

YUKON HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY

The Alaska Highway: A Thematic Overview

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The Alaska Highway: A Thematic Overview

Introduction



The Alaska Highway was not just another road for the Yukon. It was the first road connecting the Yukon to the "outside". The opening of the Alaska Highway was as crucial to the development of the Yukon as the gold rush of 1898. Not since the stampede had there been such an explosive influx of people and technology into the territory. The social and economic impacts were enormous.

The most prominent physical legacy of this momentous event is the highway itself. As part of the Yukon Historic Sites Inventory, the highway and structural resources related to its construction and maintenance were recorded in the summer and fall of 1990. The first result of this work was a Preliminary Report produced in September 1990 which reviewed abandoned sections of original Public Roads Administration highway. Following this initial report, the Inventory broadened its scope to include all historic sites related to the Alaska Highway. The study that follows provides a brief history of the construction of the Alaska Highway as a context for the analysis of the sites found during the inventory. The history is followed by a description of the resources to be evaluated and their location on the highway. This section is not meant as an evaluation, however, as that is to be conducted as a separate exercise.

A Brief History of the Alaska Highway

The Early Attempts



The Alaska Highway was not the first attempt to build a road connecting the Yukon with southern Canada. It was, however, the first successful endeavour. Despite various proposals and false starts at building a road to the north, it required the threat of the Japanese invasion of American territory to finally provide Yukon with a land link to the rest of the Dominion.

The first serious attempt to construct a road to the Yukon was also caused by a cataclysmic event. In anticipation of the hordes of gold seekers stampeding to the Klondike goldfields in 1897, Commissioner Herchmer of the Northwest Mounted Police commissioned Inspector Moodie to look for a route into the Yukon via the Edmonton-Pelly River corridor. His instructions were to find a wagon route that would be cheap to construct, report on the need for bridges and ferries along the route, and identify suitable places for fuel, feed and hay, and supply depots.¹

The expedition was inadequately supplied, had poor guides and worse weather. These were to become recurring themes in efforts to build a road to the Yukon. With these impediments, Moodie's party did not complete their trip to Fort Selkirk until October of 1898, eleven months after they left Fort St. John. By that time the rush to Dawson was almost over and there was little immediate need for the Edmonton-Pelly route. As Moodie pointed out in his report, this would have been a very difficult route to develop and why would one bother when the connections to the Klondike via rail and river from Skagway were shorter and faster?²

In 1905 the police again were given orders to link Edmonton and the Yukon with a road. In 1905, Superintendent Charles Constantine and thirty-one men began building a wagon road from Fort St. John westward to the telegraph trail where they would push north to Atlin, B.C. and thence to Whitehorse. In two years they managed to construct 377 miles of wagon road before an argument between the B.C. and federal governments over payment for the road brought the project to a halt. The partially-completed road was abandoned.³

The next impetus for a road north came from Alaska in the late 1920's. Donald McDonald, a territorial engineer from Fairbanks, won the support of the International Highway Association with his idea of a highway link to Alaska to bring that territory firmly into the Union. He had widespread support for this concept in both Alaska and Washington. The people of the Yukon were almost unanimous in their support of the highway. Dawson City formed its own chapter of the International Highway Association to show its backing for a road through the Yukon.⁴ The idea also had its supporters in B.C., where most of the road would be located.

The Premier of B.C. at that time was T. Dufferin Pattullo. He had a personal vision of a highway to the Yukon and Alaska linking the resources of the Klondike with his own province. With the Depression, however, his coffers were bare and he could not finance such a huge undertaking.⁵ He began to lobby the federal government to support the project.

Another group supporting a highway north was the United States-Canada-Alaska Prairie Highway Association. It was composed of interests from North Dakota, Saskatchewan and Alberta, particularly Edmonton. Their promotion of a route stemming from Edmonton eventually became an important factor in the building of the highway during the early 1940's.⁶

Acting on McDonald's initiative, the Alaska legislature proposed in April 1929, that Canadian and American representatives get together to study the problem. In 1930, the American Congress authorized the president to appoint three Commissioners to sit with Canadian representatives to study building a highway from the northwestern states to Yukon and Alaska. A Canadian Commission was appointed in 1931 which included George Black, MP for the Yukon. They met with the American Commission in Victoria in October of that year to discuss the technical and economic aspects of the proposed highway. In 1933, The American Commission reported to Congress that the highway was feasible and could be built for a reasonable cost. They recommended that discussions begin with the Canadian government to see if it was interested.⁷ It was not.

Canada, as represented by the federal government of the day, did not share the American's enthusiasm for the project. Except for B.C. and its premiere T. Dufferin Pattullo, there was very little interest expressed in the project outside of the Yukon. Even though the Americans were willing to pay for the road and Canada was badly in need of work projects to relieve the unemployment problem of the Depression, Prime Minister Mackenzie King felt that the benefits of the project were not great enough to offset the problems of a foreign government building a public work on Canadian soil.⁸ It must be remembered that Canada was rather sensitive about its sovereignty, especially regarding American activities in Alaska. The Department of National Defence warned the Prime Minister that the Americans might ignore Canadian sovereignty in the event of war if they were to build such a road.⁹ As it turned out, this fear was not entirely unfounded.

Division of opinion on the value of the highway began to show up on both sides of the border. In 1938, the U.S. Chief of Staff reported that the value of the proposed highway was negligible. A Canadian interdepartmental committee reported that there were great benefits to be gained from such a road including opening up new settlement, tourism and recreation areas, support for air traffic and unemployment relief. The official American stance, however, was still for the highway and Roosevelt appointed a five member commission to communicate with any Canadian commission that might be appointed to look into a highway connecting the continental U.S. with B.C., Yukon and Alaska.¹⁰ Apparently as a concession to the pressures from the U.S. and B.C., King also appointed a five member commission to "study the problem".¹¹

The Commission first met in Victoria in April 1939. They held a series of public meetings and collected technical data on the three routes proposed, all of which were in B.C. and all of which originated in Prince George. Aerial survey of the B.C. routes began in 1939. The Commission eventually recommended the course up the Rocky Mountain Trench which was the most easterly of the routes proposed. While cost, engineering feasibility and tourism potential were not deciding factors, the proximity of the route to the Peace River agricultural belt and existing air routes favoured the Trench. This routing ignored the wishes of the Americans who favoured a coastal route.¹² It is not known whether or not the U.S. would have supported this highway since war broke out and changed the ground rules.

While debate was continuing over a road to Alaska, an air route was being planned. There was government and commercial interest in developing a Great Circle route connecting

the Canadian Northwest with Alaska, Siberia and China. British and Canadian interests were anxious to tap this market. In 1935, Dan McLean, an employee of Department of Transport, flew an aerial reconnaissance of the route with Punch Dickens, a famous bush pilot. Based on McLean's findings, the federal government authorized a preliminary survey of the airfields about the time war broke out in Europe.¹³ This series of airfields, which was to become known as the Northwest Staging Route, was one of the key factors in selecting the eventual alignment of the Alaska Highway.

The War: No More Fooling Around!

With the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour on Dec 7, 1941, the U.S. moved to protect its northwest flank. The mental state of North Americans at the time was somewhat paranoid because the Japanese and Germans seemed to be winning on most fronts. With that happening it was not unreasonable to fear that they may make a direct attack on the American home continent. When the Japanese began taking the Aleutian Islands in 1942, this fear seemed justified.

Political pressure for the highway increased dramatically after Pearl Harbour but still opinion was divided. The American military studied the pre-war plans for the proposed routes. The War Plans Division concluded that such a highway was not necessary since the most of Alaska's communities were coastal and the navy could continue to supply them with strategic goods. The favoured inland route would miss these communities at any rate. They felt the money was more urgently needed for other projects and advised against building the road. On February 12, 1942, the U.S. government ignored this advice and decided to proceed with the highway.¹⁴

On February 2, 1942, the U.S. War Department ordered that a plan of survey and construction be prepared immediately for a road to Alaska. The Canadian government was "told" about the plan on February 13 and approved it the same day. The next day, the U.S. government issued a directive to begin the project. Also on February 14, the War Department issued a directive to the Chief of Engineers to begin planning.¹⁵ A formal agreement outlining obligations of both countries was signed on March 17, 1942.¹⁶

The main burden of this massive project was on the U.S. which was to construct a highway from Dawson Creek, B.C. to Fairbanks, Alaska. They agreed to build and maintain the highway during the war and for six months afterward. Then it became the property of the Canadian Government. Canada was obliged to provide right of way, local construction materials and waive import duties, licence fees and income tax on American companies and citizens.¹⁷

Link Up the Airfields, Billy!

While the Americans had decided to build a road, and the Canadian Government decided to go along with the idea, no one had chosen a route. The Committee on Public Roads met in Washington that February to select one. This was where the United States-Canada-Alaska Prairie Highway Association made their big pitch for a highway from Edmonton. Although there was a good deal of stiff opposition to this proposal, since many Americans still had their hearts set on a coastal route, the government eventually accepted the Association's recommendations.¹⁸

Perhaps the most important factor in selecting a route for the road was the existence of the Northwest Staging Route, a series of airfields between Edmonton to Whitehorse. This route was well inland and fairly secure from enemy attack from offshore aircraft carriers. It also connected with Edmonton and existing supply lines so that equipment for the highway and war effort could come overland via rail and road. The road also provided reciprocal support for the airstrips which, since 1941, had been instrumental in getting supplies to Russia.¹⁹

The Northwest Staging Route was originally conceived in 1939 as a means of facilitating civilian air traffic between Edmonton and Whitehorse. Strips were built at Grand Prairie, Fort St. John, Fort Nelson and Watson Lake. There were also auxiliary strips built in between these points in accordance with standard safety procedure. Construction began in 1940 and the fields were opened to aircraft flying Visual Flight Rules in September of the following year. They had radio beacons by December and were open to all weather flying. In 1942 the airstrips were made over to accommodate military traffic. The military enlarged runways, improved the navigation facilities and built hangars, workshops, fuelling systems and airport lighting. By July 1943, they were fully capable of handling military transport.²⁰

In building the highway, the directive was to build an alignment that would ensure completion of the road as a practical military highway in the minimum possible time employing the maximum forces and equipment.²¹ As Ken Coates remarks; Seldom has a project of this magnitude been undertaken with such haste and so little planning.

Since they were not using any of the routes that had been examined before, all the previous planning work was rejected and started again. Managing the project was given to Colonel William Hoge of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. His only direction was to finish the pioneer road by the end of the 1942 season and link up the NWSR air fields. Other than that, he had no idea where the road would go.²²

A Road is Built

How It Was Organized

The highway was to be built in two stages. First, a pioneer road was to be constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, then a finished gravel highway was to be built by civilian contractors under the authority of the U.S. Public Roads Administration.

