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# Bechtol Planning & Development

**Memorandum**

To: Nome Planning Commission (NPC)
Glenn Steckman, City Manager

From: Eileen R. Bechtol, City Planner

Date: November 3, 2021, Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Meeting

Subject: Historic Preservation Plan

Attached are the comments provided by Austin Ahmasuk. Please read through the comments so that the HPC can discuss each of the items and include or not include in a plan revisions.

Also attached are the Historic Preservation Plan pages 1 through 24 which are referred to in Mr. Ahmasuk's review.

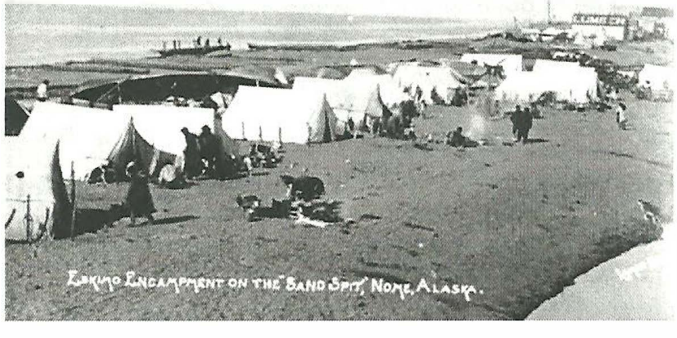
If anyone wants a copy of the Historic Preservation Plan via email, please let me know. When I get back to Nome, I will make hard copies for whomever wants one.

**Comments to Nome Historic Preservation plan dated June 16, 2021**
**Austin Ahmasuk**

According to the National Historic Preservation Act. "Preservation planning is the rational, systematic process by which a community develops a vision, goals, and priorities for the preservation of its historic and cultural resources."

Under and upon the land of the Nome area are interred the bones, villages, homes, and sacred objects of the Inupiaq people. Their stories and those of their descendants cry out for a place within the modern context of **ANY** City of Nome document. We the Inupiaq people of this town know that choices have been made by city officials that have forged a path of destruction and we know that must be reconciled with a transformation of how history in Nome is documented. The historic preservation plan dated June 16, 2021 does not provide the context for the Alaska Native history that we as Native people know. The plan is in fact deficient in many respects because it does not depict the history of Nome from local perspective.

The history of Nome is a history of colonialism. The founding of Nome was based on the ideology of white supremacy, the widespread practice of land theft, disease epidemics, and assimilationist practices that decimated the Alaska Native population in many complex ways. Writing that history from a factual perspective requires rethinking the historic preservation plan in its entirety. The historic preservation plan narrative is deficient, not in its facts, dates, or details but rather in its essence. When I claim the foudning of the city of Nome has resulted in the destruction of Alaska Native people it is NOT an accusation but rather historical reality. Ignoring the essence of Nome's Alaska Native history becomes a permanent and lasting act that **MAY NEVER BE RECOVERED**, unless the plan is completely revised After all it took the destruction of an archeological site in 2005-2006 for the world to realize that Alaska Native people were the first inhabitants of "sanispik" aka sandspit.




Nome's Historic Preservation Plan could create a local sense of place to help build a sense of community identity, the greater than 50% Alaska Native population and its many customs, archeological resources, and history must be respected. Sadly, Nome's Historic preservation plan appears to pluck details from history books that may not reflect the community at large. Those history book facts only need to be mentioned if we want them mentioned.

I do NOT accept the historical context manufactured by the Nome Historic Preservation plan and I will provide details that may guide a plan revision

**Overall Critiques**

*The plan must be approved because it will allow grants to be applied for.*

Just because we have invested ourselves thoroughly in the plan as proposed does not mean that we should continue with that plan, without considering the future consequences it will have on Alaska Native history. We may achieve a sense of accomplishment by adopting the plan, but it is not enough to justify a plan that is WRONG.

*The NHPA does not limit plans to structures only.*

When we say the NHPA is limited to structures we are using authority to ignore Alaska Native history. The plan as drafted has steered conveniently away from Alaska Native history and put in place non-Native history which I go into later in this paper.

City officials have responsibly cited the relevant authority of the NHPA as it relates to the Historic Preservation Plan. However, there are other historical facts and context to describe that would improves Nome's plan and ensure it reflects the community.

**PAGE 12**

*"Although their lifestyle was primarily nomadic there is evidence of at least seasonal settlements near present day Nome, one of which was an Inupiaq Eskimo settlement site at Cape Nome. The site is now a protected archaeological resource."*

The term nomadic and seasonal is problematic because there are clearly habitations that portray and may prove habitual existence in specific locations all throughout the Nome flats. I am not convinced that nomadism was and/or is a facet of the Alaska Native way of life and I am convinced declaring seasonal settlements within the plan is not truthful. I am convinced we made noteworthy journeys but those journeys may have been wrongly characterized by historians as nomadic when they may not have been.

The Cape Nome site is outside the municipal boundaries of the city of Nome and is not owned by the city. Rather the site is owned by Native Allottees and/or Sitnasuak Native Corporation.

**PAGE 12**

*"A relatively recent archaeological discovery indicates a more permanent Inupiat settlement was located at the mouth of the Snake River, which lies within the City of Nome boundaries. The settlement, known in Inupiat as Sitnasuak, was uncovered during construction work in 2005-2006 to improve navigation to the Nome harbor."*

It may NOT be universally accepted that Sitnasuak is the only place name for the mouth of the Snake River there may be others.

**PAGE 14**

*"Though Native herding continued it was much less in scale than originally envisioned."*

Alaska Native reindeer herders have taken their own initiative as to what reindeer herding means, the above statement needs revision in order to reflect how Alaska Native reindeer husbandry has changed and is being managed by reindeer herders today.

**PAGE 15**

*"A rapidly erupting pandemic. Repeated public reminders of safe hygiene practices. Travel limited. Indefinite quarantines. Schools closed for weeks on end. Governors begging the federal government for help. An insufficient rescue package from Congress. Passengers caught on ships. Orders to wear masks and instructions to make them. Businesses struggling. A rancorous partisan federal election. Dead bodies piling up (Gastineau Heritage News)." Thinking 2020/21 COVID-19 pandemic? Think again to the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918.*

The last sentence appears to be a fragment. However, the paragraph lists various events with no reference and without reference it may not be relevant to mention. The subsequent paragraph after the one above could provide additional detail into other pandemics that Alaska Native people endured.

**PAGE 15-17, SERUM RUN**

Alaska Native people are the original dogmushers of the Arctic and the contributions we made to that form of transportation must be better characterized.

**PAGE 18 Alaska Native residents**

There is NO mention of Nome Eskimo Community. **There is NO stronger point of criticism than the glaring lack of any mention of the tribe of Nome and their historic contributions to the community.** The decision by the planning commission to leave Nome Eskimo Community out of Nome's own historical narrative is glaring and would have a lasting consequence unless that is changed. Nome Eskimo Community members also have strong traditions that could be mentioned.

**PAGE 19**

*"The Bering Land Bridge is recognized as the primary land access route for indigenous people from Siberia to Alaska."*

That characterization is untrue and needs complete refinement. The Alaska Native people of Nome are mariners and while there may be identifiable timeframes for pedestrian travel across a prehistoric land bridge, the statement ignores the maritime transportation that existed for at least the past millennia and longer.

*"Sometimes people embarked on journeys with unconventional transportation means simply for the challenge or to join the swarms of people seeking their 39 Item C. Interim Draft June 16, 2021 Historic Preservation Plan for Nome, Alaska Page 20 fortune. Such is the case of those*

*who ventured out on wheeled bicycles. In February 1900, Ed Jesson left Dawson arriving in Nome several weeks later. In March of that year Max Hirshberg did the same trek by bicycle. His chain broke east of Nome so he rigged up a sail for the last leg of the venture."*

I am not convinced that the above anecdote has relevance for the community of Nome. There are other just as remarkable instances of travel that could be obtained from local stories from Alaska Native people.

**PAGE 21**

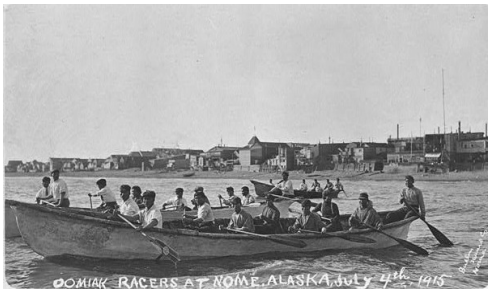
*"Water access has been important to Nome throughout the years. Baidarkas (enclosed skinned kayaks) and Umiaqs (open skinned boats) were used by early inhabitants for basic transportation from one location to another and for hunting expeditions. The original vessels were made of wood and skins but have evolved to more modern materials of wood, aluminum, fiberglass, and high-tech composites. These single and multiple passenger vessels continue to provide transportation for recreation, hunting, and ceremonial activities."*

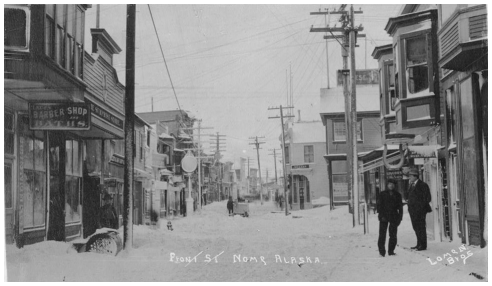
Bairdarka is NOT the traditional term that is used for this region and should be deleted. The appropriate term is kayak.

**PAGE 21**

*"Nome's port was and continues to be an important regional transshipment hub for many Western Alaska communities that rely on the port for movement of heating oil and gasoline, construction supplies, non-perishable food, gravel, and other cargo. The port is strategically positioned to serve national, state, regional, and local needs as it is poised to play an increasingly important role in a changing sea access to the Arctic"*

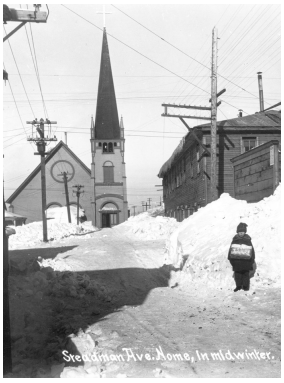
The port of Nome's role in a thawing Arctic is not yet a historic resource because its future role has not yet been realized and it is only 15 years old in its present form. The Nome Historic Preservation Plan defines historic as a resource that is age 50 years or greater (page 4). The narrative inflates the port beyond any historic significance and needs to be deleted.










# CITY OF NOME, ALASKA

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN

**Prepared by**
**Gary H. Gillette, Architect**
**For the**
**Nome Historic Preservation Commission**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Nome was incorporated as an Alaskan first-class city in 1901 - one hundred and twenty years ago. Physical evidence uncovered in 2005 indicates an indigenous settlement within the city boundaries occurred at least two hundred years prior to Nome becoming a city. It is also known that indigenous people hunted, fished, and gathered in the surrounding areas since time immemorial.

People, events, stories, customs, and physical remains (sites, buildings, structures, objects) represent the history and legacy of Nome. History is important for understanding the community's past and guiding its future. It contributes to the community's unique personality and character thereby adding to the quality of life in this special location between the vast Bering Sea and the upland tundra of northwest Alaska.

