop Inn". Now and then, glimpses of the shining metal roofs of Nabesna camp and mine are caught. The grounds and mine buildings appear miniature and dwarfed by the cliffs and wild massiveness of White Mountain.

Abruptly, the road breaks from the brush and the old camp and mine loom stark ahead. With weathered buildings, broken windows, doors ajar, the scene is reminiscent of a Hollywood ghost town movie set; and a backward glimpse of history.

Nearest, upon approach, is the machine shop; its rough slab siding typical of late 19th century Alaskan construction. These slabs, and other rough lumber, were cut on the mine's sawmill. The machine shop, like all buildings at Nabesna, is roofed with corrugated galvanized metal. Lower on the slope and fronting an open yard, a larger log building the boiler house and garage sports wide doors and a rusty stack. All mine buildings were steam heated.

On the opposite side of the road is a grassy embankment eight feet higher than the roadbed. Weathered frame and celotex miner's cottages sprawl along that tier; fronted by a planked boardwalk. Vacant gaps between buildings glare out; others stood there before being hauled away or vandalized. At the far end of the boardwalk is the deteriorating mess hall. Inside, that high-ceiling room (once housed long rows of trestled tables) miners and visiting dignitaries were served mountain sheep, caribou, moose, and "the finest pastry north of San Francisco". The floor of the 60 foot long building is, like all living quarters in the town, tongue and groove. One inch thick, buff-colored celotex panels the mess hall as well as other buildings.

Behind this first tier is a second row of buildings, the small guest houses. Beyond that is a third tier of buildings which housed foremen and the Superintendent. Like the first row, grass-covered gaps indicate where other buildings once stood.

Concealed in the brush, a few yards away is the old horse barn. That building, still fitted with stalls, was later converted to a warehouse; it also saw temporary use as a bordello.

Sideways and up slope from the mess hall is the old Nabesna Post Office, a long building with high ceiling and craftsman-like tongue and groove paneling. Still posted behind the mail window are postage fees to towns and gold camps in eastern Alaska. Vandals have torn-up the floor, probably in search of old stamps. Alongside the Post

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

SPECIFIC DATES 1926 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Carl F. Whitham

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Unlike other famous Alaskan lode mines--corporately developed and lavishly capitalized--Nabesna epitomizes the indomitable persistence of one Alaskan sourdough. It has a unique significance in the annals of Alaskan gold discovery and recovery.

Nabesna Gold Mine thus had little in common with mines financed on Wall Street, or shepherded by the great financial houses personified by absentee ownership. Nabesna was different. As if from a fabled, single page in the romance of mining, Nabesna was discovered and almost single-handedly built by one man, Carl F. Whitham.

The prelude to the story begins in 1837, when Baron von Wrangell dispatched Lt. Rufus Serbrenikof and Russian soldiers to explore the upper reaches of the Copper River. The expedition disappeared without a trace. Not until 1885, when Lt. Henry Allen, U.S. Army, came upon the unknown village of Batzuletnas was Lt. Serbrenikof's fate known. He and the other Russians had fought, and were killed by the Indians. Allen admired the war-like Batzuletnas. He recorded that they did not speak the language of the other Copper River natives. Interestingly, words spoken by the Batzuletnas were almost identical to the Apache of Arizona. Those Indians called the great white cliffs at nearby Nabesna, El-Se-Ba.

In 1891, Lt. Frederick Schwatka, along with C.W.Hayes and Mark Russell, entered the Nabesna region from Ft. Selkirk, the first members of the USGS to visit the area. In 1899, Alfred Brooks and W.J. Peters carried out the initial geologic mapping in the region. Topography was mapped by Oscar Rohn and A.H. McNeer of the War Department. That same year, D.C. Sargent and James Galen first prospected what is now called Orange Hill. Ten miles away another group of prospectors found gold at the base of El-Se-Ba. Of those prospectors Carl Whitham later wrote:

"Long before the coming of the white men. . . Indians knew this as El-Se-Ba, or The White Mountain, taking its name from the white limestone cliffs towering above and overlooking Nabesna Valley.

