Early Transportation Routes Fort Wainwright, Alaska

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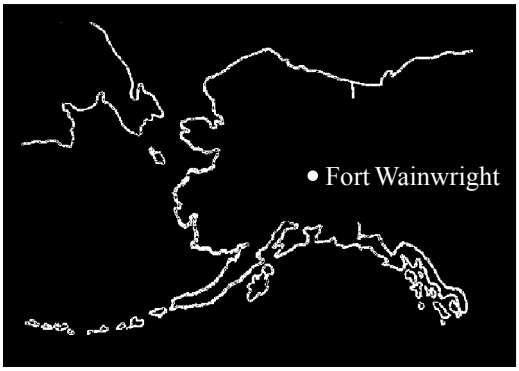

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CHAPTER 1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Document

The U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK) consulted with the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) to prepare an *Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan (ICRMP) for 2001–2005* for Fort Wainwright and Fort Greely. Section 2.4 of the ICRMP identifies the need to develop historic contexts as they will "lay the foundation for understanding why historic properties exist on Forts Wainwright and Greely."[1] This document serves to meet this goal for early transportation routes on the two forts. Secondly, Section 2.4.2 of the ICRMP roughly defines historic contexts found on the two forts. These include prehistory, historic mining and the gold rush era, World War II, and the Cold War. This report will contribute to the prehistoric and historic contexts introduced in the ICRMP.

Beyond providing an understanding of how people traveled on present Army lands, this report offers an extensive bibliography on the history of transportation in Alaska, specifically in the Tanana Valley around the towns of Fairbanks and Delta Junction. It outlines the potential for locating cultural resources on military land associated with early transportation routes, defines the history of trails and roads on the two Forts, and provides the guidelines and criteria used to determine the eligibility of linear features for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

This report will assist the Cultural Resource Manager (CRM) to remain in compliance with cultural resource laws and regulations (defined in Section 3.1 of the ICRMP), notably in facilitating the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act. It will also begin fulfillment of the ICRMP Public Education initiative forwarded in Section 3.2.4.3, and will continue step one in the action plan to "develop historic context documentation necessary for evaluating eligibility."[2]

1.2 Previous Research

The topic of transportation in the Interior of Alaska has received limited attention. Books and reports tend to cover the more popular transportation themes, such as the early cartographic expeditions of Southeast Alaska, the famed Iditarod Sled Trail, or the Chilkoot Trail from Skagway to Dawson, Yukon Territory. The Alaska Historical Society compiled a collection of scholarly essays relating to transportation in Alaska's past covering these topics.[3] The essays range in coverage from shipbuilding in Russian America to early Aviation, and some references to rivers and trails. Other similar overviews have been written.[4]

Other works concentrate on associated features of the trails, such as Walter Phillips' *Roadhouses of the Richardson Highway* published in 1984. Other topics, such as

[1] Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Office of History and Archaeology, *Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan 2001-2005 Forts Wainwright and Greely.* D.L. Lewis and Russell Sackett (Anchorage, Ak: OHA, 2000).

[2] Ibid., 142.

[3] Michael S. Kennedy, ed., *Transportation in Alaska's Past* (Anchorage: Alaska Printing, Inc., 1982).

[4] Archie Sheils, *A Short History of Transportation to and Within the Territory of Alaska, 1987-1980* (Bellingham, WA: Archie Sheils, 1950).

the founding of Fairbanks and the construction of the Washington Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS) relate indirectly to transportation.[5] Many periodical articles have focused on the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail, but provide limited interpretation on the context of Interior transportation.[6]

The most authoritative historian on the subject, Claus M- Naske, has written extensively on the role of the Alaska Road Commission.[7] Naske has researched roads and trails throughout the state and generated the Alaska Trails Database.[8] This is an extensive list of over 14,000 individual citations regarding the construction, maintenance, and function of roads throughout Alaska. The State of Alaska, Division of Natural Resources, compiled a similar database for the RS #2477 Project.[9] This is an excellent starting point for researching historic trails.

Indigenous Trails in the state have also been slighted in previous transportation research. A prehistoric context can be established using a large body of archeological investigations and reports done regarding the Tanana Valley. The lack of primary source documents makes locating indigenous trails a challenge. Ethnographic studies do tell of trade routes and hunting trails in the Interior.[10] The information is hardly specific and leaves one with a laundry list of rivers and not many conclusive descriptions about exact routes and time frames of use.

1.3 Materials Presented

This document provides a brief history of transportation in Interior Alaska.It then establishes which transportation routes crossed land currently withdrawn for Fort Wainwright and associated training areas. The report's bibliography provides a comprehensive list of sources relating to the development of transportation in Alaska generally, and to the transportation history of the Tanana Valley specifically. The Elmer Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks, holds many of the sources used in this study. These include U.S.G.S. Bulletins and Reports, Alaska Road Commission Annual Reports, Travelogues, Ethnographies, and general books and jour-

[5] The founding of Fairbanks is covered in Terrence Cole's *Crooked Past: The History of a Frontier Mining Camp, Fairbanks, Alaska* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1991). The Washington Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System is addressed by William A. Quirk, *Historical Aspects of the Building of the Washington Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System with Special Emphasis on the Eagle-Valdez and Goodpaster Telegraph Lines, 1902–03,* report prepared for the Bureau of Land Management, Fairbanks District Office, 1974.

[6] Elva Scott, "Alaska's First Highway, Eagle-Valdez Trail," *Eagle Wireless*, 18, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 6; Richard W. Helbock, "The Valdez-Fairbanks Trail," *La Posta* 16, no. 3(1985): 21–30; and Interior Department, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Alaska Field Office, *Valdez Trail, Valdez to Fairbanks,* no publisher listed, 1975.

[7] Claus M- Naske, *Alaska Road Commission Historical Narrative: Final Report*, report prepared for the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (Fairbanks, 1983) and Claus M- Naske, *Paving Alaska's Trails: The Work of the Alaska Road Commission* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986).

[8] Claus M- Naske, *Alaska Trails Database*, prepared for the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (Fairbanks, 1989).

[9] Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Land, Northern Region, *The R.S. 2477 Project Historic Trails Database and Map Atlas* (Fairbanks, July 1994). The RS 2477 Project researched historic trails for establishing rights-of way on unreserved federal land. A trail designated as a RS 477 route must be 25 years old, historically documented, and mapped. Designation as an RS 2477 grants public access (right-of-way) across federal, state, and private land.

[10] For an introduction into the ethnography of the Tanana Athapaskans, review Craig W. Mishler's *Born With The River: An Ethnographic History of Alaska's Goodpaster and Big Delta Indians* report prepared for the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, 1986, Report of Investigations 86-14; and Elizabeth Andrews, "Salcha: An Athapaskan Band of the Tanana River and its Culture," (masters thesis, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1975); and Robert A. McKennan, *The Upper Tanana Indians* (New Haven: Yale University Department of Anthropology, 1959). Holly Reckord wrote on the Ahtna of the Copper River Basin in *That's The Way We Live: Subsistence in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve*, report prepared for the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, Occasional Paper no. 34 (Fairbanks: Anthropology and Historic Preservation, 1983).

nals that cover transportation subjects.[11] The Polar Regions Archive at UAF contains photograph, manuscript, oral history, and map collections used in this report. The Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Fairbanks Office, holds case files relating to historic trails and roads throughout the state.[12] These files are all part of the RS #2477 project that documented historic trails and public right-of-way corridors in Alaska. The State's Office of History and Archaeology (OHA) provided materials on the linear features that helped create a framework for the historic context of roads and trails.[13] Materials on the Alaska Road Commission were reviewed at the Office of History and Archaeology. Archival collections relating to the Bureau of Public Roads and the Alaska Road Commission were examined at the National Archives regional center in Anchorage.

[11] Travelogues include two pieces, Valdez Chamber of Commerce, *Over the Richardson Road: Valdez to Fairbanks* (Valdez, 1900) and Valdez Transportation Company, *A Travelogue of the Richardson Highway* (Valdez, 1928). A few examples of books that reference Interior trails include Margaret Murie's *Two in the Far North* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1962), Merle Colby's *A Guide to Alaska: Last American Frontier* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1954), and A.W. Greely's *Handbook of Alaska: Its Resources, Products, and Attraction* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1914).

[12] The Elmer Rasmuson Library, Alaska and Polar Regions Archive also holds a reproduced collection of the RS 2477 files.

[13] Publications assisting in developing a framework for this study included two unpublished documents from the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, the Iditarod Trail Report [unpublished draft] and the National Register Nomination Form for a segment of the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail near Copper Center, Alaska.

CHAPTER 2.0 Historic Context for Early Transportation

2.1 Introduction

Fort Wainwright and the Donnelly Training Areas near Delta Junction encompass lands in Interior Alaska that have been inhabited by people for well over 10,000 years (See Figure 1).[14] Through time, people of both Native and Euro-American descent have left traces of their activities. These signs of human activity on the land are defined as cultural resources. On military withdrawal lands for the two posts, cultural resources include archeological artifacts, such as stone tools used by Native inhabitants, historic cabins and mines, homesteads, and numerous buildings and sites associates with World War II and the Cold War. Cultural resources on the forts also include early transportation routes. People moved across Interior Alaska

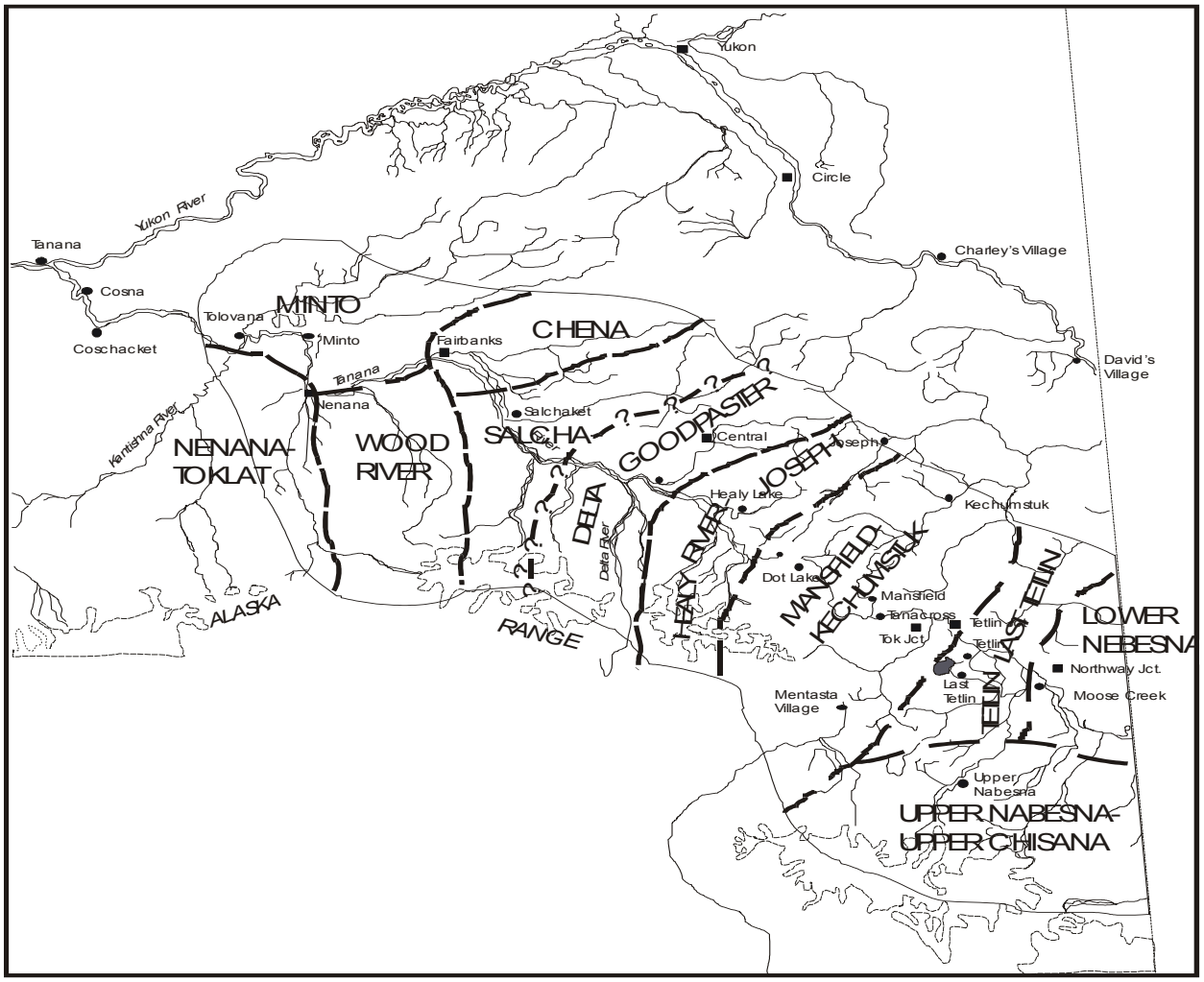

Figure 1. Map of interior Alaska showing locations of native bands along the Tannana Valley.

[14] Fort Greely was officially decommissioned in 2001. The training areas now fall under the command of Fort Wainwright. All references to Donnelly Training Areas refer to the former Fort Greeely. Donnelly Training Area West refers to the area west of the Delta River. Donnelly Training Area East refers to Army land east of the Delta River. Any references to Fort Wainwright are intended to include all associated training areas, including the Tanana Flats and Yukon Training Area (YTA).

on rivers and overland trails. They traveled for a variety of reasons ranging from subsistence hunting to leisurely scenic drives. This report documents the ways in which people moved across Fort Wainwright and examines what, if any, marks that have been left on the landscape relate to historic transportation in the Tanana Valley. This report also provides a contextual framework to interpret the history and significance of early transportation routes. This report concentrates on rivers and overland routes. The history of aviation in the Interior warrants its own study. Rivers and trails both have an indigenous and Euro-American historical context.

2.2 Historic Context Overview

The development of Alaska relied on effective and efficient transportation. Routes into Interior Alaska traversed oceans and navigated rivers by steamers and paddlewheels, and crossed overland trails by sleds, wagons, trains, and cars. These routes took the paths of least resistance; pathways that had been traveled by the Native inhabitants of the land. Gold discoveries stimulated a rapid Euro-American population increase. The one hindrance to mineral exploitation in Alaska had always been a lack of sufficient transportation routes. Individuals had limited finances to support trail building and maintenance. They urgently clamored for government assistance. The government responded with a number of military reconnaissance expeditions and subsequent road construction projects. Many of these survey and building expeditions took advantage of Native guides and indigenous trails. The pre-historic and historic transportation routes in Interior Alaska are significant in that they provide clues to the economic, social, and political development of the region.

Transportation routes located in the Tanana Valley fall within three broad categories. The first category consists of indigenous trails used before the arrival of European-Americans in Interior Alaska. These include navigable rivers, hunting trails, and trade routes. The second type of routes is federal and territorial government trails and roads established after the purchase of Alaska. The government expeditions initially followed navigable rivers such as the Yukon, Copper, and Kuskokwim. Overland routes included at first pack trails, then sled wagon roads, and eventually automobile highways. The final category of transportation routes consists of private roads. The private roads usually connected mining areas to the mainline, or trunk routes. They were independently funded and maintained or created by use over a period of years with no identifiable builder. These trails often fell into misuse more quickly than the government routes. Some were taken over by government transportation authorities. They also changed course more often as landscape conditions changed. A description of each of these context themes follows.