## Background

Preserving the history and physical remains of a community provides important links to the past. The City of Nome has taken steps toward historic preservation in past actions.

In 1975 the Nome Common Council adopted an ordinance that supported historic preservation. The ordinance set the first steps to be taken, including the identification of historic resources; designation of significant historic resources as historical landmarks; and maintenance of a catalogue of city landmarks.

The *Nome Comprehensive Plan 2020* was adopted in 2012 to help shape the character of the community and its quality of life. Its mission was to promote new development opportunities while maintaining and enhancing existing elements of the community that make Nome unique and define its heritage and identity. Within the Comprehensive Plan are goals, objectives, and strategies to promote and capitalize on Nome's unique history.

In 2018 the City of Nome became a Certified Local Government (CLG) as approved by the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer. This designation made Nome eligible for certain historic preservation programs and for funding of preservation activities.

The City of Nome received a CLG grant in 2018 for Phase I of the development of an historic preservation plan. The grant was specifically to solicit public input for development of the historic preservation plan. A follow-up grant was awarded in 2019 to complete Phase II of the plan's development. The city contracted with Gary H. Gillette, Architect to perform the work.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Nome Historic Preservation Plan is to guide efforts for identification, preservation, and protection of valuable historic and cultural resources of the Nome community. The plan is intended to educate the public of the value and importance of Nome's history and influence future development to be sensitive to historic and cultural resources.

The plan states a vision of a future for Nome that celebrates, preserves and shares its unique past. The plan establishes goals and objectives that the community has determined to be important for historic preservation. It defines implementing actions that will serve as a road map for future activities with an eye toward achieving the preservation goals.

## Historic Preservation Plan Application

The City of Nome, Alaska is a recognized political entity with specific boundaries as set by the State of Alaska. This historic preservation plan along with its goals, objectives, and implementing actions applies to historic properties within the city boundaries and are enforceable by city ordinances and codes.

Some historical information contained in this plan reference historic events and properties that are outside the specific city boundaries thus are not subject to ordinances and codes established and enforced by the city. However, these historic events and properties mentioned in the plan may have had significant impacts on the history and culture of the city thus included for a better understanding of Nome's unique past.

The city is encouraged to engage with owners of historic properties outside the city boundaries for support and assistance in preserving these places that are significant to Nome's history.

## Recommendations

The preservation plan identifies a number of recommendations that should be implemented to assure that Nome's past is clearly supported by the community and demonstrates a desire to protect important historic resources. These recommendations include the following:

- Adopt and Implement the Historic Preservation Plan
- Review and Update the Historic Preservation Ordinance (76-10-1)
- Update the Nome Comprehensive Plan
- Periodically Review and Update the Historic Preservation Plan

# INTRODUCTION to HISTORIC PRESERVATION

In 1966 the National Historic Preservation Act was adopted by the United States Congress. The National Park Service (NPS) was charged with implementing the programs outlined in the act. NPS describes historic preservation as follows:

> "Historic preservation is a conversation with our past about our future. It provides us with opportunities to ask, "What is important in our history?" and "What parts of our past can we preserve for the future?" Through historic preservation, we look at history in different ways, ask different questions of the past, and learn new things about our history and ourselves. Historic preservation is an important way for us to transmit our understanding of the past to future generations."

> "Our nation's history has many facets, and historic preservation helps tell these stories. Sometimes historic preservation involves celebrating events, people, places, and ideas that we are proud of; other times it involves recognizing moments in our history that can be painful or uncomfortable to remember."

Historic preservation includes the process of identifying, preserving, and protecting sites, districts, buildings, structures, or objects which reflect elements of a community's cultural, social, economic, political, archaeological or architectural history. This history is important because it links to specific times, places and events that were significant milestones in the past. Revisiting preserved elements of a community's past provides a sense of place, and maintains continuity between the past and the present.

## What is Historic?

The generally accepted threshold of establishing an historic resource is its age of 50 years or greater. The NPS evaluation criteria for listing a resource on the National Register of Historic Places is a good reference for use in the evaluation and determination of the significance of an historic property within the national, state, or local community.

Properties of historic significance possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

1. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

2. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

3. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

4. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Historic resources (districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects) that meet one of the above criteria are considered significant in a community's history and worthy of preservation and are the focus of the Vision, Goals, and Objectives of the Nome Historic Preservation Plan.

## Benefits of Historic Preservation

The history of a community contributes to its personality. Preserving this personality through its history, historic properties, and culture gives a community its unique character. Historic preservation provides a link to the roots of the community and its people. It adds to the quality of life making for a more livable community.

Historic preservation is beneficial to the community in many ways:

- Cultural - a community is richer for having the tangible presence of past eras and historic styles. It benefits from traditional languages, customs, rituals, events and other cultural activities.

- Economical - a community benefits from increased property values and tax revenues when historic buildings are protected and made the focal point of revitalization and when the community is attractive to visitors seeking heritage tourism opportunities.

- Social - a community benefits when citizens take pride in its history and culture through mutual concern for the protection of the historic building fabric, sites, and cultural customs and practices.

- Developmental - a community benefits from having a concerted and well-defined planning approach for the protection of historic buildings while accommodating healthy growth.

- Environmental - a community benefits when historic buildings are recycled (restored or rehabilitated) rather than demolished and disposed of in the community landfill.

- Educational - a community benefits through teaching local heritage and the understanding of the past and the resultant cultural respect by its citizens.

## Importance of Historic Preservation Planning

Historic preservation efforts can be influenced by national, state, and local factors: social; political; economic; legal; and other influences. These influences can come from private enterprises and/or public agencies. Successful preservation planning recognizes these influences and establishes goals, objectives, standards, and incentives to resolve conflicts between various parties in reaching consensus within the community.

Historic preservation planning is important for the following reasons:

A. To clearly state goals of preservation in the community.

B. To inform developers in advance how the community wants to grow and what the community wants to protect.

C. To assure consistency between various government policies that affect the community's historic resources.

D. To educate and inform citizens about their heritage and its value to the community.

E. To create an agenda for preservation activities and a framework to protect historic resources.

F. To comprehensively address issues relating to tourism, zoning, traffic patterns, development patterns, and design that might adversely affect historic preservation goals.

G. To encourage economic development through the preservation of historic resources.

H. To strengthen the political understanding of and support for historic preservation policies.

## Activities Affecting Historic Resources

- Tourism: Heritage tourism is a growing sector of the tourism industry. Increased use of a historic resource through tourism development may have detrimental impacts to the property. Care should be taken to control the level of use and impacts to assure the integrity of the property is maintained. The balance between preservation and sharing the resource is critical as protection may be dependent on the economic benefits that tourism brings.

- New Development: As communities grow, pressure arises for new and larger buildings to meet the needs of the overall community and its businesses and its residents. New development in and around historic buildings, districts, sites, and neighborhoods can dilute the overall historic character by compromising the scale and fabric of the area. Additions and remodeling of existing buildings can have a negative impact to the overall character of the district if they are not done in a sensitive manner.

  Developing and adopting local design guidelines for new development projects that might negatively impact historic resources is an important tool for preserving the overall character of historic properties. Guidelines need to allow new buildings to reflect their own time but should identify general characteristics that would enhance the historic neighborhood rather than detract from the established architectural character.

- Demolition: Often buildings are demolished to make way for new development. This practice may have major impacts to the character of historic buildings, districts, sites, and neighborhoods. In many cases demolition is not as cost effective as rehabilitation of existing buildings.

  Communities should investigate offering financial assistance for preservation activities through grants, low interest loans, and tax incentives that would encourage developers to consider renovation rather than demolition of historic properties. Typically, renovation of existing buildings provides economic benefits to the community through increased local labor and materials purchases. In remote communities such as Nome there may be a cost advantage to preserve materials and avoid the cost of shipping in new materials.

- Maintenance: Buildings in general, require periodic repair and maintenance. Neglecting maintenance needs of historic buildings may leadto their destruction over time. Maintenance that is delayed often results in being too costly to reverse in later years. Relatively simple tasks such as keeping roofing intact to not allow water intrusion and the inevitable rot that would occur will preserve buildings for the future. Protecting wood elements with paint or preservative treatment will prolong materials.

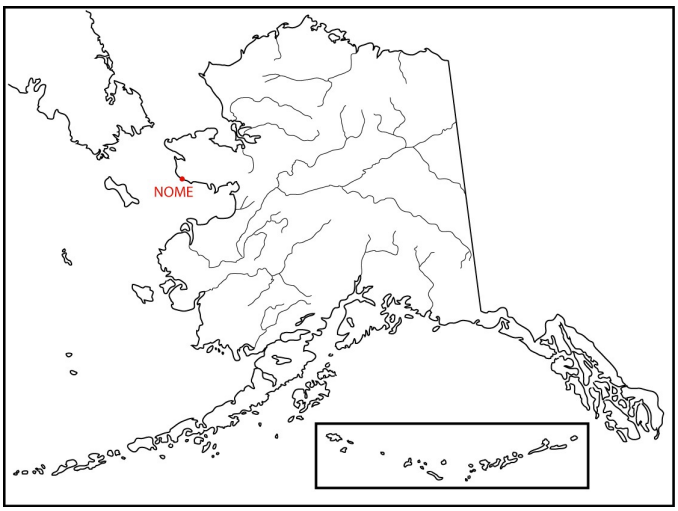
## Unique Events Affecting Historic Resources in Nome

Sometimes unforeseen events can impact the history and historic resources of an area. Nome suffered fire and storm damage that erased much of the historic building fabric of the main downtown area. These events caused new design considerations for roadways and distances between buildings that are significantly different than the original construction practices. The new design standards significantly changed the character of the original community, especially in the downtown business areas.

Often, buildings that were spared by the fire or storm events were moved for reuse at other sites. In other cases, such as occurred with the closing of Marks Air Force Base, buildings were moved to recycle or reuse for other purposes. Moving an historic resource from its original location may reduce its historic integrity While this practice is not preferred in historic preservation efforts, it does serve to preserve important historic resources when other options are not available.

# LOCATION and SETTING

## Location




The City of Nome is located on the southwestern edge of the Seward Peninsula along the coast of Norton Sound of the Bering Sea. It is approximately 550 miles northwest of Anchorage and 102 miles south of the Arctic Circle.

