



# Historic Preservation

# PROJECT FACTS

The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) is an important part of Alaska's history. The corporation actively celebrates the railroad's heritage and supports historic preservation efforts related to railroad assets and infrastructure.

Some ARRC assets are historic properties. For example, Bridge 264.1 over the Susitna River and the Historic Ship Creek Depot in Anchorage are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, along with eight other properties formerly owned by the Alaska Railroad. Also, more than 50 other Alaska Railroad properties (including the Freight Shed in Anchorage and one-third of our bridges) are eligible for listing on the National Register.

## Consultation

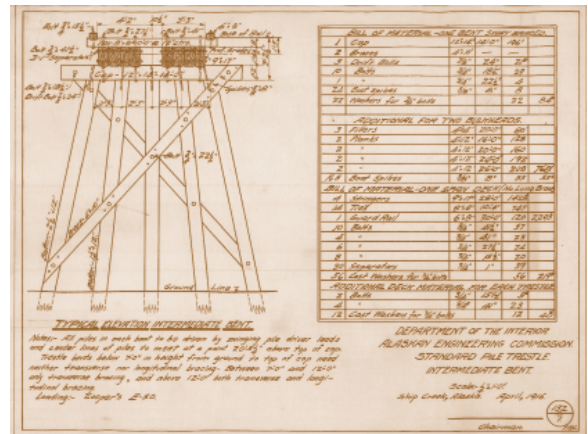
In concert with its capital improvement program, the Alaska Railroad ensures compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and the Alaska Historic Preservation Act. Capital project managers and support personnel consult with the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology/State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and retain cultural resource professionals as necessary, to:

- evaluate railroad structures (including bridges, buildings and tunnels) that may be affected by plans to replace or improve the structure;
- determine eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places and assess potential impacts, as appropriate; and
- develop and implement appropriate mitigation measures if adverse effects will occur.

## Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures may include documenting detailed information about ARRC's legacy infrastructure before structures are removed or modified. Documentation includes narrative descriptions accompanied by photos and scanned

drawings. Documentation is archived, accessible to the public, and may be used to create educational materials. A recent example of thorough documentation includes scanning original engineering drawings into an archived and indexed database.



*This Alaskan Engineering Commission drawing of timber trestle bridge standards was created in 1915. Such historic drawings have been scanned into an indexed and archived database.*

## Public Info and Education

Mitigation often involves educating the public about historic assets. ARRC sponsors public outreach programs to provide historic information to the public. These initiatives include:

- **Alaska Railroad History on Web Site:** The Alaska Railroad's corporate web site — [www.AlaskaRailroad.com](http://www.AlaskaRailroad.com) — features historic photos and a timeline dating back to 1903.
- **Historical Records – Access for Research Purposes:** ARRC maintains an engineering library including historical design drawings and other information pertaining to the construction of the railroad and its various elements. This indexed library is available to cultural resource professionals researching railroad properties.

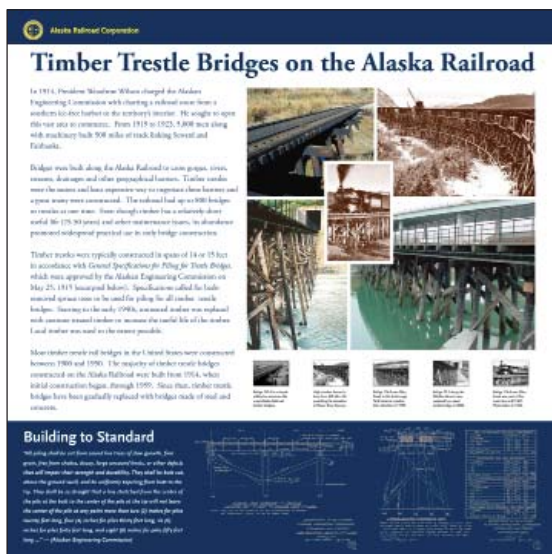
- Collateral Materials that Include Historical Information:** ARRC develops various materials that contain historical information. The *Alaska Railroad Strip Map* (provided to rail passengers) features historical information by milepost. *Panorama Magazine* (provided to rail passengers) features many historical articles and facts. A *Corporate Media Kit* features a history overview and timeline. ARRC newsletters (*All Aboard*, *Community Ties*, *Tenant Ties*) often feature historical articles. *Project Fact Sheets* sometimes highlight historical background information.

- Interpretive Signage:** ARRC has developed and placed interpretive signage about railroad history or historical structures in several locations along the rail line, such as onboard passenger railcars, at Denali National Park, at Curry, and in the Ship Creek area in Anchorage by the historic pedestrian bridge over Ship Creek.

