

Eligibility Evaluation

for Five Structures along East Dowling Road

(ANC-2572, ANC-2573, ANC-2574, ANC-2575, and ANC-2576)

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Introduction

The following documentation, prepared in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended December 12, 2000, and 36 CFR 800, is for four houses and a “cabin” along East Dowling Road (Figure 1). These structures are not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (National Register), either individually or as part of a historic district.

Historic Context

During World War II, people responded to a crowded housing situation throughout Anchorage, by moving from the original townsite to the suburbs of Mountain View, Eastchester, Fairview, and Spenard. Living conditions in these areas were probably worse than downtown, but there was available land, and housing could be built with few or no restrictions (Carberry and Lane 1986:140). There were few amenities, but the inhabitants thought of themselves as hardy pioneers who needed little from the government. When the war ended, however, the people who stayed in the areas realized they did indeed require services like schools, sewers and water, postal service and fire protection (Hibpshman1998a:1).

Following World War II, Spenard—named after Joe Spenard who ran a taxi service and opened a resort during World War I on the lake that bears his name—was a growing suburb. Spenard covered the area from the southern boundary of the city at Eleventh Avenue to the northern boundary of the Campbell Military Reservation, on what was then known as Campbell Creek Road. The latter ran east from Arctic Boulevard to what is now Dowling Road and Old Seward Highway (Spenard Social and Civic Club 1951).

Hans S. Hanson and Fred C. Fischer were issued separate patents in 1950 for land that included what later became Hanson Acres Subdivision and Aurora Subdivision, respectively (Spenard Social and Civic Club 1951). The Hanson family homesteaded the area near the current intersection of International Airport Road and Old Seward Highway in 1945. The Hansons cleared and corduroyed a road (Potter Station Road, now “Lower Potter Road”) in about 1947-1948 (Hibpshman1998b:6). According to the State of Alaska Recorder’s Office records, the plats for the Hanson Acres and Aurora subdivisions were drawn up in 1951. The Hansons began divesting themselves of some of their homestead in 1949. An aerial photograph of the area in 1950 shows some of the early development in the area (Aeromap 1950).

The Seward Highway opened in 1950, providing easier access to land available along Campbell Creek Road, west to Arctic Boulevard. Local residents formed the Spenard Social and Civic Club (SSCP) in 1947 to advocate for community improvements. They were especially concerned that Anchorage planned not to admit out-of-city children to the city schools during the 1947-1948 academic year. They petitioned the governor to set up an independent school district, and in 1948 voted to establish a public utilities district—the Spenard Public Utilities District (SPUD)—which had a legal status comparable to a municipality (Hibpshman 1998c:Box 2, File 36). In 1951, the Spenard Volunteer Fire Department was founded as a response to high fire insurance rates in the area (Hibpshman1998a:2).

The SPUD was responsible for, among other things, road maintenance and improvements. This was accomplished through “improvement districts” created for certain limited projects (Hibpshman 1998c:Box 2, File 34). SPUD did an admirable job, according to a 1955 letter from the SSCC, although there was concern that the district was spending \$500 a year for the services of a dogcatcher (Hibpshman 1998c:Box 2, File 12).

From about 1950 until 1967, the combination of roads now known as East and West Potter Drive and Dowling Road were known as Campbell Creek Road (Polk’s Directory 1966/1967). A 1950 aerial photograph shows some development at what would now be the intersection of East Potter and Dowling (Aeromap 1950). Kriss Kross and Polk’s city directories from 1950 to 1967 list the addresses in this area as Spenard. Houses were mostly handmade, sometimes with the help of neighbors, and of no special architectural style. There were both frame and log houses depending on the availability of materials and the preference of the owner (Hibpshman 1998b:24).

Spenard, in bits and pieces, became part of the city of Anchorage and the Greater Anchorage Area Borough (GAAB). It is now an integral part of the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA). The current residents of the Potter/Dowling area, who are now served Taku/Campbell community council, likely do not consider themselves as part of Spenard.