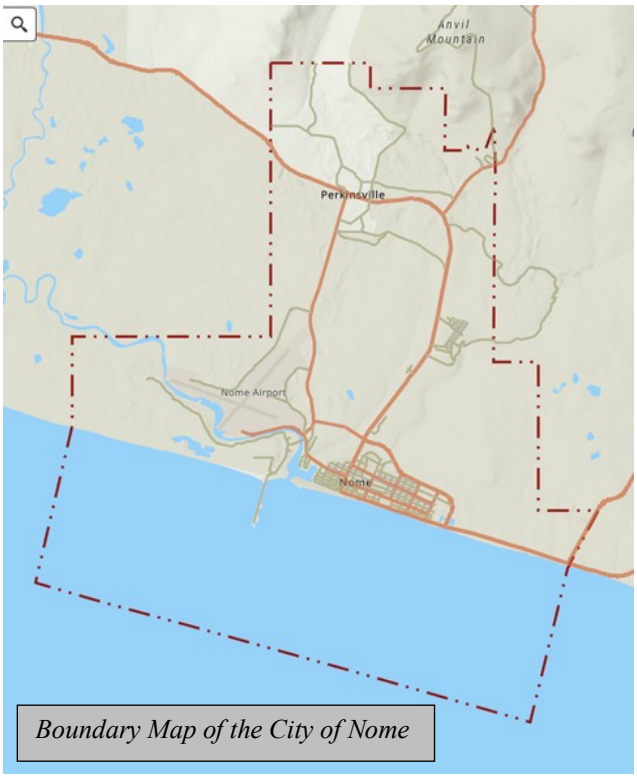
Nome is a regional hub of commerce, education, transportation, and tribal and federal government services for much of northwest Alaska.

## Setting

The Seward Peninsula features rolling hills and flat lowlands cut by meandering streams and containing thousands of lakes and bogs. The area is in the transitional climate zone, receiving about 18 inches of rain and 56 inches of snowfall per year. Average temperatures range from -3 to +65 degrees Fahrenheit. The climate is influenced by both maritime and continental conditions. Maritime conditions dominate in the summer, while in the winter, conditions shift to a mostly continental climate. The area is known for numerous intense storms, particularly during the fall months. Storms usually arrive from the southwest, although intense storms can also come from the south and southeast.

## City of Nome

The City of Nome became an Alaskan first-class city on April 9, 1901. The city has a total area of 21.6 square miles, of which 12.5 square miles is land and 9.1 square miles is water. The population of Nome has waned since the peak of early gold rush years. The 1900 census reported a population of 12,488. The 2010 census established the population at 3,598 and in 2018 the population was estimated to be 3,866.




*Boundary Map of the City of Nome*

Nome's local government is a Mayor / Manager administration. The executive power of the city is vested in the Mayor. The Mayor presides at meetings of the Common Council. Although the Mayor may take part in the discussion of a matter before the Common Council, the Mayor may not vote except in the case of a tie. The Mayor acts as ceremonial head of the City government, executes official documents on authorization of the Common Council, and is responsible for additional duties and powers prescribed by Alaska law.

The Mayor and Common Council employs a City Manager who serves as the Chief Administrative Officer for the City by providing management and policy direction as established by the Common Council. The City Manager is responsible for the overall supervision and coordination of City operations, which includes managing the multimillion-dollar annual budget for 13 departments, plus capital programs.

The city has a seven-member Planning Commission appointed by the Mayor. The Commission oversees the preparation and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan; land use regulations; coastal management program; platting regulations and serves as the Platting Board; considers and acts on variances and conditional uses; and other duties as prescribed by the Common Council.

The Common Council has adopted legislation that designates the Planning Commission as the official Historic Preservation Commission.

# HISTORIC CONTEXT

## Introduction

Nome has a rich heritage spanning from the earliest indigenous inhabitants to the modern-day community. A tool to understanding a community's history is to organize it into "historic contexts." An historic context is based on historic/cultural themes; geographical areas; and chronological periods.

Contexts describe the significant broad patterns of development in an area that may be represented by historic properties. As historic resources are identified they should be categorized within the historic contexts that relate to a community's history.

The State of Alaska's Historic Preservation Plan identifies themes and time periods that are useful in setting the appropriate contexts for Nome's historic resources.

Pre-History:

- First Inhabitants, Time Immemorial Prior to Contact (Mid 1700s).

Historic periods:

- Russian America, 1741-1867
- Early American Alaska, 1867-1897
- Gold Rush Era, 1897-1912
- Post Gold Rush, 1912-1939
- WWII and the Cold War Era, 1941-1959
- Statehood, Earthquake, and Oil Era, 1959 to present

Within these state-wide themes and time periods, historic contexts may be identified that are specific to Nome. Information about the occupancy and development of Nome provides a clearer picture of the overall history of the community. Some broad themes span various time periods. The following discussion identifies significant contexts that relate to historic resources identified in Nome.

## First Inhabitants

- First Inhabitants, Time Immemorial Prior to Contact (Mid 1700s).

It is believed that the first people came to Alaska around 15,000 years ago across the Bering Land Bridge connecting with Siberian Russia. Ultimately these people migrated throughout northern Alaska and Canada. Although their lifestyle was primarily nomadic there is evidence of at least seasonal settlements near present-day Nome, one of which was an Inupiaq Eskimo settlement site at Cape Nome. The site is now a protected archaeological resource.

A relatively recent archaeological discovery indicates a more permanent Inupiat settlement was located at the mouth of the Snake River, which lies within the City of Nome boundaries. The settlement, known in Inupiat as Sitnasuak (NOM-00025), was uncovered during construction work in 2005-2006 to improve navigation to the Nome harbor. Two semi-subterranean houses and a trash midden dating back to 1700 were excavated and recovered tools, pottery, carvings, and animal bones. This discovery documents that indigenous people were in Nome prior to the Gold Rush.

## Gold Seekers

- Early American Alaska, 1867-1897
- Gold Rush Era, 1897-1912

Since 1865, when gold was first discovered in the streams and coastal beaches of the Seward Peninsula, the area has been known for gold extraction. In 1898 gold was discovered about three miles north of present-day Nome along the banks of Anvil Creek. The discovery by the “Three Lucky Swedes” (Jafet Lindeberg, Eric Lindblom, and John Brynteson) set off one of the most famous gold rushes in American history.

Gold was also found in 1899 along the sandy beaches around the mouth of the Snake River that fed into the Bering Sea. With gold discoveries in the Nome area prospectors and suppliers arrived in droves. The spring of 1900 saw thousands of pioneers arriving from the ports of Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco setting off the great Alaska Gold Rush. Almost overnight this isolated area was transformed into a tent city of prospectors, gamblers, claim jumpers, saloonkeepers, lawyers, and prostitutes.

In short time, vessels arrived from southern ports with building materials and workers to craft a new community upland of the gold-laden beaches. The need for quickly erected buildings to serve the growing community meant there was no time to analyze the local climate and environmental conditions. The new residents brought with them the styles and forms of buildings they were accustomed to in their former communities. The lineup of buildings created narrow streets with wooden walkways.

Early photographs of Nome show bustling scenes with narrow streets, wooden walkways, and rows of buildings much like those erected in early mining towns of the western United States. Commercial businesses and government facilities were mainly located along Front Street (parallel to the beach) and Steadman Street (perpendicular to the beach). Most commercial buildings featured residential uses on the upper floors in the form of hotels, apartments, and rooms for prostitution. Family residences were located inland from the bustling scene of Front Street.

The only remaining commercial building of that early era is the Discovery Saloon (NOM-00042). It is located on Lomen Avenue at the west end of town along with a number of residential buildings from that era. Other historic resources include Alaska Gold Powerhouse, Anvil Creek Gold Discovery Site (NOM-00021) and Erik Lindbloom Placer Claim (NOM-00038).

## Religious Influence

Religious influences through missions and churches occurred throughout Alaska's history including within and surrounding Nome. As additional research is undertaken it likely will be found that religious influences occurred during multiple theme and time periods. The most notable remaining church building in Nome, known at this time, is the Old St. Joseph's Church. Other buildings identified in past surveys include the Methodist Church (NOM-00035) and Methodist Rectory. Additional resources may exist and come to light in future historic building surveys as proposed by this preservation plan.

## Old St. Joseph's Church

- Gold Rush Era, 1897-1912

As early as 1899 when Nome was a fledging gold rush tent city, some Catholic priests were organizing a small following. Two Jesuits, Fr. Louis Jadquet, a Belgian, and Fr. John Van der Pol, a Hollander, arrived in Nome in April 1901 to further a church presence. They officially established a church on July 4, 1901 and later on November 17, 1901 dedicated it to Saint Joseph. It became the westernmost Roman Catholic church in the United States.

The church building presented an impressive silhouette dominating the town skyline. It had a tall steeple with large cross lined with rows of electric lights. The cross could be seen for miles around and often served as a beacon for travelers during blizzards, a common occurrence along Alaska's coast.

In 1944 part of the bell tower and the spire were removed from the church for safety reasons. The building was sold in 1945 to the U.S. Smelting and Mining Company and converted to a warehouse. A second church building was constructed two blocks south of the old location. It was dedicated on Easter Sunday in 1946. This church was replaced in 1993, with a modern facility at the corner of Steadman and West King Place. This third and present Saint Joseph church was dedicated on March 19, 1994.

In 1995 the original church building was donated to the City of Nome by the U.S. Smelting and Mining Company. It was moved in 1996 to its current location. The setting of the church is within a city park known as Anvil City Square. The church has been restored to its original 1901 appearance, including the reconstruction of the bell tower and spire. The building now serves as community center.

The architectural style of the Old St. Joseph Church is Late 19$^{th}$ and 20$^{th}$ Century Revivals – Late Gothic Revival. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2000.

## Reindeer Herders

- Post Gold Rush, 1912-1939

Nome's reindeer industry began with Dr. Sheldon Jackson, a pioneer missionary and educator. His plan was to develop reindeer herding as a viable industry for the local Natives. Jafet Lindeberg, one of the "Three Lucky Swedes" originally came to the Nome area as a reindeer herder.

The Lomen Company, founded by brothers Carl and Alfred Lomen, began developing a large-scale commercial reindeer enterprise in 1914. The peak reindeer years were from 1927 to 1930 when the Lomen Company and the Office of Indian Affairs, Reindeer Service, sold millions of pounds of reindeer meat throughout the United States. The reindeer market crashed as political and advertising endeavors of powerful cattlemen and sheep ranchers were able to thwart the vision of a great reindeer industry. The Lomen herding operations ceased after 1937 when passage of the Reindeer Act phased out white ownership of reindeer herds. Though Native herding continued it was much less in scale than originally envisioned.

There are some remaining sites, buildings, and structurers utilized during the reindeer breeding period. These include the Lomen Commercial Company Warehouse and BIA Building 402 or Reindeer House (NOM-00156).

## Major Health Events

Nome suffered from global, national, and local health events over time. Two specific events, listed here, had tragic terminal results impacting many communities throughout the area. The global COVID/19 pandemic is sure to be identified as a significant historic health event in future community discussions.

### Spanish Flu

- Post Gold Rush, 1912-1939

"A rapidly erupting pandemic. Repeated public reminders of safe hygiene practices. Travel limited. Indefinite quarantines. Schools closed for weeks on end. Governors begging the federal government for help. An insufficient rescue package from Congress. Passengers caught on ships. Orders to wear masks and

instructions to make them. Businesses struggling. A rancorous partisan federal election. Dead bodies piling up." (Quoted from Gastineau Heritage News). Thinking 2020/21 COVID-19 pandemic? Think again to the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918.

The 1918 worldwide flu pandemic had significant impacts to Alaskan Natives including indigenous people in and around Nome. "By the time the 1918 flu virus burned out on the Seward Peninsula it had claimed some 750 lives, the majority of them Alaska Natives. Hundreds of children were left orphaned (The Nome Nugget)."