It has now been nearly 40 years since the time three 'ninety-eighters', finding their way across the practically unexplored mountain wilderness from the seacoast to the new-found gold diggings of the Yukon valley, eased packs from their shoulders at the base of El-Se-Ba to rest, boil a pot of tea and have a midday bite of food. Their journey was continued but not before one of these three had taken a pan of gravel and slide rock from a steep gulch coming down the mountain side and found colors of gold. Thus was White Mountain first known to contain gold."

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Attached)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 330.6

Quadrangle Scale: 1:36360

UTM REFERENCES Nabesna B-5

A | 0,7 | | 3,9,7 | 4,0,0 | | 6,9 | 1,7 | 6,7,5 |
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B | 0,7 | | 3,9,6 | 9,7,5 | | 6,9 | 1,6 | 4,2,5 |
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | 0,7 | | 3,9,5 | 9,0,0 | | 6,9 | 1,6 | 9,5,0 |

D | 0,7 | | 3,9,6 | 3,50 | | 6,9 | 1,8 | 1,7,15 |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All of U.S. Mineral Survey 1591, December 21, 1932.

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

Kirk W. Stanley, President

(907) 279-4222

ORGANIZATION

The Ptarmigan Company, Inc.

DATE

May 1, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 3-3956

TELEPHONE

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

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

William K. ...

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

4/6/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Shirley ...

DATE

5-25-79

ATTEST

W. Pay ...

DATE

7/30/79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 16 1979
DATE ENTERED	25

Nabesna Gold Mine (AHRS NAB-011)
(Historic District)

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1 of 2

Office is a vacant plot where the store once stood. Across the road is another empty site; where the dispensary once stood. A few yards away is the diamond drill core storehouse. Rows of once-neatly-stacked core boxes are now scattered about the floor.

On the grassy, brush-covered knoll above the Post Office is the 40 foot log building which served as the mine office and home of Carl F. Whitham, president and general manager of Nabesna. From the door of that well-built house, Whitham could view the camp and the mine. Not far away, within "shouting distance", is the mill superintendent's office.

Three hundred feet away is the spacious mill building. This rambling, three-level structure was built on a slope, to insure gravity flow. From its cavernous main level, stairs, ladders and walkways lead to other levels, rooms, cubby-holes and balconies. Most of the old equipment is in place. The 45 ton ball mill is propped on timbers; but flotation cells, the cyanide leaching mill, as well as other equipment are intact. Throughout this rambling structure, redwood tanks are seen, some ranging in size to that of a modest house. Scavengers have ripped parts of the old planked floor apart searching for spilled gold (and gold was found). A pan anywhere off the sub-floor gravel will yet show flakes of gold.

The mill building, enlarged over the years, measures approximately 100 by 120 feet; corrugated iron covers its sweeping shed roof. The structure is in fair shape, undoubtedly due to its sturdy, hand-built construction. The crusher room is the highest section of the mill. From there a platform leads onto the roof. To one side sprawls the town; and below the mill spread the tailings. Thousands of ounces of gold are still locked in that brownish-yellow waste.

The assay office is close by. Heavy wire mesh shrouds its windows. Inside, gold and silver bullion was melted down in the "muffle" furnace, then stored in a safe. The furnace is still in place.

Behind the mill, aerial tram cables stretch upward to the loading platforms at mine portals. The highest portal is the "100" Level, site of the original Bear Vein discovery. Two old log buildings, carried log by log up that steep slope in 1927, still stand.

Down slope, 150 feet, is the "250" Level. There, snug against a narrow ledge is a frame bunkhouse and lunch room, blacksmith shop, tool shed and ore loading platform. The view from that high perch is spectacular.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 10 1979
DATE ENTERED	25

Nabesna Gold Mine (AHRS NAB-011)
(Historic District)

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2 of 2

The lowest mine portal is the "650" Level, located 400 feet down slope. Nothing remains there except the portal and ore loading platform. The mine was entered from portals on the 250 and 650 Levels (there were no vertical shafts at Nabesna). Underground, mining was carried out on 6 levels (manways and ore chutes connected all levels). The working totaled approximately 16,000 linear feet.

