

EARLY VIEWS

HISTORICAL VIGNETTES



OF

by Kristen Griffin

SITKA NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

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EARLY VIEWS:
HISTORICAL VIGNETTES
OF
SITKA NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE
INTERIOR IN ALASKA

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This E. W. Merrill photograph portrays Chief Annahootz of the Wolf House of the Kaagwaantaan clan and the Multiplying Wolf house screen. This screen is on loan from the Wolf House and currently displayed at the Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center. (Sitka Historical Society Photograph).

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Figure 1: A young Native man fishing along upper Indian River.

Administrative Summary

Sitka National Historical Park has the distinction of being the first federal park in Alaska, designated by President Benjamin Harrison on June 21, 1890. It is also Alaska's smallest national park unit. With boundary adjustments over the years the main park unit, the Fort Site, covers just over 100 acres of forest, river margin and shore and about half of that is tidelands. This area surrounds the mouth of the Indian River, a clear running stream known to the Tlingit people as Kasdaahéen. A second park unit, the restored 1840s Russian Bishop's House (a National Historic Landmark) occupies a small urban parcel located approximately one mile north of the visitor center.

The park's historical significance revolves around two main themes. One is the history of southeast Alaska Native art and culture, evident in the totem poles and artifacts exhibited at the park and the work of the contemporary Native artists in the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center. The other revolves around the complex interactions that occurred as Russian colonialists expanded into the traditional territory of the Tlingit people in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This includes the park as the site of the Battle of 1804, the last major armed resistance of Alaska's Native people to Russian colonization.

The focus of this study lies outside these major themes, as late nineteenth and early twentieth century values began to shape this complicated historical landscape into the park we know today.

The park followed a somewhat unusual path to its designation as a national park unit. By the late 1800s, the mouth of the Indian River already had a long history as a cherished but informally maintained community park. The importance of the park to the community was not overlooked by a panel of three local commissioners appointed to identify lands that should be set aside for public use before public land laws were extended to Alaska.¹ In 1890, along with more utilitarian lands reserved for military, transportation, school and government use, the commissioners recommended that Sitka's favorite recreation spot, the lower Indian River, be set aside as a federal public park, the only such reservation in Alaska.



Figure 2: A pin featuring the trademark "AB" logo of the Arctic Brotherhood.

President Benjamin Harrison approved the recommendation by proclamation later that year. In spite of this designation, responsibility for protection, maintenance and improvements continued to fall to community members and organizations. Up until the 1930s, the Alaska Road Commission was the most visible organization spending funds on maintaining the bridges, roads and trails in the park.²

Shortly after 1900, a group of influential Sitkans concerned about vandalism and the overall lack of care for the park started a movement to have it declared a national monument. The campaign, led by Sitka's chapter of the Arctic Brotherhood (an Alaskan social organization for non-Native men) was successful and the designation was approved on March 23, 1910. Along with its new status, the monument acquired a formal statement recognizing the park's historical past. The proclamation cited the need to commemorate and preserve the site of the Russian-Tlingit Battle of 1804 along with a newly installed collection of historic totem poles. With the creation of the National Park Service in 1916, the monument was brought under the new agency's care but no significant appropriation was made until 1921.³

The 1930s brought an increase in planning efforts, but the park was still managed from a distance and functioned more like a community park than a unit of the National Park Service. Through the 1960s administration of the monument was either combined with Glacier Bay National Monument or was under the purview of the Superintendent of Mt. McKinley National Park.

The 1940s began with the arrival of Ben Miller, the park's first full time resident custodian. The park, like the rest of Sitka, felt the effects of the World War II buildup. Evacuation of non-military personnel and disruptions to civilian travel greatly limited visitation. The park was transferred into military hands during 1942 and briefly occupied for defense purposes. It was formally returned to the Department of the Interior in 1947. More significantly, a series of massive military construction projects, including the first naval air station built in Alaska, triggered the removal of massive amounts of gravel from the park's river, shoreline and estuary. Environmental impacts from the gravel removal proved to be a major resource issue for decades to come.

In 1965 a new visitor center, the park's first real visitor facility, was completed. It provided room for exhibits and demonstrations of Alaska Native arts and crafts. In 1969, in an agreement that was groundbreaking at the time, the Alaska Native Brotherhood assumed control of the demonstration program and established its focus on Southeast Alaska Native cultural arts. Known today as the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center, this successful program celebrated its 30th anniversary in January 2000. Another aspect of the park facility that was clearly ahead of its time was its display of remarkable Tlingit artifacts. Many of the objects in the collection were loaned or donated by local clans under agreements designed to insure ongoing traditional use.

In 1972, the monument's name was changed to Sitka National Historical Park and its boundaries expanded to include the Russian Bishop's House, a National Historic Landmark in serious disrepair. Acquisition of the house brought more emphasis to the Russian American focus of the park and involved the park in a lengthy restoration project.

Efforts to strengthen consultation and cooperation between the National Park Service and Sitka's federally recognized tribal government resulted in the development of a Memorandum of Agreement between the National Park Service and Sitka Tribe of Alaska. Signed in 1997, the agreement is designed to establish a framework for cooperative relationships and communication regarding park planning and operations.⁴

Over the years there have been five individuals in the custodian/acting custodian role and fifteen who served as either superintendent or acting superintendent. Although the majority of these were National Park Service managers brought into the community from other posts, the first three custodians, actually part-time caretakers, were local residents. E.W. Merrill, Sitka's best-known artist/photographer, was the first official custodian (1919-1922). Although sources indicate that Merrill had difficulty with the bureaucracy, these difficulties did not interfere with his devotion to the park. Merrill was followed by carpenter Peter Trierschild (1922-1937), and Trierschild's son John assumed the duty after his father (1937-1940). The first full-time, on site non-local manager was Ben C. Miller who arrived in 1940, bringing more official National Park Service involvement in the day to day management of the park. Another local Sitkan to supervise the park was Ellen Lang (Ellen Hope Hays; 1974-1978) who also holds the distinction of being the first Native woman Superintendent in the National Park Service.⁵

The park has been known officially by several different names, including Sitka Park, Government Park, Indian River Park, Sitka National Monument, and Sitka National Historical Park. Depending on the context, it is just as often referred to by its unofficial names, Lovers' Lane or Totem Park, indicating that it is much easier to change a name than community custom. For clarity and consistency within this publication, it will simply be referred to as "the park."

Introduction

Over the years, research and management programs have produced a number of studies that focus on the history and historic resources of the park. Some of the more recent include an archeological overview and assessment, a landscape history, a Tlingit traditional use study, a physical and cultural landscape study, an administrative history, and specialized studies that detail the restoration and furnishing of the Russian Bishop's House. Finally, a lengthy planning process recently concluded with approval of a new park General Management Plan.¹ Although these studies vary in terms of purpose and perspective, together they give thorough coverage of the founding of the park, its administration, and identified resources.



Figure 3: Sitka's park at Indian River, known today as Sitka National Historical Park, has a long tradition of recreational use by residents and visitors.

A common thread running through many of these studies is the theme of people's social and personal connections with the park, particularly during its inception and formative years. How have people valued the park? The answer is not found in the park's enabling legislation and yet it is central to the park's establishment. Without a doubt, it was the value that people placed upon this small tract of forest, river and shore that was the catalyst in its formal designation as a park more than 100 years ago. Presented in the form of a turn of the century scrapbook, this study highlights these values and connections through the first half century or so of Sitka National Historical Park, beginning with its designation in 1890 as the first federal park in Alaska.

The close of the nineteenth century must have been an exciting time in Sitka. Still the seat of the district government, Sitka was in many ways Alaska's most influential community. It had a rising population and was Alaska's cultural as well as political center. The town's physical landscape also manifested growth and progress. Although many of the old Russian buildings were collapsing, Lincoln Street, then as now the town's main street, was being transformed by new ones.

The era brought accelerating cultural change to Sitka's Native population as symbolized by two very different communities, one old and one new, at the extreme ends of town. The old was the "Ranche" or traditional village. Government officials and missionaries were determined to speed Native assimilation through formal education. The federal board of education, including Sheldon Jackson, mandated the enrollment of Native children in school. The old style plank houses were disappearing but the new "American style" houses that replaced them did not seem to stop the ravages brought by tuberculosis, smallpox, measles, and influenza. At the opposite end of town, at the edge of the park, a new Native community had taken root. The Model Cottage Settlement was a mission-sponsored community dedicated to the pursuit of a new way of life. Its residents would build and maintain very close connections with the park, characterized by traditional, recreational and symbolic uses.

Another aspect of life in Sitka during this time was the growing tourist industry. Pleasure travel to Alaska began in earnest with sporadic "Inside Passage" steamer travel in the 1880s. Within a



Figure 4: Merrill photograph of the Sitka Native village, often referred to as the "Ranche."

few years weekly steamers were bringing southeast Alaska's towns and villages steadily growing numbers of "excursionists" and welcome deliveries of mail and merchandise. With its range of scenic and cultural attractions, not the least of which was the beautiful Indian River Park at the edge of town, Sitka grew to be a popular stop. The business of providing for the wants and needs of visitors would grow into a strong economic force that would play a role in shaping the town, and the park, for years to come.

Sitka's role as a cultural center during the late 1800s and early 1900s is well documented. To a large degree, turn of the century attitudes were characterized by a romantic appreciation of nature and beauty. The tradition of walking for pleasure along the park's scenic paths was the perfect outlet for the expression of these values. The feelings of countless residents and visitors who strolled along the park's trails are preserved in art, photography, poetry, and other writings about the park.

This was also a time period when the nation as a whole was experiencing progress, expansion, growth and change. With the completion of several cross-country railroads, distant points were becoming less remote. Americans were realizing that even the wide-open western frontier was susceptible to change. A national conservation movement was growing, inspired by concern over the disappearance of entities that ranged from public land to native artifacts. The nation's system of parks and monuments symbolize this interest in preserving threatened resources, whether natural, cultural, historical, or archeological. Sitka National Historical Park, with its 1890 "birthday" as a federal park, is certainly part of this early tradition of preservation.

SITKA NATIONAL MONUMENT ALASKA

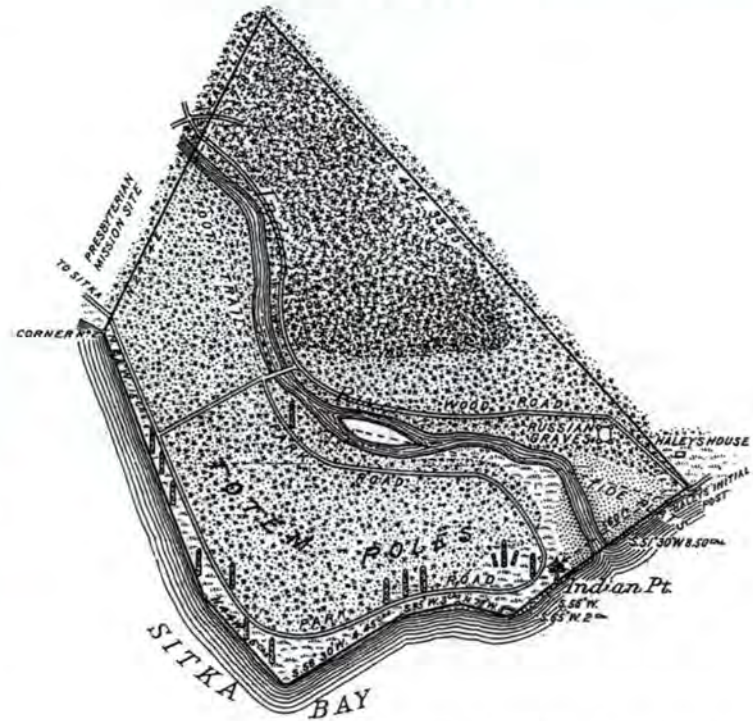


Figure 5: Map of Sitka National Mounment which accompanied the 1910 Presidential proclamation setting aside Indian River Park as a National Monument.
(This image has been digitally altered. Some text has been removed for clarity.)

1

Steamer Day: Early Tourism in Sitka

NEAR the end of the nineteenth century, many well to do Americans had the urge to travel. They had many destinations to choose from. Some of the more adventurous traveled by train to west-coast ports and booked passage on a steamer to see and experience the newest exotic locale: Alaska. The trip took about a week as the steamer wound along the "Inside Passage," stopping at towns and points of interest on the way. Sitka was the last Alaskan port of call, following a stop at the Muir Glacier (Glacier Bay), the northern turnaround point for virtually all of the voyages.



Figure 6: Northern Pacific Alaska Cruise Brochure.

Nature writer and Alaska lover John Muir summed up the attraction of a trip through the Inside Passage:

To the Lover of pure wildness Alaska is one of the most wonderful countries in the world. No excursion that I know of may be made into any other American wilderness where so marvelous an abundance of noble, newborn scenery is so charmingly brought into view as on the trip through Alexander Archipelago to Fort Wrangell and Sitka.¹

In this respect, early excursionists were seeking the same image as today's Alaskan visitor: a wild frontier, unspoiled nature, the "real" Alaska.

In the decades between the 1867 purchase of Alaska and the mid-1880s, most travel to Alaska was government or commerce related. Mainstream America knew little about Alaska and if a traveler had wanted to come north, transportation options were limited. After a trickle of adventurers opened the door in the 1880s the popularity of an Alaska trip rose dramatically, jumping from 1,650 visitors in 1884 to just over 5,000 by 1890.² One factor in the increase was the continued expansion of the national rail system that made Alaska much more accessible:

When the first railroad was built across the continent, an interesting branch of the stream of tourist travel began to set westward, to see golden California and its glorious Sierra and Yosemite. Then on the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad over the Cascade Mountains in the summer of 1887 the gate was opened wide to the icy northern wilderness.³

Another factor was a growing public awareness that there was more to Alaska than ice and snow. A longstanding information void was slowly being filled by a diverse collection of recognized experts with first hand knowledge. Perhaps the most influential of these was Sheldon Jackson.



Figure 7: Adventurous excursionists at the Muir Glacier.

THE MEMBERS OF THE GREAT HARRIMAN EXPEDITION, WHICH ARRIVED HERE LAST WEDNESDAY, HAVE BEEN ENJOYING THEMSELVES VERY MUCH AND HAVE GAINED MUCH VALUABLE INFORMATION SINCE THEIR ARRIVAL. NUMEROUS SMALL PARTIES HAVE GONE OUT IN ALL DIRECTIONS, ACCOMPANIED BY GUIDES AND FRIENDS, AND HAVE OBTAINED MANY VALUABLE SPECIMENS. MANY OF THESE SCIENTISTS HAVE CLIMBED THE VARIOUS MOUNTAINS AROUND SITKA. THE SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM HAS BEEN A FAVORITE RESORT WITH MANY, AND OTHERS HAVE SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME IN THE INDIAN VILLAGE.

THE ALASKAN, JUNE 17, 1899

From his first trip to Alaska in 1877 virtually to the end of his life, Jackson was engaged in writing and lecturing about Alaska and its needs in order to gain support for his Presbyterian mission there. Jackson's message reached a broad audience, and many who heard him had the resources to travel to Alaska. Jackson himself even organized one of the earliest group tours of the Inside Passage in 1884, escorting a group of eastern teachers northward following a meeting of the National Education Association in Madison, Wisconsin.⁴

Another influential Alaskan promoter was nature writer and preservationist John Muir, who made his first Alaska trip in 1879. An immensely popular figure with a wide audience, Muir used vivid imagery to

describe the wild beauty of Alaska and encourage tourists to make the trip. In an 1891 steamship brochure, Muir urged that "everybody able to breathe" should make the trip: "Go to Alaska, go and see."⁵

Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore was another early Alaska visitor whose impressions inspired many to head north. A wealthy and adventurous traveler, Scidmore was a noted geographer, photographer, author and the first woman to serve on the Board of Managers of The National Geographic Society. Scidmore visited Alaska in 1883 and 1884 and wrote a series of articles on her experiences. These articles, repackaged as the book *Alaska, its Southern Coast and the Sitkan Archipelago*, became one of the region's most popular early tourist guides.⁶



Figure 8: Promoters proclaimed Alaska “The Tourists Mecca.”

Described as perhaps “the last grand expedition of the nineteenth century,” the privately funded expedition of railroad tycoon E.H. Harriman in 1899 brought particularly long-lasting national attention to Alaska. In a combination luxury cruise and loosely defined scientific venture, Harriman invited notable scientists, artists and writers aboard the steamer *George W. Elder* for a trip from Seattle to Siberia and back again. Along for the journey were photographer Edward S. Curtis, popular nature writers John Muir and John Burroughs, scientists C. Hart Merriman, and William Healey Dall, among others. The family component of the expedition, including Mrs. E.H. Harriman and the five Harriman children, showed the world that women and children as well as hardy pioneers could enjoy rugged Alaska.⁷

Another way mainstream America learned about Alaska was by visiting exhibits at major expositions. Turn of the century expositions with significant Alaska exhibits included the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1893), the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis (1904), the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland (1905) and the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle (1909). Both the St. Louis and Portland exhibits benefited from display of the famous totem poles that would eventually find permanent homes at Sitka’s Indian River Park.

As the Alaska tourist industry caught on, so did advertising and more focused promotion. Seattle business leaders were quick to recognize the economic potential of the Alaska travel market. The Seattle Chamber of Commerce, established in 1882, was an early advocate for transportation improvements, especially where they strengthened the Seattle-Alaska connection. The Chamber’s Alaska Bureau, a special committee devoted to Alaska issues, organized well-publicized excursions to Alaska, bringing prominent business and government leaders northward to take a look for themselves.⁸ The first Alaska Bureau trip, in 1913, included a special representative of President Woodrow Wilson, several newspaper editors, and Bureau members and guests. Noted northwest photographer Asahel Curtis, brother to Edward S. Curtis, was along to record the trip.

THE SHORT STAY OF THE STEAMER DOES NOT SUFFICE TO EXHAUST OR EVEN TO ENJOY THE PLEASURES WHICH THE PLACE AFFORDS. THE HURRIED PURCHASE OF INDIAN CURIOS, A HASTY INSPECTION OF THE GRECO-RUSSIAN CHURCH, A GLANCE AT THE MISSION SCHOOL, AND A RACE TO INDIAN RIVER TAKE ALL THE TOURIST'S TIME; THE STEAMER'S WHISTLE BLOWS AND OFF THE PASSENGERS GO IN A HURRY...

THE ALASKAN, MAY 17, 1890

UPON THE WHOLE, OUR SUMMER VISITORS ARE A FINE CLASS OF PEOPLE. SOME OF THE WEALTHIEST AND MOST DISTINGUISHED PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES ARE FOUND AMONG THE ALASKAN TOURISTS, AND THEIR VISITS ARE A SOURCE OF GREAT PLEASURE TO OUR PEOPLE.

NORTH STAR, AUGUST 1896

THE EXCURSION SEASON HAS CLOSED, THE BEAUTIFUL EXCURSION STEAMER QUEEN HAS MADE HER LAST TRIP AND SITKA HAS AGAIN SETTLED DOWN TO HER WONTED QUIET LIFE. HUNDREDS OF TOURISTS FROM ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD, TOURISTS GREAT AND TOURISTS SMALL HAVE BEEN SWARMING OUR COAST ALL SUMMER LONG.

NORTH STAR, AUGUST 1896



Figure 9: The Alaska Bureau visits Sitka's park, June 1913. Asahel Curtis photograph. Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma.

The phrase "Steamer Day" was universally understood by all residents. With the signal that a ship was due into port, many townspeople responded by going down to the wharf to be part of the action. A crowd often gathered at the wharf to celebrate the ship's arrival. Native curio sellers were also in place, ready to tempt new arrivals with their displays of artifacts and handmade items.

Local businesses welcomed the income from the visitor industry but residents also relished the arrival of merchandise, mail and new faces in town. Sitkans were ardent promoters of their town and seemed pleased to share it. Unlike the choreographed motor tour provided most cruise ship tourists today, early excursionists roamed the town on foot, almost as temporary residents. Visitors were invited to participate in the best that Sitka had to offer.

After departing one of the major American west-coast ports, a typical Inside Passage tour would proceed through British Columbia, perhaps stopping at Victoria or Nanaimo. Once in Alaskan waters, the steamers would stop at Wrangell, Juneau, Glacier Bay and eventually, Sitka. As a population center and a seat of government, a stop at Sitka was expected. But it was a popular stop because it offered a variety of attractions.



Figure 10: Alaska Bureau excursionists on the *Jefferson*.