House Descriptions

257 East Dowling Road (ANC-2572; Figure 2)

Block 3, Lot 16, Hanson Acres #1

Built in 1953

In 1953, this was the residence of Frederick and June Swingle. Born in 1918 in Montana, Fred served in the U. S. Army during World War II. After the war, in 1949, he and June came to Alaska, where he worked at Fort Richardson and on the North Slope. The Swingles moved to California in 1989, but apparently maintained ownership of this house until they sold it in 1998, along with the property to the west at 5957 Franklin Drive, to Thomas Harrel (or Harrell).

This single story, wood frame, ranch style home has 1,760 square feet of living space. It is built on a concrete block foundation and has a cross-gabled roof, aluminum or vinyl horizontal siding, and a front entrance canopy. It consists of seven rooms, including three bedrooms and an 864-square foot finished basement. There is a 9- by 20-foot “entrance canopy” on the west side of the house. Behind it is a 192-square foot, wood frame, storage shed that was added in 1982. This house and the property at 5957 Franklin Drive are enclosed in the same chain link fence, added in 1982.

According to MOA tax records, this house was originally covered with asbestos shingles and had a wood frame instead of concrete block front porch. A 16- by 24-foot garage that faces the road in front of the house, noted in the earliest—1967—MOA property assessment, was gone by 1989.



Figure 2. 257 East Dowling Road (ANC-2572). View north.

Despite additions to the back of this house, the original form remains clearly identifiable as a simple, one-story building with a gable roof lacking eave or rake overhangs. The floor level is several feet above grade to allow windows into the basement. Original features include some double-hung wood windows, and a small gable sheltering the front door. The roofing and siding have been replaced.

361 361 East Dowling Road (ANC-2573; Figure 3)

East Dowling Road (ANC-2573; Figure 3)

Block 3, Lot 24, Hanson Acres #1

Built in 1957

Patsy and William Franklin (Frank) Guest were the original residents of this house. Frank Guest was born in Texas in 1922. In 1953, he and Pat moved to Anchorage where he worked as a mechanic for Studebaker and Inlet Motors and as a furnace repairman for Spenard Fuel. He later opened his own business, Spenard Heating and Service. In 2001, after Frank's death in 1998, Patsy sold the house to the current owners.

This is a 1,326-square foot single story, wood frame ranch style home with a wood exterior and a metal-shingled, side-gabled roof. It has five rooms, including two bedrooms and a 442-square foot, partially finished basement. It also has a 728-square foot attached garage, a wooden deck, a metal storage shed, and a wooden stockade fence.



Figure 3. 361 East Dowling Road (ANC-2573). View north.

Although this house has a garage addition at one end, its original massing is clearly identifiable as a simple, one story building with a gable roof, and narrow eave and rake overhangs. The floor level of the house is several feet above grade. The existing wood siding and large picture windows may be original, although the house has obviously been re-roofed. Since 1995, a front porch has been added to the house and a door cut into the west end of the garage.

415 East Dowling Road (ANC-2574; Figure 4)

T13N R3W Sec 31, Parcel 13B

Built in 1952

According to state property records, the earliest owners of this house were Fred C. and Lillian E. Fischer. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) records show that Mr. Fischer was issued a patent for the land in 1950. Fred, born in 1897 in Taylor, Texas, and Lillian (also known as Eunice), born in 1900 in Pearl, Texas, moved to Anchorage in 1941. The Fischers owned several other properties in this area along East Dowling Road. The Fischers left Anchorage in 1961 and moved to New Braunfels, Texas, but apparently retained ownership of this house until they sold it in 1981 to Richard and Ivalo Atkin. The Atkins sold the house in 1988 to James and Marsha Korpi, the current owners. This property is not part of Hanson Acres Subdivision.

