

climbs over rubble slopes, which give uncertain footing. This route appears not to have been known before, and although starting from near the head of Turnagain Arm will probably not be much used except by prospectors who may wish to reach Raven Creek or other of the upper tributaries of the Yukla, from Sunrise. A pack trail could be constructed over it, but not without considerable outlay (Mendenhall 1898:278-279, 303)

Rich placer gold deposits were discovered on Crow Creek in 1895 and 1896, and many prospectors from the Kenai Peninsula mining districts to the south staked claims on Crow Creek, Glacier Creek, and the tributaries of these streams. The Crow Creek Consolidated Mine Company was formed in 1898 and began extensive placer mining near the confluence of Crow and Glacier creeks. This operation became the most successful placer gold mine in the Turnagain-Knik region (Carberry 1979:114). Hydraulic equipment was installed possibly as early as 1898 but certainly by 1906, and massive amounts of earth and gravel were excavated and washed for gold (Mendenhall 1898:278; Seward Weekly Gateway 8/25/1906). The mine headquarter complex is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Other substantial placer mines on Crow Creek included that of James Girdwood about two miles upstream from the Crow Creek Consolidated Gold Mine.

Conrad Hories found gold lode deposits on a mountain face at the northern end of Crow Creek in the summer of 1909, and a minor prospecting rush to the area occurred that fall and during 1910. Hories' claims were developed as the Barnes/Monarch Mine, and at least two other small hard-rock gold mines were also active at the upper end of the valley between 1909 and 1940. Equipment including stamp and ball mills were hauled up the trail to the mines after 1920, by means of either horse-drawn sled or small caterpillar tractor. The Crow Pass Trail passes through the area of hardrock mining development, which is designated the Monarch/Jewell Mining District.

The earliest improvement of the Crow Pass Trail was associated with a need to transport equipment and supplies to the placer mines on Crow Creek. In 1899 the owners of the Crow Creek Consolidated Mine built a road from the shore of Turnagain Arm to their mine, and in 1903 the road was apparently extended to Girdwood's

claims (Barry 1973:99-100, 106; Reger and Antonson 1976:4).

The Crow Pass Trail appears came into general use by prospectors traveling from the Kenai Peninsula to the interior and northwest of Alaska after the rich gold strikes at Nome in 1898 and Fairbanks in 1903. Use of the trail benefitted from the establishment of the year-round port at Seward in 1903 and the construction of the Alaska Central Railroad northward from Seward beginning in 1902. By 1906 the railroad had been completed about 48 miles from Seward, and clearing and grading had been completed around the head of Turnagain Arm to Kern Creek, about four miles from the mouth of Glacier Creek. The railhead remained at Kern Creek effectively until the railroad was completed through Anchorage to the Matanuska Valley in 1918.

Coastal mining areas could be supplied largely by boat during summer months, but costal areas to the north of Seward remained ice-bound for many months, and the transportation season on interior rivers was even shorter. The need and demand for overland transportation routes increased dramatically with gold rushes to the Innoko Mining District in 1906-1907 and to the Iditarod Mining District in 1909-1912.

The volume of travel over the Crow Pass Trail before 1906 is unknown, but it clearly was minor in comparison with other major trails (Spude 1982:164). However, the trail was heavily used in 1906-1907 rushes to the interior, primarily as a winter route for dogsleds and men afoot. The route was promoted with some reservation by the editor of the Seward newspaper in January, 1906.

The old Crow creek trail is still available. It turns off at the mouth of Glacier creek on mile 75 [of the railroad route], and runs up that creek and its tributary, Crow creek, to the divide; thence over to Eagle valley. The trouble with this trail is that it is very steep near the summit, and the snowslides are dangerous. It is unsafe for one man to travel it alone. On this trail it is ten miles from timber to timber ... (Seward Weekly Gateway 1/20/1906).

The threat from snowslides was most acute in the early spring. In late March, 1906, the Seward Weekly Gateway reported that three men had been rescued after having been buried by a snowslide near Crow Pass, and that the

deteriorating conditions would end a considerable volume of traffic over the trail.