Hoge divided the project into two sections, north of Watson Lake and south of Watson Lake. He commanded the northern portion himself and put the southern portion under the command of Col. James "Patsy" O'Conner. Fort St. John was southern Headquarters for the highway and Whitehorse was designated as the main administrative centre as it offered the best combination of air, rail and river transportation north of Edmonton. He set up crews working south from Big Delta, in both directions from Whitehorse and north from Fort St. John. They had 1,500 miles to complete before the end of the year.²³

The speed of construction was such that work had begun well before a final route was selected. From Whitehorse to Kluane the army could follow the Kluane wagon road but there was no established trail from Fort Nelson to Whitehorse. Local Indians were very helpful in selecting routes around mountains but mostly their knowledge was limited to relatively small areas. No one had a good knowledge of the whole. Hoge relied heavily on Knox McCusker, DLS, to lay in the rough trail. Meanwhile, Hoge and bush pilot Les Cook flew the route from Fort Nelson to Whitehorse over and over again to select a route. By June of 1942, they had one.²⁴

How it Was Built

Construction began with 394 officers and 10,765 enlisted men divided into seven regiments working on the project.²⁵

The road was divided into six sectors:

Dawson Creek-Fort Nelson

Fort Nelson-Lower Post

Lower Post-Teslin

Teslin-Whitehorse

Whitehorse-International Boundary

International Boundary-Fairbanks

Each sector had six construction crews. Each crew built about 20 miles of road then leapt to the head of construction. Locating parties marked the right of way, advance tractors went in and cleared a swath 50 to 100 feet wide; bulldozers followed doing the levelling and rough grading; ditch and culvert crews followed and, finally, the finished grade crews put a stable surface on the road.²⁶

Construction was slowed down by bridging requirements. Crews could ford some rivers and creeks but they needed bridges for the numerous turbulent rivers. These took a while to build and the bridging crews were always far behind the rest of construction. As an interim measure, pontoon bridges were used. Crews lashed together pontoons, floored them with planks and put on an outboard. These served as ferries until the bridge approaches were built. Then crews lashed a bunch of pontoons together and laid timbers and planking over them, anchored them with deadmen and, voila, you had a bridge. When the bridging crews arrived, the pontoon ferries were dismantled and shipped to the next crossing.²⁷

The bridges were usually built using rock-filled log cribs rather than pilings as the latter were too time consuming. The cribs were plated with flattened oil drums for ice protection. The bridges themselves were timber structures, often using local materials. The original directive ordered that permanent bridges be built. For the sake of speed, however, the army used timber structures which, on a normal river, would have a life expectancy of four to five years or about the same period as the road would be required. In the mountainous terrain that the road ran through, the timber could not stand up to the spring run off and almost all of them had to be replaced in the first year. Thereafter, steel was used which actually required less tonnage of material to provide a higher carrying capacity than timber.²⁸

Permafrost was another factor which impeded development of the road since, in the beginning, the army did not know how to handle it. At first they stripped the surface layer of organic material and exposed the ice, which melted and created muck holes. After consulting with local road builders, the army engineers figured out that you should insulate with more brush and lay on corduroy.²⁹ This technique served both the army and the PRA, who built the finished road. Much of today's highway still has an underlayer of local spruce and poplar corduroy.³⁰ Even before they were finished the Pioneer Road, however, it began to break down under the strain of heavy traffic.

There were, of course, the difficult working conditions that made the highway infamous. Most of the men working on the road were not used to northern conditions. When they were subjected to poor accommodation, and the insects, dust and mud for which the Yukon is most notable, the result was extremely trying working conditions.

Supply and Admin.

The supply system was also burdened with heavy use. The main supply routes into the Yukon and Alaska were never designed to carry the volume of traffic resulting from highway construction. There were not enough labour and material supplies in the north to build the highway so almost everything had to be brought in. Because Whitehorse was right in the middle of the highway, and the White Pass Railway was its main supply, they became the main distribution point and supply route respectively. Whitehorse had the added advantage of a large airfield.

The Northwest Service Command was established in Whitehorse on September 4, 1942 thus formalizing Whitehorse as the operations centre for the Alcan Project. The NWSC was the coordinating authority for all highway activities in B.C., Alta, Yukon and Alaska. One of the main tasks of the NWSC was to boost capabilities of the White Pass Railway. The White Pass itself soon realized that it could not hope to handle two thousand tons of material per day the army was demanding. C.J. Rodgers, president of the White Pass, suggested that the army assume control of the railway for the duration. The NWSC assumed lease of the railway on October 1, 1942 for \$27,708.33 per month. The 770th Railway Operating Battalion took over the railway and established their railhead at McCrae.³¹

The movement of supplies into the Yukon was still slow since the White Pass Railway was the main access point and it was loaded beyond capacity. The Americans decided they needed another point of entry and directed that a road be build from Haines, Alaska into the Yukon. The original egress point for this road was to be somewhere around Champagne but it ended up in Haines Junction and thus was born a new community.³²

Administration of the highway probably caused as many problems as the terrain. Hoge did not get along with Brigadier General Clarence Sturdevant who had overall responsibility for the highway. The General claimed that Hoge's operation did not mesh well with that of the PRA. Although he was way ahead of schedule, his superiors felt he was not getting along with PRA though it seems it was more that Sturdevant and Lt. General Brehon Somerville, commanding general for service and supply, simply did not like him. William Hoge had other problems to contend with, however. The concentration of American industry on the war effort meant that the highway project was a secondary consideration. There were, therefore, equipment supply problems and, for a while, Hoge had his men working with hand tools until the heavy equipment arrived.³³ In order to complete the road on time, Hoge also commandeered PRA men and equipment to finish the Pioneer Road.³⁴ This may have been a source of friction that drew the attention of his superiors. Whatever the real reasons, in the middle of 1942, William Hoge was fired and Patsy O'Connor assumed command.

Under Hoge and O'Connor, the road was finished on October 28, 1942 when the eastern and western sections met at Contact Creek. The road was officially opened at a ceremony held on November 20 at Soldier's Summit, just over eight months from the start of construction.

The Public Roads Administration Road

Enter the PRA

The pioneer road quickly deteriorated under the onslaught of traffic and the army had to implement phase two of the project early. In August 1942, the PRA was called in to begin the finished road. They had been in Whitehorse since May lining up local contractors.³⁵ They had also been busy building camps and housing for their workers. Except for two troop companies, all American military personnel were withdrawn before the beginning of the construction season in 1943. The PRA had the road all to themselves.

At the peak season of 1943, there were 81 private contractors working on the road. The principal contractors for the project were lined up in 1942 and they were mostly American: Dowell Construction, Okes Construction, Lytle and Green Construction, W. Green Co., and one major Canadian firm, R. Melville Smith Co. They were contracted on a cost plus basis to avoid time consuming bids.³⁶ This was a total labour force of 15,900 of which 10,400 were U.S. contractor employees, 1,800 were PRA employees and 3,700 were Canadian contractor employees.³⁷ To aid them in their project, they had 11,107 pieces of equipment at the peak of the 1943 construction season.³⁸

About the time that the PRA was assuming responsibility for construction of the Alaska Highway, the strategic importance of the road was downgraded by the U.S. Government. This in turn led to a reduction of the building standards for the highway. Despite the fact that the Americans continued to tout the road as a first class highway, the Committee on Roads reported to the House of Representatives that

*...progressive steps were taken by the War Department to restrict improvements and reduce construction standards wherever feasible.*³⁹

The Americans were nonetheless proud of their accomplishment. The road was renamed the "Alaska Highway" at the request of the American government on July 19, 1943.⁴⁰

Even with the reduced requirements, the PRA basically had to rebuild the entire highway. Due to the extreme speed with which it was built, the road did not measure up to even the basic standards. The problems they experienced included inadequate drainage, many portions were built just above ground water level, disturbed permafrost, unstable soil conditions, and excessive curves and grades. The contractors set to work to realign, replace corduroy, and completely resurface the road. They also replaced the wooden bridges with steel.⁴¹ Some sections, such as that along Kluane Lake, were only drivable after freeze-up. This entire section had to be rebuilt to cope with the glacial streams which washed out road and bridges every spring, and formed ice glaciers over the road in winter.

Winding Up

The American government was not at all pleased that the road had to be redone. Since it was now of limited strategic value, they not only built it to a lower standard, but they attempted to persuade the Canadian Government to assume responsibility for the highway before the agreed date of six months after the war was over.⁴² The Haines Lateral project was halted in 1944 and the Americans showed no intention of doing anything more than they

had to. The PRA finished the road and pulled their people out as the road was completed. A small number of Americans were left to maintain the highway and the airfields but all American personnel were removed from the Yukon in 1944.⁴³

The Canadian Government was in the unenviable position of taking over a road that was not completed to the standard required by civilian traffic. They could not leave it in that state if it were to be any use at all, so they had to spend a great deal of money to bring the highway up to a useful quality. The government could not even openly complain that the Americans had failed to live up to their part of the bargain since they had built the road at no cost to Canada. They did have to pay for the fixed assets left by the Americans. It cost Canada \$123,500,000 to "buy back its sovereignty".⁴⁴

To fill the void left by the departing American forces, Ottawa sent thousands of soldiers to Yukon in the wake of the PRA withdrawal to maintain the highway and do construction where necessary. The Yukon they inherited had been profoundly changed by the "friendly invasion".

Aftermath

The pattern of life in the Yukon had been altered. Even though one third of the highway was in the Yukon, the territory had no part in the decision to build it and a negligible role in its construction. During the war, the Yukon was virtually an occupied country. It had been inundated with military personnel and the needs of the soldiers and their war effort came before that of the citizenry. As in many occupied countries, the army departed, leaving their mark on the landscape and the people.

The legacy of the wartime construction in Yukon was of dubious value. The Canol project, which was to supply cheap fuel from Norman Wells, was abandoned. The Northwest Staging Route was made obsolete by wartime advances in aviation technology and the highway itself did not produce the expected economic benefits everyone had hoped for.⁴⁵

Until June 1943, no commercial or civilian traffic was allowed on the road at all. After that, all non-military carriers were required to make application to the Joint Traffic Control Board for permission to use the road. Permits were limited so as not to interrupt military traffic and because there was a very limited number of places to service civilian traffic.⁴⁶ The highway remained under military control and traffic was restricted until 1948.

The road opened to general civilian traffic in February of 1948. The highway had been built for military purposes with no thought being given to its commercial viability after the war. It managed to bypass the principal mineral producing regions of Dawson and Mayo meaning that it was of limited utility in transporting the Yukon's main commodity. Until the 1980's, the railway was still a much cheaper way to transport most classes of goods. It was not until the road was improved enough to handle greater volumes of tourist traffic that it started to be of appreciable economic benefit.⁴⁷

A number of new communities sprang up to service the highway and they can be said to owe their continued existence to that artery. Whitehorse probably benefitted more than any other place. Its rise to metropolitan status, becoming the new capital and "an extended economic frontier" are largely due to the highway.⁴⁸

There were also social impacts resulting from the highway and its construction. Much of the Yukon's life began to reorient itself to the road. The effect was especially marked among the Indian community which began to leave their traditional settlements and lifestyle to live

along the highway.⁴⁹ The road not only radically improved transportation between the communities, it brought improved communication within the Yukon and with the outside world in the form of a widely available public telephone system. With improved communications and transportation came the subtler changes brought by the greater flow of ideas and goods from the outside. The Yukon also became more accessible to people from the south, many of whom had come up to work on the highway and either stayed or came back to live.

