

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Chena Building
Other names/site number: "Old Timer Cabin," AHRS FAI-02828
Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: Chena River State Recreation Site, Mile 8 Chena Pump Road
City or town: Fairbanks State: Alaska County: Fairbanks North Star Borough/090
Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☒

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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Name of Property

Borough, Alaska

County and State

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☐

Public – Local

☐

Public – State

☒

Public – Federal

☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

☒

District

☐

Site

☐

Structure

☐

Object

☐

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Name of Property

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

WORK IN PROGRESS

GOVERNMENT/State Park Support Cabin

RECREATION AND CULTURE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th and EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Commercial Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Chena Building is a rare surviving example of a gold-rush-era commercial property type from interior Alaska. The small, narrow, false front, wood frame building was most likely constructed sometime after ca.1905 in the now non-existent town of Chena, situated approximately 9 miles downstream from Fairbanks, Alaska, near the confluence of the Chena and Tanana Rivers.¹ The historic Chena townsite served, alongside Fairbanks, as a central transportation hub for interior Alaska between 1903 and 1920, serving all the Tanana basin gold-rush communities via the Tanana Valley Railroad, the first operating railroad in interior Alaska.² Noted as being a store in Chena, the Chena Building's architectural style reflects the conditions and visual language of early 20th-century boomtown commerce: the exaggerated vertical false-front disguised the modest interior floor plan, and economical shed roof, simple flat trim around the door and windows was likely milled locally along with the rough-finished siding.³ Some of the original townsite buildings were salvaged after Chena's decline and relocated to other growing communities, such as downriver in Nenana and upriver in Fairbanks, beginning around

¹ While the exact construction date remains unknown, photographic evidence of similar false-fronted buildings lining Front Street in the Chena townsite by 1905. Oral history sources recall that the building, which sat on a private lot for decades in Fairbanks, originated in historic Chena and was the family's "prized possession." Darling, Bob. Interviewed by Joshua Reuther, Martin Gutoski, and Patricia Peirsol, July 12, 2024.

² Terrence Cole, *Crooked Past: The History of a Frontier Mining Camp: Fairbanks, Alaska*. Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press, 1991 and Daniel L. Osborne, *Alaska's Tanana Valley Railroads*. Arcadia Publishing, 2013.

³ Local Affairs Agency. *Chena, Alaska: Proposal for Incorporation as Second-Class City*. Report to the Local Boundary Commission on proposal for incorporation as a second-class city of Chena. Juneau, AK. December 3, 1971.

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1916. With the sale of the Tanana Valley Railroad to the Alaska Engineering Commission and dismantling the rails at Chena in 1920, the removal of buildings from Chena likely increased.⁴ Over the past 120 years, human and natural processes have nearly obliterated the historic Chena townsite as the braided channels of the Tanana River have changed their courses and eroded much of the town's Front Street and commercial district.⁵ Of the few buildings that may have survived, the Chena Building is the only example that has been returned to the location of the historic Chena townsite, much of which now lies within Alaska State Park lands. Because the Chena Building was moved, returned to its original townsite, and near where it is believed to be the historic location based on the broader location of false-fronted buildings within photos of the townsite and placed in its original orientation, the property has significant and rare interpretive value. Importantly, it retains character-defining features and integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling. While the rescued property faces significant environmental and human-caused threats and requires extensive rehabilitation, the historic Chena Building is believed to be one of the last remaining buildings from the Chena Townsite in the Fairbanks borough. It would be one of only a handful of false-front-style buildings from interior Alaska, the only known false-fronted building remaining from Chena, and the last standing remnant from the townsite listed in the National Register of Historic Places.⁶

Narrative Description

Environmental Setting: The Chena Riverscape

The terrain of the Tanana Lowlands consists of well-sorted floodplains, terraces, and alluvial fan deposits of gravels, sands, and silts.⁷ The terrain of the Yukon-Tanana Uplands is characterized by rounded ridges, rolling hills, and relatively flat alluvial valleys. Landscapes in the region are underlain with discontinuous permafrost and contain "weakly active to inactive" ice wedges.⁸ Soils are composed of silty or sandy loam and range from poorly drained soils with peat deposits to well-drained soils on floodplains and low terraces. Protected by the Alaska Range in the south and the Brooks Range in the north, the Tanana Valley experiences a continental climate with warm summers and cold winters. Precipitation is relatively light, and winds are light to moderate

⁴ Nicholas Deely, *Tanana Valley Railroad, the Gold Dust Line*. Denali Designs, Fairbanks, Alaska, 1996; and Osborn, 2013.

⁵ Gutoski, Martin. "Where is Chena? -The search for a lost 20th Century-Gold Rush Town." *The American Surveyor* (2013): v.10, #2; and Justin Cramb, et al., *Excavations at the Chena Townsite Archeological District* (FAI-00011). Report Prepared for Alaska Cultural Resource Permit 2021-03 for the Alaska Office of History and Archeology and the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. UAMN Museum Technical Series Report #2022-01. 2022.

⁶ Janet Matheson, and F. Bruce Haldeman, *Historic Resources in the Fairbanks North Star Borough*. Prepared for the Fairbanks North Star Borough Planning Department, 1981.

⁷ Clyde Wahrhaftig, *Physiographic Divisions of Alaska*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. 1965.

⁸ Péwé, Troy, L. *Middle Tanana River Valley*. In *Guide to the Quaternary Geology: Central and South-Central Alaska*, edited by Troy L. Péwé, O. J. Ferrains, D. R. Nichols, and T. N. V. Karlstrom, pp. 36-54. Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys, Department of Natural Resources, College, Alaska. 1965 [1977].

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in most areas. Vegetation in the region is composed of Upland Spruce-Hardwood and Bottomland Spruce-Poplar Forests, with Low Brush-Bog Muskeg vegetation northeast of the wayside area. Local vegetation is dominated by black spruce (*Picea mariana*) and Alaska paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*). Forestation of the site is variable, with dense stands of second-growth forest on the north and south margins and thinned timber stands within the central parking and picnic area.

Along the site's shoreline and other disturbed portions are alder thickets (*Alnus* spp.). Under the mature forest canopy are sphagnum moss, rose, lowbush cranberry, blackberry, raspberry, Labrador tea, and fireweed, consistent with Low Brush-Bog Muskeg. Moose, caribou, black bear, grizzly bear, wolverines, porcupines, coyotes, gray wolves, shrews, and squirrels are among the animal populations found in this area. Birds include ptarmigan and grouse, and waterfowl populations include various loons, swans, ducks, and geese species. Chum, silver, and king salmon spawn in several tributaries of the Tanana River. Arctic grayling, whitefish, and northern pike are found throughout the Tanana River area. Notable landscape features include a conspicuously large hill bordering the site's southwestern portion. A stream channel (Rost Creek), river slough, and associated wetlands are present at the base of the hill directly across Chena Pump Road from the wayside. A level plain characterizes most remaining acreage within the wayside without discernible drainage or topographic variability.

The Chena Building's False Front Façade:

A Rare but Significant Character-Defining Feature in Interior Alaska

The Chena Building is a simple, single-story, false-front, early twentieth-century commercial-style building. In a 1971 proposal for incorporation at Chena, the building's original function was noted as a store.⁹ The Chena Building measures 10 feet and 5 inches wide by 24 feet and 5 inches long. The physical proportions and finishing of the Chena Building represent well the crowded and fast pace of early twentieth-century Alaskan boomtowns.

The Chena townsite was situated at an advantageous bend of the Tanana River, ideal for mooring deeper draft river boats that delivered people and supplies from as far away as St. Michael on the Yukon River.¹⁰ The narrow, false-front style announces its historic commercial purpose. Chena's scarcity of finished lumber materials and competition for space along the unimproved street fronts resulted in row buildings conjoined by a party wall and side-by-side business concerns jostling for customers and commerce.

Essentially, a false front is a front wall that extends above the roof and the sides of a building to create a more impressive façade. The false front commercial building has four major defining

⁹ Local Affairs Agency 1971.

¹⁰ Cecil Francis Robe, *The Penetration of an Alaskan Frontier: The Tanana Valley and Fairbanks*. Yale University, Ph.D., 1943; and Hedrick, et al., *Steamboats on the Chena: The Founding and Development of Fairbanks, Alaska*. Fairbanks, AK: Epicenter Press, 1988.

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design characteristics. First, the façade (main or street side) rises to form a parapet (upper wall) which hides most or nearly all of the roof. Second, the roof is almost always a front gable, though gambrel and bowed shed roofs are occasionally found. Third, a better grade of materials is often used on the façade than on the sides or rear of the building. And fourth, the façade exhibits greater ornamentation than the other sides of the building. In currently recognized photos of the Chena townsite, most, if not all, of the false-fronted buildings were located on Front and First Streets in the heart of the commercial district; outside of the commercial district, log structures without false-fronts were preferred.

The Chena Building's false front likely served as a firebreak to help prevent sparks from jumping to the other side of the street, something residents of the primarily wooden construction area would have been mindful of. Moreover, the false façade is an essential character-defining feature that directly links Chena and Fairbanks to an icon of the urban pioneer American West and represents the reach of American capitalism and culture into interior Alaska. Commercial buildings with the familiar false front architectural style were constructed in mountain mining towns, plains agricultural communities, and early railroad centers from the late 19th to the early 20th century. While false front architecture is deeply associated with the American West, the style is rooted in 19th-century classical European architecture that drew inspiration from building styles of the 16th-century Italian Renaissance that created continuity and communicated an era of global commerce and colonization.

