

# Right-of-Way Alaska

ROWAlaska.net

## Right-of-Way Alaska

*"Located at the Mystical Intersection of History, Law & Mapping"*

John F. Bennett, PLS, SR/WA



[Home](#)

[Author](#)

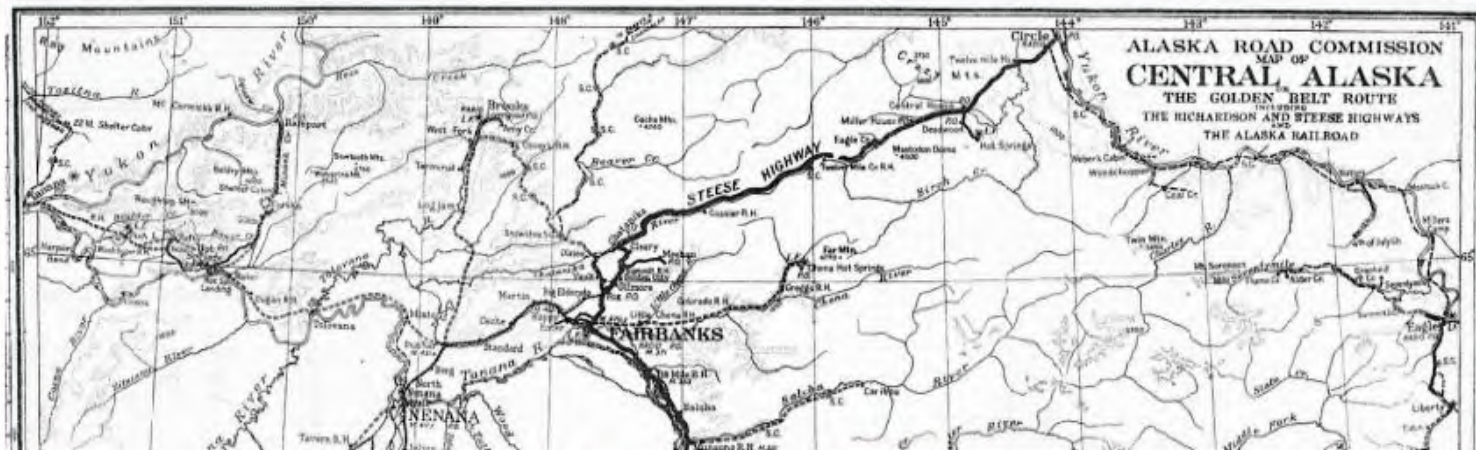
[Archives](#)

[Links](#)

[Search](#)

[Journal](#)

[Contact](#)



Alaska Road Commission 1929

ASPLS Conference 2024

## Right-of-Way Alaska

*“Located at the Mystical Intersection of  
History, Law & Mapping”*

- Mystical? ...to have a reality that is not immediately apparent to the senses or the mind.
- Mapping? ...a lot of Alaska's ROW are not mapped.
- Law? ...in a perfect world we would have clear legal documents attesting to the existence of all ROW.
- History? ...the history and development of Alaska can be tracked through the history and development of its rights-of-way.

# Right-of-Way Alaska

## *“Why Right-of-Way...and Surveyors?”*

- My view – before 1985:
  - ROW not typically a considered a surveyors subject.
  - For surveyors:
    - ROW meant subdivision dedications or;
    - Access related to retracement surveys.
  - Surveyors & ROW Research
    - PLO – what’s the width? Ask DOT&PF...
    - Planners – what’s the width of the Richardson Highway?...”300 feet except where it ain’t...”
    - Section Line Easements
      - SLE by dedication with DOT assistance...
      - All of the subdivision plats missing valid SLEs...
        - A valid SLE will still be valid...

## Right-of-Way Alaska

### *“Why Right-of-Way...and Surveyors?”*

- 1985 – Joined R&M Fairbanks for “Geist Road Extension”
  - ROW base mapping and in depth chain of title.
- 1986 – Joined DOT&PF Northern Region Right of Way
  - First “ROW Engineer” where PLS was a requirement
  - Staff has limited understanding of ROW authorities -
  - Platting authority conflict –
  - Large portion of highway system unmapped -
  - ROW Certification required to advertise project –
  - Engineers: ROW mapping & monumentation adversely impacts project schedule, budget & their authority...
  - FAA focus in on “title”, not “location” (surveys & maps)

## Right-of-Way Alaska

### *“Why is Right-of-Way Research Cool?”*

- Airport Road – Fairbanks
  - Recent request by local business owner for history –
    - Pike’s Landing – Homestead – North end of FIA
  - Personal history – 1967 flood – Fairview Manor
    - Airport Road under construction
  - Airport Road history through maps, photos & reports –
    - ROW plans – University Ave to Ft. Wainwright
      - Bearings & distances may not be continuous...
      - ROW to match existing subdivision may not be dimensioned with station & offset...
      - Monuments (offset) only shown on as-builts...
      - More detailed M&B in acquisition documents...
        - AGO required M&B for condemnations.
    - 1957 City of Fairbanks Precise survey of Rickert Homestead Subdivision – Not recorded.

