

OWU NO. 11011000  
EXP. 12/31/83

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received 8/21/82  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic The Mike Alex Cabin (AHRS SITE NO. ANC-111)

and/or common Alex Place, Eklutna

2. Location

street & number Glenn Highway Mile 26.5 not for publication

city, town Eklutna vicinity of ~~Congressional District~~

state Alaska code 02 county Anchorage Division code 020

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Period Home

4. Owner of Property

name Lois Munson (907) 274-5286

street & number P.O. Box 1397

city, town Seward vicinity of state Alaska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. District Recording Office

street & number 911 West 4th Avenue

city, town Anchorage state Alaska 99501

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Patterns of the Past: An Inventory  
title of Anchorage's Heritage Resource has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
\*Alaska Heritage Resources Survey  
date 1979 \*1980  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Division of Parks, Office of History and Archaeology, 619 Warehouse Dr. Suite 210  
Municipal Planning Department, Pouch 6-650

city, town Anchorage state Alaska 99501

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved      date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	enlarged in 1930s	

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This once-common, but now rare Athabaskan Indian cabin, was built later than most, (in 1925) by the last traditional Chief of the Eklutna people. It is sited across from the two Russian Orthodox Churches (old and new), virtually in the center of Eklutna Village. In keeping with Tanaina tradition, a basic single-room cabin was built first by Mike Alex, in anticipation of his forthcoming marriage. This strongly rectangular residence was single story, unattached, and predominantly of log except minor wood accents. The modest, original log walls enclosed a 17' by 20' area. To expand, the front wall had to be removed in the early 1930's, to accommodate a 17' by 17' addition, in order to meet the pressing needs of Alex's fast-growing family. A gable, shaked roof, later covered with asphalt shingles, currently protects the structure. A single wood step leads to an enclosed portico. This was covered with a separate gable roof when the addition was completed in the 1930's.

Some minor renovation and modification has been done since Mike Alex's death in 1977, namely refurbished gables, and a new roof. The pitch and style of the original roof, however, is unchanged. The cabin and addition since the 1930's have been under a common roof. (Originally, the gable roof was separated over each section (old and new) because the cabin and its addition had been built to slightly different heights. The original segment of Mike Alex's cabin covers a 6' 6" deep cellar, added slightly afterwards. Since then (about 1950) concrete block walls, nine courses high, would rise from the poured concrete foundation. A sand and river stone floor under the old cellar remains as it was originally excavated. The cabin is supported by three 8" by 8" beams, placed approximately three feet on center. These run the length of the cellar. Two by four joists on 12" centers extend across the width of the base. About one-fifth of the joists appear to have previously been used elsewhere (probably as rafters). The joists are notched to receive a sill plate. The subfloor is of 1" thick boards; with the edges shiplapped and laid at an angle to the joists. All three beams are supported along their entire length by vertical 8' logs.

The large log walls of the original portion were well-crafted, with tennoned corners, cut by handsaw. The first four logs measure 10" high; the rest are approximately 8". Each log runs the full length of the wall and shows few tooling marks. The walls (approximately eight and one-half feet high) which support the framed end-wall of the addition, are covered with whipsawn siding from the original structure. The ridge rises 7' above the walls; with rafter ends exposed under the eaves. Unadorned rake-boards complete the overhanging roof eaves.

There are no windows, or doors, on the rear wall. The south and north wall central, has single pane, fixed windows covered with storm windows. The southern window (approximately 2' by 4" by 2' 6") is trimmed with 1" by 6" boards; but the north side window has no trim. A three-foot high window here is recessed into the logs. It is divided by a central mullion into two 2' by 6" wide, single-light, fixed windows. All joints in the log walls were caulked with traditional burlap strips and moss. In recent years, fiberglass insulation has been added as a replacement.

The 1930 addition at the front of the original cabin, was constructed of 6" logs, trimmed on three sides, with lapped corner joints. All walls rested on 10" by 10" logs, set on the ground until the concrete-block foundation was eventually added. This now provides a small crawl space. The walls of the addition butt directly against the original cabin's north wall. When this facade was cut away, the tennoned joints were left, in the thickness of the original cabin's walls. They do not appear to be structurally joined; but they are sturdy and in good condition for 60 year-old native-growth logs.

(Continued)

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Native Culture
<input type="checkbox"/> invention				

**Specific dates**    1926                      **Builder/Architect**    Chief Mike Alex

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The significance of this historic Native Tanaina cabin is its identity to the extant fabric of a now-remnant Eklutna village; and vital association with Mike Alex, the last traditional Chief of the Village; a much-revered, and prominent, Alaskan Native leader of the Tanaina Athabaskan Tribe. It qualifies under both A and B of National Register Requirements.