Shopkeepers, hotel proprietors, and other business people were often reluctant to invest heavily to erect a place of business in a new and uncertain location. Still, the new arrivals wished to project an image of stability and success to prospective clientele and create a more urban atmosphere. Once construction methods advanced beyond tents and log buildings, usually with the advent of a local sawmill or railroad access, commercial building owners would budget their spending for impressive facades while relegating the secondary sides and back of the building to more utilitarian treatment. Today, the Chena Building represents the oldest false front commercial building in Alaska's interior region and one of the five oldest buildings in the Fairbanks area.¹¹

The façade features a half-glazed, single wooden door entry on the right side. A large window opening to the left of the entry measures 72 inches wide and 32 inches tall. Flat board trim surrounds both the door and window opening. The façade is sided with a finished, flush shiplap that is joined horizontally and extends above the shed roofline, creating a false-front parapet. No cornice detail remains.

The Chena Building's northeast elevation is finished with rough-cut, flush-mounted boards 7 ½ inches wide. The rear third of the building has horizontal battens installed to cover cracks between boards. The front two-thirds of the northwest elevation were enclosed in a shed addition. A doorway between the main building and the addition is currently covered with plywood. The addition has been removed. The building's southeast elevation or rear side is sided

¹¹ Alaska Heritage Resource Survey, Office of History and Archaeology, Anchorage, Alaska.

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in large unfinished, flush-mounted, rough-cut boards measuring 11 ½ inches wide. There is an off-centered framed doorway with simple flatboard trim, but the door no longer remains. The southwest elevation is covered in simple drop siding, also known as cove-style novelty siding or channel rustic siding, 5 ½ inches wide. This elevation is the shortest wall with the low end of the shed roof and is the only elevation with eaves.

The roofline has an open shallow eave with rafter tails covered with a simple fascia board. A window opening with flatboard trim is at the rear third of the southwest elevation. Towards the front of the building, there are electrical junction boxes and a metal conduit. The roof is a composite multilayer of hewn spruce poles, planking, and corrugated sheet metal.

The interior is divided into two rooms by a thin wall with an off-center, four-panel wood door connecting the two spaces. Each room features a single window and exterior doorway. The front room is approximately double the size of the back room.

The Chena Building currently rests on a temporary milled timber crib foundation. Three beams support the floor joists that run the width of the building and extend slightly beyond the exterior walls. A temporary shed roof shelter over the Chena Building has been constructed to protect it from the elements and prevent further damage caused by heavy snow loads. The standing seam metal shed roof is supported by three posts on each side with cross bracing. The temporary shelter is affixed to the three beams spanning underneath the building. The temporary foundation and the shelter are constructed of modern pressure-treated lumber and are not attached directly to the building.

While structurally sound, the Chena Building has been subject to more than 70 years of neglect and exhibits significant weathering of all the exterior surfaces. The often unmanned park location makes it a potential target for graffiti, sabotage, or fire.¹² The foundation, floor, windows/doors, roofing, and exterior surfaces require rehabilitation. Further research will continue to identify the original interior finishing, roofing, window glazing, and stove/heating configuration for making possible a compatible use for a property through the repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features that convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. While the Chena Building faces manifold human and natural risks, the last known remnant of the historic Chena townsite holds vast interpretive potential and remains architecturally significant to interior Alaska.

¹² Vandals broke into the Chena building in the summer of 2021.

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INTEGRITY

Setting

GIS analysis of the Alaska State Parks Chena-Pump wayside comparing historical maps and aerial imagery estimates that the course of the Tanana River has shifted more than 200 meters north-northwest since the region's first medium-scale USGS mapping in 1908.¹³ Numerous seasonal floods have largely scoured the predominantly alluvial floodplain on which the Chena townsite was built, so today, the wayside is a combination of road-bed material built to grade mixed with stands of cottonwood, black spruce, and brush willow and alder. The heavily denuded landscape around the unimproved town streets shown in historic photographs has changed significantly throughout the century. However, a few remnants echo the period of significance. The Chena-Pump Road on the north limit of the wayside still closely follows the original Tanana Valley Railroad route, and the spindly black spruce forest in the muskeg of the Tanana Flats on the southside of the Tanana River was likely less altered than the surrounding hills, thus preserving Chena's historic river-facing viewshed. Still, the historic Chena townsite no longer exists, and other than the state-maintained public restrooms and picnic shelter, the Chena Building is the only structure on the Alaska State Parks Chena-pump wayside. Thus, much of the building's integrity of setting has been lost.

Location

The historic Chena Building retains a good level of integrity regarding location. The Chena Pump State Park wayside, home to the historic archaeological Chena Townsite and the historic Chena Building site, is located in the transitional zone between the Tanana Lowlands and the Yukon-Tanana Uplands physiographic provinces.¹⁴ The wayside location, on the banks of a bend in the Tanana River, presents an unobstructed view South across the Tanana Valley to the Alaska mountain range 70 miles distant. Visitors can observe all of the location's characteristics and advantages for historic riverboat traffic, and its modern use as a public boat landing illustrates the importance of river transportation even in 21st-century Alaska.

The present location of the Chena Building in the Chena Pump Road wayside and public boat landing brings the story of the Chena Building full circle: all the physical characteristics of the location on the main stem of the Tanana River that initially attracted Euroamerican traders and riverboat traffic are present and still being used by Alaskans year-round. Townsites with riverboat landings trace the history of interior Alaska, and the story of interior Alaska remains inextricably intertwined with the story of riverboats, early railroads, and the town of Chena.¹⁵

Natural processes and human activity over the past 100 years have almost entirely erased above-ground evidence of the original Chena townsite. Through detailed analysis of historical railroad

¹³ Gutoski 2013; Henszey 2019.

¹⁴ Daniel R. Thompson, and Catherine Pendleton. Cultural Resource Reconnaissance of the Chena Pump/Tanana River Scenic Wayside (FAI-011): ADOT&PF Project Number (TEA-0645(9)/61267), Alaska Office of History and Archeology, 2004 and see Gutoski, 2013.

¹⁵ Hedrick and Savage 1988.

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and civil surveys, it has been possible to recreate the townsite street plan, which is now occupied partly by the Alaska State Parks Chena Pump wayside.¹⁶ Ongoing archeological and archival investigations of the Chena townsite by the University of Alaska Fairbanks Department of Anthropology, the University of Alaska Museum of the North, and local historians strive to identify the physical characteristics of the historic townsite and develop a broader understanding of settlement and abandonment patterns, commodity flows, subsistence practices, and ethnicity, class, and gender relations in early 20th century interior Alaska.¹⁷

When the historic Chena Building was recovered from downtown Fairbanks, it was placed in its current location: south (river side) of the Chena Pump wayside parking lot, with its front façade facing approximately north-northwest.¹⁸ Based on historical maps, photos, and interviews with long-time residents, the building's current location is within the original Chena townsite limits and rests only a few hundred feet from an ongoing archeological survey of the townsite area. The historic Chena Building has been moved at least three times in its lifetime. Researchers may never establish its precise original position. However, based on historic photographs of Chena, most of the false-fronted buildings were on Front and First Streets within the townsite's commercial district, and the current archival and archaeological investigations have identified the remaining areas of that district. The Chena Building's return to the Chena Townsite location is essential in preserving the property's structural integrity, interpretive value, and historical meaning.

Design

Analysis of the historic Chena Building is ongoing, but the present expert consensus is that it is an intact original example of the early twentieth-century commercial style, false-front wood frame buildings that commonly appear in photography of gold-rush era Alaska. Its construction from dimensional milled-lumber signal proximity to either local sawmills or transportation and supply hubs where board-wood became a viable alternative to log construction. Design details such as window and door trim-molding also provide evidence of the frontier region's transition to more metropolitan and mercantilist sensibilities. The design choice of a half-gabled or lean-to roof behind the false-front suggests an economical use of materials and speed in construction while still handling the inevitable snow loads typical for long interior Alaskan winters. The narrow floor plan of the Chena Building is a logical accommodation for the crowded and subdivided lot sizes available on commercial front streets that ideally tried to capitalize on the proximity to both the riverside docks and warehouses and the Tanana Valley Railway sidings.

Materials

The Chena Building retains high integrity of materials. Analysis by archeologists and architectural historians suggests that except for minor repairs and detail replacements, the

¹⁶ Gutoski 2013 and Cramb, et al. 2022.

¹⁷ Cramb, et al. 2022.

¹⁸ Based on historic photos of the townsite, the false-fronted buildings at Chena were mostly toward the river and facing south. The building's north-by-northwest orientation at the Wayside is temporary and can be changed to face the river.

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Historic Chena Building retains original materials except for possibly window glazing and roof sheathing. There is no evidence of the original foundation. In many cases, local river stones would be employed for riverside communities similar to Chena, reflecting the unavailability of masonry. However, scavengers would have abandoned the original foundation when the Historic Chena Building was initially moved to Fairbanks. The Chena Building is constructed from a mix of dimensional milled lumber, mostly unplanned, revealing saw marks from small diameter circular saw blades used in both the local Chena sawmill and sawmills in nearby Fairbanks.

