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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM

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

Historic Properties Associated with Mineral Development in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, Alaska, 1898-1942

B. Associated Historic Contexts

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1) Copper Mining in the Wrangell Mountain Region, 1898-1938
2) Gold Mining in the Wrangell Mountain Region, 1898-1942

C. Form Prepared by

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name/title Geoffrey T. Bleakley, Historian
organization Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve date 02/06/00
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city or town Copper Center state AK zip code 99573

D. Certification

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.)

Joan M. Antonson — 8 March 2000

Signature and title of certifying official — Date

Alaska Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

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.

Edson H. Beall

Signature of the Keeper — Date 6/15/00

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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.

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings.

Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

E. Statement of Historic Context

INTRODUCTION

The international publicity surrounding the Klondike gold discovery lured thousands of stampeders to the north and many entered the Wrangell Mountains. Some, having examined one of several popular guidebooks, considered the Copper River a viable route to the Yukon. Others, aware that the Klondike was already thoroughly staked, searched for a new El Dorado. A few were not even attracted by gold. Familiar with Russian accounts of the Wrangells, they sought the Ahtna Indian's long-rumored source of copper.

For whatever their reasons, hundreds of prospectors explored the area, and over the next couple of decades, many made promising finds. While only the Kennecott deposits were ultimately of national significance, several others were locally important. These included copper deposits along the Kotsina, Kuskulana, and Chitistone Rivers, gold placers on Dan, Chititu, Young, Golconda, and Bonanza Creeks, and gold lodes on Berg, Jacksina, and Golconda Creeks.

Although the majority of the miners eventually left the region, even the most temporary made some contribution. By choosing to labor here, they facilitated the establishment of transportation networks, encouraged the development of supporting industries, and hastened the settlement of both the Copper and Tanana Valleys.

COPPER MINING IN THE WRANGELL MOUNTAIN REGION, 1898-1938

The first local copper prospectors concentrated on the Kotsina River, where Doc Billum, an Ahtna traditional leader, had reported finding a large deposit. Others examined the nearby Kuskulana drainage.[1]

No major discovery occurred until July 1900, when prospectors finally reached the upper Kennicott Valley. While pausing for lunch near National Creek, Jack Smith and Clarence

[1] B. F. Millard, "The Chittyna Copper Belt, Part I," *Valdez News*, April 20, 1901; Fred H. Moffit and J. B. Mertie, Jr., *The Kotsina-Kuskulana District, Alaska*, USGS Bulletin No. 745 (Washington: GPO, 1923), 82.

Warner noticed a green stain on a distant hillside. Scrambling up to the spot, they found a fabulously rich lode, which they subsequently called the "bonanza."[2]

A well-connected businessman named Stephen Birch soon purchased a controlling interest in the property and established the Alaska Copper and Coal Company in order to develop it. After gaining the financial backing of the Guggenheim brothers and J. P. Morgan, Birch reorganized as the Kennecott Mines Company, the predecessor of the Kennecott Copper Corporation.[3]

Kennecott constructed the region's most sophisticated mining complex, containing a mill, leaching plant, power plant, hospital, warehouse, school, offices, bunkhouses, and even some single-family housing. It made other improvements as well, including three aerial tramways and an extensive trail and road system. Its parent company even built the Copper River and Northwestern Railway.

Kennecott's numerous improvements and well-publicized success encouraged other prospectors to explore the region. While many erected small cabins, dug prospect pits, and drove short tunnels, few progressed any further.

There were, however, a few notable exceptions. Some prospectors having especially promising claims managed to organize or attract small companies in order to develop them. These included Mullen lode on Copper Creek; the Elizabeth prospect on Elliott Creek; the Valdez claim on Nugget Creek; the North Midas Mine on Berg Creek; the Westover Mine on Boulder Creek; the Mother Lode Mine on McCarthy Creek; and the Green Butte Mine on McCarthy Creek. Each established a relatively elaborate base camp, typically containing a mill, an office, a bunkhouse, and a shop. Many also built spur camps near their primary portals, as well as connecting aerial tramways.[4]

Two firms also constructed important parts of the regional transportation network. The Mother Lode built a 12-mile-long road from its camp to the railway at McCarthy and the Alaska Copper Company built a 16-mile-long road from its Valdez claim to the railway at Strelna.[5]

Blessed with its own transportation system, Kennecott purchased nearly all of its supplies outside Alaska and also imported the majority of its labor. In contrast, these smaller mines were an important market for local supplies and an crucial source of regional employment.