2.2.1 Indigenous Context: ca. 12,000 BP to 1867

Some of the oldest archeological sites in Alaska have been discovered in the Tanana Valley. What remains at a site and the condition of artifacts depends on when the site was created. In Interior Alaska, five time periods have been developed to categorize indigenous cultural sites.[15] They are introduced here to provide a general

[15] Anthropologists and archaeologists continually revise which "period", "tradition" or "complex" a prehistoric site can be attributed to. Alaska's prehistory can be quite puzzling. These divisions typically use available technology and changes in flora and fauna to divide cultural eras. This paper uses the periods posed by Charles Holmes in "Early Human Settlement in the Tanana Valley, Alaska" Geological Society of America Conference Paper (Fairbanks, May 25, 1995). It also incorporates the chronology of human presence in Interior Alaska used in the Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements for projects on Fort Wainwright.

framework in which to place indigenous transportation routes. They begin with the Beringian Period (11,000 BP and older) before forestation and when the land connection to Siberia still existed. The American Paleoarctic tradition characterizes this era. Sites created during the Beringian Period in Interior were likely unglaciated during the Wisconsin Ice Age. Site locations represent small hunting camps where now extinct animals were sought. In the Transitional Period (11,000 to 8500 BP) the land connection disappears, and major changes in the composition of flora and fauna begin. During the Early Taiga Period (8500 to 5000 BP) the boreal forest seen today becomes established. The environmental changes led to human adaptation. During the Early Taiga Period the Arctic Small Tool tradition emerges. The Middle Taiga Period (5000 to 2500 BP) encompasses a time local variants occurring in indigenous technologies. The Denali Complex is associated with this era. The Late Taiga Period (2500 BP to modern) is the most important for this study. During this period, around 1500 BP, the Athapaskan Tradition emerges. This tradition is firmly linked with the present Native inhabitants of the Interior. It included the use of copper tools and other organic artifacts (wood, birch bark, bone). The flora and fauna we see today matured during this era. Trails used by the Athapaskan cultures have the highest probability of discovery and documentation of use for this report.

Indigenous transportation routes included both rivers and trails. Rivers provided important transportation passages throughout the history of Alaska, particularly in the interior.[16] The geography of Alaska is such that the large mountain ranges block easy, overland access to the coast. The lack of sea access separated the cultural character and settlement patterns of Interior Natives from that of maritime oriented bands.[17] Ethnographic studies have characterized Interior bands as semi-nomadic, and inland-riverine/hunter-trappers in subsistence orientation.[18] Rivers served as critical transportation routes, as well as important areas for fishing, plant gathering, and waterfowl hunting.[19] Alfred Brooks of the USGS described the use of "cumbersome rafts" by Indians to navigate the rivers. Brooks also depicted the construction of decked canoes for river use.[20] Muskeg and bogs of the Interior limited overland travel by indigenous bands.

This subsistence economy description places the Tanana Indians within the larger classification of Interior Athapaskans. Athapaskans are noted for their cyclical hunting/gathering, and fishing traditions.[21] This tradition differs from other Alaskan Natives such as Aleut and Yupik that harvest marine mammals for subsistence. The large rivers, such as the Copper, Tanana, and Yukon were the first "highways" in Alaska. Smaller, clear water tributaries provided prime areas for inhabitation. Athapaskan bands of the Tanana Valley near Fort Wainwright included the Salcha, Chena, Wood River and Delta-Goodpaster; each band named after the river of primary use in the region. The bands of the lower Tanana River also traded with neighboring tribes. These bands included the Han, Tetlin, Nabesna (Upper and Lower), Healy River-Joseph, and Mansfield-Kechumstuk.[22] This opens the possibility for

[16] Michael S. Kennedy, ed., *Transportation in Alaska's Past* (Anchorage: Alaska Printing, Inc., 1982), 75-90.

[17] J.M. Nielson, *Focus on Interior History: Alaska's Past in a Regional Perspective* (Alaska Historical Commission, 1980), 1.

[18] Elizabeth Andrews, "Salcha: An Athabaskan Band of the Tanana River and its Culture," (masters thesis, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1975), 4.

[19] J.M. Neilson, *Focus on Interior History: Alaska's Past in a Regional Perspective* (Alaska Historical Commission, 1980), 3.

[20] Alfred H. Brooks, *A Reconnaissance in the Tanana and White River Basins, Alaska,* report prepared for the Interior Department, USGS, Bulletin # (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 439.

[21] William E. Simeone, *A History of the Alaskan Athapaskans, including a description of the Athapaskan culture and a historical narrative* (Anchorage: Alaska Historical Commission, 1979), 9.

[22] The band divisions were derived from Robert A. McKennan, "Tanana," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 6: Subarctic*, ed. June Helm (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1981).

trail use by the Han (Fortymile area) and the other Upper Tanana River bands. Ethnographies have noted late Athapaskan trade routes connecting the central Tanana Valley to Eagle via the Kechumstuck Trail, and later to Circle City following the Salcha or Goodpaster Rivers. Emily Reckord noted of the Ahtna south of the Alaska Range that rivers not only provided salmon, but also served as dog sled routes when frozen.[23] The same activity can be applied to the Tanana River bands. The subsistence cycle required the use of natural corridors as transportation routes.

The likelihood of Natives using and traveling on current Army land is high. An archeological site on the northwest corner of Fort Greely contained cultural components dating human occupation between about 4,100 and 2,100 years ago, placing it in the Middle Taiga Period and associating the site with the Denali Complex.[24] Ethnohistories have indicated a fish camp located at or near this site during the Late Taiga Period, tying this site to the Athapaskan tradition most closely related to the current indigenous population of the Interior.[25] This site was at the confluence of the Little Delta River and the Tanana River. The Little Delta River, Delta Creek, and Delta River connected the inhabitants along the Tanana River to sheep hunting grounds in the foothills of the Alaska Range. These rivers acted as feeder routes from the main camps (for a map of the water routes, refer to Figures 12 and 16). Main camps were located on clear water tributaries and larger lakes closest to the best fishing and hunting grounds. For example, the main camp of the Salcha band was near the confluence of the Salcha River and the Tanana River. The Salcha River is a spawning stream for salmon and provided a food base for the band. They could then supplement their salmon diet with seasonal trips up the feeder streams to hunt moose, caribou, and sheep. They would also build temporary fish camps, such as the one on the Little Delta River, to increase the catch. The Tanana River emerged as the trunk line connecting bands with seasonal hunting grounds.

Another site near Donnelly Dome dated the earliest occupation to over 7,000 years ago. This site falls within the Transitional Period where adaptation to new environments was occurring. Cultural components included a variety of stone tools.[26] These sites were likely hunting camps or overlooks where the hunters could work on tools while looking for game. Donnelly Dome provided a perfect view of the surrounding area for miles and was an ideal location for temporary hunting camps. Northern Athapaskans inhabited portions of the interior during late pre-historic, protohistoric, and historic times.[27] The prehistoric transportation context begins 12,000 years ago and ends at the first contact with Euro-Americans in the late 1960s.

Transportation routes covered in this context involved travel by foot and boat along the major river courses of the interior for purposes of hunting, gathering, fishing, and trading. These interior waterways include the Yukon, Tanana, Delta, Little Delta, Salcha, Goodpaster, Volkmar, Chena and Wood Rivers, and Delta Creek. Scant

[23] Holly Reckord, *That's The Way We Live: Subsistence in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve*, report prepared for the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, Occasional Paper no. 34 (Fairbanks: Anthropology and Historic Preservation, 1983).

[24] Glenn H. Bacon and Charles Holmes, Archaeological *Survey and Inventory of Cultural Resources at Fort Greely, Alaska* (Fairbanks: Alaskarctic, 1979), 90.

[25] Elizabeth Andrews, "Salcha: An Athabaskan Band of the Tanana River and its Culture."(master's thesis, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1975), 75.

[26] Glenn H. Bacon and Charles Holmes, Archaeological *Survey and Inventory of Cultural Resources at Fort Greely, Alaska* (Fairbanks: Alaskarctic, 1979), 92.

[27] James E. Dixon et al., *Archaeological Survey and Inventory of Cultural Resources, Fort Wainwright, Alaska. Final Report* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Museum, 1980), 55.

physical evidence is likely to remain related to indigenous travel on Fort Wainwright. The rivers still flow, but without actual physical remains of transportation activities little else can be determined. Rivers on Fort Wainwright used by indigenous people include the Wood, Tanana, Chena, Little Delta, and Delta Rivers. Delta and Jarvis Creeks provided access routes to sheep hunting grounds on the Donnelly Training Areas. The Delta River enabled travel to the coast for trade with the Ahtna Indians of the Copper River Basin. This route was one of two major passes connecting the Interior to the southern coast of Alaska. The Wood River eased access into the Tanana Flats for moose hunting. The Chena and Salcha Rivers led to hunting and trapping grounds in the hilly uplands to the north of the Tanana River.

Information on Native overland routes has been hard to discover. Inference suggests that Natives traveled along naturally clear corridors, such as rivers and exposed ridges. The numerous archaeology findings allow for some speculation as to the prehistoric routes of travel. For example, numerous sites on Dinosaur Ridge in Donnelly West Training Area suggest that Natives traversed this ridge between Little Delta River and Delta Creek on a regular basis. Archeological sites in the Tangle Lakes area of the Alaska Range combined with ethnographic information suggest use of the overland route between the headwaters of the Delta River and Copper River basin served as an important trade route connecting the interior to the coast. Occupation of the Tangle Lakes area dates between 10,150 and 8400 BP.[28] Much of what can be said about indigenous transportation is conjectural. Athapaskan bands were small, dispersed groups of people pursuing sheep, moose, caribou, waterfowl, and fish.[29] These bands may have had a central winter camp and auxiliary summer hunting camps that changed due to seasonal variations and desirable harvests at that time. This means their land routes changed. Without technological advancement in modes of travel, Native trails followed naturally cleared corridors such as rivers, exposed ridges, and low, mountain passes, leaving little trace of their traveling movements.

2.2.2 US Government Transportation Context 1867–1939:

When the US government purchased Alaska in 1867, much of the interior remained *terra incognita* to Euro-Americans. The initial administration of land before a territorial legislature was authorized in 1912 was carried out by the U.S. Army then the U.S. Navy and concentrated on the coast. Maps dating between 1800 and 1890 often left the interior of Alaska blank, save the approximate course of the Yukon.[30] Only the confluence of the Tanana and Yukon Rivers was drawn in. A dotted line indicated the "supposed course of the Tanana River." It was an early objective of the Army to explore and map the new possession. The U.S. was curious about what it had purchased from Russia. Expeditions into the interior represent the first wave of Euro-American travelers that crossed land now withdrawn for Fort Wainwright. These military reconnaissances mapped the interior and commented upon Native inhabitants, routes of access, and the economic potential of the Tanana Valley. Their

[28] John Hofffecker, Roger Powers, and Ted Goebel, "The Colonization of Beringia and the Peopling of the New World," *Science* 259 (January 1993), 48.

[29] Anne Shinkwin, Jean Aigner, and Elizabeth Andrews, "Land Use Patterns in the Upper Tanana Valley, Alaska," *Anthropological Papers of the University of Alaska* 19, no. 2 (March 1980): 46.

[30] The Alaska and Polar Regions Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks, maintains and extensive collection of rare and manuscript maps that were consulted for this project. A list of specific map titles with the archival reference number is in the bibliography. The footnote citations for maps give an abbreviated title and the date of illustration.

missions supplied information on unknown lands and pioneered early transportation routes just as government-sponsored expeditions had done in the American West.[31]

Lieutenant Henry T. Allen traversed through interior Alaska following the Tanana River Valley in 1885. He was the first Euro-American in the region with the express purpose to map it and report on conditions. He entered the Tanana River drainage from the Lake Mentasta Trail and Tokai (Tok) River after having ascended the Copper River on the south side of the Alaska Range. The current Tok-Cutoff highway roughly follows this route. His party descended the Tanana River to its confluence with the Yukon River.[32] His report, published in 1887, commented on the potential of a trail to the interior via Lake Mentasta. It also offers first hand insight in to the conditions of local Indians prior to Euro-American contact. Allen is credited with providing the first map of the Tanana Valley. The map became the first road atlas for early transportation and opened up the interior to further Euro-American penetration and settlement.

Though the dates remain unclear, there is a chance that the Tanana Valley had been traversed by Euro-Americans prior to the Allen expedition. Early fur trappers and traders from the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) explored the Canadian Northwest Territories and followed the Porcupine River to its confluence with the Yukon in 1846 and again in 1847.[33] Trader A.H. Murray established Fort Yukon at the latter date. The trader/prospector trio of Arthur Harper, Jack McQuestern, and Alfred Mayo entered the upper Yukon area in 1873. While Mayo and McQuestern established a trading post at Fort Reliance on the Canadian Yukon, Harper continued prospecting and familiarized himself with the major watercourses in the vicinity, including the Tanana River.[34]These men made known the territory of the Fortymile and Upper Tanana River region to an increasing population of Euro-Americans fortune seekers.

The Yukon-Tanana River confluence had been visited by other military expeditions. The Russians ascended the Yukon as early as 1834.[35] Captain Charles Raymond, who represented the US government, conducted a reconnaissance of the Yukon River in 1869. Raymond described a "River of the Mountains" (Tanana) and that only a few miles near the mouth of the river had been explored by Euro-Americans.[36] First Lieutenant Frederick Schwatka visited the mouth of the Tanana River in 1883. His expedition descended the Yukon River from its headwaters after climbing through Chilkoot pass from Dyea. His report noted that the Tanana River remained the largest unexplored river of the Western Continent.[37] By Allen's expedition in 1885, only second hand reports based on the recollections of Indians and prospectors spoke of access to the Tanana Valley.

Gold discoveries in 1892 near Circle City, Alaska, had prospectors combing the entire Upper Yukon region for gold. The 1897 Klondike strike provided further

[31] Melody Rae Webb, "Yukon Frontiers: The Westward Movement to the North Country" (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 1984).

[32] Terrence Cole, ed., An *Expedition to the Copper, Tanana, and Koyukuk Rivers in 1885, by Lt. Henry Allen* (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing Company, 1985), 71.

[33] J.M. Nielson, *Focus on Interior History: Alaska's Past in a Regional Perspective* (Alaska Historical Commission, 1980), 42.

[34] Ibid., 75; and Alfred H. Brooks, *A Reconnaissance in the Tanana and White River Basins, Alaska in 1898* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 437.

[35] J.M. Nielson, *Focus on Interior History: Alaska's Past in a Regional Perspective* (Alaska Historical Commission, 1980), 35.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Senate, Department of Military Affairs, *Compilation of Explorations in Alaska* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 415.

purpose for the improvement of transportation routes into Alaska. Later interior strikes in Fairbanks and northward to Tolovana, Livengood, and eventually Wisemen and Coldfoot in the Brooks Range, increased the population of interior Alaska dramatically. The new residents expressed a strong desire for improved transportation services. The early and established route to the Klondike via Chilkoot Pass went through Canadian Territory. Part of the mission of the early U.S. government expeditions included finding an all-American route to the gold fields. The federal government decided to survey the territory and address the feasibility of constructing trails and roads into Alaska. The government quickly reacted to the calls of the gold stampeders.