This is a single story, wood frame, ranch style home with wood siding and a shed roof. Its four rooms, encompassing 1,307 square feet, include one bedroom and a 609-square foot finished basement. The house has a covered, open porch along the east wall (added after 1995); an



Figure 4. 415 East Dowling Road (ANC-2574). View west.

enclosed porch along the west wall; and an entrance canopy facing the road to the south. The original form of this house is difficult to recognize, due to the shed-roofed additions at the front. It also has a detached garage, a frame storage shed that was added in 1980, and a wooden stockade fence added in 1982. The property is adjacent to a dirt drive/unnamed road that connects to the apartments at 433 East Dowling.

528 East Dowling Road (Figures 5 and 6)

Block 7, Lot 2A, Aurora Subdivision

House (ANC-2575) built in 1958, “cabin” (ANC-2576) built in 1954

Fred C. Fischer’s 1950 patent also included the land where the Aurora Subdivision is located. State records indicate that he owned a house on this particular lot in 1954, likely the cabin since the main house was not built until 1958. The main house may have been first owned by Fischer or possibly Ernest M. and Donna Dickey. Unfortunately, parts of the computerized copy of the original deed at the State of Alaska Recorder’s office are illegible, including the date.

Born in 1923 in San Patricio, Texas, Dickey served in the Aleutian Air Force AACS in 1949. After serving in Washington State, Dickey returned to Alaska and served at Fort Richardson from 1950 to 1955, and then in Kenai, Homer, Kodiak, and Seattle. The *Anchorage Daily News* ([ADN] 2003) states that he returned to Alaska in 1959, the year after the house was built. After retiring from the Air Force in 1964, Dickey worked in the civil service at Fort Richardson.



Figure 5. House at 528 East Dowling Road (ANC-2575). View south.



Figure 6. "Cabin" at 528 East Dowling Road (ANC-2576). View northeast.

In 1965, the Dickey's sold this property to Franklin E. and Donnie McNutt. Franklin was born in 1923 in Wyoming. After serving in the U. S. Army during World War II, he moved to Anchorage in 1952 and worked as a trucker. Donnie, born in 1926 in Arkansas, served in the U. S. Navy and moved to Anchorage in 1954. The McNutts owned and operated the Cozy Corner Café until they retired and sold it in 1982 (ADN 2003). Their heirs sold the house in 2001 to the current owners, Jane and David C. Johnson. Innovations Hair Salon currently operates at this address.

The main house is a one story, wood frame, ranch style home with vinyl siding and a cross-gabled roof. It is 1,738 square feet and has six rooms, including three bedrooms and a 560-square foot finished basement. It has a 504-square foot attached garage; a covered, open porch; and a wood deck. The property also includes a metal storage shed added in 1980 and a frame storage shed added in 1982.

The L-shaped massing of this house is easy to discern, although it has undergone significant changes to exterior materials over time, with new siding, roofing, and windows, as well as additions to the side and rear. The front elevation, however, has remained unchanged since 1972 (Figure 7).

The “cabin”—as it is described in MOA tax records—is 432 square feet and sits adjacent to the alley at the rear of the property. Built in 1954, it is wood frame with vinyl siding and a side-gabled roof.