From the Sitnasuak Native Corporation website; "Sitnasuak Native Corporation (Sitnasuak), in partnership with community organizations, is glad to announce October 1, 2018 as the dedication date for the Sitnasuaŋmiut Quŋuwit.
This quŋuwit (Inupiaq for gravesite or cemetery) memorializes the indigenous people who are peacefully laid to rest at this site located in Nome, Alaska. The cemetery has been known as the "Sea View Cemetery" and "Eskimo Cemetery" in the past. During the 1918 global flu pandemic, at least 170 Sitnasuaŋmiut (People of Sitnasuaq) who perished in Nome were buried at this cemetery site in a mass grave. There are other mass grave sites throughout the Bering Strait Region that reflect the impact of the flu pandemic among our Alaska Native people."

**Serum Run**

- Post Gold Rush, 1912-1939

In the winter of 1924–1925, Curtis Welch was the only doctor in Nome. He, along with four nurses served the town and the surrounding communities. Several months earlier, Welch had placed an order for more diphtheria antitoxin after discovering that the hospital's entire batch had expired. However, thereplacement shipment did not arrive before the port was closed by ice for the winter, and more could not be shipped in to Nome until spring.
After treating an increasing number of cases of what was thought to be tonsillitis four children died. Since Welch had not been able to perform autopsy of the deceased, he became increasingly concerned about diphtheria as the cause of death.

By mid-January 1925, Welch officially diagnosed the first cases of diphtheria. Realizing that an epidemic was imminent, Welch called Mayor George Maynard to arrange an emergency town council meeting. The council immediately implemented a quarantine. The following day, on January 22, 1925,Welch sent radio telegrams to all other major towns in Alaska alerting them of public health risk and he also sent one to the U.S. Public Health Service in Washington, D.C. asking for assistance.

Despite the quarantine, there were over 20 confirmed cases of diphtheria and at least 50 more at risk by the end of January. Without antitoxin, it was expected that in the surrounding region's population of around 10,000 people would be severely impacted. Recalling the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918, which wiped out about 50 percent of the native population of Nome, and 8 percent of the native population of Alaska, prompted quick action to get hold of diphtheria antitoxin

A proposal to set up a dogsled relay consisting of two fast team was developed. One team would start at Nenana and the other at Nome – meeting at Nulato to exchange the antitoxin. The Norwegian Leonhard Seppala was chosen for the 630-mile round trip from Nome to Nulato and back. A proposal to fly the serum into Nome from Fairbanks was nixed as no planes had previously flown that route in the harsh winter months.

In all there were 20 mushers and dog teams that completed the relay. The teams travelled day and night until they handed off the package to Seppala at Nulato. Together, the teams covered the 674 miles in 127 ½ hours, which was considered a world record. The run was made in extreme subzero temperatures with near-blizzard conditions and hurricane-force winds. The delivery of the serum fought off the feared epidemic. The death toll from diphtheria in Nome is officially listed as 5 to 7, but Welch later estimated there were probably at least 100 additional cases among the Native population in the area but outside the city. Forty-three new cases were diagnosed in 1926, but they were easily managed with a fresh supply of serum.
In 1973 Nome became the ending point of the 1,049-mile Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race of which the latter part of its route was used in the serum run.

## Military Presence

Since the United States acquired Alaska there has been some level of military presence to maintain law and order throughout the territory. As World War II

escalated, extensive military facilities were developed in Alaska. This military presence was also observed in Nome. Three specific events and facilities are identified here of which identifiable historic buildings and structures remain in Nome and the surrounding area.

## World War II Build-Up

- WWII and the Cold War Era, 1941-1959

In 1940, rumors spread that the Russians were building an air and submarine base on Big Diomede Island just 150 miles northwest of Nome. The rumors proved untrue but they may have helped convince Congress to fund a military build-up in Alaska. Construction of an air base at Nome began in the summer of 1941. The military facilities were built on the spoils of gold dredging where the tailings provided firm foundations for buildings, roads, and landing strips. After the base was decommissioned in 1955 it became Nome's municipal airport. Many of the military buildings were made available for subsequent uses. Some of these buildings were moved to downtown Nome for use as storage, workshops, and other uses. A grouping of former military single family residential buildings was moved to Spokane Street in Nome and used as rental units.

## U.S. Lend-Lease Program

- WWII and the Cold War Era, 1941-1959

In the decades following World War I, many Americans were wary of becoming involved in another costly international conflict. As conflicts began in Europe, isolationist members of Congress pushed through a series of laws limiting how the United States could respond including the supply of materials and weapons. President Franklin D. Roosevelt committed the United States to materially aiding the opponents of fascism, but, under existing U.S. law, allies had to pay for its arms purchases from the United Stateswith cash, popularly known as cash-and-carry.

By the summer of 1940, British prime minister, Winston Churchill was warning that his country could not pay cash for war materials much longer. The Lend-Lease Act of 1941 stated that the U.S. government could lend or lease, rather than sell, war supplies to any nation deemed "vital to the defense of the United States." Under this policy, the United States was able to

supply military aid to its foreign allies during World War II while still remaining officially neutral in the conflict. Most importantly, passage of the Lend-Lease Act enabled a struggling Great Britain to continue fighting against Germany virtually on its own until the United States entered World War II late in 1941.

By the end of 1941, the lend-lease policy was extended to include other U.S. allies, including the Soviet Union. Due to its strategic location, the City of Nome served a critical role in the Lend/Lease program. Approximately 8,000 aircraft flew through Nome to the Russian front.

The Alaska-Siberian supply route was shorter and less dangerous than sea routes. Aircraft was flown from Great Falls, Montana, through Whitehorse, Canada and into Fairbanks. There they were painted with a red soviet star and turned over to Russian pilots. The pilots would refuel and make repairs in Nome before completing their journey.

Remnants of a 1944-era WWII T-Hangar, representing the Lend/Lease history is located about three miles outside Nome on Teller Road. Some enthusiasts hope to restore the building and create an aviation museum so that this fascinating part of Nome's history can be preserved.

**White Alice Communications System**

- WWII and the Cold War Era, 1941-1959

Conceived in the 1950s to improve communications across Alaska the White Alice Communications System (WACS) was built by the U.S. Air Force beginning in 1955 and became operational in 1958. A series of giant antenna structures were built in several locations including Anvil Mountainoutside Nome. The construction brought some economic benefits to the area for a brief period. The large steel antenna structures of the WACS facility remain at the site. Although they are not within the boundaries of the City of Nome,the large structures present a striking landmark visible from Nome across the treeless tundra landscape.

## Alberta Schenck and the Dream Theatre Incident 1944-1945

Alberta Schenck was born in Nome, Alaska, on June 1, 1928, to Albert Schenck, a white army veteran of World War I. Her mother was Mary Pushruk Schenck of native Inupiat heritage. She was born into an era when the indigenous peoples of Alaska were subjected to segregated practices that often left non-white children without an education for lack of facilities. Some segregated business establishments advertised that all their employees were white.

Alaska Dream Theatre incident

When Alberta was a high school girl in 1944, she had a part-time job ushering at the Alaska Dream Theatre in Nome, where part of her job was to make sure non-white patrons sat in their designated segregated area. She eventually registered a complaint with the theatre's manager and was fired. Alberta's response became an opinion article on March 3, 1944, in the *Nome Nugget* newspaper. She returned later with a white date, and the two of them sat in the "Whites Only" section. She and her army sergeant date refused to move when the manager demanded she move to the non-white section. The theater manager contacted the local police who arrested Schenck and placed her in jail for one night. Schenck's arrest rallied the local Inupiat community, who staged a protest at the theater until her release from jail the next day.

Anti-discrimination legislation

Indignant and determined not to be deterred, she wrote a letter to Alaska Governor Ernest Gruening and related the incident to him. The prior year, the Governor had seen his anti-discrimination bill be defeated in the Territorial Legislature. Her letter inspired the Governor to have the bill re-introduced in the Territorial Legislature, during which her experience was cited on the floor of the legislature. He answered her letter vowing that no one would again receive that kind of treatment in Alaska. The re-introduced bill passed both houses of the legislature and was signed into law as the Alaska Equal Rights Act of 1945 on February 16, 1945.

In 2011, Alberta Schenck Adams was inducted into the Alaska Women's Hall of Fame. ***Source:*** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alberta_Schenck_Adams

The Dream Theater burned down in the 1960s. The Historic Commission will pursue erecting a storyboard in Nome illustrating Ms. Schenek’s bravery.

## King Island Residents Move to Nome

- Statehood, Earthquake, and Oil Era, 1959 to present

King Island is located approximately 90 miles from Nome in the Bering Straits. King Island was located and named by Captain James Cook in 1778. The island is considered to be one of the harshest environments in the world yet for thousands of years, a community of Inupiat people lived, survived, and thrived there. The village site on King Island which is located on the south side facing Russia, is called Ukivok (OO-Q-Vok). According to the State of Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs, in 1937 there were 190 residents, 45 houses, a Catholic church, and a school in the village.

In 1959, the Bureau of Indian Affairs decided to close the school on the island which ultimately led families to seek education opportunities on the mainland.

In the early 1960's, social and economic pressures and opportunities persuaded island residents to relocate to Nome. In Nome, King Islanders have maintained a distinct community identity. Former residents visited King Island in the spring and summer months to hunt walrus, pursue other subsistence activities, and maintain dwellings.

Although vacant most of the year, King Island is recognized as a distinct village corporation under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), has an operative IRA Council, and conducts itself as a community organization based in Nome, Alaska. The King Island Native Corporation has 206 shareholders and owns several businesses.

## Transportation

- First Inhabitants, Time Immemorial Prior to Contact, Mid 1700s.
- Russian America, 1741-1867
- Early American Alaska, 1867-1897
- Gold Rush Era, 1897-1912
- Post Gold Rush, 1912-1939
- WWII and the Cold War Era, 1941-1959
- Statehood, Earthquake, and Oil Era, 1959 to present

Transportation is a broad subject that spans all historic themes and time periods and which may include all movement from person powered to machine powered methods. The importance of this discussion is in understanding historic transportation trends and how transportation influenced the historic development of Nome. This understanding is important for relating identified historic resources to the overall history of Nome.

Access to and around Nome can be categorized into three basic routes: Land; Water; and Air. The following discusses the influence of transportation on the historic development of the city and connection to surrounding areas.

## Land Access

The Bering Land Bridge is recognized as the primary land access route for indigenous people from Siberia to Alaska. The primary mode of transportation was pedestrian and may have been supplemented with dogs. People and dog pulled sleds were likely used to transport goods and belongings on the trek.
Sometimes people embarked on journeys with unconventional transportation means simply for the challenge or to join the swarms of people seeking their fortune. Such is the case of those who ventured out on wheeled bicycles. In February 1900, Ed Jesson left Dawson arriving in Nome several weeks later. In March of that year Max Hirshberg did the same trek by bicycle. His chain broke east of Nome so he rigged up a sail for the last leg of the venture.