***ALASKA EXCURSION
SAILS TOMORROW***

EVERYTHING IS IN READINESS FOR THE SAILING OF THE ALASKA EXCURSION OF THE NEW SEATTLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TOMORROW ON THE JEFFERSON. THERE WILL BE 120 EXCURSIONISTS ON BOARD THAT HAVE BEEN BOOKED FOR THE ROUND TRIP ALONG THE ALASKAN COAST, DOWN THE YUKON RIVER AND BACK TO SEATTLE.

ALASKA DAILY EMPIRE, JUNE 20, 1913

THE FORESTS OF ALASKA ARE ITS REVELATIONS. THE SINGLE STREET OF SITKA TERMINATES WHERE THE BEAUTIFUL INDIAN RIVER LOOSES ITSELF IN SITKA BAY, WHERE THE FOREST BEGINS. THE SPRUCE, PINE, HEMLOCK, FIR AND CEDAR RISE ABOVE A TANGLED UNDER-GROWTH WHICH SHOWS NO SIGNS OF HAVING EVER BEEN VISITED BY FOREST FIRE... THANKS ARE DUE TO LT. GILMAN FOR HIS RUSTIC BRIDGES BUILT ACROSS INDIAN RIVER WHOSE CRYSTAL WATERS RUSH... THE ARTISTS OF OUR PARTY ARE BUSY WITH THEIR BRUSHES.¹³

...THE LOCAL WEEKLY PAPER, THE ALASKAN, WAS ENTERPRISING ENOUGH TO GET OUT AN EXTRA IN A COUPLE OF HOURS WITH THE PASSENGER LIST AND THIS EDITION THE YOUNG LADIES BOUGHT BY THE DOZEN AND MAILED TO THEIR FRIENDS AS CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE THAT THEY HAD BEEN SO NEAR THE NORTH POLE.

THE ALASKAN, DECEMBER 3, 1887

AMONG OTHER THINGS THAT SITKA CAN BOAST OF AS AN ATTRACTION IS A PROMENADE, A WELL-GRAVELED WALK THAT THE RUSSIANS BUILT ALONG THE CURVING LINE OF THE BEACH, AND THROUGH THE WOODS, TO THE BANKS OF THE PRETTY INDIAN RIVER. UP AND DOWN THIS WALK THE RUSSIANS USED TO STROLL, AND DURING THE STAY OF THE MAIL STEAMER THE WALK TO INDIAN RIVER IS TAKEN ONCE AND TWICE A DAY BY THE PASSENGERS, WHO ARE ENRAPTURED BY THE SCENERY, AND GIVEN SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE HEART OF THE WOODS AND THE MYSTERIES OF THE FOREST GROWTH.¹⁶

Even before it was designated a monument, certain areas within the park were notably popular. The series of bridges that crossed the river over the years were favorite features. So was the far end of the peninsula, known as “the point.”

By the 1920s, the historical values of the park had become more apparent to visitors. After the first totem pole was introduced to the park in 1902, the poles began to vie with the natural setting for the tourists’ attention. Tourists (then as now) found the poles to be an irresistible backdrop for a photograph. A 1929 newspaper article allows that the park has some beautiful forests, but describes the principal attractions as the totem poles and the historical events surrounding the Battle of 1804.¹⁴



Figure 12: Sitka’s most distinguished visitors made the walk to the park. Here President Warren G. Harding (center, in front of totem pole), Mrs. Harding (in plaid coat), and entourage are seen in a stereoscopic view at the park during their trip to Alaska in 1923.

Early visitors to the park have left a rich record of their impressions of the park in personal journals, books and magazine articles. Consistently these convey a sense of the turn of the century appreciation of nature and the benefits of a quiet walk along a river, a forest path or the seashore. These are the values that made the park a source of pride and enjoyment for residents as well as visitors, and ultimately led to its establishment as a public park.



Figure 13: Early park visitors on a somewhat dilapidated footbridge over Indian River.

ALL THE WOODLAND THAT BORDERS INDIAN RIVER IS A PART OF AN ENCHANTED FOREST, AND MORE LOVELY THAN WORDS CAN TELL...¹⁷

EVERYWHERE IS WILD, RICH BEAUTY, SO RESTFUL, SO LOVELY, THAT ONE TURNS WITH REGRET FROM EACH BRIDGE OR FOOTPATH, FEELING THAT NOWHERE CAN THERE BE EQUALLY BEAUTIFUL SCENES AND TEMPTING VISTAS. BEWARE HOW YOU PROMISE YOURSELF OR OTHERS TO SPEND EVEN A DAY IN THIS MOST BEAUTIFUL SPOT, FOR DURING THE SUMMER TWILIGHT DOES NOT SINK INTO DEEPEST DARKNESS BUT IT SLOWLY MELTS INTO THE ROSY BRIGHTNESS OF MORNING. THE DAYLIGHT LINGERS AS IF ITS TENDER CARE WERE NEEDED TO WATCH OVER SUCH PERFECT LOVELINESS. ONLY THE GREATER STARS AND PLANETS ARE PERMITTED TO SHOW THEIR REFLECTIONS INTO THE SWIFT FLOWING LITTLE RIVER OR UPON THE CHANNEL'S MORE PLACID BOSOM.

THE ALASKAN, APRIL 12, 1890

TURNING FROM THE WORK OF MEN TO THE WORK OF THE CREATOR, SCARCELY A MORE LOVELY WALK AMONG THE MOST PRIMITIVE NATURE CAN BE FOUND, THAN THE INDIAN RIVER TRAIL. THIS IS ABOUT A MILE FROM TOWN AND GOOD WALKS WILL BE FOUND ALL ALONG THE RIVER BANKS. ON A FAIR DAY THE SHIFTING SUNLIGHT PLAYING ON THE VARIED SHADES OF GREEN IN MOSS AND FERN, FORMS AN ENCHANTING PICTURE, WHICH WILL NOT BE THE LEAST SURPRISING NOR THE LEAST HAPPY OF YOUR MEMORIES OF ALASKA.

THE ALASKAN, JUNE 5, 1897

DR. [SHELDON] JACKSON ACCOMPANIED US TO INDIAN RIVER. IT IS A WILDLY ROMANTIC STREAM. AT SOME POINTS OVERARCHED BY BIRCHES AND WHITE AND YELLOW CEDARS, AND ALONG ITS BANKS WERE ALDERS AND THICK CLUMPS OF WILLOWS SPRINGING FROM THE SOFT GREEN MOSS WHICH GROWS BENEATH THEM.¹⁸

THE SCENERY ABOUT SITKA IS SIMPLY LOVELY. I KNOW THAT'S THE WAY A WOMAN DESCRIBES THINGS BUT THAT JUST ABOUT FITS THE SITUATION. THE BEAUTIFUL BAY, WITH THE TOWERING MOUNTAINS, AND THE TROPICAL SCENERY UP THE INDIAN RIVER CANNOT BE SURPASSED ANYWHERE ON EARTH...
THE ALASKAN AUGUST 9, 1902

HEARING THAT THE INDIAN RIVER IN THE SUBURBS OF THE TOWN IS WORTHY OF A VISIT, WE ACCEPTED THE ESCORT OF OUR TWO YOUNG FRIENDS. AND AFTER A WALK OF HALF A MILE (I BELIEVE I ALREADY SAID THAT THERE ARE FEW HORSES IN ALASKA, AND NO CARRIAGES) WE CAME TO A REALLY VERY QUIANT AND ROMANTIC LANE, LEADING TO A CLEAR AND RAPID STREAM OVER WHICH IS THROWN A PRETTY AND RUSTIC SUSPENSION BRIDGE. IT IS A VERY CHARMING SPOT, RICH WITH FERNS OF MOST DELICATE TEXTURE AND BRIGHTEST GREEN AND VELVET MOSSES, SUCH AS THOSE WHICH BORDER THE FOOTPATHS THROUGH THE WOODS IN ENGLAND, A BOWER OF WILD FOLIAGE IN FACT, OF EXQUISITE COLOR.¹⁹



Figure 14: E.W. Merrill photograph of Lovers' Lane.

Figure 15a: View of Sitka harbor.

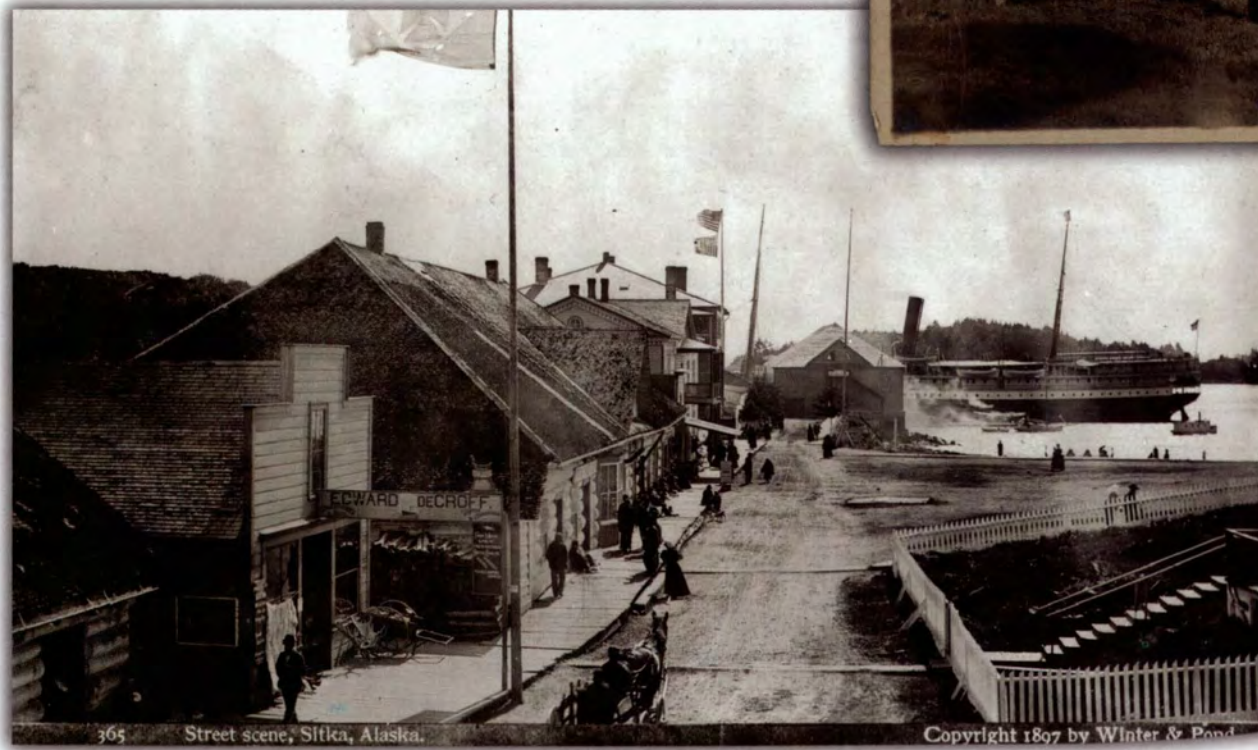


Figure 15b: Street scene, Sitka, Alaska. Note Revenue Cutter in background, right.

2

Postcard Views of Lovers' Lane

ACCORDING to the published authority on the subject of historical postcards of Alaska,¹ the 1893 Columbia exposition in Chicago was the “real beginning” of the nation’s souvenir postcard industry. Encouraged by the success of the penny view cards sold at the exposition, publishers began to market postcards featuring a variety of subjects nationwide. Collecting the cards proved popular and the industry expanded rapidly, with billions of cards produced between 1907 and 1915. A single publisher, The Portland Postcard Company, reported selling 50,000 cards per day at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle in 1909, with visitation averaging 20,000 per day.

The timing of this new trend coincided perfectly with the emergence of Alaska's early tourist industry. Late nineteenth century excursionists were able to buy postcards depicting most of Sitka's main attractions, including its quaint downtown street, "castle" on a hill, Russian blockhouse, and of course, "Lovers' Lane."

Many of the major national publishers in the early post card industry carried "Alaska views". The earliest recorded Alaska postcards were issued in 1897 by The American Souvenir Card Co. Their set of 12 color Alaska views included images titled "Main Street, Sitka" and "Sitka Bay." Edward H. Mitchell of San Francisco, another early publisher/printer, is noted as one of the largest publishers of postcards in the western states. Mitchell reissued some of the American Souvenir Card Alaska images in 1899 and produced other designs beginning in the early 1900s.



Figure 16: A Tourist's View of Sitka.

The park's totem pole collection was the subject of a postcard published by the Rotograph Company of New York. Rotograph was another prolific publisher of postcards but relatively few featured Alaska. A Rotograph card titled "Alaska Totem Poles" depicted the totem poles collected by Governor Brady on display at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. Judging by the numerous postcards that have survived the years with his papers, Brady himself may have been a postcard collector.²

E. DEGROFF HAS A FINE LINE OF SOUVENIR POSTAL CARDS. THEY ARE HALF-TONE REPRODUCTIONS OF PHOTOS TAKEN BY E. W. MERRILL. THE ARTIST'S AND PRINTER'S WORK ARE ALIKE COMMENDABLE.

THE ALASKAN, OCTOBER 7, 1905

OUR LOCAL ARTIST, MERRILL, HAS ON SALE SOME POSTAL CARDS WITH A VIEW OF MT. EDGECOMBE. THE PRODUCTION IS THE FINEST WE HAVE EVER SEEN OF THE EXTINCT VOLCANO AND SHOULD RIGHTLY BE CALLED "MERRILL'S MOUNT EDGECOMBE."

THE ALASKAN, FEBRUARY 10, 1906



1652 Totem Poles. Lewis & Clark Exposition, Portland.

The J. K. Gill Co., Portland, Ore.

Figure 17: Sitka National Historical Park Totem Poles on exhibit at Lewis and Clark Exposition, Portland Oregon, 1905. J. K Gill Company postcard.

Curt Teich & Co. of Chicago was known as the world's largest volume printer of view and advertising postcards. Curt Teich printed postcards for dozens of publishers from 1898 to 1978, when the company was sold. Records in the company archives trace orders for Sitka cards beginning in 1914 and continuing through the early 1970s. The park's totem poles and the Russian church account for more than half of the orders for Sitka cards.³

Other publishers of early Alaska postcards included photographic studios, steamship companies, stores and hotels (especially those catering to the tourist trade) and even missionary organizations like the Presbyterian Women's Board of Home Missions, known for their support of the Sitka Training School.

In Sitka, at least three local merchants published their own post cards: W.P. Mills Co., the Alaska Drug and Jewelry Co. (Wortmans's Drugs), and the Northwest Trading Company, the latter owned by Edward deGroff, a successful merchant and noted photographer who sold his photographs in his shop beginning in the 1880s. Several of deGroff's photographs were made into postcards printed by the American News Company of New York. The name C.M. McGrath also turns up as a Sitka-based publisher of postcards. McGrath operated deGroff's store after purchasing it from his widow in 1911.⁴



Figure 18: E.W. Merrill view of Sitka, Alaska showing Park area in background, right.

Merrill published postcards featuring his own work. One series, printed by the Albertype Company of Brooklyn, included different views of Sitka ("View of Sitka: Water, Town, Mountains" for example) and one of the Navy wireless and coaling station on Japonski Island. It is not known how many Merrill images were produced as early postcards. Photographer's names were not consistently included with the names of the publisher and printer on the credit line.



Figure 19: Merrill postcard of Sitka.

*E. W. MERRILL, PHOTOGRAPHER,
HAS A QUANTITY OF FIRST CLASS
NEGATIVES FROM WHICH HE CAN
SUPPLY ORDERS FOR VIEWS OF
SITKA AND VICINITY.
THE ALASKAN, AUG. 25, 1900*

only source of locally printed postcards. The print shop had more than one location at the school. After the Sheldon Jackson Museum relocated to the new fireproof facility in 1898 (site of the present museum), the print shop moved into the old wood frame museum building on the slope above Lincoln Street, between the school and the park entrance. The postcards were a minor part of the materials the print shop produced; other items included the mission newspapers as well as programs, tickets, business and calling cards, invitations, and announcements.⁵

C.L. Andrews made his first trip to Alaska in 1892, becoming a Deputy Customs Inspector in 1897. Andrews lived in a number of Alaskan communities, including Sitka, which gave him the opportunity to practice his hobby of photography. Andrews sold his photographs commercially and a small number apparently were published as postcards.

While most Sitka postcards were printed outside of Alaska, the Sitka Training School print shop, staffed by students as part of the school's industrial training program, may have been the

A slight variation on the published postcard is the photo postcard. These are actual photographic prints printed on postcard-sized photographic paper with a divided back to accommodate an address and correspondence. Photo postcards were black and white (or brown and white depending on the paper used) but were sometimes hand tinted after printing. Photo postcards could be easily reproduced in a photographic studio and they most often portrayed subjects of local interest.⁶ Sitka's Photoshop Studio was one source of photo postcards. The company produced many images of local landmarks and attractions, including the park.



Figure 20: In 1907, Governor Brady's daughter Mary, then living away from Sitka, received this postcard describing a popular new line of postcards by E. W. Merrill.

The following selection of images is offered as a "postcard tour" of the park. Most of the images are published postcards but a few photo postcards are also included. Both kinds of images were widely available for tourists to collect and display in albums telling the story of their stop in Sitka. Together the images portray the qualities most valued by early visitors and give a sense of the early visitor experience. They are representative of the many different cards that have featured the park over the years.

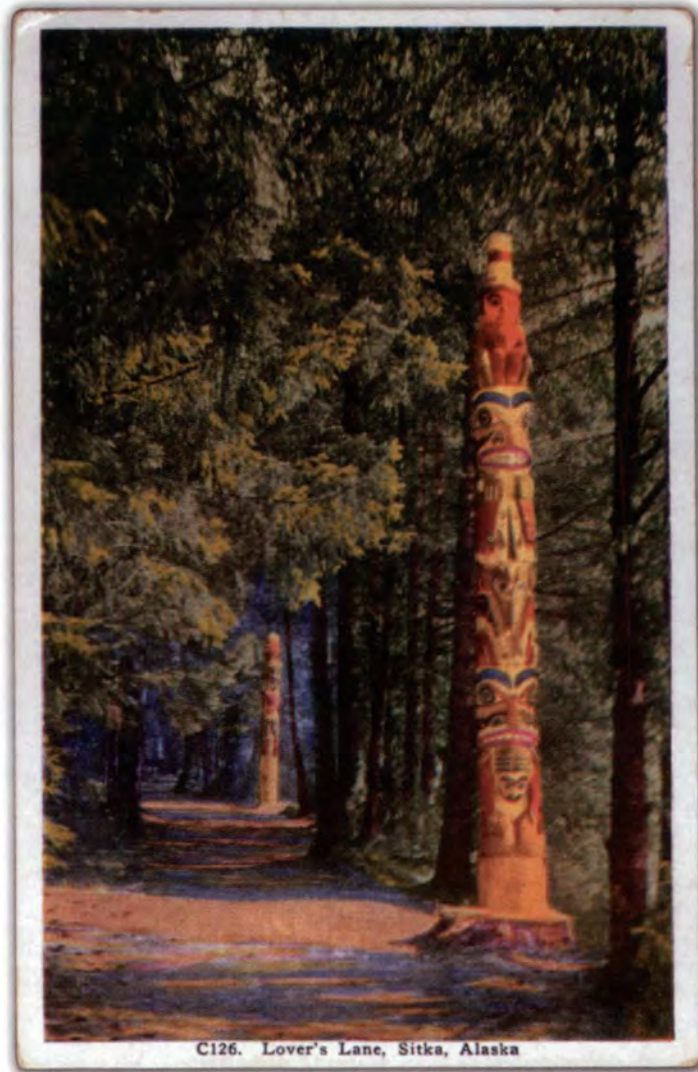


Figure 21: "Lover's Lane, Sitka, Alaska"

More than any other, this inviting view of the trail that came to be known as "Lovers' Lane" is the image that generations of twentieth century visitors associate with the park. The pleasant trail winding through the forest offered an opportunity to view beautiful scenery within and from the park. The shaded trails contributed to its legendary romantic qualities. The totem poles were an added attraction.



Figure 22: "The Tallest Totem in the World"

This postcard depicts the over fifty foot tall Saanaheit pole that was for many years described as the tallest in the world. The pole and the four surrounding houseposts on display today are reproductions. In response to serious deterioration, this and other poles at the park were duplicated by Civilian Conservation Corps carvers in 1942. Perhaps because they originally were protected from the elements inside, the four house posts experienced slower deterioration and were not re-carved until 1981. The original pole and house posts, along with a large canoe, were given to Governor John G. Brady by Chief Saanaheit of Kasaan in 1901. The Saanaheit pole was the only pole erected in the park before the others in the collection were returned to Alaska in 1906, following their display at the St. Louis and Portland expositions.



