
National Park Service
Cultural Landscape Inventory
2020



Visitor Center
Sitka National Historical Park

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I. Inventory Unit Summary and Site Plan

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory Overview

Purpose and Goals of the CLI

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI) is an evaluated inventory of all significant landscapes in units of the national park system in which the National Park Service has or plans to acquire any enforceable legal interest. Landscapes documented through the CLI are those that individually meet criteria set forth in the National Register of Historic Places such as historic sites, historic designed landscapes, and historic vernacular landscapes or those that are contributing elements of properties that meet the criteria. In addition, landscapes that are managed as cultural resources because of law, policy, or decisions reached through the park planning process even though they do not meet the National Register criteria, are also included in the CLI.

The CLI serves three major purposes. First, it provides the means to describe cultural landscapes on an individual or collective basis at the park, regional, or service-wide level. Secondly, it provides a platform to share information about cultural landscapes across programmatic areas and concerns and to integrate related data about these resources into park management. Thirdly, it provides an analytical tool to judge accomplishment and accountability.

The legislative, regulatory, and policy direction for conducting the CLI include:

- *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 USC 470h-2(a)(1))*. Each Federal agency shall establish...a preservation program for the identification, evaluation, and nomination to the National Register of Historic Places...of historic properties...
- *Executive Order 13287: Preserve America, 2003*. Sec. 3(a)...Each agency with real property management responsibilities shall prepare an assessment of the current status of its inventory of historic properties required by section 110(a)(2) of the NHPA...No later than September 30, 2004, each covered agency shall complete a report of the assessment and make it available to the Chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Secretary of the Interior... (c) Each agency with real property management responsibilities shall, by September 30, 2005, and every third year thereafter, prepare a report on its progress in identifying...historic properties in its ownership and make the report available to the Council and the Secretary...
- *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Federal Agency Historic Preservation Programs Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, 1998*. Standard 2: An agency provides for the timely identification and evaluation of historic properties under agency jurisdiction or control and/or subject to effect by agency actions (Sec. 110 (a)(2)(A) *Management Policies 2006*. 5.1.3.1 Inventories: The Park Service will (1) maintain and expand the

following inventories...about cultural resources in units of the national park system... Cultural Landscape Inventory of historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes, and historic sites...

- *Cultural Resource Management Guideline, 1997, Release No. 5, page 22 issued pursuant to Director's Order #28.* As cultural resources are identified and evaluated, they should also be listed in the appropriate Service-wide inventories of cultural resources.

Responding to the Call to Action

The year 2016 marks the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. A five-year action plan entitled, “*A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement*” charts a path toward that second century vision by asking Service employees and partners to commit to concrete actions that advance the agency’s mission. The heart of the plan includes four broad themes supported by specific goals and measurable actions.

These themes are: Connecting People to Parks, Advancing the NPS Education Mission, Preserving America’s Special Places, and Enhancing Professional and Organizational Excellence. The Cultural Landscape Inventory relates to three of these themes:

- **Connect People to Parks.** Help communities protect what is special to them, highlight their history, and retain or rebuild their economic and environmental sustainability.
- **Advance the Education Mission.** Strengthen the National Park Service’s role as an educational force based on core American values, historical and scientific scholarship, and unbiased translation of the complexities of the American experience.
- **Preserve America’s Special Places.** Be a leader in extending the benefits of conservation across physical, social, political, and international boundaries in partnership with others.

The national CLI effort directly relates to #3, Preserve America’s Special Places, and specifically to Action #28, “Park Pulse.” Each CLI documents the existing condition of park resources and identifies impacts, threats, and measures to improve condition. This information can be used to improve park priority setting and communicate complex park condition information to the public.

Responding to the Cultural Resources Challenge

The Cultural Resources Challenge (CRC) is an NPS strategic plan that identifies our most critical priorities. The primary objective is to “*Achieve a standard of excellence for the stewardship of the resources that form the historical and cultural foundations*

of the nation, commit at all levels to a common set of goals, and articulate a common vision for the next century.” The CLI contributes to the fulfillment of all five goals of the CRC:

- 1) Provide leadership support, and advocacy for the stewardship, protection, interpretation, and management of the nation’s heritage through scholarly research, science and effective management;*
- 2) Recommit to the spirit and letter of the landmark legislation underpinning the NPS;*
- 3) Connect all Americans to their heritage resources in a manner that resonates with their lives, legacies, and dreams, and tells the stories that make up America’s diverse national identity;*
- 4) Integrate the values of heritage stewardship into major initiatives and issues such as renewable energy, climate change, community assistance and revitalization, and sustainability, while cultivating excellence in science and technical preservation as a foundation for resource protection, management, and rehabilitation; and*
- 5) Attract, support, and retain a highly skilled and diverse workforce, and support the development of leadership and expertise within the National Park Service.*

Scope of the CLI

CLI data is gathered from existing secondary sources found in park libraries, archives, and at NPS regional offices and centers, as well as through on-site reconnaissance. The baseline information describes the historical development and significance of the landscape, placing it in the context of the landscape’s overall significance. Documentation and analysis of the existing landscape identifies character-defining characteristics and features and allows for an evaluation of the landscape’s overall integrity and an assessment of the landscape’s overall condition. The CLI also provides an illustrative site plan that indicates major features within the inventory unit and generates spatial data for Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The CLI also identifies stabilization needs to prevent further deterioration of the landscape and provides data for the Facility Management Software System.

Inventory Unit Description

Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center is in the City and Borough of Sitka on Baranof Island in Southeastern Alaska, overlooking a natural harbor with views of the surrounding islands. Accessible only by boat or airplane, Sitka is the former capital of Russian-America and the District of Alaska (1867-1906) and is currently the fourth largest community in Alaska. The community has deep ties to the sea for transportation, communication, and livelihood. During the summer, most visitors arrive by cruise ship and spend the day touring Sitka by foot or by bus. Most of these visitors access the park via Lincoln Street, passing an assortment of tourist boutiques and historically significant buildings and sites, including the carefully restored Russian Bishop's House, a National Historic Landmark.

