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DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE
RECEIVED SEP 23 1976
DATE ENTERED NOV 10 1977

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 ******
St. Michael, Fort, Site (AHERS Site No. SMI-015)
AND OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
CITY TOWN
STATE Alaska
COUNTY Nome Division
VICINITY OF
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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"/> BUILDINGS:	<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	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Bureau of Land Management, Alaska Office
STREET & NUMBER 555 Cordova Street
CITY TOWN Anchorage
STATE Alaska
VICINITY OF
99501

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC Bureau of Land Management, Alaska Office
STREET & NUMBER 555 Cordova Street
CITY TOWN Anchorage
STATE Alaska
99501

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHERS)
DATE 1 January 1976
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Alaska Division of Parks, 323 East 4th Avenue
CITY TOWN Anchorage
STATE Alaska
99501

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

St. Michael Island, 36 miles long and 8 miles wide, is located along the southern coast of Norton Sound. The townsite, on the southeast portion of the island, adjacent to St. Michael Bay, is the closest deep sea port to the mouth of the Yukon River and offers some protection from the open sea. On the booby, unforested island the Russian American Company established a redoubt, Mikhailivski, in 1833. Redoubt St. Michael served as the major supply and fur depot for the vast Yukon-Kuskokwia region under both Russian American and Alaska Commercial trading companies. Also, the site was the western base for expeditions into the interior of Alaska, and a stopping point for naval expeditions in northern waters.

Prior to establishing a military post at St. Michael in 1897, the United States Government operated a weather station, school, and post office at the site. Records from the weather station exist from 1874. The highest summer temperature recorded that year was 53.5°F in July, the winter temperature averaged -2.5°F, and the island received 14.6 inches of snow and rain. By 1885 a government school operated. And, prior to 1898 only two post offices operated between Dawson and the Bering Straits, one at Circle City the other at St. Michael.

General Order 59, issued by the War Department on October 20, 1897, declared St. Michael Island and all land within 100 miles of the flagstaff a military reservation. The order specified that buildings on the reserved land at the time would not need to be removed, and new structures could be built after securing permission from the War Department. The fort was surveyed the next year, U.S. Survey 4100, and the buildings constructed.

U.S. Fort St. Michael was a complex of yellow and white frame buildings with the warehouses covered with metal siding. The main complex was northwest of the Russian redoubt site, Russian Orthodox Church properties, and Northern Commercial Company (formerly Alaska Commercial Company) buildings. The flagstaff, however, was placed just south of the Northern Commercial Company structures. The military used four separate locations around the island for its operations. The main complex included several warehouses, barracks, an armory and jail that were clustered from the waterfront north and cut the community of St. Michael approximately in half. Southwest of the main complex, along the waterfront, was the shipyard and quartermaster's depot. On the eastern tip of the island was the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System station and post cemetery. Target ranges were northeast and northwest of the village. The military installation was connected by wide boardwalks. The Army also constructed a railroad track leading north from the waterfront and Army warehouses, along the west end of the main complex, that curved east behind the military buildings, and headed toward the wireless station.

In 1920 St. Michael's population was recorded as 371—down about 100 people from the 1910 count. After the post closed in 1925 the other government operations at the village were gradually discontinued. The transportation companies left. By 1930 the population had shrunk to 147.

Today, St. Michael is a predominantly native village of less than 200 people. Few buildings from the town's boom days remain. One waterfront warehouse, the armory, jail, and evidence of the railroad remain of Fort St. Michael. The jail is used by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for storage, the others stand empty, still federal

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	ART
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHAEOLOGY PREHISTORIC
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHAEOLOGY HISTORIC
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS

SPECIFIC DATES 1897-1925

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Significance

The all-water route from Seattle, Klondike and Fortyeale gold districts to the interior. The Yukon and Kuskokwia Rivers, travellers and supplies were transported, initially a Russian settlement, becoming a transportation center increased activity as a result Government to establish a military of its location, Fort St. Michael, States Army Department of Alaska, strategic military significance, provided a year-round supply route. Since, the site has been a small post—three buildings and evidence township status, and in accordance that excepts only the airstrip.