The Built Legacy

The Roads Themselves



he highway itself remains as the most significant historic legacy from the war effort in Yukon. The road, however, has been in a constant state of change. As noted above, the PRA basically built a different road from the army. They either built a new highway over top of the Pioneer Road, or they built along a completely different alignment. The PRA road, in turn, has been realigned and resurfaced so that there are very few sections one can point to as being "original" PRA road.⁵⁰

The Camps

The whole Alaska Highway project can be characterized as an exercise in expediency. The highway itself was only meant to be used for the predicted four to five year duration of the war.⁵¹ The camps and facilities built to support construction of the highway were no more permanent than that.

With the exception of Whitehorse, where the administrators of the highway required semipermanent housing and offices, the army used tents and movable buildings on skids.⁵² Accommodation was primitive during the winter of 1942-43. The contractors experienced an incredibly high labour turn over of over 100%, largely because the workers could not tolerate the conditions. This statistic pointed out clearly that they needed adequate housing and medical facilities.⁵³

In 1943, the American army made housing and camp facilities available to the 14,100 civilian employees of contractors and 1,850 PRA employees working on the highway. These were mostly located in camps that were systematically planned and laid out before the 1943 construction season. Some of the new camps were simply enlarged and improved army camps built for the Pioneer Road and some were newly-constructed.

The army used salvaged prefabricated buildings from several large Civilian Conservation Corps camps in the northwestern United States. They later used prefabricated metal huts (quonset). Once the PRA contractors were set up, most buildings were constructed from lumber produced by the contractor-operated sawmills. These produced over 15 million board feet of lumber for camp construction.⁵⁴

The PRA had two classes of camp. There was the Headquarters type (the only one in Yukon was Whitehorse) and the construction, line or bush camps set up at 10 to 15 mile intervals along the route and at every sawmill and bridge crossing. The Headquarters held 1000 personnel while the average line camp had 6 to 12 engineers and 100 to 200 construction workers.⁵⁵

The Headquarters had administration personnel and technical workers who were stationed semi-permanently in Whitehorse. They were provided with recreation halls, medical facilities, commissaries and communications services.

A wide variety of equipment was used to establish the line camps. Although the official reports on the camps state that the typical building measured 20'x120', it appears from the

appendices to the report that buildings varied considerably in length but the average width seems to have been 20 feet.⁵⁶ Photographs from the period show the 20'x120' buildings were certainly widely used in Whitehorse. A typical line camp included five main buildings: one unpartitioned barracks, one office, one combination kitchen and mess hall, one PRA combination office and barracks, one field shop and storage warehouse. There was also often a bath house and elevated or underground meat storage.⁵⁷

Barracks were generally unpartitioned dormitories. Each person had the minimum 50 square feet for his bunk in accordance with Army health regulations. There was a wash facility either in a partitioned off section of the bunk house or in separate building in between the barracks. These had hot and cold running water at all times.

The United States Public Health Service checked the camps regularly and tested quality of the drinking water and general sanitation. They also had dispensaries and 11 public health supervised hospitals along the highway. In Yukon, there were facilities at Whitehorse in the form of a dispensary with 30 beds, and the US Army Hospital. There was also a dispensary with 12 beds at 195 miles east of Whitehorse and a similar facility 152 west of the town.⁵⁸

In addition to these camps, the managing contractors also set up their own shop facilities. Each contractor was responsible for his own equipment as well as that of his subcontractors. They each had a headquarters shop that included departments for repair or rebuilding of motors, radiators, batteries and electrical equipment as well as a complete machine shop with engine lathes, bench lathes, shapers, milling machines, piston grinders, bolt-threading machines, tin shop, forge, blacksmith shop and welding equipment. They also had the facilities to repair and retread tires. There were over 75 smaller field shops along the highway to do routine maintenance.⁵⁹ There was likely one of these headquarters facilities in McCrae.

Another prominent feature related to the highway were the relay stations which serviced the telephone lines and other communications systems. There was a telephone line strung from Edmonton to Fairbanks, with nineteen repeater stations in Canada and four in Alaska. The main use of this was for the American military but there were also lines provided to the RCAF from Edmonton to Whitehorse for the purpose of air traffic control. The Canadian government also requested additional spur lines which carried telegraph and telephone. These extra lines were strung from Coal River to Swift River, Teslin to Whitehorse, Canyon Creek to Aishihik, and Koidern to Snag. There was also a line from Skagway to Whitehorse to assist in running the railway and it included a teletype line.

The stations were composed of prefabricated buildings, usually taken from other camps. They were used to house army truck drivers and station personnel required for the repair and servicing of vehicles and the maintenance of the station.⁶⁰

Whitehorse in Particular

Perhaps the greatest development, outside of the highway itself, took place in Whitehorse. Development of Whitehorse during the war reflected an attitude of temporariness. As Ken Coates summarizes the situation

*Whitehorse was, to all but a few businessmen and citizens, a way station, a place to earn a few dollars before escaping.*⁶¹

In the Spring of 1942, Whitehorse was invaded. More than 3,000 soldiers from the US Army Corps of Engineers camped west of the town. As these soldiers were shifted up and down the highway to construction camps, others came to take their places. As headquarters for the army and the PRA, Whitehorse was temporary home for thousands of administrators, maintenance workers, soldiers and construction workers, project managers and support personnel. It was also the site of the Canol refinery and a supply depot for much of the northwest. A year after construction started, there were 10,000 people living in Whitehorse.⁶²

Housing them all was a big problem. There were only a few houses and three hotels available. Tent cities were built to accommodate the soldiers and, eventually, civilian contractors built dozens of barracks, office buildings and other facilities. Berrigan built the log skyscrapers in response to the housing demand. Local residents were denied housing due to the demands placed on the market by the Americans. Many workers and residents simply squatted on White Pass Railway land and built semi-permanent shacks.⁶³

The Northwest Service Command Headquarters were built near the airport and the town began to move up the hill. A subdivision of "cemesto" family homes were built in Camp Takhini. These were meant to be more permanent residences, although they were designed for southern climes.⁶⁴

The local and Canadian governments did almost nothing to control the developments by the American Army. They also did nothing to control the spread of squatting to private and Crown Land. George Jeckell, nominal head of the Yukon's government and staunch defender of Dawson City as the political and economic capital of the Yukon, refused to spend money or time to control developments in Whitehorse. He apparently had no commitment to the town and believed that the changes were temporary. Things would get back to normal after the war.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, the increase in population placed serious pressures on water supply and sewage disposal systems which were still quite primitive. Water was delivered and sewage was handled by cesspits and septic fields. Health dangers were imminent. The American Army built chlorination plants to serve their personnel and planned an extensive sewer and water system for the community. The foreign development of a major public work on Canadian soil, without consultation with its citizens, raised the ire of Ottawa. The project was scaled back. The system served the American Army's own residences and offices but only a select few local residences, businesses and government offices were serviced, all of whom hooked in at their own expense.⁶⁶

While critical opinion differs on whether or not the benefits of the American's building projects outweighed the drawbacks, the fact is that there was a substantial built legacy left to the civilian population. Outdoor hockey rinks and a number of baseball fields were built by American Army. Bars, restaurants and two theatres opened in response to demand. In 1941, Whitehorse had three restaurants, in 1943 it had 10. More rooms were added to the school and the hospital and the Americans built a small medical facility of their own. All this was in addition to the highway construction and maintenance facilities and equipment that were either given, purchased or scavenged after the Americans left. In fact, the developments made by the Army and the PRA in Whitehorse are in large part responsible for the town's layout and the did much to change the orientation of future development from the river and the railway to the airport and the escarpment.

Fate of the Highway and Its Camps

After the Canadian Government assumed control of the highway on April 1, 1946, the road became the responsibility of the Northwest Highway System of the Canadian Army. Eventually, the highway came under the what is now Public Works Canada. In 1972, the maintenance of the road was given over to the Government of Yukon while planning and development stayed in federal hands.

When the Americans pulled out of the Yukon, they sold off or removed most of their equipment and buildings. Many of the highway camps were kept up by the Canadian Government as highway maintenance facilities. As the road surface and equipment improved over the years, the need for maintenance camps at regular intervals along the highway became less and less. The camps were systematically closed, the buildings sold off and moved and, in most cases, the sites were "reclaimed".⁶⁷ While many of the buildings from the construction period remain around the Yukon, very few are on their original sites. Of those that remain in their original locations, most were altered to suit some other use such as highway lodges or garages. Even the large number of buildings set up in Whitehorse have gradually disappeared or are now well disguised in new identities as warehouses and garages.

A final development related to the highway, which still occurred within the pre-1955 historic period, was the development of highway lodges and service centres. Since it was not until 1948 that general civilian traffic was allowed on the highway, there are not many of these sites.

Thematic Points to Ponder



The most prominent theme related to the Alaska Highway is that of Economic/Transportation/Land/Road. While this study is specifically aimed at provided historic and thematic background for the extant historic sites along the highway, there are some themes which are important to the highway's history but which are not well represented in physical resources. While this study does not examine these themes, since they do not relate to specific sites, their significance to the history of the highway warrants mention.

The influence of the highway and the "friendly invasion" on the Social/Cultural theme is the most prominent of these. Almost every community in the southern Yukon and Dawson City was an intercultural contact point between civilian and military, Canadian and American, white and Indian, even some white, Indian and Black.

Less prominent, but also important in the development of the highway was the theme of Transportation/air/military. One of the main reasons the highway was built was to provide ground support for the Northwest Staging Route airfields. The location of the airfields was more influential in the location of the road than any other feature.

Communications/wire/telephone is a theme of secondary importance related to the highway, but it is nonetheless significant. One of the spinoff benefits from the American invasion was a telephone system that linked Yukon to southern Canada and to other Yukon communities on the highway.

There are a number of political themes related to the building of the highway. Simply trying to plan the road involved the themes of Administrative military, mapping and exploration, operational and sovereignty. The most prominent of these, and the easiest to represent through the highway is the theme military/American. Perhaps in all of Canada, there is no better place to depict American military operations on Canadian soil outside of York and the war of 1812. This was essentially an American road. They conceived of it, planned it, organized it and built it. Canadian involvement was token.

All three sub-themes under Settlement and Community Development are important to the highway. Under buildings, the highway is important both for the functional types and designs it introduced to the Yukon through the military and PRA operations. The military uniformity of housing, barracks and camp buildings is still evident in parts of the Yukon. Similarly, the distinctive quonset hut is still part of the Yukon landscape.

