NPS Form 10-900-b
(March 1992)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

OMB No. 1024-0018
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
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This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

X New Submission ___ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Historic Properties in Alaska.

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

The Admiralty Island Civilian Conservation Corps Canoe Route, 1933 - 1937.

C. Form Prepared by

name/title Charles M. Mobley

street & number 200 W 34th #534 telephone (907 653-1937

city or town Anchorage state AK zip code 99503

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D. Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Evan J. DeBlois Federal Preservation Officer 10-2-95

Signature and title of certifying official Date

Forest Service

State or Federal agency and bureau

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In my opinion, the documentation meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Judith E. Bittner March 3, 1993

Signature of commenting or other official Date

Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

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I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Antoinette Lee 11/2/95

for Signature of the Keeper Date

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Table of Contents for Written Narrative

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

	Page Numbers
E. Statement of Historic Contexts (If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)	4
F. Associated Property Types (Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)	5
G. Geographical Data	9
H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods (Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)	10
I. Major Bibliographical References (List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)	11

Section E Statement of Historic Contexts

In 1933 the Federal Government, under newly-elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt, began a series of public works programs to ease under-employment during the Great Depression. One of these programs was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), created to use local labor for rural conservation and forestry projects. In Alaska the program was administered differently than it was in the Lower 48 states, where the Department of Labor did the recruiting; the War Department handled camp operation, education, and payroll; and various resource agencies oversaw field activities. In Alaska, the USDA Forest Service oversaw field activities and took over the tasks of camp operation and education, since Alaska's military presence at the time consisted of 200 men stationed at Chilkoot Barracks near Haines and another 200 or so dispersed throughout the territory to operate isolated communications outposts. The military did issue the payroll from the Haines post.

By 1935, the USDA Forest Service in Alaska employed 325 men through the CCC program, 130 of whom were assigned to the Admiralty Island Division based in Juneau. Two years later the enrollment had increased to 1,037, with 245 men in the Admiralty Island Division. CCC activities in Alaska encompassed practically every human need in the territory, including air strips, housing, fire and flood control, demolition, communications, sanitation, wells, cabins, trails, roads, bridges, shooting ranges, fences, floats and docks, dams, hatcheries, totem pole restoration, and archaeology.

On Admiralty Island the emphasis was on recreation. Crews constructed a bear-watching tower at Pack Creek and a series of improved trails and shelter cabins to support a canoe route from east to west across the island through a series of fresh-water lakes. A 1936 Tongass National Forest brochure promoted the system of trails, portages, and three-sided shelter cabins on Admiralty Island as a unique way to experience the wilderness. An accompanying map located the trails and shelters. A log cabin, called Big Shaheen, on Hassleborg Lake served as a lodge.

Work on Admiralty Island began in 1933, with three CCC crews totaling 23 men. By 1934 four shelter cabins had been constructed. In 1935 crews built the trails, more shelters, and installed a dam at the outlet of Beaver Lake to make it navigable to Lake Alexander. By 1936 there were over thirty miles of trails, two boat portages, seven shelters, thirteen skiffs, and the Big Shaheen cabin and its seaplane mooring float. More improvements were made in 1936 and 1937, including three more shelters, more trails, and a small dam at the mouth of Guerin Lake (then known as Shiels Lake).

This vision of wilderness recreation was characteristically Alaskan in assuming that people would embrace a modestly-developed wilderness trail system in a remote region of great beauty. The project, in fact, was ahead of its time. The facilities were not heavily used and were falling into disrepair until volunteer efforts by Juneau's Territorial Sportsmen's organization repaired most of the shelters and trails in the late 1950s and early 1960s. They renovated two of the shelters by adding a fourth exterior wall and installing stoves and interior furnishings to increase the shelters' utility and comfort. Today, most of the shelters and trails are maintained by the USDA Forest Service, and growing numbers of kayakers and canoeists use the facilities.