Workmanship

The Chena Building exhibits good integrity of workmanship. Its construction does not display a high level of ornamentation or artistic craftsmanship but clearly represents the utilitarian and hasty nature of boomtown, gold rush-era construction compounded by material shortages and the abbreviated construction season in sub-arctic Alaska.

Feeling

The Chena Building retains the integrity of feeling, particularly with its re-establishment near its original location. The building's character-defining features, combined with archival visual documentation, archaeological investigations, oral histories, and the interpretive and educational endeavors of local historians, are important elements that infuse the building with historical meaning and communicate to visitors important trends and events that occurred at this place: the dismantling of the narrow-gauge rail spur to Chena in 1920 and the decline of the bustling Chena townsite that quickly followed.¹⁹ The movement of resident workers to the rival town of Fairbanks and the gradual abandonment of Chena. Finally, the built environment's transformation is due to natural cycles of river flood and reforestation.²⁰ In essence, the building retains strong interpretive value. It still evokes its historic commercial function, the penetration of American capitalism through Alaska river routes, and remains one of the few places that conveys not only the story of the rise of a gold rush boomtown but also the impact and totality of its bust.

Association

The integrity of the association is good for the Chena Building. When approached by boat or road, the site conveys the impression of an unimproved river landing that looks today much as it might have at the turn of the 20th century. Alaska's early river communities were faced with a constant struggle against the forces of nature but, at the same time, served as ports of entry for a multitude of human dreams and ambitions. The raw elements at the Chena Building are the same as those available in 1902, and modest, roughly finished survivors like the Chena Building directly link to the lost gold rush town of Chena and provide an interpretive window into a

¹⁹ Duane Koenig, "Ghost Railway in Alaska: The Story of the Tanana Valley Railroad." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* (1954): 8-12.

²⁰ T. Cole 1991 and Dermot Cole, *Fairbanks: A Gold Rush Town That Beat the Odds*, Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press, 2008.

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watershed moment in the history of interior Alaska. The Chena Building also rests squarely within a pending Chena Townsite Historic Archaeological District that recognizes and hosts archeological research to document better the historic Chena Townsite and the history of interior Alaska's social and economic development. Archeologists from the University of Alaska Fairbanks Anthropology Department and the University of Alaska Museum of the North continue to consult closely with the Alaska Office of History and Archeology on the status of ongoing research contextually linked to the historic Chena Building.²¹

²¹ Oral history sources place the building origins in Chena, creating a strong association to the historic townsite. Darling, Bob. Interviewed by Joshua Reuther, Martin Gutoski, and Patricia Peirsol, July 12, 2024.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☒ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE

EXPLORATION & SETTLEMENT

Period of Significance

1905 ca. -1922

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Significant Dates

1904-1920 Tanana Mines Railway/ Tanana Valley Railroad

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Chena Building is a rare surviving example of a commercial-style false-front building in Interior Alaska. The 120-ca.-year-old, one-story building is situated on the north bank of the Tanana River, nine miles downriver from Fairbanks, in the vicinity of the Chena Townsite Historic Archaeological District. The building's period of significance starts with its construction sometime after 1905ca., paralleling a stampede to interior Alaska sparked by Felix Pedro's discovery of gold in 1902 and the establishment of the riverside town of Chena built to accommodate gold rush participants heading to the goldfields in 1904.²² The building's significance ends around 1922, when social and commercial trends after World War I led to the boomtown's bust and abandonment, marking the final extension of frontier economics in the American West.²³

The Chena Building, like many of Alaska's early 20th-century structures, endured several moves, reuses, and eventual neglect between the 1920s and 2020s, while large-scale shifts in the river's course eroded all visual evidence of the Chena townsite. Through a private donation to the State of Alaska, the Chena Building has returned to its historic location, where today, the Alaska State Parks and Outdoor Recreation operates a boat launch and picnic area. While somewhat decrepit and needing repair, the Chena Building's character-defining features continue to convey the town's early economic optimism and speak to the significant historical areas of commerce and community settlement. Thus, the Chena Building is significant on a local level under Criterion A for its association with Fairbanks' gold rush era, the settlement of Chena, its lost competition to Fairbanks, and interior Alaska's boom and bust economy. It also qualifies for listing under Consideration B because moving the building from the original location saved it from the erosional fate of Chena's built environment, thereby making the Chena Building the last standing remnant of the lost townsite at Chena. The Chena Building's return to the historic Chena townsite

²² T. Cole 1991; D. Cole 2008.

²³ Robe 1943.

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serves as an excellent interpretive reminder of the long-vanished boomtown, its relationship to the river, and its oft-forgotten contribution to Fairbanks' history.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: The Chena Building and the Rise and Fall of an American Frontier Boomtown in Interior Alaska, 1905-1922 ca.

The rivers of interior Alaska have been transportation conduits of human activity for thousands of years. One of the greatest river drainages in Alaska is the Tanana River system, flowing northwesterly from its origins in the Alaska Range to its confluence with the Yukon River approximately two hundred miles west-northwest of modern-day Fairbanks, Alaska. In the first years of the twentieth century, after the Klondike and Nome gold rushes, gold prospecting activity reached deep into interior Alaska. A series of modest gold discoveries in hills and valleys between the Yukon and Tanana Rivers, culminating with the strike by Felix Pedro only about 20 miles north of the present-day Fairbanks, attracted a steady stream of prospectors and traders that relied on water transport and river towns that sprang from river commerce. In the early stages of the Fairbanks gold boom, the river town of Chena was the key transportation hub between river-borne material originating on the lower Yukon and the first operational railroad to serve the gold camps.

After the decline of the Klondike district, the Tanana River and one of its tributaries, the Chena River, became the epicenter of prospecting activity in interior Alaska. The lure of gold led to the establishment of two townsites on the banks of the Chena and Tanana Rivers that would become transportation and supply centers for mining activity in the middle Tanana region.²⁴ The best-known (and only survivor) of the two communities, Fairbanks, was founded by entrepreneur E.T. Barnette, who established a trading post in the prospecting season of 1901.²⁵

Approximately 9 miles downstream from Fairbanks was the town of Chena, which began as a trading post near the confluence of the Chena and Tanana Rivers. The Hendricks and Belt trading post founded by N.V. Hendricks and George Belt was established only months before E. T. Barnette's venture.²⁶ Initially settled to engage in the fur trade with a nearby Dene-Athabascan Indian village, the future Chena townsite's chief advantage over Barnette's trading post (the future Fairbanks) was more reliable water depth for passage by larger river boats. There is some evidence that Barnette would have preferred the Chena townsite but was beaten to the location by Belt and Hendricks.²⁷

²⁴ Robe 1943.

²⁵ T. Cole 1991; D. Cole 2008.

²⁶ Robe 1943.

²⁷ According to Robe, Barnette probably knew that Hendricks and Belt were ready to establish trading posts along that stretch of the Tanana, given their widely known contracts with the NAT&T. Robe thought that is why Barnette may have decided to focus on Tananacross but could not make it because of Bates Rapids. Hendricks and Belt were trading and contracted for mail along the Tanana and parts of the Yukon running mail from Dawson and already had a couple of

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The town of Chena's development was rapid and meteoric. Period photographs of Chena reveal a bustling railroad depot and waterfront lined with paddle-wheel steamboats and the entire community nestled under clouds of woodsmoke. The denuded surrounding landscape is a clue to the primary power source and construction material. In part because of the Chena townsite's superior boat harbor, several commercial ventures chose it as the terminus for shipping and warehousing of supplies. Late in the 1903 season, entrepreneurs Falcon Joslin and Martin Harrais traveled from Dawson, Yukon Territory, Canada, to the Chena region to evaluate the potential for building a railroad.²⁸ After returning to Dawson and securing financial backing, Joslin and Harrais began construction in 1904 of what would become the Tanana Mines Railway.

This narrow-gauge system would eventually provide service for many of the major gold camps that would dot the valleys on the north slope of the Tanana basin.²⁹ Building a railroad bed over permafrost-laden terrain proved more challenging than anticipated. Still, the extensive supporting facilities for the Tanana Mines Railway and riverine docks and warehouses drove a flurry of construction in Chena through 1904 and 1905, culminating with the arrival of the first steam locomotive in July 1905, which accelerated the development of both Chena and the rail line. The town of Chena continued to grow in parallel with the fortunes of the Tanana Mines Railway, with a locomotive roundhouse and riverside depot, telegraph station, sawmill, stores, restaurants, and dwellings, so that by 1907 more than 120 structures filled out maps of the townsite, and population estimates are as high as 1000 residents. The Chena Building, constructed and utilized between 1905 and 1922 as a store for the expanding riverside settlement, would be perched among the wooden maze.