Settlement patterns were radically affected by the highway. New communities sprang up in response to the existence of the road and the services and economic opportunities it offered. Conversely, it meant the death of many small places removed from the highway. The native population was particularly affected by the highway and many were drawn away from their traditional lifestyles and homes by the pull of the "gravel magnet".

The pattern of settlement in Whitehorse changed remarkably as a result of the highway. Offices, warehouses and housing were built in a helter skelter manner reflecting the temporariness of the development. The erection of army camps as separate communities

within a community is also a phenomenon worthy of note since it set the pattern for future developments in the area.

The highway also had an spin off impacts in areas such as recreation, where the Americans built baseball diamonds and sport facilities which were inherited and used by the civilian population. Schools and health care facilities were built to accommodate the burgeoning population that came with the highway. The highway, or the prospect of one, even created political interest groups in the Yukon. There seems to be very few facets of Yukon life that were not touched in some way by the building of this road. Its impact must be ranked with more glamorous and popular, but no more significant, Klondike gold rush of 1898.

Site Inventory and Evaluation

Methodology



Although the initial focus of the Alaska Highway Inventory was abandoned sections of highway, we also decided to look for any sites related to the construction period of the road. To this end, we reviewed annotated topographical maps made available by Public Works Canada and the As-constructed drawings of the Public Roads Administration. By comparing these two sets of plans, we were able to locate potential historic resources such as army and PRA roads and camps, relay stations, Canol pump stations, airfields and bridges. The plans were reviewed with Public Works staff to get an idea of what may still exist. The plans were then taken into the field for verification.

We were aided in the reconnaissance of these sites by two former highway superintendents who had both travelled and worked on the highway since it was first built. They were able to advise us as to which sites shown on the plans still did or did not exist. They were also able to show us places that did not show up on the plans. The results of this broad review appear in the Alaska Highway Inventory Field Notes attached to this report.

The discussion of each resource is preceded by locational data. These include kilometer and mile post and reference to the Public Roads Administration As-Constructed Plans. These are available at Heritage Branch and Public Works Canada. Photographic reference numbers refer to the photographs in Appendix A and to transparencies in Heritage Branch files. The Site Files refer to the Yukon Historic Sites Inventory site record numbers (eg. 105C/06/007). These files are available at Heritage Branch as well as the topographical maps showing the location of the sites.

Parameters

The original terms of reference for this study directed that research be carried out on the theme Transportation/ Road/Alaska Highway. Initially, this was to apply strictly to abandoned sections of road and the structural resources related thereto. This was expanded later to include all historic structures associated with the highway. In order to maintain a focus for this study, the inventory concerned itself with sites whose primary significance derived from the theme Transportation/Road/Alaska Highway, specifically those sites directly related to the construction or maintenance of the road.

This led to some types of sites being screened out although they are related to the highway. Highway lodges and service stations were screened out as they are primarily related the Commercial/services theme and were not directly related to the construction or maintenance of the highway. The Northwest Staging Route airfields, although they were the main reason for the route selected for the highway and one of the main reasons for building the highway, are still sites falling under the theme Transportation/air. Airfields could not properly be evaluated under the Alaska Highway theme since it was the system of airfields and not any particular site that was important to the highway. A hangar, for example, cannot be evaluated for how well it represents the Transportation/ road theme. Similarly, sites related to the Canol Pipeline were considered to be related to the Industrial/secondary theme. The pipeline and its related resources cannot be properly evaluated as they relate to the Transportation theme.

The Extant Resources



The historic resources to be examined in relation to the Alaska Highway fall into seven general categories:

- Pioneer Road
- PRA Road
- Construction Camps
- Headquarters Camp
- Relay Stations
- Bridges
- Support Facilities

One of these categories, the PRA road, has been examined in a separate report.⁶⁸ Since the terms of reference have been altered, however, some of the sections of PRA road which did not meet the selection criteria in that study may now be viewed in a fresh perspective. For that reason, some sections of the highway have been reintroduced in this study in a different light.

Whitehorse was not inventoried, thus, there is no site information presented on the remains of the army or PRA headquarters camps and offices. This omission is due in part to the previous policy of avoiding Whitehorse in the Yukon Historic Sites Inventory. The other reason that no Whitehorse sites appear is that, although historic photographs were examined to determine if buildings or groupings of construction camps or headquarters offices remained, we could find no clear evidence that there were construction period buildings remaining on their original sites. This is not to say that they do not exist. Some of the long buildings in Whitehorse's industrial area very likely date from the construction period, but additional interviews and photographic analysis would be required to determine whether or not they were on their original sites.

Pioneer Roads

There are several sections of the pioneer road left in various states of repair. These range from vague trails through the woods which have not been travelled in years to roads like Marshall Creek and the Tagish road which are maintained and driven year round. The top and bottom ends of this grouping have been screened. The trails through the woods and short loops are no longer identifiable as road. The Tagish Road, on the other hand, has been upgraded to the point where it resembles a highway and not a pioneer road. In order to qualify for consideration under the evaluation process, the sites should retain the aspects of a road without resembling a modern secondary highway.

Swift River

Km. 1166.3 to 1169.5 (ingress/egress points)

MP 724 to 726

PRA Plans Section C, sheet 31

Nisutlin Bay to Upper Crossing

Photographs 90-08-102-20 to -22

Historic features

This is a section typical of the Pioneer Road that followed the path of least resistance around a low lying area only to find itself having to climb a steep grade on the other side. In retrospect, looking at the present alignment and the lay of the land, it is hard to understand why the army did not go the easy way.

Contextual Integrity

The surroundings of this section have not changed since its construction save for the new alignment. The road exhibits some of the typical terrain the Pioneer Road had to move around and over.

Condition

The road is just barely passable for about one kilometre of its eastern section because the trees are beginning to grow back. It is broken by a stream and by the Swift River where the bridges have washed out.

Marshall Creek

Km. 1613.8 to Haines Junction

MP 1003.5 to Haines Junction

PRA Plans Section B, sheets 23-24

Whitehorse to Burwash Landing

Photographs 90-08-103-31 to -35 and 90-08-104-03 to -20

Historic Features

This 18 Km. section of road parallels the Canol Pipeline. It is anchored at the Haines Junction end by the old asphalt plant which, as far as we know, was built to service the highway but never used. Haines Junction itself owes its existence to the fact that the Pioneer Road, and later the highway and the Haines Lateral intersected here. The road remains in much its original state in the northern part and even retains the ford rather than a modern bridge.

Contextual Integrity

Since it runs so far from the modern highway, this road is unaffected by most modern development. There are houses in the southern section which intrude on the road somewhat.

Condition

The road is about 18 km. long and crosses Marshall Creek about 6.5 km south of the present highway. The road is in good driving condition but is still single lane for most of its length and rutted from erosion and run off. The ford at Marshall Creek can be managed by passenger vehicle only in the dry months. From the creek to the Indian Village in Haines Junction the road is maintained year round as it services several residences in the area. It is wider through this section and the surface is better maintained. The road terminates at the old asphalt plant just east of Haines Junction.

Jarvis Creek

Km. 1670 to 1692

MP. 1037 to 1050

PRA Plans Section B, sheets 33-36

Whitehorse to Burwash Landing

*This section was not recorded

Historic features

The main claim to fame of this site is that it is probably the longest extant section of Pioneer Road in the Yukon. The later road was forced up onto the hillsides to avoid the wet lowland road which was really only usable in winter. This is fairly typical of most of the Pioneer Road in the Kluane Lake area.

Contextual Integrity

The road is far enough removed from the highway that it has not been affected. It is used as an access road for wildlife personnel in the area and their spur roads may have affected the integrity of the site slightly.

Condition

The road lies in lowlands and is very marshy. It is used regularly by trail bikes and 4x4 vehicles, however. It should be considered to be in fair condition.⁶⁹

PRA Road

Although the PRA road has already been reviewed in the preliminary report, it should be noted that Silver City and the Donjek River sections, which were screened out in the preliminary study, may be reconsidered within the broader scope of this evaluation. The *Alaska Highway Inventory and Research: Preliminary Report, September 1990* is attached to this report.

Construction Camps

After their abandonment, construction camps were systematically dismantled. Even where they were converted into highway maintenance camps, they were mostly obsolete by the late 1960's and then dismantled. Most of the sites are in a very poor state of repair, consisting largely of foundation remains and one or two dilapidated buildings.

Some of the buildings from these camps still exist, though not on their original sites. These relocated buildings have been screened from the evaluation process because their integrity and context have been lost. Camp remains were found at several places but very few with buildings still standing.

Johnson's Crossing.

Km. 1346

MP 836

PRA Plans Section C, sheet 31

Whitehorse to Nisutlin Bay

Photographs 90-10-106-15 to -22 and -31 to -37 and 90-10-107-0 to -9

Historic features

At Johnson's Crossing there were three camps: Canol, Army and Relay Station. Of these, there were various foundation remains, but only one garage and one oil tank still standing. Since these remains are in between where the Canol and Relay Station sites are marked on the PRA As-builts, it is hard to say just which they belonged to or if they were part of a service centre for all three.

The building is typical of the standard prefabricated, general purpose buildings used in the camps. (See file for Garage-Canol Junction 105C/06/007).

There is also an oil tank on site, likely used for fuelling the camp(s) and/or vehicles. (See file for Oil Tank-Canol Junction 105C/06/006).

Contextual integrity

The existence of three camps at this site was due to the fact that it was a major river crossing and the intersection of two major roads. It also happened to be where the PRA finished their 1943 construction and began the 1944 season. The remaining buildings are still associated with the remains of the Pioneer Road, the approaches to the early trestle bridge, the old PRA alignment and the new highway. The latter, unfortunately, did much to disturb the site's integrity.

Condition

Both of the remaining features are in fair condition.

Cracker Creek

Km. 1589

MP 987.8

PRA Plans Section B, sheet 18

Whitehorse to Burwash Landing

Photographs 90-08-102-31 to-37 and 90-10-104-28 to -33

Historic features

This camp went by the illustrious name of "4W" according to the PRA As-constructed drawings. There were originally 19 buildings on this site of which 7 remain.⁷⁰ The camp was likely built in 1943 by the E.W. Elliot Company of Seattle, Washington who were responsible for camp construction in the Yukon.⁷¹ The buildings which remain are all small and of undetermined use. Clues to their original functions have been masked or obliterated by the subsequent years of use. The foundation remains of the large 20'x120' buildings are still evident. (See files for Cracker Creek Buildings, #1 to #7 115A/15/006 to 012. Key map included with Building #1).

The site was apparently taken over by private interests for use as a highway lodge shortly after its abandonment and served in that capacity on and off over the years.⁷²

Contextual integrity

The Cracker Creek site sits on a short section of abandoned PRA road just off of the present highway. This allows it to maintain an atmosphere of the earlier highway period. The site has been modified to adapt it to use as a lodge. The degree of interference is unknown since we do not know what the original buildings looked like or even whether all of the buildings are from the construction camp. Building #1 matches the configuration and location of the tiny map on the PRA map sheet but it is the only structure showed up on the plan.