Section F Associated Property Type(s)

The Admiralty Island canoe route consists of shelter cabins, the Big Shaheen log cabin, trails, dams, and miscellaneous features. Portage trails connect the lakes into two loop options. The shelter cabins are at strategic portage take-outs. The Big Shaheen cabin was built as a small lodge "to provide quarters for mixed parties of men and women." The two dams were built to raise water levels and improve the navigability of Guerin and Beaver lakes. Trails were built using minor cut-and-fill improvements, and puncheon boardwalks of log stringers and split shakes were laid over muskeg. At least one boathouse was apparently constructed, and over a dozen skiffs (now gone or replaced with aluminum craft) were at the lake/portage junctions.

1. Shelter Cabins

Description:

Fifteen three-sided shelters were built at the beginnings of portages. The three-sided shelters were of the Adirondack style. This style was apparently developed by early trappers and hunters living in the Adirondack region of the eastern United States. Such shelters had a saltbox roof (a gable roof with one slope extended), with the shorter slope overhanging the open front. Built low in height, the shelter could be heated by a campfire built in front of the open side. Rather than being made solely of logs, the Admiralty Island shelters were framed with peeled logs and poles then covered with split cedar shakes. All of the shelters were built of materials obtained at or near its location.

Fourteen of the Admiralty Island shelter cabins were of a standard design, measuring about 10'6" X 12'8". Peeled local spruce and hemlock logs from six to ten inches in diameter, with braces up to six inches in diameter, were used for the post-and-beam frame. The posts were set on wood sill foundations, notched with a saw and axe to accommodate the butts of the posts. The roof was constructed of log rafters from six to ten inches in diameter, supporting parallel log purlins from three to five inches in diameter. The purlins, and the horizontal nailers on the walls, were originally on sixteen inch centers to accommodate thirty inch long shakes. Shakes about 3/4" to 1 1/2" thick were split of local spruce (possibly yellow cedar at some sites) and laid two deep. Roof shakes overlapped, while wall shakes were abutted end-to-end. Galvanized nails were used throughout. The overall appearance is a three-sided salt box with exposed post-and-beam construction and a smoke vent along the length of the ridge. The floor was earth or perhaps gravel, except for one shelter with a concrete slab (49SIT-322, Hasselborg River Cabin). This cabin also has a granite and concrete fireplace.

The fifteenth shelter cabin (49SIT-375) is the ruin of a three-sided structure, built slightly larger than the others and using a conventional horizontal log style. It appears on USGS (1951) and USFS (1964) topographic maps marked as a cabin at the Thayer Lake trailhead, but it is not mentioned in the CCC documents reviewed. A structure of that design and dimension labeled "Adirondack Shelter" appears in a 1937 USDA Forest Service "Emergency Conservation Work" design book for camp stoves and fireplaces. The Thayer Lake site might have functioned as a CCC-era cabin shelter or boathouse.

All the shelter cabins are in their original locations and settings. Most have been maintained in their original form. Two (49SIT-322, Hasselborg River shelter cabin, and 49SIT-361, Distin Lake shelter cabin) have been modified with interior improvements and the addition of a fourth wall to enclose the structure, but their shape and structural members retain the original Adirondack style. Two shelter cabins have collapsed, and a third will soon. Eleven shelter cabins are maintained. Because of rot to the original sill logs used as foundations, most of them have been replaced. Similarly, the bottoms of the vertical posts have been exposed to moisture, causing some to have been replaced and some to have been cut off and shimmed with short rounds.

Significance:

The shelter cabins were essential components of the canoe route, stationed at the junctions between water bodies and trails, where weary travelers could recuperate before starting another leg of the journey. Once voyagers began their excursion, they cycled between paddling, portaging, and living in a shelter; so the shelters comprised a good third of the outdoor experience. The three-sided shelters were deliberately rustic and intended for use with a campfire, since (as a 1936 recreation guide points out) "fish stories are always taller and better when told around a good camp fire." The structures had names and signs, so that the shelters (along with the lake names) became points of reference in conversation, documents, and maps. If it were not for the shelters, the Admiralty Island lakes would be less comfortable to canoe. The Adirondack log style is a romanticized architecture, and easily evokes the image of a northwoodsman.