In 1907, the Tanana Mines Railway was refinanced and restructured under a new name, the Tanana Valley Railroad.³⁰ Its service expanded from Chena to the Fox Creek and Chatanika districts. The railroad enjoyed expansion and profitable operations through 1909. The town of Chena thrived even in the shadow of the nearby rapidly growing Fairbanks, which had secured several key (and competitive) developments, perhaps most importantly, the U.S. Federal District Court seat and Land Recording Office, that contributed to a shift of regional focus away from Chena.³¹

Even though gold production increased in the Tanana basin after 1909, technical and social developments began to transform settlement patterns and business, especially for railroad operations and the Chena community. The widespread adoption of the automobile provided yet another alternative to animal-powered cartage and transportation. The increasing demand for electrification also increased the demand for an alternative to wood-fired power plants as the increased population's requirements began outstripping practical timber sources. After 1910,

small trading posts along the Tanana, so their plans to begin one at Baker and near the confluence of the Chena and Tanana would likely have been widely known. Joshua Ruether, Personal Communication, 2024.

²⁸ T. Cole 1991.

²⁹ Osborne 2013.

³⁰ Osborne 2013.

³¹ T. Cole 1991.

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revenues for the Tanana Valley Railroad started to drop. Returns continued to decline until the First World War, when the war-related economic downturn, combined with local and regional competition, led to bankruptcy. The regional competitor to the Tanana Valley Railroad was the new and federally funded Alaska Engineering Commission (AEC) Railroad (eventually the Alaska Railroad).³² By 1918, the AEC Railroad had purchased all the Tanana Valley Railroad assets. By 1919, the last of the old Tanana Valley Railroad's narrow-gauge lines had been widened and absorbed into the AEC Railroad. By 1923, the ARC Railroad had completely bypassed the town of Chena as the new routes had extended south to Nenana to link with the "tidewater line" north of Anchorage.

The town of Chena had been in decline well before the demise of the Tanana Valley Railroad. The 1910 United States Census records show less than 300 people living in Chena.³³ The amenities and conveniences offered by Fairbanks and other outlying river communities had siphoned away Chena's population nearly as quickly as it had appeared. Local newspapers reported dismantling buildings and reassembling them at Nenana and Fairbanks as early as 1916. Other properties were dismantled and sold for lumber.³⁴

Most commercial buildings in Chena were associated with railroads, materials warehousing, stores, bars, and hotels. After the narrow-gauge railway spur shut down to Chena, much of the commercial district became redundant. The high price of building materials in Fairbanks (and throughout Alaska territory) made economic sense of salvaging unused buildings wherever gold booms had "played out." With the demise of the Tanana Valley Railroad during World War I, there was no longer a need for the warehouses and docks that lined the riverfront or the railway terminal and support facilities. Demand for hotels, bars, and stores has dropped exponentially. Fairbanks residents may have salvaged many structures for local construction or even firewood. The Chena Building likely moved from the Chena townsite to Fairbanks City around the same time as the liquidation of Tanana Valley Railroad (1917), marking the final chapter in Chena's brief history. Some evidence suggests the Chena Building remained in Chena as late as 1922, hence the ending date for its period of significance. Recently uncovered newspapers used as insulation in the building's flooring date to July 1922. However, it is possible that the flooring was rebuilt in 1922, and the building moved earlier.³⁵ Until more evidence is discovered, the actual moving date and motive for its move are unknown.

While we may never know exactly when the building left Chena, we can surmise how it moved. One viable transportation method for moving an entire building was the Tanana Valley Railroad, meaning it would have left Chena before the route closed in 1920. The relatively short distance up the Chena River also made it possible to transport complete buildings by barge to the still-

³² Osborne 2013.

³³ U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census. Censuses of 1900-1910.

³⁴ Reuther, Joshua. Personal Communication, 2024. see Deely 1996, and Fairbanks Daily-News Miner issues Sept. 12, 1916, and September 23, 1916.

³⁵ Joshua Reuther, Personal Communication, 2024

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expanding city of Fairbanks. This method would have made it possible to move the building in 1922.

Whatever the date, the move saved the building from the meandering course of the Tanana River, which had obliterated all that remained of the Chena townsite by 1949.³⁶ In Fairbanks, the Civil Aviation Authority repurposed the Chena Building as an administrative office associated with housing and placed it on the periphery of the now non-existent Weeks Field, once Fairbanks' main civilian airfield. In the decades after World War II and the decommissioning of Weeks Field, the Chena Building was again moved to a private lot on 10th Avenue, only a short distance from what was once Weeks Field, by Fairbanks resident Alaska Linck in the 1950s. According to a longtime friend of the Linck family, Bob Darling, Alaska Linck had mentioned that her old building originated in Chena, and it was one of her most "prized possessions."³⁷ Alaska Linck's son, Jim Moody, affectionately dubbed the historic building "Old Timer." For nearly 50 years, Old Timer functioned as a shed or storehouse on 10th Avenue.³⁸ After Moddy's passing, his estate donated the Chena Building to the State of Alaska in 2018.³⁹

Interpretive value

Any history of territorial Alaska is incomplete without recognizing the significant transportation barriers faced by people who were attracted to the area and attempted to make it their home. The rivers of interior Alaska revealed to stampeder the mineral riches of one of the most remote reaches of North America while also serving as the thoroughfares of human movement and access. The introduction of steam riverboats led directly to the first railroads, and the town of Chena was a vital part of this development pattern. In the 21st century, there can be no argument that the modern Fairbanks International Airport and the aviation it serves have overtaken river transportation. It is now the most important transportation hub in Alaska north of Anchorage. There is some irony in the fact that the historic townsite of Chena lies closer to the airport than downtown Fairbanks. Without a doubt, understanding the history of Alaska's inland empire starts with Fairbanks, and strong evidence exists that the mining and mercantile commerce that Fairbanks relied upon were tied to Chena's deeper harbor and the Tanana Valley Railroad headquartered there. While it remains an open question whether the establishment of Fairbanks would have been possible without the prior development of Chena, the Chena building, now resting in the heart of the historic Chena Townsite, provides a final and important interpretive window to understanding the Fairbanks gold rush, manifestation of American capitalism, settlement rivalries, and the patterns of history sculptured by the rivers of interior Alaska.

Today, the Chena Building is the last building from historic Chena still standing at the original townsite and represents one of a handful of pre-World War I structures in the Fairbanks region.

³⁶ Aerial photographs from 1949 show faint traces of one street.

³⁷ Longtime Fairbanks journalist Kathleen "Mike" Dalton interviewed many local pioneers, with Alaska Linck being one of them. Dalton passed away in 2019. Darling, Bob. Interviewed by Joshua Reuther, Martin Gutoski, and Patricia Peirsol, July 12, 2024.

³⁸ Local Affairs Agency 1971.

³⁹ Ray Bonnell, "110-year-old building returns home to Chena." Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, May 20, 2019.

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Importantly, it remains one of the few publicly owned cultural resources on the Chena River, which offers the community rare access to local history and education. The Chena Building was placed on a parcel of Alaska State Parks land (the Chena Pump Wayside) that corresponds with the historic archaeological investigation of the original townsite, restoring its integrity of location, feeling, and association. While the boom of Chena's commercial district in 1905 ca. marks the start of the Chena Building's period of significance, and the town's bust by 1922 marks its end, the providence of its rediscovery and return to the original historic townsite after more than 100 years supports both its interpretive value and the significance of the Chena Building's nomination under Criteria A.

Criteria Consideration B: There and Back Again: The Chena Building and its Return to the River.

The Chena Building survived the disappearance of its original town and has been moved at least three times since its original construction. After the decline of Chena and the closure of the Tanana Valley Railroad, the building was moved (by boat or barge) up the Chena River to Fairbanks.

According to local informants, the Chena Building was used as a housing bureau office for the Civil Aeronautics Authority on the outskirts of Weeks Field – the primary civilian airfield for Fairbanks between 1923 and 1951. Civilian and commercial aviation transitioned to the newly constructed Fairbanks airport beginning in 1950, and the Civil Aeronautics Authority decommissioned the Weeks Field tower in June 1951 after it burned down in an accident that fall.

The City of Fairbanks realigned some of the streets on the north side of Weeks Field in the early 1950s, and the Chena Building was again moved onto a private lot on 10th Avenue owned by the Lincks family, where a rough addition was added to one side, and the building was used for storage and possibly seasonal dwelling. Very little maintenance was performed on the building for the next 50 years. The ravages of Fairbanks' winters and seasonal floods (including the great flood of 1967) took their toll on the interior and exterior, although it remained structurally sound. The owner, Alaska Lincks, died in 2008, and her son, Jim Moody, retained it. Moody gave the building its moniker, "Old Timer," underscoring its historical value to the local community.

In the summer of 2018, the Lincks/Moody estate, local historians, and preservationists brought the "Old Timer" to the attention of the Alaska Division of Parks and Recreation and donated the building to the State of Alaska. Alaska State Parks returned the building to the historic Chena Townsite, situated partly within an existing facility, a combined-use public access site, and a boat landing. Meanwhile, geospatial analysis, archeological surveys, excavations, and Ground-Penetrating Radar imaging have revealed extensive preservation of intact features and

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assemblages at the Chena Townsite.⁴⁰ The current multi-year project conducted by the Department of Anthropology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the University of Alaska Museum of the North and local researchers are working to ground-truth Chena's tangible resources with historic mapping, generate Chena's ethnographic story through archeological, archival and oral history sources, and nominate the Chena Townsite Historic Archaeological District to the National Register of Historic Places.⁴¹ Importantly, because the public uses the current site, the building becomes a significant interpretive tool for telling the history of the long-forgotten town of Chena.

