Senators: Ted Stevens/Mike Gravel Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Congressman: Don Young FOR NPS USE ONLY RECEIVED JAN 3 1979

SEE IN	ISTRUCTIONS IN <i>HOW</i> T TYPE ALL ENTRIES			RMS
NAME				
HISTORIC Laurit	sen Cabin (AHRS SI	TE NO. SEW-152)	
AND/OR COMMON Clasby	Cabin (Also referr	ed to as Renne	r Cabin)	
LOCATION	West bank of Lak	e Creek, confl	uence of Lake & Mi	lls Creek (formi
STREET & NUMBER	Canyon Creek), M	ile 48, Seward	Highway.	
CITY, TOWN Moose Pa			congressional Alaskaat	DISTRICT
STATE		VICINITY OF CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Alaska		02	Seward Division	210
CLASSIFICA	ATION			
CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	Р	RESENT USE
DISTRICT	PUBLIC	X_OCCUPIED	AGRICULTU	
X BUILDING(S)STRUCTURE	XPRIVATE	UNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIA	
SITE	_BOTH PUBLIC ACQUISITION	WORK IN PROGRES		
OBJECT	IN PROCESS	X_YES: RESTRICTED	ENTERTAINM GOVERNME	
	BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED		
	SERVICE CONTROLLED	NO	MILITARY	OTHER:
OWNER OF	PROPERTY			
- NAME Patricia	Ryan Clasby			
STREET & NUMBER P.O. Box	794 Phor	ne (907) 224-34	443	
city, town Seward			STATE	00661
	OF LEGAL DESC	VICINITY OF	Alaska	99664
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ET	District Posses		7) 224–3075	
STREET & NUMBER	5th & Adams (P.			
CITY, TOWN	Seward		STATE Alaska	99664
REPRESENT	TATION IN EXIST	ING SURVE	YS	
TITLE				
Alaska	Heritage Resources	Survey (AHRS)	(907) 274-4676	
July 14	, 1977	FEDER	AL XSTATECOUNTYL	OCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS	Alaska Division of	Parks, 619 War	ehouse Dr., Suite	210
CITY, TOWN	horage		STATE Alaska	



CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

__EXCELLENT

X_DETERIORATED

__UNALTERED
X_ALTERED

_XORIGINAL SITE

__FAIR

__UNEXPOSED

__RUINS

__MOVED DATE____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

PHYSICAL SETTING:

This rustic cabin lies in an intermontane valley in the Chugach Range. Lake Creek, a clear gravel-bottomed stream that drains Lower Summit Lake, flows 25 feet from the cabin. The structure is on the west bank, about twelve feet above normal water level. To the East, Mills Creek, a larger and frequently turbid stream, emerges from a canyon and flows diagonally across the flood plain to meet Lake Creek and form Canyon Creek below the cabin. Mills Creek has occupied course's much closer to the cabin (1904 and 1911 photos), due to natural channelization and diversion by placer miners. Tailing piles and cuts, overgrown now with shrubs, testify to the miners' activities.

The cabin stands among scattered willows and alders. Behind it (to the west) a slope of spruce and birch rises to a bench, and beyond that another slope rises to the present Seward Highway. The trees and flowing water seclude it from the sight and sound of traffic.

PRESENT APPEARANCE:

From a distance, this cabin appears dilapidated. The exterior wood has weathered to a mellow gray, and the south wall of the middle and front section sags. Up close, however, some charming features are revealed: The less weathered sections, especially the dovetailed corners of the logs, are a rich reddish gold. The dovetailing, hand-hewn, is impressively tight and handsome. The ridgepole is hewn to a hipped shape to fit the peak. Cross-sections of three similarly-hewn roof supports are exposed at the tops of the north and south walls. The building is rectangular along an east-west axis facing the stream. Outside dimensions are 27 feet by 13 feet.

The structure is composed of three sections. The oldest is the rear (west) section. It is a tribute to the wood-working skill of its builder that this section is also in the best condition. Horizontal logs, rounded outside and hewn flat inside, form all sides, including the east wall, which is now an interior division between the rear and middle sections. Logs are chinked with whatever the builder and subsequent owners had at hand; mostly rags and moose hair. Vertical boards of irregular widths form the gables. These were missing from the east end of the rear section when the present owner took ownership, but she has installed weathered boards to match those of the west end.