### Relationship of the cabin to Eklutna Village

Eklutna is best known to Alaskans (and visitors) for its distinctive old Russian Orthodox Church -- Old Saint Nicholas and the associated colorful, authentic Tanaina burial grounds. St. Nicholas Church history represents a rich blend of both Tanaina Indian and Russian Missionary tradition, dating back to the 18th Century.

The people of Eklutna are Tanaina-Athapaskan, of the geographically-large (Canadian-Alaskan) Athapaskan group. The Tanainas have been identified, anthropologically, as inhabitants of the Cook Inlet Region for at least several centuries. Other names used to identify these Natives are: "Dena'ina," "Tinnats-khotana," or "Kenaitze" (term used by the Russians). The Tanaina are closely linked by blood, language, and culture. They lived in scattered villages from Katchemak Bay to Kenai; at Lake Iliamna, Lake Clark, the Stony River, and from Eklutna north into the upper Susitna Valley. The Village of Eklutna was the most important of several in the Knik Arm vicinity. It is the only Native Village now remaining near the Municipality of Anchorage; or the region north of the Kenai Peninsula into the Susitna Region near Mt. McKinley.

Like other Tanaina, the Eklutna centuries ago turned to Cook Inlet and its ocean-run salmon streams as important sources of food. With the installation of summer salmon traps, fish camps were traditionally able to harvest a major portion of each year's generally abundant food supply of salmon. Eklutna has been a permanent (or winter) settlement for possibly three hundred years. During summer months the early villagers would move down along Knik Arm and Ship Creek to reach Fire Island. Here they would fish from their traditional subsistence fish camps. In the fall, they would return to Eklutna to spend the winters and spring. Then the Eklutnans would trap and hunt -- especially in the Eklutna Lake area near their village.

The old village has had names prior to the most recent Eklutna. The Tanaina word for the village was once Eydlughet (which means "at plural objects"). An anglicized variation of that word, Ikluat, was used by Frederica de Laguna earlier in this century. When Ivan Petroff (Special Agent for the 1870 Census) recorded the villages along the south side of Knik Arm, he listed Kinikk, Nitakh and Zdluiat. (Nitakh, in the vicinity of Eklutna, probably was misplaced geographically by Petroff.) Zdluiat is another linguistic variation of Eklutna. During the 1880s Eklutna was called by some, "Old Knik" (also spelled "Kinik"). But it has generally been known as Eklutna since then. Eklutna, unlike most early Native

(Continued)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See the attached continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 5.0 acres

Quadrangle name Anchorage (B-7) Alaska, USGS

Quadrangle scale 1:63 360

### UMT References

A 

0	6	3	7	4	3	2	5	6	8	1	6	3	2	5
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See the attached metes and bounds descriptions.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael Carberry, Senior Planner; Paul Chattey, Preservation Consultant assisted by Michael S. Kennedy, Historian, Office of History and Archaeology

organization Anchorage Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission date January 27, 1982

street & number Municipal Planning Dept., Pouch 6-650 telephone (907) 264-4228

city or town Anchorage state Alaska 99501

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

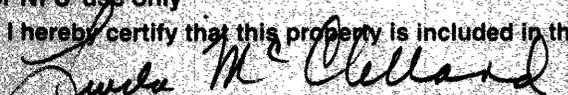
The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer date August 10, 1982

For NPS use only  
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register  
 date 9-8-82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:   
Chief of Registration date

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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The Mike Alex Cabin (AHRS SITE NO. ANC-111)

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

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The south and north wall of the addition each have a central window. The southern wall has a fixed, single plane window which matches the window on the same side of the original cabin. The north wall has a fixed pair of windows, separated by a 4" mullion. The windows are 2' 4" by 3', each containing (six 12" by 10" lights, arrayed in horizontal pairs. The cabin's front wall is without a window. The 2'8" by 6'6" door (set slightly left of center and containing nine lights) hinged right, opens into the addition (front) section. The rebuilt second gable will be covered, in 1982, with siding recovered from the old original structure, to retain its patinated integrity.

In relation to other Eklutna Village structures in the Anchorage area, the Mike Alex Cabin is the only extant, authentic, and representational, one of its kind. The cabin and the old church constitute all that remains of the historic nucleus of the Village of Eklutna. They constitute a historic district of authenticity and regional cultural significance, which qualifies, readily, for Alaskan Landmark Status.

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The Mike Alex Cabin (AHRS SITE NO. ANC-111)

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

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Interior villages north of the Alaska Peninsula, was influenced strongly by Russian (18th and 19th century) Missionaries. By 1880, there were recorded a record 100 Tanaina-Eklutna converts to the Russian Orthodox faith; the Tanaina being among the most dominant converts, except for the Aleuts, in all of Alaska.