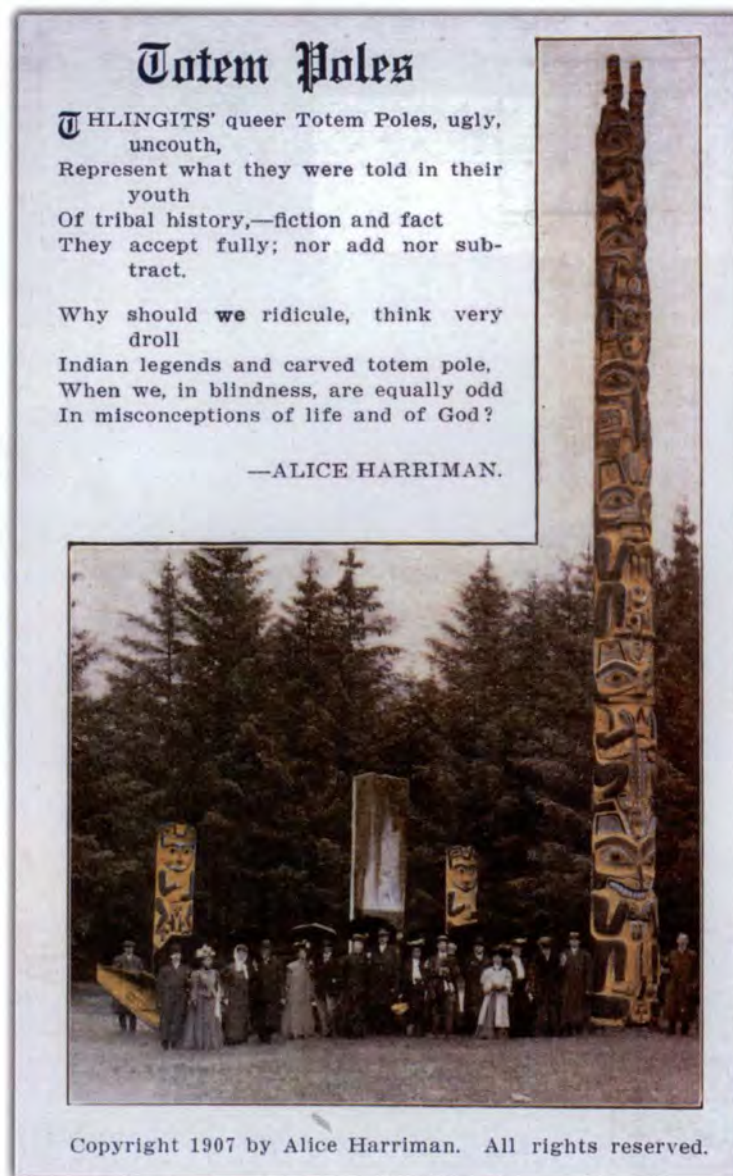
This postcard does feature totem poles, but they were never part of Sitka's park. As with Sitka's totem poles, these were collected from a traditional village and moved to a park setting to be preserved and exhibited as a cultural attraction. These poles originally lined the beach in front of the traditional houses of Tongass Village. They were collected in the 1930s by a civic group and taken to Ketchikan for display in City Park. When the poles deteriorated they were taken down and eventually became part of Ketchikan's Totem Heritage Center. Some of the original poles remain in that collection.

Figure 23: These "Famous Totem Poles" were never located in Sitka National Park, Alaska.

Although the title indicates that the totem pole is the intended subject of this postcard, modern visitors would probably find the cows more remarkable. In earlier times Sitkans were familiar with roaming livestock. A letter to the editor of the local paper in 1891 recommended herding the animals out to Indian River each night to keep them from waking residents, damaging property and raiding gardens.⁷ The cows in this picture may have been from the Burkhart Dairy. Into the 1930s, Mrs. Burkhart's cows periodically roamed across Indian River and into the park and were notorious for leaving a mess and damaging vegetation. Park caretakers paid local children to shoo the cows back across the Indian River. The image also illustrates that the landscape has changed over time. Clearings like the one in the picture are less evident today due to the evolving forest and shoreline.



Figure 24: "Totem Pole, Sitka, Alaska"



This postcard features a photograph of the (Haida, not Tlingit) Saanaheit totem pole and house posts on display in the park. The introspective poem by Alice Harriman reflects the turn of the century fascination with totem poles and the cultures that carved them. An author and the head of her own publishing company, Harriman was a Seattle resident in the early 1900s. The card's copyright date and the presence of the canoe suggest that the photograph was likely taken some time between 1902 and 1907.⁸

Figure 25: "Totem Poles" by Alice Harriman

Although not of the park, this picture depicts an early incarnation of the motor tour industry in Sitka, a major part of the modern visitor industry. It also shows that the park was a “headline” attraction. By the summer of 1901, entrepreneur Charles Haley began offering a tour to the park in his converted freight wagon.⁹ At some point following the installation of the Saanaheit totem pole and houseposts in the park in March of 1902, he added this sign advertising “To the Indian River Park and Totem Poles”. It would be another four years before the full collection of poles would be installed at the park.



Figure 26: An early horse drawn tourist wagon, Sitka, Alaska.



Figure 29: One of the many bridges to span the Indian River, this suspension bridge was built in 1888.

Over the years, Indian River has been spanned by an impressive variety of bridges, ranging from simple pedestrian footbridges to structures designed for wheeled traffic. Keeping the bridges intact was an ongoing job due to periodic floods and the challenge of maintaining wood in southeast Alaska's climate. The rustic footbridges were favorite features of the park. A moonlight party at the park in 1890 found one of the bridges a source of inspiration: "...the vocalists in the party rendered a few delightful songs in the stillness of the night on the bridge crossing the river...."¹³ Local youth apparently appreciated the bridges for more than their scenic value. An 1891 newspaper item complained about ongoing "rowdyism" on the bridge, especially the practice of "skylarking," wildly rocking the bridge from side to side.¹⁴

The replica Russian blockhouse once located near the point was a favorite destination for park visitors. For years it was also the only structure in the park. The blockhouse was built in 1926 at the request of the non-Native Sitka community who felt it would be an attraction for park visitors. Hardware, cannons and fittings from one of the town's original Russian blockhouses were used in the construction of the replica. Many adults, especially those raised in the nearby Cottage community, recall playing in the blockhouse as children. The structure was seriously deteriorated when it was demolished in 1959, but the action still brought the Park Service under fire from the community that sponsored its construction. This led the National Park Service to become involved in the construction of another replica that stands today atop the rock outcrop overlooking the intersection of Katlian and Lincoln Streets.¹⁵



Figure 30: Reproduction Russian blockhouse built in 1926.

3

Sylvan Twilight: Artists' Views of the Park

SITKA in the late nineteenth century has been described as Alaska's Cultural Capital. Centuries of overlapping historical paths had crossed there, leaving behind a wealth of imagery depicting the town and its surroundings, including the park. From sketches in a miner's journal to a romantic poem in a local newspaper, these images form a collective and often sentimental view of the early park landscape.

Graphic Art

Up until the middle of the nineteenth century the European style art being produced in Alaska was documentary art, primarily illustrations produced by scientists, explorers and military men engaged in the exploration of new territory. Many of these recorded their impressions of early Sitka.¹



Figure 32: This 1869 watercolor of Sitka illustrated Special Indian Agent Vincent Colyer's report to the Secretary of the Interior. The image documents the historical landscape. Along with the early fall colors of the surrounding mountains, Colyer clearly shows the characteristic yellow paint and red roof color scheme preserved today by the National Park Service restoration of the Russian Bishop's House.

By the turn of the century, however, Sitka was part of a "Golden Age" in Alaskan art. With its core of resident amateur artists and visiting professional artists, the town was known to have a surprisingly healthy art market for its size. One source estimates that more than 1,000, and perhaps as many as 2,000, paintings were produced in Sitka between 1867 and the turn of the century.²



Figure 33: This watercolor preserves Colyer's impressions of the Indian village. It shows the traditional plank houses before they were replaced by houses with European style doors and windows. Canoes line the beach.

Landscapes were a common subject. A number of Sitka's natural and architectural features are well documented, especially Castle Hill, St. Michael's Cathedral, Native villages (at Sitka and surrounding areas), islands, and mountains including Mt. Edgecumbe. Though the park was one of Sitka's most scenic and accessible landscapes, known paintings and sketches that focus on the park are scarce. Most often, the park shoreline appears as a shadowy peninsula in the background of drawings and paintings depicting other features.

A good example is an image recorded in 1898 by George Ogrissek, a

prospector who recorded his travels through southeast Alaska in a journal and a series of detailed and precisely labeled pencil drawings. While in Sitka, Ogrissek sketched a view of the Presbyterian mission buildings from the top of Castle Hill. The shoreline of the park appears in the distance. The sketch also presents a mystery, an angular-roofed structure that appears to be located in the park. One possibility is that the structure was related to Native subsistence. Sources have indicated that the Kiksadi seasonally occupied fish camps along the park shoreline.³

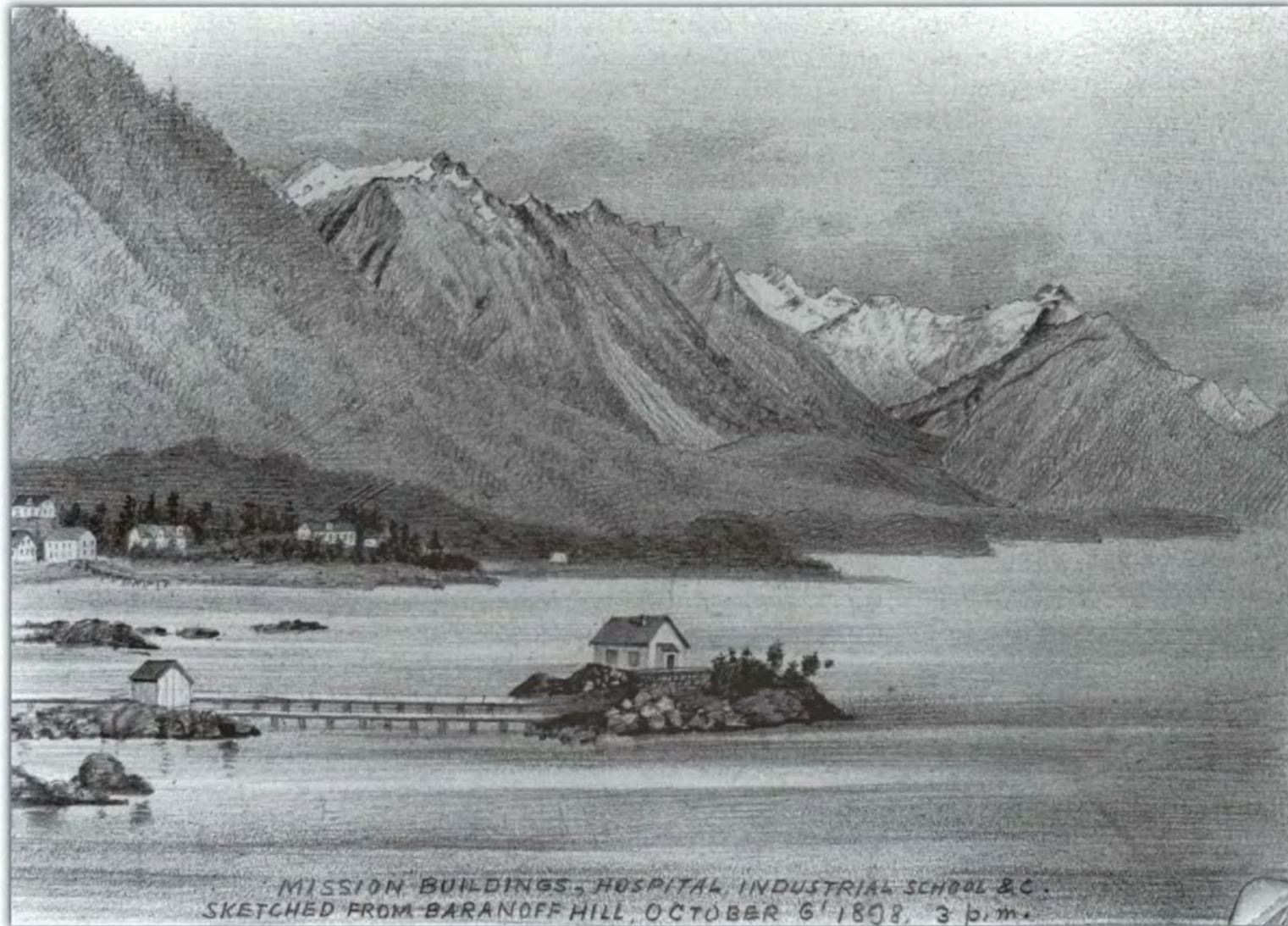


Figure 34: Looking toward the park, George Ogrissek sketched the Presbyterian Mission buildings from Castle Hill in 1898. Along with the park shoreline, he also records the mission's long dock that once extended into the harbor.

A RARE TREAT WAS ENJOYED BY THE RESIDENTS OF OUR LITTLE VILLAGE ON A RECENT AFTER-NOON; IT WAS A PRIVATE EXHIBITION OF WATER COLORS GIVEN BY MR. T. J. RICHARDSON OF MINNEAPOLIS, AT THE BEAUTIFUL HOME OF REVEREND AND MRS. BRIGGS, WHERE A PARTY OF INVITED GUESTS WERE PERMITTED VIEW ONE OF THE FINEST COLLECTIONS EVER MADE OF ORIGINAL SKETCHES OF ALASKA SCENERY, ABOUT THIRTY IN NUMBER. MR. RICHARDSON PLACED EACH UPON AN EASEL, EXPLAINING THE LOCATION, ETC., IN THE CLEAREST AND MOST AGREEABLE WAY. THE SKETCHES ARE EXQUISITE PRODUCTIONS, ONE OF THE GREATEST CHARMS BEING THEIR FIDELTY TO NATURE, AND THE FACT THAT THEY WERE TAKEN ON THE SPOT. HIS REPRODUCTION OF THE BEAUTIFUL MOUNTAINS, WHICH IN MOST CASES ARE ABRUPT AND STRIKING, TAKEN UNDER MANY DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF FOG, EVENING HAZE AND DAYLIGHT ETC., ARE THE ADMIRATION AND DELIGHT OF THE BEHOLDER. THE DAINTY COLORING IS ALMOST TO BE FELT AS SEEN, AND THE ATMOSPHERIC EFFECT IS ABSOLUTELY PERFECT.

THE ALASKAN, MARCH 14, 1891

Perhaps Sitka's most popular visiting professional artist was Theodore J. Richardson of Minneapolis, reportedly the first painter to work in Alaska solely for the purpose of making art.⁴ Between 1884 and 1914, Richardson made regular trips to Alaska and produced numerous watercolors. The newspaper *The Alaskan* makes frequent mention of Richardson's visits to Sitka, including a trip in which he taught an art class. Richardson was primarily a landscape painter but Native artifacts and culture were also favorite images. An 1895 Richardson painting titled "Old Kasaan" portrays some of the houses and totem poles of Old Kasaan, one of the source villages for the totem poles that would eventually be displayed at the park. Richardson also provided paintings for the Alaska exhibit at the 1904 St. Louis Exposition, including one titled "Way to Indian River."⁵



Figure 35: Old Kasaan by T.J. Richardson, 1895.

Richardson also played a role in encouraging one of Canada's favorite turn-of-the-century artists, Emily Carr. In 1907 Carr, along with her sister Alice, took a summer trip to Alaska and stopped in Sitka. Born and raised in Victoria, Carr was familiar with Pacific Northwest Native culture but she found the setting of park's totem poles extremely interesting. The experience became the inspiration for a major part of her life's work, a goal to record the totem poles and villages of British Columbia. While in Sitka, Carr met Richardson and showed him some of her sketches. She wrote about the meeting in a journal entry:

*We moved to Sitka and there I met an artist from New York. He had set up a studio and was painting pretty little bits which he expected to sell in New York. He had done a few bits of things in the Indian Village and the totem poles. Quite pretty but not Indian at all, I felt I could do better and made several which I showed him, he said "had I done those I would be proud."*⁶

This description of Carr's meeting with Richardson is particularly significant, as it seems to confirm that he produced at least one painting of the park's totem poles. Emily Carr worked on her Native village paintings for 20 years. Today, they are appreciated not only for their dramatic style, but also as for their contribution to the historical record.⁷



Figure 36: "Totem Walk at Sitka" by Emily Carr, 1907.



Figure 37: "Indian Creek" by James Stuart, 1891.

LAST SATURDAY AFTERNOON BY INVITATION FROM MR. J. C. STUART (SIC), THE VISITING ARTIST OF NEW YORK CITY, THE LADIES OF SITKA GENERALLY VISITED HIS STUDIO IN THE WEITENHILLER BUILDING FOR THE PURPOSE OF VIEWING SUCH PICTURES AS MR. STUART BROUGHT WITH HIM AND HAS FINISHED DURING HIS STAY AMONG US. THE APARTMENTS OCCUPIED BY MR. STUART WERE VERY TASTEFULLY ARRANGED FOR AN EXHIBIT OF OIL AND WATER COLORS, THE WALLS BEING COVERED WITH DRAPERY AGAINST WHICH THE PICTURES WERE HUNG, VERY EFFECTIVELY. TAKE IT FOR ALL IN ALL THE EXHIBITION WAS AN EXCELLENT ONE AND VERY CREDITABLE TO THE ARTIST.

THE ALASKAN, JUNE 27, 1891

Another talented landscape artist who was well known in Sitka was James Everett Stuart, a San Francisco artist who visited Sitka in 1891 and 1907. Like Richardson, Stuart was primarily a landscape painter. In 1891 he painted Indian River surrounded by lush dark green forest. The painting would be hard to identify as Indian River if it were not for Stuart's trademark of providing detailed information including location on the back of most of his paintings.⁸

Facing Page: The town of Sitka and its valued landmarks and historical park continue to inspire contemporary artists. Byron Birdsall comments on his 1988 interpretation of the Russian Bishop's house.

"Painting this modest dwelling of an 18th century Russian Bishop was a challenge. I knew how to paint it, but I was unsure how to make it interesting. Its very simplicity was the problem. The setting provided the solution--the spectacular beauty of the surrounding countryside, New Archangel. I also hoped to convey the dedication of those early missionaries who lived in this humble home as they brought the message of Christ to Southeast Alaska."

Once badly weathered, the Bishop's house has been restored by the National Park Service and is now designated a National Historic Landmark.



Figure 38: Russian Bishop's house by Byron Birdsall. Image provided through the courtesy of Byron Birdsall, and Artique Ltd., Publisher. Copyright Byron Birdsall, 1988.

Years later, Asahel Curtis visited the park as part of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce's "Alaska Bureau," a special division of the chamber devoted to promoting Alaska for tourism and commerce. Travelling on the steamer *Jefferson* with a list of notable passengers, the group stopped in Sitka for a typical whirlwind tour that included a stop at the park. Curtis photographed members of the excursion posing in front of the Saanaheit pole and house posts.



Figure 42: Asahel Curtis photographed members of an Alaska Bureau excursion during their visit to the park in 1913. In this photograph the canoe that was once part of this scene (Figure 19) has completely disintegrated.

Another well-known photographer to document Sitka's park was Amos Berg, a regular contributor to *National Geographic* in the 1930s and 40s. Berg visited Sitka while researching an article on the Inside Passage. Nancy Yaw Davis, who grew up on the Sheldon Jackson campus, remembers the park and the blockhouse replica as a favorite place. Shown here with her younger brother and Berg's dog "King", Davis remembers the excitement of having Berg in town.



Figure 43: The replica blockhouse in the 1940s.



Figure 44: St Michael's Cathedral by Ansel Adams.

Even landscape photographer Ansel Adams recorded his view of the park. While travelling in Alaska on a Guggenheim scholarship in 1947 and 1948, Adams's flight briefly stopped over in Sitka. He recorded the event with photographs of the downtown area, including fishing boats in the harbor and St. Michael's cathedral. He also accompanied acting Custodian Grant Pearson through the park. As with all VIPs, Pearson's monthly report noted the photographer's presence in the park "with the purpose of taking pictures" and also commented that the cloudy weather was not the best for picture taking. Possibly the most interesting thing about Adams's walk through the park was his selection of subject matter; the one picture of the park shows a turbid Indian River overhung with typical vegetation. He apparently did not take a single picture of the park's trails or the totem poles that have intrigued so many other visitors.

