

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.

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.

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.

It is shown on the 1916 ARC map of Alaska and on maps in the Rand-McNally Guide to Alaska and Yukon (1922:40). It was established by the Kuskokwim Commercial Company of Joaquin, Twitchell & Fowler as a dispersal point for supplies sent up the Kuskokwim and Takotna Rivers to the Innoko Gold Mining District in 1908 (Maddren, 1911:34). It consisted of a log store and roadhouse. The name "Joaquin" was also employed for the Big Creek establishment (Timothy Twitchell, pers. comm.). All that remained of the structures when the site was inspected in 1976 were outlines in the grassy clearing (Plate C-28). Apparently the last standing structures at the site burned down in 1974 (Pete Shepherd, pers. comm.).

Historic accounts of the Iditarod area refer to "Joaquin" as an early embarkation point for supplies to Moore City, just over the hill to the west. It is not entirely clear, however, if the name was being applied to Big Creek Roadhouse, Joaquin Mountain across the river, or the nearby Indian village for which no name has been recorded.

Although no structural remains are extant at the Big Creek Roadhouse Site, there may be subsurface remains of archeological value. Since this site is gradually being eroded away by the river it should receive archeological testing sometime in the near future to determine its potential. Further research of archival and local information sources may help clarify the part this site played in the region's history.