Historic Background

When news of the Klondike gold discovered headed north. The all-water route of Alaska, then along the Yukon gold fields. As ocean-going vessels River by shallow waters off the narrow draft sternwheelers. The St. Michael, 80 miles north. Cor later, a river steamer constructed and built hotels and warehouses to accommodate 500 guests. Estimates transportation to or from the gold of supplies to the interior were October. From St. Michael to Dawson freight. Yukon River traffic, that made available year-round service

River traffic along the Yukon, however, Alaska Commercial Company took over St. Michael continued to grow at a

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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St. Michael, Fort, Site (AHRS SMI-019)
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property. The warehouse and armory, both boarded up, are rectangular structures covered with metal siding. They parallel the shore--the warehouse is along the waterfront, the armory is approximately 150 feet north. The jail is at the northwest corner and armory at the southwest corner of what was the main complex of Fort St. Michael. The white, frame, rectangular jail building still has the bars on the window frames and iron doors to the individual cells intact. The jail is half the size of the other two buildings.

When river traffic declined with the completion of the Alaska Railroad in 1923, a number of boats were abandoned at St. Michael. The rusting iron along the waterfront is testimony to the boom days of the town and the importance of the Yukon River traffic. Some new buildings stand among the remains. The Bureau of Indian Affairs has constructed a number of homes around the site. A new Northern Commercial Company store was built in 1974 to replace the former structure that burned. The earlier store, reportedly, had been constructed before 1900. At the east end of the island Standard Oil tanks were recently built to serve the few boats that still operate in the northern waters.

In 1974 the residents petitioned for a townsite survey. The original U.S. Survey was conducted in 1868 to establish the military post boundaries. Inside Lot 1 of the 1898 survey, 4100, is the Bureau of Indian Affairs school. No improvements have been made on the land surveyed in 1937, U.S. Survey 2252, for the school reserve that is east of the present location. The village has used Lots 7 and 8 of Survey 4100 for a generator and storage tanks. Adjacent to the southeast side of the survey, a Catholic Church stands. Again, that group has not improved their surveyed tract that lies northeast of the Northern Commercial Company buildings. The land on the island, except for the air strip, has been filed for by the St. Michael Villiage Native Corporation.

CHECK ONE
ALTERED
REMOVED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

OWN PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

is located along the southern
east portion of the island,
sea port to the mouth of the Yukon
On the boggy, unforested
redoubt, Mikhailivski, in 1833.
and fur depot for the vast Yukon-
Alaska Commercial trading
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tions in northern waters.

Michael in 1897, the United States
and post office at the site.
The highest summer temperature
temperature averaged -2.3°F, and
By 1885 a government school
was operated between Dawson and the
St. Michael.

On October 20, 1897, declared St.
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could be built after securing
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and Northern Commercial Company
The flagstaff, however, was placed
structures. The military used four
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The main building was the Washington-Alaska Military
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The main building was connected by wide
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transportation companies left. By

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waterfront warehouse, the armory,
at St. Michael. The jail is used by
others stand empty, still federal

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"/> L.A.V.	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
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<input checked="" 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 1897-1925

BUILDER/ARCHITECT United States Army

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Significance

The all-water route from Seattle or San Francisco along the Yukon River to the Klondike and Fortymile gold districts proved to be the easiest, although the longest, route to the interior. The island of St. Michael, 80 miles from the entrance to the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers, was the closest deep water port. Thus, at the site, travellers and supplies were transferred from ocean vessels to sternwheelers. The village, initially a Russian supply center and fur depot, was in the process of becoming a transportation center when the 1897 rush to the gold fields began. The increased activity as a result of the gold rush hurried the United States Government to establish a military post at St. Michael to maintain order. Because of its location, Fort St. Michael was selected in 1900 as headquarters for the United States Army Department of Alaska. However, the location later proved to be of little strategic military significance, more so after the Alaska Railroad was completed that provided a year-round supply route to the interior. In 1925 the fort was abandoned. Since, the site has been a small native village. Little remains today of the military post--three buildings and evidence of the railroad. The residents have petitioned for township status, and in accord with the Native Claims Settlement Act, filed for land that exempts only the airstrip on the island.

Historic Background

When news of the Klondike gold discoveries spread in 1897, large numbers of people headed north. The all-water route from Seattle or San Francisco, to the west coast of Alaska, then along the Yukon River, was the longest, but easiest route to the gold fields. As ocean-going vessels were blocked from direct entry to the Yukon River by shallow waters off the mouth, passengers and freight had to transfer to shallow draft sternwheelers. The closest deep sea port to the river mouth was at St. Michael, 80 miles north. Consequently, the site became the transfer point, and later, a river steamer construction center. Private enterprises rapidly organized and built hotels and warehouses at St. Michael. One hotel, Healy's, reportedly could accommodate 500 guests. Estimates of people who wintered at St. Michael awaiting transportation to or from the gold fields have extended as high as 10,000. The bulk of supplies to the interior were transported by the all-water route between June and October. From St. Michael to Dawson the fare was \$125 per passenger, \$85 per ton of freight. Yukon River traffic, thus St. Michael, flourished until the Alaska Railroad that made available year-round service to the interior was completed in 1923.