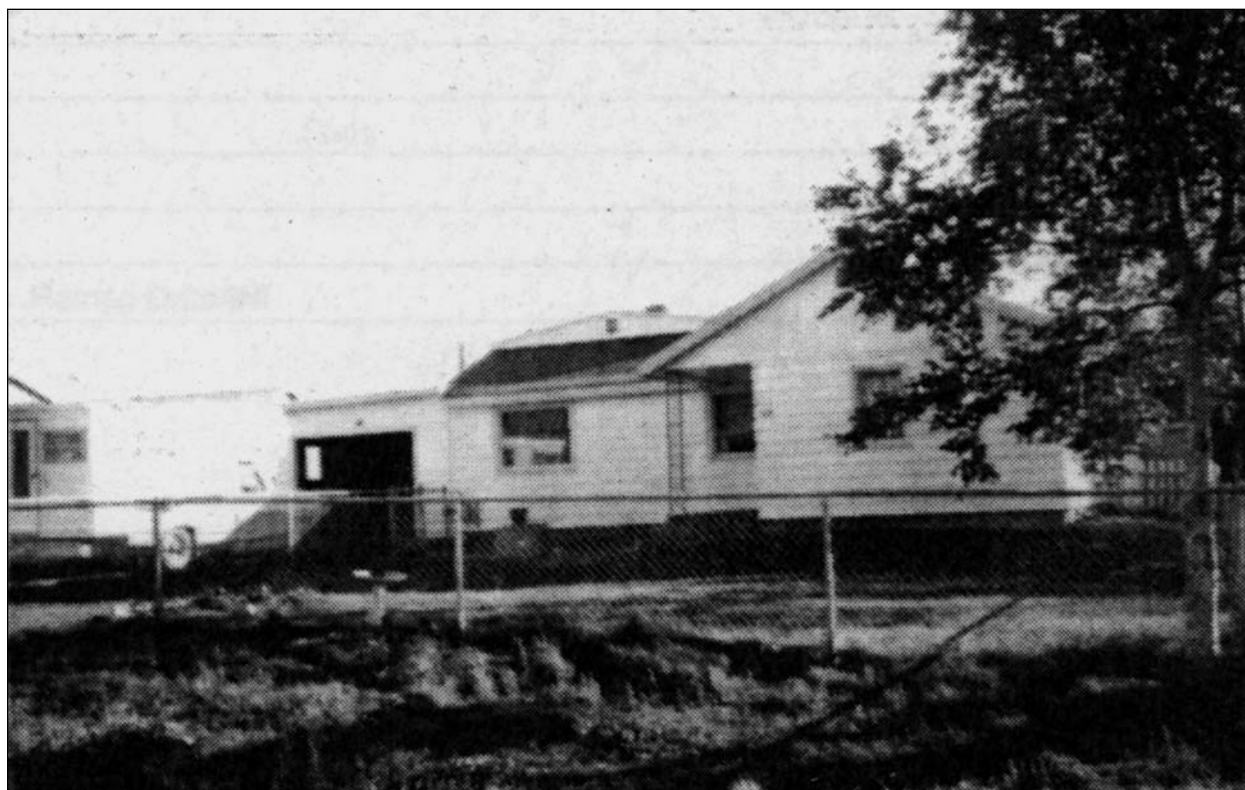


Figure 7. 1972 photograph of the house at 528 East Dowling Road. View south. MOA property appraisal, file number 013-011-49

National Register Eligibility

Even though the five structures described above are all over 45 years old, they are not eligible for the National Register, either individually as or part of a historic district. These buildings are in an area where the once predominant single-family homes are gradually being replaced by apartment buildings condominiums, and commercial businesses. They certainly represent a dwindling number of the area's early residences, but there is no evidence that any of them are of particular historic or architectural significance.

These properties date to a period of growth of Anchorage, when many residents moved to the suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s due to the housing shortage in the original townsite. However, their association with this pattern of events is not significant. Also, while there is no doubt that the people who lived in these houses made contributions to the growth of Anchorage, there is no indication that any of them made a significant contribution to the history of Anchorage.

Even though the four main houses are described by municipality records as being “ranch style,” they are in effect a hodge-podge of construction and do not reflect any particular style. Although they are recognizable as a product of the post-war era, they lack individual distinction and do not represent a significant and distinguishable group of houses from that era.

While three of these houses (257, 361, and 528 East Dowling) are now considered part of Hanson Acres and Aurora subdivisions, all of these homes are on the fringes of what were once 1950s and 1960s neighborhoods. The cluster of 1950s and 1960s era houses in Hanson Acres Subdivision occurs primarily along Cordova and Denali streets, what can be considered the “heart” of the subdivision (Figure 8). Accordingly, in the Aurora Subdivision, the cluster of 1950s and 1960s era houses are along Pearl Drive, a more “interior” section of the subdivision, rather than on East Dowling Road (Figure 9).