Condition

All of the structures are in good condition.

Silver City

Km. 1692.6

MP 1052

PRA Plans Section B, sheet 37

Whitehorse to Burwash Landing

Historic features

There are six structures at Silver City related to the construction of the Alaska Highway (see Yukon Historic Sites Inventory sites 115G/01/002 to 007). These are typical highway buildings clearly set up as barracks and kitchens. Who they belonged to is not at all clear as the camp is not marked on the PRA plans and the big army camp was at Kluane Camp (150W) to the west. The site is associated with a section of the PRA road which was abandoned and, except for the eastern section, is mostly gone due to frequent washouts by Silver Creek. This in itself is an interesting and typical feature.

Contextual Integrity

So far as we know from our informants, these buildings have not moved nor the site changed (except for regular flooding and collapse of buildings) since the 1940's.

Condition

All of the buildings are in poor condition.

Relay Stations

Although the relay stations are perhaps better examined under the theme of Communications, these sites were directly involved in the management of the highway construction project. These went the way of the construction camps for the most part. With the advances in communications technology, there was no need for relay stations. With the notable exception of Canyon Creek, which was converted to a microwave repeater station, the relay stations have disappeared.

Canyon Creek

Km. 1904

MP 996.5

PRA plans Section B, sheet 21

Whitehorse to Burwash landing

Photographs 90-10-104-22 to -27

Historic features

There are three main buildings and one small outbuilding on this site that appear to date from the construction period. (See site form for Canyon Creek 115A/14/018). The functions of the buildings are unknown. As far as we can tell, these are the only buildings associated with a telephone repeater station left in the Yukon.

Contextual integrity

This was once a large site complex which included a construction camp. We do not know what the original site looked like but there has not been much modern infill.

Condition

While in good condition, two of the four buildings have undergone rather extensive modernization and additions. The other two appear to have the same configuration and finishes of construction period buildings. The largest of the buildings may not date from the construction period at all. If it does, it has been so radically modified that its integrity has been lost.

Bridges

As far as we have been able to determine, there are only two bridges remaining on the Yukon section of the Alaska Highway that were built in 1943 or before. This includes the Canyon Creek Bridge, which has since been mostly reconstructed, and the steel trestle at Johnson's Crossing.

Canyon Creek Bridge

Km. 1604

MP 997

PRA plans Section B, sheet 21

Whitehorse to Burwash landing

Historic features

The wooden bridge across Canyon Creek was built by the US Army when they were constructing the Pioneer Road. It replaced an even earlier bridge that served the Kluane wagon road. It was also known as the Stockton Bridge by the 1st and 2nd platoons of "A" Company, 18th Engineers Regiment, who constructed it.⁷³ This apparently became the model for other bridges and appeared thereafter in the War Department Field Manuals on construction.⁷⁴ It is the only remaining bridge from the Pioneer Road that we know of.

Contextual integrity

The modern highway and new bridge directly below this bridge intrude on its original context somewhat.

Condition

The bridge is in good condition, having been reconstructed by YTG's Heritage Branch (see Branch file 115A/14/001 for plans and details).

Teslin River Bridge (Johnson's Crossing Bridge)

Km. 1346

MP 836

PRA Plans Section C, sheet 31

Whitehorse to Nisutlin Bay

Photographs 90-10-106-23 to -30 and 90-10-107-5 to -9

Historic features

The 1,466.4 foot long cantilever bridge was built over a two year period from 1942 to 1944.⁷⁵ It is the only steel bridge left from the construction period in Yukon so far as we know. The approaches for the ferry crossing and the temporary trestle bridge are still on this site as well. See site file 105C/06/008

Contextual integrity

There have been very few changes to this area to mar the integrity of the site. The camps on both sides of the river are gone but sections of both Pioneer Road and PRA road remain, as well as the older bridge and ferry approaches.

Condition

The bridge is in active use and well maintained.

Support Facilities

It was difficult to establish what sites should be included in this category since things like highway lodges and service stations could be considered as support facilities. The primary importance of these sites, however, is derived from their association with the theme commercial/services and not the highway per se.

Destruction Bay

Km. 1743

MP 1083

PRA plans Section B, sheet 48

Whitehorse to Burwash landing

Historic features

There are three buildings in Destruction Bay associated with the highway. Two are still in use as storage buildings in the YTG compound and one is at Km. 1742. The latter building was used as a garage and repair shop by the Royal Canadian Electrical Mechanical Engineers in the late 1940's. Other than that, we know nothing about the structures. (See site forms for Royal Canadian Electrical Mechanical Engineers 115G/07/024, Storage Buildings #1115G/07/022 and #2 115G/07/023, Destruction Bay).

Contextual integrity

Two of the buildings are still in the context of a maintenance yard but not of the same vintage.

Condition

The two buildings in the YTG yard are in good condition while the one at Km. 1742 is only fair.

Asphalt Plant

Km. 1635.2

MP 1016.2

PRA plans Section B, sheet 28

Whitehorse to Burwash landing

Photographs 90-10-104-10 to -21

Historic features

This asphalt plant was constructed in the hopes the Canol oil could supply a surfacing material for the Alaska Highway and Haines Lateral.⁷⁶ It was never used to our knowledge. The site consists of the plant, four oil tanks, a weigh scale and a smaller building of unknown use. See site file 115A/014/019.

Contextual integrity

The site is still located on the Pioneer Road (see Marshall Creek Road) and there is no modern intrusion.

Condition

While the interiors and fittings of the buildings have been removed, the structures themselves are in good condition.

Endnotes

1. Gordon Bennett, Yukon Transportation: A History (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1978), p. 126.
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3. Ibid, p. 128.
4. Bennet, p.128.
5. Ken S. Coates and William R. Morrison, Land of the Midnight Sun: A History of the Yukon, (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1988),p.222.
6. Ibid, p. 223.
7. Bennett, p. 128.
8. Ibid, p. 129.
9. Ibid, p. 128
10. Ibid, p.129.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid, pp. 129-130.
13. Coates and Morrison, pp.223-224.
14. Ibid, p. 226.
15. United States House of Representatives, Interim Report from the Committee on Roads, "The Alaska Highway", March 13, 1946, p.13.
16. Bennet ,131-132.
17. Ibid, p.132.
18. Coates and Morrison, p. 227.
19. Bennet, p.132.
20. Ibid.
21. As quoted in Ibid, p. 132.
22. Coates and Morrison, p. 227.
23. Ibid, p. 227.
24. Ibid, p. 228.
25. Committee on Roads, p. x.

26. Bennett, p. 133.
27. Ibid, p. 134.
28. Committee on Roads, p. 19.
29. Bennet, p. 134.
30. Ray Magnuson, Whitehorse, taped interview, July 18, 1990.
31. Bennet, pp. 136-137.
32. Committee on Roads, p. 13.
33. Coates and Morrison, p. 230.
34. Ibid, p. 232.
35. Bennet, p. 134.
36. Coates and Morrison, p. 232.
37. Committee on Roads, p. 17.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid, p. 16.
40. Bennett, p. 137.
41. Ibid.
42. Coates and Morrison, p. 232.
43. Ibid, p. 253.
44. Ibid, p. 254.
45. Bennet, p. 138.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid, p. 139.
48. Ibid.
49. see Julie Cruikshank, "The Gravel Magnet: Some Social Impacts of the Alaska Highway on Yukon Indians", in Ken Coates, ed., *The Alaska Highway: Papers of the 40th Anniversary Symposium* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1985).
50. see Rob Ingram, "Yukon Historic Sites Inventory: Alaska Highway Inventory and Research, Preliminary Report", Government of Yukon, Heritage Branch, September 1990.
51. Committee on Roads, p. 19.
52. Ibid, p. 54.

53. Ibid, p. 52.
54. Ibid, p. 53.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid, pp. 54 and 264-268.
57. Ibid, p. 54.
58. The location of these facilities, as reported in the Committee on Roads, p. 54, is likely in error since those distances, even accounting for changes in the highway, would put the hospital facilities in the middle of nowhere. It is likely that they were located at Swift River and Kluane.
59. Committee on Roads, p. 55.
60. Ibid.
61. Coates and Morrison, p. 246.
62. Ibid, p. 247.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid, p. 248.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Ray Magnuson, taped interview, July 1990.
68. Ingram, Preliminary Report.
69. Brent Liddle, Canadian Parks Service, personal communication to David Porter, July 1990.
70. Committee on Roads, p. 266.
71. Ibid, p. 43.
72. Ray Magnuson, taped interview, July 1990.
73. Fred Rust, Regimental Historian, The Eighteenth Engineers Regiment (Combat) in Yukon Territory: April 1942 - January 1943, Typescript, 1944. p. 27.
74. Ibid.
75. Ellen Davignon, personal communication, July 1990 and Ray Magnuson, personal communication, July 1990.
76. Gudrun Sparling, personal communication to Helene Dobrowolsky, January 1991.

Appendix A

Photographs

Appendix B
Preliminary Report

YUKON HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY

Alaska Highway Inventory and Research

Preliminary Report, September 1990

prepared by

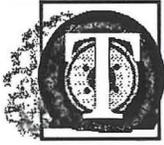
Rob Ingram of *Midnight Arts*

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Introduction



This report, in accordance with the terms of contract, provides background information for a preliminary evaluation of original sections of the Alaska Highway. The study forms a follow up and augmentation to the Nairn and Associates report *Alaska Highway Heritage Parkway Site Evaluation Study* produced earlier this year. That study did not take particular note of heritage features on the highway segments it examined, nor was it specifically concerned with thematic issues. One of the main functions of this inventory is to fill that gap in the analysis.

It should be noted that no site specific history has been provided other than that gained from informants or the Public Roads Administration's as-built drawings. The general history of the highway will be included in the theme study to follow this report. At that time we hope to have more specific data pertaining to the specific sections of highway that are examined below. While there has been a great deal written on the construction of the Alaska Highway, however, most of it deals with generalities and not a mile by mile narrative on the road. We feel, nevertheless, that the material provided here should be adequate to the immediate needs of the Branch.

Methodology

As proposed, Midnight Arts undertook research and recording of the Alaska Highway for entry in the Yukon Historic Sites Inventory and to locate potential candidate sections for the proposed heritage parkway. While we read the Nairn and Associates report on the same topic, we did not use it as a guideline. Rather, we examined sections of the highway which met the following criteria as developed between Heritage Branch and ourselves:

- 1) Alaska Highway as-built by the Public Roads Administration. Forerunners of this road were either simply trails, tote or pioneer roads cut by the army. While we examined many of the longer sections of pioneer road, they were not included in the preliminary evaluation since they were not Alaska Highway per se. This includes sections such as the Haines Junction (Marshall Creek Road), Kluane and Destruction Bay sections identified as old highway in the Nairn report.
- 2) Approximately five kilometres in length, unbroken by the present highway.
- 3) No longer actively used as highway.
- 4) Drivable and accessible by normal two-wheel drive passenger vehicle with minimal upgrading of surface and access. In the late 1970's, Community and Transportation Services of YTG began a policy of "scarifying" abandoned road to promote revegetation and discourage use. These sections would now be difficult and expensive to reclaim.