This side of Crow creek pass Mr. Herning met thirty-one mushers headed for the Yentna. He thinks they are about the end of the procession to that district until after the spring break-up lets men through in boats by way of the inlet and up the river... the slides are becoming so frequent on the slopes around Crow creek pass that it will soon be foolhardy to travel that way ... (Seward Weekly Gateway 3/24/1906)

Every new account of the rush to the Yentna adds to the number who are said to have gone into the district, or at least started over the trail. Frank Watson ... reported that a large number of men have crossed over the range from Valdez and gone in by way of the creeks above Knik Arm. The number of these is uncertain but is probably 100 and may be greater. The number who have gone from Seward and the railroad camps is placed ... at not less than 400. ...Mr. Watson repeats the warning already given that Crow creek pass is becoming dangerous because of the frequent slides ... Because of this several parties turned back and are now waiting at Glacier creek for a chance to get around the Arm in boats (Seward Weekly Gateway 3/31/1906).

By February, 1907 travelers on the Crow Pass Trail were served by one and possibly three roadhouses. A Glacier Creek Roadhouse may have been established as early as 1903 in the Girdwood settlement near the mouth of Glacier Creek, and this roadhouse was certainly in operation by 1911 (DeArmond 1962:40-41; Smith 1974:54). Farther up the trail, the Crow Creek Roadhouse was operated by E.W. Young in February, 1907, supposedly near the top of Crow Pass (Seward Weekly Gateway, 2/9/1907). However, a 1913 map indicates the Crow Creek Roadhouse was to the south of the actual pass, possibly in the vicinity of the current Crow Pass Trail trailhead (Alaska Road Commission 1913).

The same 1913 map indicates the existence of Raven Creek Roadhouse on the north side of Crow Pass about 8 miles north of the Crow Creek Roadhouse, probably near the confluence of Raven Creek and Eagle River. In September, 1913 men named Frisbie and Murray were

reported to operate a roadhouse at Raven Creek (Seward Daily Gateway 9/8/1913).

Information about these roadhouses is extremely sparse, and it is possible that the establishments were housed in tents and operated sporadically. Maps in 1909 and 1914 Alaska Road Commission reports do not contain notation of these roadhouses, and the roadhouses are not mentioned in the report of the official 1908 survey of the Crow Pass segment of the Iditarod Trail. A map in the 1916 report of the Alaska Road Commission again indicates the locations of the Crow Creek and Raven Creek roadhouses, but this map appears to be a slight adaptation of the 1913 map. Physical remains of neither roadhouse have been found.

The Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska was formed in 1905 to investigate and promote construction of trails and roads in the Territory. In the early months of 1908 the Commission sent a reconnaissance party under command of George E. Pulham to determine the feasibility of a winter trail from the head of Cook Inlet to Kaltag on the Yukon River. The route mapped by this party would become most of the Iditarod Trail after it was extended to the Iditarod gold fields. The party traveled the Crow Pass Trail, and the Commission later reported on the route:

The Board believes this to be an important line of winter communication through the country, but the best results from its construction will not come until after the Alaska Central Railroad shall have been extended as far as Knik at the head of Cook's Inlet and until some other further developments take place in the Kuskokwim and Innoko districts. Both these conditions, however, will, it is thought, be fulfilled within another year (Alaska Road Commission 1908:95).

W.L. Goodwin, the party's engineer, was more explicit about the Crow Pass route:

Up Glacier Creek from mile 75 to 85 we had no difficulty as a sled road was being operated to Girdwood at mile 82, but over Crow Pass it would be out of the question to handle Nome mail with an ascent of 45 degrees for the last 1500 feet and to an altitude of 3550 feet and then down nearly as steep some

places to Raven Creek and on down to Eagle River 9 miles below (Goodwin 1908:3).

The railroad was not completed to the head of Knik arm until 1918, and substantial new gold rushes to the Ruby and Iditarod areas served to increase use of the Crow Pass Trail in the period 1909-1912. In the fall of 1908 the Alaska Road Commission substantially upgraded a trail along Turnagain Arm from Girdwood to Bird Creek, so that the trail through Indian Pass could be used to avoid the avalanche problems and steep grades of the Crow Pass Trail (Alaska Road Commission 1909:25-26). Indian Pass was some 1200 feet lower than Crow Pass, but the Indian Pass Trail was 15 to 20 miles longer than the Crow Pass Trail and had about five miles of difficult trail compared to one mile of steep climb on the Crow Pass Trail. The Indian Pass Trail also had avalanche hazards, and early in its first season was closed by snowslides between Girdwood and Bird Creek, which again routed traffic through Crow Pass (Seward Weekly Gateway 1/2/1909).