Alfred Brooks of the USGS conducted a geological reconnaissance of the White and Tanana Rivers in 1898. He entered the Tanana Valley via Mentasta Pass and Mirror Creek, a tributary of the Tanana upriver from Tok.[38] Brooks then descended the Tanana River. His expedition provided the first systematic geological report of the Tanana Valley. The report served as a source of route information for later expeditions by both government officials and individual prospectors. Brooks credited the first exploration of the Tanana River to the trader Harper, noting that the date of Harper's first trip was unknown.[39] Brooks suggested the possibility of other prospectors having traversed the region, but these trips rendered little useful information. The Brooks report further revealed the use of rivers by Natives and Euro-Americans as the primary transportation routes in Alaska. He commented on the use of rivers by "boats, or more often in downstream trips on rafts, and in the winter [they] traversed their frozen surfaces with dog teams."[40] Brooks is a significant person in the history of Alaska associated with locating and mapping early transportation routes through the Tanana Valley.

The U.S. Army prepared expeditions to find access routes to the developing mining regions of the Yukon, Tanana and Fortymile Rivers. Significant expeditions that contributed to the expansion of transportation in the Tanana Valley included those of Lieutenant William Abercrombie, Captain Bogardus Eldridge, and Captain Edwin Glenn. The few years between 1897 and 1900 saw immeasurable growth in the knowledge about routes to the Tanana Valley based on the reports of these military expeditions. This era of Alaska's history paralleled closely the era of military reconnaissance expeditions sent out to map and explore regions of the West in the contiguous states. The War Department ordered a three-pronged approach to explore Alaska. They ordered expeditions from Eagle towards the Tanana River (Eldridge), from Valdez towards the Tanana River (Abercrombie), and from Cook Inlet toward the Susitna, Copper, and Tanana Rivers (Glenn). Both the Abercrombie and Glenn expeditions represent the important military role in exploring, mapping, and settling the Tanana Valley.

Lieutenant Abercrombie was charged with exploring the Copper River and its tributaries to find an all-American route from Valdez to the Fortymile and Yukon Rivers. His expedition created the first leg of what later became the Valdez-Eagle trail. This route went up the Copper to the Slahna River. It then traversed the Alaska Range through Mentasta Pass and hit the Tanana River near the current location of Tok and Tanana Crossing, present day Tanacross. Mentasta Pass, the old Native

[38] Alfred H. Brooks, *A Reconnaissance in the Tanana and White River Basins, Alaska in 1898* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 436.
[39] Ibid., 438.
[40] Ibid., 439.

trail followed by Allen, was then mapped and recommended as a prime route for access into the Tanana and Fortymile River valleys. This route developed into the first military trail into the Tanana Valley.

Captain Glenn sent out two or three scouting parties to cover as much ground as possible. The travels of one member over-shadowed the activities of his senior officer. Lieutenant J.C. Castner's explorations led him from the coast to the Interior and pioneered a new route for Euro-Americans into central Alaska. His trail led from the Matanuska Valley toward the Copper River headwaters. It then followed the Gulkona River (now Gulkana), a tributary of the Copper River. With the assistance of Native guides, the party crossed the Alaska Range and descended the Delta River to its confluence with the Tanana River. Lieutenant Castner became the first Euro-American to use the Delta River drainage as a transportation route. A glacial stream on the modern Richardson Highway that follows this route is named after the Lieutenant. Castner also searched extensively for a route from the Tanana River to the Fortymile River country.[41] This strenuous journey led him up the Volkmar River (now known as the Goodpaster), and back down to the Tanana River to return half-starved and shoeless.[42] Castner, like his predecessors Brooks and Abercrombie, represents a significant individual in the development of transportation routes into the Tanana Valley. Castner's expedition down the Delta River likely covered ground in and adjacent to the Donnelly Training Areas.

The Army sought to improve communications in the north. In an effort to provide law and order the Army built a series of forts. Connecting the Alaska posts with the lower forty-eight via telegraph cable had also been a long Army goal. They deemed communication between these forts as critical to effective administration. The efforts to build this line relates directly to the transportation history of the Interior. The routes that the telegraph crews cleared evolved into trails and wagon roads. The Washington Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS) connected Alaska to the lower forty-eight by 1901.[43] While numerous extensions existed throughout the territory, the most consequential to this report is the segment connecting Fort Liscum in Valdez to Fort Egbert in Eagle. Commanded by Lieutenant William Mitchell, the line from Eagle to the Tanana River was completed by 1903. This included a segment called the Goodpaster line that connected Fairbanks to the main Eagle-Valdez line. The Goodpaster line followed an old Indian trail from Fortymile country to the Tanana River. From there, it headed to Fairbanks following the north bank of the Tanana River into town. The later constructed Fairbanks-Valdez military trail followed the telegraph route on the north bank of the Tanana until Big Delta where the two routes split. The telegraph line not only cleared routes for eventual travel, but also created associated features of the transportation routes. Line maintenance required permanent camps along the route. Signal Corps soldiers built small cabins and based their maintenance operations from these camps. In 1907 a wireless radio communication system replaced the landline. Wireless transmitting and receiving towers were located at places near Donnelly Dome, Big Delta, Salcha and Fairbanks.

Continued gold discoveries and the growing American population prompted the US Congress to further investigate the conditions in the burgeoning territory. The

[41] J.C. Castner, "A Historical Topic: Exploration in Alaska," (paper presented at the Hawaiian Engineering Association Conference, Honolulu Hawaii, 1910, and published as the association's Press Bulletin no. 27), 35.

[42] Ibid., 43.

[43] Claus -M Naske, *Alaska Road Commission Historical Narrative: Final Report*, report prepared for the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (Fairbanks, 1983), 12.

government arranged a committee of senators in 1903 to travel through the territory and report on the economic and social conditions. In Rampart, this committee interviewed Abraham Spring, a local resident of the Tanana Valley.[44] Spring echoed the sentiments of many Alaskans when asked how the territory could be improved. He recognized that "next to the great need of a comprehensive mining code are roads and trails. They are absolutely necessary…[and] can only be built by congressional appropriations."[45] Spring succinctly described the historic context of government trails in Alaska. The building of transportation and communication services in Alaska required government aid.

Upon reviewing the expedition reports and testimonials on conditions in Alaska, the Department of War ordered a survey of a potential route for a military road from Fort Liscum in Valdez to Fort Egbert in Eagle. This survey took place in 1904.[46] The route followed the rough pack trail created by the Abercrombie exploration up the Copper River.[47] From that point, the trail crossed Mentasta Pass (Allan's Route), forded the Tanana River, and then followed an old Indian trail approaching Eagle from the south. This last segment closely followed the telegraph line built by William Mitchell. This road was the first overland route capable of handling heavy pack traffic. It is sometimes referred to as the Trans-Alaska Military Trail, Government Trail, or just the Military Trail. Gold discoveries in the Tanana Valley near Fairbanks continued. Further news of gold came from Bonnifield, Tolovana, Innoko, Rampart, and other small Interior communities. It was soon obvious that more than one pack trail was necessary. The Army recognized the necessity of a commission that could plan and organize the development of a transportation system in Alaska.

Congress formed the Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska in 1905 to improve transportation access to the territory.[48] This act responded directly to the testimonies of Spring and others about the lack of roads and trails. The Board was composed of Army personnel. It rapidly sought to improve the transportation situation. The first president of the commission was Army Major Wilds P. Richardson. Lieutenants George Pillsbury and Samual Orchard filled the other two seats of the board.[49] Before the board began fulfilling its road building objectives, less than 200 miles of road had been constructed in Alaska. When the board finally passed its administrative function over to the new State of Alaska in 1960, over 11,000 miles of roads existed. The Alaska Road Commission (ARC), as it became known, was the most influential group on the formation of a road system in and around the Tanana Valley. The routes it surveyed and maintained cleared the path for future roads. It has left a permanent and relatively unchanged imprint on the landscape.

The first priority of the ARC was to improve the Valdez-Eagle military trail and extend a branch to Fairbanks following the route traveled by Castner along the Delta River. The Fairbanks branch would provide the town year-round access to the coast. Access was needed not only for the importation of household and industrial goods, or the export of raw materials, but also for mail delivery. At the time,

[44] A retelling of the Spring's interview with the Congressional Committee can be found in Claus –M Naske's *Paving Alaska's Trails: The work of the Alaska Road Commission* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 12-13.

[45] Senate Subcommittee of Committee on Territories Appointed to Investigate Conditions in Alaska, *Conditions in Alaska*, 58th Cong., 2nd sess., 1904, S. Rpt. 282 99, 94–101.

[46] Claus M- Naske, *Alaska Road Commission Historical Narrative: Final Report*, report prepared for the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (Fairbanks, 1983), 23.

[47] Abercrombie improved the first part of the trail. He was following an already existing Native route.

[48] Clause –M Naske, *Paving Alaska's Trails: The work of the Alaska Road Commission* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 28.

[49] Ibid., 28.

the Fairbanks area shipped all freight by riverboat up the Tanana River. This limited the transport to the season after spring break-up and before winter freeze-up. An overland trail could be traveled in the winter. It promised the opportunity of year round access to the coast. The Valdez to Fairbanks road quickly emerged as the most important land transportation route to the Interior.[50] It was the primary route for people, animals, freight, and mail bound for Fairbanks and the surrounding communities. It was advertised as a scenic trip for automobiles after 1913. The road received most of the attention of the ARC. The local newspapers along the entire route constantly reported on the progress of road improvements and mail delivery speed. When the ARC completed the trail, Fairbanks emerged as the transportation hub for all Interior Alaska. The town was located at the end of navigable waters on the Tanana River, was an important station for the telegraph and wireless system, and was the terminus for the government road.

Figure 2. Photo of the Richardson Highway looking south from Donnelly Dome Area. Frederick B. Drane Collection, Box 6, Folder 169, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks (ca. 1910).

Though the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail, later named the Richardson Highway in honor of the ARC's first board president, consumed most of the attention, other routes were being developed in the Tanana Valley. Richardson quickly realized the practicality of roads for economic development in the Interior. These roads were maintained almost exclusively for access to the mines near Fairbanks, with a handful leading to small farms and homesteads. ARC reports designated the roads leading from Fairbanks to the creek and hill towns with the number 7. Each segment then received a letter, such as 7A, 7B and so on. The 1911 ARC report listed nine such road segments leading to the mines. They included roads such as Summit-Cleary Road (7A), Ester Creek Road (7D), Fairbanks-Gilmore Road (7G), and the Gilmore-Summit Road (7I).[51] By 1910–1911 a web of roads and trails had been constructed emanating from Fairbanks.

The ARC constructed other routes as well. The Tanana Valley was in the ARC's Yukon/Fairbanks District. The ARC built and maintained numerous local roads between Fairbanks and the creek communities. Speaking of the Fox-Gilmore Road, a reporter commented that it "has been completed, and is said to be a splendid piece of work by those who have traveled over it."[52] This district covered everything from Eagle down to the confluence of the Tanana River, including all the major tributaries of the Yukon River between these points. The ARC maintained roads and trails from Fairbanks to Fort Gibbon at the mouth of the Tanana River. Other

[50] Richard W. Helbock, "The Valdez-Fairbanks Trail," *La Posta* 16, no. 3 (June/July 1985): 24.
[51] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1911*, 14.
[52] *Tanana Tribune*, September 30, 1908.

roads extended to Rampart, north of Fairbanks on the Yukon River, and the Chatanika-Birch Creek Sled Road (Route 16). Road segments also linked Fairbanks to Circle and included the Circle-Central House segment (Route 15) and the Chatanika-Birch Creek segment. By 1921 a segment had been included that connected Fairbanks to "the famous Chena Hot Springs."[53] The road to Circle eventually opened up to year round automobile traffic by 1930. The ARC report of the year noted the Circle Road had just recently been named the Steese Highway.[54] That same report indicated the continued access to the interior via navigable rivers, primarily the Tanana and Yukon Rivers. It is important to remember that these roads supplemented the navigable rivers. Overland travel by no means ended the use of the rivers by steamers as a primary access route to the coast. The 1930/31 Annual Report to the ARC listed 99 segments of roads in the Yukon/Fairbanks District. The bulk of government road building activity occurred in the 1910s and 1920s.

By 1930, the road corridors of the Tanana Valley had been established. Later road construction would follow these existing routes closely. Transportation routes in the Government context were built primarily to access the military posts around Alaska. Some of the forts, notably Fort Egbert on the Yukon River, were located near mining regions. The military access roads also served transportation conduits for miners. The roads also served as mail lines and communication corridors. Government sponsorship characterizes many of the roads and trails constructed in this era. The routes were mapped and reconnoitered by government officials. Congressionally sanctioned commissions carried out construction and maintenance. Within the government context the current road system in Alaska was established. This is the most important context of historic transportation routes in the Tanana Valley.

Figure 3. Alaska Road Commission Crew in camp near Donnelly Dome. James T. Geoghegan Collection, Box 4, Folder 4, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The ARC constructed three types of roads — trails, sled roads and wagon roads.[55] Each type called for different methods during road building. Technological advances in road grading equipment and bridge construction continually affected the methods of road building.[56] By 1918, one 12–25 horsepower tractor was doing the work done previously by eight horses at the cost of feeding three horses.[57]

The type of road influences what physical evidence might remain that represents the government road context. The first transportation routes in the government context were classified as "trails." Trails required the least amount of improvements. They were intended for use by dog team in the winter and pack trains in the sum-

[53] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1920/21*, 36.

[54] Alaska Road Commission, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1930/31*, 43. J.G. Steese was president of the ARC in the 1920s.

[55] The ARC actually maintained four road types, the three described above and "flagged trails." Flagged Trails marked routes over ice and snow where no natural landmarks were visible. This would be the case in Nome on some of the trails over sea ice.

[56] Road construction methods changed rapidly with the introduction of new technology. The method used depended on a variety of factors, such as the purpose of the road, the available technology, and the amount of anticipated travel. The methods used on roads crossing Fort Wainwright will be discussed in the historical route descriptions in the next section.

[57] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1918*, 3842.

BONNIFIELD'S GOOD TRAILS

Has Built 35 Miles in the Bonnifield District This Summer.

TO BUILD 20 MORE MILES

And Then There Will Be Fine Communication With the District.

John Bonnifield, after whom the Bonnifield district is named, returned from Gold King creek last night, after spending the summer in building trails into that section.

The work is being done personally by Mr. Bonnifield, who is representing about 40 claims in the district, and has spent the moneys necessary to proof of labor in trail building in order that the district may be developed with greater speed.

Work Already Done.

Thirty-five miles have already been constructed. The trail is 12 feet wide and will take any kind of a team over the winter snows. The work was started from 20 below Gold King creek, the summer's work all being devoted to the creek end of the line. There is a good trail for dog teams for a distance of about 20 miles out of Fairbanks, where it connects with the new trail, and this will be converted to a good wagon road next summer.

Figure 4. Newspaper Article from *Fairbanks Daily News Miner*, September 27, 1907. Courtesy of Rex Fisher.

mer. Trail crews cut trees and shrubs "as close to the ground as possible" to a width of eight feet.[58] "Sled roads" were constructed for winter use only. Stumps, hummocks, and obstructions were removed to an eight-foot width, though a sixteen-foot wide clearing was maintained. The ARC used sled roads where the amount of traffic would not justify the construction of a wagon road, or where water transport proved adequate in the summer months. The latter is the case in the Tanana Valley. "Wagon Roads" were the most intensive modification of the landscape. The road itself was usually cleared to a minimum of twenty feet, or twenty-four feet if a grader was used for maintenance. The actual corridor was cleared to at least thirty feet, and sometimes sixty feet to "secure the beneficial action of wind and sun on the roadbed."[59]

The Government also built and maintained airfields and railroad lines. The most well known example of this is the government railroad from Seward to Fairbanks completed in 1923. Earlier, the government purchased the Tanana Valley Railroad, which had served the gold communities in the Fairbanks District. Both the history of potential rail lines on Fort Wainwright and the history of Aviation should be considered in another study.