### Roads

Nome cannot be reached by road from Anchorage or other population centers of Alaska, but it is the hub for a regional network of roads that provide access to various villages, mines, and resource development sites eastward to Council, northwest to Teller, and north to Taylor. This road system is critical for connection and supplying needs of outlying communities. The main roads outside the city boundaries are maintained by the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

### Railroads

Private rail lines were developed primarily to transport supplies and materials to area mining operations. In 1900 the Wild Goose Railroad was created by the Wild Goose Mining Company. Track was laid from Nome to the terminus at Anvil

City. The trains ran only from spring to November. In 1903 the Wild Goose Railroad was reorganized as the Nome Arctic Railway. In 1906 it was bought by The Seward Peninsula Railway and was ultimately acquired by the State of Alaska but it never resumed operations. In 1953 the railroad was reopened as The Curly Q Line which was outfitted for tourist operations but lasted only until 1955.

During the gold rush frenzy, the Western Alaska Construction Company was organized for the purpose of constructing the Council City & Solomon River Railroad (CC&SRR). The current Nome-Council Highway turns inland at the ghost town of Solomon, an old mining town where an abandoned railroad train known locally as the "Last Train to Nowhere" is located.
The engines of the CC&SRR were originally used in New York City on elevated lines in 1881. They were shipped to Alaska in 1903 to serve the miners along this line to Nome.

The remains of the railroad at Mile 31 of the Nome-Council Highway are comprised of three locomotives, two flat cars and a boiler. The site was listed as an historic district on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001.

## Water Access

Water access has been important to Nome throughout the years. Baidarkas (enclosed skinned kayaks) and *Umiaqs* (open skinned boats) were used by early inhabitants for basic transportation from one location to another and for hunting expeditions. The original vessels were made of wood and skins but have evolved to more modern materials of wood, aluminum, fiberglass, and high-tech composites. These single and multiple passenger vessels continue to provide transportation for recreation, hunting, and ceremonial activities.

Once word got out about the gold discoveries, stampeders began arriving overland from the Klondike but the greatest number of prospectors arrived by steamships from Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco. The beaches of Nome did not offer deep water access so ships anchored offshore and people came ashore by small vessels. The water access allowed materials and supplies for the prospectors mining needs and for development of the new town.

The area at the mouth of the Snake River provided deeper water for the development of a port and harbor. Construction of Nome's original jetties began in 1919 and were complete by 1923. A seawall protecting Nome was constructed

in the early 1950s and a 3,000 ft. armor stone causeway was built in 1985. The Corps of Engineers continued improvements to the port in 2006 adding an approximately 3,000-foot-long breakwater east of the existing Causeway. During this project remains of two semi-subterranean houses and a trash midden dating back to 1700 were discovered as mentioned above.

Nome's port was and continues to be an important regional transshipment hub for many Western Alaska communities that rely on the port for movement of heating oil and gasoline, construction supplies, non-perishable food, gravel, and other cargo. The port is strategically positioned to serve national, state, regional, and local needs as it is poised to play an increasingly important role in a changing sea access to the Arctic.

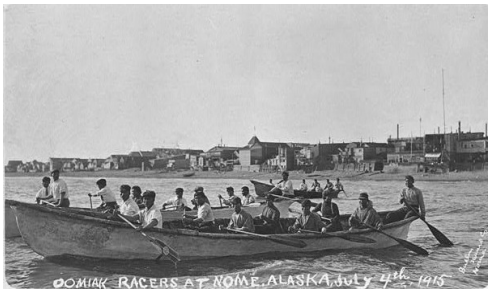
## Air Access

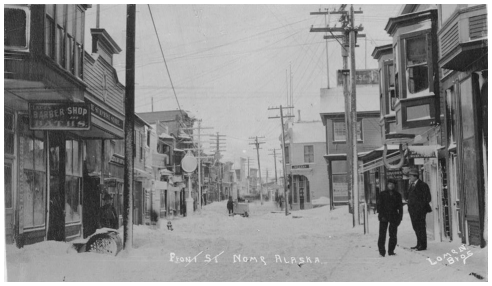
Air flights began in Nome as early as 1901 when Leonard, Prince of the Air, launched a balloon and drifted out to sea while performing trapeze acts. He parachuted to the sea where a boat was waiting to pluck him from the cold water. In 1905, Professor Nemo rose above Nome in a balloon as part of a May carnival. The first airplane built in Alaska was in 1911 by Professor Henry Peterson but after a number of attempts it never left the ground.

In August 1923 four Army biplanes, travelling cross country from New York City, circled Nome and landed at Fort Davis outside the city. In 1925 Noel Wein made the first commercial fight into Nome from Fairbanks. He later began Wein Alaska Airways in 1927 providing weekly flights to Fairbanks.

By 1939 Nome had five year-round commercial air operators (Wein Alaska Airlines, Mirow Air Service, Ferguson Airways, Northern Cross, Pacific Alaska Airways – a subsidiary of Pan American). Today Nome is primarily served by regular, scheduled jet service by Alaska Airlines.

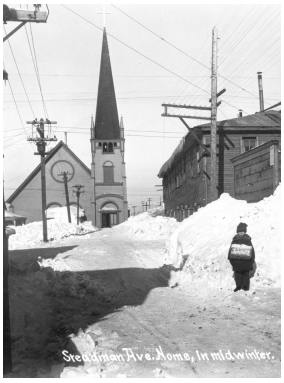
The Nome Airport features a 6,000-foot main runway and a 5,576-foot crosswind runway. The airport occupies what was once Marks Air Force Base. There is also a small airstrip known as Nome City Field which offers a 1,950-foot-long gravel runway.
There are a number of historic buildings that remain in Nome that were connected to the history air access. These include a building used by Wein Alaska Airways and recycled buildings from Marks Air Force Base.

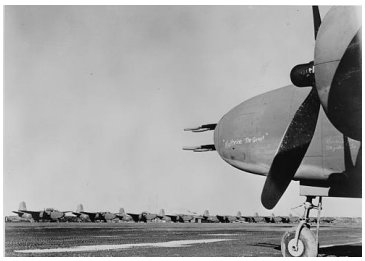








# CITY OF NOME, ALASKA

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN

**Prepared by**
**Gary H. Gillette, Architect**
**For the**
**Nome Historic Preservation Commission**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Nome was incorporated as an Alaskan first-class city in 1901 - one hundred and twenty years ago. Physical evidence uncovered in 2005 indicates an indigenous settlement within the city boundaries occurred at least two hundred years prior to Nome becoming a city. It is also known that indigenous people hunted, fished, and gathered in the surrounding areas since time immemorial.

People, events, stories, customs, and physical remains (sites, buildings, structures, objects) represent the history and legacy of Nome. History is important for understanding the community's past and guiding its future. It contributes to the community's unique personality and character thereby adding to the quality of life in this special location between the vast Bering Sea and the upland tundra of northwest Alaska.

## Background

Preserving the history and physical remains of a community provides important links to the past. The City of Nome has taken steps toward historic preservation in past actions.

In 1975 the Nome Common Council adopted an ordinance that supported historic preservation. The ordinance set the first steps to be taken, including the identification of historic resources; designation of significant historic resources as historical landmarks; and maintenance of a catalogue of city landmarks.

The *Nome Comprehensive Plan 2020* was adopted in 2012 to help shape the character of the community and its quality of life. Its mission was to promote new development opportunities while maintaining and enhancing existing elements of the community that make Nome unique and define its heritage and identity. Within the Comprehensive Plan are goals, objectives, and strategies to promote and capitalize on Nome's unique history.

In 2018 the City of Nome became a Certified Local Government (CLG) as approved by the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer. This designation made Nome eligible for certain historic preservation programs and for funding of preservation activities.

The City of Nome received a CLG grant in 2018 for Phase I of the development of an historic preservation plan. The grant was specifically to solicit public input for development of the historic preservation plan. A follow-up grant was awarded in 2019 to complete Phase II of the plan's development. The city contracted with Gary H. Gillette, Architect to perform the work.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Nome Historic Preservation Plan is to guide efforts for identification, preservation, and protection of valuable historic and cultural resources of the Nome community. The plan is intended to educate the public of the value and importance of Nome's history and influence future development to be sensitive to historic and cultural resources.

The plan states a vision of a future for Nome that celebrates, preserves and shares its unique past. The plan establishes goals and objectives that the community has determined to be important for historic preservation. It defines implementing actions that will serve as a road map for future activities with an eye toward achieving the preservation goals.

## Historic Preservation Plan Application

The City of Nome, Alaska is a recognized political entity with specific boundaries as set by the State of Alaska. This historic preservation plan along with its goals, objectives, and implementing actions applies to historic properties within the city boundaries and are enforceable by city ordinances and codes.

Some historical information contained in this plan reference historic events and properties that are outside the specific city boundaries thus are not subject to ordinances and codes established and enforced by the city. However, these historic events and properties mentioned in the plan may have had significant impacts on the history and culture of the city thus included for a better understanding of Nome's unique past.

The city is encouraged to engage with owners of historic properties outside the city boundaries for support and assistance in preserving these places that are significant to Nome's history.

## Recommendations

The preservation plan identifies a number of recommendations that should be implemented to assure that Nome's past is clearly supported by the community and demonstrates a desire to protect important historic resources. These recommendations include the following:

- Adopt and Implement the Historic Preservation Plan
- Review and Update the Historic Preservation Ordinance (76-10-1)
- Update the Nome Comprehensive Plan
- Periodically Review and Update the Historic Preservation Plan

# INTRODUCTION to HISTORIC PRESERVATION

In 1966 the National Historic Preservation Act was adopted by the United States Congress. The National Park Service (NPS) was charged with implementing the programs outlined in the act. NPS describes historic preservation as follows:

> "Historic preservation is a conversation with our past about our future. It provides us with opportunities to ask, "What is important in our history?" and "What parts of our past can we preserve for the future?" Through historic preservation, we look at history in different ways, ask different questions of the past, and learn new things about our history and ourselves. Historic preservation is an important way for us to transmit our understanding of the past to future generations."

> "Our nation's history has many facets, and historic preservation helps tell these stories. Sometimes historic preservation involves celebrating events, people, places, and ideas that we are proud of; other times it involves recognizing moments in our history that can be painful or uncomfortable to remember."

Historic preservation includes the process of identifying, preserving, and protecting sites, districts, buildings, structures, or objects which reflect elements of a community's cultural, social, economic, political, archaeological or architectural history. This history is important because it links to specific times, places and events that were significant milestones in the past. Revisiting preserved elements of a community's past provides a sense of place, and maintains continuity between the past and the present.

## What is Historic?

The generally accepted threshold of establishing an historic resource is its age of 50 years or greater. The NPS evaluation criteria for listing a resource on the National Register of Historic Places is a good reference for use in the evaluation and determination of the significance of an historic property within the national, state, or local community.

Properties of historic significance possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

1. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

2. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

3. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

4. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Historic resources (districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects) that meet one of the above criteria are considered significant in a community's history and worthy of preservation and are the focus of the Vision, Goals, and Objectives of the Nome Historic Preservation Plan.