Old St. Nicholas Church, dating from at least 1870 -- and its Native cemetery -- reflects Eklutna's rich association with the Russian missionary influence. (Old St. Nicholas Church and Cemetery were placed on the National Register in 1975.) Only the Alex Cabin and the Church and Cemetery now give identity to that significant past era of Native Alaskan village life. The Alex Cabin remains as the focal point of the old village. While unpretentious in design and proportion, it echoes past days and different lifestyles -- when one built with what was at hand. Structures and buildings were constructed from native timber by people who lived off the land and sea, in a subsistence pattern developed over many centuries by cultural tradition.

Association with Mike Alex, Chief of the Eklutnas

Mike Alex, the last of a long line of the traditional Tanaina Chiefs -- was not born until 1907. During his long life (over 70 years) he witnessed extensive change in the Native lifestyles. While his people and his own Eklutan village were being unalterably transformed, Alex provided stability throughout all of his lifetime. Almost alone, he held the village together. He gave much of himself in time, money and perserverance, to maintain and pass on the fervent Tanaina traditional traits; including the Russian Orthodox religion.

In relation to other Tanaina, Mike Alex was a Nulchina, or "Sky Clansman." His parents both were associated with earlier nearby villages. His mother, Matriona, was born at Susistna. His father, Eklutna Alex, first saw the light of day at Hutnaynut'i, near Bodenbergt Butte. Eklutna Alex (Bel k ighil 'isen, his Tanaina name) was not only a Chief; he was also a Tsisiyi, or "Paint Clansman;" and one of the very last Tanaina medicine men known to practice as a shaman.

During his youth, Mike Alex saw the village lifestyle -- primarily based on a hunting-fishing subsistence style -- give way to twentieth century White man's adaptations. Unlike most other Tanaina, he was willing to dedicate his life to help maintain his cultural heritage. In 1918, Mike helped his father construct a salmon smokehouse at their Fire Island fish camp. He worked that ancestral site for over 50 consecutive seasons, gaining a reputation as "one of Cook Inlet's best fishermen." He was just a boy when the Alaska Railroad was constructed through the Eklutna area, after 1916. With the influx of people brought in by the railroad (completed in 1923), Eklutna would experience the mixed blessings that often accompany "development," ie., an influenza outbreak in 1918 which decimated the village. When a Railroad Section was located at Eklutna for the area north of Anchorage, Alex was selected as the first Section Foreman for the Alaska Railroad -- and probably the first Native hired in a supervisory capacity at that time.

In keeping with Tanaina custom, Mike Alex built his original cabin in 1928. With his wife Nellie, thirteen children were then brought into the world; and the cabin soon had to be expanded to accommodate this ever-growing family. But it was always modest (if judged by contemporary social standards), even for Alaska.

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Mike Alex remained a devout Russian Orthodox layman throughout his 70 years; his love of the church having started as a young altar boy. After suffering a massive heart attack in 1953 he was hospitalized and confined for several months. During his recovery he was visited and blessed by the Alaska Orthodox church leader, Metropolitan Leonty; who encouraged him to continue his important work. In keeping with that charge, Alex set out, with his sons, the following year to build a new Eklutna church. Thereafter, he maintained both old and new churches; and the historic cemetery as well. In his last few years, it was he, and his children who spearheaded the restoration of Old St. Nicholas, before his death in late August, 1977.

Mike Alex's position as the last Chief of the Eklutna tribe was ultimately replaced by a Village Council. Mr. Alex had witnessed Eklutna's change from traditional tribal structure, to incorporation, as Eklutna, Inc. By continuing to live at the village -- and in helping to keep Eklutna decedents together -- he also lent strength to this new corporation (formed as a result of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act) over which his son, Daniel, now presides.

Even during his aging years Mike Alex continued his extensive contributions to retain the language and the Tanaina traditions. He assisted the University of Alaska in the teaching of bilingual courses at Lime Village, Nondalton and Tyonek -- working with Dr. James Kari -- in compiling Tanaina place names, and the legends and lore passed down by tradition over the centuries. Among the last of the Native Chiefs, Mike Alex has endowed future generations by perpetuating the last remaining, significant structures of Eklutna -- Old St. Nicholas Orthodox Church and the family home which he built and lived in for more than half a century -- well known now to most Alaskans as the Mike Alex Cabin.

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The Mike Alex Cabin (AHRS SITE NO. ANC-111)

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 1

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received *8/11/82*  
date entered

Alex, Mike -- Interview by M.E. Carberry, April 18, 1977

Carberry, M.E. -- Patterns of the Past: An Inventory of Anchorage's Heritage Resources.  
Anchorage: Municipal Planning Department, 1979.