River traffic along the Yukon, however, had begun before the gold rush. After the Alaska Commercial Company took over the Russian American Company operations in 1868, St. Michael continued to grow at a steady rate. When the Alaska Commercial Company

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purchased the tiny steamer Yukon in 1869, regular river service formally began. The first prospectors from San Francisco reportedly arrived at St. Michael aboard the Bora in 1880.

On August 4, 1897, Captain F. H. Ray and Lieutenant W. F. Richardson were sent to Alaska to investigate conditions, especially related to the gold rush, and make recommendations. At St. Michael they found 430 prospectors who had little hope of getting to the Klondike that season, and heard that at least that many more people were on ships heading for the town. Meant as a temporary emergency measure to maintain order among the gold seekers, the U.S. Army sent Lieutenant Colonel George M. Randall, 8th Infantry, with 2 officers and 25 enlisted men to St. Michael during September, 1897. On the 20th of October the War Department officially established Fort St. Michael. The island and all land and islands within a hundred mile radius of the flagstaff at the site were declared a military reservation. When the War Department created the Department of Alaska, January 19, 1900, Fort St. Michael was selected to be the headquarters. Initially, two posts at the terminal points, St. Michael and Earle, were thought to be sufficient to establish and retain order along the Yukon.

The significance of the post at St. Michael was reassessed several times. By Executive Orders on April 13, 1899; October 27, 1899; and July 8, 1906 the reserve was reduced. However, an Executive Order on May 15, 1907, restored all the land. One to three companies of infantry were regularly stationed at Fort St. Michael. Accounts by soldiers at St. Michael agree that they saw little reason for the Army to be there. Occasionally a party would be sent to explore or help a stranded group. Several reports tell of the quantities of unused outdated supplies that seemingly had only one purpose, to be inventoried annually for inspection. The only way to get through the long winters, from soldier's stories, was to drink. In the summer there was some activity with ships arriving and departing.

Fort St. Michael became the western terminus for the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System constructed by the United States Signal Corps beginning in 1900. The communication system linked military garrisons in Alaska with each other and Washington, D.C. The land cable stretched from Fort Ekbert near the United States-Canada border to St. Michael, and an underwater cable crossed Norton Sound to connect Fort Davis near Nome with the system. Four construction crews were of men serving at St. Michael. In 1903 both underwater and overland cables that connected St. Michael were replaced by radio communication. AMCATS western headquarters were transferred from St. Michael to Fort Gibbon in 1913, and the radio operator at St. Michael was removed.

After the communication office was discontinued the major reason to maintain Fort St. Michael was gone. Ten years later when the Alaska Railroad was completed, the town rapidly declined in importance. Seasonal river traffic along the Yukon could not compete with the year-round railroad service. Finally in 1925, the United

UNITED STATES

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY

St. Michael, Fort, Site
CONTINUATION SHEET

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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St. Michael, Fort, Site (AHRS SMI-015)

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State. Army closed the fort. By Executive Order, issued January 22, 1925, the Secretary of the Interior was given control of the disposition of land at St. Michael, "the same having become useless for military purposes," with the exception of the post cemetery at the east end of the island. In 1929, the fourteen bodies at the cemetery were moved to the National Cemetery in Sitka. Executive Order 7049 issued on May 21, 1935, placed the cemetery land under the control of the Secretary of the Interior. The Customs House at St. Michael closed in 1930. Reports during the 1940's and 1950's from people on the few ships that continued to stop there mention the many empty buildings. Today few of the structures remain. The village is predominantly native. Almost all evidence of the thriving community on the west coast of Alaska that required military supervision to maintain order during the gold rush days is gone.

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 25. USARAL Pamphlet
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9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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 Greely, Major General A. W. Resources of Alaska. New York: Kennikat Publishing Company, 1925.
 Kitchener, L. D. Flag Over the North. Seattle, Wn.: Superior Publishing Co., 1934.
The Pathfinder of Alaska. Valdez, Ak.: Pioneers of Alaska, 1916-1925.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 03
 UTM REFERENCES

A	03	14	07	75	7	06	01	00	B								
	ZONE	EASTING			NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING			NORTHING				
C								D									

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION
 Improvement of railroad rail segments as shown in color, St. Michael
 late map of 1905; within local survey -100 of 1890.