Most of the park is thickly forested with Sitka spruce, western hemlock, devils club, salmonberry and other vegetation. The Indian River, which bisects the park, is spanned by a pedestrian bridge. Three-to-eight-foot-wide trails wind through the park's forested area and guide pedestrians to the park's 1804 Battle of Sitka site, the Kiks.ádi Tlingit fort site, totem poles, and the Russian Memorial. The Sitka Sound shoreline forms the southern edge of the park, offering both views and vistas of the surrounding islands. The visitor center and administration facilities dominate the clearing at the entrance of the park with views of Sitka Sound to the south. Public vehicular access and paved walkways are consolidated in this entrance area.

The primary vehicular entrance is accessed from Metlakatla Street and leads into a paved parking area in front of the visitor center. Another larger paved parking area, which accommodates larger vehicles, is situated on a terrace to the north overlooking the visitor center. The entrance to this parking area may be reached by driving farther up Metlakatla Street. Several concrete sidewalks lead visitors from the lower parking lot through the visitor center entry area. A gravel pathway, parallel to the primary vehicular entrance, leads directly to toward the visitor center and then forks: one branch continuing toward the building and the other continuing toward the shore. The former splits again before reaching the building, one path sending the visitor to the main visitor center entrance and the other delivering the visitor to totem hall. The shoreline branch proceeds as a gravel path running parallel to and between the shoreline and visitor center's southern façade before connecting with the entrance to the Totem Trail. The upper and lower parking lots are connected by a curvilinear path of concrete pavers. Beside the visitor center, several circular paving stones allow visitors to cross from the curvilinear path over a narrow, grassy area to the sheltered walkway near the visitor center's restrooms.

Three totem poles are located in the triangular lawn located between the lower parking lot and main visitor center entrance, one is located west of the visitor center's theater wing, another is located near the entrance to the Totem Trail, and a final one is located along the shoreline southeast of the visitor center. To the south of the visitor center is the rocky shoreline of the Sitka Sound. The level of the beach is slightly below the visitor center, which is stabilized against erosion by a barricade of rock and log riprap.

Two clumps of Sitka spruce are planted on either side of the vehicular entrance to the lower parking lot which frame the access point. Lawn is planted in several areas west and south of the

visitor center, primarily in the triangular space between the lower parking lot and visitor center entrance, and along the shoreline connection trail. Native shrubs and forbs are planted in beds surrounding the visitor center's theater wing, totem hall, and resource offices/curatorial wing. A predominantly Sitka spruce forest flanks the eastern side of the visitor center.

Significance Summary

The Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center district is significant at the state level under National Register Criteria A and C for its relationship to the National Park Service Mission 66 era associated with NPS Director Conrad Wirth's ten-year (1956-1966) planning, landscape and architecture program which models "changing visions for national park planning and development." Under Criterion A, events, the district is directly associated with Wirth's innovative vision for national park planning and development in the post-World War II era of increased park visitation. The building and site increased public accessibility to Sitka National Historical Park, creating a central location for interpretation of the park's history and significance and highlighting the conservation of the park's collection of Alaska Native-crafted totem poles. Under Criterion C, art and architecture, the district is an excellent example of a Mission 66-era visitor center, and reflective of the Pacific Northwest Modern and Park Service Modern styles of architecture and landscape architecture. Additionally, it illustrates the collaborative work of two master architects - Cecil Doty and John Morse.

The period of significance for the visitor center commences in 1963 with the preliminary planning for the building, as evidenced by architect Cecil Doty's drawing dated May 3, 1963, and ends in 1977 with the completion of John Morse's north maintenance addition, associated site improvements, and interior modifications to the Cultural Center Wing. The justification for beginning the period of significance with the early date of 1963 encompasses preliminary building planning associated with Doty's initial schematic drawing through the construction documentation as carried forward by John Morse. Further, the end date of 1977 acknowledges Morse's continued involvement in the building starting in 1975 with sketches proposing building expansion and site development, and eventual fruition with his design as implemented in the 1977 construction project.

Integrity Summary

While the district has been modified and the building added to over time, it retains a strong association with the development and interpretation of Sitka National Historical Park. Overall, the district retains integrity of location, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association. Its integrity of design and materials has been moderately impaired by past alterations and additions. For the cultural landscape those modifications include the addition of a curvilinear accessible ramp that links the upper parking lot with the lower parking lot and main visitor center entrance, the infill of the inlet modifying the shoreline, the introduction of a path between Metlakatla St. and the Shoreline Trail, and the creation of a gravel gathering area located near entrance to the Totem Trail.

Condition Assessment Summary

The Sitka Visitor Center landscape is in good condition. There is some wear on the circulation features such as the asphalt in the lower parking lot and the concrete and gravel of the sidewalks and pedestrian paths, but overall, they are being maintained very well. Similarly, some lawn

areas have been worn away by consistent visitor use, especially on a social trail that connects Metlakatla Street with the curvilinear path leading to the upper parking lot that passes by three Sitka spruce trees.

Local Nomenclature

Indigenous peoples of Alaska are referred to as Alaska Natives. Alaska Natives include at least eight distinct cultural groups, including the Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, and Eyak of Southeast Alaska. The Tlingit are the indigenous people of Sheet'ka (the original Tlingit name for Sitka). The Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center is within the traditional territory of the Sheet'ka Tlingit (Sheet'ka Kwaan).

Brief Description of the Tlingit Society

Traditionally, the Tlingit people are a matrilineal society associated with one of two moieties - the raven and the wolf/eagle. A matrilineal society passes ancestral descent through maternal lines. Under each moiety people are organized by association with distinct clans. Raven clans within the Sheet'ka Kwaan (Sitka area) are the Kiks.adi and L'uknax.adi. Within the Wolf (now referred to as Eagle) clan are the Kaagwaantaan and Chookaneidi. Each clan is associated with a crest, which is typically an animal. Clans are further organized into clan houses, which identifies an individual's origin. Clan houses traditionally include building elements that identify the clan house, such as interior or exterior house posts, house screens, and sometimes totems constructed near the clan house.