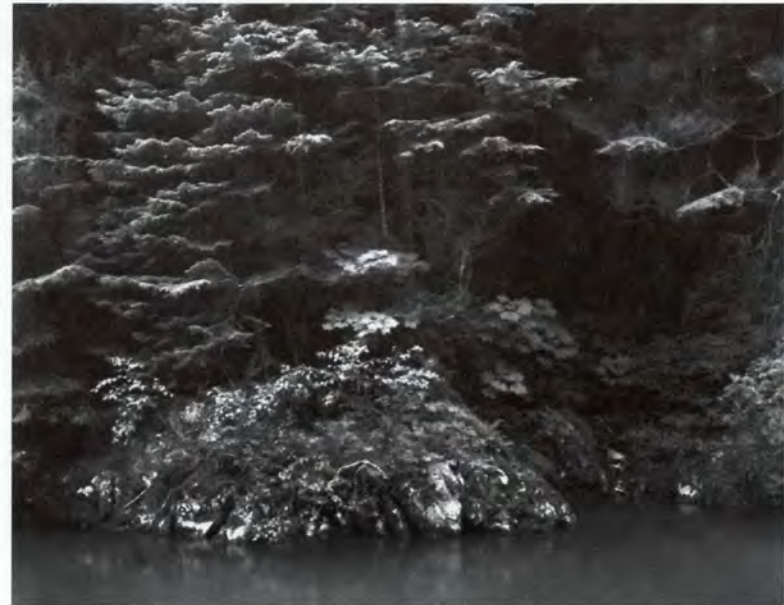


Figure 45: The Indian River by Ansel Adams.



Figure 46: Sitka Harbor by Ansel Adams.



Poetry

Sitka had an active poetry scene a century ago.¹² Local poems were regularly featured in the newspaper and readings, like musical performances, were popular entertainment often reported in the social news. A surprising number of early poems describe the park, indicating that residents and visitors were inspired by the park on a personal level.

Works analyzing poetry often evaluate poems for their relevance to historical events and social issues, but these early home-grown poems have a consistently non-political, local focus. In another sense, the poems are typical of romantic poetry that flourished everywhere in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Nature was a symbol of beauty, honesty, and purity, and romantic poetry was the accepted voice for those sentiments.

Most of the published poems about the park touch on its legendary romantic qualities. Although it is not clear who coined the name “Lovers’ Lane”, the image of the park as a place for lovers was an established theme by the 1880s. As visitors wrote about Sitka, they passed on the romantic qualities of the park, and successive generations of tourists adopted the idea before ever seeing the river or the walking along the park’s trails. The acceptance of this image was so widespread that poets often used the river as a metaphor for romance:

...And we wandered toward the river
While loves arrows made me shiver
As they came from Cupid’s quiver
When her dear eyes looked in mine....

...We heard the river singing,
And within our souls upspringing
Came fancies which were bringing
A love I thought divine...¹³

Nineteenth century historical sources include a substantial amount of poetry. One measure of Sitka’s interest in poetry at this time is the fact that one of the first books written and printed

there was a volume of poetry. *Poems on Alaska: The Land of the Midnight Sun* was published in 1891.¹⁴ Most of the poems in the book were written by Henry Haydon, a U.S. Court Clerk and ex-officio Secretary of Alaska. Haydon's poems turned up regularly in the newspaper *The Alaskan*, sometime signed only as "H". Haydon's poem "Sylvan Twilight" portrays classic nineteenth-century romantic ideals and is perhaps the best example of romantic poetry about the park. His strong feelings are particularly significant. About the time he wrote this poem, he was one of the land commissioners who recommended that the park be set aside as a federal reserve.

"Sylvan Twilight by Indian River:
An Evening Scene in the Summer of 1890"
By H.E.H. [Henry Haydon]¹⁵

A snow white moth from the dim green woods
Flew out and lit on her nut brown hair;
The clover blooms kissed her tiny feet,
And the fire-flies followed her everywhere.
She was the Queen of the dying day,
And I was the King of the dusky night;
And I would hold her close always
With my cold bronze face on her shoulder white.
She threw a kiss to the sinking sun
And he blushed in a flush of golden glow
And his shining lances one by one
Fell harmless into the River's flow;
And the shadows changed to a silvery gray
With the light of stars and the young new moon;
And my beautiful Queen of the dying day
Said "Sweet! The nightingale sings too soon."

"A Ludicrous Episode
(witnessed by an *Alaskan* reporter at Indian River during the week)"
By O.I.C., 1890¹⁶



The day was fine for strolling
As no doubt two lovers thought,
As they pursued their way to Indian River
To hold a term of court.

They sat down on a rustic seat
You all know where it is!
He looked at her, she looked at him,
They settled down to biz.

He looked around to be quite sure
That they were all alone,
Then he took her in his arms and said
"My dear, my love, my own".

He kissed her lips, her hair, her cheek,
He kissed her on the jaw,
Such kissing and caressing
The like I never saw.

For an hour or more, I think it was,
He held her to his breast,
While she – who is as badly gone as he,
Returned each soft caress.

The mosquitoes drooped their heads in shame
At such a sight to see,
While a bullfrog fell fainting from the bridge
And quickly drowned was he.

MORAL:
Now boys and girls take my advice
When spooning you do go,
On the banks of the Indian River
In the summer's sunset glow —
Look out for the Alaskan reporter!

“An Indian River Episode”

Author unknown, 1889¹⁷

He-How beautiful and poetic
 are some of the old Indian words!
 Minehaha, for instance, and Alabama!
 She-Why yes, and Kissimee.
 Which he did, if he was any good.

Another variation on the romantic theme of nature relates to purity and spirituality. Several poems about the park express the feeling that its trails provide an opportunity to experience solitude and beauty that allow people to feel closer to God. D.A. Noonan was a chief steward with the Pacific Coast Steamship Company. He included a poem about the park in a book of poetry on Alaska.

“Lovers’ Lane at Sitka”

By D. A. Noonan, 1925¹⁸

There’s a little lane at Sitka winds deep into the wood,
 And oftentimes I’ve trod it in blithe and lightsome mood.
 Cedar boughs festoon it, and, hidden in the shade,
 Great salmon-berries ripen beneath shielding leaves of jade.
 Invitingly it beckons like phantoms in a dream,
 And leads across a rustic bridge that spans a silver stream.

Gaunt against the blue sky the spruce grow straight and tall,
 Tho where the trees are thickest you can see no sky at all.
 Then there comes a clearing where the lane climbs up the hill,
 With glimpses of the glistening bay, placid deep and still,
 A green spot to rest oneself in the freshness of the sod,
 There to contemplate the goodness and the boundless gifts of God!

A little lane of happiness, vast would be the throng
To journey North to Sitka-town could they hear its song.
For never better lane was made where lovers may stroll in tune,
Whether in winter starlight or under silken skies of June.
Grimly the heathen totems gaze toward the trackless sea,
And like life, their carved figures still an unplumbed mystery.

Tiny whitish lichens peep from under brake and bark,
Where this lane meanders narrowly through Indian River Park
Past thickets of broad devil's-club and lacy ferns and tare,
Past a rancher's cozy cabin and a sweep of ocean glare,
Past a dearly sheltered hallowed spot where some brave sailors lie,
It is such a solitude I want when it comes my turn to die.

This little lane goes winding into the reaches of my heart,
Just as it winds into the wood where weird shadows flit and dart
On days when I am far away I long to come again
To ramble along this peaceful path in heaven-like domain.
And I know when I am old and gray and waiting for Death's nod,
I'll pray it may be along this lane that I'll walk to meet my God!



This much later poem, written during the summer of 1942, expresses some of the same feeling. It is interesting that the author refers to “the sound of swashing gravel.” The definitely unromantic sound of the military’s intensive mining of gravel from Indian River would have been going round the clock in 1942.

“Just a Memory from Sitka’s Lover’s Lane”

By Captain Olaf Hansen, 1942¹⁹

In the silence of the forest
 where the nimble Fairies dwell
 And the hushing natures voices
 do their mystic stories tell;
 Where the sun through swaying branches
 paints its beauty spots below,
 And the pretty woodland flowers
 glitter golden in its glow;
 What a place for meditation!
 just a poets perfect dream,
 Can you blame me if I linger
 by your peaceful purling stream?
 In the shadow of your TOTEMS
 on your famous LOVERS LANE
 Where the spirits of those Chieftains
 seem to come to life again,
 While the sound of swashing gravel
 on your fragrant briney shore
 Mingling with the gentle murmur
 from the ocean’s roar
 Lifts my soul above its trials
 far from this delightful spot,
 To Celestial heights of glory
 in the Kingdom of my God.

There’s a coal black raven talking
 over there from yonder tree,
 I’m the only one around here
 so it must be meant for me;
 “Look,” he says, “I do no sowing,
 neither do I have to reap,
 For my Heavenly Father feeds me
 and he watches o’er my sleep;
 What a fool you must be making
 of yourself with all your care
 When He’ll bear your burdens for you
 if you ask him in your prayer.”
 In the silence of that forest
 with your Lover’s Lane so near
 If your heart is sad and weary,
 come and rest a moment here;
 Breathe your deepest longing freely
 to the only Prince of Peace
 You will find Him waiting for you
 right among those gnarled trees
 Feel His gentle pleading whisper
 echo deep within your breast:
 “Come to me with all your sorrow
 I will give you peace and rest.”



At least one poem was written to memorialize the log blockhouse that was a part of the park's landscape between 1926 and 1959. Although the blockhouse was a misplaced replica, not an authentic Russian American structure, it was an extremely popular feature for many years, especially for the local children who played there.

"Lines to a Blockhouse"

By Genevieve Mayberry, 1966²⁰

Silent and gray beside a jade green sea you stand,
a lonely sentinel upon a far flung strand.
Shadowed by stately totems at the forest's rim,
You keep your age old vigil by the ocean's brim.
Welcoming weary travelers at the long trail's end,
Guarding fabled lovers by Indian River's bend.

Bright silvered sentinel beside a northern sea,
Do you remember kolosh warriors bold and free,
And hear across the years deep throated pushkas roar,
Or savage war cries echo on the rock bound shore?
Do you await returning of that vanquished host
In sweep of swift bidarka down the otter coast?

Rain lashed, windswept and scourged by wild pacific gales,
Your adze-hewn walls hold fast to those near forgotten tales
Of mystic splendor and a tragic lover's quest
Within rude castle walls on yonder keekor's crest.
Ravaged, sun-purged and chastened by bleak winter's rime,
Steadfast you stand – hallowed by memory and time.

“No lover of nature can be long in Sitka without falling in love with Indian River” reports a January 1925 article in the *Verstovian* that goes on to relate a popular local legend that “Whoso drinketh of my waters will return to drink again”. At least two poems relate this legend; the first was published in *The Alaskan* in 1899. The second is by Emma-Lindsay Squier, who visited Sitka in 1924:

“The Legend of Indian River”
1899, author unknown²¹

‘Tis a quiet little river
Running eastward to the sea;
Every leaf upon its borders
Speaks of some sweet memory.

Winding thro the shady forest,
Sparkling, clear, and icy cold,
The same today as in the distant days of old.

When the Thlinket lived unnoted,
Ere the Russian trader came
With his beads and tawdry baubles,
For the priceless furs and game.

As before the savage hunter
Bear and fox fast disappear,
So in time each sign shall vanish
Which the Thlingit hand may rear.
There shall linger but a legend



Figure 47: The Indian River, circa 1890.

By the river's grassy brink,
Which will reach the hearts of passers,
Who may stop and stoop to drink.

Bending to the running river,
They shall catch its sad refrain:
"Ye who drink once from my waters
Shall return to drink again."

"The Song of Indian River"

By Emma-Lindsay Squier
The Verstovian, January 1925²²

Drink of my water and you will come back to me,
For the land of the north will be calling and calling.
The pale spirit lights will leap up in the sky,
Their white dancing fingers will beckon you northward.

Drink of my waters and you will come back to me,
Back to the forest that man has not trod,
Back to the high mountains heavy with snow crowns,
Back to the bay and the green-dotting islands.

The voice of the Raven will call you to come again,
The hoarse croaking voice of the robber-god Yealht.
And the great eagle resting on high wings outspread
Techalk calls you back again, king of the birds.
Drink of my waters and you will come back to me,

Back to the mists and the soft rains a-falling,
Back to the glory of cloud-covered mountains,
Back to the wonder of moonlight and shadows.

Drink of me deeply, for thus I would bind you,
Each clear crystal drop as a chain that will hold you.
The chain will stretch far – to the rim of the earth,
But it will pull back again, bringing you with it.

Drink of me! That is the song I am singing,
Put your lips down for the kiss of enchantment.
I give you myself, ah, gladly, so gladly,
But I will keep part of you held here for ransom.
Your heart I will keep in the wilds of the northland,
I will make it a prisoner, in memory's cage.
You may have it, ah, freely, if you will return to me,
But when you come back, you will bide with your heart –
You will bide with your heart, and the northland and me.
So drink of my waters, and you will come back again.



4

Collecting to Preserve

ALASKA'S Native communities experienced the opening of the Alaska territory as a series of immense changes cutting across all aspects of life. The primary mechanisms of these changes were the missionary movement, the disruption of subsistence, economic and settlement patterns, and the introduction of alcohol and disease. Many of the territory's new residents and visitors recorded their impressions of these impacts, including the fact that some villages appeared deserted, leaving houses, graveyards and cultural objects vulnerable to destruction by vandalism and the elements. Perhaps fueled by the perception that Native culture itself was a relic, interest in collecting Native material culture soared. Residents, government officials, museum curators, merchants, and tourists all placed a premium on authentic Native artifacts.

The pursuit of Native cultural material was a significant part of the early Alaskan tourist experience. In Sitka, evidence of the commercial value of “curios,” a term used to describe a wide range of Native art, crafts and artifacts, could be seen throughout the town, in the shops and on the street where Natives gathered to sell artifacts, jewelry and other handmade items. Some of the most favored items were Tlingit basketry, etched silver jewelry, and all types of carving, especially miniature totem poles.

In Sitka, the curio market was a recognized part of the local economy. Reflecting on the 1889 visitor season, *The Alaskan* acknowledged that “...no visitor leaves these shores without carrying with him some memento of this land full of superb scenery and stocked with relics of barbaric days and historic times.”¹

Curios could be purchased from one end of Sitka to the other. Native vendors sold items in the village, at the wharf, and at several accustomed gathering places along the main street. Curios could also be bought in most of the main street shops that catered to the tourist trade. At the Sheldon Jackson Museum, authentic as well as “facsimile” objects were available in a range of prices. Three dollars, for example, would buy a pair of genuine carved silver bracelets or a decorative whalebone box and the museum would mail purchases home.² Near the park entrance, several of the residents of the Mission Cottage settlement built small structures for selling handmade items, such as moccasins and jewelry.

As in any collectors’ market, the strength and desires of the market influenced price and selection. Relatively early in the Alaskan tourist trade, collectors began to comment on what they viewed as a reduction in quality and increase in price. Savvy sellers were aware of the concern and assured buyers of quality and authenticity. As early as 1885 there were rumors that not all of the Native work was genuine.³ Although some in Sitka challenged that perception, skepticism remained. An especially cynical reference appears in an 1891 poem: “...Forth she goes to bleed the tourists, who land every steamer day, Sells them curios made in ‘Frisco, and makes them dearly pay.”⁴



Figure 48: Native woman selling handicrafts. Photograph by Ansel Adams.

RUDOLPH WALTON
NATIVE CURIOS.

SILVER TOTEM POLES, \$1 & UP;
YAKUTAT BASKETS NATURAL
COLORS, NO DYES, \$1 & UP;
PADDLES, CANOES, ETC., AT
REASONABLE PRICES. IVORY
CARVINGS TO ORDER. REPAIRING
WATCHES, JEWELRY, ETC., ON
SHORT NOTICE. INDIAN DISHES
FROM \$1 UP. ALASKA TOTEM
POLES, \$1 UP. TOURISTS SHOULD
CALL AND SEE INDIAN WORKING
ON CURIOS.

THE ALASKAN, JULY 14, 1906

RARE AND CURIOUS RELICS: NO HOME IS COMPLETE NOW-A-DAYS WITHOUT A NEAT AND ARTISTICALLY ARRANGED INDIAN BASKET CORNER. THE FAD OF COLLECTING THESE BEAUTIFULLY WOVEN GEMS—THE HANDIWORK OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ABORIGINES—IS ONE WHICH IS FAST FINDING FAVOR WITH THOSE WHO JOURNEY NORTHWARD. WHAT A PLEASURE TO WANDER ABOUT IN QUAIN INDIAN VILLAGES WHICH STILL HAVE THE PRIMITIVE CHARM; STOP NOW AND THEN TO GAZE UPON THE VENERABLE TOTEM POLES OR POKE YOUR WAY INTO THE COUNTLESS HUTS AND IGLOOS IN SEARCH OF THE RARE AND CURIOUS RELICS...⁵



Figure 49: A well-stocked Sitka curio shop. The sign assures the visitor of authenticity and defends its pricing policies: *All Curios for sale here are guaranteed as represented. Having been in use by the Indians from 25 to 100 Years or more. We are not dealing with specimens made from steer bones. Desirability and Value to purchasers depends solely upon Antiquity and Usage by Indians. We offer none other.*

Although the Native and non-Native merchants who sold curios must have welcomed the profits that high demand brought, this popularity also resulted in theft. At the large end of the size spectrum were entire totem poles removed from unoccupied southeast villages. The Harriman Expedition's raid on Cape Fox village is one example, documented by trophy-like photographs and a song called "The Taking of the Totems."⁶ In some villages, Native houses were boarded up when residents were seasonally absent with signs instructing unwanted visitors to stay out.⁷ Objects such as Chilkat robes, rattles, and even bones were so commonly removed from grave houses and burial monuments that it was impacting traditional burial practices; these items no longer could be left in the open.⁸ To be fair, Native artifacts were not the only things to fall victim to "tourist acquisitiveness." A sample of other items to turn up missing in Sitka include the collection baskets at the Tlingit Presbyterian Church, flowers from graves in the Russian Cemetery, and the Russian-era hardware from the newspaper editor's door.⁹

A different aspect of the fascination with curio collecting were the professional collectors competing to acquire and preserve an ethnographic record of northwest coast culture for posterity. Sitka was home to some of the best known of the northwest's early collectors. In the late 1880s, from his two-story house overlooking the harbor, Navy Lieutenant George Thornton Emmons was just beginning his famous monograph on the Tlingit. His research was based on his own observations and on a spectacular collection of artifacts that eventually was sold to the American Museum of Natural History. Emmons was a friend to the family of Louis Shotridge, a Tlingit man who would one day live in the mission model cottages near the park entrance. Shotridge became known as a collector, of both artifacts and information, for the University of Pennsylvania Museum beginning in the early 1900s.¹⁰

Just around the corner from the park entrance, Sheldon Jackson's clapboard museum was filled with Native artifacts. By 1897 the collection had grown so large that a remarkable new fireproof museum, still attracting visitors today, was under construction on the mission property.¹⁴ In 1887, an organization of museum supporters formed the Society of Alaskan Natural History and Ethnology. The society, which was devoted to collecting and preserving the territory's natural and cultural history, provided a number of Sitka's citizens with an outlet for their interest in collecting. One member was John Green Brady, Alaska's territorial governor from 1897 to 1906. Through Brady, the turn of the century urge to collect and preserve would become permanently entwined in the history of Sitka's Indian River Park.¹¹

BOTH AT THE NORTHWEST TRADING COMPANY'S STORE ON THE WHARF AND IN THE LARGE, RAMBLING STORES ON THE STREET, THERE WERE CURIOS BY THE ROOMFUL, AND EVERYTHING FROM CANOES TO NOSE RINGS WERE TO BE SEEN, THOUGH THE PRICES WERE HIGHER, AS BEFITS A CAPITAL. THE SITKA TRADERS HAD THE MOST TEMPTING ARRAYS OF CARVED AND PAINTED WOODWORK, AND BASKETS, AND BRACELETS IN ENDLESS DESIGNS.¹²

UP THE STREET AND ON THE RIGHT ARE THE STORES IN WHICH CURIOS MAY BE BOUGHT, AS MAY ALSO BE DONE FROM THE NATIVES SITTING ALONG THE STREET AND WHARF. IN PASSING I WOULD SAY THAT THESE CURIOS SOLD BY THE NATIVES ARE GENUINE NATIVE MANUFACTURE AND ARE NOT, AS OFTEN CLAIMED, BOUGHT FROM THE EAST. I HAVE NEVER HEARD OF THIS BEING DONE HERE. WHILE THE ARTICLES MAY NOT BE AS ANTIQUE AS SOMETIMES CLAIMED THEY ARE GENUINE NATIVE WORK AND THUS FAR ARE VALUABLE.