⁴⁰ Bowman Peter M. Bowers, and Joshua D. Reuther. *Old Chena Townsite (FAI-00011): Ground Penetrating Radar Analysis*. Report prepared for Alaska Office of History and Archaeology by Northern Land Use Research, Inc., Fairbanks, Alaska. 2013; and see Cramb et al. 2022

⁴¹ Scott, Shirar, Josh Reuther, and Robert Bowman (with contributions from Martin Gutoski, Bob Henzey, and Tom Duncan). *2014 Testing at the Old Chena Townsite Archaeological District (FAI-00011)*. Professional report submitted to the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology and the State Historic Preservation Officer. University of Alaska Museum of the North, Fairbanks, Alaska. 2020; and see Gutoski 2013; Cramb et al. 2022.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☒ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): AHRS FAI-02828

10. Geographical Data

Acree of Property less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 64.795348 | -147.952881 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

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The Chena building is set on a wooded section of land in the Alaska State Parks "Chena Pump Wayside and boat launch, approximately 70 meters from the Tanana River. The Alaska State Parks Chena Pump Wayside is approximately 1800 meters downstream from the confluence of the Chena and Tanana Rivers. The Tanana River cuts through a broad valley, draining the northern slopes of the Alaska Range and the southern slopes of the Yukon-Tanana Uplands, and flows into the Yukon River. The Alaska State Parks Chena Pump Wayside occupies an area that corresponds to a portion of the historic early-19th-century townsite of Chena, and ongoing archeological survey work has revealed material evidence from the gold-rush era less than 100 meters from the current location of the Chena Building.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See map

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Michael Letzring, Historian, with local historians Martin Gutoski and Patricia Peirsol offering resource support. Edited by Justin Cramb, Archeologist, Joshua Reuther, Archeologist, and Katherine Ringsmuth, Historian

organization: State of Alaska Office of History and Archeology

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city or town: Anchorage state: Alaska zip code: 99501

e-mail: katie.ringsmuth@alaska.gov

telephone: 907.269.8714

date: 7-3-24

Chena Building

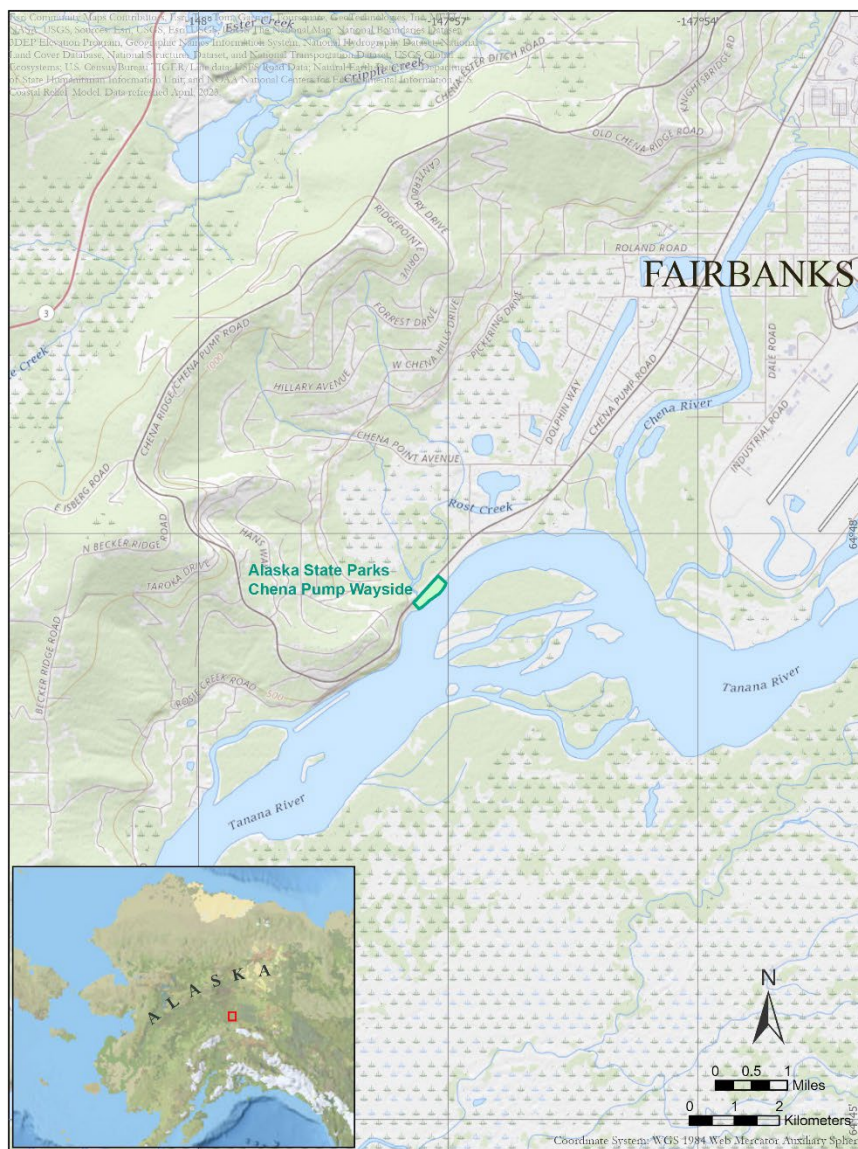
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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.



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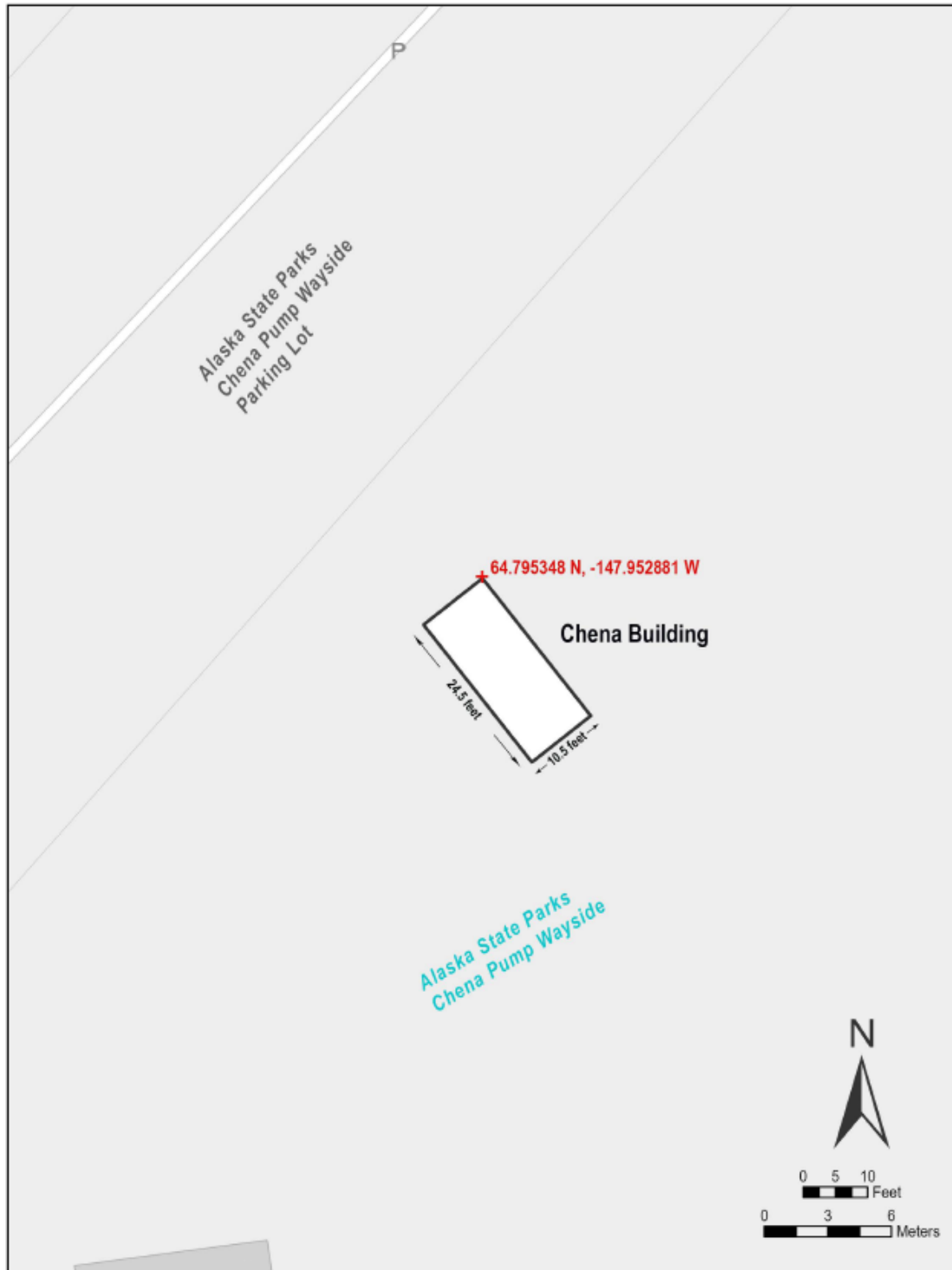
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.
Key all photographs to this map.