The first step in the research process was an examination of plans relating to the highway. We were very fortunate to have the assistance of Public Works Canada personnel who were familiar with the road and with the old plans. Fritz Stockmuller was particularly helpful in providing us with a set of present day alignments marked on 1:50,000 topographical map sheets, as well as copies of the Public Works Administration Plans for the As-Constructed Highway. Since the 1:50,000 map sheets showed previous roads and alignments (contrary to information we had received earlier) we were able to determine roughly where remaining sections of pioneer road and original alignment were located. These sections were then checked on the As-Constructed plans to ensure that they were original sections of highway and to see what other features might be associated with that section of road such as camps, pipeline, et cetera. (Copies of these plans are on file with Heritage Branch).

Once we had identified potential candidates for the inventory, we consulted with people who had worked on the highway. We were again very fortunate to have the assistance and knowledge of two former highway superintendents, Ray Magnuson and Ches Campion. For information on the present day road, Jim Coxford of Public Works Canada proved invaluable by advising us of the condition of the abandoned road and related features.

These were the principal informants we used for the field portion of the Inventory. While we contacted a few others, they were either vague in their recollections or confessed to having very little useful information.

The field examination and recording were conducted by David Porter and me with Ches Campion and Ray Magnuson as guides and informants. We used the notations made from the plans we had examined as a guideline for sites to inspect. We also checked any sites our informants thought might be relevant to the Inventory. While our principal aim was to record the potential parkway candidates, we also made notations on other features related to the highway and our informants' recollections of them so as not to squander the opportunity. Unfortunately, most of the on-site notations were made on a pocket tape recorder which was stolen before the tape could be transcribed. They were reconstructed from memory as much as possible.

Formal interviews were conducted with each of the informants to review material they had given us while travelling the highway. The resultant recordings also provide general biographical data as it related to the highway.

It was not surprising, but nevertheless disappointing, that there was very little, historically or technically, to differentiate one section of abandoned highway from another. It was, and is, the policy of the federal government to dispose of its assets after they are no longer in service. In the case of the road camps, pipeline and service centres along the Alaska Highway this meant selling and moving buildings and machinery and bulldozing whatever was left. There are, therefore, very few historic structures still associated with the old road that have retained their original appearance or context.

The road itself was constantly upgraded. There is virtually nothing in the method of construction to differentiate a 1940's road from a 1970's road, according to our informants. One possible exception to this that we thought of was the use of corduroy in the construction of the early road. According to Ray Magnuson, the PRA road was built right over top of these old wooden road beds and the logs are still underlying the highway in many places. He noted that the highway maintenance people would find corduroy road in quite a number of places but there was no record of where. The logs were quite often as fresh as the day they were cut since they had not been exposed to the air for forty or fifty years. On the surface, however, one could not tell the difference between old road and new road. There are still some original wooden box and barrel stave culverts remaining but almost none of them are on the sections of abandoned road we examined. We found no signage whatsoever. In terms of historic resources then, there is not a great deal to recommend one section of abandoned road over another.

Evaluation Criteria

As stated in Section 3.3 (2) of the terms of reference, the following criteria were to be used in evaluating the interpretation potential of each section of highway:

- 1) Evidence of early construction methods and equipment
- 2) Remains of work camps and other roadway construction features
- 3) Original bridges and culverts
- 4) Contextual integrity of roadway
- 5) Condition of resources
- 6) Any remaining sections of visible concurrent pipeline
- 7) Association with earlier roads and trails

As noted above, there was very little to examine under criterion 1,2,3 and 6. Strictly according to the selection criteria, there are only four sections of original Alaska Highway in the Yukon that remain uninterrupted for five kilometres. The features of these sections have been outlined below.

In order to allow comparison and continuity with the Nairn and Associates report *Alaska Highway Heritage Parkway Site Evaluation Study*, we have used the same names where we are discussing similar sections of highway.

Below the name of each section, we have used references to the Public Roads Administration As-Constructed plans. This will assist the reader in locating the road on the old plans. The mile post (MP) and kilometre post (Km.) refer to distances on the present alignment. It should be noted that these distance vary significantly from plan to plan and even on the road itself at times where the posts have been relocated without proper measurement. These markers should assist the reader in locating the referenced sections on the 1:50,000 maps supplied by Public Works Canada and on the present highway itself.

Watson Lake

PRA Section D, sheets 46,47

MP 637-642

Km 1025.8-1033

This loop of original highway, west of the town of Watson Lake and just before the Upper Liard River, was cut off in 1978. See *Appendix A*, photographs 90-08-102-0 to -18 and colour slides 90-08-105-22 to -33.

Historic Features

The Canol Pipeline and the original telephone lines paralleled this alignment. While the right of way for both features is still evident, there are no other physical remains.

There is a notorious curve about half way down the hill, about 1.5 km. from the western access (*Appendix A*, photo 90-08-102-15 and 90-08-105-30s). In winter, it apparently claimed a number of vehicles annually which either flew off the outside of the curve going down or slipped off the road on the inside of the curve going up. In summer, however, it does not pose much of a problem.

For the most part, the PRA alignment overlays the Army Pioneer Road. The one significant exception was right at the top of the hill where the Pioneer Road followed the pipeline over the top of the hill and the PRA road went around. There is no clear evidence of the army road remaining.

The Army tote road to Watson Lake cuts off to the north just past Mile 640. This is now a service road to an air navigation beacon and is fenced off 1 km. from the point where it intersects the PRA road. It has been upgraded but retains its narrow allowance (*Appendix A*, photos 90-08-102-09 and -10 and 90-08-105-27s).

The airport and beacon are also have significant historical associations with the highway as they were part of the Northwest Staging Route which worked with the road to supply America's northwestern frontier during World War II.

Contextual Integrity

There is some residential construction near the west end of the road. Though none of the residences appear to date from the pre-1955 historical period, they are mostly well off the highway and do not present much of a visual intrusion. In fact, they are not even visible in our photographs of the road.

This road is also used as access to the YTG campground. The cutoff road to that site does intrude significantly upon the old highway as it is obviously modern and has a wider allowance.

Condition

The road is in good condition and appears to be maintained year round for access to residences and the air navigation beacon. The curve posed no real driving hazard despite the fact that it had rained the day before we drove it.

Teslin Area

The Nairn Report identified one possible candidate section of highway near Teslin which we are calling the Hays Creek Section. A second candidate, this one on the west side of Teslin, we have labelled the Lone Tree Creek Section.

Hays Creek

PRA Section C, Sheet 8

MP 790-793

Km 1272-1276

The 8 km. section of highway identified in the Nairn Report as the Teslin Alternative Site, is not continuous. It is broken near Km. 1276 where it crosses the present alignment twice. The section we found to be reasonably intact and accessible is the eastern 4.4 km. This section is accessible from both ends, the western entrance is via the road to the Teslin Rod and Gun Club firing range. See *Appendix A* photographs 90-08-101-29 to -37 and colour slides 90-08-105-17 to -21.

Historic Features

Highway camp 8E was located just west of Hays Creek on this section of road. There is evidence that indicates a small sawmill operation may have been located to the south of the camp, across the road. There is nothing left on either of these sites save sawdust and a few broken boards. The camp site was bulldozed sometime after its abandonment.

Contextual Integrity

The firing range constructed near the western end of the section comes right into the road allowance and gives the road a feeling of being an access rather than a highway. Borrow pits were dug near the eastern end of the section when the highway was realigned in 1982. The access road to this has also intruded upon the original alignment (*Appendix A*, 90-08-102-36). The borrow pit and firing range themselves also mar the integrity of the road somewhat. The remainder of the road travels through spruce forest which forms a buffer between the old and new highways.

Condition

The road is generally in good condition, both eastern and western ends being used regularly. The centre portion which intersects an unnamed creek is in poor condition where the old bridge has been removed. Beavers have filled this gap with their own

construction which has created a pond. This threatens to overflow the central 100 m. of the road about 2 km. from the eastern end (*Appendix A*, 90-08-101-31 and 90-08-105-17s).

Lone Tree Creek

PRA Section C,

MP 817-820

Km. 1314.5-1319.5

This portion of the old road measures approximately 5.6 km. and runs roughly from Lone Tree Creek to Deadman Creek west of Teslin. While it is not really an historical feature, we thought it worthwhile to point out that this is a very scenic piece of road. It offers a view of Teslin lake for most of its length. See *Appendix A* photographs 90-08-101-14 to -28 and colour slides 90-08-105-09 to -16.

Historic features

Other than knowing that this section was cut off in 1983, our informants could think of nothing related to the history of this section. All of the culverts we examined along the road were modern, metal fittings. There was no signage and no historical references that indicated camps or other related features.

Contextual Integrity

There is almost nothing to mar the integrity of this section of road. It is located far enough away from the present highway that it does not intrude. The eastern end of the road now runs under the guy wires for the power poles erected after the section was abandoned. This does mar the integrity somewhat (*Appendix A*, 90-08-101-27 & -28 and 90-08-105-15 & -16).

Condition

Although both ends of this section have been scarified, they are still passable in a passenger vehicle. Other than these end portions, the road is in remarkably good shape. Since it is not maintained, however, there are some minor washout areas where winter glacier melt has cut into the road surface.

North Whitehorse Section

"Old Alaska Highway"

PRA Section B, Sheet 3

MP 929-933

Km. 1496-1501

This six km. curve of the highway was cut off in the 1977 realignment. It is located between the Klondike Highway cutoff and Takhini Crossing. See *Appendix A* photographs 90-08-104-21 to -33.

Historic features

Since this section of highway is near to Takhini Crossing, it is possible that it overlays the old Dawson Trail. This is difficult to prove, however. Other than that possible association, there is little other known history.

Contextual Integrity

The proximity of this road to Whitehorse made it desirable for residential development. Its nature now is more that of a residential street than a highway. Numerous driveways and access roads to modern dwellings accentuate this change in use and ambience.

Condition

The road is maintained but retains its historic narrow alignment. It is in very good condition.

Also Rans

There were a couple of sections of original highway which were either too fragmented or in too poor condition to include in the study. They did have some features to recommend them, however, so they are included below.

Silver City

PRA Section B, Sheets 37-38

MP 1052-1056

Km. 1692.6-1698.5

The access road to Silver City on Kluane Lake was cut off in 1974 by the highway realignment. Although the total length of the abandoned section is over 5 km., it is broken by two creeks. We included the Silver City section in this report because of the relative abundance of historic features associated with it. See *Appendix A* photographs 90-08-103-01 to -13 and colour slides 90-08-106-06 to -13.

Historic Features

The highway at this point partially overlays the older Kluane Wagon Road between Silver City and Whitehorse, which was built to service the miners and outfitters around Kluane Lake around 1904. The wagon road itself overlay an even older trail of unknown antiquity.