THE ALASKAN, JULY 4, 1896

VANDALISM, A POLITE TERM FOR ROBBERY, IS A LAMENTABLE MANIA POSSESSED BY THE MAJORITY OF THE GENUINE TOURIST. IT ASSUMES FORMS VARYING FROM THE THEFT OF A TOTEM POLE TO THAT OF A SIXPENNY RUSSIAN NAIL...

THE ALASKAN, JULY 21, 1900

SEVENTH CRUISE OF THE RUSH VISITS MANY SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA POINTS. CHIEF SONIHAT'S GIFT. CHIEF SONIHAT PRESENTS THE GOVERNMENT WITH FIVE TOTEM POLES, COUNCIL HOUSE AND WAR CANOE - POLES TO BE ERRECTED IN GOVERNMENT PARK AT SITKA.

THE ALASKAN, NOVEMBER 2, 1901

THE FIVE TOTEM POLES AND THE WAR CANOE RECENTLY BROUGHT TO SITKA FROM THE VILLAGE AT KASAAN BAY ON PRINCE OF WALES ISLAND HAVE JUST BEEN REPAIRED AND PAINTED BY NATIVE ARTISTS, WITH THE AID AND UNDER THE DIRECTION OF JIM THE NATIVE JEWELER, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS KLAY-NAY-HOO, AND THE POLES ARE NOW BEING [INSTALLED] IN THE GOVERNMENT PARK AT INDIAN RIVER POINT...

THE ALASKAN, MARCH 8, 1902

July 27, 1901

Garter, Roy Alaskan
Governor J. B. Brady

Dear Sir

I am in receipt of your most welcome letter dated Novem but as was very glad to have from you but would like to have seen you and had a long talk with you about a good many things I am much pleased to hear you are helping us to get a school house and have a school as well as other Indian Towns. We have to be a good many times to get a school here but we have been failed but now I feel sure we will get one you wanted to know in your letter if I had anything to give the park you helped us to get a school so I feel good and will say yes I have a large canoe the biggest one in Alaska and a fine large Totem Pole I will give to Alaska you can come down, and get them I will give them to the white people of Alaska to take to Sitka and put in the park. This to stop and stay at the time the Totem pole was put up it cost me a good many dollars I give a big Pallatoh and every thing was high the canoe I paid a hundred dollars for and was used by me and my people for a long canoe and have kept it for a long time in a house where it still is I want them marked presented to the white people of Alaska by some heart chiefs of the Kigolan Indians. Rosen Roy Prince of Wales Island and to be held by you until your time expires then turned over to you such as one by him turned over the same when you again come down I would like very much to see you and please help us in the way of a school so good by

from your friend
Soneheart

Figure 50: Chief Saanaheit letter to Governor Brady.¹³

Although Brady's involvement with collecting is usually linked to his role in planning and carrying out the St. Louis Exposition exhibit, his interest began much earlier. In his days as a Sitka merchant he both collected and sold curios. He developed a concern for the effect that cultural change was having on the disappearing material culture of the region. Aware that poles were being vandalized by tourists and rotting in declining villages like Old Kasaan, Brady conceived the idea of collecting a number of poles and bringing them to a central place, a park in Sitka, where people could view them.

His idea was set into motion in 1901 with a single totem pole, a house, a canoe and four house posts, given to Brady by Chief Saanaheit of Old Kasaan. Brady's plan was to reconstruct the house and display the canoe inside it. The house was never completed but the other objects were transported to Sitka where the pole and houseposts were erected in the park near the point. Although a canoe was displayed with the pole and houseposts, it is not certain that it was Saanaheit's canoe.¹⁴

There is no question that Chief Saanaheit gave the objects willingly. In response to Brady's request for cultural objects, he dictated a letter to Governor Brady, through a crewman on the *Rush*, clearly stating his intent and expectations.

*You wanted to know in your letter if I had anything to give the park. You helped us to get a school so I feel good and will say yes. I have a large coeneau [canoe]. The biggest one in Alaska and a fine large Totem Pole I will give to alaska. You can come down and get them. I will give them to the white people of alaska to take to Sitka and put in the park there to stop and stay. At the time the Totem pole was put up it cost me a good many dollars. I give a big potlatch and everything was high. The coeneau I paid a hundred dollars for and was used by me and my people for a war coeneau and have kept it for a long time in a house where it still is. I want them marked presented to the White people of Alaska by soneheart Chief of the Hoydas Indians, Kasan Bay Prince of Wales Island...*¹⁵



Figure 51: Governor Brady (left) and Chief Saanaheit of Old Kasaan (third from left) preparing the Saanaheit pole for transport to Sitka in 1901.

THE PICTURESQUE AND THE PRACTICAL ARE AT WAR IN ALASKA BECAUSE THE GOVERNOR OF THAT TERRITORY IS MAKING A COLLECTION OF TOTEM POLES AND INDIAN HUTS TO SEND TO THE WORLD'S FAIR, WHILE THE SETTLERS WANT ALL THE APPROPRIATION DEVOTED TO EXHIBITING THE "CIVILIZED" PRODUCTS OF ALASKA. BUT IN ORDER TO EXHIBIT THE RYE, OATS, COAL AND METALS OF ALASKA TO WORLD'S FAIR VISITORS, IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO GET THE VISITORS TO STOP AT THE ALASKA DISPLAY...IF ALASKA WANTS PEOPLE TO LOOK AT HER, SHE MUST MAKE THEM LOOK BOTH THE PICTURESQUE AND THE PRACTICAL ARE NECESSARY. IF ALASKA HAD A MILE OF TOTEM POLES HERE, AMERICA, EUROPE AND ASIA WOULD NEVER FORGET HER.

THE ALASKAN, DECEMBER 26, 1903



Figure 52: The Alaska Building at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Sitka National Historical Park's totem pole collection, along with a community house and large canoe, flanked the building.

When Brady, in 1901, assumed the task of overseeing the exhibit for the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, he envisioned a display of towering Alaskan totem poles to be the one feature that was sure to draw crowds of potential Alaskan visitors. Over the next two years, assisted by the crew of the revenue cutter *Rush*, Brady toured southern southeast Alaska's Tlingit and Haida villages, seeking poles for the exposition.¹⁶

Support for Brady's interests, especially with respect to how to portray Alaska to the world, was not universal. There were those who felt that the totem poles gave too much attention to Alaska's Native culture. The focus should be on progress and civilization.

Brady saw his fifteen poles delivered and installed at St. Louis in 1904 and was pleased with their reception. At the close of the exposition, most of the poles were transported to the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland for another exhibit there in 1905. Two long, decorated cedar house planks and two totem poles, deemed too deteriorated for the trip to Portland, were sold.



Figure 53: Totem Pole exhibit, 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition, Portland.

One of the poles wound up in the Milwaukee Public Museum, the other in an Indianapolis neighborhood. Demonstrating his perception that an obligation had been incurred by accepting the poles, Brady requested that he be allowed to use \$75 of the money to buy gifts to thank the pole's Native donors. His request was refused on the grounds that the expenditure could not be allowed under existing law and treasury regulations.¹⁷

GOVERNOR BRADY SPOKE INTERESTINGLY OF THE EXHIBIT ALASKA IS TO MAKE AT THE FAIR. HE BROUGHT WITH THE PLANS OF THE ALASKA BUILDING, A TYPICAL ALASKAN STRUCTURE, USING FOUR GIANT TOTEM POLES, ONE AT EACH CORNER. IN ADDITION TO THE BUILDING THE PROJECT OF BRINGING TO THE EXPOSITION A NATIVE HOUSE WAS CONSIDERED.

THE ALASKAN, AUGUST 29, 1903

THE FOURTEEN POLES AND WAR CANOE WHICH ARRIVED HERE ON THE LAST AL-KI HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO THE GOVERNMENT PARK, INDIAN RIVER, WHERE THEY WILL BE ERECTED. BOTH GOVERNOR BRADY AND COMMISSIONER W. A. KELLY ARE TO BE CONGRATULATED ON THEIR SUCCESS IN SECURING THESE INTERESTING RELICS AS OTHER TOWNS HAD TRIED, IN VAIN, TO OBTAIN THEM. THE SERVICE OF OUR LOCAL ARTIST, W. MERRILL (SIC) HAVE BEEN RETAINED FOR THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE POLES ARTISTICALLY. THANKS TO THE COURTESY OF THE P.C.S.S. CO. (PACIFIC COAST STEAMSHIP COMPANY) THEY HAVE BEEN FREIGHTED FREE OF ALL CHARGE.

THE ALASKAN, JANUARY 13, 1906

E.W. MERRILL HAS CONCLUDED HIS TASK OF ERECTING THE TOTEM POLES WHICH WERE EXHIBITED AT THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPOSITION AND HAS ARRANGED THEM IN AN ARTISTIC MANNER AND THEY MAKE A GOODLY SHOW. HE IS NOW ENGAGED IN REPAINTING THE OLD WAR CANOE THAT FOR A LENGTHY PERIOD SLUMBERED BESIDE THE OLD NAVAL HOSPITAL.

THE ALASKAN, MARCH 24, 1906



Figure 54: Governor and Mrs. Brady with family and staff at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904.

Finally, the poles were returned to Sitka to be installed along park trails in 1906. Once home, Brady gave local art photographer Elbridge Warren Merrill and a crew of Native carvers¹⁸ the job of overseeing the repair and installation of the poles at the park. As the years passed, the community watched the poles continue to deteriorate. Caretakers tried many approaches to keep the aging collection of original poles standing, but treatment of deteriorating surfaces resulted in

a cumulative alteration of subtle design features. Rotted wood was repeatedly carved away and patched with metal, wood and fabric. Paint and preservatives were applied to surfaces. Different types of mounts were tried, and some inadvertently hastened deterioration. In spite of these efforts, it became apparent that there was a limit to the length of time that unprotected wood could exist in southeast Alaska.

In the late 1930s, a new era of totem pole preservation began with a restoration project that was led by the U.S. Forest Service and implemented by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). A crew of Native carvers patched and/or painted most of the poles, and four were so deteriorated that they were completely recarved.¹⁹ Interestingly, once the original poles were replaced they lost their associated display value. They were set aside in the woods, and although there were discussions of the need to protect them from the elements, no serious efforts were made. At one point it was even suggested that the most decayed of the original poles should be destroyed. Instead, some were loaned to the Naval Air Station on Japonski Island and even passed into private hands for a period of time. New interpretive exhibits being planned at the park will include a display of one of the original poles, once again a valued artifact.



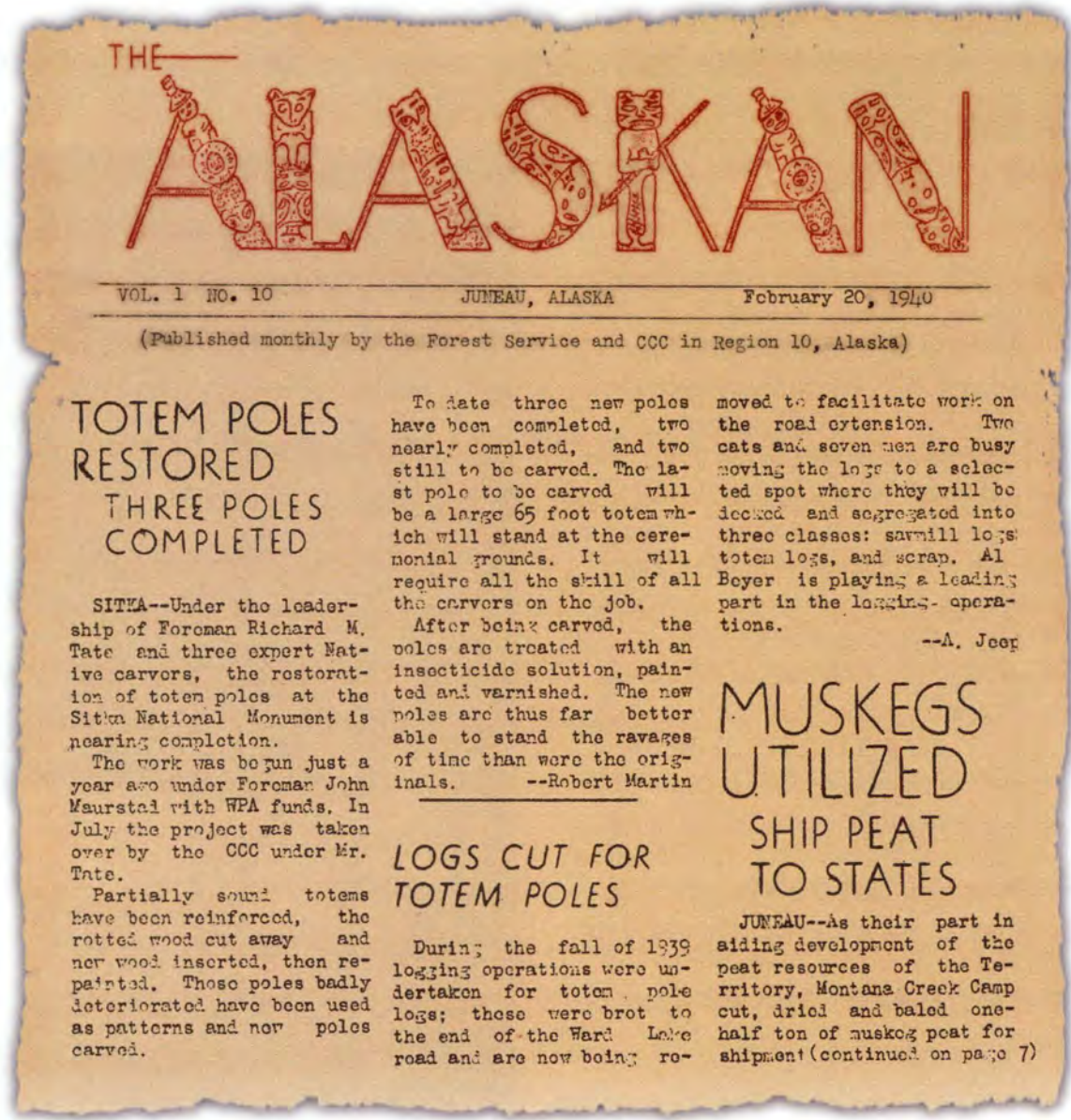
Figure 55: An unidentified carver working on the park totem poles during a Civilian Conservation Corps project in the late 1930s.

IN WRITING YOU A REPORT OF THE PROGRESS OF WORK IN THE SITKA NATIONAL MONUMENT I MIGHT REFER TO IT AS REPEATING THE REPORT OF THE PAST YEAR, 1919. REPAIRING, CARVEING [SIC], AND PAINTING FIRST AND SECOND COATS OF PAINT AFTER CREOSOTING OR TARRING THE BACK OF A TOTEM POLE THE SCAFOILING [SIC] IS REMOVED. THERE ARE TWELVE COMPLETED. THEY ARE GIVING A GREAT PLEASURE TO THE TOURISTS AND ALASKANS. THEY ARE A GREAT CREDIT TO SITKA NATIONAL MONUMENT AND REFLECT CREDIT OF THE GREAT INTEREST YOU HAVE TAKEN IN PRESERVING THE FINEST EXAMPLES OF INDIAN ART AND TOTEM POLES.

LETTER FROM E. W. MERRILL TO GOVERNOR THOMAS RIGGS, JULY 12, 1920.²⁰

"CCC SERVICE IN ALASKA BEING LIQUIDATED AFTER NINE YEARS' HARD WORK": "ONE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT PROJECT...HAVING GREAT ARCHAEOLOGICAL VALUE HAS BEEN THE RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION OF TOTEM POLES AND COMMUNITY HOUSES, THE MOST INTERESTING FORM OF ART DEVELOPED BY THE SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA INDIANS. THE TOTEM POLES AND COMMUNITY HOUSES WERE RAPIDLY DECAYING AND DISAPPEARING FROM SIGHT WHEN THE CCC UNDERTOOK THE TASK OF PRESERVING THESE STRANGE MEMORIALS AND PERPETUATING THIS ANCIENT ART.

ALASKA WEEKLY, JULY 31, 1942



TOTEM POLES RESTORED THREE POLES COMPLETED

SITKA--Under the leadership of Foreman Richard M. Tate and three expert Native carvers, the restoration of totem poles at the Sitka National Monument is nearing completion.

The work was begun just a year ago under Foreman John Maurstad with WPA funds. In July the project was taken over by the CCC under Mr. Tate.

Partially sound totems have been reinforced, the rotted wood cut away and new wood inserted, then repainted. Those poles badly deteriorated have been used as patterns and new poles carved.

To date three new poles have been completed, two nearly completed, and two still to be carved. The last pole to be carved will be a large 65 foot totem which will stand at the ceremonial grounds. It will require all the skill of all the carvers on the job.

After being carved, the poles are treated with an insecticide solution, painted and varnished. The new poles are thus far better able to stand the ravages of time than were the originals. --Robert Martin

LOGS CUT FOR TOTEM POLES

During the fall of 1939 logging operations were undertaken for totem pole logs; these were brot to the end of the Ward Lake road and are now being re-

moved to facilitate work on the road extension. Two cats and seven men are busy moving the logs to a selected spot where they will be decked and segregated into three classes: sawmill logs, totem logs, and scrap. Al Beyer is playing a leading part in the logging operations. --A. Jeop

MUSKEGS UTILIZED SHIP PEAT TO STATES

JUNEAU--As their part in aiding development of the peat resources of the Territory, Montana Creek Camp cut, dried and baled one-half ton of muskog peat for shipment (continued on page 7)

Figure 56: February 20, 1940 issue of the Civilian Conservation Corps newsletter *The Alaskan*.



Figure 57: The park entrance during the Civilian Conservation Corps project in the late 1930s.

The CCC-era poles have remained in place at the park, with periodic maintenance. In 1993, as they reached a half-century in age, the National Park Service undertook another intensive restoration program. Conservators from the Harper's Ferry Center and the park applied a new generation of research and preservation techniques to the project.

WHEN POSSIBLE, THE POLES WERE RESTORED BUT OFTEN THEY WERE SO BADLY DECAYED THAT DUPLICATES HAD TO BE CARVED. ALL OF THE COMMUNITY HOUSES WERE IN SUCH A POOR STATE OF PRESERVATION THAT THEY HAD TO BE ENTIRELY REBUILT. ALL OF THIS WORK WAS DONE BY INDIAN ENROLLEES, THE OLDER INDIANS TEACHING THE YOUNGER MEN THE ART OF CARVING. IN ADDITION TO PRESERVING THE TOTEM ART, MANY OF THE YOUNGER INDIANS WILL BE ABLE TO EARN A LIVELIHOOD IN THE FUTURE, THROUGH THE SALE OF THEIR CARVINGS TO CURIO SHOPS AND TOURISTS. THIS PROGRAM OF REHABILITATION HAS RECEIVED HIGH PRAISE FROM MANY ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS THROUGHOUT ALASKA AND THE STATES.

ALASKA WEEKLY, JULY 31, 1942



Figure 58: Modern totem pole preservation involves collaboration by specialists in several different fields.



Figure 59: National Park Service staff continue to monitor the condition of the poles.

The year 2002 will mark the 100th anniversary of the placement of the first totem pole in Sitka's Indian River Park. As a collection, the poles may be most remarkable for the range of cultural values that have been applied to them over the years. Without question, the display of these Haida and Tlingit cultural monuments so clearly outside their intended cultural contexts seems contradictory. Outside of Alaska, totem poles are a recognized symbol of Alaska Native culture and yet the poles collected by Brady had no cultural connection to local clans or the Indian River. Even the effort devoted to the collection's preservation is ironic when compared to the typical way of dealing with aging poles in traditional times: as an old pole decayed, another would be planned, carved and raised. In the process, it was clan relationships and cultural practices that were being preserved, not wood. But just as the original poles donors witnessed 100 years ago, times and contexts change. Today, much of the interest in preserving totem poles is being generated by Native organizations and cultural centers.



Figure 60: Chief Saanaheit.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the collection is that for almost 100 years, it has fulfilled its stated purpose. Just as the original donors intended, the preservation and display of totem poles in Sitka National Historical Park has provided a lasting memorial to their wealth, generosity and cultural heritage. And, just as Governor Brady intended when he began his efforts to bring totem poles to the park, the poles are powerful symbols that continue to generate attention and tourism for Alaska and provide a tangible link to the past.