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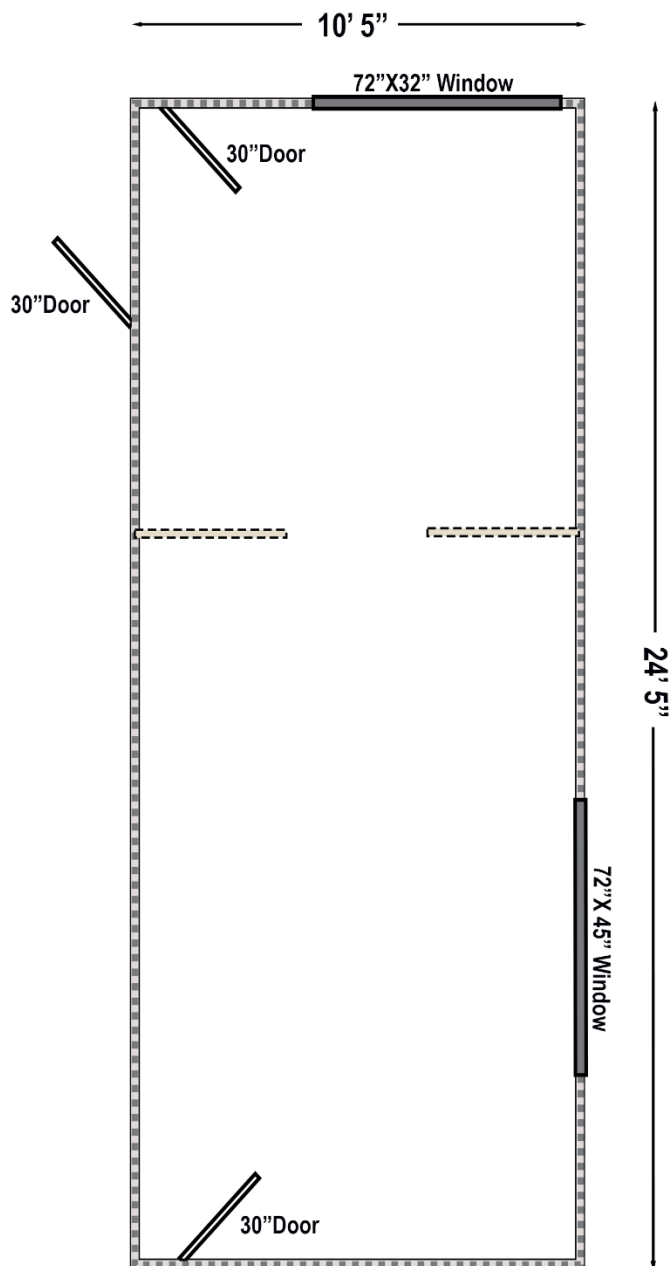


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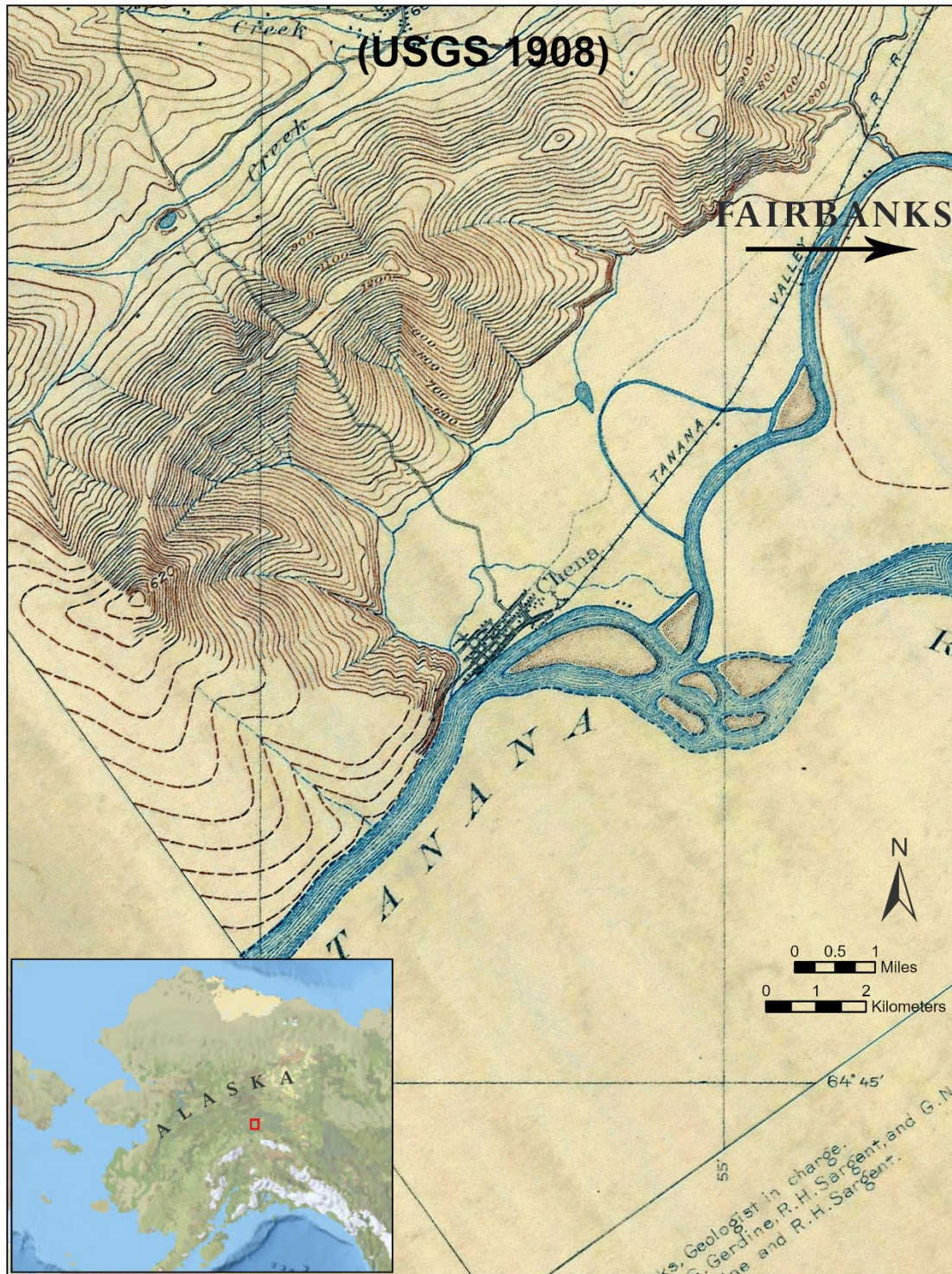
Chena Building interior plan