The middle section, not as tightly constructed as the rear section, was probably a storage area and entryway. The walls are narrow vertical logs, exposed inside (on the north) but covered with thin planks and celotex (on the south). Vertical boards and batten are nailed to the exterior and overlap the rear section's logs by about four inches. This board-and-batten exterior continues along the north, south and east walls of the front section. The boards and batten were probably added when the front section was built, some years after the middle section's logs were added.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AF	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	IECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
PREHISTORIC	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION
1400-1499	ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
1600-1699	ARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
<u>X</u> 1800-1899	COMMERCE	X EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	_TRANSPORTATION
1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	OTHER (SPECIFY)
		INVENTION		
	1		•••	
SPECIFIC DAT	ES 1896, 1904, 1913	L BUILDER/ARCH	HITECT Polly Mining	Co.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Lauritsen cabin is significant for its association with a pre-Klondike gold rush, which brought the first major influx of people to eastern Kenai Peninsula. The cabin, possibly the oldest in the Canyon Creek drainage, symbolizes the area's gold mining. Built and used by the first generation of Canyon Creek miners, and used by two generations of successors, it is now owned by a couple who are applying new mining techniques to old claims.

Lauritsen is also significant for its distinctive construction, featuring beautiful dovetailing of logs. The fact that this work was done by hand--and probably by a builder who was hard-pressed to get on with his main job of mining--makes the careful detail all the more impressive.

Finally, this cabin has association with individuals significant in Alaska's mining history. During research, fascinating details of the lives of several such men come to light. Photographs, articles, and a few of their own writings have been collected and could make a fine interpretive display. An understanding of these old-time miners is especially useful for gaining perspective on such current Alaskan issues as d(2) legislation, oil leasing and development vs. conservation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The Hope-Sunrise area of the Kenai Peninsula was the scene of a short, but intense, pre-Klondike gold rush. Gold was found near Hope in the late 1880's, and prospectors trickled in for several years. Then, in 1895, Robert Michaelsen and John (Jack) Renner made a placer discovery on Mills Creek, a tributary of Canyon Creek. They and several others formed the Polly Mining Company, which produced \$40,000 in gold in its first year. As Barry notes, "Forty thousand dollars in 1895 seemed very close to a fortune." (Barry, 1973.)

What followed is described by Moffit: "The discoveries on Mills and Canyon Creeks brought about during the following season (1896) the first considerable rush of prospectors to this field. . . some state the number as high as 3,000. are said to have landed at Tyonek en route for Turnagain Arm and Sushitna [sic] River, while a considerable number crossed by way of Portage Glacier from Prince William Sound. This was the banner year on Canyon Creek, 327 men being engaged in mining its gravels during the summer." (Moffit, 1906.)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Attached)

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LIST ALL STATES AND CO	OUNTIES FOR PROPERT	IES OVERLAPPINO	STATE OR COUNTY BOUN	IDARIES
STATE	CODE	COUNTY		CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY		CODE
ORGANIZATION Mailing Addr	ess: P.O. Box 1		DATE August 3, 1978 TELEPHONE (907) 224-303	
STREET & NUMBER	المستعدد الم		August 3, 1978	
city or town Seward			STATE Alaska 99664	
2 STATE HISTORIC P				V
NATIONAL	ATED SIGNIFICANCE OF STAT	E WENTY V	LOCAL X	
As the designated State Historic Preshereby nominate this property for in criteria and procedures set forth by the	clusion in the National F		that it has been evaluated	
TITLE State Historic	Preservation Off	icer	DATE 24 No	v 78
OR NPS USE ONLY I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PI DIRECTOR, GEHEOL TTEST:	ROPERTY IS INCLUDED LOGY AND HISTORIG PE	L	DATE OF THE	-16-79
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Lauritsen Cabin (AHRS NO. SITE SEW-152)

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There is no interior wall between the middle and front sections, except in the gable area, which is formed of vertical boards and rests on a hewn log beam. The front section walls are framed with nailed 2×4 's and covered on the outside with vertical boards and batten.

Although the roof line is continuous throughout, each section has a separate construction. The oldest, the most substantial roof, is composed of four layers: first, planks perpendicular to the ridgepole, then planks parallel to the ridgepole, then tar paper, and finally an outer covering of corrugated metal. The middle section has rafters of very rough planks, overlain by wider planks which parallel the ridgepole. The front section has 2 x 4 rafters overlain by wider planks. These planks parallel the ridgepole and slightly underlap those of the middle section. The roof of the middle and front sections has gaps and rotten spots.

The floors are now dirt, with vestiges of rotten floor boards. The present owner removed two layers of rotten planks from the rear section and plans to lay a new wooden floor, harmonious with the rest of the cabin. The cabin had settled into the earth to a depth of several logs. Foundation logs are rotting, and the owner would like to jack up the cabin to replace them. A cellar, with vestiges of wooden sides, near the window of the rear section, is two feet deep and three feet square.

There are three windows on the south wall of the cabin (one in each section) and one in the north wall (front section). Glass is missing. A few small panes remained in the rear section window, but the owner has removed them and temporarily boarded it up to prevent water damage.