If one observes closely the face of White Mountain, faint trails are yet visible. Switch-back follows switch-back as those hand-made old trails traverse the steep, rocky slope. Some were built by Carl Whitham in the early twenties, but the fainter, older ones date to 1903. One trail leads to an old stamp mill, hauled to White Mountain by dog sled in 1904. The stamp mill, used to crush the gold ore, stands in its original location and appears in nearly perfect condition. A wagon trail, now grown up in brush, leads to Cabin Creek and an original log, miner's stampede cabin, built about 1902.

All mine buildings at Nabesna, considering their age and lack of care for the past 30 years, are in fair to good shape. However, log foundations have rotted and several buildings sag.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED APR 16 1979	25
DATE ENTERED	

Nabesna Gold Mine (AHS NAB-011)
(Historic District)

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 1 of 4

Letter to Nabesna Mining Corp. Shareholders
November 1, 1938
Carl F. Whitham, President and General Manager

In 1902, while F.C. Schrader and D.C. Witherspoon of the USGS were mapping Nabesna valley, the first gold stampede to White River took place. Several of those stamperders, including one of the original 'ninety-eighters' stopped at White Mountain. Prospecting above Cabin Creek (named for the cabin those men built) free gold was also found in quartz veins. They formed the Royal Development Corporation and sold shares in Valdez to finance development. Three drifts and one open pit were dug by hand steel. One of those drifts remains open today.

In the winter of 1904-1905 a ton-and-a-half stamp mill was hauled from Valdez, by dog sled, over the military Eagle Trail to White Mountain. During that period supply points for Nabesna valley was either Valdez or Dawson (in the Yukon) and required one to two months for a round trip. The stamp mill was set-up and although the ore graded 1 to 2 ounces in gold, recovery was poor. This prospect was abandoned in 1914. The stamp mill is still there.

In 1912, Carl F. Whitham along with others was drawn to the new gold fields discovered by Billy James at Chisana (then called Shushana). Chisana is 30 miles SE of Nabesna and two trails led to it: one via Platinum Creek and the other past White Mountain. Whitham took the latter and stayed a few days at Thad Conkel's cabin. That cabin is situated near the present tailing dam at Nabesna. That was Whitham's first view of the great white cliffs. Fourteen years later he would build his mine there.

Whitham thus reached Chisana, staked his claim on Little Eldorado Creek and started mining placer gold. At age 18 had come to the Territory; in 1900. A die-hard prospector and self-taught miner, he loved Alaska and never stopped promoting it. He had no formal education; but he became an effective writer and speaker. He hated to see Alaska change, but he knew it must. His articles promoting Alaska's development appeared in the New York Times, Seattle Post Intelligencer, The Alaska Weekly, Cordova Daily Times, Seattle Post Intelligencer, The Alaska Weekly, Cordova Daily Times and the Engineering Mining Journal. A tough man and a hard drinker, like many others in his day, Whitham also carried and read a Bible.

In 1917 he left Chisana, enlisted in the Army and served in France during WW I. Discharged in 1919, he married and brought his bride to Alaska. Leaving the railhead at Chitina they rode horseback for 15 days to Chisana. In 1922 he leased his placer mine and took his wife to the great cliffs at White Mountain. Settled in the cabin on Cabin Creek, he started prospecting the old Royal Development workings. But such was a hard and lonely life for a woman, so, in '24 he re-settled his wife in Seattle; then returned to White Mountain.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

Nabesna Gold Mine (AHRS NAB-011)
(Historic District)

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 16 1979 25
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2 of 4

The leased placer claims paid him \$500 to \$1000 per year and that money supported his wife. To finance prospecting he took other jobs. One was with D.C. Sargent, then exploring the copper deposit at Orange Hill. At other times he worked for the Alaska Road Commission or carried the mail. But always he came back to White Mountain.