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
 Joan M. Antonson, Historian

ORGANIZATION
 Alaska Division of Parks

DATE
 15 August 1976

STREET & NUMBER
 323 east 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 _____ 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 *Kenneth W. Cabell*
 TITLE *State Historic Preservation Officer* DATE *9/3/76*

FOR NPS USE ONLY
 I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE *11/10/77*

ATTEST *W. H. Cole* DATE *11-9-77*

Special Agent in Charge

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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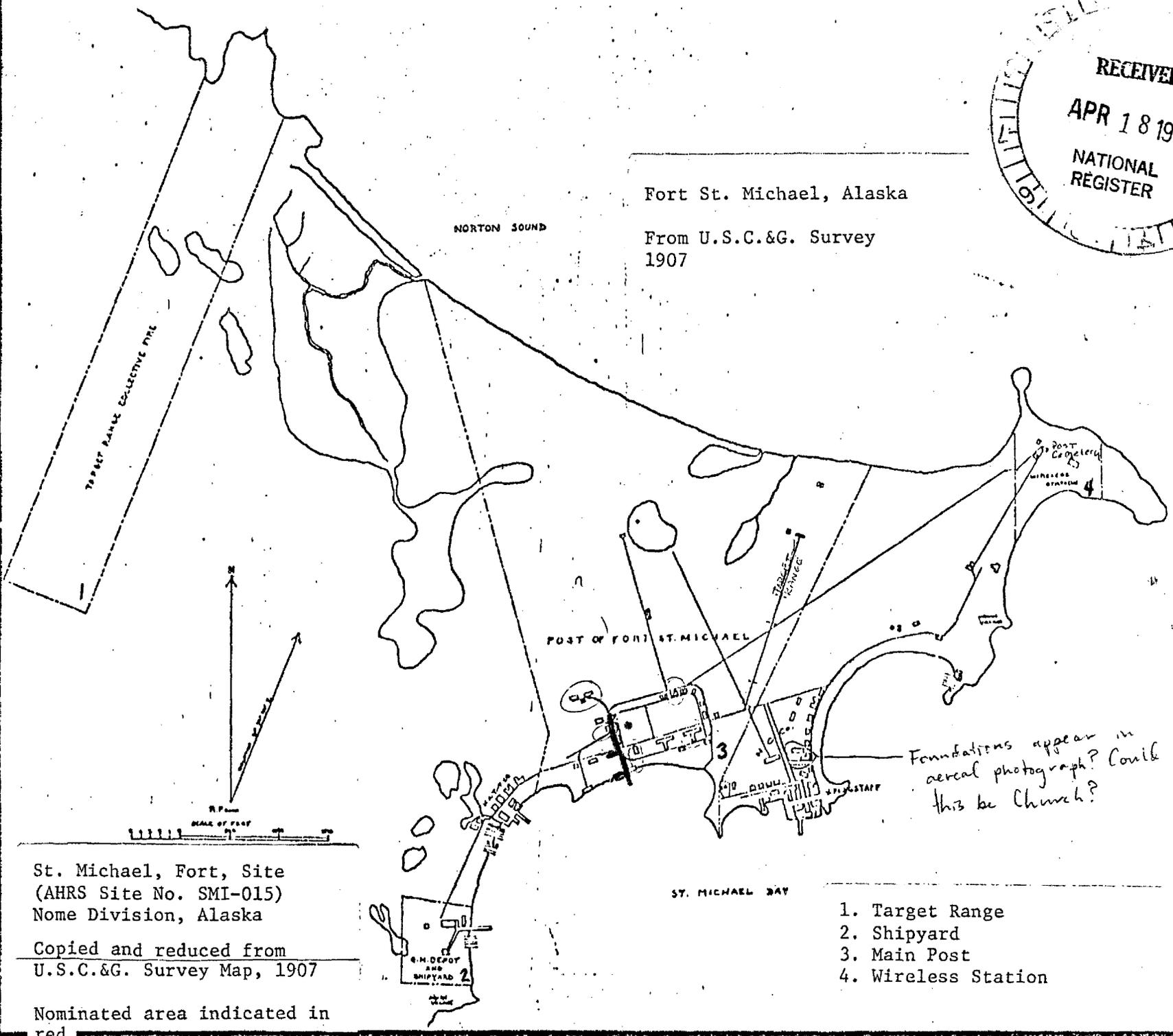
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Fort St. Michael, Alaska

