

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

843

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

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OCT 16 2015

Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: The Wireless Station  
Other names/site number: AHRS Site No. ANC-00306  
Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 124, 132, 140 East Manor Avenue (3 buildings)  
City or town: Anchorage State: AK County: Anchorage  
Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D

<u>John M. Antonson, Deputy S/HPO</u>	<u>14 October 2015</u>
<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<u>Alaska</u>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Title :</b>	<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

*For Edwin H. Beall*  
Signature of the Keeper

*12.1.15*  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	<u>          </u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Government  
            
          

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

No style

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Alaska Engineering Commission constructed a building in 1917 for a Wireless Station on the bluff now known as Government Hill in Anchorage. The bluff overlooks the railroad yards and the mouth of Ship Creek. The site provided better radio reception than the temporary station location the AEC set up in the rail yard. On the bluff, the Wireless Station stood apart from the thirteen cottages the Alaska Engineering Commission built there. The area had much less vegetation than today, and the Wireless Station was visible from the mouth of Ship Creek. Its lit cupola was known to provide direction to help ships get into the port. In 1934 and again in 1949 a building was added to the station. On the site are three buildings, each with horizontal wood siding painted white with green trim. The original building, enlarged in the 1940s and in 1950, still has its cupola. The buildings have been vacant for twenty years and are in need of restoration but retain their physical integrity from the period of significance.

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### Narrative Description

The Alaska Engineering Commission constructed the Wireless Station in 1917, a single building with an aerial tower, to facilitate communications for the construction of the Alaska Railroad. After completion of the railroad in 1923, the station continued to be used for radio communication for the city of Anchorage until the early 1950s. The initial station building was enlarged twice, doubling its size, and two buildings were added later.

**Building A.** The original building constructed in 1917 was one story, with dimensions of 28' by 28' and a pyramidal roof crowned by a central cupola supporting a mast. The building had an operating room, generating room, and living quarters for two men. A six-wire aerial with a spread of 30' by 400' was adjacent to the building set on two, three-section 200' fir masts. The aerial provided an operating radius of 500 miles.

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The original building was clad in board and batten siding and painted a dark color. White corner boards, window frames and sashes provided contrast. The casement windows were set in pairs or triples. Each window had a narrow row of three panes over one large pane. The cupola had three pane fixed windows on each side. The roof had a deep three foot boxed eave and was sheathed in standing seam metal.

In the early 1940s an addition was added to the south end and a partial concrete basement dug. On the east elevation, a portion of the boxed eave was enclosed to provide access to the basement. The addition was clad in shiplap siding and the roof was extended to make a hipped roof to cover the addition. The ridge of the roof rose slightly from the height of the cupola.

In 1950, a second enlargement expanded the building to the north. This addition nearly doubled the building in size to overall dimensions of 28' by 60'. Another enclosed entrance was added under the east elevation eave for access to the new addition. This addition sits on a shallow crawl space. The hipped roof was continued over the addition with the ridge line continuing from the height of the cupola and the roof inset slightly from the original roof.

The building is at the southwest corner of the lot near an alley. The oldest section of the building, where there is no foundation, has significant settling. Only four of the original three-over-one casement windows remain. Others are one-over-one casement windows and a pair of six-over-one double hung windows. All windows are wood with flat board trim. One original five paneled wood exterior door remains in its original location on the west elevation of the original building. The original configuration of paired windows remains intact on all facades save the south one where a door is sandwiched between two three-over-one casement windows. A number of window panes have been broken and chain-link fencing framed in wood has been installed over the window openings.

The original board and batten siding has been covered with false beveled drop siding set out from the original siding so that it runs flush with the window and door trim. The roof is currently sheathed in standing seam galvanized metal.

**Building C.** In 1934 a building was constructed to the north of the original building for the radio operations. It is rectangular and measures 34' 5" by 24' 3" with a front gable roof that has an open eave. It has a wood foundation and 7" wide wood shiplap siding. The roof is sheathed in standing seam galvanized metal. The primary façade faces south. It has a small fixed three light window with a two light storm window enclosed in a Plexiglas cover screwed into the flat board window trim. The primary entry door is a partially glazed single paneled metal door.