2.2.3 Private Routes Transportation Context 1867–1939

The last category is private transportation corridors. These are roads not maintained by the government. Government surveyors seldom planned these routes. Prospectors and traders often developed these trails while exploring new mining territories. Sometimes gold bearing regions were too remote and cost prohibitive for the government to consider building a road. Private entrepreneurs and mine claim owners constructed routes to access their mine holdings. This method was referred to as subscription. Abraham Spring related the story of private road building. "Trails are built by subscription every year, but all such trails are in their nature temporary. In the fall we have to rebuild our winter trails, and in the spring rebuild our summer trails…Men subscribe from $10 to $30 apiece for building a trail, others from $1 to $5; others from $50 to $500…There is no intelligent supervision of the work; there is no engineering skill."[60]

These trails and roads occasionally developed without a reliable survey or plan. They simply emerged as the path of least resistance between point A and point B. Enough people traveled the route over time that it became well known and somewhat maintained. Due to the swamps and bogs of Alaska, private routes were often most passable in the winter by sled. Current topographic maps still delineate "winter sled trails." Winter trails required much less maintenance. Historic private roads crossing Fort Wainwright and Fort Greely typically accessed mining regions and have been used in recent times to access hunting and trapping grounds. Other trails led to homestead claims and remote cabins. The dates for the private road historic context are approximately 1900–1939. The most notable of these trails in the

[58] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1917*, 16. This report included a description of road types and methods of construction used by the ARC.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Senate Subcommittee of Committee on Territories Appointed to Investigate Conditions in Alaska, *Conditions in Alaska*, 58th Cong., 2nd sess., 1904, S. Rpt. 282 99, 101.

Fairbanks area was the Bonnifield Trail across the Tanana Flats Training Area. It connected Fairbanks to the mines on the northern flanks of the Alaska Range. This trail shows up on Alaska Road Commission maps in the 1910s and 20s, though the ARC played no role in the construction or maintenance of the route.

Private trails and other modes of conveyance initially connected Fairbanks to the surrounding creeks, such as Pedro, Gilmore, Fairbanks, Vault, and Eldorado. Notably, private entrepreneur Falcon Joslin constructed the Tanana Valley Railroad (now abandoned) that ran from Fairbanks through Goldstream Valley and then terminated at Chatanika. Although this railroad was not on Army lands, it illustrates that wagon roads and foot trails were not the only type of transportation routes in the Interior. This railroad gave the creeks much needed rail service to transport gold and heavy-duty industrial wares. Occasionally, the Alaska Road Commission took over private trails for improving them to wagon roads. This is the case for most of the creek trails in and around Fairbanks, such as the roads leading to Gilmore, Chena Hot Springs Road, and Cleary. These routes would then fit into the government context previously described. Other private trails and roads emerged near the cantonment area of Fort Wainwright to access homesteads that existed before the military began withdrawing land.

2.3 Context Summary

Pre-historic and historic transportation routes located on Fort Wainwright and the Donnelly Training Areas can be placed in the context of three main themes. These include Native, government, and private routes. Rivers as well as overland trails can be placed in each category. Indigenous travel occurred for subsistence (hunting and gathering) and for trade with other tribes. Such routes do exist on Fort Wainwright and associated Training Areas. Government trails were sponsored and maintained by the federal government. In Alaska the Department of War, then the Navy represented the government before the formation of a territorial government in 1912. The Army maintained road authority throughout the territorial period. Army explorations and later the Alaska Road Commission took responsibility for road construction and maintenance into the Tanana Valley. There are also government routes located on or adjacent to Fort Wainwright and Donnelly Training Areas. Finally, private routes were built to access specific regions usually for mining. These roads were built and maintained by the individuals that used them independent of any government assistance. There are also private routes located on military land in Alaska.

In 1937 the government began the initial steps in creating Ladd Air Field adjacent to Fairbanks. That year Executive Order 7596 withdrew 2,684 acres for what would eventually become the main post of Fort Wainwright. Within the next two years, the military had withdrawn the Tanana Flats Training Area. The major portion of the Birch Hill area was withdrawn in 1943. By 1956 the Yukon Training area was integrated into the military reservation under Army command. Fort Greely began with land reservations in 1941 that created the main post. Between 1950 and 1959 the major portions of the Donnelly East and West Training Areas had been withdrawn. The Alaska Road Commission relinquished maintenance and construction activities to the Army on routes that crossed these withdrawals. The onset of the military presence in the Tanana Valley in 1937 provides an ending point for this study, though road activities in the 1940s and 1950s will be addressed where appropriate.

CHAPTER 3.0 National Register of Historic Places Criteria for Nomination

3.1 National Register Overview

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) provides base-line criteria to evaluate the significance of historic properties. This section outlines the criteria used to establish the significance (national, state, local) and level of integrity of historic transportation routes. Presently, the National Park Service has not developed criteria specifically for roads, trails, and rivers as transportation routes. The same standards for evaluating buildings, bridges, and significant historic sites apply to linear features. This is not to say that the National Register does not recognize transportation corridors. In Alaska, two trails have received national attention, one being listed on the register. A segment of the Valdez-Fairbanks Military Road was nominated and accepted in 1998. The criteria use to judge the nominated Copper Bluff segment of the road would be used to determine the eligibility of any historic linear feature. A brief description of those criteria follows. For a more detailed discussion, review the National Parks Service Bulletin, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*.[61]

Evaluating transportation routes poses challenges. Often these routes have been moved, resurfaced, not maintained, or otherwise treated as to diminish their integrity. Also, many times a road or trail spans eras of different transportation technology. What was originally a historic footpath may now be under a four-lane highway. This report provides the framework to evaluate transportation sites likely found on Fort Wainwright, including the Donnelly Training areas of former Fort Greely.

The trail descriptions part of this report addresses the eligibility of each trail based on that trail's period of significance. The period of significance usually begins with the construction of the road, and ends when use of that route diminishes. Another ending point for the period of significance is when the Army withdrew the land that the route crossed. This action ended or at least changed the prior maintenance and use of the route. Finally, the period of significance ends when a change to the route occurred that impacted its function. This includes large sections of a route being changed thus eliminating the original footprint. It also involves paving a road that is known historically as a dirt route. Each route may have a different period of significance. Detailed descriptions are provided in the trail descriptions chapter.

3.2 NRHP Criteria

Four criteria are used to evaluate the eligibility of historic resources in the United States for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. These criteria apply to sites on military lands in Alaska and may either highlight the local, state, or national significance of a historic transportation route. The criteria are as follows:

A. Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

[61] U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. National Register Bulletin Series, 1990, revised 1997.

B. Association with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic value, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

D. Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

An early transportation route may be eligible if it meets one of the above criteria. Eligibility under Criterion A requires that a road or trail facilitated major historical events of a national, state, or local significance. On Army land the broad patterns that routes contribute to include transportation development (state, local), settlement (national, state, local), and economic development such as the Gold Rush (national, state, regional). For example, a road that played a critical role in the opening of a new territory for settlement and economic development may be eligible for the register. This is the broadest category for inclusion into the National Register of Historic Places. Use of this Criterion requires specific historic documentation that links the transportation route to broader historical themes.

Eligibility under Criterion B requires more than a significant person to have once traveled on the route. The fact that a president or famous Army general traveled a road does not qualify that road for the National Register of Historic Places. The route must demonstrate a significant contribution to the career or life of a significant person. This connection must also be fully documented. For example, Ed Orr was a locally significant person in the Interior of Alaska. He started the first continual stage business between Fairbanks and Valdez. Ed Orr himself drove wagons and horse teams along the trail. He also assisted with the maintenance of the trail and the construction of many rest stops along the way. The trail defined Ed Orr, and represents a property type that accurately illustrates his career and life. However, the Fairbanks-Valdez Trail may not be the best representation of Ed Orr. A building or site where Orr lived or based his operations out of would better reflect his career than the trail itself. Criterion B may not apply to linear features very easily. The fact that Margaret Murie, a nationally prominent environmental conservationist, traveled the same trail when she was sixteen does not fulfill Criterion B. The trail is by no means a representation of her career and life.

Under Criterion C, certain segments of a trail may be eligible. To be eligible these segments would have to retain physical evidence that displayed something more unique than what existed on the rest of the route. One example would be a bridge that required special engineering to withstand permafrost under the abutments. Another example may include a segment of road that required an engineering feat to summit a pass or cut through a canyon. In Alaska, the permafrost conditions required a distinctive method of construction called corduroy, where saplings were laid perpendicular to the road bed. A segment of road may be eligible if the poles used to cover the frozen ground are in place. The main points being that 1) an entire road is not eligible because one section is distinctive or represents the work of a master, and 2) physical evidence must remain *in situ*.

Criterion D suggests that for a route to be eligible it must have the potential to yield more information that is important to history or prehistory. This is the most am-

biguous of the criteria for eligibility, and will rarely apply to historic transportation routes. However, this report does address indigenous, prehistoric trails. Some of these routes may be eligible under Criterion D. For example, further research of a prehistoric trail may lead to new understanding about hunting patterns, human migration, and settlement in the Interior.

3.2.1 Criteria Considerations

Once one or more of the above criteria have been applied to an early transportation route, the National Register of Historic Places applies several criteria considerations to a site to further assess its eligibility. The National Register of Historic Places precludes some sites from qualifying for a nomination. These include cemeteries, birthplaces or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious organizations or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from there original locations, reconstructed historical buildings, commemorative properties, and properties that have achieved significance in the last 50 years. None of the transportation routes examined in this study are excluded under these conditions, and further discussion of these considerations is not warranted.

3.2.2 Integrity

The last step in evaluating a transportation route is measuring its ability to convey its significance, otherwise known as integrity. The NRHP has defined seven aspects of a property that help define its integrity. These include location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. To retain integrity, a transportation route should include several, if not all of the seven aspects listed above. These aspects can be loosely categorized into physical integrity (design, materials, workmanship) and environmental integrity (location, setting, feeling, and association).

In the minimum, a transportation route must meet the following conditions of environmental and physical integrity to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places:

A. A period of significance must be established to address the aspects of integrity.

B. Physical remains must be present on the ground. For a linear feature, a minimum of ¼ mile of corridor must remain for that segment to be eligible. This corridor must retain the design and workmanship from the period of significance. For example, if a route is being nominated for its use during the mining rush in the Interior, it must retain the appearance from that era. If they cleared routes to sixteen feet wide during the period of significance, the route must still be close to sixteen feet wide. If the road has been modified, such as resurfaced or widened for more modern use, it is not eligible unless there are significant and tangible material remains that convey what the road was like before the modifications took place.

C. If ¼ mile of corridor does remain, it must retain its original location. A rerouted portion of a historic trail is not eligible.

D. The environment surrounding the segment of road must be similar to the environment during the period of significance. A road that once cut through

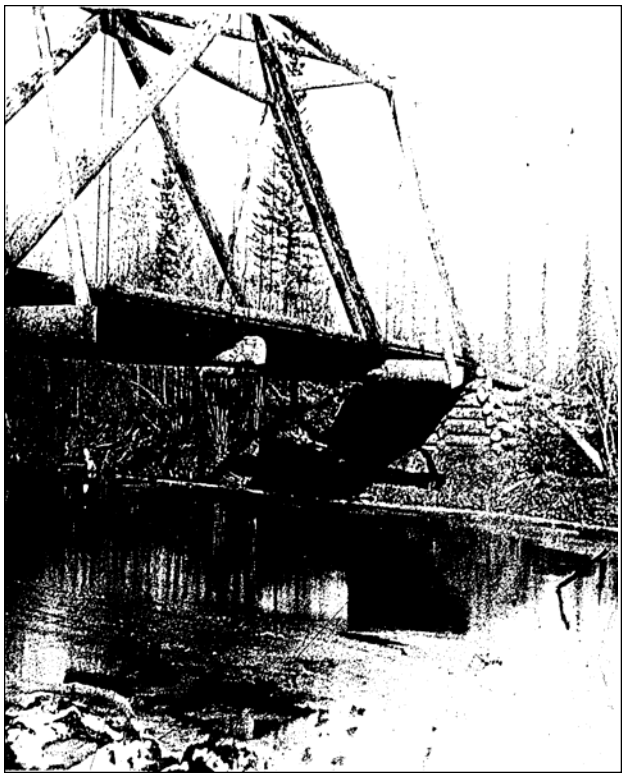

Figure 5. ARC Bridge Sample, location unknown. John Zug Collection, Album 1, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

a forest and is now lined by strip malls has lost its sense of feeling and association, and its integrity has been significantly diminished.

3.3 Associated Property Types and Artifacts

Transportation routes through Interior Alaska gave rise to other historical sites, buildings, and associated property types. For early transportation routes, a clear definition of "associated" must be understood. Without this distinction, entire towns and districts could be associated features. For example, Fairbanks could be interpreted as an associated feature of the Richardson Highway. Associated property types must be directly related to the construction and maintenance of an early transportation route to be considered contributing features. These property types must support the linear features and have directly facilitated transportation. In some cases, Associate property types may be eligible on their own if the criteria and considerations are met. They must retain the historical appearance and other aspects of integrity discussed above to contribute. An artifact directly related to the transportation route is not eligible by itself, but may be considered a contributing feature to the route. Potential associated features include the following property types:

- Bridges
- Roadhouses
- Road crew and Signal Corps Camps

Artifacts related directly to the early transportation routes may include the following items:

- Culverts
- Trail markers and signs
- Road equipment (tractors, graders, sleds, wagons)
- Tools (shovels, picks)
- Wood remains from corduroy sections

CHAPTER 4.0 Route Descriptions

4.1 Donnelly Training Area: Land Routes

4.1.1 Donnelly-Washburn Winter Sled Route

NAME:

Donnelly-Washburn Cutoff (Winter sled trail of Valdez-Fairbanks Government Trail)

LOCATION:

The southern end of the road was located at Donnelly's Roadhouse on the east bank of the Delta River south and west of Donnelly Dome. From this point a seasonal bridge spanned the Delta, and the trail continued on an approximately NW heading toward the historic town of Washburn (a.k.a. Delta City) at the confluence of the Little Delta and Tanana Rivers (Figure 6). The trail crossed to the west bank of the Little Delta River about five miles south of this confluence. The road crossed the Tanana River and rejoined the summer route south of Birch Lake. The trail was approximately 55 miles long.[62] The majority of the trail crossed military withdrawal land for Fort Wainwright, Donnelly Training Area West.