From U.S.C.&G. Survey
 1907



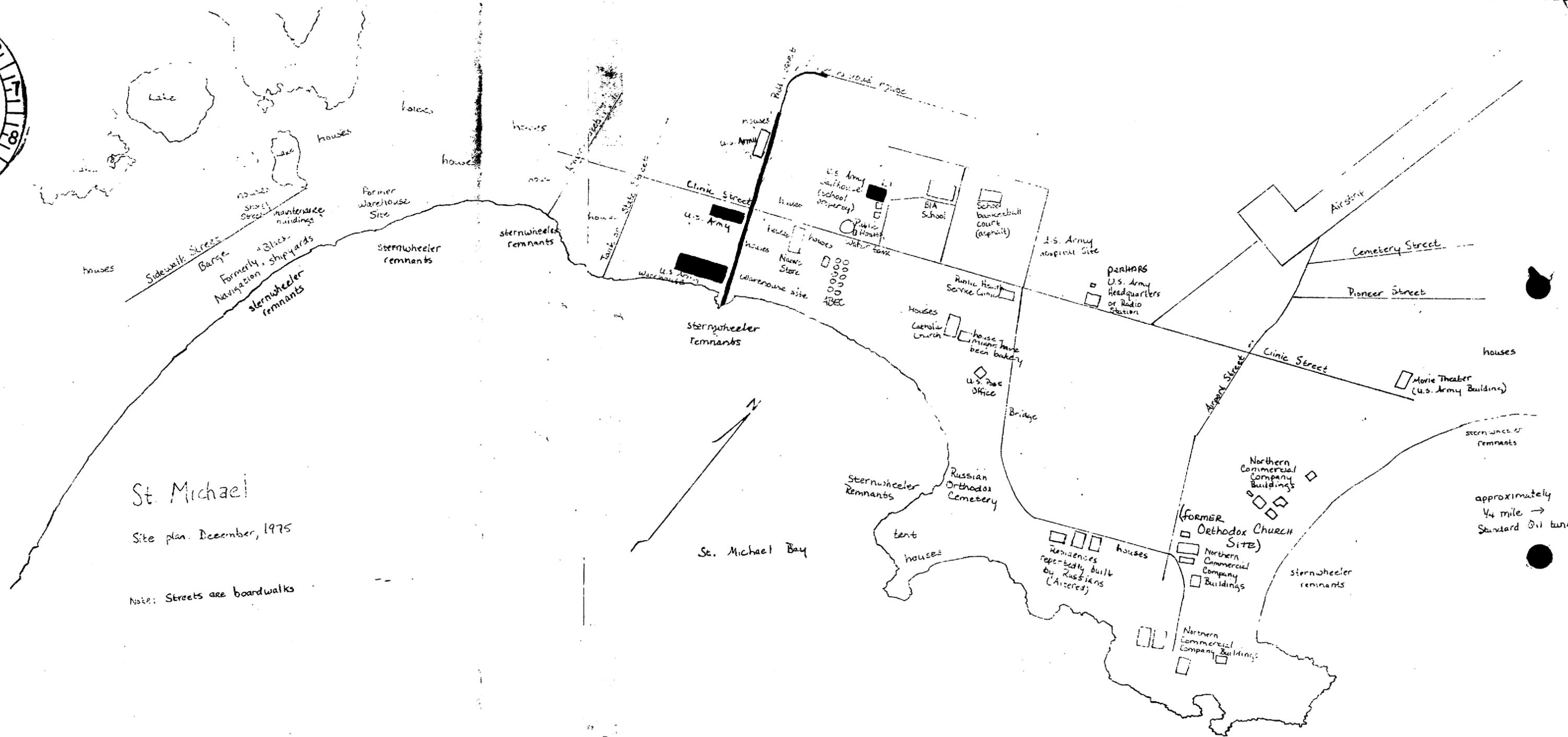
St. Michael, Fort, Site
 (AHRS Site No. SMI-015)
 Nome Division, Alaska

Copied and reduced from
 U.S.C.&G. Survey Map, 1907

Nominated area indicated in
 red

1. Target Range
2. Shipyard
3. Main Post
4. Wireless Station

NOV 10 1977



St. Michael

Site plan, December, 1975

Note: Streets are boardwalks

St. Michael Bay

approximately 1/4 mile → Standard Oil tank