On the west elevation is a larger metal door with a small square glass window. The other fenestration on this elevation includes two small fixed three light windows with two light storm windows enclosed in a Plexiglas cover screwed into the window trim. The north elevation has a single small fixed six light window covered in large metal mesh and then enclosed in a Plexiglas cover. The east elevation has two windows, one similar to the window on the north side, and a

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second larger window which consists of a narrow row of three panes over one large pane casement window.

**Building B** The third and largest building was added in 1949. It is a single story building and has a T-shaped floor plan. The main body measures 82” by 21”, and a centrally placed wing off the west elevation measures 12’ by 31’. Differing construction methods indicate the wing might have been added later. The long section of the building has a three foot high board form concrete foundation wall with shiplap siding above. The windows on the main body of the building include eight paired single pane wood casement windows and two fixed nine light wood windows. All windows are covered with Plexiglas. The cross gabled roof is sheathed in standing seam galvanized metal.

The wing is clad in a mixture of simple drop siding and two different styles of shiplap siding. Two windows have been filled. The third window is a fixed six light wood window with a wood framed mesh screen covering it and then it is enclosed in Plexiglas. A doorway is located at the west end.

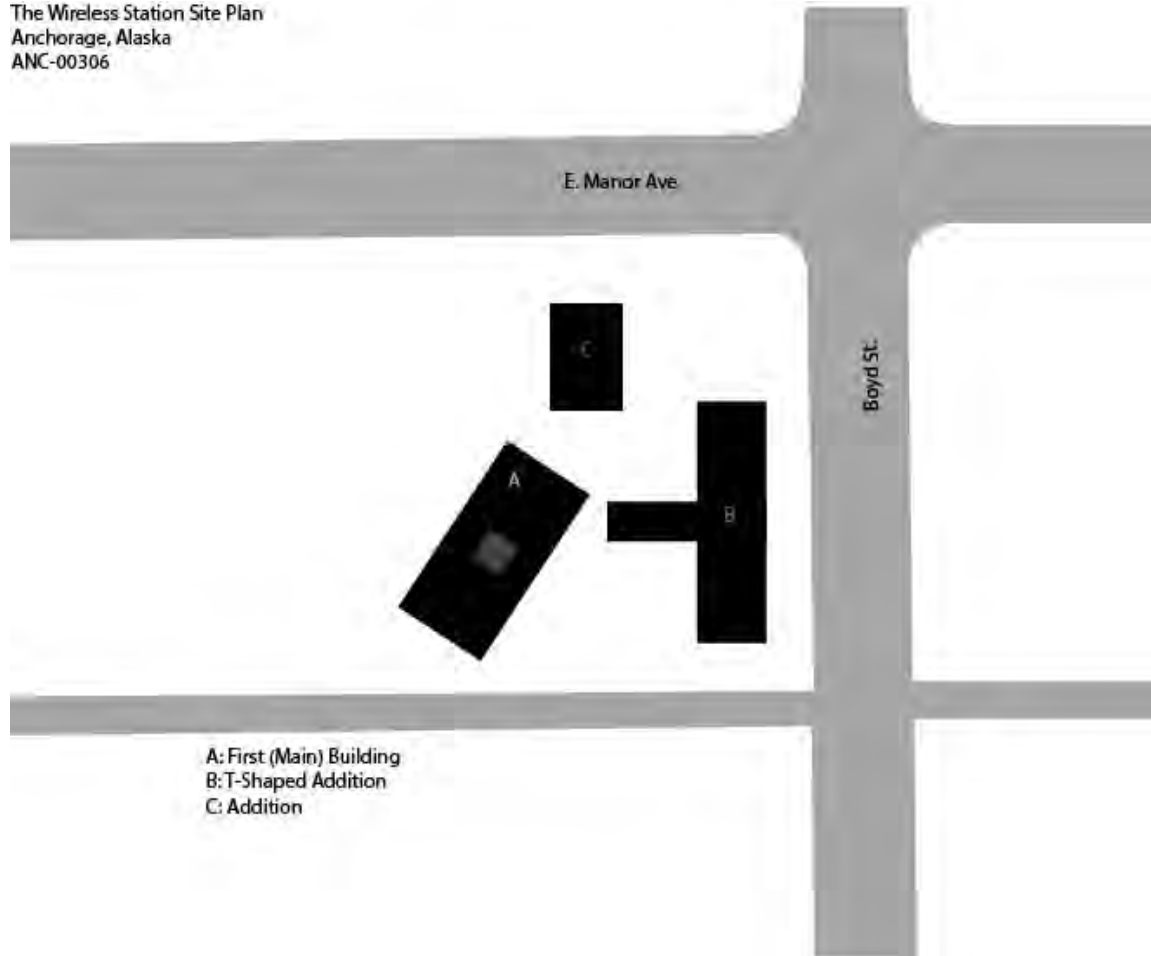
Several characteristics, including a curb cut at the north end of the building, and an outside concrete pad indicate the building was used for vehicle repair and storage. Ten foot wide doors on both ends of the building have been replaced with conventional doors on the north end and a small window on the south end. The north end of the building has a slab floor, and the remainder of the building is raised approximately a foot above the slab and is covered with 6” fir decking. There is evidence the decking covers a grease pit.

