The Iditarod Trail consisted of a 938-mile main trail and numerous branch or connecting trails for a total of some 2,264 miles. The main trail connected the ice-free port of Seward with the mining and trade center of Nome, an ice-locked port from October to June. The branch or connecting trails tapped three major Alaskan mining regions—the Cook Inlet country, the inland empire between Iditarod and Ruby, and the Seward Peninsula.

Between 1908, when the U.S. Army's Alaska Road Commission blazed the main trail, and the 1930s, the Iditarod Trail served as one of the three main cross-Alaska land routes used primarily during the winter. Travelers crossed the trail by dog sled, snowshoe, and, in a few segments, rowboats. Roadhouses and shelter cabins were built approximately every twenty miles, a convenient day's journey apart, and served the miners between settlements. Skwentna Crossing, Rhon River, and Portage are three representative shelter cabins. The decline of mining after World War I and the introduction of the airplane for mail and freight service caused the decrease of trail use today. Trappers, hunters, natives, and dog mushers continue to use portions of the trail.

The documentation of the Skwentna Crossing, Rhon River and Portage shelter cabin sites along the Iditarod National Historic Trail was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the National Architectural and Engineering Record (NAER), a division of the National Park Service (NPS). The project was executed under the general direction of Robert J. Kapros, Chief of NAER, and John Cook, Alaska Regional Director. HUD'S recording was carried out during the summer of 1974 by Robert Spude, Project Director, Randall W. Copeland, Historical Architect, and Walter Smaling, Photographer, with the support of the Bureau of Land Management's Iditarod National Historic Trail Project Team.
SKEWENTNA CROSSING
SHELTER CABIN

Located at mile 260 on the Skwentna-Dotan Road. The Skwentna Crossing Shelter Cabin replaced an old shelter and roadhouse which was destroyed by fire ca. 1925. The original tent was constructed in 1911. Size: 12 x 18.

Old structure built around 1925.

BARN

Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"
SHELL AND GROOVED PAPER
ROOF CARRIED WITH SHEATHING

SHelves above

MATERIALS NOTE
ORIGINAL STRUCTURE:
WALLS 6" MODIFIED NOTCHED LOSS, HEMM WOOD ON INTERIOR.
DOORS ON HINGES
FLOOR SHELL AND GROOVED PAPER
ROOF CARRIED WITH SHEATHING

FRONT ADDITION:
WALLS 6" SHUSWAP 90/80
FLOOR SHELL AND GROOVED PAPER
ROOF CARRIED WITH SHEATHING

PLAN
SCALE: 3/8" = 1' 0"

NORTH ELEVATION

SOUTH ELEVATION

EAST ELEVATION

NORTH ELEVATION

SECTION AA

SECTION BB
RHON RIVER
SHELTER CABIN

AFTER THE RUNDOWN AT RHON RIVER HOM TATINA RIVER,
SHEDD IN WASTING TRAVELERS USED THE TRAPPER'S CABIN
WHERE THEY RESTED AND SURVIVED. THE HOM TATINA
RIVER HOUSE WAS command's RHON RIVER SHELTER CABIN.
LATER MAINTAINED BY THE ALASKA ROAD COMMISSION, WAS
305 MILES ALONG THE TRAIL FROM SEWARD.
PORTAGE SHELTER CABIN

THE PORTAGE SITE, LOCATION OF A ROADHOUSE DURING THE
HOMELAND'S GOLD RUSH, WAS AT MILE 63 ON THE SHEMAGH-
ROAD COMMISSION, A COLLECTIVE OF THE ALASKA ROAD
COMMISSION, CONTINUED WITH THE PORTAGE SHELTER CABIN
TO BUILD SHELTER CASINGS ALONG NORTON SOUND, AMONG
THEM THE PORTAGE SHELTER CABIN.