

DATA SHEET

H0055981

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Alaska
COUNTY:	Southcentral
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	APR 3 1975

1. NAME

COMMON:
* Alaska Nellie's Homestead

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Mile 23, Seward Highway

CITY OR TOWN:
Lawing

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

STATE: Alaska CODE: 02 COUNTY: Southcentral CODE: 02

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Opal Everett

STREET AND NUMBER:
6908 Mink Place

CITY OR TOWN:
Anchorage

STATE: Alaska CODE: 02

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
District Recorder

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Kenai

STATE: Alaska CODE: 02

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Alaska Heritage Resource Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1970 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Alaska Division of Parks

STREET AND NUMBER:
323 E. 4th Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:
Anchorage

STATE: Alaska CODE: 02

Senators: Mike Gravel/Ted Stevens
Congressman: Don Young

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Original Appearance

During Nellie's lifetime, Lawing reportedly consisted of about eight buildings, including greenhouse, garage, boathouse, museum, cafe/bar, four cabins, barn, and windmill. Probably the only structure dating before 1923 was the roadhouse, a one-story log building (about 20' x 48') with three large rooms: a trophy room, dining room, and kitchen. After 1923, Nellie converted the roadhouse into a restaurant/museum complex and extended the kitchen over the lake, so that she could fish while preparing meals. Sleeping quarters were located in various small cabins near the roadhouse. Nellie's own home was a two-story, rectangular log structure, which her husband barged across the lake, log by log. A 1,000 gallon water tank was once attached to the building. Telephone lines probably were located nearby as Nellie was reported to be one of the earliest subscribers to the government railroad telephone.

Present Appearance

Today, only the two-story log structure, two small log cabins, concrete foundations of a structure, and log foundations of the former roadhouse, remain at the site. The grounds are overgrown with brush and weeds, only stones marking the site of Nellie's gardens. Nellie's former home is in excellent condition, recent additions being the chimney and possibly the storage area on the second floor; it is no longer used as a residence but a tourists' shop. The two other cabins were former sleeping quarters for tourists; now they are private residences. Both are considerably altered. One has been entirely reconstructed along modernistic lines, while the other has rear additions of plywood. The former roadhouse is completely destroyed, reportedly by the rising of Kenai Lake after the Great Earthquake.

Legal Description: US Survey No. 2094 Patent No. 1094990.

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SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1923-1956**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<u>Adventure</u> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

As a symbol of the Alaskan frontier tradition, Nellie Neal-Lawing or "Alaska Nellie" lingers in the memories of many Alaskans. Her rough and romantic individualism left its appealing mark on many who met and knew her. Indeed, her image probably came first to minds when tourists later recalled their experiences in Alaska. Perhaps to them, she was Alaska. But to those who knew Nellie well, she was a remarkably vibrant woman whose personal contribution to the construction of The Alaska Railroad, the tourist industry, and Alaska's public image can never be accurately defined. As a memorial to a significantly representative figure in Alaska's frontier history, Alaska Nellie's Homestead deserves entry to The National Register of Historic Places.

Eldest of ten children, Nellie Neal-Lawing (1874-1956) was born to Robert Nathan and Jennie Jan (Gibson) Trosper at St. Joseph, Missouri. As related in her autobiography, Alaska Nellie (1940), she enjoyed youth on a Missouri farm, where she learned to fish, hunt, trap, and farm. During these years, she often dreamed of a little-known land called Alaska. With the death of her mother in 1898, she assumed the family household duties until her father remarried in 1900. Then, armed with the works of Samuel Smiles and H.W. Longfellow, Nellie headed West.

After leaving Missouri, Nellie pursued a career in the restaurant business for railroad companies. From positions in Wyoming and Denver, she traveled to Cripple Creek, Colorado, to work as a cook in a boarding house. Arriving in 1903, during a time when the town was locked in a terrifying labor strike and martial law, Nellie soon moved to Victor and established her own boarding house. It was there, despite the labor turmoil, that Nellie married a fellow Missourian, the assayer Wesley Neal. Returning to Cripple Creek, the couple purchased a thirty-room hotel. However, the venture was shortlived; her husband's drinking problems forced Nellie to abandon the marriage. And again, she headed West.