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[2] William C. Douglass, "A History of the Kennecott Mines, Kennecott, Alaska," 4, typescript in historic files, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, Copper Center, Alaska (hereafter cited WRST).

[3] *Alaska Prospector* [Valdez], March 6, 1902; Elizabeth A. Tower, *Ghosts of Kennecott: The Story of Stephen Birch* (Anchorage: Elizabeth Tower, 1990), *passim*.

[4] Moffit and Mertie, *Kotsina-Kuskulana District*, 82; Fred H. Moffit and A. G. Maddren, *Mineral Resources of the Kotsina-Chitina Region, Alaska*, USGS Bulletin No. 374 (Washington: GPO, 1909), 55, 72-78, 92; Fred W. Moffit, "Mineral Deposits of the Kotsina-Kuskulana District, with Notes on Mining in Chitina Valley," in Alfred H. Brooks, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigation in 1914*, USGS Bulletin No. 622 (Washington: GPO, 1915), 109-115.

[5] Fred H. Moffit and Stephen R. Capps, *Geology and Mineral Resources of the Nizina District, Alaska*, USGS Bulletin No. 448 (Washington: GPO, 1911), 17; William Maloney, *Report of the Territorial Mine Inspector to the Governor of Alaska for the Year, 1917* (Juneau: n.p., 1917), 21; Fred H. Moffit, "Mining in the Chitina Valley," in Alfred H. Brooks, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1919*, USGS Bulletin No. 714 (Washington: GPO, 1921), 84.

Most of these mines continued operating through the teens, but the precipitous decline in copper prices following the First World War eventually forced many to end production.[6] The North Midas, for example, was temporarily closed, and the Mother Lode transferred its operating control to Kennecott.[7]

Some recovery occurred during the 1920s. The Green Butte was especially active, but the North Midas and the Mullen were also revived. None was very successful. Copper prices remained low, and all three operations had closed by the end of the decade.[8]

After 1931 Kennecott controlled virtually all copper development in the region. Work, however, was slowing there as well. In 1938 it shut down its mines and abandoned its railway, eliminating the area's cheap transportation. While some local exploration continued through the 1970s, the Wrangell's never produced any additional copper.

GOLD MINING IN THE WRANGELL MOUNTAIN REGION, 1898-1942

The Nizina District

Prospectors first entered the Nizina Basin early in the Klondike rush, with one group detecting gold in Dan and Young Creeks in 1899. Unfortunately, quantities remained too small to justify development. Dan Creek, however, was not forgotten, and in 1901 Clarence Warner and Dan Kain (both of whom were members of the party which had earlier discovered Kennecott) staked much of the drainage.[9]

Further discoveries quickly followed. In 1902 outfits headed by Frank Kernan and Charles Koppus explored many nearby creeks, including Chititu, Rex, and White. Reports of their finds soon reached Valdez, generating considerable excitement and even a brief stampede.[10]

The district's first prospectors employed a wide range of methods, many of which left enduring marks on the landscape. These include small test pits, shafts, adits, dams, ditches, flumes, pipelines, hydraulic scars, tailings piles, and hand-stacked cobble. Local miners also built cabins and outbuildings in most major drainages and established two small communities nearby: Sourdough City, near the mouth of Young Creek, and Nizina, the site of the local post office from 1903-1925.[11]

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[6] John W. Jenkins, Michael Lappen, and Robert L. Spude, "North Midas Mining Camp Historic District," draft National Register nomination, WRST.

[7] Ibid; Kathleen Lidfors, "Coppertown Historic District," draft National Register nomination, WRST; Don J. Miller, "Copper Deposits of the Nizina District, Alaska," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska, 1943 and 1944*, USGS Bulletin No. 947 (Washington: GPO, 1946), 99-100.