## Benefits of Historic Preservation

The history of a community contributes to its personality. Preserving this personality through its history, historic properties, and culture gives a community its unique character. Historic preservation provides a link to the roots of the community and its people. It adds to the quality of life making for a more livable community.

Historic preservation is beneficial to the community in many ways:

- Cultural - a community is richer for having the tangible presence of past eras and historic styles. It benefits from traditional languages, customs, rituals, events and other cultural activities.

- Economical - a community benefits from increased property values and tax revenues when historic buildings are protected and made the focal point of revitalization and when the community is attractive to visitors seeking heritage tourism opportunities.

- Social - a community benefits when citizens take pride in its history and culture through mutual concern for the protection of the historic building fabric, sites, and cultural customs and practices.

- Developmental - a community benefits from having a concerted and well-defined planning approach for the protection of historic buildings while accommodating healthy growth.

- Environmental - a community benefits when historic buildings are recycled (restored or rehabilitated) rather than demolished and disposed of in the community landfill.

- Educational - a community benefits through teaching local heritage and the understanding of the past and the resultant cultural respect by its citizens.

## Importance of Historic Preservation Planning

Historic preservation efforts can be influenced by national, state, and local factors: social; political; economic; legal; and other influences. These influences can come from private enterprises and/or public agencies. Successful preservation planning recognizes these influences and establishes goals, objectives, standards, and incentives to resolve conflicts between various parties in reaching consensus within the community.

Historic preservation planning is important for the following reasons:

A. To clearly state goals of preservation in the community.

B. To inform developers in advance how the community wants to grow and what the community wants to protect.

C. To assure consistency between various government policies that affect the community's historic resources.

D. To educate and inform citizens about their heritage and its value to the community.

E. To create an agenda for preservation activities and a framework to protect historic resources.

F. To comprehensively address issues relating to tourism, zoning, traffic patterns, development patterns, and design that might adversely affect historic preservation goals.

G. To encourage economic development through the preservation of historic resources.

H. To strengthen the political understanding of and support for historic preservation policies.

## Activities Affecting Historic Resources

- Tourism: Heritage tourism is a growing sector of the tourism industry. Increased use of a historic resource through tourism development may have detrimental impacts to the property. Care should be taken to control the level of use and impacts to assure the integrity of the property is maintained. The balance between preservation and sharing the resource is critical as protection may be dependent on the economic benefits that tourism brings.

- New Development: As communities grow, pressure arises for new and larger buildings to meet the needs of the overall community and its businesses and its residents. New development in and around historic buildings, districts, sites, and neighborhoods can dilute the overall historic character by compromising the scale and fabric of the area. Additions and remodeling of existing buildings can have a negative impact to the overall character of the district if they are not done in a sensitive manner.

  Developing and adopting local design guidelines for new development projects that might negatively impact historic resources is an important tool for preserving the overall character of historic properties. Guidelines need to allow new buildings to reflect their own time but should identify general characteristics that would enhance the historic neighborhood rather than detract from the established architectural character.

- Demolition: Often buildings are demolished to make way for new development. This practice may have major impacts to the character of historic buildings, districts, sites, and neighborhoods. In many cases demolition is not as cost effective as rehabilitation of existing buildings.

  Communities should investigate offering financial assistance for preservation activities through grants, low interest loans, and tax incentives that would encourage developers to consider renovation rather than demolition of historic properties. Typically, renovation of existing buildings provides economic benefits to the community through increased local labor and materials purchases. In remote communities such as Nome there may be a cost advantage to preserve materials and avoid the cost of shipping in new materials.

- Maintenance: Buildings in general, require periodic repair and maintenance. Neglecting maintenance needs of historic buildings may leadto their destruction over time. Maintenance that is delayed often results in being too costly to reverse in later years. Relatively simple tasks such as keeping roofing intact to not allow water intrusion and the inevitable rot that would occur will preserve buildings for the future. Protecting wood elements with paint or preservative treatment will prolong materials.

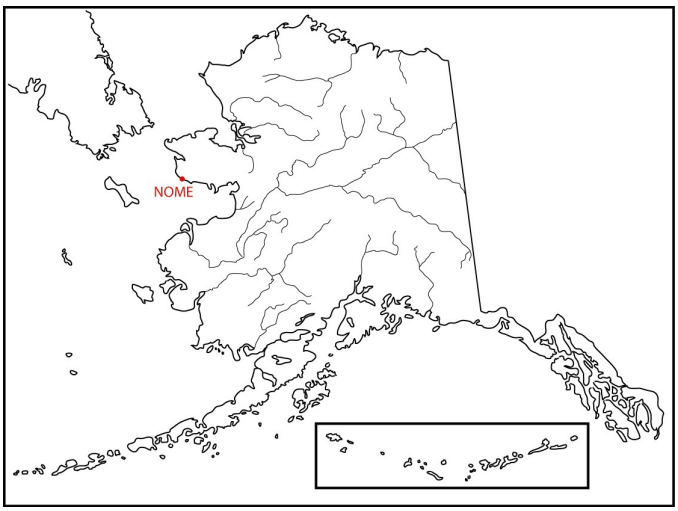
## Unique Events Affecting Historic Resources in Nome

Sometimes unforeseen events can impact the history and historic resources of an area. Nome suffered fire and storm damage that erased much of the historic building fabric of the main downtown area. These events caused new design considerations for roadways and distances between buildings that are significantly different than the original construction practices. The new design standards significantly changed the character of the original community, especially in the downtown business areas.

Often, buildings that were spared by the fire or storm events were moved for reuse at other sites. In other cases, such as occurred with the closing of Marks Air Force Base, buildings were moved to recycle or reuse for other purposes. Moving an historic resource from its original location may reduce its historic integrity While this practice is not preferred in historic preservation efforts, it does serve to preserve important historic resources when other options are not available.

# LOCATION and SETTING

## Location




The City of Nome is located on the southwestern edge of the Seward Peninsula along the coast of Norton Sound of the Bering Sea. It is approximately 550 miles northwest of Anchorage and 102 miles south of the Arctic Circle.

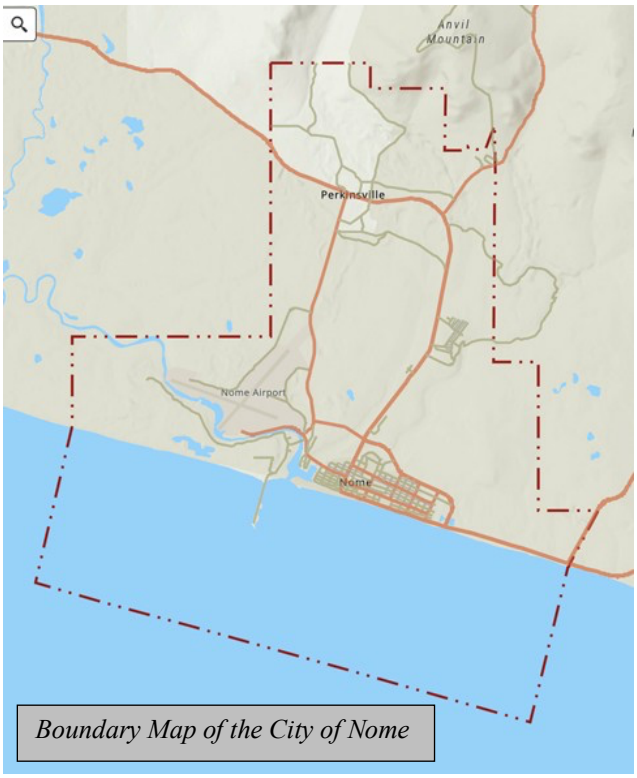
Nome is a regional hub of commerce, education, transportation, and tribal and federal government services for much of northwest Alaska.

## Setting

The Seward Peninsula features rolling hills and flat lowlands cut by meandering streams and containing thousands of lakes and bogs. The area is in the transitional climate zone, receiving about 18 inches of rain and 56 inches of snowfall per year. Average temperatures range from -3 to +65 degrees Fahrenheit. The climate is influenced by both maritime and continental conditions. Maritime conditions dominate in the summer, while in the winter, conditions shift to a mostly continental climate. The area is known for numerous intense storms, particularly during the fall months. Storms usually arrive from the southwest, although intense storms can also come from the south and southeast.

## City of Nome

The City of Nome became an Alaskan first-class city on April 9, 1901. The city has a total area of 21.6 square miles, of which 12.5 square miles is land and 9.1 square miles is water. The population of Nome has waned since the peak of early gold rush years. The 1900 census reported a population of 12,488. The 2010 census established the population at 3,598 and in 2018 the population was estimated to be 3,866.




*Boundary Map of the City of Nome*

Nome's local government is a Mayor / Manager administration. The executive power of the city is vested in the Mayor. The Mayor presides at meetings of the Common Council. Although the Mayor may take part in the discussion of a matter before the Common Council, the Mayor may not vote except in the case of a tie. The Mayor acts as ceremonial head of the City government, executes official documents on authorization of the Common Council, and is responsible for additional duties and powers prescribed by Alaska law.

The Mayor and Common Council employs a City Manager who serves as the Chief Administrative Officer for the City by providing management and policy direction as established by the Common Council. The City Manager is responsible for the overall supervision and coordination of City operations, which includes managing the multimillion-dollar annual budget for 13 departments, plus capital programs.

The city has a seven-member Planning Commission appointed by the Mayor. The Commission oversees the preparation and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan; land use regulations; coastal management program; platting regulations and serves as the Platting Board; considers and acts on variances and conditional uses; and other duties as prescribed by the Common Council.

The Common Council has adopted legislation that designates the Planning Commission as the official Historic Preservation Commission.

# HISTORIC CONTEXT

## Introduction

Nome has a rich heritage spanning from the earliest indigenous inhabitants to the modern-day community. A tool to understanding a community's history is to organize it into "historic contexts." An historic context is based on historic/cultural themes; geographical areas; and chronological periods.

Contexts describe the significant broad patterns of development in an area that may be represented by historic properties. As historic resources are identified they should be categorized within the historic contexts that relate to a community's history.

The State of Alaska's Historic Preservation Plan identifies themes and time periods that are useful in setting the appropriate contexts for Nome's historic resources.

Pre-History:

- First Inhabitants, Time Immemorial Prior to Contact (Mid 1700s).

Historic periods:

- Russian America, 1741-1867
- Early American Alaska, 1867-1897
- Gold Rush Era, 1897-1912
- Post Gold Rush, 1912-1939
- WWII and the Cold War Era, 1941-1959
- Statehood, Earthquake, and Oil Era, 1959 to present

Within these state-wide themes and time periods, historic contexts may be identified that are specific to Nome. Information about the occupancy and development of Nome provides a clearer picture of the overall history of the community. Some broad themes span various time periods. The following discussion identifies significant contexts that relate to historic resources identified in Nome.

## First Inhabitants

- First Inhabitants, Time Immemorial Prior to Contact (Mid 1700s).