Chena Building

Name of Property

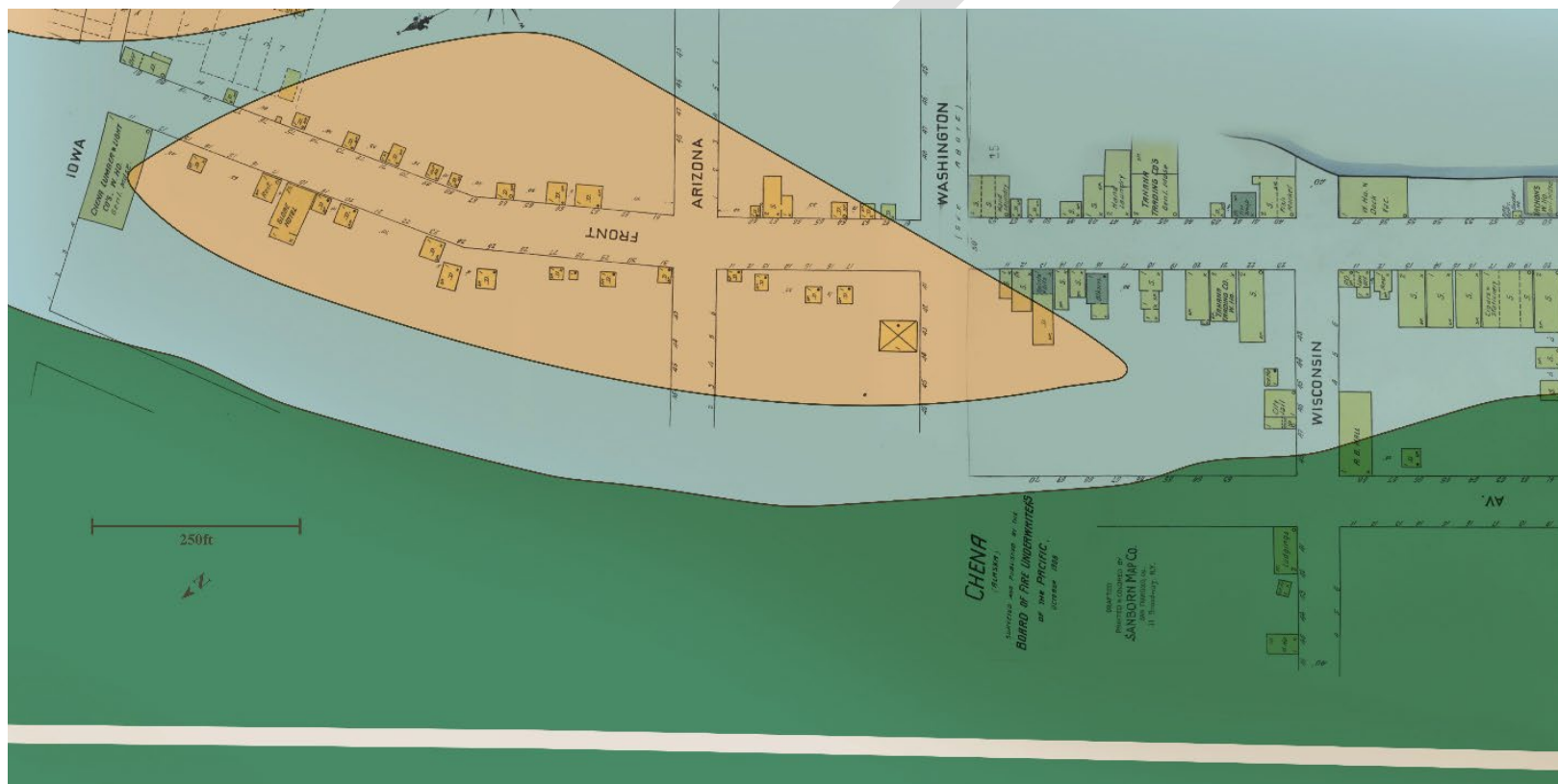
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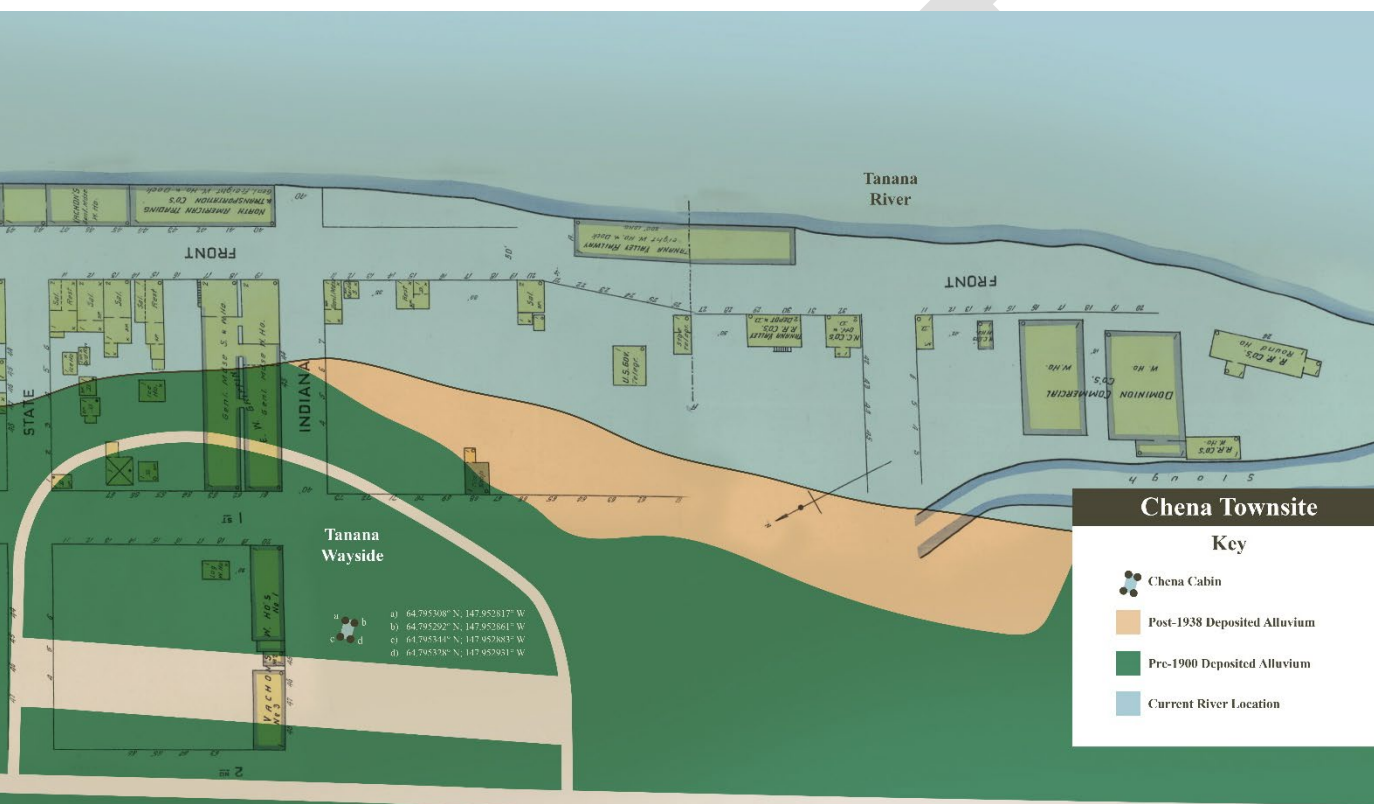
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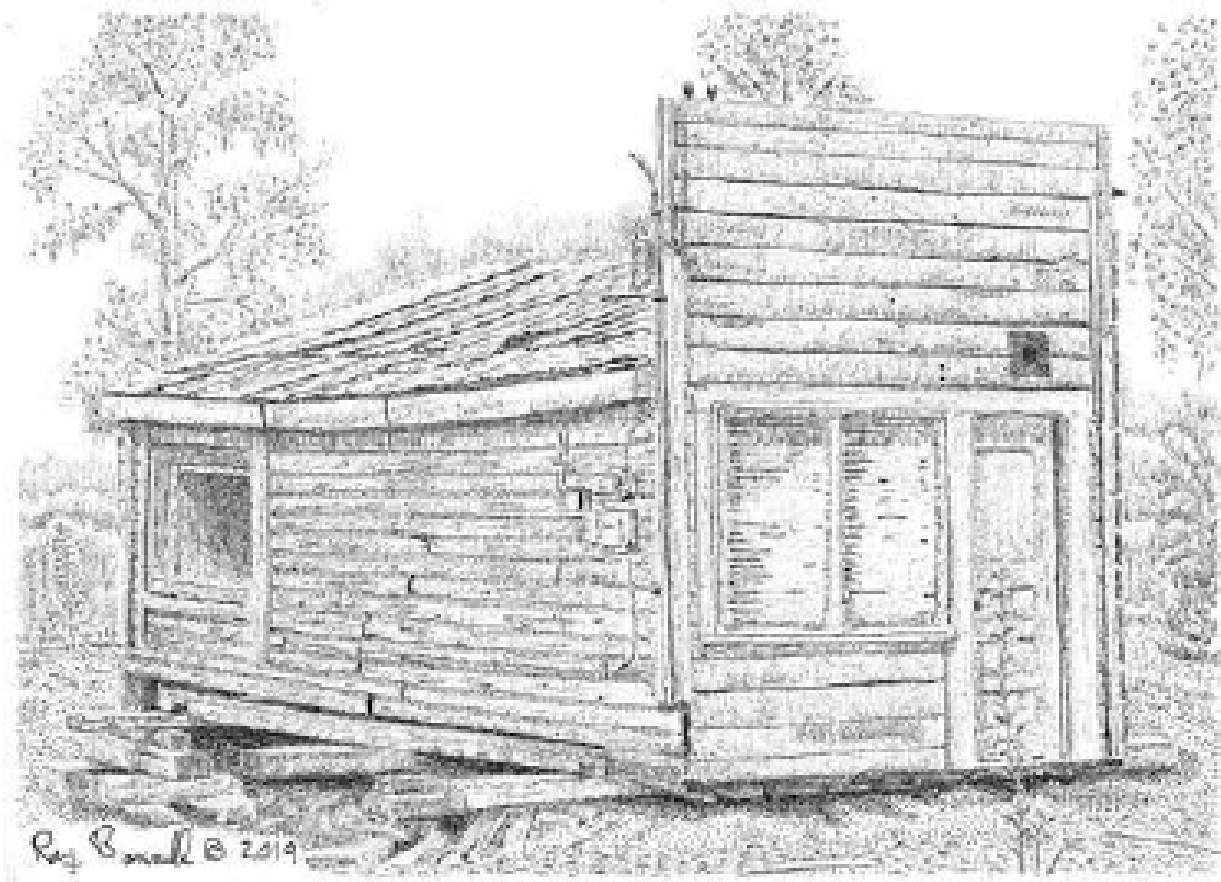
Current site map with Sanborn Map overlay. 2024. Joshua Reuther and Justin Cramb, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

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- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)



Artist Ray Bonnell, 2019. In addition to being a local artist, Ray is a former member of the Alaska Historical Commission.

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Fairbanks Daily News-Miner - 11/27/2018

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CHENA CABIN



An old store built some time in the first decade of the 20th Century is seen Monday after being unloaded at the Tanana River wayside along Chena Pump Road. The cabin is one of few surviving structures from the town of Chena. Chena was an early competitor to Fairbanks during the Fairbanks gold rush that was located near the confluence of the Chena and Tanana. The store was moved to the Weeks Field airport some time around the collapse of Chena in 1917. The was later moved to the Barnette Street home of Alaska Stewart Linek and her son James "Jim" Moody.