[8] Jenkins, Lappen, and Spude, "North Midas Mining Camp"; Miller, *Copper Deposits of the Nizina District*, 99-103; Robert L. Spude, "Green Butte Mining Camp," draft National Register nomination, WRST.

[9] Moffit and Capps, *Geology and Mineral Resources of the Nizina District*, 76.

[10] Ibid; *Alaska Prospector* (Valdez), June 12, 1902; June 19, 1902; *Valdez News*, June 14, 1902.

[11] *Alaska Prospector*, April 2, 1903, April 30, 1903, March 31, 1904, May 26, 1904, September 8, 1904; *Valdez News*, July 11, 1903; Moffit and Maddren, *Mineral Resources of the Kotsina-Chitina Region*, 95-97.

After the initial excitement ended, miners found that most of the claims in the district were unprofitable for an individual to work. As a result, by 1912 two outfits had managed to consolidate the most productive holdings: the Nizina Mining Company, owned by John E. Andrus, held Chititu Creek, and the Dan Creek Mining Company, owned by Dan Kain and Stephen Birch, controlled Dan Creek. Each established an impressive headquarters site: Chititu Camp, situated at the mouth of Rex Creek, and Dan Creek Camp, located near the mouth of Dan Creek.[12]

Both Chititu and Dan Creek yielded significant amounts of gold during the teens and twenties, but in the late 1930s their production drastically declined. The closure of the Copper River and Northwestern Railway in 1938, and war-time restrictions on mining beginning in 1942, hurt them even further. Some mining, however, continues in both locations.[13]

The Bremner District

Prospectors began entering the Bremner region relatively early, with Guy Banta, Pete Monahan, and Angus Gillis locating the district's first placer deposits on Golconda Creek in 1901.[14]

From 1902 until 1910 most of the mining occurred just below Standard Creek, about four miles from the head of Golconda. Miners initially shoveled-in and employed "boomer" dams to disperse their tailings. Most apparently lived in tents.[15]

As in the case of the Nizina district, a few miners were eventually able to consolidate many of the local claims. In 1911 the Golconda Mining Company, organized by a group which included Charles Bunnell, later president of the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines (now the University of Alaska), worked the property, but never recovered much gold.[16]

From 1913 until 1926, miners largely ignored the district, but in 1927, Lee and Peyton Ramer located a promising lode above Golconda Creek and began a concentrated effort to develop it. In the early 1930s their Bremner Gold Mining Company established a large camp on the valley floor, as well as spur camps at its two primary mine sites. Its other

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[12] Harold E. Smith, "Chititu Gold," *Alaska Sportsman* 30, no. 9 (September 1964): 48; *Chitina Leader*, October 21, 1913.

[13] William R. Hunt, *Mountain Wilderness: Historic Resource Study for Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve* (Anchorage: National Park Service, 1991), 59.

[14] *Valdez News*, February 15, 1902.

[15] Fred H. Moffit, *Geology of the Hanagita-Bremner Region, Alaska*, USGS Bulletin 576 (Washington: GPO, 1914), 46. "Booming" is an important variant of ground sluicing, practiced in areas possessing little water. The stream to be worked is impounded behind a dam. On being released by either a hand-operated or an automatic gate, the water rushes down the cut, carrying most of the surface material with it. Norman L. Wimmler, *Placer-Mining Methods and Costs in Alaska*, Bureau of Mines Bulletin 259 (Washington: GPO, 1927), 90; *Alaska Prospector* (Valdez), September 29, 1904.

[16] *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, December 27, 1910; Fred H. Moffit, "The Taral and Bremner River District," in Alfred H. Brooks, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1911*, USGS Bulletin 520 (Washington: GPO, 1912), 97-98; Moffit, *Geology of the Hanagita-Bremner Region*, 43-44, 46.

improvements included a fifty-ton Marcy mill, a hydroelectric system, two tramways, a short stretch of local road, and a primitive airstrip.[17]

Asa Baldwin began developing the nearby Yellow Band Group in 1936 and acquired the Ramer brothers' property the following year. He spent the rest of the decade trying to ready his extensive holdings for production. Baldwin moved most of the Bremner Company's buildings to a more convenient spot about .75 mile down the valley, and built spur camps at two additional mine sites. He also improved the local transportation system, opening a forty-mile tractor trail in order to connect the mine with the May Creek Road and erecting two new aerial tramways.[18]

Although he obviously planned to continue his work in the 1940s, the onset of the Second World War delayed his efforts and then his premature death from heart failure in September 1942 ended them altogether. Baldwin's company never resumed operations.