It is believed that the first people came to Alaska around 15,000 years ago across the Bering Land Bridge connecting with Siberian Russia. Ultimately these people migrated throughout northern Alaska and Canada. Although their lifestyle was primarily nomadic there is evidence of at least seasonal settlements near present-day Nome, one of which was an Inupiaq Eskimo settlement site at Cape Nome. The site is now a protected archaeological resource.

A relatively recent archaeological discovery indicates a more permanent Inupiat settlement was located at the mouth of the Snake River, which lies within the City of Nome boundaries. The settlement, known in Inupiat as Sitnasuak (NOM-00025), was uncovered during construction work in 2005-2006 to improve navigation to the Nome harbor. Two semi-subterranean houses and a trash midden dating back to 1700 were excavated and recovered tools, pottery, carvings, and animal bones. This discovery documents that indigenous people were in Nome prior to the Gold Rush.

## Gold Seekers

- Early American Alaska, 1867-1897
- Gold Rush Era, 1897-1912

Since 1865, when gold was first discovered in the streams and coastal beaches of the Seward Peninsula, the area has been known for gold extraction. In 1898 gold was discovered about three miles north of present-day Nome along the banks of Anvil Creek. The discovery by the “Three Lucky Swedes” (Jafet Lindeberg, Eric Lindblom, and John Brynteson) set off one of the most famous gold rushes in American history.

Gold was also found in 1899 along the sandy beaches around the mouth of the Snake River that fed into the Bering Sea. With gold discoveries in the Nome area prospectors and suppliers arrived in droves. The spring of 1900 saw thousands of pioneers arriving from the ports of Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco setting off the great Alaska Gold Rush. Almost overnight this isolated area was transformed into a tent city of prospectors, gamblers, claim jumpers, saloonkeepers, lawyers, and prostitutes.

In short time, vessels arrived from southern ports with building materials and workers to craft a new community upland of the gold-laden beaches. The need for quickly erected buildings to serve the growing community meant there was no time to analyze the local climate and environmental conditions. The new residents brought with them the styles and forms of buildings they were accustomed to in their former communities. The lineup of buildings created narrow streets with wooden walkways.

Early photographs of Nome show bustling scenes with narrow streets, wooden walkways, and rows of buildings much like those erected in early mining towns of the western United States. Commercial businesses and government facilities were mainly located along Front Street (parallel to the beach) and Steadman Street (perpendicular to the beach). Most commercial buildings featured residential uses on the upper floors in the form of hotels, apartments, and rooms for prostitution. Family residences were located inland from the bustling scene of Front Street.

The only remaining commercial building of that early era is the Discovery Saloon (NOM-00042). It is located on Lomen Avenue at the west end of town along with a number of residential buildings from that era. Other historic resources include Alaska Gold Powerhouse, Anvil Creek Gold Discovery Site (NOM-00021) and Erik Lindbloom Placer Claim (NOM-00038).

## Religious Influence

Religious influences through missions and churches occurred throughout Alaska's history including within and surrounding Nome. As additional research is undertaken it likely will be found that religious influences occurred during multiple theme and time periods. The most notable remaining church building in Nome, known at this time, is the Old St. Joseph's Church. Other buildings identified in past surveys include the Methodist Church (NOM-00035) and Methodist Rectory. Additional resources may exist and come to light in future historic building surveys as proposed by this preservation plan.

## Old St. Joseph's Church

- Gold Rush Era, 1897-1912

As early as 1899 when Nome was a fledging gold rush tent city, some Catholic priests were organizing a small following. Two Jesuits, Fr. Louis Jadquet, a Belgian, and Fr. John Van der Pol, a Hollander, arrived in Nome in April 1901 to further a church presence. They officially established a church on July 4, 1901 and later on November 17, 1901 dedicated it to Saint Joseph. It became the westernmost Roman Catholic church in the United States.

The church building presented an impressive silhouette dominating the town skyline. It had a tall steeple with large cross lined with rows of electric lights. The cross could be seen for miles around and often served as a beacon for travelers during blizzards, a common occurrence along Alaska's coast.

In 1944 part of the bell tower and the spire were removed from the church for safety reasons. The building was sold in 1945 to the U.S. Smelting and Mining Company and converted to a warehouse. A second church building was constructed two blocks south of the old location. It was dedicated on Easter Sunday in 1946. This church was replaced in 1993, with a modern facility at the corner of Steadman and West King Place. This third and present Saint Joseph church was dedicated on March 19, 1994.

In 1995 the original church building was donated to the City of Nome by the U.S. Smelting and Mining Company. It was moved in 1996 to its current location. The setting of the church is within a city park known as Anvil City Square. The church has been restored to its original 1901 appearance, including the reconstruction of the bell tower and spire. The building now serves as community center.

The architectural style of the Old St. Joseph Church is Late 19$^{th}$ and 20$^{th}$ Century Revivals – Late Gothic Revival. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2000.

## Reindeer Herders

- Post Gold Rush, 1912-1939

Nome's reindeer industry began with Dr. Sheldon Jackson, a pioneer missionary and educator. His plan was to develop reindeer herding as a viable industry for the local Natives. Jafet Lindeberg, one of the "Three Lucky Swedes" originally came to the Nome area as a reindeer herder.

The Lomen Company, founded by brothers Carl and Alfred Lomen, began developing a large-scale commercial reindeer enterprise in 1914. The peak reindeer years were from 1927 to 1930 when the Lomen Company and the Office of Indian Affairs, Reindeer Service, sold millions of pounds of reindeer meat throughout the United States. The reindeer market crashed as political and advertising endeavors of powerful cattlemen and sheep ranchers were able to thwart the vision of a great reindeer industry. The Lomen herding operations ceased after 1937 when passage of the Reindeer Act phased out white ownership of reindeer herds. Though Native herding continued it was much less in scale than originally envisioned.

There are some remaining sites, buildings, and structurers utilized during the reindeer breeding period. These include the Lomen Commercial Company Warehouse and BIA Building 402 or Reindeer House (NOM-00156).

## Major Health Events

Nome suffered from global, national, and local health events over time. Two specific events, listed here, had tragic terminal results impacting many communities throughout the area. The global COVID/19 pandemic is sure to be identified as a significant historic health event in future community discussions.

### Spanish Flu

- Post Gold Rush, 1912-1939

"A rapidly erupting pandemic. Repeated public reminders of safe hygiene practices. Travel limited. Indefinite quarantines. Schools closed for weeks on end. Governors begging the federal government for help. An insufficient rescue package from Congress. Passengers caught on ships. Orders to wear masks and

instructions to make them. Businesses struggling. A rancorous partisan federal election. Dead bodies piling up." (Quoted from Gastineau Heritage News). Thinking 2020/21 COVID-19 pandemic? Think again to the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918.

The 1918 worldwide flu pandemic had significant impacts to Alaskan Natives including indigenous people in and around Nome. "By the time the 1918 flu virus burned out on the Seward Peninsula it had claimed some 750 lives, the majority of them Alaska Natives. Hundreds of children were left orphaned (The Nome Nugget)."

From the Sitnasuak Native Corporation website; "Sitnasuak Native Corporation (Sitnasuak), in partnership with community organizations, is glad to announce October 1, 2018 as the dedication date for the Sitnasuaŋmiut Quŋuwit.
This quŋuwit (Inupiaq for gravesite or cemetery) memorializes the indigenous people who are peacefully laid to rest at this site located in Nome, Alaska. The cemetery has been known as the "Sea View Cemetery" and "Eskimo Cemetery" in the past. During the 1918 global flu pandemic, at least 170 Sitnasuaŋmiut (People of Sitnasuaq) who perished in Nome were buried at this cemetery site in a mass grave. There are other mass grave sites throughout the Bering Strait Region that reflect the impact of the flu pandemic among our Alaska Native people."

**Serum Run**

- Post Gold Rush, 1912-1939

In the winter of 1924–1925, Curtis Welch was the only doctor in Nome. He, along with four nurses served the town and the surrounding communities. Several months earlier, Welch had placed an order for more diphtheria antitoxin after discovering that the hospital's entire batch had expired. However, thereplacement shipment did not arrive before the port was closed by ice for the winter, and more could not be shipped in to Nome until spring.
After treating an increasing number of cases of what was thought to be tonsillitis four children died. Since Welch had not been able to perform autopsy of the deceased, he became increasingly concerned about diphtheria as the cause of death.

By mid-January 1925, Welch officially diagnosed the first cases of diphtheria. Realizing that an epidemic was imminent, Welch called Mayor George Maynard to arrange an emergency town council meeting. The council immediately implemented a quarantine. The following day, on January 22, 1925,Welch sent radio telegrams to all other major towns in Alaska alerting them of public health risk and he also sent one to the U.S. Public Health Service in Washington, D.C. asking for assistance.

Despite the quarantine, there were over 20 confirmed cases of diphtheria and at least 50 more at risk by the end of January. Without antitoxin, it was expected that in the surrounding region's population of around 10,000 people would be severely impacted. Recalling the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918, which wiped out about 50 percent of the native population of Nome, and 8 percent of the native population of Alaska, prompted quick action to get hold of diphtheria antitoxin

A proposal to set up a dogsled relay consisting of two fast team was developed. One team would start at Nenana and the other at Nome – meeting at Nulato to exchange the antitoxin. The Norwegian Leonhard Seppala was chosen for the 630-mile round trip from Nome to Nulato and back. A proposal to fly the serum into Nome from Fairbanks was nixed as no planes had previously flown that route in the harsh winter months.

In all there were 20 mushers and dog teams that completed the relay. The teams travelled day and night until they handed off the package to Seppala at Nulato. Together, the teams covered the 674 miles in 127 ½ hours, which was considered a world record. The run was made in extreme subzero temperatures with near-blizzard conditions and hurricane-force winds. The delivery of the serum fought off the feared epidemic. The death toll from diphtheria in Nome is officially listed as 5 to 7, but Welch later estimated there were probably at least 100 additional cases among the Native population in the area but outside the city. Forty-three new cases were diagnosed in 1926, but they were easily managed with a fresh supply of serum.
In 1973 Nome became the ending point of the 1,049-mile Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race of which the latter part of its route was used in the serum run.

## Military Presence

Since the United States acquired Alaska there has been some level of military presence to maintain law and order throughout the territory. As World War II

escalated, extensive military facilities were developed in Alaska. This military presence was also observed in Nome. Three specific events and facilities are identified here of which identifiable historic buildings and structures remain in Nome and the surrounding area.

## World War II Build-Up

- WWII and the Cold War Era, 1941-1959

In 1940, rumors spread that the Russians were building an air and submarine base on Big Diomede Island just 150 miles northwest of Nome. The rumors proved untrue but they may have helped convince Congress to fund a military build-up in Alaska. Construction of an air base at Nome began in the summer of 1941. The military facilities were built on the spoils of gold dredging where the tailings provided firm foundations for buildings, roads, and landing strips. After the base was decommissioned in 1955 it became Nome's municipal airport. Many of the military buildings were made available for subsequent uses. Some of these buildings were moved to downtown Nome for use as storage, workshops, and other uses. A grouping of former military single family residential buildings was moved to Spokane Street in Nome and used as rental units.