The cabin has a single entrance on the east end; the door is missing. There is one interior doorway, between the middle and rear sections. The owner has constructed a sleeping loft at the west end of the rear section.

ORIGINAL APPEARANCE:

Two U.S. Geological Survey photographs, taken in 1904 and 1911, establish the previous appearance. The 1911 photo (Moffit) shows the cabin most clearly. It is taken from the north, so only that side is shown. Two sections were then present: the horizontal and the vertical log sections. Curiously, the horizontal logs appear to project beyond the northwest corner. Perhaps this is an illusion: it is not the case today, for the dovetailed logs now terminate at the corners.

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The proportions between the sections of the structure are the same. (In the picture, the ratio is .16 inch: 36 inch; in the cabin today, 6 feet: 14 feet. These ratios can be expressed as .44 and .47, respectively.) Shakes, rather than corrugated metal, appear to cover the roof. No window is in evidence, just as the north wall of the rear and middle sections has no window today.

The 1904 photo (Johnson) taken from the northeast, shows the front, and north side of the cabin. Again, horizontal and vertical log sections identify the structure. The front, which today is the division between middle and front sections, appears completed only in the gable area. Vertical planks or logs are leaning in front of it. There is a gap between the planks for an entrance.

Both photos show a larger cabin south of the Lauritsen cabin, as well as outbuildings. None are standing today.

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The rush waned as men moved onto the Klondike, but, "The beginning of the new century was an optomistic time on the mining grounds of Cook Inlet and the Kenai Peninsula. Pick and shovel work on the gold claims gave way to hydraulic mining." (Barry, 1973.) Moffit's 1904 photograph shows an hydraulic operation, with Lauritsen cabin in the background. He estimates that the region produced about one million dollars between 1895 and 1904, with the bulk coming from Canyon, Mills, Lynx and Gulch Creeks. (Moffit, 1906.)

During the next twenty year, the area's production declined, but Canyon and Mills Creeks continued to contribute a large percentage of the yield. Yet hopes continued high. A random sampling of Seward newspapers from that period indicate the importance that mining held in projections of the area's future. Nearly every issue featured a front-page article. One corporation devoted several years to building an enormous log dam near the mouth of Canyon Creek. The project was eventually abandoned; but smaller operations continued. World War II brought gold mining to a virtual standstill, as in most of Alaska. After the War a few operations resumed. (Barry, 1973.) In recent years, with an increased price of gold, Canyon and Mills Creek claims range from major backhoe-and-bulldozer operations to small-scale suction dredge ventures.

It is interesting to note the vital role that cabins played in the area's history. At the start of the rush, they embodied civilization on the eastern Kenai Peninsula. Seward did not yet exist. Even Sunrise and Hope, roughly twenty and twenty-five miles, respectively, from the Lauritsen cabin, did not pre-date the rush, but sprang up with it. In 1898 Mendenhall described the route along Canyon Creek as "very bad trail". Even in 1922, Romig found it rough, steep and extremely tiring. Mining cabins, no matter how simple, were havens. They were important to the comfort and survival of all who travelled through the area. Romig describes stopping at Anderson's camp, several miles below the Lauritsen cabin:

"A little farther along the trail was located the main camp of this mining company. It being nearly noon Jack and Robert [Romig himself] entered the mess house and made themselves at home, starting a fire in the range and frying ham and eggs, as well as some fresh moose meat found there.

"After eating heartily and complying with the unwritten law of all Alaskan Sourdough travelers, of cutting up kindling wood for the next sojourner, the two proceeded on their way to the railroad."

(Romig, 1924.)

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Most cabins passed in rather casual fashion from one user to another as prospectors came and went. Usually, they were not referred to on the deeds transferring ownership of mining claims, although this may have been a tactic to avoid alerting the Forest Service to their presence.

Because so many cabins have disappeared it is remarkable that this one has survived. Indeed, Lauritsen appears to be the oldest cabin in the Mills Creek/Canyon Creek drainage. It is at least 74 years old, since it appears in the 1904 Moffit photograph. Probably it was built before 1900, for the miners whose names are associated with it arrived before 1900. Since mining was the only activity on that site at that time, it seems logical that Lauritsen was the owner—and possibly the builder.

The 1911 Johnson photo shows the Lauritsen cabin, with a larger log cabin upstream (south) of it and a small outbuilding between them. The photo is captioned, "Looking upstream from just below Renner's cabins." The map that accompanies Johnson's report shows three buildings at the site, simply labeled "Renner's". (Martin, Johnson and Grant, 1915.) Sleem's 1910 map also shows three buildings, but "Renner" appears beside the upstream building, and "Renner" beside the downstream one. Thus, the enigma as to whether the surviving cabin should be called Lauritsen or Renner.