The Chisana District

N. P. Nelson, Billy James, and Matilda Wales made the Chisana district's first placer discovery near the mouth of Bonanza Creek in May 1913, but it was the find made by James and Wales a few days later and a couple of miles upstream on Little Eldorado Creek that really put the place on the map. Reports of that strike electrified the region and precipitated a major rush.[19]

Over time, local miners constructed a variety of utilitarian buildings and structures near their work sites. As was the case in other placer districts during the same period, these included tentframes, cabins, outbuildings, dams, ditches, and flumes.

As the most productive mining areas in the Chisana district were all above treeline, the miners established their main communities down below. The first, called Bonanza City, was situated at the mouth of Bonanza Creek.[20] Timber there was soon exhausted, and the miners

[17] U.S. Bureau of Mines, "Preliminary Report of Bremner Mining Company, Hanagita-Bremner Mining District, August 14, 1936," U.S. Bureau of Mines Microfilm Records, roll 5, item 6, Alaska Resources Library, Anchorage, Alaska (hereafter cited ARL); *Valdez Miner*, August 30, 1935; Fred H. Moffit, "Recent Mineral Developments in the Copper River Region, Alaska," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1935*, USGS Bulletin No. 880 (Washington: GPO, 1937), 99-101; *Valdez Miner*, August 30, 1935.

[18] U.S. Bureau of Mines, "Preliminary Report of Yellow Band Group, Bremner District, August 18, 1936," U.S. Bureau of Mines Microfilm Records, roll 5, item 9, ARL; J. C. Roehm, "Investigations: McCarthy, Nizina River, Bremner and Chisana Mining Districts; Summary Reports and Itinerary . . . August 4 to September 1, 1936," U.S. Bureau of Mines Microfilm Records, Roll 9, item 25, ARL; J. C. Roehm, "Summary Report of Mining Investigations in the Nizina, Bremner, Chisana, Tiekel, Nabesna, and Prince William Sound Districts . . . , August 22 to September 1, 1938," U.S. Bureau of Mines Microfilm Records, roll 9, item 35, ARL; *Valdez Weekly Miner*, January 19, 1940; Asa C. Baldwin, "Diary, September 1, 1940-October 16, 1941," Baldwin Collection, Alaska State Library, Juneau, Alaska (hereafter cited ASL).

[19] N. P. Nelson, "Statement on the Chisana Discovery," autograph manuscript, Ivan Thorall Collection, Chisana, Alaska; DeLorme D. Cairnes, *Upper White River District, Yukon*, Geological Survey Memoir No. 50 (Ottawa: Canada Department of Mines, 1915), 128; *Dawson Daily News*, October 9, 1913.

[20] *Weekly Star* (Whitehorse), August 1, 1913; *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, August 11, 1913; August 20, 1913; *Alaska and Northwest Mining Journal* 3, no. 3 (September 1913): 56; *Dawson Daily News*, September 17, 1913.

were forced to look for a better spot. That fall they established a second townsite, eventually called Chisana City, on a wooded bar near the mouth of Chathenda Creek.[21]

The district's first cold weather provoked an exodus of stampeders, with some bartering their outfits to finance their passage home.[22] Although mining activity dwindled, Chisana City continued to grow. By the middle of October, nearly all townsite lots had been staked and the village contained about two hundred cabins.[23]

Things looked even better the following spring. Still expanding, Chisana City began to assume an air of permanence and the camp at the mouth of Bonanza Creek was also beginning to look more like a town. Although still made up mostly of tents, it now possessed a few cabins, as well as four stores, two hotels, and a restaurant.[24]

The Chisana district remained viable until about 1920, when even the most productive claims in the district were virtually exhausted.[25] No significant recovery occurred until 1934, when the construction of a road linking the Richardson Highway and the nearby Nabesna River greatly facilitated local transportation. The federal government's nearly 70 percent increase in the price of gold was even more significant, creating substantial incentives to mine.[26]

As the 1930s ended, the Chisana district's production again began to fall.[27] That accelerated in October 1942, when America's War Production Board issued Limitation Order L-208 closed most of the country's gold mines. Many companies fought the order, and the federal government eventually allowed some to operate, including those employing five or fewer men.[28]

Although legally allowed to continue, many Chisana operations closed for the duration of the war. Most of the miners were now too old to work their claims without the help of younger labor.