Chandonnet, Ann -- "Mike Alex of Eklutna: Icons and Obedience," The Greatlander Shopping News. Volume 8 (April 28, 1976), Anchorage.

Laguna, Frederica -- The Archaeology of Cook Inlet, Alaska. Anchorage: Ken Wrays Print Shop, Inc., 1975.

Kari, James -- The Heritage of Eklutna: Mike Alex, 1908-1977. Eagle River, Alaska: Eklutna Alex, Inc., 1977.

Kennedy, Michael S. -- State Historian, Office of History and Archaeology, State Division of Parks. Research, 1978-82., Notes, in 3330-1 file, Office of History and Archaeology, Anchorage.

Osgood, Cornelius -- The Ethnography of the Tanaina, Yale University Publication in Anthropology, Number 16, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937.

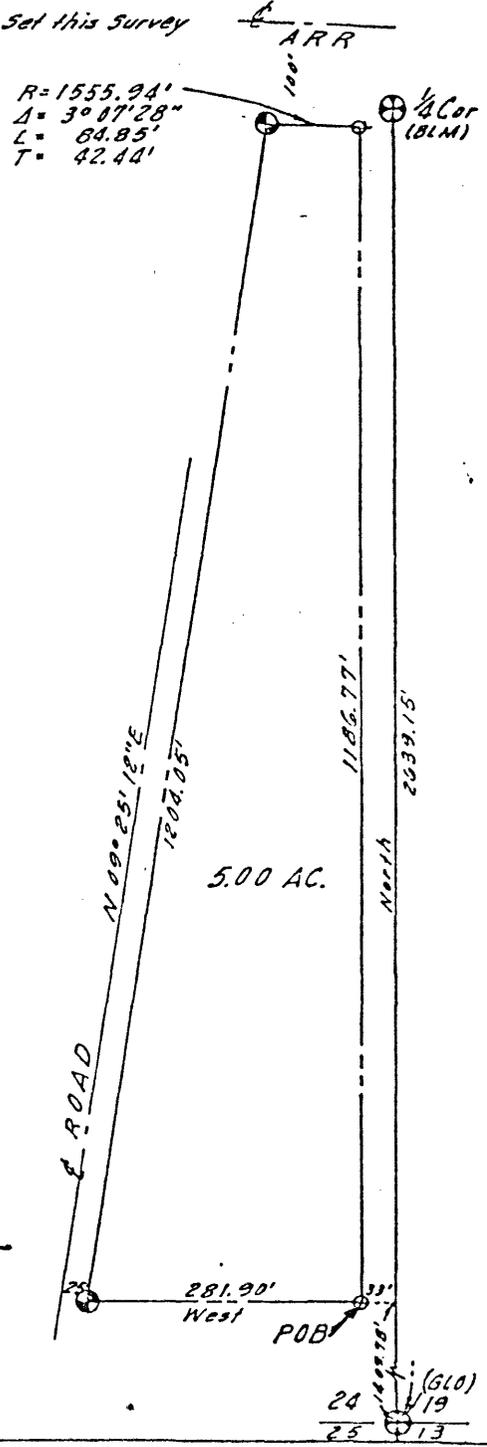
**METES AND BOUNDS DESCRIPTION**

Commencing at the southeast corner of Section 24, Township 16 North, Range 1 West, said point being located on the Seward Meridian, Alaska; Thence North along the Seward Meridian, 1,409.78 feet; Thence West, 33.00 feet to the southeast corner of this property, and the true point of beginning; Thence continuing West 281.90 feet to the southwest corner; Thence N 09° 25' 12" E, along the easterly right-of-way of a 50 foot road, 1,204.05 feet intersecting the southerly right-of-way of the Alaska Railroad, the northwesterly corner; Thence along a curve concave to the right having a radius of 1,555.94 feet, the chord bearing being S 89° 17' 49" E, to the northeasterly corner; Thence South, 1,186.77 feet to the southeasterly corner, the true point of beginning and containing 5.00 acres all lying within the SE 1/4 of Section 24, Township 16 North, Range 1 West, Seward Meridian, Alaska.

**LEGEND**

- ⊕ B.C. Mon., Exist.
- ⊕ Alum. Mon., Set this Survey
- 3/4" Pipe w/Plastic Plug, Set this Survey

The Mike Alex Cabin  
(AHR SITE NO. ANC-111)



Prepared for: Mike Alex

DES. CR	SCALE 1"=200'
CHK. JWA	DATE 9-19-74
F.B.	SHEET 1 OF 1
JOB NO. 4093.0	B-1580

**TRYCK NYMAN & HAYES**  
ENGINEERS PLANNERS SURVEYORS

5 ACRE PARCEL WITHIN  
SE 1/4 SEC. 24, T16N, R1W, S. M.  
ALASKA