In addition, the houses are too scattered to evoke the historic feeling of a 1950s and 1960s Anchorage neighborhood. They are in three separate areas along East Dowling Road, too far apart to present a streetscape and establish a unified entity. Three of the houses—257, 361, and 415 East Dowling—are on the northern side of the street. However, the furthest west house at 257 East Dowling is separated from the home at 361 East Dowling by three apartment complexes, built in 1974 and 1983, and four lots of vacant land. Even though the houses at 361 and 415 East Dowling Road are adjacent to one another, the house at 415 East Dowling is obscured from view by landscaping and is not clearly visible from the street (Figure 10). The house at 528 East Dowling, the easternmost of the four, is on the southern side of the street, at least five lots to the east of 415 East Dowling.

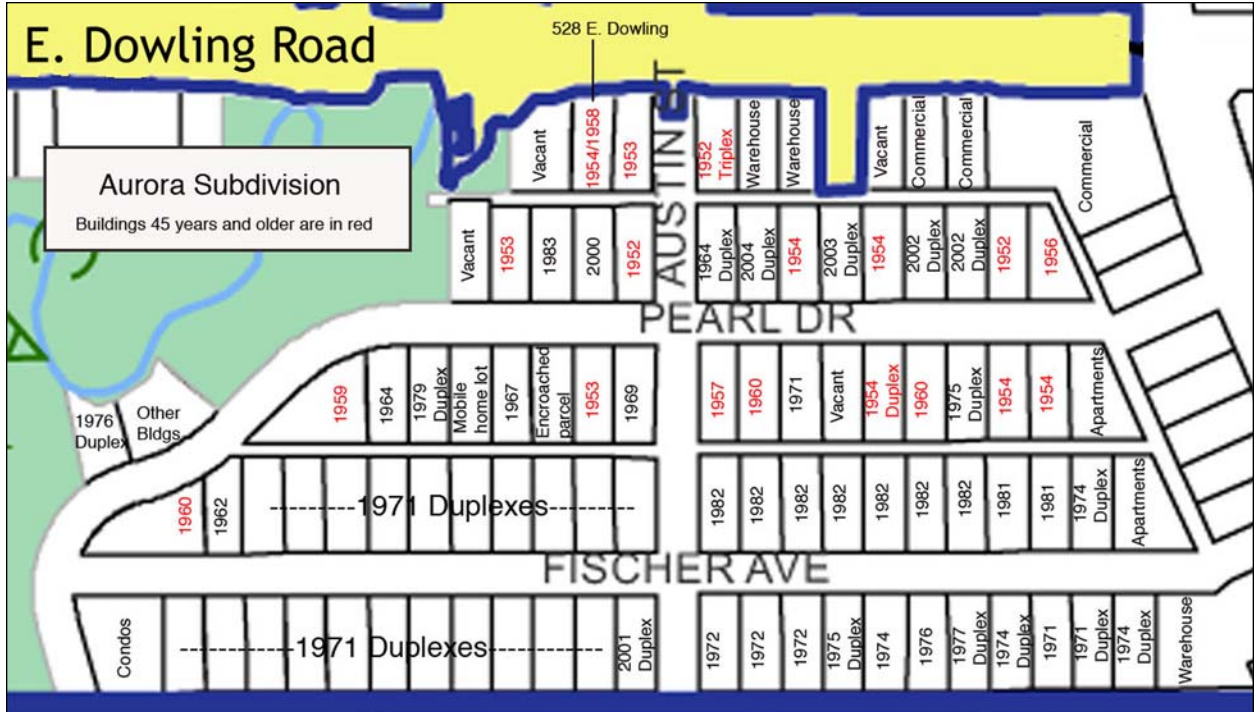


Figure 9. Aurora Subdivision.



Figure 10. 415 East Dowling Road. View north from the road.

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