In despair, Nellie spent the years 1912 to 1915 drifting from job to job. She worked briefly for various railroad companies in Oregon, Washington, and Nevada, before learning of her divorce decree. On a vacation in 1915, she visited the San Francisco Exposition, where she was inspired by the Alaska exhibit into deciding that the time was propitious to realize a childhood dream. Thereupon, she boarded the steamship Admiral Evans for Seattle, and Alameda for Seward, Alaska. In early July, 1915, she arrived at Seward.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Allen, Lois Hudson, "Woman Unafraid," The Alaska Sportsman, VII (July 1939), 10-11, 31-33.
 Neal-Lawing, Nellie, Alaska Nellie. Washington: Seattle Printing and Publishing Co., 1943 (1940).
 Pierce, Carrie ida, "I Remember Nellie," The Alaska Sportsman, XXIII (January 1957), 18-19, 26-28.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		60° 24' 09"	149° 21' 45"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 4.3

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
 Jacques L. Conner

ORGANIZATION: _____ DATE: May 8, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:
 843 Eleventh Avenue, Apt. 201

CITY OR TOWN: Anchorage STATE: Alaska CODE: 02

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

<p>Owner Notified</p> <p>As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name <u>William Skene</u></p> <p>Title <u>Deputy SAPO</u></p> <p>Date <u>January 7, 1975</u></p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>Alfred A. Montross</u> Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date <u>4/3/75</u></p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p><u>W. M. [Signature]</u> Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date <u>APR 2 1975</u></p>
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Too late in the season to secure employment with the railroad, Nellie worked as a cook for the Oasis Mining Camp, twenty-six miles north of Seward. While the mining crew disbanded for the winter, Nellie remained alone in the mountains to operate a trapline. When spring arrived she walked most of the distance to a railroad camp called Anchorage, where she obtained a contract from the federal government to operate a roadhouse at Mile 45. Thus began Nellie's long association with The Alaska Railroad and Alaska.

During the construction years, Nellie operated several roadhouses for The Alaska Railroad. Impressed by the scenery about the roadhouse at Mile 45, she named the site "Grandview," a name later adopted by railroad travel guides. She subsequently operated the Kern Creek Roadhouse and the Mile 281 (present site of Hurricane) Roadhouse. There she met President Warren G. Harding, Alaska Governor Scott G. Bone, Interior Secretary Hubert Work, and Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, among other dignitaries, all of whom spent one night in 1923 at the roadhouse before continuing to Nenana to commemorate the completion of The Alaska Railroad. However, despite the excitement of 1923, the year also held sorrow for Nellie.

For the second time in her life, Nellie consented to marriage. Before, however, the vows were exchanged, her prospective husband, Kenneth Holden, was killed in a heavy equipment accident. Again in despair, Nellie decided to retire to Roosevelt on Kenai Lake, a roadhouse site which first captured her eye in 1915. There was also a practical reason behind her retirement. The need for roadhouse operators was fast disappearing with the completion of The Alaska Railroad. But Nellie understood that the railroad would prove to be a major tourist attraction. With Roosevelt's scenery and close proximity to the railroad, she could surely pursue her career in the restaurant business.

Shortly after moving to Roosevelt, Nellie received a letter from Holden's cousin, Billie Lawing (?-1935), who wanted to come to Alaska and marry her. Impetuous Nellie cabled her acceptance. They were married on the stage of Seward Theatre. At Roosevelt, the couple soon converted the small roadhouse to a museum for Nellie's trophies, some of which she obtained at no small risk to her life. Among the more spectacular trophies were three glacier bears: one was red with yellow stripes down the back; the second, yellow with brown legs; and the last, the rarest and most valuable, the blue glacier bear, which was blue with a black head and yellow nose.

Through the years, Nellie's home became a major tourist resort. The railroad stopped at the roadhouse for ten minutes so that passengers could hear Nellie's lecture on Alaska wildlife. As her reputation increased, famous persons visited her, including Will Rogers, General Simon Buckner, and the actress Alice Calhoun.

In 1924, when a post office was established at Roosevelt, Nellie became the

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postmistress, a position she held for nine years. The name "Lawing" was selected for the post office; it was so listed in subsequent travel guides and maps. It was the second of two locations on the railroad ever named after an individual.