- Alaska Railroad Photo Collection at the Anchorage Museum:** ARRC donated an extensive historic photo collection to be archived at the Anchorage



*This interpretive sign was erected next to the historic bridge over Ship Creek in Anchorage.*



*This interpretive sign is posted in several common-use passenger railcars as part of a public education effort.*

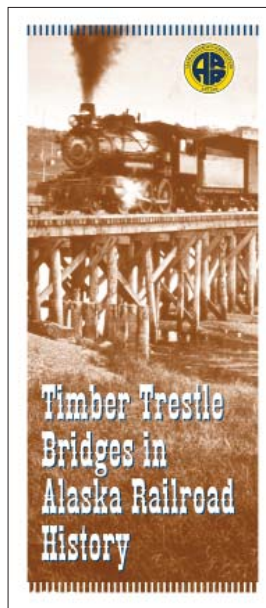


*Built in 1921, the 914-foot Hurricane Gulch Bridge at Milepost 284.2 is a remarkable feat of engineering. It is eligible for the National Register of Historical Places. This photo of this iconic bridge is part of the Alaska Railroad's collection of historic photos archived at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art.*

Museum of History and Art. The collection has approximately 15,000 images, including construction photos dating from 1914. The photos are searchable by subject or railroad milepost. Photos and negatives are not loaned, but reproductions are available for purchase, either in print format on photo-quality paper or as digital scans.

- Museum Exhibit Interpretive Displays:** The Anchorage Museum of History and Art featured an Alaska Railroad exhibit in 2006. The exhibit highlighted the construction and development of the Alaska Railroad during the past century and the communities tied to this development. The railroad underwrote the cost of the exhibit and now owns 12 interpretive boards that may be used for public displays.
- Alaska Railroad Historic Record Collection at National Archives & Records Administration:** In 1995, many Alaska Railroad historic records were transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration. These records cover the period when the Alaska Railroad was part of the U.S. Department of the Interior (1914-1967) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (1967-1985). Architectural Recordation Forms prepared for various Alaska Railroad structures determined eligible for the National Register are also archived here. Currently, this type of information is archived for five timber bridges, two steel bridges, a wye track and a tunnel.

- Donation and Preservation of Historic Structures and Equipment:** In 1997, the Alaska Railroad donated two historic residences (Browns' Point Cottages) to the Municipality of Anchorage. Constructed in 1941, the cottages were restored and listed on the National Register in 2004. ARRC also donated numerous other structures and equipment to various local governments or non-profit organizations. These include the Wasilla Depot and the Nenana Depot, both listed on the National Register and given to the community governments. In addition, historic rail equipment was donated to the Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry.
- Historic Bridge Survey:** ARRC conducted a preliminary historic bridge survey that compiles historical information about all existing Alaska Railroad bridges. Based on the information compiled, approximately one-third of ARRC bridges are eligible for listing on the National Register.
- Timber Trestle Bridge Historical Preservation:** In the last decade, a number of Alaska Railroad timber trestle bridges have been determined eligible for the National Register in consultation with the Alaska Office of History and Archeology/State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). Most have been found eligible under National Register Criterion C, because they embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction and are representative examples of this utilitarian bridge type on the Alaska Railroad. However, this bridge type is functionally obsolete and no longer economically feasible to maintain for modern railroad operations. Architectural Recordation Forms for five individual timber trestle bridges have been



*A Timber Trestle Bridge brochure was produced in 2009 to preserve bridge history. It is available at [www.AlaskaRailroad.com](http://www.AlaskaRailroad.com) -> Projects -> System-wide Projects.*

permanently archived with the National Archives and Records Administration in Anchorage. ARRC and SHPO agreed on additional measures to mitigate impacts associated with replacing timber trestle bridges:

- publishing an educational booklet, *Timber Trestle Bridges in Alaska Railroad History*;
  - compiling an annotated bibliography of timber bridge references;
  - digitizing historic timber bridge drawings;
  - preparing an Alaska Heritage Resource Survey (AHRS) card for remaining timber bridges;
  - developing and posting interpretive signs in depots and trains that relate to timber bridges and the history of the Alaska Railroad; and
  - preserving, to the extent possible, two timber bridges to resemble their existing appearance.
- Historic Freight Shed Renovation:** ARRC has completed renovation of a historic Freight Shed in Anchorage. Eligible for the National Register, the Freight Shed was constructed in 1941 primarily from heavy timber. The Freight Shed allowed the railroad to more than double freight tonnage in its first fiscal year of operation, and it was used through 2008 to store customer goods. Renovation has been coordinated with the Alaska Office of History & Archeology and it is Alaska's first historic building to be renovated to meet the stringent standards of the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program.
  - Anchorage Historic Depot:** Recent renovations of the historic depot in lower downtown Anchorage were coordinated with SHPO, and comply with standards and guidelines for preserving, rehabilitating, restoring, and reconstructing historic buildings to the extent possible. Renovations are largely complete, and to mitigate effects, ARRC prepared a Building Preservation Plan to ensure that the historic significance of the Depot is documented and understood, and key historic features will be preserved in accordance with this plan in Anchorage.