# Right-of-Way Alaska

## *“Why is Right-of-Way Research Cool?”*

- Airport Road – Fairbanks
  - COGO by Boeing or Juneau IBM 360 main frame...

END AT SW COR	99				.000N	.000E	964111.776	231768.735
PROB. 02 DESCRIPTION	CSE	DISTANCE	BEARING		LATITUDE	DEPARTURE	NORTH COORD	IDENT. F624 EAST COORD
NE COR L2 B9	00						963714.190	234002.030
SE COR L2 GTWY	01	80.000	S01 31 0.0W		79.972S	2.117W	963634.218	233999.913
SW COR L2 B2	02	963.635U	N88 29 0.0W		25.505N	963.297W	963659.723	233036.616
SE COR L2 B3RK	03	532.695U	N01 55 5.0E		532.397N	17.829E	964192.120	233054.445
END AT SE COR	99				.000N	.000E	964192.120	233054.445



## Right-of-Way Alaska

### *“Why is Right-of-Way Research Cool?”*

- Airport Road – Fairbanks
  - Fairbanks 1947-1999 AeroMap Calendar for 2001



## Right-of-Way Alaska

*“Why is Right-of-Way Research Cool?”*

- Airport Road – Fairbanks
  - Fairbanks 1947-1999 AeroMap Calendar for 2001





## Right-of-Way Alaska

*“Why is Right-of-Way Research Cool?”*

a

- Airport Road – Fairbanks
  - Gaffney Road – Old Airport Road – International Airport Road – CAA Tower Road – multiple name references...
  - Fairbanks International opened in 1951
  - Prior to Fairbanks International Airport –
    - Fairbanks Civilian Airport was “Weeks Field”

## Right-of-Way Alaska

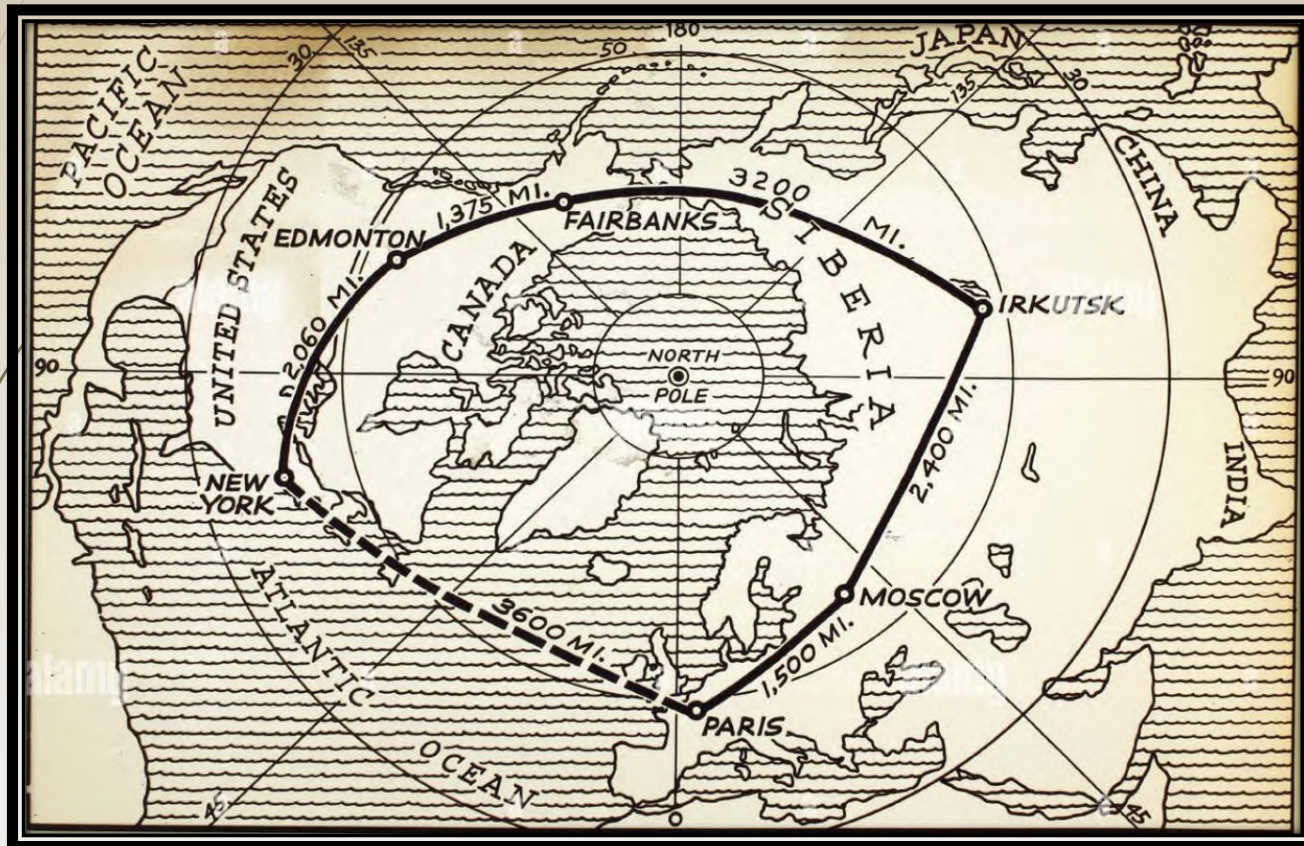
### *“Why is Right-of-Way Research Cool?”*