## U.S. Lend-Lease Program

- WWII and the Cold War Era, 1941-1959

In the decades following World War I, many Americans were wary of becoming involved in another costly international conflict. As conflicts began in Europe, isolationist members of Congress pushed through a series of laws limiting how the United States could respond including the supply of materials and weapons. President Franklin D. Roosevelt committed the United States to materially aiding the opponents of fascism, but, under existing U.S. law, allies had to pay for its arms purchases from the United Stateswith cash, popularly known as cash-and-carry.

By the summer of 1940, British prime minister, Winston Churchill was warning that his country could not pay cash for war materials much longer. The Lend-Lease Act of 1941 stated that the U.S. government could lend or lease, rather than sell, war supplies to any nation deemed "vital to the defense of the United States." Under this policy, the United States was able to

supply military aid to its foreign allies during World War II while still remaining officially neutral in the conflict. Most importantly, passage of the Lend-Lease Act enabled a struggling Great Britain to continue fighting against Germany virtually on its own until the United States entered World War II late in 1941.

By the end of 1941, the lend-lease policy was extended to include other U.S. allies, including the Soviet Union. Due to its strategic location, the City of Nome served a critical role in the Lend/Lease program. Approximately 8,000 aircraft flew through Nome to the Russian front.

The Alaska-Siberian supply route was shorter and less dangerous than sea routes. Aircraft was flown from Great Falls, Montana, through Whitehorse, Canada and into Fairbanks. There they were painted with a red soviet star and turned over to Russian pilots. The pilots would refuel and make repairs in Nome before completing their journey.

Remnants of a 1944-era WWII T-Hangar, representing the Lend/Lease history is located about three miles outside Nome on Teller Road. Some enthusiasts hope to restore the building and create an aviation museum so that this fascinating part of Nome's history can be preserved.

**White Alice Communications System**

- WWII and the Cold War Era, 1941-1959

Conceived in the 1950s to improve communications across Alaska the White Alice Communications System (WACS) was built by the U.S. Air Force beginning in 1955 and became operational in 1958. A series of giant antenna structures were built in several locations including Anvil Mountainoutside Nome. The construction brought some economic benefits to the area for a brief period. The large steel antenna structures of the WACS facility remain at the site. Although they are not within the boundaries of the City of Nome,the large structures present a striking landmark visible from Nome across the treeless tundra landscape.

## Alberta Schenck and the Dream Theatre Incident 1944-1945

Alberta Schenck was born in Nome, Alaska, on June 1, 1928, to Albert Schenck, a white army veteran of World War I. Her mother was Mary Pushruk Schenck of native Inupiat heritage. She was born into an era when the indigenous peoples of Alaska were subjected to segregated practices that often left non-white children without an education for lack of facilities. Some segregated business establishments advertised that all their employees were white.

Alaska Dream Theatre incident

When Alberta was a high school girl in 1944, she had a part-time job ushering at the Alaska Dream Theatre in Nome, where part of her job was to make sure non-white patrons sat in their designated segregated area. She eventually registered a complaint with the theatre's manager and was fired. Alberta's response became an opinion article on March 3, 1944, in the *Nome Nugget* newspaper. She returned later with a white date, and the two of them sat in the "Whites Only" section. She and her army sergeant date refused to move when the manager demanded she move to the non-white section. The theater manager contacted the local police who arrested Schenck and placed her in jail for one night. Schenck's arrest rallied the local Inupiat community, who staged a protest at the theater until her release from jail the next day.

Anti-discrimination legislation

Indignant and determined not to be deterred, she wrote a letter to Alaska Governor Ernest Gruening and related the incident to him. The prior year, the Governor had seen his anti-discrimination bill be defeated in the Territorial Legislature. Her letter inspired the Governor to have the bill re-introduced in the Territorial Legislature, during which her experience was cited on the floor of the legislature. He answered her letter vowing that no one would again receive that kind of treatment in Alaska. The re-introduced bill passed both houses of the legislature and was signed into law as the Alaska Equal Rights Act of 1945 on February 16, 1945.

In 2011, Alberta Schenck Adams was inducted into the Alaska Women's Hall of Fame. ***Source:*** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alberta_Schenck_Adams

The Dream Theater burned down in the 1960s. The Historic Commission will pursue erecting a storyboard in Nome illustrating Ms. Schenek’s bravery.

## King Island Residents Move to Nome

- Statehood, Earthquake, and Oil Era, 1959 to present

King Island is located approximately 90 miles from Nome in the Bering Straits. King Island was located and named by Captain James Cook in 1778. The island is considered to be one of the harshest environments in the world yet for thousands of years, a community of Inupiat people lived, survived, and thrived there. The village site on King Island which is located on the south side facing Russia, is called Ukivok (OO-Q-Vok). According to the State of Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs, in 1937 there were 190 residents, 45 houses, a Catholic church, and a school in the village.

In 1959, the Bureau of Indian Affairs decided to close the school on the island which ultimately led families to seek education opportunities on the mainland.

In the early 1960's, social and economic pressures and opportunities persuaded island residents to relocate to Nome. In Nome, King Islanders have maintained a distinct community identity. Former residents visited King Island in the spring and summer months to hunt walrus, pursue other subsistence activities, and maintain dwellings.

Although vacant most of the year, King Island is recognized as a distinct village corporation under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), has an operative IRA Council, and conducts itself as a community organization based in Nome, Alaska. The King Island Native Corporation has 206 shareholders and owns several businesses.

## Transportation

- First Inhabitants, Time Immemorial Prior to Contact, Mid 1700s.
- Russian America, 1741-1867
- Early American Alaska, 1867-1897
- Gold Rush Era, 1897-1912
- Post Gold Rush, 1912-1939
- WWII and the Cold War Era, 1941-1959
- Statehood, Earthquake, and Oil Era, 1959 to present

Transportation is a broad subject that spans all historic themes and time periods and which may include all movement from person powered to machine powered methods. The importance of this discussion is in understanding historic transportation trends and how transportation influenced the historic development of Nome. This understanding is important for relating identified historic resources to the overall history of Nome.

Access to and around Nome can be categorized into three basic routes: Land; Water; and Air. The following discusses the influence of transportation on the historic development of the city and connection to surrounding areas.

## Land Access

The Bering Land Bridge is recognized as the primary land access route for indigenous people from Siberia to Alaska. The primary mode of transportation was pedestrian and may have been supplemented with dogs. People and dog pulled sleds were likely used to transport goods and belongings on the trek.
Sometimes people embarked on journeys with unconventional transportation means simply for the challenge or to join the swarms of people seeking their fortune. Such is the case of those who ventured out on wheeled bicycles. In February 1900, Ed Jesson left Dawson arriving in Nome several weeks later. In March of that year Max Hirshberg did the same trek by bicycle. His chain broke east of Nome so he rigged up a sail for the last leg of the venture.

### Roads

Nome cannot be reached by road from Anchorage or other population centers of Alaska, but it is the hub for a regional network of roads that provide access to various villages, mines, and resource development sites eastward to Council, northwest to Teller, and north to Taylor. This road system is critical for connection and supplying needs of outlying communities. The main roads outside the city boundaries are maintained by the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

### Railroads

Private rail lines were developed primarily to transport supplies and materials to area mining operations. In 1900 the Wild Goose Railroad was created by the Wild Goose Mining Company. Track was laid from Nome to the terminus at Anvil

City. The trains ran only from spring to November. In 1903 the Wild Goose Railroad was reorganized as the Nome Arctic Railway. In 1906 it was bought by The Seward Peninsula Railway and was ultimately acquired by the State of Alaska but it never resumed operations. In 1953 the railroad was reopened as The Curly Q Line which was outfitted for tourist operations but lasted only until 1955.

During the gold rush frenzy, the Western Alaska Construction Company was organized for the purpose of constructing the Council City & Solomon River Railroad (CC&SRR). The current Nome-Council Highway turns inland at the ghost town of Solomon, an old mining town where an abandoned railroad train known locally as the "Last Train to Nowhere" is located.
The engines of the CC&SRR were originally used in New York City on elevated lines in 1881. They were shipped to Alaska in 1903 to serve the miners along this line to Nome.

The remains of the railroad at Mile 31 of the Nome-Council Highway are comprised of three locomotives, two flat cars and a boiler. The site was listed as an historic district on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001.

## Water Access

Water access has been important to Nome throughout the years. Baidarkas (enclosed skinned kayaks) and *Umiaqs* (open skinned boats) were used by early inhabitants for basic transportation from one location to another and for hunting expeditions. The original vessels were made of wood and skins but have evolved to more modern materials of wood, aluminum, fiberglass, and high-tech composites. These single and multiple passenger vessels continue to provide transportation for recreation, hunting, and ceremonial activities.

Once word got out about the gold discoveries, stampeders began arriving overland from the Klondike but the greatest number of prospectors arrived by steamships from Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco. The beaches of Nome did not offer deep water access so ships anchored offshore and people came ashore by small vessels. The water access allowed materials and supplies for the prospectors mining needs and for development of the new town.

The area at the mouth of the Snake River provided deeper water for the development of a port and harbor. Construction of Nome's original jetties began in 1919 and were complete by 1923. A seawall protecting Nome was constructed

in the early 1950s and a 3,000 ft. armor stone causeway was built in 1985. The Corps of Engineers continued improvements to the port in 2006 adding an approximately 3,000-foot-long breakwater east of the existing Causeway. During this project remains of two semi-subterranean houses and a trash midden dating back to 1700 were discovered as mentioned above.

Nome's port was and continues to be an important regional transshipment hub for many Western Alaska communities that rely on the port for movement of heating oil and gasoline, construction supplies, non-perishable food, gravel, and other cargo. The port is strategically positioned to serve national, state, regional, and local needs as it is poised to play an increasingly important role in a changing sea access to the Arctic.

## Air Access

Air flights began in Nome as early as 1901 when Leonard, Prince of the Air, launched a balloon and drifted out to sea while performing trapeze acts. He parachuted to the sea where a boat was waiting to pluck him from the cold water. In 1905, Professor Nemo rose above Nome in a balloon as part of a May carnival. The first airplane built in Alaska was in 1911 by Professor Henry Peterson but after a number of attempts it never left the ground.

In August 1923 four Army biplanes, travelling cross country from New York City, circled Nome and landed at Fort Davis outside the city. In 1925 Noel Wein made the first commercial fight into Nome from Fairbanks. He later began Wein Alaska Airways in 1927 providing weekly flights to Fairbanks.

By 1939 Nome had five year-round commercial air operators (Wein Alaska Airlines, Mirow Air Service, Ferguson Airways, Northern Cross, Pacific Alaska Airways – a subsidiary of Pan American). Today Nome is primarily served by regular, scheduled jet service by Alaska Airlines.

The Nome Airport features a 6,000-foot main runway and a 5,576-foot crosswind runway. The airport occupies what was once Marks Air Force Base. There is also a small airstrip known as Nome City Field which offers a 1,950-foot-long gravel runway.
There are a number of historic buildings that remain in Nome that were connected to the history air access. These include a building used by Wein Alaska Airways and recycled buildings from Marks Air Force Base.