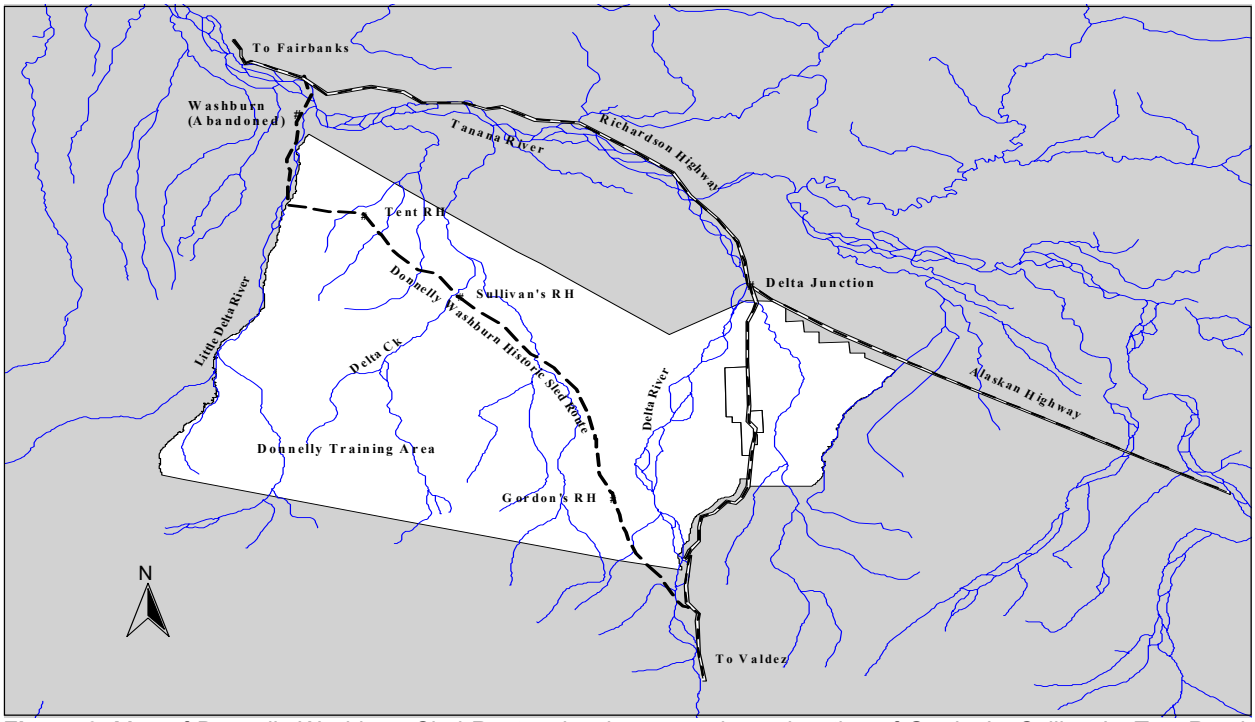

Figure 6. Map of Donnelly-Washburn Sled Route, showing approximate location of Gordon's, Sullivan's, Tent Roadhouse, and Washburn City.

[62] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1920*. Also see *Fairbanks Evening News*, September 1, 1906, Rex Fischer Collection.

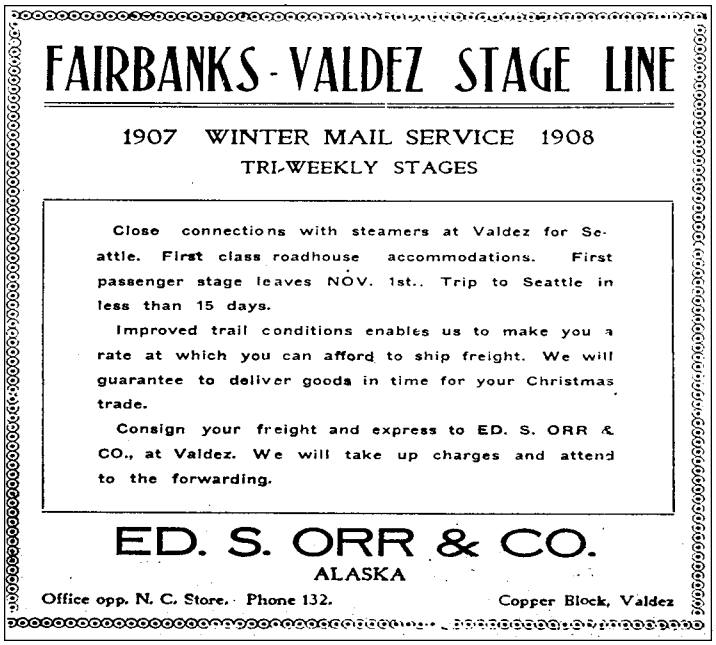

Figure 7. Ed Orr Advertisement, *Tanana Tribune*, 1907.

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION:

1906–07. The route was originally constructed by the Alaska Road Commission and designated as Route 4A.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Donnelly-Washburn Trail served as a winter sled "short-cut" along the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail. It was constructed to shorten the route and to avoid the overflow and rough terrain along the main route between Big Delta and Richardson Roadhouse. Sources suggest the route saved 12–15 miles from the summer trail.

The trail was used primarily for freight and mail, though all travelers used it during the winter months heading between Fairbanks and Valdez. By the end of the first year the mail carriers crossed the Donnelly-Washburn cutoff three times a week.[63] The mail contractors included the Ed Orr Stage Company ca.1910 and later the Northern Commercial Company ca. 1915. Ed Orr was described as the "big Tanana stage man" that had "knowledge about the conditions of winter mails in Alaska" and is credited with establishing the first regular stage line on the trail.[64]

The Donnelly-Washburn Cutoff bears the name of Ed Donnelly, operator of the Donnelly Roadhouse from 1906–1910.[65] The Roadhouse maintained horse barns and storage buildings for use by the freighters and mail carriers along the winter cutoff. Washburn refers to the now abandoned town at the northern end of the trail near the mouth of the Little Delta River.

This trail fits within the government road context established by this report. The Alaska Road Commission was involved from the beginning with surveying, building, and maintaining the route. ARC reports mention that they had built a sled route in this location in 1906, but due to many steep grades a new route was surveyed. Newspapers reported the work of the "Woods Party", referring to J.C. Wood, a field crew manager working under John Zug, Alaska Road Commission superintendent of the Fairbanks Road District at the time. The crew worked on the cutoff "from little Delta Station to the Big Delta, which [reduced] the distance between these two places about ten miles when completed."[66] By September of 1907, the Fairbanks paper reported that the "much discussed road [was] being fixed" and Superintendent Zug reported work on the trail as half-finished, and the cutoff would be ready by October 15, 1907.[67]

[63] *Tanana Tribune* Oct 12, 1907.
[64] *Tanana Tribune,* Sept. 21, 1907.
[65] Walter T. Phillips, Sr., Roadhouses *of the Richardson Highway: The First Quarter Century, 1898-1923,* prepared for the Alaska Historical Commission (Anchorage, 1984), 58.
[66] *Fairbanks Daily Times*, Aug. 9, 1907.
[67] *Tanana Tribune*, Sept 21, 1907

Margaret Murie, a prominent environmental activist in Alaska, crossed this route in 1918 as a child. Her experience received its own chapter in her book, *Two in the Far North*. She recalls that the trail "was the lifeline" for interior Alaska.[68] Murie accompanied the mail runners on a trip over the cutoff. She further recalled a stay at Sullivan's Roadhouse, which located her travels on the Donnelly-Washburn Trail.[69] Murie's account provides one example of travel along the trail before its abandonment by the ARC in 1921–22. By 1923 the completion of the Alaska Railroad ended the need for continued use of the Donnelly-Washburn Cutoff.[70]

The ARC expended $33,460.06 in maintaining the sled route between 1907 and 1922.[71] The 1912 report on repairs and maintenance typified the ARC's activities during this 15-year period. In 1912 the ARC repaired numerous bridges that were damaged by the spring thaw each year at a cost of $33 per mile. They also built a temporary bridge across the Delta River costing $500.[72] In 1917 the ARC constructed temporary bridges over the Big and Little Delta Rivers and graded the approaches to stream crossings without bridges.[73] The ARC contracted J.E. Sullivan, proprietor of Sullivan's Roadhouse to complete the annual bridge repairs. The Northern Commercial Company held the mail contract and also worked on maintaining the route. As a sled route, the Donnelly-Washburn Cutoff was cleared to a sixteen-foot width, with the center eight-feet grubbed as close to the ground as possible. Winter trails did not require much maintenance. The Donnelly-Washburn Cutoff did not need grading or surfacing.

ASSOCIATED PROPERTIES AND ARTIFACTS:

Other historical resources developed along this route that were directly related to the use of cutoff trail. These include roadhouses and a small settlement. The information given on these roadhouses comes from Walter Phillips' *Roadhouses of the Richardson Highway* unless otherwise cited.[74]

A. *Donnelly's Roadhouse:* Constructed originally in 1906 at the junction Donnelly Washburn winter trail and the Valdez-Fairbanks trail, this Roadhouse was a single story log structure overlooking the Delta River. It was built at the location of the Donnelly Telegraph station of the US Signal Corps. James Geoghegan ran the roadhouse after Donnelly until the river washed it out in 1914. The structure was rebuilt in 1915, and after 1921–22 served primarily summer traffic along the road until another flood washed it out in 1926. This roadhouse was reported as a preferred stop for the freighters and mail carriers between Fairbanks and Valdez.

B. *Sullivan's Roadhouse:* This roadhouse was originally constructed in 1907–08 near the midpoint of the Donnelly-Washburn Cutoff on the right bank of Delta Creek. The passenger and mail stages stopped here every night, as did hunting parties. J. Sullivan contracted with the ARC for maintenance and repair of the numerous small bridges along the winter cutoff trail. The Alaska Office of History and Archeology worked with the Army to relocate the Roadhouse in

[68] Margaret Murie, *Two in the Far North* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 46.
[69] Ibid., 82.
[70] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1922*, 49.
[71] Alaska Road Commission, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1933*, Budget Chart, 14.
[72] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1912*, 10.
[73] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, Annu*al Report for fiscal year 1917*, 19.
[74] Phillips, Walter T., *Roadhouses of the Richardson Highway* Vol. 2, prepared for the Alaska Historical Commission, Studies in History No. 172 (Anchorage, 1985).

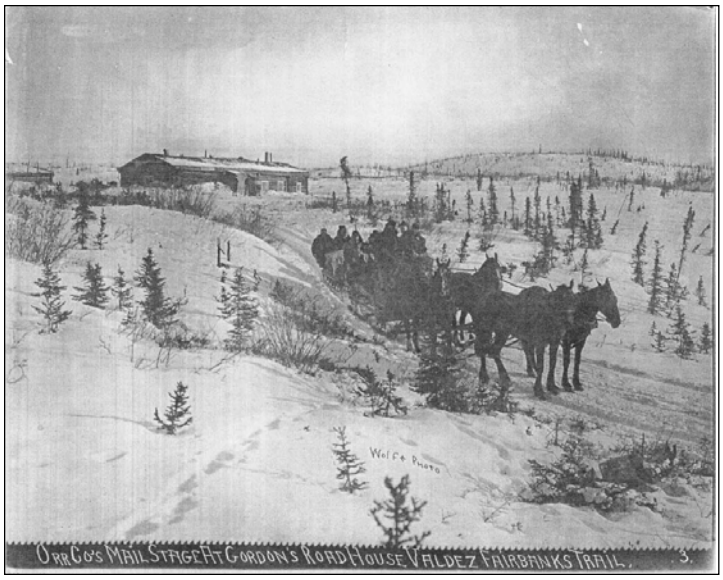

Figure 8. Orr Stage leaving Gordon's Roadhouse. Margaret Lentz Collection, Folder 57, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Delta Junction where it has been restored and turned into a museum. Fort Wainwright Cultural Resource Manager and the State's Office of History and Archeology hold files on the history and relocation of Sullivan's Roadhouse.

C. *Gordon's Roadhouse:* Reported as being 16 miles from Donnelly's Roadhouse, H.E. Gordon's Roadhouse served travelers on the Donnelly Washburn Cutoff. This roadhouse acted as a lunch stop for the stage companies, and hosted hunting parties. Phillips discussed Tingley's roadhouse, also 16 miles from Donnelly's, that was open in 1906. This roadhouse was likely located on the first winter trail of 1906 before the reroute of 1907.

D. *Tent House (a.k.a. Spruce Creek):* This was a small stop over between Washburn and Sullivan's roadhouse that consisted of three tents because the spruce trees were too small to build a log structure. This tent house was set up and maintained for the Sullivan's by James Geoghegan, and reports suggest it was only used intermittently to water horses between 1906 and 1909.

E. *Washburn (a.k.a. Delta City or Little Delta).* This was a small community at the confluence of the Little Delta and Tanana Rivers circa 1905. This area is outside of the Donnelly Training Area and is not a management concern of the US Army. The site is the terminus for the Donnelly Washburn Trail, and further research may provide additional information related to the trail as it enters Army lands. For example, the Orr Stage Company had express use of a barn at Schroeder's Roadhouse in Washburn. This roadhouse burnt down in 1910 and replaced by Martin's roadhouse, which served as a "jumping off" point for freight, mail, and travelers using the Donnelly-Washburn Cutoff trail. The US Signal Corps also had a telegraph station located at Washburn.

ELIGIBILITY STATEMENT:

The Donnelly-Washburn Sled Road was a significant transportation route from 1907 to 1921. The trail would be eligible under Criteria A because of its historic association with interior Alaska's transportation and settlement. Criteria B would also apply, though only for people directly related to the creation and upkeep of the trail during its period of significance. The trail was used by regionally significant persons and businesses, such as Ed Orr and his stage company, who maintained the trail and played a role in how the trail looked during the 1910s. Though many regionally significant persons traveled the trail, such as Margaret Murie, their use of the trail does not qualify the route for the NRHP. This route is not eligible under Criteria C as its construction and maintenance were common methods that do not represent unique technological innovation or the work of a master. Criteria D may

Figure 9. Horse and Sled crossing icy trail over Delta River south of Donnelly Dome. James T. Geoghegan Collection, Box 4, Folder 2. Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks

apply. Further investigations may reveal that the trail corridor contains sites, structures, and buildings that would increase the knowledge about the material and social history of early trail users.

Segments of the trail must retain both the physical and environmental characteristics that would have been present during the period of significance. Actual trail segments cut to the standard 16-foot width would be required to meet the physical integrity standards of the national register. These segments must be a minimum of a ¼ mile in length. The Donnelly Washburn Cutoff does retain its natural setting and meets the environmental integrity standards.

Pending on reports from field surveys addressing the physical integrity, segments of this trail are potentially eligible for the NRHP. The remains of bridges or other artifacts are not eligible by themselves but may contribute to the eligibility of the segment on which they were found.

4.1.2. Granite Creek Trail

NAME:

Beale's Cache to Granite Creek

LOCATION:

USGS Surveyor Fred Moffit described a trail beginning from the Richardson Highway three miles south of Beales Cache. From this point the trail led east to Granite Creek. Moffit suggested this was one route used to reach the upper Gerstle River district to the east and south of Delta Junction. His description is short and printed here in its entirety:

> "An alternate route from the Delta River that may be used in place of the one just described start from the Richardson Highway about 3 miles south of Beales Cache, an old, abandoned roadhouse on the highway near mile 361.5. This route provides a well-defined trail from the highway eastward as far as Granite Creek or a little beyond, that is, for about 10 miles."[75]

CONSTRUCTION DATES:

This route was likely associated with the development of Beale's Cache Roadhouse ca.1915. It falls in the private road context established by this report. No evidence indicates use of this trail specifically by indigenous people. No ARC records mention this trail. It possibly developed as a hunting route used intermittently by small parties.

[75] Fred H. Moffit, in Philip S. Smith, Fred Moffit, and F.F. Barnes, *Mineral Resources in Alaska, 1939,* prepared for the Interior Department, USGS, Bulletin # 926 (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office), 115.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION:

The only report of this trail came from Moffit's report written in 1942.

ASSOCIATE FEATURES:

None.

ELIGIBILITY STATEMENT:

This trail fails to meet the criteria and considerations for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and is determined not eligible. Further study may reveal more of the local history related to hunting and trapping in the Delta Junction/Granite Mountains Area. However, the scant historical record would suggest a high level of difficulty in finding more information on this trail.