The Wireless Station buildings have not been used for some years. Some windows are covered with wire fencing, others are missing or the panes are broken. The smallest building has trees growing very close to the foundation and one tree blocks an entrance. The site has a driveway to the garage. Cement walks connect the buildings. The buildings remain in their original location and retain their association with each other to reflect their use as a communications station similar to ones found in many communities around the United States during the first half of the twentieth century.

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The Wireless Station Site Plan  
Anchorage, Alaska  
ANC-00306



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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations N/A

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years



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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Communications

Exploration/Settlement

**Period of Significance**

1917-1950

**Significant Dates**

1917

1936

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Alaska Engineering Commission

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The federal Alaska Engineering Commission constructed a building in 1917 in Anchorage for radio communications, known as the Wireless Station, to facilitate building the government's Alaska Railroad. Anchorage had been selected in 1915 to be one of the AEC's major construction camps. The Wireless Station's radio receiving and transmitting system initially had a 500-mile radius, but soon was upgraded to connect with Seattle and the rest of the world. In 1921 the government allowed private citizens access to the system to send messages. The federal government's Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System, of which the Wireless Station in Anchorage became a part in 1923 after the railroad was completed, became the Alaska Communication System in 1936. The Anchorage Wireless Station could reach ships at sea. In addition, its cupola served as a beacon for captains to locate the port of Anchorage. In 1950 ACS did its last upgrading of the station's buildings. A few years later it closed the station. The three buildings of the Wireless Station stand as an excellent example of a federal government agency's complex that provided essential communication service for a major construction project then for the residents of Anchorage from 1917 to 1950.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Wireless Station on the bluff above the new town's railroad yards connected Anchorage by radio with other places in Alaska, and a few years after its construction in 1917 with the rest of the United States and the world. The Alaska Engineering Commission, created by the federal government to construct the Alaska Railroad, selected the mouth of Ship Creek for a major construction camp in 1915 and it became the town of Anchorage. To communicate with the then railroad headquarters in Seward, the construction centers at Nenana and Fairbanks to the north, and the work camps north and south of Anchorage, radio communication was vital. A temporary radio station had been set up in 1915 in the railroad yards.

A site on the bluff north of the yards offered unobstructed air space and was selected for a permanent building for the radio receiving and transmitting center. The bluff, now known as Government Hill, was part of the Railroad Reserve. The AEC built cottages for railroad employees on the bluff in 1915, and a building for the wireless radio station in 1917. The original Wireless Station was a two story building topped by a cupola and had an operating room, generating room, and living quarters for two operators. Adjacent to it was the aerial on two masts. Well into the 1930s, the only other buildings on Government Hill were the cottages that stood about a quarter of a mile west of the station. Other buildings were not constructed on the bluff until World War II.

Alaska had been at the forefront as radio was replacing the telegraph in the early 1900s. The Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System built by the Army Signal Service started using radio transmission between Fort St. Michael and Fort Davis across Norton Sound in 1903 because the submarine cable connecting the two repeatedly broke. The Navy established radio stations across the southern coast of Alaska starting in 1907. Initially, the AEC operated the Anchorage Wireless Station exclusively for railroad construction, but in 1921 it allowed private individuals to use the system. When the railroad was completed in 1923, the AEC transferred the station to the U.S. Army Signal Corps that operated the WAMCATS radio and telegraph system.