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[21] *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, September 26, 1913.

[22] *Dawson Daily News*, October 23, 1913.

[23] *Fairbanks Times*, October 17, 1913; *Dawson Daily News*, October 20, 1913.

[24] *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, February 24, 1914; *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 20, 1914; Fred Best "Diary, March 15, 1914," Best Collection, ASL; *Dawson Daily News*, June 8, 1914.

[25] Alfred H. Brooks, "The Alaskan Mining Industry in 1920," in Alfred H. Brooks, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1920*, USGS Bulletin No. 722 (Washington: GPO, 1922), 50-51.

[26] Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1934," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1934*, USGS Bulletin No. 868 (Washington: GPO, 1937), 44; Knut Peterson, *When Alaska Was Free* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Ashley Books, 1977), 25.

[27] Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1939," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1939*, USGS Bulletin No. 926 (Washington: GPO, 1941), 53; Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1940," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1940*, USGS Bulletin No. 933 (Washington: GPO, 1942), 51.

[28] Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1941 and 1942," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report of Progress of Investigations in 1941 and 1942*, USGS Bulletin No. 943 (Washington: GPO, 1944), 11.

Mining resumed in 1945, though on a far smaller scale. It continues today.

The Nabesna District

As was the case in the Bremner, miners reached the Nabesna region relatively early. One group led by K. J. Fjeld discovered a quartz-gold lode on Jacksina Creek near the head of the Nabesna River in 1899. Unfortunately, as such a remote lode remained virtually impossible to develop, the group ignored the find and continued its search for placer deposits.[29]

Following construction of the Valdez-Eagle Trail at the beginning of the century, Field returned to the region, staking both gold and copper claims. In 1905 he joined with Paul Paulson to form the Royal Gold Mining Company in order to develop the property. The firm continued its effort for several seasons, but about 1914 it suspended operations and allowed its claims to lapse.[30]

While prospecting in the Nabesna district continued, particularly around Orange Hill, no one had much success until Carl Whitham began re-examining the area in the early 1920s. Convinced that the Royal Development Company had abandoned its efforts prematurely, Whitham prospected nearby and in 1925 located a rich new exposure, which he called the "bear vein," only about 1,000 feet from Fjeld's original discovery.[31]

Whitham spent the early 1930s developing his Nabesna Mine, establishing a large camp and installing a tram system, Blake-type crusher, ball mill, and classifiers. By 1936 his mill, which was run by Phil Holdsworth (who later served as Alaska's commissioner of natural resources), was processing around 25-tons per day.[32]

Whitham's property was very productive between 1934 and 1938, but output slowed in 1939 and 1940, and the onset of the Second World War ended it altogether. Although relatively short-lived, it was still a very profitable venture, yielding nearly $2 million.[33]

CONCLUSION

Apart from the Kennecott property, which produced about $200 million in copper between 1910 and 1938, none of the Wrangell Mountain discoveries ever achieved true national significance. Many, however, were locally and regionally important. Miners extracted about $700,000 in gold from Chititu Creek between 1925 and 1947, for example, and Dan Creek was similarly productive. Across the range, the Chisana district yielded about a million dollars worth of gold between 1913 and 1942, and the Nabesna Mine, nearly exclusively owned by local investors, produced another $2 million between 1934 and 1940.

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[29] *Valdez News*, September 12, 1903.

[30] Ibid; Benjamin D. Stewart, *Report on Cooperation Between the Territory of Alaska and the United States in Making Mining Investigations and in the Inspection of Mines for the Biennium Ending March 31, 1931* (Juneau: Territorial Department of Mines, 1931), 60; Russell G. Wayland, "Gold Deposits Near Nabesna," in Fred H. Moffit, ed., Geology of the Nutzotin Mountains, Alaska, USGS Bulletin 933-B (Washington: GPO, 1943), 176.