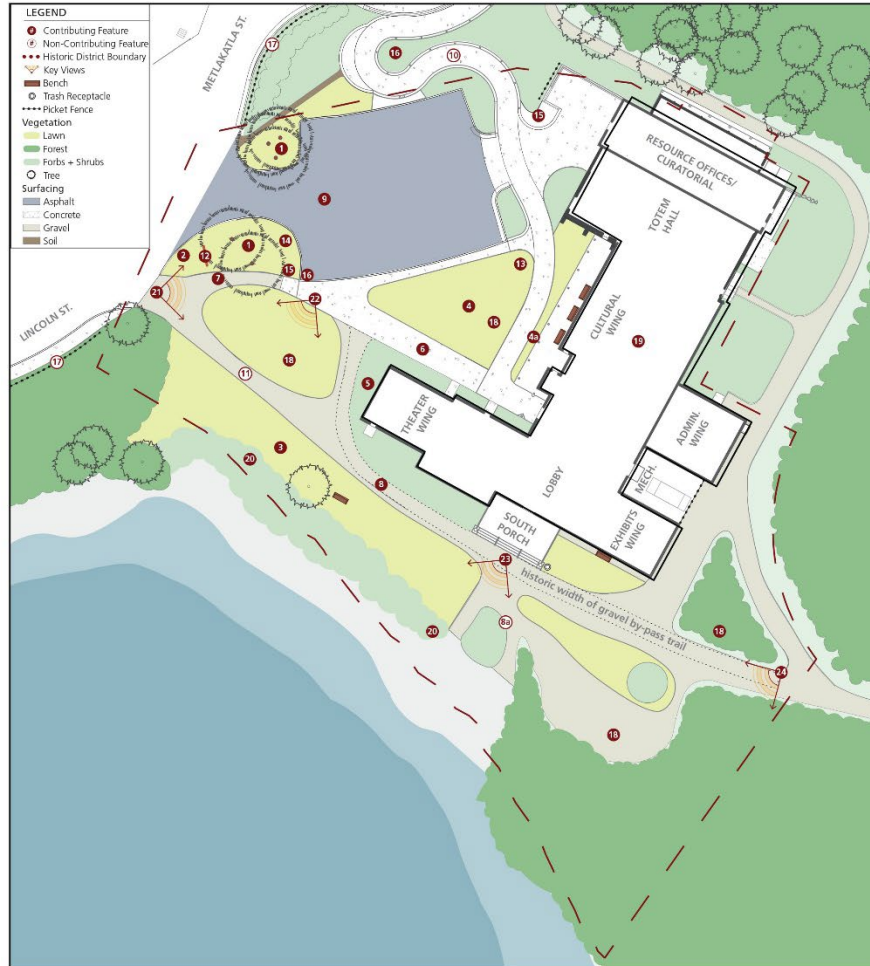
Property Level and CLI Numbers

Inventory Unit Name:	Visitor Center
Property Level:	Landscape
CLI Identification Number:	100092

Park Information

Park Name and Alpha Code:	Sitka National Historical Park (SITK)
Park Organization Code:	9835

Site Plan



LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS AND FEATURES

Vegetation:

- 1 Sitka spruce (5)
- 2 Entrance Lawn
- 3 Shoreline Lawn
- 4 Triangular Lawn
- 4a Porchside Lawn
- 5 Planting Bed

Circulation:

- 6 Entry Sidewalk
- 7 Path - Between Metlakatla St. and Entry Sidewalk
- 8 Shoreline Connection Trail
- 8a Connection to Shore
- 9 Lower Parking Lot
- 10 Accessible Ramp
- 11 Path - Between Metlakatla St. and Building
- By-Pass Trail (non-contributing)

Small-Scale Features:

- 12 Entrance Sign
- 13 Flag Pole
- 14 Bike Rack
- 15 Fire Hydrants
- 16 Catch Basin
- 17 Picket Fence

Buildings and Structures:

- 18 Totem Poles (undetermined)
- 19 Visitor Center
- 20 Rock and Log Riprap

Views and Vistas:

- 21 View toward Visitor Center
- 22 View towards Sitka Sound from Entry Sidewalk
- 23 View from the Visitor Center to Sitka Sound
- 24 View from the start of Totem Trail to Mt. Edgecumbe

0 10 20 30 60 90 Feet
1" = 30'

Sitka National Historical Park
Visitor Center Historic District
landscape Existing Conditions

II. Concurrence Status

Inventory Status: Incomplete

Completion Status Explanatory Narrative: The CLI will be considered complete when the Park Superintendent and Alaska Region CLI Coordinator review and concur with its findings, and it is approved by the Alaska SHPO. That effort will be managed by the AKRO CLI Coordinator.

Concurrence Status:

Park Superintendent Concurrence: See explanatory narrative

Park Superintendent Date of Concurrence: x/xx/xxxx

National Register Concurrence: See explanatory narrative

Date of Concurrence Determination: x/xx/xxxx

III. Geographic Information and Location Map

Inventory Unit Boundary Description:

The boundary of the district includes the building and site associated with the Mission 66 era design and construction of the Sitka Visitor Center. In addition to the building whose boundary is marked by its roofline, the site is defined by landscape characteristics and features such as the northern and western edges of the lower parking lot and its entrance along Metlakatla Street, the southern outline of the historic shoreline including the rock and log riprap and former inlet, the entrance to the Totem Trail near the southeast corner of the visitor center, and the north east corner of the visitor center building. The switchback accessible ramp located north of the lower parking lot is not included in the boundary of the historic district.

State and County:

State: Alaska
County: Sitka

Size (Acres): 4.12

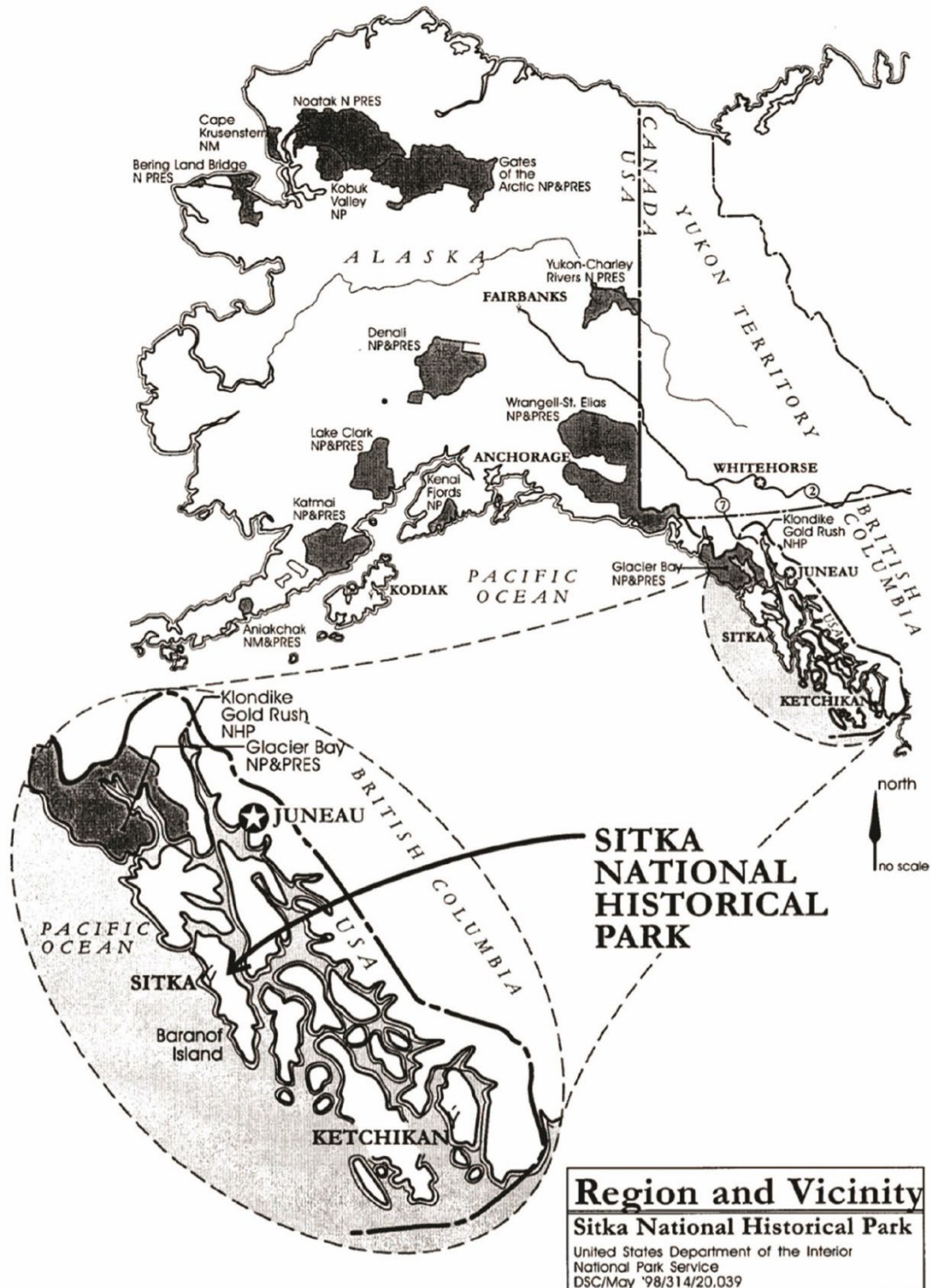
Boundary UTMS:

Source	Type	Datum	Zone	Latitude	Longitude	Boundary Point
ArcGIS	Point	WGS84		57.048575	-135.319238	Center Point

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE INVENTORY

				135 19' 10.86" W	57 2' 54.95" N	Mid-point of curve of former inlet
				135 19' 11.67" W	57 2' 55.06" N	Pedestrian Entry South
				135 19' 11.74" W	57 2' 55.23" N	Pedestrian Entry North
				135 19' 11.11" W	57 2' 55.89" N	Parking NW corner
				135 19' 9.64" W	57 2' 56.07" N	Parking NE corner

Location Map



Sitka National Historical Park is in Sitka, Alaska which lies on the outer shore of Baranof Island in southeast Alaska about 100 miles southwest of Juneau, Alaska. (National Park Service)

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE INVENTORY



The Visitor Center is located on the western side of Sitka National Historical Park just north of Sitka Sound and east of the town center of Sitka, Alaska. (National Park Service)

IV. Management Information

General Management Information

Management Category: Should be Preserved and Maintained (Category B)

Management Category Date: January 6, 2000

Management Category Explanatory Narrative:

The Visitor Center landscape *should* be preserved and maintained since it meets the criteria for Category B due its being eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and being compatible with the park's legislated significance referenced in the General Management Plan (1998) and established by a determination of eligibility (2000). The cultural landscape represents the NPS Mission 66 era, and fosters the ability of visitors to access and understand the park's resources, especially the site of the 1804 Battle of Sitka, the Kiks.ádi Tlingit fort, and the totem poles.

Management Agreement: None

Management Agreement Expiration Date: n/a

NPS Legal Interest

Type of Interest: Fee Simple

Public Access

Type of Access: Unrestricted

V. National Register Information

Existing National Register Status

National Register Landscape Documentation: Undocumented

National Register Explanatory Narrative:

Through a determination of eligibility for the building alone, the Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places by the State Historic Preservation Office on January 6, 2000 (File No.: 3330-1-2 NPS). The draft National Register Determination of Eligibility (August 2, 2012, updated and revised 2016, 2018) states that the building is significant at the state level under National Register Criterion A within the recreation/entertainment, conservation, and ethnic heritage areas of significance. The building is also significant under National Register Criterion C within the areas of art and architecture. The site is being evaluated through this CLI which has found that the site shares the same significance as the building and retains integrity to the period of significance (1963-1977). The draft National Register nomination is being updated concurrently with the development of a Historic Structures Report and this CLI.

National Register Eligibility

National Register Concurrence: Eligible (pending concurrence by SHPO)

Contributing/Individual: Contributing

National Register Classification: District

Significance Level: State

Criteria: A and C

Period of Significance: 1963-1977

Historic Context Theme: Expressing Cultural Values

Subtheme: Landscape Architecture

Facet: NPS Mission 66

Areas of Significance:

Architecture, Art, Conservation, Entertainment/Recreation, Ethnic Heritage: Native American, Landscape Architecture

National Historic Landmark Information

National Historic Landmark Status: no

World Heritage Site Information

World Heritage Site Status: no

Statement of Significance

The Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center district is significant at the state level under National Register Criteria A and C for its relationship to the National Park Service Mission 66 era associated with NPS Director Conrad Wirth's ten-year (1956-1966) planning, landscape and architecture program which models "changing visions for national park planning and development."