5

New Traditions: The Cottage Community

FOR the past 100 years, people walking to the Indian River have passed a cluster of homes lining the two streets between the Presbyterian mission and the park trail entrance. Appearing like any other small neighborhood, today's modern-looking homes mark the location of a community with a unique origin and a significant history. Its founders were the first generation of Alaska Native students to receive a mission education; young adults who came of age in a period of intense cultural change and faced the challenge of building a way of life that was dramatically different from their parents. Many emerged as leaders whose actions still influence Native politics today.

Residents of this community also established a tradition of close involvement with the park. Like a community commons, the park in some ways was an extension of the community. Residents used the park for enjoyment and recreation, but it was also a “backyard” for their growing children, a place of opportunity for business entrepreneurs and, for some, a place to continue traditional ways of relating to the land.

The community’s roots lie in the earliest days of Sitka’s Presbyterian mission. Begun in 1878, the mission’s goal of assimilating Native youth through formal education, industrial training, religious instruction and isolation from traditional language and culture gained momentum in the 1880s. Originally a day school for boys located on the outskirts of the Native village, by 1884 the mission had grown to accommodate both male and female students at the site of present day Sheldon Jackson College.¹ A major concern of the missionaries was finding a way to insure that once separated from traditional culture, students would not return to village life.



Figure 61: Merrill photo of the Cottage community, in front of Cottage Hall.

One approach, voiced in 1885, was to create a mission-sponsored model residential community for graduates:

It is proposed also, as the first pupils are approaching the time when they may desire to set up their own little households, to build for this purpose a model village of model cottages, on the school farm, which shall be under the care and supervision of the faculty.²



Figure 62: The Cottage community is left center in this Merrill photo of Sitka from Mt. Verstovia. Cottage Hall is the larger building to the right of the rows of cottages.

This concept was not unique. A similar approach led to the 1887 founding of New Metlakatla on Annette Island by Father William Duncan of the Anglican Church and one thousand Tsimpsian followers. The Presbyterian Church was involved in Indian home building projects in many regions at the turn of the century. *The Indian's Friend* and the *Home Mission Monthly*, both published by the Women's National Indian Association, were typical of the pamphlets and newsletters seeking donations for building Native homes that circulated throughout the country. With Sheldon Jackson backing the Sitka model cottage project, funds were quickly obtained for three homes, and the seeds of a new community were sown.³

The chosen site for the new project was the extreme eastern edge of the mission property, a location physically set apart from the village and the rest of the town. Although the land was part of the mission tract, it also fell within the traditional territory of the Kiks.ádi clan. Money to build the homes was provided to selected married or soon-to-be-married students through a revolving loan fund. Although residents repaid the loans, the mission intended to maintain some control over the lives of residents as indicated

by a declaration required of all residents. The declaration specified that residents agreed to keep the Sabbath, provide a school education for their children, maintain public health, abstain from alcohol and gambling, avoid “heathen” festivities and customs, and agree to keep the property in the hands of people who subscribe to the stated rules.⁴

There was no need to hire workers to build the homes. Most Training School graduates were skilled carpenters who had practiced trades like furniture building and construction from the early grades on. The first year (1888), three cottages were completed. They were typical small homes, well-built and uniform in appearance:

*The cottages are 24 feet square and one and a half stories high. Each has a living room, kitchen, pantry and wood-house on the first floor and two bedrooms and a closet in the half-story or attic. The students are expected to repay the loan at the rate of \$50 per year.*⁵

By 1895 the number of cottages had increased to eight. The Mission’s physician, B.K. Wilbur, who lived briefly in one of the cottages, provides this description:

*One of the most interesting features of the mission work at Sitka is the model cottages and the families dwelling in them...The cottages, eight in number, are neat frame houses generally of four rooms each, arranged along two streets...their inmates are all Christian Native young men and women who have had the training of the mission school.*⁶

Although the 1923 plat map for the area shows that the Mission planned for growth, the area maintained fairly consistent boundaries. At its peak, homes occupied roughly 16 lots bounded by Kelly Street and Metlakatla Street; the latter street crossed Indian River during this period and provided access to Jamestown Bay and beyond. A series of simple boardwalks ran in front of some of the homes, and at some point streetlights were added along Metlakatla Street.⁷

Cottage resident Cyrus Peck noted that the streets were named for two men who were important in the community's development. Metlakatla Street was named for Native leader Peter Simpson, a Tsimpsonian from Metlakatla, and Kelly Street, named somewhat later, honored Superintendent Kelly of the Sheldon Jackson School, a strict disciplinarian who ruled with an "iron hand" but was also much respected.⁸



Figure 63: The Cottage Women's Missionary Society: The organization was chartered in 1905. Members identified in this picture are: Back row (left to right): Mrs. John James*, Mrs. Thomas Cook*, Miss Gibson (Mission staff), Mrs. Andrew Wanamaker*, Mrs. Ralph Young*. Third row: Mrs. John Newell*, Mrs. Dundas, Mrs. Ray James, Gibson Young. Second row: Mrs. Albert James with baby Dorothy, Mrs. George Howard, Mrs. John Williard*, Mrs. Mackay, Mrs. Charles (Search) Bailey. Front row: Jenny Sing, Mrs. Peter Simpson*, Mrs. Sam Johnson and baby, Ruth Bartlett, Mrs. George Bartlett* and baby. Asterisk (*) indicates charter member. Charter members not shown include: Mrs. William Wells, Mrs. Eaton Hunter, Mrs. John Gambell, Mrs. Andrew Hope, Mrs. Frank Price, Mrs. Cyrus Peck, Mrs. Ray James.

What began as a street of individual homes soon grew into something more. As the homes took shape, so did a distinct community with a strong identity that was recognized throughout the town. Newspapers, official records, and correspondence all refer to the residents as "the Cottagers" or by variations on that theme. The community was known as "the Cottages" or the "Cottage Settlement," but other names were also used, including the "Model Cottages," the "Home Cottages," "Cottages by the Sea," the "Mission Village," and "Westminster Addition" (the original but short-lived name for the community).

Although the community in many ways represented a break with Tlingit traditions, several sources have suggested that some important traditions remained. Like the Native residents of the Village, Cottage residents continued to rely on the lower Indian River area as a close, convenient, year-round source of traditional foods, including salmon, clams, deer, food and medicinal plants, and berries. One source recalls that a Cottage resident's trap line ran through the park. Others have

pointed out that families with Kiks.ádi clan connections were well represented in the Cottages, which could have been a way of preserving ancestral ties to the Indian River area.⁹

Although wealth from mining and canneries played a role in the community economy, in the early days,¹⁰ most Cottage residents made their living in trades that seemed to combine traditional Tlingit skills with those learned at Sheldon Jackson School. These included fishing, boat building, carpentry, sealing, selling crafts, furs and other handwork. A number of these industries were centered in and around the park.

Rudolph Walton was one exemplary student. Walton was involved in many lines of work, including carpentry, boat building, and a retail business. Before moving to the village, Walton and his wife Mary had lived in one of the original cottages on Kelly Street where Walton had a workshop and became known for his skill at making jewelry and repairing watches. Like other Cottage women, Mary Walton sold jewelry and other handmade items to tourists on their way to the park. There were several small shed-like buildings used for displaying items for sale in the area, from the foot of Kelly Street to the area that now is the park Visitor Center.¹¹

Cottage residents were also involved in Sitka's thriving Native boat building industry. Cottager Peter Simpson's boat shop, located at the seaward end of Metlakatla Street, was a Cottage community landmark. Many adults who grew up in the Cottages remember playing there as children.¹²

In addition to the homes they built, Cottage residents also applied their woodworking skills to the park. In 1906, when E.W. Merrill sought Native carvers to help prepare the collection of totem poles returning from exhibition at St. Louis and Portland for placement in the park, Cottage men were called on to do the work.¹³

As the community grew, its identity was reinforced by a number of distinctly community-level actions that included the building of a communal gathering place, hosting social events for the broader community, and forming community-based organizations.

Since it was a community organized around the Presbyterian Church, it is not surprising that Cottage residents were involved in Church-related organizations like the Christian Endeavor

MR. PETER SIMPSON, OF THE COTTAGE SETTLEMENT, IS DOING SOME FINE WORK AT HIS BOAT SHOP AT THAT PLACE. HE HAS JUST ENLARGED HIS SHOP MAKING IT 22 BY 60 FEET WITH AN ADDITION OF 12X12 FEET. HE HAS A WORK FORCE OF FIVE MEN AT WORK, (ALL OLD MISSION BOYS) AND ORDERS ENOUGH AHEAD TO KEEP THEM BUSY TIL SPRING...

THE THLINGET, OCTOBER 1908

MR. RUDOLPH WALTON'S BOAT WAS SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHED THE 19TH AND IS A BEAUTY IN EVERY RESPECT. THE WORKMANSHIP IS OF THE BEST ORDER AND THE ENTIRE BOAT IS A CREDIT TO THE MEN WHO HAVE BUILT HER. MR. SIMPSON AND HIS MEN HAVE BUILT MANY BOATS IN THE LAST FEW YEARS BUT THIS LAST ONE IS BY FAR AND AWAY THE FINEST HE HAS EVER COMPLETED. IT WAS MODELED, BUILT AND PAID FOR BY THE COTTAGERS THEMSELVES. SHE IS 34 FEET OVERALL AND IS PROPELLED BY A TEN HORSEPOWER UNION ENGINE.

THE THLINGET, MARCH 1909

Society and the New Covenant League. Cottage women were strong forces in the community as well as in their families. One women's service group that was active throughout the Native community specifically bore the community name: the Cottage Women's Missionary Society.¹⁴

Secular organizations were also important. The community placed a high value on musical ability and many residents were accomplished musicians. This tiny community of fewer than 20 homes supported a concert band and orchestra as well as clarinet, violin, and vocal groups.



Figure 64: The Cottage Band.

Cottage musicians toured other southeast communities, and visiting musicians (many of them former mission students from other villages) were in turn often hosted by the Cottagers. The Cottage Band was invited to perform at the Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition in Seattle. Reading music was part of a mission education, but many of the Cottage musicians were able to play complex pieces entirely from memory, an ability that has been compared to the traditional Tlingit skill in memorizing and repeating oral history.¹⁵

Perhaps the best indication of the early Cottage community's cohesiveness is the fact that its residents organized to build and

maintain one, and perhaps two, communal buildings. Very little is known about an octagonal-shaped building thought to have been located near the park entrance. The building was reported to have been used as a practice house for the Cottage band. Second-generation Cottage resident Cyrus Peck recalled being inside this building as a child, watching band members rehearse for a concert tour.¹⁶ Mission physician B.K. Wilbur referred to the “little tower” used by the band in an 1896 tourist guide. From his description it would have been very near the present park trail entrance.¹⁷ An intriguing early photograph of an octagonal-shaped structure reinforces that impression but more research is necessary.¹⁸



Figure 65: Octagonal building, thought to have been used by the Cottage Band, near the park entrance.

Considerably more information is available for Cottage Hall, a large social hall that became a focal point for the community and inspired construction of the first Alaska Native Brotherhood hall. In November of 1899, about 10 years after the first cottages were built, *The Alaskan* reported:

*The Native boys at the Mission Cottage Settlement will commence the erection of a large building in a few days for social purposes. The building will be 40 x 80 feet in size. In the rear of the building will be a kitchen 20 x 40 leaving the main room 40 x 60. This room will be used for public and private entertainment and will be quite beneficial to the mission people. Space is also provided for a bowling alley which will be added later.*¹⁹

The men from the Cottages harvested the timber for the new hall from Silver Bay. Like the Cottager's homes, the hall occupied Mission property. Although the exact footprint

of the building is no longer known, the entrance faced Metlakatla Street toward the back of what is the park's upper parking lot today. The building was probably completed in 1900 or 1901.²⁰



Figure 66: Cottage Hall under construction, 1899-1900.

From the beginning, Cottage Hall served a number of important social functions. In one sense, it literally was a “community house.” Like the traditional community houses maintained by clans in the village, the Cottage community’s most important events were held there. Perhaps the most visible of these was a large annual Thanksgiving dinner that was shared with the entire Sitka community. Several newspaper accounts describe the hall as beautifully decorated with places set for hundreds of guests.

The hall was often the chosen backdrop for formal group photographs of the community. It was also the setting for a wide range of entertainment including concerts, literary readings and skits. A group of Cottagers occasionally performed as “The Original Americans.” One of their performances, reviewed in *The Alaskan*, was a fund raising event that netted \$40 for new chairs for the hall.²¹

Educator and historian Gilbert Truitt notes that, although it was small for the purpose, Cottage Hall was the first place that basketball was played in Sitka, linking it to yet another important local tradition. In addition to men’s games, the Cottage women also played basketball in the hall, competing against a team of Sheldon Jackson women as early as 1908.²²

In the beginning, the Mission staff seemed to support the presence of the hall and the activities that took place there. An historical sketch of the mission that mentions the social hall hypothesizes about its social significance, stating: “if the old customs are given up, something must be given them to fill that place.”²³ At some point, however, attitudes changed.

Several residents recall that there was disagreement with the mission school administration over what constituted proper use of the building. The newly popular trend of European style social dancing, a practice described as “a hurtful pastime” in the mission press, is said to have been one source of contention.²⁴



Figure 67: Photograph of the Cottages on Metlakatla Street. The larger, broad-roofed building at the far end of the street is thought to be Cottage Hall. Note that the street grade is steeper than today. It was later modified by blasting and road grading.

OUR THANKSGIVING DINNER WILL BE SERVED IN THE COTTAGE HALL AS IT HAS BEEN EVERY YEAR SINCE THE BUILDING WAS ERECTED. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A VERY ENJOYABLE EVENT, AND ONE THAT HAS BEEN REMEMBERED ALL THROUGH THE YEAR. IN PAST YEARS IT HAS BEEN A TIME WHEN THREE TO FOUR HUNDRED PEOPLE HAVE COME TOGETHER AND FROM ALL OUTWARD APPEARANCES ALL PARTY AND CHURCH DIFFERENCES WERE FORGOTTEN AS AFTER A HYMN OF PRAISE HAD BEEN SUNG AND A WORD PRAYER SPOKEN ALL SAT DOWN TOGETHER...

THE THLINGET, NOVEMBER 1908

THE ENTERTAINMENT GIVEN BY THE "ORIGINAL AMERICANS" AT THE COTTAGE HALL ON THE EVENING OF WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY WAS A WELL-MERITED SUCCESS. THE NATIVES ARE NATURAL ORATORS OF THE DANIEL WEBSTER TYPE. THE COTTAGE BAND AND THE BOYS' BAND FROM THE TRAINING SCHOOL VIED WITH EACH OTHER IN WINNING APPLAUSE FROM AN APPRECIATIVE AUDIENCE...

THE ALASKAN, MARCH 2, 1907



Figure 68: Program for a Cottage band concert in Cottage Hall.

In response to the disagreement, Cottage Hall was closed and then eventually demolished, probably in the mid-1920s. A 1929 air photo of Indian River shows a vacant lot where the building once stood. Some later-generation residents recall seeing faint evidence of the building's foundation during their childhood years.²⁵

Around 1914 newspaper references to events in the hall became less frequent but that may have to do with the fact that an important new gathering place had appeared on the scene. Following an initial meeting organized by former Sheldon Jackson School Superintendent W.G. Beattie in Juneau in 1912, a group of New Covenant League members, including Cottage residents Peter Simpson, Frank Price, and Ralph Young, returned to Sitka and founded the organization known today as the Alaska Native Brotherhood or ANB. The objectives that galvanized the new organization, especially education, equality, opportunity and citizenship, were issues that were

important to Cottage residents. Almost instantly the community and the organization were closely associated. The perception was that the entire Cottage community belonged. Addressing the role that the Cottage community played in the early days of the ANB, former Cottage resident and ANB member Ellen Hope (Lang) Hays once observed that "...on this street the Alaska Native Brotherhood was born," a sentiment echoed by others.²⁶

Recognizing the important role that Cottage Hall had played in strengthening the Cottage community, Peter Simpson is credited with suggesting that the Village needed a similar gathering place.

In 1914, ANB Camp Number 1 opened the organization's first meeting hall. Situated along the waterfront at the edge of Sitka's Native village, the new hall provided a needed place for people to gather, organize and socialize. Recognized as a National Historical Landmark for its role in the Native rights movement, the building continues to be an important gathering place today.²⁷

The photograph at right accompanied a story in a 1916 issue of *The Verstovian*, the mission newspaper at that time. The story highlights the organization's close association with the school and Cottage community:

This picture shows a group of delegates to the A.N.B. Grand Lodge meeting held in Sitka, November 1914, with whom are a few members of the local lodge who were not delegates. Twenty-four of the thirty-one were formerly pupils in the Sheldon Jackson School. Nine are now residents in the Cottage Settlement adjacent to the school plant.²⁸



Figure 69: Alaska Native Brotherhood members posed in front of the ANB hall. Photograph by E.W. Merrill, 1914.

Although some extended families have maintained a connection with the area, the community began to noticeably change in the early 1920s, losing some of its uniformity and connection with the mission. Families in the Cottages were not immune to the problems that were impacting other Native communities. Some families experienced deaths due to disease and alcohol and other families chose to move from the cottages to the village. In time, homes were constructed in the settlement that did not look like the original mission cottage houses.²⁹

Other changes involved the neighboring park. The official government presence in the park was growing stronger, an unfamiliar sensation to those who were accustomed to unrestricted access and the slow pace of change in the area.³⁰ In the late 1930s, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) crews were busy in the park. They worked on road and trail maintenance, landscaping at the park entrance, and mining sand and gravel at the mouth of the Indian River. A primarily Native CCC crew was at work on the park's collection of deteriorating totem poles, re-carving the poles that the Cottage men had repaired two generations earlier.

As in other communities, World War II dramatically changed Sitka. In the park, the most obvious changes stemmed from wartime construction projects, like the Naval Air Station and massive causeway, that intensified the need for Indian River gravel. Residents watched as the removal of gravel churned the salmon spawning beds and accelerated riverbank erosion in the lower river. They listened to the gravel trucks rumbling along Metlakatla Street night and day.

In addition to permanent construction projects, Sitka's growing defense network included many small, temporary features. One of these was at the park. In 1941, the army constructed a series of earthen gun revetments and supporting features along the totem pole lined trails and the park was briefly closed to the public. War-related disruptions, including the absence of many clan members in the military service and the park's closure, brought an end to the quiet practice of holding Kiks.ádi memorial gatherings to honor those who had died in the Battle of 1804.³¹

In the 1950s, the National Park Service embarked on an agency-wide facility improvement program known as "Mission 66". The program brought dramatic change to Metlakatla Street. Between 1955 and 1963, the National Park Service purchased the properties along the park side of Metlakatla Street. The cottages were demolished and replaced with landscaping, parking and, in 1965, a dramatic new Visitor Center to replace the old trail entrance. The demolition of the

cottages did not meet with strong resistance, perhaps because by that time, the community had become less cohesive.³²

Today, additions and modifications to most of the homes along Kelly and Metlakatla Streets make it difficult to know which of them may date to the earliest days of the community. One or two appear very similar in outline to the 1880s vintage cottages. Others appear to have been built around 1910 in a second wave of home building. In spite of these changes, the footprint of a vibrant community, the park's nearest neighbor, remains.

Since its inception in the 1880s, the Cottage community has maintained a uniquely close relationship with the park. While other user groups related to the park as a place of enjoyment and recreation, for Cottage residents the connection was particularly strong; the park was an extension of their community. At its peak, the homes and streets were alive with a sense of community, music, industry and an emerging social and political ideal. Its story is one part of the very complex picture of cultural change experienced by Alaska Natives in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



Figure 70: Former Cottages on Metlakatla Street, 1940s.

6

World War II at Sitka National Historical Park

AS it did in communities across Alaska, World War II forever changed the face of Sitka. Some of these changes reached within the protected boundaries of the park, a portion of which was under the control of the U.S. War Department between 1942 and 1947.¹ Where the park had been valued for its scenic and historical attributes, the early 1940s brought a new set of values. These were the emergence of Indian River gravel as a strategically important resource for military construction and the fact that the park's harbor-facing shoreline, still widely known as Lovers' Lane, was also an ideal location for an anti-aircraft coast defense site.