The significance of the shelter cabins lies primarily with criteria A - association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; and C - that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. Under criterion A, the shelter cabins are a major element of the Admiralty Island canoe route built by Alaska's Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. The CCC was a very visible Depression-era jobs program, employing thousands across the nation. Initial racial discrimination against hiring Natives in Alaska provoked an outcry that resulted in greater Native participation in the CCC, and thus the CCC is especially significant in the history of ethnic equality in Alaska. The Admiralty Island canoe route was one of the more systematic CCC efforts, worthy of advertisement as a recreation experience. The Hasselborg River shelter cabin (49SIT-322), a three-sided shelter cabin in the Adirondack style that was subsequently modified with the addition of a fourth wall, was determined eligible for listing in the National Register on October 5, 1989, under criterion A.

Under criterion C, all but one of the shelter cabins show a faithful adherence to a consistent architectural style. The elegant post-and-beam construction was favored for federally-sponsored recreation facilities in the United States, but it was not common in Alaska. Rather, the horizontal log approach with saddle-notched corners, like the style of Thayer Lake East ruin (49SIT-375), was usually taken. The two shelters later modified with the addition of a fourth, enclosing wall (49SIT-322, Hassleborg River shelter cabin; and 49SIT-361, Distin Lake shelter cabin) are excluded from eligibility to the National Register under criterion C as are the shelter cabins in ruins.

Criteria B - association with the lives of persons significant in our past, and D - having yielded or being likely to yield information important in prehistory or history, lend little significance to the shelter cabins. Archaeological analysis could help describe recreation use patterns at the shelter sites, and many of the shelters have graffiti that could be documented and used to piece together a more complete record of shelter use, but these contributions are minimal to the significance of the features.

Registration requirements:

To be eligible for listing in the National Register under this context, shelter cabins must have been originally constructed by the CCC and remain in their original location. They must be components of the Admiralty Island canoe route as it was originally conceived and constructed, not as it is maintained now. Cabin shelters later modified with the addition of a fourth wall and interior appointments are not eligible under criterion C, but are eligible under criterion A. The buildings now in ruins lack architectural integrity, but retain their eligibility under criterion A.

2. Trails

Description:

Ten trail segments were constructed to portage from lake to lake or lake to saltwater. Most of the segments probably incorporated trails used by bears and people traveling to and from the village of Angoon on the west coast of Admiralty Island. CCC workers brushed trails, graded them where necessary, and built narrow drainage channels in rivulets, bridges across ravines, and puncheon walkways in the boggy areas. The extensive puncheon walkway system was particularly labor intensive. Hefty poles of local conifer were cut and laid parallel about 48" apart, imbedded in the soil slightly so that split shakes about 3" thick and 52" long could be laid perpendicular over them and nailed (with galvanized nails) to form a firm boardwalk. The shake walking surface was deliberately imbedded into the adjacent ground surface so that forest duff and moss collecting there, along with upward seepage, would keep the wood wet and thus less prone to decay. Varnished wood trail signs indicating the distance in miles to the next shelter cabin were nailed to cabins or nearby trees. They had one end notched and the other sharpened to point the way.

There are probably sections of trails with original shakes of the CCC puncheon walkways. In many cases, maintenance has involved building puncheon boardwalks over original CCC puncheon. Elsewhere, new puncheon has been built immediately adjacent to original CCC puncheon, and in at least one location (the northwest end of Freshwater/Thayer trail) the present alignment is considerably removed from the original. In some parts of the trail the original CCC puncheon shakes and stringers were removed and cast aside, where they can still be seen today.

Significance:

The trails were the "connective tissue" holding the Admiralty Island canoe route together. Of the three main elements of the route--shelters, trails, and lakes--trails constituted the largest portion of the man-made improvements. They provided access between the lakes and saltwater.