Under Criterion A, events, the district is directly associated with former NPS Director Conrad Wirth's ten-year (1956-1966) planning, landscape and architecture program known as Mission 66. The visitor center is associated with Wirth's innovative vision for national park planning and development in the post-World War II era of increased park visitation. The building and site increased public accessibility to Sitka National Historical Park, creating a central location for interpretation of the park's history and significance and highlighting the conservation of the park's collection of Alaska Native-crafted totem poles. By centralizing an exhibit space, theater, cultural center and visitor amenities such as restrooms, parking and trail access, Wirth's vision for park improvements and enhancements under the Mission 66 initiative was exemplified in the Sitka NHP Visitor Center. The Cultural Center Wing of the building emphasized the Alaska Native building and traditional art, with specific involvement by local tribes, and furthered the conservation of native techniques in various areas of traditional art.

Under Criterion C, art and architecture, the district is an excellent example of a Mission 66-era visitor center, and reflective of the Pacific Northwest Modern and Park Service Modern styles of architecture and landscape architecture. Additionally, it illustrates the collaborative work of two master architects - Cecil Doty and John Morse. Preliminary designs were completed by NPS architect Cecil Doty, the principal designer of Mission 66 visitor centers in the western United States. Doty designed a preliminary scheme for the visitor center including many ideas that were incorporated into later schemes. This preliminary scheme responded to the site context by orienting the building lobby towards the water with direct connection to the exterior by way of a prominent porch and deck. He was assisted by landscape architects in the NPS Western Office of Design and Construction, especially in terms of site planning and building location. This scheme also incorporated an original Tlingit clan house screen, specifically selected for the building project. John Morse of John Morse and Associates, a prominent Seattle architect affiliated with the Pacific Northwest style, refined Doty's conceptual design and produced the construction drawings. The combined work of these two accomplished and recognized architects resulted in an outstanding example of a Mission 66 visitor center, one of only a few that embodies a distinctly Pacific Northwest and Alaska Native design influence. In 1977, after John Morse had designed another structure in Alaska for the NPS - the Glacier Bay Lodge at Glacier Bay National Park outside of Gustavus, Alaska - he was engaged by NPS to design an addition to the

Sitka NHP Visitor Center, which included a maintenance building and associated site improvements.

On September 30, 2015, the Keeper of the National Register certified the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPD) for National Park Service Mission 66-era Resources nationwide. This guiding document for the assessment of Mission 66 resources identified several building types specific to the era, including the visitor center. According to Sarah Allaback's study from 2000, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: A History of a Building Type*, the "Mission 66 planners coined the term 'visitor center' to describe a new building type they developed to serve the vastly increased numbers of people (and their cars) who began visiting the national parks following World War II." Typical features of this new building type included automobile parking, simple and direct access to the building, an information desk prominently located in a large lobby, exhibit space, a theater to show interpretive movies, restrooms, and a distinct viewing area to orient visitors towards a selective view. Allaback further stated: "The Mission 66 visitor center remains today as the most complete and significant expression of the Park Service Modern style, and of the planning and design practices developed by the Park Service during the Mission 66-era."

The Sitka NHP Visitor Center has all the common elements of the Mission 66 visitor center, including the prototypical visitor arrival by automobile connected to a choreographed entry sequence. The visitor would park their car in the parking lot and walk via designated concrete sidewalks to the primary lobby entry. Once inside the entrance, visitors would encounter the information desk staffed by a park ranger, experience a selective view to the exterior, peruse the exhibits, watch a short informational movie about the park, and visit the Cultural Center Wing to observe traditional art practices. After exploring the range of activities and acquiring information provided within the building, visitors could then embark on the Totem Trail along the shores of Sitka Sound and the banks of the Indian River. At the Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center, Doty and Morse executed Wirth's vision of a building and site that provided visitor information in an efficient and memorable fashion. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Pacific Northwest Style, a regionally appropriate variant of Parks Service Modernism and Modernism generally that embraces the connection between building and the landscape.

The period of significance for the visitor center commences in 1963 with the preliminary planning for the building, as evidenced by architect Cecil Doty's drawing dated May 3, 1963, and ends in 1977 with the completion of John Morse's north maintenance addition, associated site improvements, and interior modifications to the Cultural Center Wing. The justification for beginning the period of significance with the early date of 1963 encompasses preliminary building planning associated with Doty's initial schematic drawing through the construction documentation as carried forward by John Morse. Further, the end date of 1977 acknowledges Morse's continued involvement in the building starting in 1975 with sketches proposing building expansion and site development, and eventual fruition with his design as implemented in the 1977 construction project.

VI. Chronology and Physical History

Cultural Landscape Type and Use

Cultural Landscape Type: Designed Landscape

Current and Historic Use/Function

Primary Historic Function-Major Category: Government
Primary Historic Function-Category: Government Office
Primary Historic Function: Visitor Contact (Visitor Center)

Primary Current Function-Major Category: Government
Primary Current Function-Category: Government Office
Primary Current Function: Visitor Contact (Visitor Center)

Other Current and Historic Uses/Functions:

Other Historic Function-Major Category: Recreation/Culture
Other Historic Function-Category: Outdoor Sculpture
Other Historic Function: n/a

Other Historic Function-Major Category: Recreation/Culture
Other Historic Function-Category: Museum (Exhibition Hall)
Other Historic Function: Exhibit

Other Historic Function-Major Category: Landscape
Other Historic Function-Category: Functional Landscape
Other Historic Function: Pedestrian Circulation

Other Historic Function-Major Category: Landscape
Other Historic Function-Category: Functional Landscape
Other Historic Function: Vehicular Circulation

Other Historic Function-Major Category: Landscape
Other Historic Function-Category: Scenic Landscape
Other Historic Function: View

Other Current Function-Major Category: Recreation/Culture
Other Current Function-Category: Outdoor Sculpture
Other Current Function: n/a

Other Current Function-Major Category: Recreation/Culture
Other Current Function-Category: Museum (Exhibit Hall)

Other Current Function:	Exhibit
Other Current Function-Major Category:	Landscape
Other Current Function-Category:	Functional Landscape
Other Current Function:	Vehicular Circulation
Other Current Function-Major Category:	Landscape
Other Current Function-Category:	Functional Landscape
Other Current Function:	Pedestrian Circulation
Other Current Function-Major Category:	Landscape
Other Current Function-Category:	Scenic Landscape
Other Current Function:	View
Other Current Function-Major Category:	Education
Other Current Function-Category:	Interpretive Landscape
Other Current Function:	n/a