The activities that took place in the park, like those at a number of coastal locations around Sitka, were sidelights to the military activity taking place on the islands offshore. The epicenter was the construction of a system of coast and harbor defenses that included Alaska's first Naval Air Station (on Japonski Island), Fort Ray, an installation for the defense of the air station and harbor (on Alice and Charcoal Islands), and Fort Rousseau, U.S. Army coastal defense headquarters (on Makhnati Island). The most dramatic feature of this complex was the 8,100-foot long causeway, a rock-filled roadway linking the three into one of the largest coast and harbor defense systems in Alaska. Today the complex is a National Historical Landmark.²

The impact that this construction had on the park was substantial. Large volumes of gravel were needed for cement manufacturing. The mouth of the river just bordering on the park boundary was already the site of a municipal gravel pit when the Navy, through defense contractor Siems Drake, began dredging there in early 1940. The Navy soon requested permission to expand the pit and the operation slowly worked its way into the park.³

The operation included a dragline with a one-yard bucket, rock crushers and sorting screens. The gravel was hauled by truck to the harbor and then barged across the channel to Japonski Island. It is estimated that military use eventually extracted 100 million cubic yards of gravel from the river, including an entire forested island. As a result, the river channel became straighter, deeper and more prone to erosion. A manmade terrace at the mouth of the river, marking the location of the dredge, can still be seen today.⁴



Figure 71: A U.S. Marine Corps platoon marches at the entrance of the park.

IT CAN READILY BE SEEN THAT SITKA NATIONAL MONUMENT IS PLAYING AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE DEFENSE PROGRAM AT SITKA AS THE GRAVEL SUPPLY IN INDIAN RIVER IS THE ONLY SOURCE AVAILABLE IN THIS LOCALITY.⁵

SHOULD THE EXCAVATION BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE UNTIL THE NAVAL AIR STATION AND SUPPORTING ARMY CAMPS ARE COMPLETED, THE AREA NOW KNOWN AS SITKA NATIONAL MONUMENT WILL BE OF LITTLE VALUE TO THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BECAUSE A HOLE FULL OF WATER HAS VERY LITTLE ATTRACTION, ESPECIALLY IN A COUNTRY WHERE THERE IS WATER EVERYWHERE.⁶

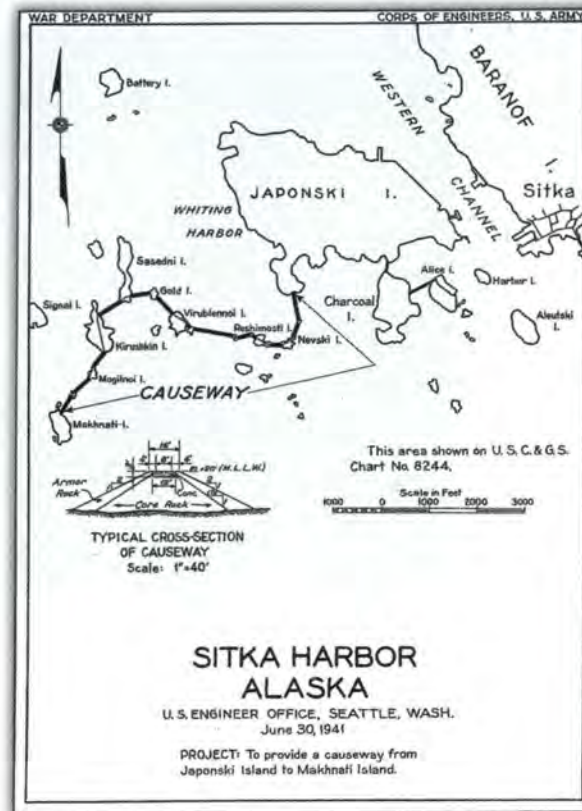


Figure 72: "Sitka Harbor Alaska". This June 1941 Army Corps of Engineers map shows plans for the rock filled causeway from Japonski Island to Makhnati Island.

These events coincided with the arrival of Ben C. Miller, the first full time, on-site National Park Service manager for the park. Custodian Miller was a career park service ranger and under his tenure the park slowly began to assume more of a National Park identity. Newly arrived in Sitka, Miller found himself in the middle of a "boom town". The influx of military and civilian construction workers pouring into Sitka made finding a place to live almost impossible; landlords were receiving from four to ten applicants for every available house. He quickly found himself assuming a kind of generic federal civilian presence in town, filling a position on the draft board and taking an active role in civil defense planning. At one point he proposed that the park could provide a refuge for townspeople in the event of a bombing raid.⁷

Miller could do little more than monitor the progression of the gravel removal as it extended into the park and submit frequent reports on the operation. He acknowledged the importance of the gravel to the defense effort but as the dredging continued he grew increasingly concerned about the impacts. By June 1942 he warned that if the gravel removal continued to expand, even the site of the historic Tlingit-Russian Battle of 1804 would be threatened.⁸

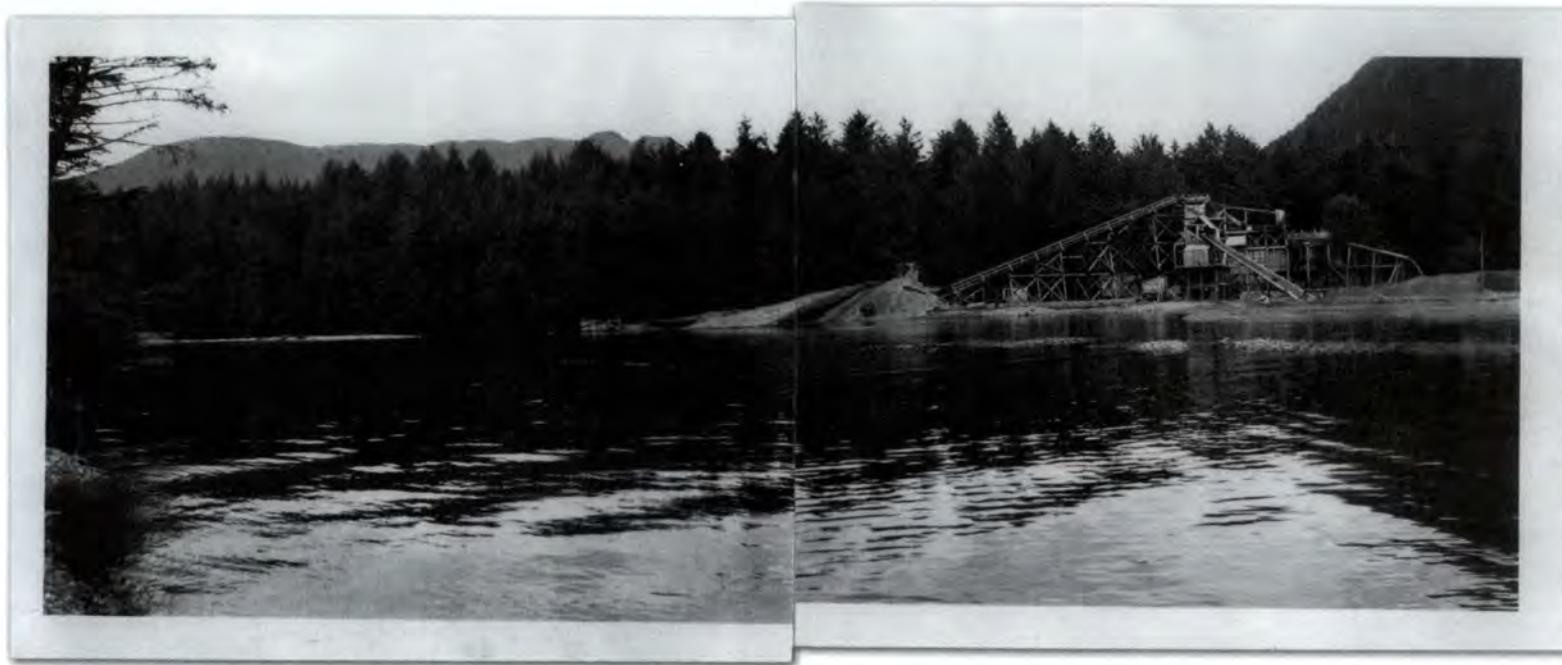


Figure 73: The Navy gravel plant at the mouth of the Indian River in March 1941. The plant supplied gravel for the concrete used in military construction. Gravel was also removed from the park shoreline.

Among the troops arriving in Sitka in 1941 were two military units that would be assigned to active duty in the park. Both were National Guard units called into active duty and sent to Alaska via Fort Lewis, Washington. The 205th CA (AA), a coast artillery anti-aircraft unit from Washington State, arrived in Sitka in August 1941. Company K of the 201st Infantry Regiment, a field artillery regiment from West Virginia, transferred to Fort Lewis in August 1941, arriving in Alaska that September.

The first references to troop activity in the park occurred in October 1941 when Custodian Miller reported that a guard tent had been established in the park for the men protecting the gravel plant against sabotage.⁹ By December the 205th CA (AA) had established a temporary antiaircraft observation post in the monument, near the replica blockhouse and Company K of

VERY FEW COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BECAUSE OF THE ARMY TAKING OVER PART OF THE MONUMENT AND CLOSING IT TO TRAVEL. THE PEOPLE SEE IT AS A NECESSITY [SIC] IN OUR PROGRAM TO WIN THE WAR AND CHEERFULLY GIVE UP THIS PRIVILEGE AS THEY ARE DOING MANY OTHERS TO FURTHER THE CAUSE FOR VICTORY.¹⁰

TWO SOLDIERS LOST THEIR LIVES BY DROWNING AND ONE NAVAL ENLISTED MAN CAME CLOSE TO LOSING HIS, RECENTLY WHEN THE INDIAN RIVER BRIDGE ON THE SAW MILL CREEK ROAD OUT OF SITKA WASHED OUT IN A TERRIFIC DOWNPOUR. THE STORM, DURING WHICH THREE INCHES OF RAIN FELL IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, HAD CONTINUED ALL DAY AND THE BRIDGE WAS BEING PATROLLED BY THE SOLDIERS, WHO WARNED APPROACHING CARS AND PEOPLE THAT IT WAS UNSAFE. THE BRIDGE IS LOCATED ABOUT A MILE AND A HALF FROM TOTEM POLE ROAD, ACCORDING TO REPORT. SHORTLY BEFORE THE STRUCTURE GAVE WAY, A MAN DROVE UP TO THE APPROACH, SAW THE DANGER AND JUMPED FROM HIS CAR JUST AS THE BRIDGE APPROACH AND CAR WENT DOWN. THE BODY OF ONE OF THE SOLDIERS HAS BEEN RECOVERED.

ALASKA WEEKLY, NOVEMBER 20, 1942

the 201st Infantry had moved the tent occupied by the gravel operation's guards to higher ground in response to tide-influenced flooding.¹¹ Other facilities mentioned included a mess hall, barracks, and fire control station. Although no physical evidence has ever been found, one park service document suggests that there may also have been an ammunition dump within the park.¹²

On May 30th 1942, under the command of Colonel John E. Copeland, then Commanding Officer of Fort Ray, the 205th abruptly occupied 14 acres of the park, closing it off to civilian use. The closed area included "that part of the monument on the west side of the Indian River, from the second cross footpath to the mouth of the river." Although he had known in advance that the military might request use of the park, Miller described the actual takeover as "sudden and unexpected." As he later sat preparing his report on these events, Miller noted that reports of an attack on Dutch Harbor were just being received.¹³

At some point during the occupation of the park a series of earthen gun emplacements or revetments, still faintly visible today, were constructed along the park shoreline. The revetments are clearly two different sizes. Five of the features are consistent with 50mm machine guns, but two larger, horseshoe-shaped features may have held 37mm antiaircraft guns.¹⁴

Although the park remained far from active military engagement, two servicemen did lose their lives while on duty there. In September 1942 a torrential flood, perhaps intensified by the dredging, tore through the park, washing out a suspension



Figure 74: Navy enlisted men visit the park during World War II.

footbridge and a Navy-built vehicle bridge. The men, identified only as Sergeant Riley and Private Westfall, had been patrolling the area to warn approaching cars and people away from the area and were apparently on the footbridge when it gave way. Frank Smith, a Navy enlisted man, was also washed into the river but survived. The force of the flood caused considerable damage to the park, including washing the Trader Legend pole, the only totem pole ever displayed on the eastern side of the park, out to sea. A Navy boat later recovered the pole and towed it back to the park where soldiers from Fort Ray helped pull it to dry ground.¹⁵

The rest of the war passed fairly quietly for the park. By 1943 the pace of military construction, and the need for gravel, was winding down. In August 1943, about the time that civilian travel restrictions were eased, the park was reopened to the public and recreational use of the park slowly began to resume. Between February and May 1944, soldiers from Fort Ray removed the temporary buildings and attempted to restore the impacted areas of the monument. Indian River, however, could never be restored to its pre-war condition. Efforts to monitor and control erosion, including an extensive rip rap installation in the 1980s, continue today.

Notes

Administrative Summary

¹ The commissioners, appointed by Governor Lyman Knapp, were Henry Haydon (Secretary of Alaska), O.W. Farenholt (U.S. Navy), and John Green Brady, a future Alaska governor. Brady would shape the park's future in another way as well, by introducing a collection of totem poles to the park trails; Joan M. Antonson and William S. Hanable, *Sitka National Historical Park Administrative History* (National Park Service, 1987). Hereafter: *Administrative History*.

² Antonson and Hanable, *Administrative History*; Holly Smith-Middleton and Arnold R. Alanen, *Impressions of Indian River: A Landscape History of Sitka National Historical Park* (National Park Service, 1998).

³ *Ibid.*; A minimal salary for an Acting Custodian was authorized beginning in 1919.

⁴ *General Management Plan: Sitka National Historical Park* (National Park Service, 1998).

⁵ Antonson and Hanable, *Administrative History*, includes a list of key park administrative staff. See also: *Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials* (National Park Service, 1991); Robert H. Keller and Michael F. Turek, *American Indians and National Parks* (University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1998), 252.

Introduction

¹ See attached bibliography for complete references: *An Archeological Overview and Assessment of Sitka National Historical Park* by Robert C. Betts (1999); *General Management Plan, Sitka National Historical Park, Alaska* by Sitka National Historical Park (1998); *Impressions of Indian River; A Landscape History of Sitka National Historical Park* by Holly Smith-Middleton and Arnold R. Alanen (1998); *Traditional Tlingit Use of Sitka National Historical Park* by Thomas Thornton (1998); *Physical and Cultural Landscapes of Sitka National Historical Park, Sitka, Alaska* by Gregory P. Chaney, Robert C. Betts, and Dee Longenbaugh (1995); *Administrative History of Sitka National Historical Park* by Joan M. Antonson and William S. Hanable (1987); *Historic Structure Reports for House 105 and the Old School – Administrative, Physical History and Analysis Sections, Sitka National Historical Park, Sitka* by Paul C. Cloyd (1983); *Historic Structure Report, Administrative and Architectural Data Sections, Russian Bishop's House* by Paul C. Cloyd (1982).

Steamer Day: Early Tourism in Sitka

¹ John Muir, *Travels in Alaska*. (Boston, 1915), 13.

² Roderick Nash, "Tourism, Parks and the Wilderness Idea in the History of Alaska." *Alaska in Perspective*, Volume IV, No. 1, 1981. Hereafter: *Tourism*.

³ 1891 steamship company excursion pamphlet. Alaska State Library, Historical Collection, MS102.

⁴ Ted C. Hinckley, "The Inside Passage: A Popular Gilded Age Tour." *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, April 1965.

⁵ 1891 steamship company excursion pamphlet. Alaska State Library, Historical Collection, MS102.

⁶ Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, *Appleton's Guide-Book to Alaska and the Northwest Coast* (Appleton and Company, 1893). Hereafter: *Appleton's*.

⁷ William H. Goetzmann and Kay Sloan, *Looking Far North: The Harriman Expedition to Alaska, 1899*. (Viking Press, NY, 1982). Hereafter: *Looking Far North*; John Burroughs and John Muir et al, *Alaska, The Harriman Expedition, 1899* (Dover Publications, NY); Frank Norris, *Gawking at the Midnight Sun: The Tourist in Early Alaska*. Alaska Historical Commission Studies in History No. 170, June 1985. Hereafter: *Gawking*.

⁸ Sources of information on the Alaska Bureau can be found at the Washington State Historical Society (Tacoma), The Museum of History and Industry (Seattle), and the Seattle Public Library.

⁹ 1889 newspaper clipping, Sheldon Jackson Scrapbook, Presbyterian Historical Society. Microfilm copy, Stratton Library, Sheldon Jackson College.

¹⁰ Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, *Alaska: Its Southern Coast and the Sitkan Archipelago* (Lathrop and Company, Boston, 1885). Hereafter: *Alaska*; also Scidmore, *Appleton's Guide*; Mrs. Septima Collis, *A Woman's Trip to Alaska: being an account of a voyage through the inland seas of the Sitkan Archipelago, in 1890* (Cassell Publishing, New York, 1890). Hereafter: *A Woman's Trip*; Bushrod James, *Alaska: Its Neglected Past, Its Brilliant Future* (Sunshine Publishing, Philadelphia, 1897); Abby Johnson Woodman, *Picturesque Alaska: A Journal of a Tour Among the Mountains, Seas, and Islands of the Northwest from San Francisco to Sitka* (Houghton Mifflin and Company, Boston, 1889). Hereafter: *Picturesque Alaska*.

¹¹ *The Alaskan*, July 4, 1896; June 5, 1897.

¹² *The Alaskan*, June 13, 1896, June 16, 1899.

¹³ For discussion of the evolution of park boundaries see Holly Smith-Middleton and Arnold R. Alanen, *Impressions of Indian River: A Landscape History of Sitka National Historical Park* (National Park Service, 1998) and Joan M. Antonson and William S. Hanable, *Sitka National Historical Park Administrative History* (National Park Service, 1987).

¹⁴ *Alaska Weekly*, November 22, 1929.

¹⁵ "Journal of a Woman Visitor to Southeast Alaska, ca. 1890." Manuscript 4-07-004, Alaska State Library, Historical Collection.

¹⁶ Scidmore, *Alaska*, 189-190.

¹⁷ Scidmore, *Alaska*, 192.

¹⁸ Abby Woodman, *Picturesque Alaska*.

¹⁹ Collis, *A Woman's Trip*.

Postcard Views of Lovers' Lane:

¹ Most of the information for this chapter comes from the leading source on Alaska postcards; *Directory, Alaska Postcards 1897-1940*, by John H. Grainger (Tongass Publishing, 1992).

² Randall C. Jimerson, *Reference Guide to Manuscript Group S1206: The John G. Brady Papers* (Beinecke Library, Yale University, 1978).

³“Guide to Dating Curt Teich Postcards” and “Curt Teich Postcard Archives Geographic Index” (Curt Teich Postcard Archives, Wauconda, Illinois).

⁴Robert N. DeArmond, *From Sitka's Past* (Sitka Historical Society, 1995).

⁵The print shop press and numerous samples of products are housed in the Stratton Library archives, Stratton Library, Sheldon Jackson College.

⁶John H. Grainger unpublished manuscript; “Photo Postcards.” Author’s copy.

⁷*The Alaskan*, March 14, 1891.

⁸Alice Harriman (apparently no relation to the E.H. Harriman family) was a noted author who lived in Seattle in the early 1900s and headed her own publishing company. The poem “Totem Poles” was also published in *Wilt Thou Not Sing*, a book of Harriman’s poems published by The Alice Harriman Company. The postcard (PCA255) and book are on file at the Alaska State Library.

⁹*The Alaskan*, July 1901; The Presbyterian mission also operated a tourist wagon, apparently several years before Haley; Robert N. DeArmond file, Sitka National Historical Park archives.

¹⁰Smith-Middleton and Alanen, *Impressions*, 166; *The Alaskan*, August 19, 1899; *The Verstovian*, January 1925.

¹¹*The Alaskan Weekly*, September 26, 1924; Thomas Thornton, *Traditional Tlingit Use of Sitka National Historical Park* (National Park Service, 1998); Beginning around 1920 the Photo Shop Studio of Sitka sold postcard-sized photographs of many features of local interest, including the trees; Smith-Middleton and Alanen, *Impressions*, 209, 210, 222-223.

¹²Joan Antonson and William Hanable, *Sitka National Historical Park Administrative History* (National Park Service, 1987), 74-75; Smith-Middleton and Alanen, *Impressions*, 213-214; Robert N. DeArmond file, Sitka National Historical Park archives.

¹³*The Alaskan*, July 12, 1890.

¹⁴*The Alaskan*, September 12, 1891.

¹⁵Smith-Middleton and Alanen, *Impressions*, 211.

Sylvan Twilight: Artists’ Views

¹Kessler E. Woodman, *Painting in the North* (Anchorage Museum of History and Art, 1993). Hereafter: *Painting*.

²Robert N. DeArmond, “Graphic Artists in Sitka”, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Alaska Historical Society, Sitka, 1989; Kenneth DeRoux, *The Gentle Craft: Watercolor Views of Alaska, 1778-1974* (Alaska State Museum, 1990). Hereafter: *Gentle Craft*.

³Thomas Thornton, *Traditional Tlingit Use of Sitka National Historical Park* (National Park Service, 1998) (44, 73). Hereafter: *Traditional Tlingit Use*.