Jack Renner, one of the two original Mills Creek stakers, was married to a Native woman name Polly, after whom the famous claims were named. She was the widow of Phineus Shell, by whom she had a son Lewis. Lewis Shell is now dead, but his son, Lewis R. Shell, lives in Anchorage and has a major mining operation on Mills Creek. He believes that the Renners did not build the Lauritsen cabin; but that they might have lived in it as early as 1898. However since he was born in 1920 and lived in Seldovia until he was about sixteen, he did not see for himself exactly where the Renners lived. By the time he and his parents returned to the eastern Kenai Peninsula, Polly and Jack Renner were dead.

A photo furnished by Lewis R. Shell shows the Renners in front of a log cabin which matches the upstream cabin in the 1904 and 1911 photographs. Labeled "Cabin at Renners Mine Mills Creek Alaska", the photo suggest that the Renners lived in that cabin. It was larger than the Lauritsen cabin and better suited to a family of three.

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Both Lewis Shell and Lewis R. Shell carried on the family tradition of mining. Lewis R. Shell reports that he and his father used the Lauritsen cabin in the late 1950's while travelling to and from Upper Mills Creek claims. By that time the upstream "Renner Cabin" no longer existed. (Lewis R. Shell interview.)

While the Renners were using the upstream cabin, it seems most likely that Laurits H. Lauritsen was using the downstream cabin, as its owner, but possibly under an arrangement with Renners. Besides the notation "Lauritsen" on the 1910 Sleem map, other evidence links him to it: A return receipt for registered mail has been found in a crevice in the frame of the rear section's window. The sender was L. H. Lauritsen, who gave his address as Sunrise (the nearest town). The receipted item was delivered at Latouche, Alaska, July 28, 1913.

Lauritsen, born in Denmark in 1869, first staked claims on Canyon Creek in 1898. Like Renner and Michaelsen, he stayed in the Hope-Sunrise district while other miners moved on to the Klondike or Nome. In 1907 he was Jack Renner's partner on Mills Creek. (Barry, 1973.)

Lauritsen is mentioned in Robert Michaelsen's diary. Between October 1917 and May 1918, Lauritsen stopped at Michaelsen's cabin several times, sometimes for a meal, sometimes overnight, while travelling to and from "the Forks" (the junction of Canyon Creek and East Fork). Even if he had owned the Lauritsen cabin at that time, it makes sense that he would stopover at Michaelsen's already-warm cabin during the colder months. (Michaelsen, 1917-26.)

Unlike Michaelsen, who stuck with the Canyon Creek/Mills Creek placer claims for 34 years, Lauritsen staked and worked on various lode and placer claims throughout the eastern Kenai Peninsula. He also did assessment work for other claim owners. He was involved, between 1919 and 1923, in lode claims with the Renners. In 1923, Renner revoked a power-of-attorney previously granted Lauritsen. (Books of Records and Deeds, Seward.) This might be evidence of a falling-out.

Lauritsen died in 1924 on "Canyon Creek at mining camp 50 miles or more north from Seward." (Certificate of Death). The "mining camp" was probably the Lauritsen cabin, as its milepost used to be given as 50.

After Lauritsen's death, other miners occupied the cabin. Emma Clark of Hope recalls stopping at the site when she made her first trip (by dog sled) to Hope in 1932. She says that the miners living there treated her royally, fixed dinn er for her and gave her a cabin to herself, while the men stayed in another cabin. (Emma Clark, personal interview.)

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Today the cabin is owned by Patricia Ryan Clasby. She and her husband, Robert, are part-owners of a mining claim on which the cabin stands. They are using a mining technique that would surely have excited Lauritsen, Renner and Michaelsen—suction dredging with a four-inch dredge and diving suits.

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- Romig, Robert H., "Alaskan Sourdoughs", <u>The Pathfinder of Alaska</u>, March, 1924, p. 5-8, 23.

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Other Materials:

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- Moffit, F.H., "Hydraulic mining at mouth of Mills Ck, looking west. July 1904." Ref.: Moffit, F.H. 114. U.S. Geological Survey Library, Denver.
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- Sleem, D.H., Map of Kenai Peninsula Mining District and Moose Pass Regions, Kenai Precinct, Alaska. Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1910.

mills Creek Manitoba "Kauritsen" AHRS Site Lake Creek "Michaelsen"
Cabin - AHRS
Site 153 Lower Summit Lake Forest Service Recreation candon Creek Homes Area M.le 48.7 X CORNERS OF CLAIM. --- GOOD ROCK B CLAIM; ALSO BOUNDARY OF NOMINATION SITE.

Sketch Map of Area Surrounding Lauritsen Cabin (AHRS Site 152). Not to scale.