4.1.3 Richardson Highway — Donnelly's Roadhouse to Jarvis Creek

NAME:

Richardson Highway (a.k.a.: Alaska Military Trail, Government Trail, Valdez-Fairbanks Trail)

LOCATION:

The segment of the Richardson Road discussed here — Donnelly's Roadhouse to Jarvis Creek — cuts directly through the Donnelly Training Areas of former Fort Greely (Figure 11). Currently, starting from Donnelly's Roadhouse, the road heads north on the *east* side of Donnelly Dome then makes a b-line for Delta Junction. This is the current route depicted on road maps and USGS quads since the late 1950s. The original route, as illustrated on ARC maps, ran on the *west* side of a topographic feature labeled "Pillsbury Dome." Other maps also had a feature labeled Pillsbury Dome. A Richardson Highway Travelogue described Pillsbury dome, "from the various points 20 to 30 miles north of the Dome, one can see it standing out like a huge mound, apparently in the center of a vast plain, with the majestic Alaska Range forming the background."[76] The only feature in the area that matches this description is the hill currently referred to as Donnelly's Dome. In 1906, then Lieutenant George Pillsbury, an original member of the Alaska Road Commission, traveled the summer trail "to the Big Delta and hence by the east side of the Big Delta all the way" with an eye to inspect the route.[77] This places the original route between Donnelly Dome and the Delta River.

The exact date of the reroute to the east of Donnelly Dome remains unclear. The ARC annual reports indicate that the section of road from Donnelly's to Big Delta required much attention. The low end of the river shifted course often and washed the road out. The original segment in question was labeled Route 4H in the annual report of 1920–21. The following year, a route 4H2 appeared, being described as a "diversion"…Yet the map records indicated the continuance of the road along the west side of Donnelly Dome until circa 1935–36. That year, the U.S.G.S. map of

[76] Valdez Transportation Company, *A Travelogue of the Richardson Highway* (Valdez, 1928), 13.
[77] *Fairbanks Daily Times*, Aug. 20, 1906.

the Delta River District indicated the Richardson Highway on the east side of Donnelly Dome.[78] Current military maps delineate the "Old Richardson Highway" as running to the west of Donnelly Dome. This will be the segment concentrated on for establishing a period of significance and addressing its eligibility status.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Valdez-Fairbanks trail was and outgrowth of the Valdez-Eagle Trail. Originally it followed the Native trail connecting the Ahtna territory of the Copper River to the Tanana River Tribes located north down the Tok River over Mentasta Pass. The Valdez-Eagle Trail was constructed and maintained by the federal government through Army explorations and later by the Alaska Road Commission. The 1905 Annual Report of the Alaska Road Commission noted that "Taking the trail from Fairbanks to Valdez as a whole, immediate improvement of this route is regarded as of utmost importance…[as it] forms the only means of communication to the Copper River and Slate Creek country throughout the year."81

The original plan had been to construct an all-American route to the Klondike gold fields via Eagle near the Canadian border. Gold strikes in the Tanana Valley warranted splitting the route at Gulkana River, and providing a more direct route to Fairbanks following the Gulkana River, Isabella Pass, and the Delta River.[80] Residents of Valdez supported the construction of this route from its inception. Fearing that the best route to the Tanana River might be through Dawson and the Chilkoot Trail, the Valdez paper hammered its readers with the advantages of starting the new road in their town.[81] This was followed the one surveyed by the Abercrombie and Glenn expeditions (1898) mentioned in the historic context overview. One road went from Gakona to Fort Egbert and Eagle, the other to Fairbanks via the Delta River drainage. The ARC originally surveyed, built, and maintained the road until statehood.

Under the Command of Wilds P. Richardson, the Alaska Road Commission had connected Valdez and Fairbanks with a trail suitable for pack trains and winter sleds between 1898 and 1906. In 1905 the *Valdez News* reported the "stage coming" with seven passengers from Fairbanks to Valdez was the "first stage over the all-American route."[82] This sled stage crossed in winter. The ARC fought for Congressional appropriations and gave "early consideration to the improvement of the route from Valdez to Fairbanks, with a view of facilitation the service of the mails for the winter, and to meet the demands of the large prospectors' travel via this route before the opening of navigation next year."[83] By 1907, the Ed Orr Stage Company of Valdez, whom also contracted the mail service, boasted traversing the entire trail to Valdez in eight days, cutting two days off their scheduled arrival.[84] Wheeled wagons made the route by 1910, and the first automobile used the road in 1913. The interior communities relied on this road from its inception, delivering freight, mail, and people from the coast.

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[78] United States Geological Survey Map, 1935–36, Elmer Rasmuson Library, Alaska and Polar Regions Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

[79] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1905*, 38.

[80] Interior Department, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Alaska Field Office, *Valdez Trail, Valdez to Fairbanks,* no publisher listed, 1975, 1.

[81] *Valdez News*, Feb. 6, 1904.

[82] *Valdez News*, Dec 2, 1905.

[83] *Valdez News*, Feb. 6, 1904.

[84] *Valdez News*, Dec 2, 1905.

The segment 4H was part of the original Valdez-Fairbanks trail, and was the preferred summer route for mail, freight, and all other travelers along this route. 4H covers the trail from Rapids Roadhouse to Big Delta. This route required extensive maintenance by the ARC. By 1912, the ARC was constructing the first permanent bridge across Jarvis Creek, and constantly ditching, grading, and building culverts in the section between Donnelly's and McCarty's (a.k.a. Grundlers, McCarty's, Rika's, Big Delta) north of the Fort Greely cantonment area. In the same year the average cost of upkeep on this section was $390 per mile. In comparison, the average cost on the Donnelly-Washburn trail was $33 per mile.[85] In 1917 a typical years work occurred on this segment, including culvert replacement, slide removal, flood control, and grading. Most of the work occurred in the section south of Donnelly Dome where the road ran directly adjacent to the Delta River and suffered damage from snow slides and flooding. The 1919 ARC report indicated that 8 and ¾ miles of new road were "thrown up with a road grader," 28 culverts with an aggregate length of 288 feet were placed, and 2 bridges were built. This, combined with the removal of 1,000 cubic yards of snow and 1,000 cubic yards of ice and other repairs, totaled the annual construction and repair costs at $26,594.21.[86] In 1923, four miles of road near Pillsbury Dome were graveled, and road crews constructed a dike to protect the Jarvis Creek bridge, totaling $4,018.40 in annual labor and construction costs.[87] In 1924 the total costs reached $16, 224.11 for this segment when the ARC dragged and resurfaced the entire length, as well as relocated a section near mile 275 as the Delta River threatened the road's stability.[88]

The first automobile to travel from Valdez to Fairbanks used this segment in 1913, though the ARC remained hesitant to recommend the road suitable for auto traffic. By 1925 the road could easily handle automobiles in dry weather.[89] As a wagon, and later auto road, the Richardson Highway corridor through Donnelly Training areas was cleared to a minimum of 24 feet between ditches where the terrain allowed. The corridor was cleared to a minimum of 30 feet. Sections of clay that became a quagmire when wet and were corduroyed, a process of grubbing all stumps a roots from the roadbed, then laying poles perpendicular to the axis of the road to act as a layer between the vehicle and the road.[90] Where no suitable poles could be obtained, gravel was hauled in from the closest source. Bridges were initially constructed with locally cut trees, each end rooted to a rock-filled log crib. After 1916, the ARC began replacing wood bridges with steel construction, using either the Howe or Pratt combination truss designs. The period of significance for this route ends in the mid 1930s when road surface materials changed as significant route relocations took place.

ASSOCIATED FEATURES:

Beales Cache Roadhouse was located seventeen miles south of Big Delta along the right side of the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail. It was a single story log structure used predominantly by hunters. In 1919 John Hadukovich, a prominent trader and hunter in the region, ran the roadhouse as a hunting lodge. The roadhouse was abandoned

[85] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1912*, 13.
[86] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1919*, 3877.
[87] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1923*, 63.
[88] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1924*, 86.
[89] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1925*, 66.
[90] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1917*, 13.

by 1928. Field surveys should be conducted to pin down the exact location of Beales Cache.

ELIGIBILITY STATEMENT:

The Richardson Highway east of Donnelly Dome fails to maintain the physical remains and natural setting that characterized the trail in the early 1900s to the late 1930s. It has been widened since and resurfaced with modern materials. The current route of the Richardson Highway is determined not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places during the period of significance established by this report.

The original segment to the west of Donnelly Dome may be eligible under Criteria A and D. The route played a pivotal role in the settlement and economic development of the Interior. It was the only road reaching the coast prior to the completion of the Alaska Railroad in 1923. Though the corridor was connected with prominent figures in the history of Alaska, such as Lieutenants Henry Allen and J.C. Castner, and General Wilds P. Richardson, first president of the Alaska Road Commission, this association is weak. The trail is not the best representation of the lives or careers of these men, and does not qualify under Criterion B. The road segment through Donnelly Training Areas does no represent a unique break from the typical road construction techniques and is not eligible under Criterion C. Further study may uncover sites, buildings, and structures that will increase the knowledge of the material and social history of early Alaskan settlers.

Field investigations may find this segment retains its natural setting as was present between 1906 and 1930. To be eligible it must retain is original width of approximately 30. The road surface must remain the original packed dirt/gravel surface. Slight modifications for maintaining the route are acceptable only as long as the segment under scrutiny retains its feeling and environment of the period of significance. Cut trees, remains of temporary bridges, culverts, and sections of corduroy, while not individually eligible, contribute to the eligibility of this segment. A minimum ¼ mile must meet these criteria.

Pending field reports on the physical integrity, the segment of the Old Richardson on the west side of Donnelly Dome is eligible for the NRHP.

4.2 Donnelly Training Area: Water Routes

4.2.1. Little Delta River

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION:

The Little Delta River forms the western boundary of Fort Greely. The river served as a hunting corridor accessing prime sheep habitat at its headwaters. Accounts refer to Mutton Hill as a sheep hunting region between Dry Creek and Little Delta River.[91] It is probable that Natives walked up Little Delta River on sheep hunting excursions. The lower stretches of the river were also known by Native inhabitants as being prime moose hunting ground.

[91] Elizabeth Andrews, "Salcha: An Athapaskan Band of the Tanana River and its Culture," (masters thesis, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1975).

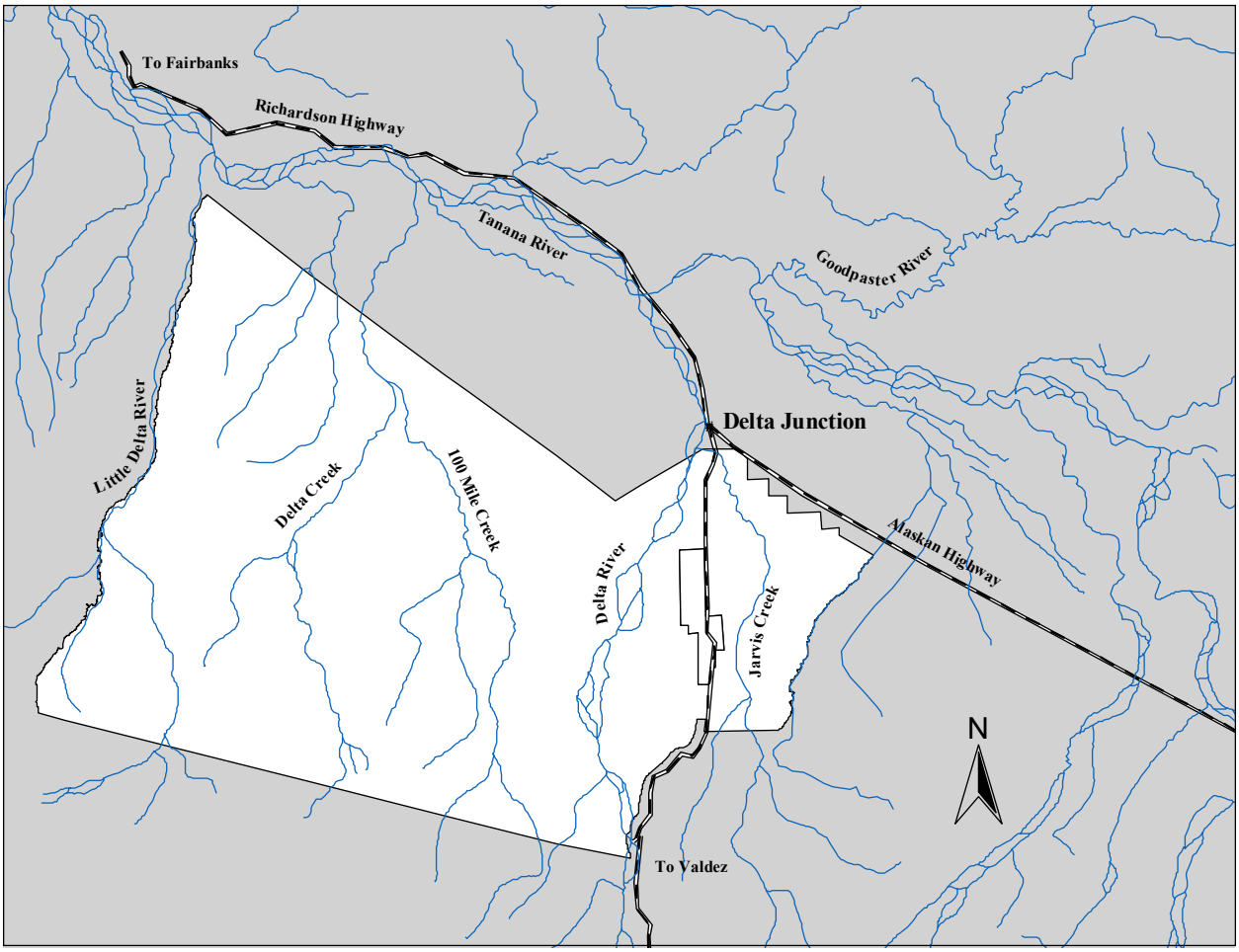


Figure 10. Map of rivers on Donnelly Training Areas.

4.2.2. Delta Creek

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION:

Delta Creek bisects the western portion of Fort Greely. The Salcha and Goodpaster Indians likely used it to access good hunting grounds.

4.2.3 Delta River

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION:

The Delta River runs through the center of Donnelly Training Area creating the East and West training sections. Approximately twenty miles of the river are contained within the Donnelly Training area. This river has a long history of use by Natives and Euro-Americans. The local bands of the Upper Tanana River use the Delta River to access hunting grounds for caribou, moose, and sheep. Intermarriage between the Ahtna of the Copper River Basin and the Upper Tanana River tribes has been documented.[92] The Delta River may have been a transportation corridor for the Ahtna to travel north and the Upper Tanana to travel south for trade and familial relationships.

[92] Holly Reckord, *That's The Way We Live: Subsistence in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve*, report prepared for the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, Occasional Paper no. 34 (Fairbanks: Anthropology and Historic Preservation, 1983), 23.

The first non-Natives to use the Delta River as a transportation corridor were members the Glenn (Captain, US Army) expedition of 1898. A report left by then Second Lieutenant J.C. Castner recalled the path of the expedition and reported on the trials of the trail and the Natives encountered.[93] At one point, the party split to find a path, and Castner recalled that "failing to find a path through the Alaskan Alps in that direction, they [Glenn] had turned north and then northwest, eventually finding our trail going up the headwaters of the Gulkona River, and following it through the pass and down the Delta River."[94] Previous parties explored the Tanana River before Castner reached it, but they had used other routes than the Delta River (see Tanana River description). The Glenn expedition also utilized Native guide to show them this route. This suggests that the Indians knew the Delta River to be the path of least resistance between the interior and the coast. The Alaska Road Commission also recognized this and constructed the Valdez-Fairbanks military trail paralleling the course of the river.

