

Michelson Cemetery
SEW-035

Excerpt from

**SURVEY AND EVALUATION OF THE IDITAROD TRAIL
AND CONNECTING TRAILS IN THE CHUGACH NATIONAL FOREST**

DRAFT TECHNICAL REPORT

VOLUME 2: NATIONAL REGISTER EVALUATION FORMS

Prepared for
USDA Forest Service
Chugach National Forest
Anchorage, Alaska

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PHASE I EVALUATION FORM

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March, 1991

1. Name of Property: Michaelson Cemetery, Site #: SEW-035
2. Location: W1/2SW Section 28, T.7N-R.1W
Seward C-7 Quadrangle.
3. Classification:
 - Ownership: Public-federal
 - Category of Property: Site
 - Number of Resources within Property:
 - Contributing: 0
 - Non-Contributing: 1 Site
 - Number of Contributing Resources previously listed: 0
 - Name of related multiple property listing:
6. Function or Use:
 - Historic Functions: Funerary/Graves
 - Current Functions: Funerary/Graves
7. Description:

The Michaelson Cemetery is reputed to exist on a hilltop between Canyon Creek and a graveled area associated with the Seward Highway, just north of Lower Summit Lake. The area was examined thoroughly twice in the summer of 1990, and definitive evidence of burials was not found. Two roughly rectangular depressions may represent graves, but the hilltop is rough and a number of shallow depressions were observed. Fencing or funerary markers were not observed. The assumed burial area is overgrown with spruce trees, alders, and low bushes; it is bordered on the east by a steep escarpment to Canyon Creek and on the west by a road and a large gravel borrow area.
8. Statement of Significance:
 - Significance Level: Local
 - Applicable Criteria: None
 - Areas of Significance: None
 - Period of Significance: None
 - Significant Dates:
 - Significant Person:
 - Architect/Builder:

State significance of property:
The exact location and history of this cemetery are murky and confused. In her book on the mining history of the Kenai Peninsula, Mary Barry includes a photograph with caption "Pioneer graves by Summit Lake, 1948 (Barry 1973:180). The photograph seems to show

three deteriorated wooden grave markers among bushes and young spruce trees. Unfortunately, the photograph does not show enough territory to allow an identification of the site.

The Seward C-7 Quadrangle map (1951/1976) indicates the cemetery on the east side of Canyon Creek, to the northeast of the Dahl recreational cabins. Evidence of burials was not found in this area during the 1990 survey, and at least one knowledgeable source has indicated the cemetery was on the west side of the mining camp if not the creek (Estes 1981). A 1972 recording of the site states "The graves are difficult to see and a child's grave is partially covered by the berm at the edge of the road. The graves are located in the USFS wayside, near the road south of the toilet" (Alaska Heritage Resource Survey 1972). Larry Schweigert, who assisted in the 1990 survey, helped move the USFS toilet to this site from Granite Creek Guard Station in 1971 or 1972, and he stated that the gravel mining operation obliterated the hill on which the toilet stood, and that the road formerly was to the west of its current position at the edge of the gravel pit (Schweigert 1990). The destruction of the cemetery was also implied by Estes (1981):

They got the Michaelson Cemetery ... they was here a couple or three years ago and I didn't get a chance to go out with them. ... but they had it on the other side of the creek, out on the lake, you know

The exact location and integrity of the cemetery therefore remain unknown. However, the setting and feeling of the site have undoubtedly been severely degraded by the removal of the hill during gravel mining.

Long-time area resident Frenchy Debeau reported in 1972 that the cemetery held graves of the Michaelsons, a family of four who died during the influenza epidemic about 1920 (Alaska Heritage Resource Survey 1972). Another long-time area resident, Ed Estes, reported alternately that the burials were those of persons who starved or suffocated in a snow-covered cabin or of Bob Michaelson, his wife, a Michaelson infant, and miner Joe Wilson (Estes 1981; Bureau of Land Management 1981). However, Ed Estes also stated that he helped Bob Michaelson leave Alaska for New York when the 90-plus year old Michaelson went blind (Estes 1981). Another source reported that both Bob Michaelson and Joe Wilson died at the Pioneer's Home at Sitka, which

wouldn't necessarily preclude burial at this site
(Morgan n.d.:96).

Cemeteries are normally excluded from nomination to the National Register, unless the properties contain exceptional architectural or artistic values or unless the properties represent a transcendently important person or event. The Michaelson Cemetery, if it exists, does not appear to qualify for nomination under these exemption criteria or under any of the primary criteria for eligibility.

9. Major Bibliographic References:

Alaska Heritage Resource Survey

- 1972 Michaelson Family Cemetery, Site SEW-035.
Site form on file at Alaska State Historic
Preservation Office, Anchorage.

Barry, Mary J.

- 1973 A History of Mining on the Kenai Peninsula.
Alaska Northwest Publishing Company,
Anchorage.

Bureau of Land Management

- 1981 Michaelson Cemetery. Iditarod Trail
Inventory site form on file at Bureau of Land
Management, Anchorage District.

Estes, Ed

- 1981 Interview at Moose Pass, Alaska, June 15,
1981. On file at Bureau of Land Management
Anchorage District office, Anchorage, Alaska.

Schweigert, Larry A.

- 1990 Personal Communication to Kurt Schweigert,
Lower Summit Lake, Alaska, August 5, 1990.

MICHAELSON CEMETERY

St Sweetmann Camp
Sweetmann Mine
Donaldson Creek
French Gulch
Wibel
Roaring Creek
Black Canyon
Wilson
VABM 2188
Cemetery
Dahl
Lower Summit Lake
SEWARD C-7 QUAD T.7N-R.1W

SEWARD C-7. QUAD T.7N-R.1W

MICHAELSON CEMETERY



Feature 1, Possible Grave, View to NE



Feature 2, Possible Grave, View to North

MICHAELSON CEMETERY



Feature 3, Possible Grave, View to North