When the highway was constructed, the builders installed numerous culverts to cope with the heavy spring run off. This was the only section of road where we found a wooden stave culvert intact (*Appendix A*, 90-08-103-02 and 90-08-106-07s).

An army construction camp was established at Silver City, which was all but abandoned by the time World War II broke out. There are still remains of five buildings associated with the army camp. These include three barracks buildings, the mess hall and canteen. All are in poor condition.

The western end of this section of road is anchored by the site of Camp 150W, the PRA's construction facility located near present day Kluane Lake Lodge. There are no remains of this camp. East of Silver Creek, there is an old gas station and the remains of Sheep Mountain Lodge. Both of these sites include buildings which may have been

highway camp buildings. Both sites purportedly date from the early 1950's and are private residences at present (*Appendix A*, 90-08-103-12 & -13).

Silver Creek itself is significant in the history of the highway in that it posed one of the greatest maintenance problems in the Yukon. The creek's seasonal flood not only regularly removed the highway bridges but it scoured out a few hundred metres of road allowance to either side as well. To this day, the waterway has defied efforts to contain it and still poses a real threat to the highway.

Thematically, Silver City is very important as it represents three subthemes of Transportation; track/trail, road and small vessel. In terms of a lake to land transportation linkage, only Carcross would rank ahead of Silver City in importance.

Contextual Integrity

Virtually nothing has affected the contextual integrity of this section since it swings well away from the present alignment. There is a gravel stockpile site about 0.5 km. from the eastern access which obtrudes on the alignment. There is also an array of radio dishes visible at this point which negatively affect the feeling of the historic road. Silver Creek has changed the site's context regularly but that in itself is a constant in the landscape.

Condition

The failing of the Silver City section is its condition. It is broken in two places by braided streams. Silver Creek has washed out almost half a kilometre of the roadbed (*Appendix A*, 90-90-103-10 and 90-08-106-12s). The eastern 2.5 km. is in excellent condition as it services residents of Silver City and regular bus tours. Similarly, the half kilometre west of Silver Creek is maintained in its original condition to service the residents in the area. Without major, costly construction to control the flow of Silver Creek, there is no way to permanently reconstruct the central portion of this road.

Donjek River

PRA Section B, Sheet 16

MP 1126-1133

Km 1817-1827

This section of highway crosses the Donjek River. Its total length is only about 3 km. See *Appendix A* photographs 90-08-103-16 to -30.

Historic Features

The remains of two early roads are visible at this site. The army pioneer road and an earlier highway alignment. The most important features are the remains of the bridges constructed to cross the wide fan of the Donjek River. These are in poor condition but are still standing nevertheless (*Appendix A*, 90-08-103-22 to -26).

There is also a wooden box culvert, the only one we found (*Appendix A*, 90-08-103-30).

Contextual Integrity

While this section has been abandoned by traffic, it has been used as access to an outfitter's camp. The eastern section of road near the river reflects that use and its horsy travellers. There are a few buildings on the site which may have been highway camp structures from another location but intrude on the site's integrity where they are.

Condition

As with Silver City section, condition is the downfall of the Donjek section. The western portion is barely visible, let alone navigable (*Appendix A*, 90-08-103-16 to -20). There is a long stretch, where bridges crossed the river flood plain, which has disappeared.

Comments

One of the main objectives of this study was to identify sections of old highway as candidates for preservation in a parkway. It was difficult to determine what elements and features could be said to typify the Alaska Highway during the historic period. When asking anyone who drove it, they will tell you that dust, pot holes, washboard, bad curves and ground squirrels best represent the old highway. The terms of reference for this study anticipated that there would be historic features and artifacts associated with the sections of highway to add weight to an evaluation. As mentioned previously, the construction and maintenance camps, pipeline features and highway artifacts such as signage and wooden culverts are not much in evidence now. Where we did find them, they were not associated with a piece of road that fell within the parameters of this study.

There are historic resources still in evidence, however, which do represent the construction and use of the highway.

While not associated with a potential parkway, they are essential elements in the understanding and interpretation of the road. These fall into the broad categories of pioneer road, flight strips, bridges, construction and maintenance camps and other support and service structures.

Pioneer road

There are several sections of this road which predated the PRA construction. Most often it was simply a trail wide enough to push a truck down but some sections saw use after the highway was built and thus remain in better condition. Some of the bigger and more complete sections we saw included;

Swift River at Km. 1166 (*Appendix A*, 90-08-102-19 to -22 and 90-08-105-34 & -35)

Marshall Creek at Km. 1614 (*Appendix A*, 90-08-103-31 to -35 and 90-08-104-01 to -19)

Jarvis River-Boutillier Summit at Km. 1670 (*no photos*)

Save for the Marshall Creek segment, none of these are drivable from end to end in a passenger car.

Flight Strips

These provided support for the highway and formed the Northwest Staging Route, a strategic supply system designed to aid the defense of Alaska. Many of these are still maintained as emergency strips. Of those that remain, we only inspected the Squanga Lake

flight strip (km. 1356.5). It still has segments of pioneer road associated with it as well as a beacon tower and storage shed (*Appendix A*, 90-08-105-01 & -02s).

Camps

There were construction camp remains at;

Stony Creek km. 1538 (*no photos*)

Cracker Creek km. 1590 (*Appendix A* 90-08-102-30 to -37 and 90-08-106-01 to -05)

Canyon Creek km. 1604 (*no photos*)

Silver City (*no photos*)

Of these, only Cracker Creek had buildings in a condition and configuration to allow for much interpretation. It has been privately owned and used on and off as a lodge since the early 1950's.

Complexes

There are complexes associated with construction and maintenance located at Johnson's Crossing (km. 1344) and Canyon Creek (km. 1604). Johnson's Crossing boasts the lodge (built in 1951), two construction camps, the original PRA bridge, the Canol Road Camp site, a communications camp and a ferry landing. There is also a fair amount of photographic documentation of this site which would be an asset to research and interpretation (*Appendix A*, 90-08-101-07 to -13 and 90-08-105-03 to 07s).

Canyon Creek has the only known pioneer road bridge still in existence, albeit mostly reconstructed. There are also buildings remaining from the communications camp which was stationed here beside a very large construction and maintenance camp. About 1 km. west of Canyon Creek, there are visible sections of pioneer road which run for 10 km. before linking up with the Marshall Creek Road.

Conclusions

This preliminary study of the Alaska Highway under the Yukon Historic Sites Inventory involved an inspection and recording of sections of the old Alaska Highway that fell within the parameters set out at the beginning of this document. We feel we were successful in this task but we also felt there was something lacking in the record.

One of the main aims of the study, as we understand it, is to identify potential candidates for a heritage parkway. To this end, the inventory was to identify sections of highway which contained elements such as artifacts, work camps, pipeline, etcetera which would act as an additional focus for interpretation. This objective could not be met, unfortunately, since appropriate sections of highway and highway related features like campsites were not contiguous. Since one of the main aims of the Yukon Historic Sites Inventory is to *further the development of the historical thematic framework* we would suggest that the study of the Alaska Highway be broadened to include the pioneer road, camps and structural remains outside of the old highway sections.

Thematically, the Alaska Highway would perhaps be better represented by the addition of a site complex where there is more than just a road to interpret its construction, development and use. A complex such as Johnson's Crossing, for example, was significant in the construction of both the Canol Road and Alaska Highway and retains historic features from the preconstruction period through to service to highway travellers.

Through this expanded inventory and site, as well as parkway interpretation, we feel the theme would be much better represented.

Appendix C

Field Notes

**Federal Works Agency, Public Works Administration
Plans for the As-Constructed Alaska Highway
Section D Fort Nelson to Summit Lake, B.C. and Y.T. Canada**

*Section D, sheets 46,47
MP 637-642
KM 1025.8-1033

This loop of original highway, just before the Upper Liard River, was cut off in 1978. The Canol Pipeline and the original telephone lines parallel to this alignment. The alignment overlays the Pioneer Road.

Army tote road to Watson Lake cuts off to the north just past Mile 640. This is now a service road to an air navigation beacon and is fenced off 1 km. from the point where it intersects the PRA road.

There is a notorious curve about half way down the hill, about ___KM from the western access. In winter, it apparently claimed a number of vehicles annually which either flew off the outside of the curve going down or slipped off the road on the inside of the curve going up. In summer, however, it does not pose much of a problem.

Section D, Sheet 47
MP 637.5

Old telephone line and pipe line cut across the curve over the hill.

Section C, Nisutlin Bay to Upper Crossing

Section C, Sheet 41
MP 687
KM 1106

Lower Rancheria River Site of Camp 12-E on the right at MP 687. The River divided the contract areas of two Companies. Nothing left at this site.

Section C, Sheet 39
MP 692

**Federal Works Agency, Public Works Administration
Plans for the As-Constructed Alaska Highway
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MP 687
KM 1106

Lower Rancheria River Site of Camp 12-E on the right at MP 687. The River divided the contract areas of two Companies. Nothing left at this site.

Section C, Sheet 39
MP 692
KM 1115

Pumping station #3 for Canol Pipeline. This is gone. Like the highway camps, these sites were systematically cleared of all buildings and equipment. The most we found at any of them was boards, concrete foundations and pipe remains.

Section C, Sheet 35
MP 710
KM 1133.5

Rancheria used to be Camp 11-E. The present-day lodge utilizes one long, narrow building with shiplap siding which looks suspiciously like an old army building. One of our informants did not think it was, however. (Ray Magnuson)

Section C, Sheet 32
MP 723.5
KM 1162.9

Road Cuts North to Pine Lake Flight Strip No. 5. part of the Northwest Staging Route.

Section C, Sheet 31
MP 723.5
KM 1165.3

Army Pioneer Road cuts SW from the highway, returns to intersect it at 90° and then runs NNW at KM 1166.2 and crosses Swift River. Joins back at KM 1169.5. The bridge is out at Swift River eliminating access from the east. While the road is accessible from the west, it is cut off by a stream after about one kilometre. The Pioneer Road is nearly overgrown and about one car-width.

Section C, Sheet 30
MP 725
KM 1168

The area northwest of the bridge at Swift River was the site of a fairly large maintenance camp. (see Magnuson interview).

MP 727.5
KM 1171.3

Site of Camp 10 ¹/₂-E, south of highway. No signs remain.

Section C, Sheet 8
MP 790
KM 1267

Loop going to Hays Creek. Camp 8-E at MP 790.5. The oil tanks shown here are now a borrow pit (Jim Coxford).

Access to this section is via the entrance to the Teslin Rod and Gun Club firing range. The road is in fair to good condition at either end but is broken in the middle by a creek and beaver dam. Both ends of the loop

are accessible from the highway. The other end is at KM 1272. It is 4.4 km in total.