4.2.4 Jarvis Creek

Jarvis Creek flows north through Donnelly East Training Area. The creek bed allowed access into the foothills of the Alaska Range for hunting parties. No evidence suggests this route was a significant early transportation corridor.

4.2.5 Water Routes Eligibility Statement

Though these rivers acted as significant historical transportation routes, they are not eligible under the National Register of Historic Places. The register requires that actual physical remains related to the use of the river as a transportation route must be present on the ground. Such physical remains may include a still recognizable portage cite, a fish camp, an explorer's camp, or a boat landing. Currently, research has failed to indicate the presence of these property types along the rivers within the Donnelly Training Area.

4.3 Fort Wainwright Tanana Flats and Yukon Training Areas: Land Routes

4.3.1 Bonnifield Trail

NAME:

Bonnifield Trail

LOCATION:

The Bonnifield Trail begins at the south end of Cushman Street in Fairbanks, Alaska. The trail crosses the Tanana River and heads due south through the Tanana Flats Training Area. It passes the west side of Clear Creek Buttes, and continues through the flats to the headwaters of Bonnifield Creek in the center of the Bonnifield mining district. Its length is approximately 50 miles. The trail first appears on the 1916

[93] J.C. Castner, "A Historical Topic: Exploration in Alaska," (paper presented at the Hawaiian Engineering Association Conference, Honolulu Hawaii, 1910, and published as the association's Press Bulletin no. 27).

[94] Ibid., 33.

Alaska Road Commission route map, and is still demarcated on the current USGS quad maps of the region.[95]

CONSTRUCTION DATES:

Circa 1908–09.

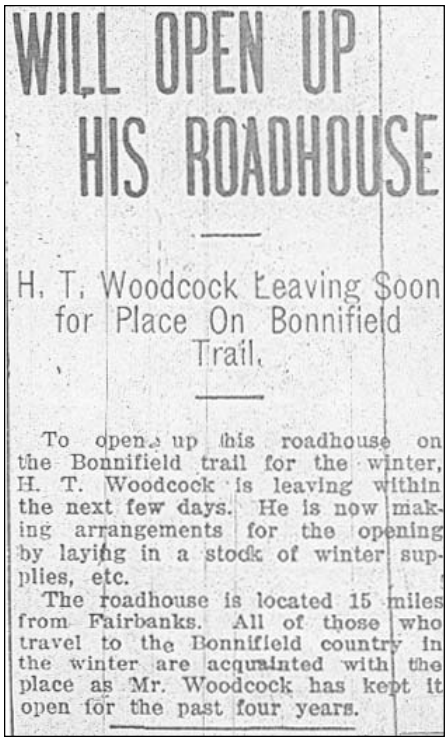
HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Bonnifield trail was a winter sled route connecting Fairbanks to the mines on the north flanks of the Alaska Range. The Bonnifield mining district shares the name of the trail, named after John Bonnifield an early prospector and miner in the Tanana Valley. Bonnifield came to the interior from Dawson in 1903.[96] He prospected the creeks near the headwaters of Wood River, one of which bears his name. By 1908, newspapers were reporting on significant activity along the creeks of this district. The quartz ledges were "very rich" and prompted some prospectors to boast that "Bonnifield has the largest mine in Alaska if not in America."[97] The possibilities of the district warranted the construction of a road from Fairbanks to the Alaska Range. By 1908, about fourteen miles of the road had been completed to Clear Creek.[98] It had always been intended as a winter route. The effort to maintain a road through muskeg in the summer presented a formidable and unnecessary challenge.

The hydraulic possibilities fueled more construction, and by 1909 over $6,000 had been expended in trail building.[99] Records indicate no involvement of the Alaska Road Commission in the construction or maintenance of this route. However, as a winter sled trail, construction techniques used by individuals was likely similar to that of the government road crews. First the trees and bushes were cut. Men then "grubbed" or cleared the stumps. No grading was necessary for the Bonnifield trail. The terrain over which the road was constructed had been described as "perfectly level" with no slopes to consider. This afforded running the trail on a straight line. Sled trails averaged ten feet in width. The condition of the Bonnifield trial during its original use to access the mines consisted of a clear swath in a spruce-lowland of the Tanana River Flats. The trail is still used today by snow-machines accessing hunting and trapping grounds, and the route is currently clear and usable for travel. The Army currently uses this route as far as Clear Creek Buttes to access training areas.

By 1909, mining firms regularly moved equipment, such as sawmills and stamp mills, into the Bonnifield District. It is assumed that they used the trail to access the mineral belt. As with other early transportation routes, roadhouses serviced the users of the Bonnifield trail. Initially, a house and barn were built at Clear Creek, Crooked Creek, Lost Creek, and the Lower end of Gold King Creek.[100] Each barn reportedly held fourteen head of stock to accommodate the freight carriers on route to and returning from the mines. About 15 miles south of Fairbanks, H.T. Woodcock operated a roadhouse starting in 1909.[101] This roadhouse was open for service

[95] RS 2477 Project, Case File #462, Bonnifield Trail Case file Summary, on record at State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Fairbanks Office; and at Elmer Rasmuson Library, Alaska and Polar Region Archives, RS 2477 Collection.
[96] *Dawson Record,* July 16, 1903 and Aug. 19, 1903; Rex Fischer Collection.
[97] *Tanana Tribune,* July 11, 1908.
[98] *Tanana Tribune*, Sept. 2, 1908.
[99] *Tanana Tribune,* Sept 6, 1909.
[100] Ibid.
[101] *Fairbanks Daily News Miner*, Oct. 23, 1913.



WILL OPEN UP HIS ROADHOUSE

H. T. Woodcock Leaving Soon for Place On Bonnifield Trail.

To open up his roadhouse on the Bonnifield trail for the winter, H. T. Woodcock is leaving within the next few days. He is now making arrangements for the opening by laying in a stock of winter supplies, etc.

The roadhouse is located 15 miles from Fairbanks. All of those who travel to the Bonnifield country in the winter are acquainted with the place as Mr. Woodcock has kept it open for the past four years.

Figure 11. Article Describing Woodcock's Roadhouse on the Bonnifield Trail. *Fairbanks Daily News Miner,* October 23, 1913.

until at least 1915. That year, the newspaper reported that a lamp exploded and severely burned Mr. Woodcock. He waited in pain almost twenty-four hours before two men stopped in and took him back to town.

The mines proved promising enough to petition for aid in road work to the Bonnifield district.[102] In 1918, the idea circulated that Bonnifield could better be served by a feeder road heading west from the mines to the soon arriving government railroad. This route was considerably shorter that crossing Tanana Flats. It provided business to the railroad and decreased the development costs of the entire mining district. The completion of the Alaska Railroad in 1923 greatly curtailed the use of the Bonnifield Trail. The more practical Kobi-Bonnifield route became the primary access to the mines. This road started north of Healy and headed west into the mining district. The Bonnifield route across the Tanana Valley was still used for many years. In 1941, a Territorial Department of Mines report noted a winter trail connected Fairbanks to the Wood River drainage that could be used by either a dog team or a tractor.[103] This report also mentioned the possibility of reaching the Kansas Creek area of the Wood River headwaters by an alternate tractor trail between Wood River and Birch Lake on the Richardson Highway.

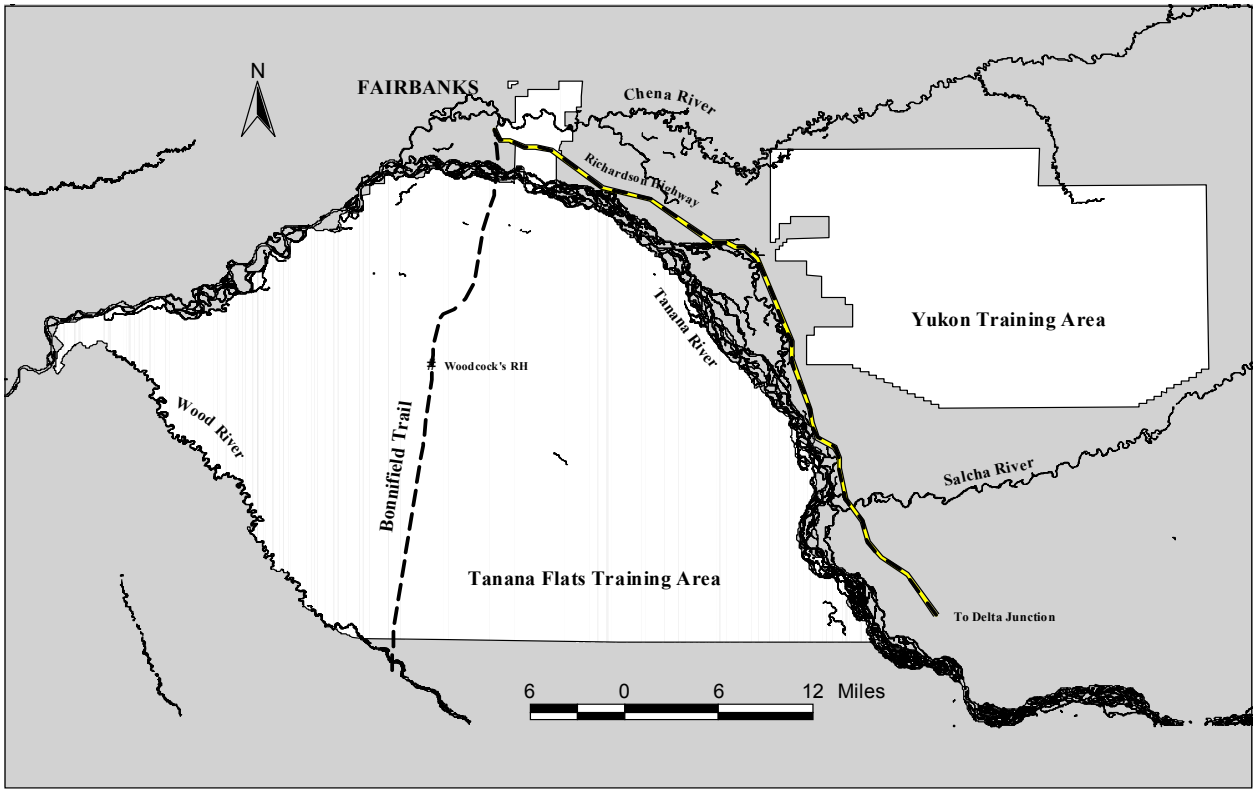


Figure 12. Map of Bonnifield trail across Tanana Flats Training Area.

[102] *Nenena Daily News*, May 4, 1918.
[103] *Fairbanks Daily News Miner*, Oct. 23, 1913.

ASSOCIATED FEATURES:

At least two roadhouses provided room and board to travelers on the Bonnifield Trail. These included Woodcock's, 15–17 miles south of Fairbanks, and the house/barn complexes reported on Crooked and Lost Creeks.

ELIGIBILITY STATEMENT:

The Bonnifield Trail's primary period of significance falls between 1908 and 1923 when the Alaska Railroad route took over. It served as an access route for miners and freighters in the Bonnifield Mining District. The trail was always a winter sled route that crossed the Tanana Flats Training Area en route to the north side of the Alaska Range. The trail is connected to the economic development of the interior by serving the mineral exploitation in the Bonnifield Mining District. However, the Bonnifield District contributes a very minor percentage of the mineral extraction in the Interior and falls short of meeting Criteria A. The trail is directly associated with a locally significant miner and prospector in the Tanana Valley, John Bonnifield, and may be eligible under Criteria B for this connection. While the Bonnifield trail does not represent the work of a master, it is one of the best representations of a trail in the private road context. The Bonnifield Trail represents one of the longest routes in the interior that was privately constructed and maintained. The absence of ARC involvement contributes to the significance of this route, and may qualify the route for the NRHP under criteria C. Field investigations may discover sites, buildings, and structures that may yield further information on the material and cultural history of miners using the trail between 1908 and 1923.

Unlike other transportation routes in the Tanana Valley, this route has seen little modification since its original construction. The Army has maintained the trail to Clear Creek Buttes as the first leg of the winter access route to Blair Lakes. From that point on the trail continues largely undisturbed and retains its physical integrity. Use by snow-machines has prevented the vegetation from reclaiming the road. The Tanana Flats lies largely undisturbed outside of the Army and Air Force bombing ranges and this route retains its natural setting.

Pending field surveys regarding the exact route location and potential discovery of roadhouses, the road from Clear Creek Buttes south to the Alaska Range is eligible for the NRHP. Discernable segments that are a minimum of ¼ mile in length and cut approximately ten feet wide meet the physical requirements established by this report. The road from South Cushman to Clear Creek Butte is ineligible due to diminished integrity near the Fairbanks terminus. Army use of the road has also modified the trail width from the Tanana River crossing to Clear Creek Butte.

4.3.2 Lazelle Road

NAME:

Lazelle Road

LOCATION:

Lazelle Road started 3 miles north of Fairbanks off the original Fairbanks-Gilmore Trial (Route 7G). From that point, the road headed east along the southern foot of Birch Hill. It covered approximately 2 1/4 miles before connecting to with the sled

trail to Chena Hot Springs. This route crossed land now within the northern part of the Fort Wainwright Cantonment area (Figure 13).

CONSTRUCTION DATES:

Circa 1922.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Territorial Road Board oversaw the construction of Lazelle Road, labeled Route 7GA. The road was classified as a wagon road, indicating year round access. Wagon roads required ditching, grading, gravel, and draining to accommodate wagon traffic and light motor vehicles. In 1922 the ARC spent $500 in widening, repairing, and hauling gravel to the section at the base of Birch Hill. The original intent of the ARC was to continue this segment to Chena Hot Springs.[104] However, a better route for the Chena Hot Springs sled road was determined in 1923 and the idea of extending Lazelle Road ended. The primary purpose of the road was to provide access to farmers and homesteaders once located in the current post area of Fort Wainwright. In 1924 the Territory spent $186 in re-grading the road, cleaning side ditches, and placing six new culverts. In 1925, $447.17 went to improvements of Lazelle Road. The road appears on the roster of Territorial projects through 1937. By that year, $8031.10 had been spent on the road; $3,917.59 on maintenance and $4,113.51 on construction. The annual reports listed no specific projects for this route.