A mail route was established from Seward to Girdwood, Crow Creek, Knik, Susitna and Tyonok. Mail not to exceed 100 pounds each way per trip was to be carried once per month between January 1 and March 31, 1909 (Seward Weekly Gateway 1/2/1909). The long-awaited Seward to Iditarod winter mail service was inaugurated in 1914, but it was discontinued by 1919 when the railroad was constructed to the north side of the Alaska range and mail was again carried along the Yukon Trail (Bureau of Outdoor Recreation 1977:44).

Between November 9, 1910 and February 25, 1911, a surveying party led by W.L. Goodwin mapped and marked what would be popularly known as the Iditarod Trail from Nome to Seward. Goodwin's party apparently crossed the Indian Pass Trail to Turnagain Arm; he noted distances and the existence of a roadhouse on the Indian Pass Trail but did not note distances for the Crow Pass route (Alaska-Yukon Magazine 1911:55). In March, 1911, Congress appropriated \$50,000 for improvement of a winter trail from Seward to Iditarod, and the Alaska Road Commission immediately began improving the trail system (Iditarod Pioneer 4/1/1911).

The Crow Pass Trail was upgraded and in some places substantially rebuilt during 1911 to lessen grades and avoid some areas prone to snowslides (Brooks et al. 1912:137). The specific location and nature of

improvements is unknown, except for information provided in the Alaska Road Commission report for 1912:

Route 19--Kern Creek-Knik Trail (60 miles)-- During September and October, 1911, the trail was completed from Crow Creek Pass to Kern Creek. The construction was more elaborate than the average for trail construction. Unit costs were: Grading, side hill, about 6 feet wide, per mile \$778.68; clearing, about 10 feet wide, per mile 80.00; pack bridge, stringer type, 124 feet long per linear foot \$1.93; Total \$800.61. The average cost of the section from Crow Creek to Kern Creek was \$220 per mile. The average cost of the entire route ... was \$168.69 per mile (Alaska Road Commission 1912:15)

The description of grading in this report seems consistent with construction of the long switch-back trail on the west-facing talus slope near the head of Crow Creek. The switch-back trail is shown clearly in a photograph in the 1913 report of the Alaska Road Commission (Alaska Road Commission 1913:Plate 7).

The editor of the Iditarod Pioneer had predicted the completion of a road suitable for 4-horse teams over Crow Pass in time for the 1911-1912 winter travel season, but a road of this quality would never be built over the pass (Iditarod Pioneer 11/26/1911). A map accompanying U.S. Geological Survey report for 1911 indicates a trail from the end of the railroad at Kern Creek to Glacier Creek, a road from that point to just above the mouth of Crow Creek, and a trail from there over the pass to Raven Creek (Brooks, et al. 1912:162). Evidence has not been found that the Crow Pass Trail was ever improved beyond its 1911 construction, nor that the Raven Creek drainage portion of the trail was ever substantially improved. The trail was maintained, particularly by means of staking of the pass area to mark the trail for travelers in stormy weather (Seward Daily Gateway 9/8/1913; Alaska Road Commission 1913:23).

The completion of the railroad around the Turnagain Arm to Anchorage and beyond in 1918 resulted in the virtual abandonment of the Crow Pass Trail, other than for use by miners on Crow Creek. In 1921 the Alaska Road Commission relocated about one mile of the ten miles of wagon road running from the railroad to the Crow Creek Mining District, and in 1922 the ten miles of wagon road were turned over to the Department of Agriculture

to become part of the forest highway system. However, in 1925 the Alaska Road Commission constructed seven miles of wagon road along Crow Creek, apparently to the current Crow Pass Trail trailhead (DeArmond 1962:41; Alaska Road Commission 1921:33).