[31] Ibid.

[32] *Chitina Weekly Herald*, November 13, 1932; Benjamin D. Stewart, *Mining Investigations and Mine Inspection in Alaska: Biennium Ending March 31, 1933* (Juneau: Territorial Department of Mines, 1933), 77-79.

[33] *Valdez Miner*, March 22, 1940; Phil R. Holdsworth, "Nabesna Gold Mine and Mill" (unpublished B.S. thesis, University of Washington, 1937), *passim*.

While relatively few ventures were financially successful, even the more marginal efforts helped alter local life, expanding the local economy and creating the region's first genuine opportunities for wage labor.

Local mining also helped enlarge and maintain the area's transportation network. It was, for example, largely responsible for the construction of the Copper River and Northwestern Railway, and the Kuskulana, Dan Creek, McCarthy Creek, Bremner, and Nabesna Roads.

Mining altered the area's demography as well. Prior to 1896, there were no permanent non-Native residents in the Copper Basin. A few had visited the region, but most had quickly departed. Expanding opportunities soon attracted additional people, including an increasing number of whites. McCarthy, Kennecott, Sourdough City, Nizina, Nabesna, Bonanza City, and Chisana City, were all established by miners or were developed to supply their needs.

Most local mining sites are long abandoned, but mining continues in several locations, including Bonanza and Big Eldorado Creeks in the Chisana district and Dan Creek in the Nizina district. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, which created Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, did not invalidate existing claims, and many remain in effect. Here, perhaps a dozen persistent miners continue their predecessor's quest--ever searching for that one rich strike.

F. Associated Property Types

Properties considered in this submission to the National Register of Historic Places are noteworthy for their association with significant events bearing on mineral development within the current confines of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. Historic association with regionally important mining may justify their inclusion under Criterion A. Properties may also be eligible under Criterion B, association with important persons, or Criterion D, potential for recovery of scientific data.

The Wrangell Mountains contain numerous districts, buildings, structures, and sites associated with local mineral development.

DISTRICTS

Description

A mining district is a discrete area containing a range of associated properties, united historically either by design or physical proximity. In the Wrangell Mountain region, a district typically includes a variety of utilitarian buildings and structures, locally manufactured tools, and landscape revisions consistent with mining operations. Three such districts, the Nabesna Gold Mine Historic District, the Chisana Historic District, and the Chisana Historic Mining Landscape, are currently listed on the National Register. A fourth, the Kennecott Mine, is a National Historic Landmark.

Significance

Most districts are significant for their direct association with pivotal events relating to the region's most important developmental trends. Many are associated with certain prominent local miners, like Asa Baldwin, Benjamin Millard, or John Andrus, each of whom had important careers outside the region.

Registration Requirements

To qualify for the National Register of Historic Places, a mining district must retain a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of features. Although some individual components may have deteriorated, the district as a whole must still convey a strong sense of the historic activity which occurred there.

Districts bearing particular associative, technological, or architectural significance remain eligible under Criteria A, B, C, and D. Setting, feeling, and association are important elements in determining eligibility. Such properties must retain identifiable remains, be supported by historic documentation, and contain datable artifacts.

BUILDINGS

Description

Most mining properties included buildings that supported mine operations. In isolated locations, these were often limited to wooden tentframes, small cabins, bunkhouses, and cook shacks. Larger operations contained employee homes, offices, mess halls, and shops. Many also possessed associated outbuildings, like privies, sheds, caches, and dog houses.

Significance

Some buildings are significant for their direct association with pivotal events relating to the region's most important developmental trends. Others belonged to prominent local miners, like Austin Lathrop or Anthony J. Dimond.

Registration Requirements

Mine-related buildings bearing particular associative significance remain eligible under Criteria A and B. Setting, feeling, and association are important elements in determining eligibility. Such properties must retain identifiable remains, and must be supported by historic documentation or contain datable artifacts.