ASSOCIATED FEATURES:

This road served as a homestead access route for farms near the present location of Fort Wainwright's main post. For further information on the history of homesteads

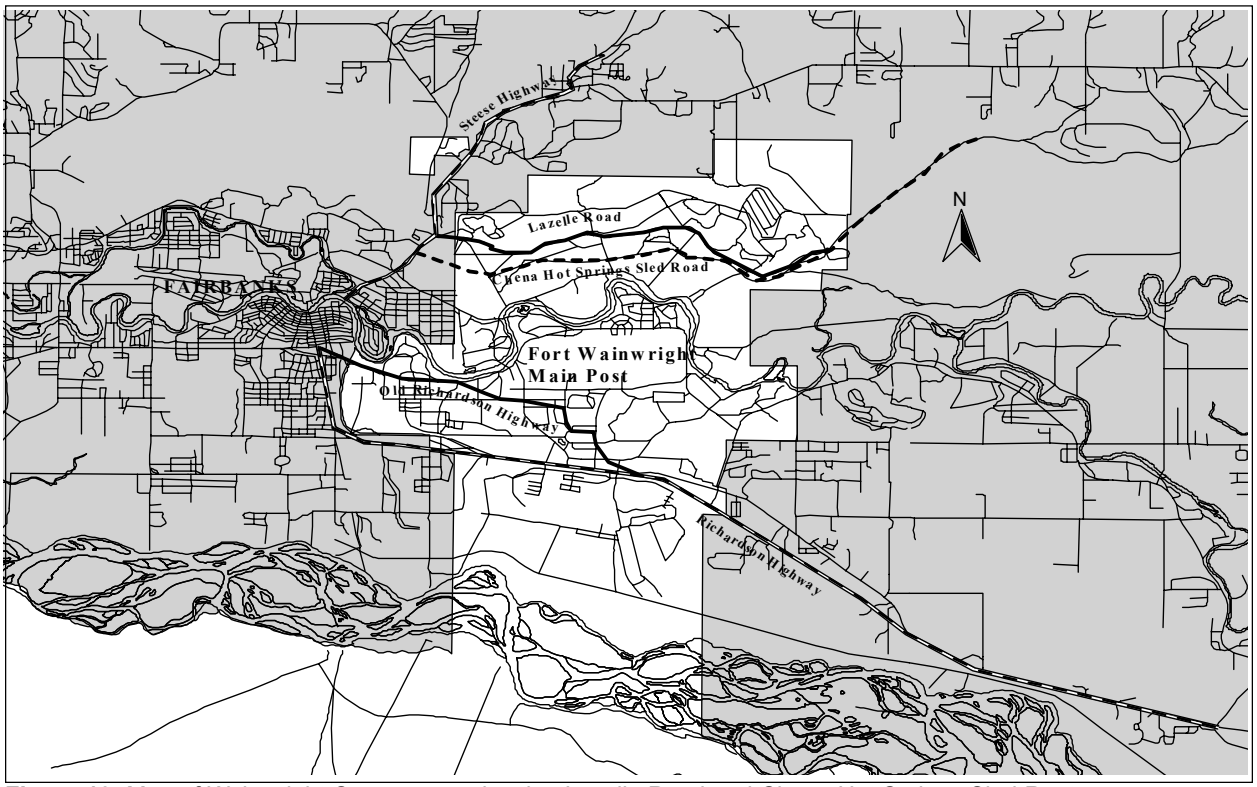


Figure 13. Map of Wainwright Cantonment showing Lazelle Road and Chena Hot Springs Sled Route

[104] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1922*, 61.

on Fort Wainwright, refer to historic context report completed by Kathy Price titled *Homesteads on Fort Wainwright, Alaska*, on file at Directorate of Public Works, Environment/Natural Resources.

ELIGIBILITY STATEMENT:

Lazelle Road was a small access road that fails to meet any of the criteria for nomination set forth by the National Register of Historic Places. The continued improvements and extensions carried out by the Army challenge the retention of both the physical and environmental qualities present during the road's historic period of significance.

4.3.3 Chena Hot Springs Sled Road

NAME:

Fairbanks-Chena Hot Springs Sled Road, AR C Route 7J

LOCATION:

The Chena Hot Springs Sled Route began about two and a half miles north of Fairbanks on the Fairbanks Gilmore Road (7G). It connected Fairbanks to Chena Hot Springs, a distance of 64 miles. It paralleled south of Lazelle Road following the base of Birch Hill. Where Lazelle Road ended, Chena Hot Springs Sled road continued on an easterly course following the Chena River to the hot springs.

CONSTRUCTION DATES:

The first reference to the sled road was found in the 1922 Annual Report of the Alaska Road Commission. The reference hints that a private trail already existed. The ARC likely took over the maintenance and improvements of the trail in the early 1920s.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

Small placer discoveries near Chena Hot Springs lured miners up the Chena River drainage as early as 1905. Mining, and later recreation warranted the development of a trail connecting Fairbanks to the hot springs region. This route served miners, wood-haulers, passenger traffic to the springs, and eventually farmers.[105] By the 1920s, several homesteads were located along the first ten miles of the road.[106] The original plan of the ARC and the Territorial Road Board was to widen the sled road and improve it to wagon road status. However, a better location for a wagon road was located (see Lazelle Road) closer to the foot of Birch hill, and the Hot Springs Road kept its sled classification.

As a sled road, the route was cleared to a width of 16-feet, with the center 8 feet grubbed and cut as close to the ground as possible. Few other improvements were necessary to maintain this winter only route. Small wood bridges were placed over the major stream crossings, such as a $1,650 bridge to span the Little Chena River at mile 14.[107] Most of the improvements took place up river from Fort Wainwright where hills were graded and flood lands avoided. Little to no improvements were

[105] Joesting, 1942, 1.
[106] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1922*, 61.
[107] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1922*, 61.

necessary on the first ten-mile segment that crossed current Army lands. In 1922, the ARC reported $1,052.35 in expenditures along the entire route. In 1924, the amount tripled to $3,014.22 when three small bridges were built, two shelters repaired, and a short segment of road moved near the junction with the north fork of the Chena River.[108] The route remained suitable only for winter travel by sleds and tractors until the land withdrawals for Ladd Air Field began. When the government withdrew lands on Birch hill in the late 1930s, the Territorial Road Board began relocating Chena Hot Springs Road to its current location on the north side of Birch hill. This project was completed by the late 1940s and the original route was abandoned. Snow machines users and dog-mushers still use a trail network branching off Chena Hot Springs Sled Road to the east of Fort Wainwright.

ASSOCIATED FEATURE:

Research indicated no associated features on Fort Wainwright.

ELIGIBILITY STATEMENT:

Chena Hot Springs Sled Road accessed a small resort community and some mines 65 miles east of Fairbanks. Although the hot springs emerged as a locally significant retreat, the road did not facilitate a major historical event at the local, state, or national level and is ineligible under criterion A. No evidence suggested that this route was associated with prominent individuals or represented the work of a master. It is not eligible under criteria B or C. This route has little potentially to yield important information about the history of the Tanana Valley and is not eligible under Criteria D.

A field survey of this route is recommended. The Army has cut many new trails and roads along the base of Birch Hill, but original segments of this route may remain intact.

4.4 Fort Wainwright: Tanana Flats and Yukon Training Areas: Water Routes

4.4.1 Salcha River:

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION:

The Salcha River is a clear water tributary to the Tanana River. While not on military land, it roughly parallels the southeast border of the Yukon Training Area of Fort Wainwright. During the pre-historic era of the valley, The Salcha River was a critical component of the Tanana Natives as king salmon spawned in it. The lower Tanana River Indians located one of their main camps at the confluence of the Salcha and Tanana Rivers.

In the historic era, the Salcha River provided winter access to the mines located primarily on Caribou Creek. Ninety-Eight Creek, a tributary of the Salcha River, was the location of a historic mining operation. A winter trail follows the Ninety-Eight Creek drainage. The majority of use in this era was by miner Mike Erceg. He owned claims up Ninety-Eight Creek and maintained the road to access his opera-

[108] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1924*, 89.

tion. Records indicate that in 1941 Erceg spent $8,265 on annual labor, part of which was the construction of a 4 ½ mile trail and the re-enforcement of a bridge.[109] Current topographic maps delineate a trail heading up Ninety-Eight Creek from the Salcha River.

ELIGIBILITY STATEMENT:

While this river is important for understanding the indigenous and later Euro-American activities in the Interior, the Salcha River is not on military land and is not a management concern. The extension up Ninety-Eight Creek does cross military land in the Yukon Maneuver Area to the south and east of Fort Wainwright. This road falls with in the private road context established by this report. However, its use was intermittent and it accessed mines that do not contribute significantly to understanding the history of the interior. The construction of the trail is not associated with significant persons in interior Alaska and does not provide a unique example of transportation routes in the Interior. The trail itself does not represent the work of a master road builder. As a seasonal sled road, the Ninety-Eight Creek extension is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

4.4.2 Chena River

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION:

The Chena River is a clear water tributary to the Tanana River. A stretch of this river flows through the Fort Wainwright cantonment area just to the north of the Ladd Field National Historic District. The confluence of the Chena and Tanana Rivers served as a fishing camp for Chena Indians, a sub-set of Tanana River Athapaskans discussed earlier. While the river was likely used for subsistence, it is less significant to the Native hunting and fishing cycles than the Salcha or Goodpaster Rivers located further up the Tanana River. Euro-Americans extensively used lower stretches of the river from downtown Fairbanks to the confluence with the Tanana River between 1902 through today. This section was critical for the steamers and riverboats dropping off supplies and peoples to the growing mining community. The stretch that crosses Fort Wainwright saw much less use compared to the lower reaches.

ELIGIBILITY STATEMENT:

While the Chena River is an important river for local history in the Fairbanks area, the section running through town contributes most to this story. The river was likely used to access homestead lands, hunting grounds, and for fishing. However, the section running through Fort Wainwright fails to meet the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places and is determined not eligible for nomination.

4.4.3 Tanana River

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION:

The Tanana River was the main artery of transportation and trade in interior Alaska south of the Yukon. It forms the northern and eastern border of the Tanana Flats Training Area on Fort Wainwright. The river has an extensive history of use in both

[109] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report for fiscal year 1922*, 61.

historic and prehistoric times. Native inhabitants used the river as a trade route that connected the tribes of the upper valley with those of the lower valley.

The central trade center for the Tanana Valley was located at the confluence of the Tanana and Yukon Rivers. British and Russian traders made annual trips to Nuklukayet at the mouth of the Tanana River to conduct trade with interior Indian bands.[110] The Tanana River served as a trade route for the lower and upper Tanana Indians. By 1869 an American trading post was established at this location, further indicating the use of the river by Indians en route to trade.

The Tanana River continued to be a critical transportation corridor in the historic Era. In 1885, Lieutenant Henry T. Allen crossed the Alaska Range from the Copper River, followed the course of the Delta River down to the Tanana River, and the followed it to the Yukon River. The Allen expedition has been describes as the first real exploration and use of the Tanana River by white men.[111] Alfred Brooks of the US Geological Survey used the Tanana River as a transportation route in 1898. Lieutenant J.C. Castner floated sections of the Tanana River in his search for land routes connecting the interior to the coast in 1898.

Numerous riverboats and steam-powered paddle wheels used the Tanana River from its mouth up to the Chena River and into Fairbanks. Overland trails crossed the Tanana River, notably, the Donnelly-Washburn winter sled trail, which forded the river near Birch Lake along the current Richardson Highway. Like the Yukon River, the Tanana River served as a major transportation route for miners, traders, and entrepreneurs since E.T. Barnette, founder of Fairbanks, ascended the river by boat in 1901.[112]

ELIGIBILITY STATEMENT:

The Tanana River, from its headwaters of the Nebesna River to its confluence with the Yukon River, has served as a critical transportation route in pre-historic and historic times. It is clearly associated with persons significant to the territory and state of Alaska, such as Allen, Brooks, Castner, and Barnette. It contributes understanding to the regional and local prehistory and history of the Interior and Fairbanks. Further research of the Tanana River as a transportation route will reveal more about the rivers use and associated features, such as fish camps, cabin locations, and the like which may be located on military lands. The river lies adjacent to and not within military lands and is not a cultural resource management concern for USARAK. Though it meets the criteria, without tangible physical proof located on the ground, the Tanana River is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

4.4.4 Dry Creek:

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION:

Dry Creek is located in the Tanana Flats Training Area of Fort Wainwright. It roughly bisects the land located between Wood River on the western extreme and the Tanana

[110] James E. Dixon, et al., *Archaeological Survey and Inventory of Cultural Resources, Fort Wainwright, Alaska. Final Report* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Museum, 1980), 59.

[111] Robert A McKennan, *The Upper Tanana Indians* (New Haven: Yale University, Department of Anthropology, 1959), 24.

[112] James E. Dixon, et al., *Archaeological Survey and Inventory of Cultural Resources, Fort Wainwright, Alaska. Final Report* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Museum, 1980), 59.

River on the eastern extreme. The flats are prime moose habitat, and Dry Creek was likely used to access good hunting grounds.[113] Beyond this, no documentation of river use was found. Dry Creek is one of thousands of small rivers in Alaska that provide access good hunting habitat.

ELIGIBILITY STATEMENT:

The river does not meet the National Register criteria and is determined not eligible for nomination.

4.4.5 Wood River

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION:

Wood River served as an access route to hunting grounds for the Athapaskan Indians. The use of this river is only loosely documented. Elizabeth Andrews noted that local inhabitants had knowledge of areas with high moose and caribou concentrations and that such knowledge took hunting camps up rivers such as Wood River.[114] Wood River was the western extent of the Salcha River tribe's territory. The river probably saw use from the time of Native inhabitation of the region c.9,000 BC until the presence of Euro-Americans altered the subsistence cycle. Within the Tanana Flats Training Area the Wood River Band reportedly occupied a village near Wood River Buttes.[115] The river probably served as a transportation route to hunting grounds and trading centers for this band.

ELIGIBILITY STATEMENT:

Wood River does not sufficiently meet the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places and is determined not eligible.

4.5 Other Early Transportation Routes on Fort Wainwright

4.5.1 Richardson Highway

Homestead maps from the 1930s and 1940s indicate that the Richardson Highway originally crossed land now in the main-post area of Fort Wainwright.[116] Traveling from Fairbanks, it roughly followed the current route of Gaffney Road to South Gate Road. Upon withdrawal by the Air Force and late Army commands, this route was moved to the south of the current cantonment area. Extensive modifications to the roads and environment of the main-post area greatly diminish the integrity of this segment of the Old Richardson Highway. This segment is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

[113] Elizabeth Andrews, "Salcha: An Athabaskan Band of the Tanana River and its Culture," (masters thesis, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1975), 52.
[114] Ibid.
[115] James E. Dixon, et al., *Archaeological Survey and Inventory of Cultural Resources, Fort Wainwright, Alaska. Final Report* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Museum, 1980), 57.
[116] Maps are on file at DPW-Environment. See the 1941 Directive Map, published by the US Engineers at Ladd Field, 1941–42.

CHAPTER 5.0 Conclusion

Transportation plays a critical role in explaining why Fairbanks and Fort Wainwright exist where they do. Fairbanks is the end of many roads, the terminus for the Alaska Railroad, and the limit of navigable water up the Tanana River. Geographically Alaska is well located for facilitating the defense of the United States. The routes and methods used to reach the Interior offer a window into the economic, political, social, and technological development of the Tanana Valley. Part of the early transportation story involves Army lands. Roads and trails crossed Fort Wainwright enroute between the ocean port of Valdez and the mines of the Interior. Understanding early transportation helps complete the picture of the history of Fort Wainwright and Fairbanks.

Transportation routes are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The criteria and considerations specific to transportation routes may be reviewed in Chapter 3 of this report. Upon field inspection, segments of the following routes are eligible:

- Donnelly-Washburn Sled Route
- Old Richardson Highway near Donnelly Dome
- Bonnifield Trail

No other land or water routes were found to have eligibility potential by this report. Transportation in Alaska also included airplanes. The context for air travel on Fort Wainwright was not addressed by this report.

Figure 14. Dog team and driver leaving Donnelly Roadhouse on the Donnelly Washburn Sled Route. James T. Geoghegan Collection, Box 4, Folder 3, Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

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Many manuscript and photography collections assisted in the completion of this project. Those located at UAF are housed in the Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks. Specific citations can be found in the text or footnoted when appropriate.

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