The Crow Pass Trail is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, for its association with the important event/pattern of overland dogsled transportation in Alaska during the period 1906 to 1918. The Crow Pass Trail was a conduit for winter travel at least as early as 1906, and thousands of gold prospectors followed this trail during gold rushes in the Yentna, Innoko, and Iditarod mining districts, and possibly to the Fairbanks District prior to the establishment of a government trail system. The Crow Pass Trail is specifically associated with this pattern because from 1911 to 1918 it was a segment of the primary route of the Iditarod Trail, which connected the all-season port of Seward with Nome and the gold mining districts in the interior of Alaska. Crow Pass was the highest point on the Iditarod Trail and by many accounts was the most difficult part of the 900-plus mile trail.

The Crow Pass Trail has substantially varied integrity within the boundaries of the Chugach National Forest. The ca. 1898-1918 trail appears to coincide very closely with the current graded vehicle road between the Forest boundary to the north of the town of Girdwood and the current Crow Pass Trail trailhead, but integrity of design, materials, and feeling have been lost as a result of reconstruction of the road and adjacent commercial and residential development since 1918. The portion of the trail between the Crow Pass Trail trailhead and the Forest Boundary to the north of Crow Pass has generally excellent integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. A portion of the original trail has been obscured within the former Monarch Mine complex, but the switchback trail ascending to the valley head is intact and dramatically represents the difficulties of dogsled travel over the Iditarod Trail.

The segment of the trail from the current Crow Pass Trail trailhead northward to the Forest boundary is recommended to be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. The segment to the south of the trailhead is not recommended to be nominated because it lacks requisite integrity to represent the theme of dogsled travel in the period 1898-1918.

9. Major Bibliographic References:

U.S. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation

- 1977 The Iditarod Trail (Seward-Nome Route) and Other Gold Rush Trails. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, U.S. Department of the Interior, n.p.

Smith, Michael E.

- 1974 Alaska's Historic Roadhouses. History and Archaeology Series No. 6, Miscellaneous Publications. Office of Statewide Cultural Programs, Alaska Division of Parks, Anchorage.

Alaska Road Commission

- Annual Reports for 1908, 1909, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1921, 1922, 1925. Contained in Secretary of War annual reports for the respective years. Early reports under title of Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska.

Alaska-Yukon Magazine

- 1911 Trail Making In Alaska: An Account of W.L. Goodwin's Trip from Nome to Seward Surveying and Marking the Proposed Overland United States Mail Route Across Northern Territory. Alaska-Yukon Magazine, July, 1911.

Barry, Mary J.

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

DeArmond, R. N.

- 1962 And So It Was Named Girdwood. The Alaska Sportsman, XVIII:6 (June, 1962)

Carberry, Michael E.

- 1979 Patterns of the Past: An Inventory of Anchorage's Historic Resources.

Brooks, Alfred H. and Others

- 1912 Mineral Resources of Alaska. Report on Progress of Investigations in 1911. U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 520. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

Goodwin, W.L.

- 1908 Letter Report to Alaska Road Commission, Skagway, Alaska, April 16, 1908.

Mendenhall, Walter C.

- 1898 A Reconnaissance from the Resurrection Bay to the Tanana River, Alaska, in 1898. U.S. Geological Survey Annual Report 1898-99, Part VII, Exploration in Alaska in 1898. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

Reger, Douglas R. and Joan M. Antonson

- 1976 Potter-Girdwood Archaeological and Historic Site Survey. In Archaeological Survey Projects, 1976, Miscellaneous Publications History and Archaeology Series No. 16, Office of History and Archaeology, Division of Parks, Anchorage, Alaska.

Spude, Robert L.

- 1982 The Iditarod Trail. In Transportation in Alaska's Past, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, State Division of Parks, Office of History & Archaeology Publication No. 30.

Iditarod Pioneer, Iditarod, Alaska. April 1, 1911.

Seward Weekly Gateway/Seward Daily Gateway, Seward, Alaska. Various dates 1905-1920.

R 1 E. R 2 E. 10'

GIRDWOOD MINE 2.1 MI 5'

ANCHORAGE A

Crow Pass/Iditarod Trail

Point A

HUGACH STATE PARK

Alyeska

Glacier

Campground

Girdwood

Wood

Armstrong

VABM

Notch

Kern

RAILROAD

Seward, D-B, Quadrangle