STRUCTURES

Description

Local mining structures fall into two main groups, placer and lode, and most are associated with either extraction, circulation, or beneficiation. Those categorized as extractive include prospect and drift pits; adits and shafts; hand, hydraulic, and bulldozer cuts; hand-stacked cobble; tailings; and spoil piles. Structures related to circulation include ore car runways, aerial tramways, boardwalks, bridges, paths, and roads. Many operations also possessed dams, ponds, pipelines, ditches, and flumes to contain, divert, regulate, or supply water. Structures associated with beneficiation include those utilized to process the ore, including mills, power plants, crushers, and concentrators.

Significance

Some structures are significant for their direct association with pivotal events relating to the region's most important developmental trends. Others were built or employed by prominent local individuals, like Asa Baldwin or Carl Whitham.

Registration Requirements

Mining-related structures bearing particular associative significance are eligible under Criteria A or B. Setting, feeling, and association are important elements in determining eligibility. Such properties must retain identifiable remains, and must be supported by historic documentation or contain datable artifacts.

SITES

Description

A site is the location of a significant event, occupation, or activity where the place itself possesses discrete historic, cultural, or archeological value. Sites associated with mining in the Wrangell Mountain region include mineral discovery points, campsites, and the ruins of buildings or structures.

Significance

Some sites are significant for their direct association with pivotal events relating to the region's most important developmental trends, such as the Chisana or Dan Creek gold discoveries. Others may provide crucial information about the lifeways of local miners or the extent and pace of technological change.

Registration requirements

Mining-related sites bearing particular associative significance are eligible under Criterion A. Setting, feeling, and association are important elements in determining eligibility. Such properties must be identifiable and must be supported by historic documentation.

Sites may also be eligible under Criterion D for their potential ability to yield important historical information. The further investigation of these sites could address key questions regarding mining variability and change, including the timing, speed, and conditions under which innovations occurred. Excavations could also provide additional social data, including a better estimate of the region's population; the role played by women and Alaska Natives; the nature of the miner's material culture; and the production, distribution, and consumption of commodities.

G. Geographical Data

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, at 13.2 million acres the nation's largest national park, stretches some 160 miles from the Malaspina Forelands on the Gulf of Alaska to the headwaters of the Tanana River. Its eastern boundary is formed by the boundary between Canada and the United States, and much of its western by the Copper River. It contains parts of the Chugach, St. Elias, Wrangell, and Nutzotin Mountains, as well as portions of five major rivers systems: the Chitina, Bremner, White, Nabesna, and Chisana. Its terrestrial and marine ecosystems include elevations from below sea level to peaks higher than 18,000 feet. Alpine tundra covers 40 percent of the surface; glaciers and icefields, 25 percent; upland spruce-hardwood forest, 10 percent; coastal western hemlock-Sitka spruce forest, 5 percent; wave-stirred beach, 5 percent; and other ecosystems, 15 percent.

Virtually every major drainage within the area now encompassed by Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve displays some sign of historic mining activity. The region's official gold-producing districts, where most of the profitable extraction occurred, included the Nizina, near the head of the Nizina River; the Bremner, between the Chitina and Bremner Rivers; the Chisana, just east of the Chisana River; and the Nabesna, near the head of the Nabesna River. Most of the region's copper came from the Kennecott Mine, located just east of the Kennicott Glacier, but smaller amounts were produced by mines on the Kotsina and Kuskulana Rivers as well as McCarthy and Boulder Creeks.

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

This multiple property nomination of Wrangell-St. Elias's mining properties to the National Register of Historic Places is primarily based on field surveys completed by the National Park Service between 1984 and 1999. This was supplemented by archival research conducted by National Park Service historian Geoffrey Bleakley between 1995-1999.

The historic mining properties of the Wrangell Mountain Region reflect two primary themes: gold mining and copper mining. These in turn generated two historic contexts: (1) Copper Mining in the Wrangell Mountain Region, 1898-1938; and (2) Gold Mining in the Wrangell Mountain Region, 1898-1942.

In drafting this nomination, Bleakley identified associated property types, basing integrity requirements on existing National Register criteria.

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J. Illustrations

Fig. 1 Orientation Map: Wrangell-St. Elias Region