Current and Historic Names

Current and Historic Name	Type of Name
Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center	Current
Sitka National Monument Visitor Center	Historic
Lingit Aani Hidi	Current

Chronology

Start Year	End Year	Major Event	Description
1840	1840	Established	Russians and later Russian-Americans were first observed using the Indian River recreationally. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1890	1890	Established	Sitka National Historical Park is first reserved as a public park. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1904	1906	Planned	Totem poles were placed in the park at Alaska Territorial Governor John G. Brady's direction, following their displays during the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition and the 1906 Portland Exhibition. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1906	1915	Maintained	Sitka National Monument is managed by U.S. Army Colonel James G. Steese of the Alaska Road Commission (ARC), a strong supporter of the park's recreational use. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1910	1910	Established	Under the authority of the 1906 American Antiquities Act, President Taft signed Proclamation No. 959 in 1910, thereby creating Sitka National Monument. Significant resources included "the decisive battle ground of the Russian conquest of Alaska in 1804, and also the site of the former village of the Kik-Siti tribe {sic}, ... the graves of the Russian midshipman and six sailors, killed in the conflict, and numerous totem poles constructed by the Indians." (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1910	1929	Maintained	Photographer Elbridge W. Merrill becomes unofficial custodian of the park and the totems he helped Governor John G. Brady collect after the park received its official designation. (Sitka National Historical Park website)
1929	1941	Maintained	During the New Deal, Alaska Territorial Governor John W. Troy requested Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) funds for landscaping and totem preservation, but totem work began with Works Progress Administration assistance and was later completed with CCC funding. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1940	1940	Built	Entry sign designed and erected. (Historic Structures Report, 2020)
1946	1946	Established	Ben Miller, NPS ranger and one of Sitka National Monument's first caretakers, introduces the idea of an information center at the entrance of the park. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1949	1949	Planned	The Department of the Interior Alaska Field Committee recommends the construction of a museum/headquarters building which would include an office for the park's superintendent, a comfort station, and work and storerooms. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)

1952	1952	Planned	Sitka National Monument Master Plan reaffirmed the need for an information center and proposed construction of one at the entrance to the monument. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1953	1953	Planned	NPS recommended that a museum be constructed when it designated Sitka National Monument as the headquarters for the interpretation of Southeast Alaska Indian and Russian history and archeology. In keeping with this recommendation, the Western Region Landscape Division drafted plans for a museum. Although frequently present in budget requests, funding of a museum never reached Sitka. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1955	1955	Built	Comfort station constructed near the entrance of the park. It was later removed in 1964. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1963	1963	Designed	A "Preliminary" drawing (NM-SIT 3011) of an "Indian Arts and Crafts Shop" is dated May 3, 1963 with NPS architect Cecil Doty listed as the designer and drafter. This design created a simple rectangular building with a central hallway surrounded on three sides by rooms for wood carving, painting, stone carving, lapidary, jewelry, an office and storage, but does not address the landscape design. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1963	1963	Designed	A drawing (NM-SIT 3010A) is completed on August 28, 1963 by NPS architect Cecil Doty depicts the "Visitor Center" with a T shape plan and its position in the landscape. It essentially added a crossbar to the previous design containing an exhibit wing, lobby and theater/office wing with a large polygonal deck along the lobby opposite of the cultural center. Pedestrian circulation features connect the parking lot with the entrance and the deck, and the parking lot is located north and west of the building. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1964	1964	Designed	Drawings (NM-SIT 3010B) completed for the Sitka Visitor Center by John Morse and Associates of Seattle, based on preliminary designs created by NPS architect Cecil Doty. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1964	1964	Altered	John Morse and Associates make significant modifications to Cecil Doty's drawings for the deck design. Where Doty had a large polygonal deck spanning out into the sound, Morse placed a simple rectangular deck with an overhanging porch supported by beams that gave the building a closer resemblance to the façade of a traditional Tlingit house. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1964	1964	Built	In the fall, construction on the visitor center commenced with removal of comfort station at the entrance of the site as well as three houses from the Presbyterian Mission fronting Metlakatla Street. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)

1965	1965	Established	Visitor center completed and dedicated on August 14. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1972	1972	Established	The monument was re-designated as a national historical park when President Richard Nixon signed Public Law 92-510. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018; Sitka National Historical Park Foundation Statement, 2012)
1975	1975	Designed	Preliminary drawings of freestanding addition to visitor center by John Morse are developed. (Historic Structures Report, 2020)
1976	1976	Built	"Jewelry Studio" and storage rooms are added at the north elevation. (Historic Structures Report, 2020)
1977	1977	Built	In 1977 a fifth wing, a two-story maintenance shop and storage building addition, was built located approximately 30 feet northeast of the visitor center, which still provided vehicular access to the Totem Trail. (Draft Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center National Register of Historic Places nomination form, 2012)
1977	1977	Built	In 1977 the path connecting the visitor center and lower parking lot with the upper terrace (now the upper parking lot) was redesigned to include a new concrete sidewalk, stairs and corresponding curved walk that provided visitors to bypass the stairs. The road connecting the lower parking lot with the 1965 service court was modified as well. (SITK 314 41000)
1980	1980	Built	Concrete stairway constructed connecting the new upper parking lot with the lower lot and visitor center entry. While initial drawings show the retention of the entry sidewalk that ran parallel to the porch, photographs from the early 1980s indicate it was removed during this project. (Historic Structures Report, 2020)
1984	1984	Altered	At the request of the NPS, the City and Borough of Sitka paved Metlakatla Street and constructed a concrete sidewalk from Jeff Davis Street to the end of Metlakatla Street. "To some it was considered the passing of an era, to others it was the best thing since the invention of smoked salmon." (Superintendent, Sitka National Historical Park to Regional Director, Alaska Region, Memorandum - Superintendent's Annual Report, 24 January 1985)
1984	1984	Altered	In September, Associated Sand and Gravel, Inc. provided a 1" overlay in the upper and lower parking lots. (Superintendent, Sitka National Historical Park to Regional Director, Alaska Region, Memorandum - Superintendent's Annual Report, 24 January 1985)
1987	1987	Established	Sitka National Historical Park is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. (Draft Determination of Eligibility, 2018)
1989	1989	Established	A job order is placed to replace park benches, located around the visitor center, bus parking area and along the foot trails at a