There are no signs of the original construction camp other than a bulldozed area and some scraps of old lumber. There seems to have been a sawmill located on the south side of the road just west of Hays Creek. (Ray Magnuson)

MP 823
KM 1323

Deadman Creek to Lone Tree Creek. This section measures 5.6 km. It has a view of Teslin Lake for most of its length with no major hills or curves. We found no features such as wooden culverts, signage or pipeline associated with the road. Both ends of the section have been scarified but not seriously as access was gained in a light truck. The eastern end of the road now passes under the guy wires of the power poles installed sometime after this section was cut off (1983). The surface is in good condition save for one spot where a winter glacier washed away a small portion of the surfacing.

There are sections of abandoned road before and after this section but they have been scarified and the culverts removed.

Our informants could not think of anything remarkable about this section of the highway. They indicated that you could not tell the difference between a road built in 1944 and one built in 1974 just by looking. Construction technology was much the same, only the machinery has improved.

KM 1334.7

Brook's Brook. There are no sign of the construction camp established here. By law, abandoned camps and assets had to be removed. they were usually turned over to Crown Assets who sold them. Buildings and

equipment that were sold in this manner then had to be removed from the site. Usually, the sites were then cleared of remaining debris and features with a bulldozer. (See Magnuson transcript)

Section C, Whitehorse to Nisutlin Bay

* Section C, Sheet 33

MP 836

KM 1344

Both the Canol Camp and the US Army Telephone Relay Station are located at the junction of the Canol and AH. The latter lies to the south between the old and new alignments.

There is also a big loop of pioneer road just south and west of the intersection.

There is a sketch of bridge 416 on this plan which appears to be the same as the present day section.

While the abandoned section is only about one k., this may be a great spot to interpret the highway.

* There is one shed and one fuel tank remaining at the Relay Station Site. There is a short service road which runs through the middle of this old camp.

The PRA road is cut off at both ends and scarified for most of its length.

The pioneer road still drivable. It leads down to the river where the old trestle bridge and, earlier, the ferry used to cross.

The present bridge was erected over a two year period from 1942 to 1944. (Ellen Davignon, Ray Magnuson)

Ellen Davignon of Johnson's Crossing Lodge has photographs showing the trestle bridge and the camp on the lodge side.

The lodge was opened in November 1949.

It was preceded by a little quonset hut cafe closer to the highway. There are also photographs of this. (Ellen Davignon)

We found concrete pads in the southwestern portion of the present day campground which correspond to two sheds of similar dimension shown in the 1947 photograph of the site.

Orville Couch of the Mayo Road is recommended as an informant on this area, particularly the Canol.(RM and CC)

Section C, Sheet 30
mp 843
KM 1356.3

The Squanga Lake Flight Strip shows on the plans as does a section of the pioneer road leading into it from the east at km 1353.5

We drove into the Squanga Lake flight strip which was part of the Northwest Staging Route. The strip measures over 6,100 feet. At one time they were all lit and had a beacon. The beacon still stands at this site, now the home of a family of eagles. There is also a small shed thought to have held a generator. (Ches Campion)

The Army Pioneer Road which runs back to the highway from the northeast end of the strip is still navigable.

Right across the highway from the flight strip, there was a cafe which was built sometime in the 40s and burnt in the 1960s. It was called the Silver Dollar. (Ray Magnuson and Ches Campion)

There was also a gas station on the flight strip side of the road. The outside dates are not known.

KM 1390

Ches Campion worked in a road survey crew camped near this spot east of Jake's Corner. He claimed it was named after an officer named Jacobi.

Section C, Sheet 16

MP 883.3
KM 1421.5

Camp 4-E on south side road. Marked as Marsh Lake Maintenance Camp on Modern Plan.

The maintenance camp at Marsh Lake (KM 1421.5) was torn down between 1958 and 1960. One of the buildings became a curling rink at Swift River. (Ray Magnuson)

Section C, Sheet 11
MP 897.7
KM 1443.8

Camp 2-E on both sides of Road, just after crossing the Yukon River Bridge.

There are no known remains of this camp.

Section C, Sheet 9
MP 909
KM 1463

Beginning of MacRae stuff. No abandoned sections however.

Section C, Sheet 7
MP 913.5
KM 1469.5

Camp shows about where squatter's row is now. No remains.

Section B, Whitehorse to Burwash Landing

Section B, Sheet 3
MP 929.25
KM 1495.75

"Old Alaska Highway" residential area. This road has been maintained to service the residents in the area. It now has the feel of a residential street rather than highway, particularly since the speed restrictions are appropriate to a residential street. It is 6 km. long.

No other historical features were associated with this section except the pipeline. The Dawson Trail may have used this alignment but that is difficult to demonstrate.

Section B, Sheet 6
MP 937
KM 1506

There is a little, 1 km. cut off curve here that had the army road to Takhini running down to the river. this was likely the much older Dawson Trail.

Section B, Sheet 8
MP 946.5
KM 1522.5

"Bates and Roger's Camp" on west side of bridge, south of road. There are little scraps of material left from this camp. The building sitting on the site was moved there recently. (Ray Magnuson)

Section B, Sheet 10
MP 956
KM 1538

Stony Creek. No Camp Shown on the old as-built plans! There are scattered foundation remains of this camp on both sides of Stony Creek. The buildings that were here a few years ago were privately owned and have disappeared. Harris Cox was suggested as a contact for information on this site and section of highway. (Ray Magnuson)

Section B, Sheets 12 and 13
MP 965.5
KM 1554

The section just before Mendenhall is only 2.5 km. There was an Army Camp marked on the south side of the road at Mendenhall River itself. This has been levelled. There is also a loop of Pioneer road right after the creek. This is now overgrown.

*Champagne Section
MP 968.5 -977
KM 1558-1573

Proposed cut off between 1558 and 1573. Has lots of pioneer road looping back and forth across it between Mp 971 and 972 (KM 1564.5) and another that loops north around the top of the hill just before you drop into Champagne (KM 1567-68). Has original telephone (cut down now I think) and pipeline (gone).

Section B, Sheet 18
MP 987.8
KM 1589

Cracker Creek and Camp 4-W on north side of road, east of creek. This is still partly intact. There are six buildings which were turned into a lodge sometime in the late '40's or early '50's. They are presently owned by the Champagne-Aishihik Band. (Ray Magnuson)

The buildings are in a fair state of repair, many of them having relatively new corrugated metal roofing. One of the buildings has been occupied recently. There are concrete foundations and remains in the northwest corner of the site. These may be the only construction camp remains still in context in the Yukon.

There is a 2 km. section of original alignment to the east of the site.

Cracker Creek to Canyon
Section B, Sheets 18-21
MP 988 to 996.5
KM 1589 to 1602.5

Old Alignment wiggles back and forth across the present alignment. These sections are all short and scarified.

Canyon Creek
MP 996.5
KM 1603.9

They call the camp here the "Relay Station". The old Army Road (Pioneer) is the one that crossed the Canyon Creek Bridge. They call that alignment the army road and make no reference to the Kluane Wagon Road. Both CN and NWTel apparently used the site north of the highway and just east of the bridge as a repeater station. The residence on this site is likely the original repeater station building. (Ray Magnuson) There are concrete foundation remains associated with the repeater station and with the construction camp further to the east.

From about 1 km. west of the bridge, the Army Road swings south but parallel to the present alignment, swings north of the road at KM 1609.6, south again at 1613.6. It heads southwest to cross Marshall Creek and follows the pipeline all the way to Haines Junction.

This road is drivable and accessed by a road just east of Marshall Creek.

KM 1629.5

The highway was originally supposed to

continue westward at this point rather than cutting south to the site of Haines Junction. A mile or so was supposed to have been built before the political ramifications of cutting off Haines Junction forced the diversion south. (Ray Magnuson)

Haines Junction
MP 1016
KM 1635

Camp 5-W shows on Haines Road, southwest of cut off to Alaska Highway. A shed stood on this site near the present Weigh Scales until a few years ago but there are no signs of the site remaining today. (Ray Magnuson)

Section B, Sheet 30-
MacIntosh Lodge to
Sulphur Lake

A whole whack of little wiggles were cut out of the road but no major realignments.

KM 1669-1692

There was a very long section of Pioneer Road which ran to the south following the pipeline. This may still be drivable in a truck.

Section B, Sheets 37-
38
MP 1052
KM 1692.6

Beginning of the cut off to Kluane (Silver City). Shows an older road that entered the townsite itself. The old highway looped just short of it and WSW along lake shore. Rejoins road somewhere around KM 1699.5. Just at Kluane Lake Lodge.

There is a __km. section of road into Silver City that is well travelled. It is cut off just to the southwest of the access to Silver City by Silver Creek. The Creek washes out about 0.5 km. of the original alignment.

Access to the section on the other side of Silver Creek is gained from the road into the air strip. The section running northeast, parallel to the strip, is maintained for the residences on the old alignment. One

of these residences was formerly a service station. The sign still hangs near the highway. The other was the Sheep Mountain Lodge. The name still appears on the roof of the house. Both have buildings which may once have been in highway camps.

Silver Creek cuts this section of road off to the north and Tatham (?) Creek severs it to the south. In total, there is about 2 km. of passable road on this side of Silver Creek.

Controlling Silver Creek to allow the middle section of this road to be reconstructed would be an expensive undertaking. Our informant felt that the creek would have to be controlled about two km. upstream by a series of dams and diversions to even out the flow and remove the rock and sediment that causes most of the damage. (Ray Magnuson)

The gravel stockpile at KM 0.5 detracts from the context somewhat as do the modern radio towers on the hill to the We found one barrel stave culvert at KM__.

Section B, Sheet 39
MP 1058.8
KM 1703+

The old army road went WSW up the Slims River and made its crossing quite some way upstream, making a loop and rejoining at Soldier's Summit.
*This is in the Park, however.

Section B, Sheet 47
MP 1080
KM 1739

Big section of pioneer road to NE, pumping station to west. All pumping stations on this section of road date from the 1960s. (Ray Magnuson)

Section B, Sheet 48
MP 1083
KM 1742

Destruction Bay. Had a big US Army camp on a section of Pioneer road that ran down to and paralleled the lake shore. Rejoined about MP 1086.5. There may be one shed left from this camp, presently used for storing

Calcium Chloride.

Quill Creek

This is another big section to be cut off.

Section B, Burwash to International Boundary

From 1787.6 to 1797.3
Section B, Sheet 11

This section is going to be cut out. There were a couple of realignments and a diversion of Quill Creek in this section. In fact, the road runs just about on top of the old creek bed.

Donjek River
Section B, Sheet 16
MP 1126-1133
KM 1817-1827

This section was relocated in 1952. Likely that the bridges are washed out anyway. Pumping station located near the cut off.

According to our informants, there is nothing left at this site and no access from the east. (Ray Magnuson)

Section B, Sheet 26
MP 1166.6
KM 1876

Big section of old Army road ran north of the highway to cross the Little White River further down stream. 167.5 there was a telephone relay station.

Section B, sheet 32
Dry Creek #2
MP 1184
KM 1905

Utah Construction Camp SW of bridge.