⁴DeRoux, *Gentle Craft*.

⁵*Ibid.*; Transcription of the catalogue of the exhibition of the District of Alaska at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis MO, 1904: “Paintings and Photographs of Alaska Scenery, Etc.” (page 148 of original). On file in the T.J. Richardson [artist] file, Anchorage Museum of History and Art.

⁶Emily Carr journal, Volume XIII 1937-40. MSS 2181, Box 3, File 7, British Columbia Archives, Victoria. Although the journal entry indicates that Richardson was from New York, he was actually from Minneapolis.

⁷ Doris Shadbolt, *Emily Carr*. (Douglas and McIntyre, Vancouver, 1990); See also 1999 British Columbia Provincial Museum online exhibit of Carr's totem pole paintings "To the Totem Forests" at internet address www.emilycarr.org.

⁸ Kessler Woodman, *Painting*, 55.

⁹ Information on the Alaska Art Project was compiled by the Anchorage Museum of History and Art for a 1987-1988 exhibition titled "Work's Progress Administration's Alaska Art Project, 1937: A Retrospective Exhibition." The information is presented in an exhibit catalog by the same name. Exhibit curators were Lynn Binek, Karl E. Fortess and Merlin F. Pollock; Inventory records for the McKinley Park Hotel art collection: Denali National Park and Preserve Archives, DENA 5789.

¹⁰ Robert N. DeArmond file, Sitka National Historical Park archives; *The Alaskan*, November 19, 1887.

¹¹ Sharon Bohn Gmelch, "Elbridge Warren Merrill of Sitka, Alaska." *History of Photography*, Volume 19, No. 2, Summer 1995; Scott Chambers, "Elbridge Warren Merrill." *Alaska Journal*, Volume 7, No. 15, Summer 1977; Henry C. Kyllingstad, "A Glimpse into Sitka's History Through the Photography of E.W. Merrill" (Sheldon Jackson College, 1989).

¹² Although the earliest poems included here are just over 100 years old, these are certainly not the first poetic expressions of Sitka or the park. Tlingit culture is known for a thousands-of-years old tradition of oral literature, including stories, songs, and oratory that are sometimes described in terms used to characterize poetry. These clan-owned stories and songs differ significantly from European style poetry in their governance by cultural protocol. Some songs are recognized as having special sensitivity. This would include songs of mourning and loss associated with the park as the site of the Battle of 1804. Russian culture also has a tradition of folk poetry and song. The Russian *promyshlenniki* recorded their poetic feelings about life in Alaska in folk songs. The "Song of Baranof" shows an optimistic perspective on expansion into Alaska in 1799. Written nine years later, "The Song to Baranov" expresses a different perspective on Tlingit-Russian relations in Sitka, retelling a tense episode involving Tlingit canoes surrounding Castle Hill and also Baranov's return to Sitka. Although there are differing translation, both songs are translated in Alexander Doll and R. A. Pierce, "Songs of Russian America," *Alaska Review*, Volume 4(1), Spring/Summer 1970, 24-32.

¹³ "Ode to the Summer Steamer Girl." *The Alaskan*, December 6, 1890.

¹⁴ Maurice E. Kenealy and Walter B. Porter, *Poems on Alaska: The Land of the Midnight Sun* (Alaska Print, Sitka, 1891).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *The Alaskan*, May 17, 1890.

¹⁷ *The Alaskan*, October 5, 1889.

¹⁸ *Alaska, Land of Now* (Seattle, 1923).

¹⁹ *The Verstovian*, February 1943.

²⁰ *One Hundred Years of Alaska Poetry* (The Poetry Society of Alaska, Inc., 1966).

²¹ *The Alaskan*, August 19, 1899.

²² *The Verstovian*, January 1925.

Collecting to Preserve

¹ *The Alaskan*, December 28, 1889.

² Museum price list reprinted in: Rosemary Carlton, *Sheldon Jackson the Collector* (Alaska State Museum, 1999), 47.

³ *The Oregonian*, October 15, 1885; *The Alaskan*, December 26, 1885.

⁴ *The Alaskan*, November 7, 1891.

⁵ Lloyd MacDowell, *Alaska Indian Basketry* (Alaska Steamship Company, Seattle, 1904). 1977 reproduction by The Shorey Book Store, Seattle.

⁶ John Burroughs and John Muir et al., *Alaska, The Harriman Expedition, 1899* (Dover Publications, NY), William H. Goetzmann and Kay Sloan, *Looking Far North: The Harriman Expedition to Alaska, 1899* (Viking Press, NY, 1982).

⁷ Scidmore, *Alaska*, 58-59.

⁸ Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts*. (University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1985). Hereafter: *Captured Heritage*.

⁹ *The Verstovian*, November 1927; *The Alaskan*, July 4, 1903; *The Alaskan*, July 21, 1900.

¹⁰ Sources on Alaskan collecting that reference Sitka include Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage*; Ted C. Hinckley, *The Canoe Rocks: Alaska's Tlingit and the Euramerican Frontier, 1800-1912* (University Press of America, 1996); Rosemary Carlton, *Sheldon Jackson the Collector* (Alaska State Museums, 1999); Nora Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, *Haa Kusteeyí: Our Culture, Tlingit Life Stories* (University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1994), 549-561.

¹¹ Construction of the concrete museum began in 1895. It was completed and opened for visitors in 1897; The idea of a society began in 1887. It was formally organized in 1888 with a recorded constitution and by-laws. The society was known by several names. For example, membership certificates bear the name "Alaska Society of History and Ethnology," but the name given in the organization constitution is the "Society of Alaskan Natural History and Ethnology."

¹² Scidmore, *Alaska*, 162.

¹³ Chief Saanaheit to Governor Brady, July 28, 1901. RG 101 File: "Misc 1901-1903 (3)", letter 59, Alaska State Archive, Juneau. See also letter number 58, W.L. Barnard to Governor Brady, July 28, 1901.

¹⁴ More research is needed regarding the canoe that was displayed in the park. Although Saanaheit's initial donation included a 47-foot long war canoe, Robert N. DeArmond suggests that it was displayed in Sitka's downtown "Totem Square" at the foot of Lincoln Street, and never placed at the park. *The Alaskan* reported that E.W. Merrill was repainting "the old war canoe that for a lengthy period slumbered beside the old Naval hospital" in early 1906. If this was Saanaheit's canoe it apparently had not been installed at the park before then. Early photos do show a canoe displayed with the Saanaheit pole and over time it can be seen gradually disintegrating in place, perhaps by 1913. Records indicate that Brady collected a second large canoe, this one measuring 54 feet long, which he transported along with the totem poles for display at the St. Louis and Portland expositions. Photographs show this canoe exhibited at both expositions. It has a distinctive solid black midsection and prow design that is clearly different from both the canoe displayed with the Saanaheit pole at the park and the canoe at Totem Square. Of course painted

designs are easily changed, but it also appears that the canoe at the park may have been smaller than the other two. By the Portland exposition, the exhibited canoe shows increased breakage, particularly on one end. It is not thought to have been returned to Alaska. Summarized from the Robert N. DeArmond file, Sitka National Historical Park archives, and project photographs.

¹⁵ Saanaheit to Brady, July 28, 1901.

¹⁶ Brady is thought to have been successful in obtaining poles from the villages of Old Kasaan, Tuxekan, Suqwan, Klawock, Kwahelis, and Klinkwan. The Saanaheit pole did not travel to St. Louis; it remained in place at the park. Judith Scherer research file, Sitka National Historical Park archives. A detailed historical study of the park totem pole collection is presently underway and expected to be completed by 2001.

¹⁷ Brady research files, Sitka National Historical Park archives (SITK 14608: RG 51, Box 1 of 2, folder 12).

¹⁸ See Chapter 5 ("New Traditions: The Cottage Community") note 13.

¹⁹ Non-Native CCC workers may also have participated in the CCC totem pole carving. Robert N. DeArmond file, Sitka National Historical Park archives.

²⁰ Merrill to Riggs, July 12, 1920. RG 101, Series 130-42, National Parks and Monuments, 1920. Alaska State Archives.

New Traditions: The Cottage Community

¹ Since its inception, the Sitka Presbyterian mission has had a number of different names, sometimes overlapping in use. Based on several published "From Sitka's Past" newspaper columns by Robert N. DeArmond (1986 and 1987, on file at Kettleon Library, Sitka), and research by the staff of the Sheldon Jackson Museum and Stratton Library, Sheldon Jackson College, these names included:

- Sitka Mission School (1878)
- Sheldon Jackson Institute (1881 to 1884)
- Sitka Industrial Home for Boys (1882)
- Sitka Industrial Training School for Indian Children (1882)
- Sitka Industrial Training School (1884 to 1909)
- Sheldon Jackson School (1909)
- Sheldon Jackson High School or Sheldon Jackson School (1917 to 1944)
- Sheldon Jackson Junior College (1944 to 1967)
- Sheldon Jackson College (1967 to present).

² *The Alaskan*, November 7, 1885.

³ *Home Mission Monthly*, November 1998.

⁴ *The North Star/The Northern Light*, Volume IX, No.5, August 1898.

⁵ *Home Mission Monthly*, December 1888

⁶ *The Alaskan*, August 3, 1895.

⁷ The Mission plat of 1923 shows plans for more Cottage lots than were eventually developed. See Holly Smith-Middleton and Arnold R. Alanen, *Impressions of Indian River: A Landscape History of Sitka National Historical Park* (National Park Service, 1998), 172; "Map of the Mission Cottage Settlement" by Gilbert Truitt, redrawn in

Thomas Thornton, *Traditional Tlingit Use of Sitka National Historical Park* (National Park Service, 1998), 59. Hereafter: *Traditional Tlingit Use*; Gilbert Truitt interview, December 1998, Sitka National Historical Park Jukebox Project.

⁸ Cyrus Peck Sr. interview, 1991, Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center (VT-91-1-B).

⁹ "Profile of the Cottage Community" in: Thornton, *Traditional Tlingit Use*; Robert N. DeArmond file, Sitka National Historical Park archives.

¹⁰ *The Alaskan*, October 1, 1887; Mark Jacobs Jr. interview, December 1998, Sitka National Historical Park Jukebox Project. Materials alone for the 1910 John Newell home on Kelly Street cost more than \$2,000. From: "The John Newell House" by Martin Strand. In: *Historical Houses in Sitka* (Margaret Peterson and Frances Lunas Ed., Arrowhead Press, Sitka, 1978).

¹¹ Thornton, *Traditional Tlingit Use*; Gilbert Truitt interview, December 1998, Sitka National Historical Park Jukebox Project.

¹² Thornton, *Traditional Tlingit Use*; Fred Hope interview, December 1998, Sitka National Historical Park Jukebox Project; Dorothy Theodoratus, *Sitka Tribe of Alaska Historic Preservation Plan* (Sitka Tribe of Alaska, 1995).

¹³ A number of men from the Cottages worked with Merrill on the project, including John Willard, Thomas Cook, Don Cameron, Ray James, Cyrus Peck, Albert James, and George Bartlett. Other men identified may also have been associated with the Cottages. Sharon Bohn Gmelch, "Elbridge Warren Merrill of Sitka, Alaska." *History of Photography*, Volume 19, No. 2, Summer 1995, 164.

¹⁴ *The Thlinget*, March 1909, October 1909, December 1909.

¹⁵ *The Thlinget*, April 1909; Cyrus Peck Sr. interview, 1991, Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center (VT-91-1-B).

¹⁶ Cyrus Peck Sr. interview, 1991, Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center (VT-91-1-B).

¹⁷ *The Alaskan*, July 4, 1896.

¹⁸ The unusual building shown in Figure 66 has been linked to the Cottage community but at least one other source gives a conflicting location for its location. Further research is needed.

¹⁹ *The Alaskan*, November 11, 1899.

²⁰ *The Alaskan*, November 11, 1899; Cyrus Peck Sr. interview, 1991, Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center (VT-91-1-B); Map of the Cottage Settlement, after original by Gilbert Truitt. Reproduced in: *Traditional Tlingit Use of Sitka National Historical Park*. Thomas F. Thornton, 1998.

²¹ Merrill collection, Stratton Library Archives, Sheldon Jackson College; *The Alaskan*, March 2, 1907; *The Thlinget*, November 1908.

²² Gilbert Truitt interview, 1991, Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center (VT-91-1-H); Gilbert Truitt interview, December 1998, Sitka National Historical Park Jukebox Project.

²³ *The Thlinget*, March 1909.

²⁴ *The Thlinget*, December 1910; Isabela Brady interview, Thornton, *Traditional Tlingit Use*; Gilbert Truitt interview, December 1998, Sitka National Historical Park Jukebox Project.

²⁵ Gilbert Truitt interview, December 1998, Sitka National Historical Park Jukebox Project; Gilbert Truitt interview, 1991, Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center (VT-91-1-H); U.S. Navy aerial photograph USN26A. Original at Sitka Supervisor's Office, U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Sitka. Enlargement at Sitka National Historical Park. Part of a series taken for U.S.G.S. between 1926 and 1929; Gilbert Truitt and Isabella Brady interviews, Thornton, *Traditional Tlingit Use*.

²⁶ William Brady interview, 1990, Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center (VT901B); Cyrus Peck Sr. interview, 1991, Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center (VT-91-1-B); Nora Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, *Haa Shuka, Our Ancestors: Tlingit Oral Narratives* (Sealaska Heritage Foundation and University of Washington Press, 1987); Andrew Hope III, *Founders of the Alaska Native Brotherhood* (Sitka, 1975); Cyrus Peck Sr., *The Tides People: Thlingit Indians of South Alaska* (Juneau Douglas High School, 1986); Ellen Hope Hays interviews, 1990, Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center (VT-90-1A, VT-90-1F); *The Verstovian*, 1914.

²⁷ Thornton, *Traditional Tlingit Use* (National Park Service, 1998); Cyrus Peck Sr. interview, 1991, Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center (VT-91-1-B). According to Gilbert Truitt, Cottage Hall directly inspired the building of the ANB Hall, with Peter Simpson's encouragement (personal communication, March 1999).

²⁸ *The Verstovian*, February 1916.

²⁹ Cyrus Peck Sr. interview, 1991, Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center (VT-91-1-B).

³⁰ Ellen Hope Hays interview, December 1998, Sitka National Historical Park Jukebox Project.

³¹ Louise Brady interview, December 1998, Sitka National Historical Park Jukebox Project; Ellen Hope Hays interview, Thornton, *Traditional Tlingit Use*, 118.

³² The Sitka visitor center was designed by noted NPS architect Cecil John Doty. As of 1999, the Sitka visitor center is being evaluated for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Sarah Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type* (Draft, National Park Service, 1999); Joan M. Antonson and William S. Hanable, *Sitka National Historical Park Administrative History*, (National Park Service, 1987); Holly Smith-Middleton and Arnold R. Alanen, *Impressions of Indian River: A Landscape History of Sitka National Historical Park* (National Park Service, 1998); Ellen Hope Hays interview, December 1998, Sitka National Historical Park Jukebox Project.

World War II at Sitka National Historical Park

¹ Approximately 14 acres of the park, subsequently known as the "Sitka Defense Site", was formally transferred from the Department of the Interior to the War Department on July 14, 1942. It was transferred back to the Department of the Interior on July 10, 1947.

² Fort Ray began as a Navy seaplane base in 1937. It was re-designated as a Naval Operating Base in 1942 and a Naval Air Station in 1943. Fort Rousseau was constructed between 1941 and 1944. The causeway was constructed between 1941 and 1943. "World War II in Alaska," *Alaska Geographic*, Volume 22, No. 4, 1995; See also "Sitka's WWII Page" a web page by Matthew Hunter: <http://mchunter1.tripod.com/sitkaww2.html>. The Sitka Naval Operating Base and U.S. Army Coastal Defenses National Historical Landmark was designated in August 1986.

³ Bonnie Houston, 1995 National Park Service manuscript, "Sitka National Historic Monument Land Use History: 1939-1945." Hereafter: "Monument Land Use History"; Siems Drake Puget Sound, a composite of three experienced northwest construction contractors, was awarded a major contract for Alaska defense construction in 1939. Their first projects included base construction at Sitka and Kodiak. Later, the 22nd Naval Construction Battalion (22 Seabees) took over the gravel operation.

⁴ Houston, "Monument Land Use History."

⁵ Annual Report, Sitka National Monument, Fiscal Year 1941, dated July 9, 1941. Sitka National Historical Park archives.

⁶ Superintendent's Monthly Narrative Report (Hereafter: SMR), June 1942. Sitka National Historical Park archives.

⁷ SMR, January 1940, December 1941.

⁸ SMR, June 1942.

⁹ SMR, October 1941.

¹⁰ SMR, June 1942.

¹¹ SMR, December 1941.

¹² Houston, "Monument Land Use History: 1939-1945," 25; Superintendent Frank Been, memorandum dated July 23, 1942: "Military authorities have taken over much of Sitka National Monument for gun positions and ammunition dumps."

¹³ SMR, May 1942; The unit designation of the 205th changed during the war. Under orders effective April 17, 1942, some elements of the 205th CA regiment units sent to Alaska were formally separated from the rest of the regiment (which had been sent to Camp Haan in California), and incorporated into the 420th Coast Artillery Battalion (Composite) (Anti-aircraft). There was confusion about the unit designation; Superintendent Miller continued to refer to the unit as the 205th.

¹⁴ Personal communication, Alex Holder and Glen Williford, Coast Defense Study Group, July of 1998.

¹⁵ SMR, September 1942; *Alaska Weekly*, November 20th, 1942.

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Front Cover: E.W. Merrill photograph, Ketchikan Museum Department, Tongass Historical Museum, Ketchikan (88-1.89-38).

Back Cover: "Totem Poles. Lewis and Clark Exposition, Portland." Stratton Library, Sheldon Jackson College (Special collections-miscellaneous, 88065, #35).

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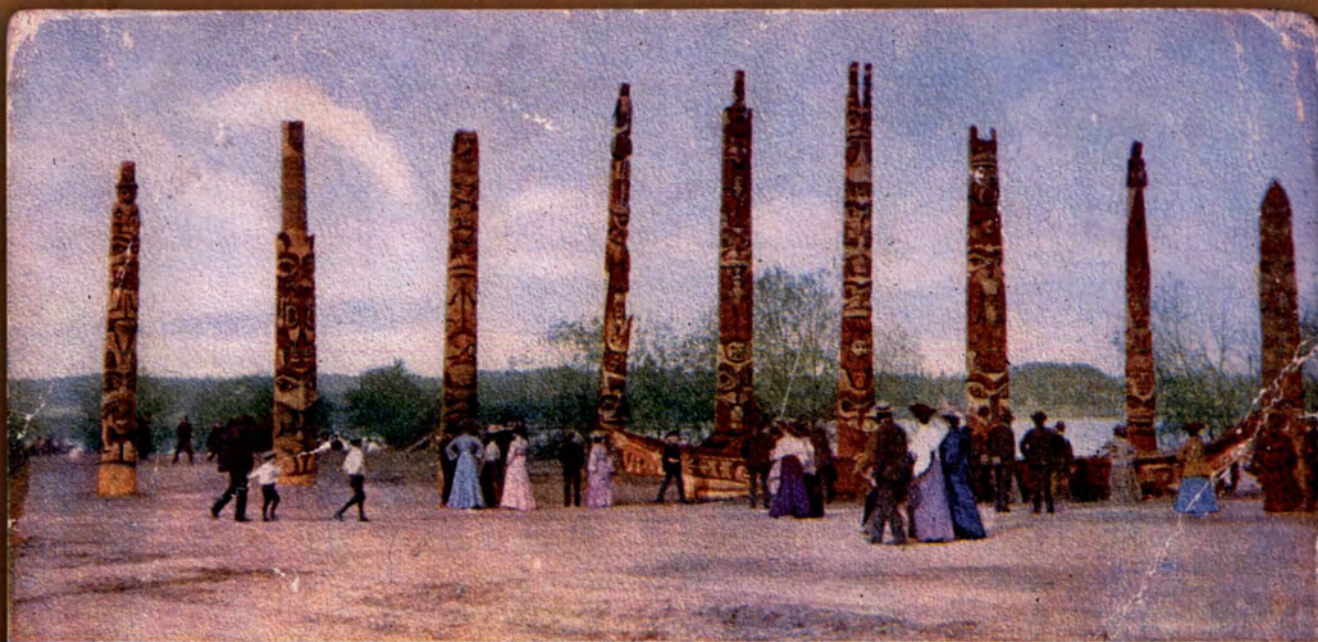
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1652 Totem Poles. Lewis & Clark Exposition. Portland.

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