

of a few miles between the two points. Two sites were found near this cutoff: a well-preserved cabin on Pitka Fork and remains of Smiths' Roadhouse on Blackwater Creek. This alternate trail passes through less densely forested terrain than the main trail, and probably was the preferred route once it became established.

Pitka Fork Cabin

MCG-018

A log cabin on Pitka Fork was observed just above the mouth of Sullivan Creek. Because of its location near the trail and because it is an extant cabin, it was examined on the ground.

The lone cabin is in a small clearing that has begun to fill in with second growth spruce (Plates C-24 and C-25) (Figure 12). The floor is constructed from sawn 1 by 8 inch floorboards, overlying pole joists 4 inches in diameter. The roof is composed of close-set 6 to 8 inch poles under an insulating layer of moss overlain by sod. The poles forming the roof are partially supported from beneath by another pole placed diagonally from the plate log to the ridge log. A table, bunks, cupboard, and cabinet were observed inside the cabin. There is no longer a stove or stovepipe in the cabin, though a hole in the roof for the stovepipe indicates that the stove once stood in the front of the cabin behind the door. There is an old barrel stove not far from the cabin that may once have been inside.

Some of the planking has been torn from the bunks, table and cupboards. A fallen spruce tree has broken through part of the roof, allowing moisture in which has rotted part of the flooring and joists beneath the hole. The window glass and shutters are missing so moisture is also beginning to come in from that source.

Magazines dated from the late 1930's and the 1940's are still lying on the bunks. Names with accompanying dates ranging from 1943 to 1966 are inscribed on the walls as testimony of travelers who had used the cabin.

Inquiries made in McGrath about the cabin's identity indicate that it was built in the late 1930's or early 1940's. According to Ray Collins, a resident of McGrath (pers. comm.), the cabin was used as a stop-over point for Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) tractor-train crews who were freighting fuel overland from Salmon River to the CAA station at Farewell. Subsequent interviews with officials of the Federal Aviation Administration (formerly CAA) (FAA) in McGrath and Anchorage confirmed this. The cabin was abandoned by CAA in the 1940's after a wannigan was constructed, which could be hauled on the tractor train and used as emergency shelter (Virgil Knight, pers. comm.; CAA film reels, 1948 and 1954). Since that time area trappers have occasionally used the cabin for shelter.

The Pitka Fork FAA cabin needs stabilization and minor repair work to preserve its integrity. The hole in the roof should be patched, the window glass and shutters replaced, and the floor repaired. A simple

stove should be installed so that an occasional occupant would not be tempted to light a fire in an unsafe manner, endangering the entire structure.

Smith's Roadhouse

MCG-016

Rand-McNally (1922:40) locates Smith's Roadhouse on the cutoff trail from Salmon Creek (Salmon River) to McGrath. The thick forest canopy in the vicinity of Blackwater Creek made spotting the site from the air impossible. The site location was obtained from Phillip Esai of Nicolai, who runs a trap line through the vicinity.

The roadhouse site lies on the western bank of Blackwater Creek in a closed deciduous forest. A faintly visible trail can be seen approaching the forested stream course from the east and the west, and it was possible to walk almost directly to the site from the west trail.

Although the buildings are in ruins, it was possible to identify and measure each structure.

The building complex consisted of a two-room log cabin and a small doghouse adjacent to it, a cache, and three low dog barns (Figure 13).

The cabin is composed of two log cabins that share a common wall. The roof and floors are gone, and the walls have partially collapsed. The wall logs and window frames lie toppled outward on the ground outside of the structure.