Considerable effort was required to build and maintain the puncheon boardwalks that are integral parts of the Admiralty Island canoe route.

The significance of the trails lies primarily with criteria A - association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; and to a lesser extent C - that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. As a contributing feature, the trails partake of the overall significance of the Admiralty Island canoe route, the CCC in Alaska, and the national significance of the CCC to twentieth century history. Under criterion C, the puncheon construction is a common boardwalk style used historically to traverse Alaska's muskeg areas, and the Admiralty Island canoe route probably had one of the more extensive puncheon systems in Alaska, constructed intermittently over approximately 25 miles of trail. Little of the original puncheon is left (although replacement puncheon is constructed in the original style), consequently, criterion A is stronger than criterion C for eligibility of the trails. The trails gain little significance from criteria B or D.

Registration requirements:

A trail must be close to its original alignment as designed and built by the CCC. In many cases, subsequent maintenance has involved rebuilding puncheon boardwalks over original CCC puncheon. Elsewhere, new puncheon has been built immediately adjacent to original CCC puncheon, and in at least one location (the northwest end of Freshwater/Thayer trail), the present alignment is a considerable distance from the original. In every case, new trail has been constructed according to the original CCC puncheon design, in large part because it makes cost-effective use of local materials.

3. Dams

Description:

The CCC Built at least two dams on the lake system to raise water levels and improve navigability. The dam at the mouth of Guerin Lake was to raise the water level of the lake one foot, but it has not been documented. The second dam was built on the outlet of Beaver Lake and is still in place. A log was laid across the creek, and split shakes were nailed to it at a 45 degree angle to form the spillway and elevate the lake surface by as much as three feet.

Significance:

The dams were to improve the navigability of the canoe route, particularly the waterways between Beaver Lake and Alexander Lake and the channel between Guerin Lake and Davidson Lake. Although transit would have been possible without the dams, they were built and maintained as part of the canoe route. Their significance lies primarily with criteria A and C. They contribute to a feature associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, and they embody the distinctive characteristics of a method of construction. Just as the canoe route's cabins are of log and shake construction, so is the Beaver Lake dam (the construction method for the Guerin Lake dam is undetermined). The dams gain little significance from criteria B or D.

Registration requirements:

A dam must have been constructed by the CCC and in its original location. It must be a component of the Admiralty Island canoe route as it was originally conceived and constructed, rather than as it is maintained now.

4. Cabin

Description:

The Big Shaheen building (SIT-019) is a shake and log cabin built with horizontal logs about 10" in diameter, attached at the corners with saddle notches. It would not be called Adirondack style. The floor is concrete. It is central to the canoe route and was intended to be a lodge. Over the years it has housed CCC workers, sportsmen, trail crews, and recreationists. In addition to a kitchen/dining area with a wood stove, the cabin has two partitioned bunk areas, intended by the CCC to accommodate parties of mixed gender. The current roof is metal, and the cabin has seen considerable use over the years. It appears to have been faithfully maintained since its construction, and its popularity increases every year, with waiting lists for occupancy during the summer months.

Significance:

The Big Shaheen cabin is a contributing component of the Admiralty Island canoe route, originally described in the 1936 recreation guide as "a central lodge . . . where the lake narrows and a prominent point of land makes a proper setting for the structure." As the only original enclosed structure of the canoe route system, it has been a focal point of recreation activity.

The structure is primarily significant under Criterion A, as a contributing element to the Admiralty Island canoe route, which is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. The cabin is of horizontal logs and likely had a shake roof originally, a style common in southeast Alaska during the historic period. Criterion B, C, and D lend the building little significance, although--as with the shelter cabins--study of the cabin's graffiti could be informative, and archaeological analysis of the immediate vicinity might aid in reconstructing activity patterns at the site.

Registration requirements:

Cabins must have been originally constructed by the CCC, and remain in their original location. They must be components of the Admiralty Island canoe route as it was originally conceived and constructed, not as it is maintained now.