			cost of \$7,500 for supplies and labor. They were created out of "clean 30' x 25' round" fir logs. (National Park Service, Job Order Request, 1989)
1989	1989	Established	A job order is placed to "remove unsightly logs used for barriers and install a wood rail barrier made of dimension lumber - 8"x8" post & 3"x8" rails" for a cost of \$11,300. (National Park Service, Job Order Request, 1989)
1989	1989	Established	A job order is placed to "remove existing walkway, install a wider walkway to match adjoining trails. Cement is to replace blacktop." It's not clear where or if this was completed. (National Park Service, Job Order Request, 1989)
1989	1989	Altered	Asphalt is installed over an existing gravel surface in the service entrance parking lot. (Historic Structures Report, 2020)
2000	2000	Altered	Extensive Visitor Center remodel by ECI/Hyer of Anchorage, Alaska including Totem Hall addition between the original building and the 1977 maintenance and storage building, and the introduction of a new curvilinear path connecting the upper parking lot with the lower parking lot and visitor center. (Historic Structures Report, 2020)
2000	2000	Altered	In 2000, the space between the original visitor center and the fifth wing built in 1977 was enclosed with the construction of a sixth wing, a two-story totem exhibit hall. At the same time a seventh wing was added to the rear (northeast) façade of the maintenance/storage building, a single-story outdoor totem shelter. A second southeast wing located northeast of the museum wing and adjacent to the cultural center, was also constructed in 2000 as the created as the eighth and final wing. (Draft Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center National Register of Historic Places nomination form, 2012)
2000	2000	Designed	\$3,641,736 is approved to "remodel" the visitor center. (Superintendent, Sitka National Historical Park to Regional Director, Alaska Region, Memorandum - Annual Narrative Report - Fiscal Year 2000, 2 February 2001)
2000	2000	Designed	Drawings associated with the visitor center remodel show the location of a new curvilinear path that connects the upper parking lot with the lower parking lot and visitor center entrance. Its alignment passes along the lower parking lot's eastern edge before paralleling the visitor center's western facade and connecting with the historic entry sidewalk. (SITK L-1)
2000	2000	Altered	The path between Metlakatla Street and the Shoreline Connection Trail does not appear on drawings associated with the visitor center remodel. (SITK L-1)
2000	2000	Planned	Five trees appear on the visitor center remodel drawings near the entrance to the lower parking lot. Two are in a planting

			area on the southern side of the entrance and three on the northern side. (SITK L-1)
2000	2000	Established	The By-Pass Trail appears in its original location extending from the entry sidewalk to the connection with the Totem Walk and appears in its historic alignment along the east side of the original visitor center building. The material of the trail between the entry sidewalk and the visitor center deck is indicated as asphalt on some drawings, but there is no photographic evidence to support that. The portion of the path between the deck and the entrance to the Totem walk is indicated as gravel. The portion of the path near the visitor center's east side is noted as being woodchip. (SITK L-1, SITK 314_25016)
2000	2000	Altered	The path between Metlakatla Street and the Entry Sidewalk is indicated as paved on the drawings associated with the visitor center remodel, but it's not clear if that is crushed gravel or asphalt. (SITK L-1, SITK 314_25016)
2000	2000	Altered	The flagpole located in the northeast corner of the triangular lawn is moved a short distance to the west. (SITK 314_25016)
2000	2000	Built	A new catch basin is indicated for the southwest corner of the lower parking lot, to replace in the same location, the one that was constructed in 1965. (SITK 314_25016)
2000	2000	Altered	Plantings from the 1965 construction of the visitor center located on the north end of the lower parking lot are removed when the accessible ramp and upper parking lot are constructed. (SITK 314_25016)
2007	2007	Altered	Following the construction of the Totem Viewing Area, a portion of the Shoreline Connection Trail was moved north and east of the visitor center's new northeast corner location.

Physical History

The Physical History included in the CLI was developed for the Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center Historic Structures Report (January 2020), and supplements the chronology developed for this CLI.

Establishment of Sitka National Historical Park

The area known as Sitka National Historical Park was first reserved as a public park in 1890 by President Benjamin Harrison. Totem poles were placed in the park by E.W. Merrill at the direction of Alaska Territorial Governor John G. Brady following their displays during both the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri and the 1906 Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition in Portland, Oregon. Under the authority of the 1906 American Antiquities Act, President Taft signed Proclamation No. 959 in 1910, formally creating Sitka National Monument. Significant resources included “the decisive battleground of the Russian conquest of Alaska in 1804, and also the site of the former village of the Kik-Siti tribe (sic) . . . the graves of the Russian midshipmen and six sailors, killed in the conflict, and numerous totem poles constructed by the Indians.” In 1972, the monument was re-designated as a National Historical Park and later, in 1987, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The park tells the story of an 1804 conflict between Native Tlingit and Russian fur hunters and traders who engaged in the Battle of Sitka. It also serves as a setting for numerous, significant Alaska Native totem poles, crafted in various eras, including some replicas in the collection.

Alaska was granted territorial status within the United States in 1912. Predating the creation of the National Park Service (NPS) in 1916, the new monument was managed by various agencies until 1940. The most prominent among these was U.S. Army Colonel James Gordon Steese of the Alaska Road Commission (ARC), a proponent of the park’s recreational use. During the Depression and New Deal era, Alaska Territorial Governor John W. Troy requested Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) funds for landscaping and totem conservation, but instead totem work began with Works Progress Administration (WPA) assistance and was later completed with CCC funding. In 1939, the Navy designated its nearby Sitka facility as an air station, while using the Indian River for gravel mining. That same year, Mt. McKinley National Park Superintendent Frank Been visited the Sitka Monument, but was distressed at the conditions he found. Been felt that the very nature of the monument was contrary to NPS objectives. He noted the destructive gravel mining in the Indian River and the poor condition of the totem poles, which had become the focal point of the monument, detracted from the potential splendor of the site. Although some totems were being repaired or duplicated through local CCC efforts, Been’s report prompted Washington officials to shift the focus of the Sitka National Monument from totem display to the historical significance of the 1804 battle. To accomplish this formidable task, care of the monument was transferred from the ARC to the NPS.