By laborious hand methods Whitham extended the older mine workings. But the work was discouraging; the grade was low. Then, in mid-summer of 1925 while prospecting above the towering cliffs he found, on a wind swept ridge, one of the richest gold veins ever reported in Alaska. He called it the Bear Vein. The Territorial Department of Mines recorded the ore graded at 49.7 ounces of gold and 73 ounces per ton of silver!

Carl Whitham, now age 45, set about to develop that vein and build his mine. For the next three years he labored, backpacking needed equipment and materials up the steep, treacherous mountain.

In the fall of 1929, with the aid of a long time friend, D.L. Kelsey and others, he organized the "Nabesna Mining Corporation": One million shares, no par value, were authorized. Whitham received \$500,000 for his claims. Two hundred and forty thousand shares were offered to the public at 20¢. All were quickly purchased; and within three weeks some were being resold for twice that sum.

A 2000 foot aerial tramway from valley to mine was constructed with 'Swede machines', and the mill started. A drift was driven to intersect the downward extension of the Bear Vein. Excellent ore was found in the drift. But it was neither as rich nor did it resemble the surface ore. That difference gave rise to interesting speculation.

At that time, B.D. Stewart, father of Judge Tom Stewart, was Supervising Mining Engineer for the Territory and sent Earl Pilgrim (later a well known mine owner) to examine Nabesna. Pilgrim confirmed the richness of the ore but disagreed with Whitham's assessment that the Bear Vein dipped steeply. The vein, Pilgrim reported, dipped at a shallow angle into the mountain. That report engendered speculation that the drift had fortuitously hit rich ore, but not the Bear Vein! Rumors persist that the drift might have crossed under the shallow dipping Bear Vein and rich ore may still lie untouched in the mountain.

During the early years all freighting was done during the winter months by tractor and horse drawn bob-sleds. But gold and gold concentrate was carried by packhorse six miles to a landing field on Nabesna River. Two famous bush pilots, Harold Gillam and Bob Reeve, flew freight in and gold out. Bob Reeve and Whitham were especially close friends and the landing field became known as 'Reeve Field' as it is shown today on maps.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

Nabesna Gold Mine (AHRS NAB-011)
(Historic District)

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 16 1979
DATE ENTERED MAY 25 1979

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3 of 4

In '33, the Nabesna Road was completed, 105 miles from the Richardson Highway to the mine. The road was called the Abercrombie Highway or North Wrangell Branch Road. The Army Signal Corps strung a telephone line, looped on pole tripods, to the mine. Nabesna Post Office had already been established. Lawrence DeWitt, owner of Slana Roadhouse, carried the mail by packhorses in summer and dog team in winter.

The first mill superintendent was Phil Holdsworth. (Years later he was the State's first Commissioner of Department of Natural Resources). The mill was considered one of the most modern in the Territory. Its capacity was increased from 25 to 50 tons per day. Gold was recovered by shaker tables, flotation and cyanide leaching. High on the mountain, underground work eventually totaled more than 3 miles. The mine was not mechanized. All ore was hand-tramed to the portals, then lowered by aerial tram 2000 feet to the mill.

Employment by the late 1930's reached 60 to 70 men. One foreman was Ben Holemen, a long time Anchorage resident. Al Gezzy, founder of Alaska Freight Lines, financed his first truck hauling Nabesna concentrates to Valdez. Many other notable, long-time Alaskans worked for Nabesna mine over the years.

Sam Gambling, an old time prospector, and hand tramer relates how Whitham warned him not to let loaded cars get away once they were pushed onto the high platform. If that happened, Whitham promised, he would fire the tramer. Gambling told how he pushed his car out of the portal and onto the platform, then watched, stunned, as it continued to roll and roll off the high cliff. A repairman had failed to replace the wooden block that would have stopped the car. "Wasn't Gambling's fault," explained the mine foremen. "Maybe not." Whitham reportedly said. But he had given his word and would keep it. Gambling was fired.