The old store took an unusual route back to the old Chena townsite. Moody's estate donated the historic building to Alaska State Parks. But earlier this month, Fairbanks police stopped the truck carrying the building on Airport Way for having improper oversize



load markings and for not having insurance or current registration. Police directed the truck and its cargo to the city impound lot, where it spent a week.

Truck driver Bob Darling, who volunteered to move the store because of his interest in the project, got the truck out of the impound lot last week. It required showing the city proof of insurance and ownership as well as paying fees, he said. After getting the truck outside the impound lot fence on

Wednesday, he and fellow historical preservationist Patty Peirsol returned on Thanksgiving to drive it the rest of the way to Chena Pump Road during the holiday lull in traffic.

"It was a combination of 'Lassie Come Home' and 'Free Willy,'" Peirsol said. Alaska State Park plans to put a temporary roof on the old store this week and later put up an interpretive sign about the old town of Chena.

Sam Friedman
Eric Engman photos

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NO.	ADDRESS	OWNER	DATE	TYPE	STYLE	SIGNIF.	REMARKS
BLOCK 109 FAIRBANKS TOWNSITE							
L. 4A, 5B	545 9th Ave.	Anna Groff	1920(A)	House	Pioneer		
Lot 11A	519 9th Ave.	C. L. Lindberg	1923	House	Plain		ABR
Lot 12	513 9th Ave.	C. L. Lindberg	1939(A)	House	Plain		
Lot 13	509 9th Ave.	C. L. Lindberg	1915(A)	House	Pioneer	T8	
Lot 14	503 9th Ave.	William Shaeffer	1920(A)	House	Pioneer	T8	
BLOCK 111 FAIRBANKS TOWNSITE							
Lot 4	655 9th Ave.	Melvin Ristau	1940?(A)	House	Plain		ABR
Lot 9	w/ 666 10th Ave.	Lee & Alaska Linck	1900s	Shack	Pioneer	T8	Moved from Chena to 4th Ave.
BLOCK 112 FAIRBANKS TOWNSITE							
Lot 3	708 10th Ave.	Alaska Linck	1935(A)	House	Plain	BG	
Lot 3A	723 9th Ave.	Richard J. Ray	1937(A)	House	Plain	BG	
Lot 3B	708 1/2 10th Ave.	Alaska Linck	1935(A)	Shack	Plain	BT, BG	
Lot 4A	729 9th Ave. (A&B)	Robert H. Teegardin	1944(A)	Shack	Plain	T8, BG	
Lot 4B	710 10th Ave.	Alaska Linck	1932(A)	House	Pioneer		
Lot 6A1	737 9th Ave.	Jan Tedesco	AWA 1940(A)	House	Pioneer		
BLOCK 113 FAIRBANKS TOWNSITE							
Lot 2A	804 Smythe	LaVaughn Tilman	1936(O)	House	Plain		
Lot 2E	835 9th Ave.	Carrie Lange	1935(A)	House	Plain		
Lot 2F	841 9th Ave.	Carrie Lange	AWA 1940?(A)	House	Plain		
		Virginia Sparks	AWA 1940?(A)	Cabin (covered up)	Pioneer		

From Matheson, Janet. *Fairbanks: A City Historic Building Survey*. Fairbanks, AK: City of Fairbanks, 1985.

Chena Building

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State

Name of Property

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: "Huey"

Date Photographed: circa 1905

Description: The historic town of Chena, Alaska. The location of riverfront docks and warehouses in this image is now beneath the Tanana River.

1 of 16.

Chena Building

Name of Property

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State



Property of University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections

Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: Unknown

Date Photographed: 1914

Description: Buildings and railroad cars in Chena, seen from Tanana River, Alaska. University of Washington Libraries and Special Collections. The image illustrates an excellent example of the use of false-front architectural style found in early settlements of Interior Alaska.

2 of 16.

Chena Building

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State

Name of Property



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: Asahel Curtis

Date Photographed: ca. 1914

Description: Businesses along the railroad tracks in Chena. Note that false-front buildings line the street. Asahel Curtis Klondike-Alaska Photographs, University of Washington Libraries and Special Collections.

3 of 16.

Chena Building

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State

Name of Property



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: Office of History and Archeology staff

Date Photographed: February 2024

Description: The northwest elevation of the Chena Building. The photo was taken facing south-southeast from the Alaska State Parks Chena Pump Wayside parking lot at approximately 426 ft elevation. Though a section is missing, the false front feature is framed by flatboard trim. No cornice details remain, but likely would have been simple. The wood siding on this elevation has a more finished look than the siding on the other elevations. Larger false-front buildings that stood on Chena's main street lining the waterfront might have displayed more ornamentation on their primary elevations.

4 of 16.

Chena Building

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State

Name of Property



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: Office of History and Archeology staff

Date Photographed: April 2024

Description: The northwest elevation of the Chena Building. The photo was taken facing south-southeast from the Alaska State Parks Chena Pump Wayside. Images show the impact of snowmelt and other weather conditions.

5 of 16.

Chena Building

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State

Name of Property



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: Office of History and Archeology staff

Date Photographed: February 2024

Description: southwest elevation of Chena Building. This elevation is finished with rough-cut flush-mounted boards 7 ½ inches wide. The rear third of the building has horizontal battens installed to cover cracks between boards. These battens appear to be a later addition, likely added to deal with air infiltration, as these boards are not joined together. The front two-thirds of the southwest elevation were enclosed in a shed addition added after the building left Chena. The building and the addition are currently covered with plywood. A doorway between the main building and the addition was removed before the building was moved in 2018. The photo was taken facing north-northeast from Alaska State Parks Chena Pump Wayside grounds.

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Chena Building

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State

Name of Property



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: Office of History and Archeology staff

Date Photographed: February 2024

Description: The southeast elevation of the Chena Building. The rear elevation is sided in large flush-mounted rough-cut boards 11 ½ inches wide. There is a framed doorway with simple flat trim, but the door no longer remains. A small shed to the right of the doorway was removed before the move. The photo was taken facing north-northwest from Alaska State Parks Chena Pump Wayside grounds.

7 of 16.

Chena Building

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State

Name of Property



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: Office of History and Archeology staff

Date Photographed: February 2024

Description: northeast elevation of Chena Building. This elevation is covered in simple drop siding, cove-style novelty siding, or channel rustic siding, 5 ½ inches wide. This elevation is the shortest wall with the low end of the shed roof. The roofline has an open eave with rafter tails covered with simple fascia board. Electrical junction boxes and metal conduits were likely added when the building was at Weeks Field. A window opening at the rear third of the left elevation might have been added when the building was at Weeks Field. The photo was taken facing west-southwest from Alaska State Parks Chena Pump Wayside grounds.

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Chena Building

Name of Property

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: Martin Gutoski

Date Photographed: 2023 ca.

Description: The old power hookup is attached to the side of the Chena Building. Historians and archeologists are still trying to determine patent dates to possibly date the building.

Chena Building

Name of Property

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: Martin Gutoski

Date Photographed: 2023 ca.

Description: Close-up of the patent number on the power box.

Chena Building

Name of Property

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer:

Date Photographed: 2023 ca.

Description: Detail of Chena Building siding shows unpainted siding, likely when it was at Chena, and the painted siding, likely painted green after it left Chena.

11 of 16.

Chena Building

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State

Name of Property



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: Office of History and Archeology staff

Date Photographed: February 2024

Description: Detail of Chena Building. Rough milled siding and trim displaying original circular saw-cuts. The photo was taken facing south-southwest from Alaska State Parks Chena Pump Wayside grounds.

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Chena Building

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State

Name of Property



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: Office of History and Archeology staff

Date Photographed: February 2024

Description: Detail of Chena Building. Composite multilayer roof construction with hewn spruce poles, planking, and corrugated sheet metal. The photo was taken facing north-northwest from Alaska State Parks Chena Pump Wayside grounds.

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Chena Building

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State

Name of Property



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: Office of History and Archeology staff

Date Photographed: February 2024

Description: Detail of Chena Building. False front detail above front door and window. The photo was taken facing southeast from Alaska State Parks Chena Pump Wayside grounds.

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Chena Building

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State

Name of Property



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: Office of History and Archeology staff

Date Photographed: February 2024

Description: The Chena Building's location and setting are dominated by the now-frozen Tanana River looking downstream towards Chena Point. The photo was taken facing southwest from Alaska State Parks Chena Pump Wayside grounds.

15 of 16.

Chena Building

Name of Property

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State



Name of Property: Chena Building

City or Vicinity: Fairbanks

County: Fairbanks North Star

State: Alaska

Photographer: Martin Gutoski and Patty Piersol

Date Photographed: October 2018

Description: Chena Building. In-situ image of Chena Building on Lincks property before being moved to the current location. The photo was taken at 9th Avenue & Barnette, Fairbanks, Alaska.

16 of 16.

Chena Building

Fairbanks-North Star
Borough, Alaska
County and State

Name of Property

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours

Tier 2 – 120 hours

Tier 3 – 230 hours

Tier 4 – 280 hours