

THE IDITAROD LOOP

IDT-

The Iditarod Loop extends southwest from Takotna along Fourth of July Creek and Bonanza Creek, through Flat and Iditarod, then northeast back to Ophir where it rejoins the main trail. This route was established soon after the discovery of gold in the area around Iditarod.

The loop follows streambeds for the most part, winding through valleys and crossing low passes through the Kuskokwim Mountains. Between Flat and Iditarod the trail was supplemented as early as 1911-12 by a wagon road. One mile of the 8-mile wagon road was constructed and maintained by private individuals, while the Alaska Road Commission was responsible for the rest (ARC Annual Report, 1912:20). A wagon road also extended up to the head of Flat Creek for transportation of heavy dredge machinery (Eakin 1912:301).

The towns of Flat and Iditarod were also connected by a tramway which is still easily visible from the air. The tramway traverses the low hills between the two towns in a nearly straight line (Plate C-48). It was in use by 1911-12 (ARC Annual Report, 1912;20), and operated during the summer months for carrying freight to Flat from the river terminus at Iditarod (Brooks, 1914:255). Many other trails are visible between the two towns, indicating that various alternative routes were used over the years (Plate C-48).

Tramway
[IDT-024]

From Iditarod the trail extends northward along the Iditarod River for approximately 20 miles to Shermeier's Halfway Roadhouse site. Traces of

Iditarod-Dikena
Trail

the old trail that are visible between Iditarod and Shermeier's follow the river much closer than the more visible later trail which keeps to higher ground as much as 2 miles eastward. The higher trail probably dates from the introduction of tracked machinery into the area, since it keeps to higher, more solid ground, rather than crossing the frozen river ice and low wetlands.

At Shermeier's Halfway Roadhouse the trail forks. One route, the Dikeman Cutoff, heads almost due north through Dikeman and on to Diskakat where it rejoins the main trail. This was part of the winter sled road between Dikeman and Iditarod in 1923, though by that time the trail between Dikeman and Dishkakat was little used (ARC, 1923:85). As the trail extends north from Dikeman it crosses lakes and swampy areas that obscured much of the trail even during the height of its activity. Faint remnants of the trail are reportedly still visible along the route, though time did not allow for an examination of the trail between Shermeier's Halfway Roadhouse and Dishkakat.

*Dikeman
Diskakat
Trail*

The second route, known as Hunter Trail, heads northeast from Shermeier's to rejoin the main trail just west of Ophir. This trail is most evident where it crosses the uplands east of the Dishna River. The Hunter Trail and known sites along its length have been included here as part of the Iditarod Loop.

*OPHIR-DIKEMAN
CUT-OFF
(HUNTER
TRAIL)*

Big Creek Roadhouse

IDT-007

Big Creek Roadhouse site lies on the west side of the Takotna River just below the mouth of Fourth of July Creek at the confluence of Big Creek.

map of the area. It was also identified by Timothy Twitchell as the Brown Creek shelter cabin (pers. comm.). The cabin is shown with the U. S. mail sled in the foreground on a mail run to Iditarod in a photo taken in the 1920's during spring break-up by Timothy Twitchell (Plate C-89).

The Brown Creek Shelter Cabin site was not examined on the ground. The ruins of the old cabin should be stabilized until further investigations can be conducted at the site to determine its historical significance and archeological potential.

SUMMER PACK TRAIL TAKOTNA TO FLAT

Also known as the Iditarod - Officer Summer Connelly Trail

IDT-

A summer pack trail just to the northwest and roughly parallel to the winter trail extends 95 miles from Takotna to Flat by way of Ganes Creek. This route, passing through high, dry country was more easily traversed in summer than the river valleys. Traces of the trail, where it passes along the ridges and side hills, are readily visible from the air. A green line of herbaceous shrubs growing in the catch basin formed by the trail where it traverses a hillside, often indicates its presence (Plate C-73). Plate C-74 shows the pack trail in use some time during the 1920's.

The shelter cabins described below were sighted or reported to have once been on the summer pack trail. Two of these have been identified as cabins built by the ARC to provide shelter to travelers. Two other cabins mentioned here were identified in ARC reports, but could not be

found during aerial reconnaissance. Another cabin is described though it is situated some distance from the visible traces of trail. There is no record that a commercial roadhouse was ever operated on the summer pack trail.

Lincoln Creek Shelter Cabin

IDT-023

Lincoln Creek shelter cabin was sighted on the north side of the summer pack trail on the east side of Lincoln Creek near its headwaters. It lies approximately 2 miles southwest of Crater Mountain, near its base.

The cabin, situated in an open woodland, has almost completely collapsed. The sheet metal roof appears to be intact, overlying the flattened structure beneath. No sign of other structures were noted at the site.

Lincoln Creek shelter cabin is first mentioned in the ARC Annual Report for 1922 (p.68), which states that a contract was let to build the cabin that year. Timothy Twitchell states that his father, Adam Twitchell, was the contractor who built the Lincoln Creek cabin during the summer of 1922, along with Brush Creek and Fourth of July cabins. In its 1927 Annual Report, the ARC mentions a cabin on Crater Mountain, presumably the Lincoln Creek cabin since its proximity to Crater Mountain would make this a logical alternative name.

The Lincoln Creek shelter cabin was not examined on the ground. The site is on state land.