- Weeks Field -1938
  - The Ping Pong Balls of Howard Hughes
  - Once quoted as saying *“I’m not a paranoid deranged millionaire. Goddamit, I’m a Billionaire!”*
  - A story from my 20’s – Tommy’s Elbow Room
    - Old timer on next bar stool told me about Howard...
    - Another elder friend who was there confirmed...
      - “Amazing souvenir! Do you still have it?”

## Right-of-Way Alaska

*“Why is Right-of-Way Research Cool?”*

- Around the World in 3 days 19 hours - 1938



## Right-of-Way Alaska

### *“Why is Right-of-Way Research Cool?”*

- Lockheed Super Electra – filled with ping pong balls for floatation – Pan Am employee accidentally opened panel...





## Right-of-Way Alaska

*“Why is Right-of-Way Research Cool?”*

All of this from a bit of ROW Research!

You can't make this stuff up!

## Right-of-Way Alaska

### *“Why is Right-of-Way Research Cool?”*

- Richardson Highway
  - Alaska's first road was known in 1898 as the Valdez to Eagle Trail – In 1902 it was extended to Fairbanks and 1910 upgraded to a wagon road under General Wilds P. Richardson, First President of the Alaska Road Commission.
  - Colonel James G. Steese was the Alaska Road Commission President from 1920 to 1927.
  - 1924 Col. Steese requested that Gov. Parks consider abandoning the Richardson Highway due to excessive costs.

# Right-of-Way Alaska

*“Why is Right-of-Way Research Cool?”*

GEO. A. PARKS  
GOVERNOR

TERRITORY OF ALASKA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
JUNEAU

October 10th, 1925.

*gm*  
*det*

Colonel James G. Steese,  
President, Alaska Road Commission,  
2802 Munitions Bldg.,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Dear Friend Steese:

The following letter is submitted in  
compliance with your request for my opinion on the  
advisability of abandoning the Richardson Highway.

# Right-of-Way Alaska

## *“Why is Right-of-Way Research Cool?”*

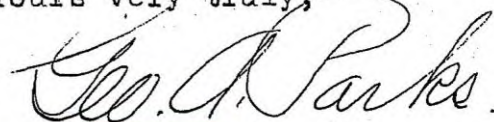
- Prior to the completion of the Alaska Railroad, the wagon road was the only overland route to the interior of Alaska.*

Only those who have followed it through all of its stages of development, from the days when it was a pack trail and it required twelve or fifteen days to make the trip from the Coast to Fairbanks to the present time when one can get in an automobile in Fairbanks and in two days easy driving, reach the Coast, can appreciate its worth.

I am advised that the statistics compiled by the transportation company now operating cars on the Richardson Highway, show that the tourist travel for 1925 increased approximately twenty-five per cent over that of 1924, and each year this business will prove to be a growing asset to the Territory.

I feel that it would be a very serious mistake to abandon the project at this time.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "E. A. Parks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "P".

Governor



## Right-of-Way Alaska

- *My Archives:*
  - I have maintained a personal email and project file archive since I first owned a computer.
  - I found that in the work I do, we rarely produce something completely new – we just apply the knowledge from our prior projects to fit the new assignment. Archives are critical.
  - It's the same question over and over and over...with just slightly different facts!

## Right-of-Way Alaska

- The ROW nerds: Me, Karen Tilton, Jim Sharp (All DOT&PF ROWE Supervisors) and a few others.
  - We dwell in a specialty area at a level most surveyors don't experience.
  - ROW Research may be considered as "Recondite Knowledge". It means "little known subject or knowledge". Or as my kids would tell me "...*stuff no one else wants to know...*"
  - Downside to over-specialization: Closest I ever got to operating a GPS is my cell phone.

## Right-of-Way Alaska

- By mid-2021 I reached the realization that the “ROW nerds” were getting a bit long in the tooth...
  - And that I was not aware of many others who might want to carry on with this focused area of research.
  - I realized that my archives, to the extent that others might find them of value, could soon be lost. This is when I considered ways to make them available to future researchers.

## Right-of-Way Alaska

- In late August of 2021 I signed up with a web hosting provider and started working on a structure for an archival website.
  - As of July of 2022 I had uploaded over 9,439 pdf files consisting of 147,289 pages.
  - Site uses “Zoom” (Australian) Website Engine.



## Right-of-Way Alaska

# *Right-of-Way Alaska*

*"Located at the Mystical Intersection of History, Law & Mapping"*

**And now to the Website...**