In 1934 the Signal Corps added a second building at the station for radio operations. Shortly after, it transferred its radio and telegraph system to a new entity, the Alaska Communication System. In 1936, the ACS moved the transmitter about seven miles out of town and opened an operating building in downtown Anchorage. The Wireless Station on Government Hill became a remote receiver station. In 1940 ACS enlarged the first building to expand the living quarters. It added a garage at the site in 1949. The first building was enlarged and remodeled again in 1950. There were no other changes to the physical plant, but technology was changing rapidly and ACS closed the station shortly after the remodel.

Starting in 1976, the U.S. Geological Survey used the buildings for storage and research office space. They moved out in the early 1990s. The buildings have survived many discussions the

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last forty years over their future, and the Municipality of Anchorage has recently become the owner. Government Hill residents are interested in restoring the buildings. The three buildings together are an excellent example of many government agency offices that can be found in hundreds of communities around the United States during the first half of the twentieth century.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Bunnell, Kristine. *Government Hill Yesterday and Today*. Anchorage: Municipality of Anchorage, Community Development Department, Planning Division, 2012.

Carberry, Michael E., and Donna Lane. *Patterns of the Past: An Inventory of Anchorage's Heritage Resources*. Anchorage: Municipality of Anchorage, 1986.

Lane, Donna. *Government Hill Historic Resource Survey*. Anchorage: Municipality of Anchorage, 1985.

"Southcentral Alaska 1915-1930 The Railroad Years." *Alaska History and Cultural Studies - Southcentral Alaska*. Alaska Humanities Forum, accessed 14 July 2014.  
<<http://www.akhistorycourse.org/articles/article.php?artID=88>>.

United States Army. "Story of the Alaska Communications System 1900-1943." Unpublished manuscript in files of Office of History and Archaeology, Anchorage.

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### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

N/A

\_\_\_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

\_\_\_ previously listed in the National Register

\_\_\_ previously determined eligible by the National Register

\_\_\_ designated a National Historic Landmark

\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

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**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** AHRS Site No. ANC-00306

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** Less than 1

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 61.229024 | Longitude: -149.881543 |
| 2. Latitude: 61.229348 | Longitude: -149.881927 |
| 3. Latitude: 61.229538 | Longitude: -149.881321 |
| 4. Latitude: 61.229259 | Longitude: -149.880808 |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927    or     NAD 1983

- |          |          |           |
|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |

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4. Zone:

Easting :

Northing:

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lots 1, 2, and 3, Block K, North Addition #4, Original Townsite Subdivision, Anchorage, Alaska. The property is bordered by East Manor Avenue and Boyd Street on the north and east sides. The west and south sides of the property are bordered by a driveway and an alley.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries encompass the three buildings that comprise the station, and include the sidewalks and yard that have historically comprised the complex.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Sarah Wilson, Intern, Summer Rickman, Architectural Historian

organization: Office of History and Archaeology, Alaska Department of Natural Resources

street & number: 550 West 7<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 1310

city or town: Anchorage state: AK zip code: 99501

e-mail: sarah.wilson907@gmail.com

telephone: 907.269.8721

date: February 10, 2015

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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### Photo Log

Name of Property: The Wireless Station  
City or Vicinity: Anchorage  
County: Anchorage State: Alaska  
Photographer: Sarah Wilson  
Date Photographed: 18 July 2014

AK\_AnchorageBorough\_WirelessStation\_0001: View of center of building A, entrance looking southeast.

AK\_AnchorageBorough\_WirelessStation\_0002: View of building A, two additional entrances, looking northwest.

AK\_AnchorageBorough\_WirelessStation\_0003: View of courtyard with building A on the left, and buildings B and C in front and on the right, looking north.

AK\_AnchorageBorough\_WirelessStation\_0004: View of front entrance of building C, looking northeast.

AK\_AnchorageBorough\_WirelessStation\_0005: View of the smaller additional building, new door and siding, looking north.

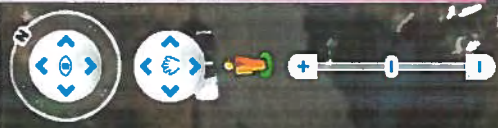
AK\_AnchorageBorough\_WirelessStation\_0006: View of long side of building B along Boyd St., looking west.

AK\_AnchorageBorough\_WirelessStation\_0007: Detail on corner of building A, looking east.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.





E Manor Ave

Soyd St

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**BLOCKED**



















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NO







