Pilgrim Hot Springs
60 miles north of Nome
www.PilgrimHotSprings.com

Pilgrim Hot springs was used as an orphanage by the Catholic (Jesuit) Diocese from 1918-1941. It was used during WWII as a place for soldiers’ rest and relaxation, when the military presence significantly increased as a result of the US/USSR lend-lease program. Since the 1950’s it was enjoyed primarily for recreational use by the people of the region and visitors to Nome.

All of the buildings in the immediate vicinity of the Mission were constructed between 1910-1930. The church and the nun’s quarters are still structurally stable and retain most of their original architectural attributes, though they have been diminished through weathering and some vandalism. Other structures at the mission have not fared as well. Nearly all present some level of instability, and some have collapsed (the machine shop). Because of the mission’s history and its historical and personal importance to local residents, it is imperative that a baseline be established to determine what efforts need to be undertaken to stabilize and preserve the structures. Pilgrim Hot Springs is an important destination for visitors to Nome and many people travel there to visit the mission and soak in the hot waters. Stabilization of the buildings and the development of interpretive signage would add greatly to that experience and would preserve the ambiance and history of this important place in Alaska’s history.
Further information for 2021: The property is also threatened from the effects of a changing climate: increased snow fall, additional snow melt, and higher waters are causing erosion and flooding on and near the property. An increase in beaver activity and new beaver dams also has increased local flooding and threatens historical structures on the property. The water level is rising high enough to threaten the cemetery and mass burial site of the 1918-1919 flu victims, as well as precious agriculture fields. While the main mission complex is not directly affected by flood waters at this moment, the threat is imminent and restoration efforts must include flood mitigation and beaver species mitigation.