Colorful and flamboyant, Carl Whitham ran Nabesna mine with an iron hand. But he made it pay. All expenses were met from earnings and every year the mine paid a dividend. The fourth year, the dividend of \$180,000 was equal to the company's total capital investment. Nabesna, in terms of stockholder investment was probably the most profitable mine ever in Alaska.

As a lusty, free-wheeling, boisterous gold mine it was the focal point in eastern Alaska. Its reputation spread; and many famous persons visited. Considering the isolation of the mine, an unusual visitor was Father Hubbard, the "Glacier Priest", a good friend of Whitham's. Others including politicians, scientists, Army generals, bankers, gamblers and of course, "sporting ladies!" All were said to have enjoyed the town's hospitality, its famous mess hall, and memorable "picnics" below the towering white cliffs.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 16 1979
DATE ENTERED	25

Nabesna Gold Mine (AHRS NAB-011)
(Historic District)

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4 of 4

Nabesna made its own 'moonshine' whiskey. A little "sunshine" was once also supplied by several enterprising ladies who surreptitiously set-up business in the old horse barn. But the best known establishment was the "Do Drop Inn". That old brothel still exists. It was asserted that Carl Whitham was "no Saint, but he was all man"; and a popular one. From his cabin on the 'knoll' he surveyed his domain and controlled all within it. Drunk or sober he rode the swaying tram to the mine. He reportedly fell off once into a 150 foot ore chute.

As the 1940's approached, mining was extended to the adjacent Golden Eagle mine (now called Rambler Mine). When WW II broke, President Roosevelt closed gold mines for the "duration and six". After the war, Nabesna reopened only briefly. In February, 1947 the indomitable Carl Whitham died. As the dominant driving force the vacuum was not filled, and the mine and town, permanently closed. An era had also ended; Alaska was no longer a frontier mining country. Post-war government construction and spending took its place.

In the late 1940's, U.S. Army-Counter Intelligence used Nabesna for an arms and supply cache. A Russian invasion, during those post-war years, was deemed possible and an underground force was organized. That was the last activity at Nabesna.

During its bustling hey-day, however, Nabesna produced over two and one-half tons of gold; twice that of silver; and many more tons of copper and lead. But its contribution was more than metal; it was an integral part of the region's history--and it opened up a country that many have enjoyed since.

Gold mining was a memorable and an unforgettable episode in Alaska's frontier history. Nabesna mine was part of that era, the last of the true "gold towns". Those old buildings represent a backward glance at a way of life that is gone and will never come again.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 16 1979
MAY 25 1979
DATE ENTERED

Nabesna Gold Mine (AHRS NAB-011)
(Historic District)

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1 of 1

Major Bibliographical References:

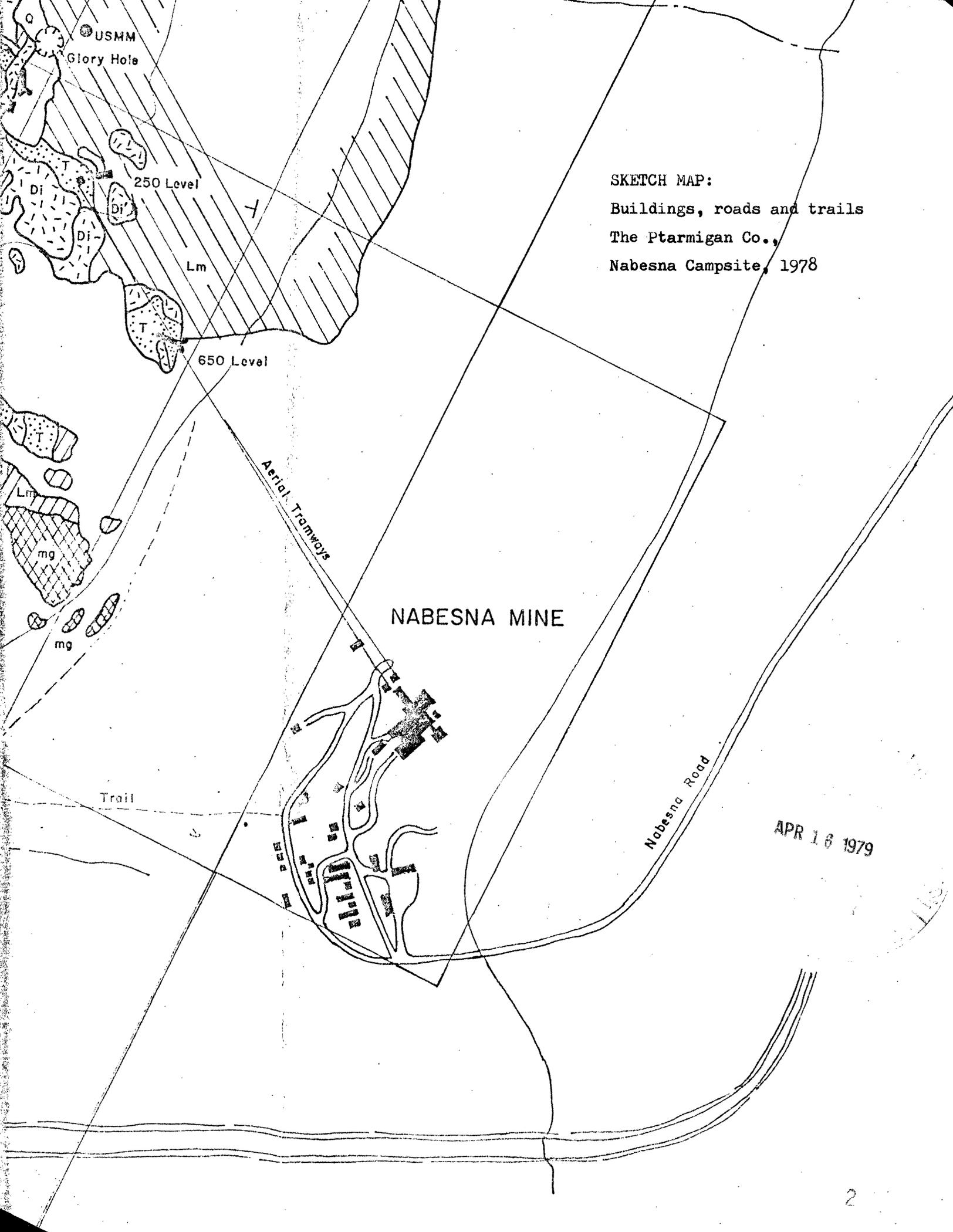
Allen, Lt. H.T., 1887: Report of an Expedition to the Copper, Tanana and Koyukuk Rivers. Washington D.C. (Military Reconnaissance of the Copper River; Narratives of Explorations) War Dept., 1886.

U.S. Geological Publications including: Twenty-first Ann. Report, Prof. Paper No. 15, Bull. 417 and 933.

Report on Cooperation Between the Territory of Alaska and the U.S. in making Mine Investigations and in the Inspection of Mines for Biennium Ending March 31, 1931. B.D. Stewart, Supervising Mining Engineer, Territory of Alaska, Juneau, Alaska, Annual Report.

Letters and diaries of Carl F. Whitham, 1912 to 1941.

Annual Corporation and Engineering Reports, Nabesna Mining Corp., Nabesna, Alaska: 1929 to 1946.



SKETCH MAP:
Buildings, roads and trails
The Ptarmigan Co.,
Nabesna Campsite, 1978

NABESNA MINE

APR 16 1979

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 79003755 Date Listed: 5/25/79

Nabesna Gold Mine Historic District
Property Name

Valdez-Cordova Area AK
County State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

for *Robert A. Lee*
Signature of the Keeper

10/2/75
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Location: Under county, Fairbanks Division is replaced with Valdez-Cordova Area.

This information was confirmed with Jo Antonson of the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)