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Section G. Geographical Data

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Admiralty Island is a large island in southeast Alaska, most of which is managed as part of the Tongass National Forest by the Chatham Area office. Federal land on the island is part of the Admiralty Island National Monument, designated as wilderness in 1980 under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. The island has the greatest density of brown bears in the world, indicated by its Tlingit name, Kootznoowoo--

"Fortress of the Bears." Two tracts of land on the island are held by Native corporations, and one tract is reserved for the Greens Creek mine. The Tlingit village of Angoon is on the west side of the island at Mitchell Bay, and most of the indented shoreline around the bay belongs to their Native village corporation (established in 1971 by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, or ANCSA). The Sitka Native village corporation of Shee'Atika selected land under ANCSA north of Angoon in the vicinity of Cube Cove and are actively logging there. The Greens Creek mine is a recent gold mining project near the north end of the island. Also at the north end of the island are two state marine parks, including one comprising the short portage between Oliver Inlet and Seymour Canal where a narrow isthmus separates the island from Glass Peninsula.

The island is mountainous with peaks over 3800' high. Northeast of Angoon is a series of fresh-water lakes which approach saltwater at two places in Seymour Canal. The lakes, amid formerly-glaciated peaks and valleys, are long and somewhat narrow. Portaging from one lake to another with a lightweight water craft, travelers can leave Angoon on the west side of Admiralty Island, hop from lake to lake via the portage trails, and arrive at Seymour Canal. A 30-mile paddle north takes the traveler to the head of the canal, where one can cross the isthmus to Oliver Inlet, enter Gastineau Channel and reach Juneau.

Several trip options are possible. Leaving Mitchell Bay overland, one can walk to Davidson Lake, or branch to the west to enter Freshwater Lake and then Thayer Lake. Originally a trail left from the north end of Thayer Lake and went to the north end of Hassleborg Lake, but it has not been maintained for many years. Now, travelers leave Thayer Lake on a maintained trail leading east to Distin Lake, where they have a choice of portaging into Davidson Lake and then entering Guerin Lake via a narrow channel, or of portaging directly to Guerin Lake. From there a short portage leads to Hassleborg Lake. Hassleborg Lake has several cabins and shelters, of which some are CCC structures (the non-contributing buildings do not intrude on the setting). Originally there was a trail from the north end of the lake to Windfall Harbor and Seymour Canal, but part of the area is prone to avalanches and the trail has not been used for many years. Now, travelers continue east via a short portage to Beaver Lake, through a narrow channel to Alexander Lake, and over another portage to Mole Harbor and Seymour Canal. The portage at the north end of Seymour Canal to Oliver Inlet now has a tramway. Today, the USDA Forest Service advertises the canoe route as a 32-mile course. Portage lengths range from .25 to 3.0 miles.

The climate of southeast Alaska is generally mild and wet, and the vegetation is classified as a temperate coastal rain forest. The lakes, being inland at an elevation of about 300' above sea level, freeze during the winter. Consequently, the canoe season runs from mid-May to mid-September.

Section H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Procedures

The Admiralty Island National Monument personnel have been aware of the potential historic significance of CCC structures and other properties associated with the canoe route and have collected pertinent documents. In 1989 a Determination of Eligibility for the National Register for the Hasselborg River shelter cabin (49SIT-322) was prepared by Conner Sorensen,

and the site was judged eligible on October 5, 1989. A plan for architectural rehabilitation was filed with the SHPO, and a determination of "No Adverse Effect" for the modification was requested and approved in 1990.

In 1992, under contract with USDA Forest Service, Charles M. Mobley inventoried CCC properties associated with the canoe route, in company with Forest Service trail maintenance supervisor Mark Johnson. Most of the contributing properties were found, and still photography and videotape were used to document each one. Archival work was conducted to supplement the field research to prepare multiple property documentation for the National Register of Historic Places.

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Section I. Major Bibliographic References

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