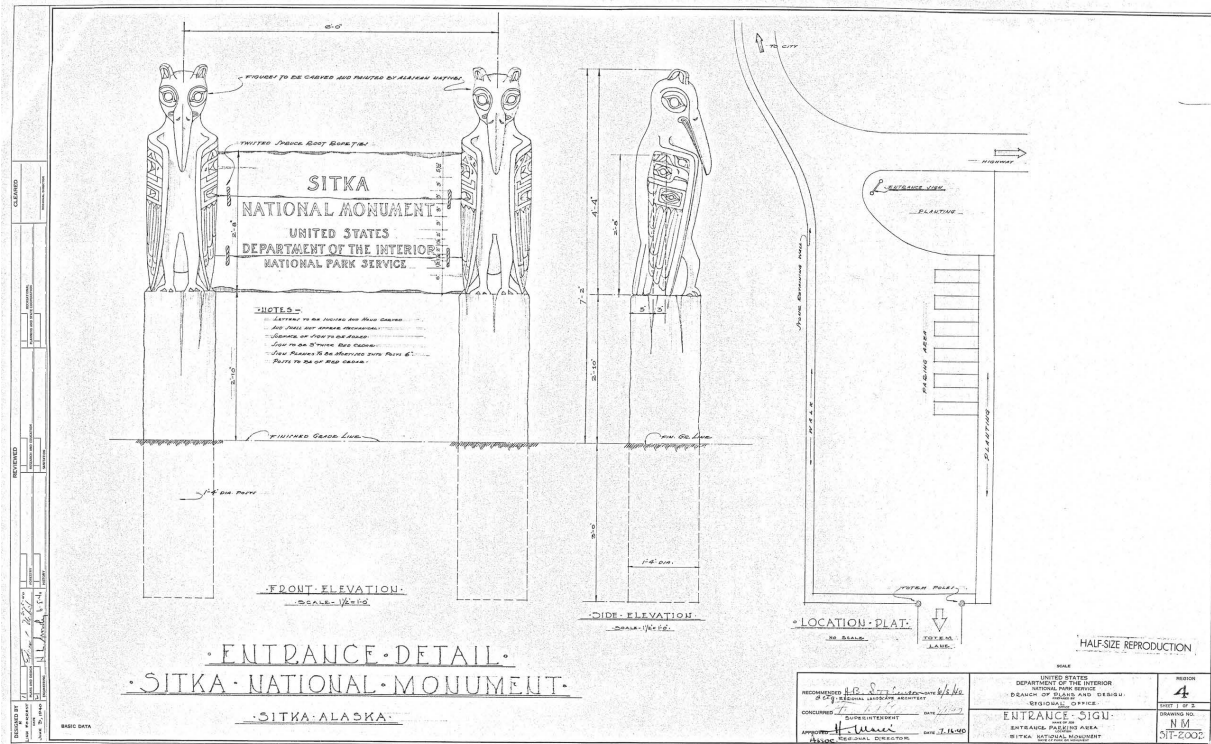
In January of 1940, Ben Miller, an NPS ranger, became the first NPS caretaker at Sitka. He noted that of the eighteen totems, none were Tlingit. Miller, who remained at Sitka National Monument until 1949, was the first to recognize and promote the need for more interpretive facilities. As early as 1946, he introduced the idea of an information center near the monument entrance. In 1949, the Department of the Interior Alaska Field Committee reiterated Miller’s suggestion by recommending the construction of a museum or headquarters building. The

proposed building included an office for the monument superintendent, a comfort station, and work and storerooms.

During World War II, the Japanese occupied two Aleutian Islands, Attu and Kiska. Although there had been American military presence in Alaska before the war, the US entry into World War II brought amplified military presence to the state including a Navy seaplane base and an Army garrison at Fort Rousseau on Japonski Island adjacent to Sitka. These military activities also resulted in an increase in Sitka's population. During the post-war era, but before statehood was fully achieved in 1959, tourism activities and amenities expanded, and visitors to Alaska increased. The town of Sitka, known for its Alaska Native culture, including a collection of important totem poles along with its Russian influenced history, was not easily accessed because of its island location.

The 1952 Sitka National Monument Master Plan reaffirmed the need for an information center and again proposed construction of a building at the monument entrance. At the time, interpretive information was distributed at the reconstructed Russian Blockhouse, located at the southeastern end of the monument lands. More often than not, inclement weather and the isolation of the site prevented visitors from proceeding out to the Blockhouse. The master plan also proposed a museum to interpret the story of Sitka, but its location was not limited to a building within the monument site.

In 1953, the NPS recommended that a museum be constructed when it designated Sitka National Monument as the headquarters for the interpretation of Southeast Alaska Indian and Russian history and archeology. In keeping with this recommendation, the Western Regional Office Division of Landscape Architecture in San Francisco drafted plans for a museum. Although frequently present in budget requests, funding of a museum was not realized. However, in 1961 Sitka officials advocated, in person, for the investment in a museum to NPS Associate Director Elvind T. Scoyen. This was likely spurred along by the July 7, 1958 Alaska Statehood Act, admitting Alaska to the union effective January 3, 1959. Additionally, there was further incentive to obtain appropriations from Washington D.C., as cooperative funding had been secured from the Indian Arts and Crafts Board (IACB). Established through the IACB Act of 1935, the board's sole purpose was to promote the development of traditional native arts and crafts. Finally, in rather fortuitous timing, the NPS ten-year (1956-1966) Mission 66 program was just commencing, allowing for access to an increased level of NPS construction funds and making a museum at Sitka National Monument a reality.



NPS Mission 66 Program

In the years leading up to the implementation of Mission 66 Program, NPS funding was limited and resources were almost non-existent. During World War II, allocations to the parks decreased in order to support the war effort. In an attempt to streamline the federal budget, Congress and President Franklin D. Roosevelt cut spending on non-essential government operations and major public works programs, such as the CCC, which had substantially benefited the parks during Roosevelt's first and second terms. Park usage peaked nationally in 1940 at about 17 million visitors but sharply decreased at the height of the war effort to below 7 million. When the war finally ground to a halt and soldiers returned home, Americans became increasingly mobile. They took to the highways in record numbers, leaving war memories behind to explore the national parks. Post-war isolationism further advanced homeland travel, limiting excursions abroad. The automobile brought record numbers of visitors to the national park system and created a demand for larger, more modern facilities, targeting motorist needs.

Consequently, underfunded and understaffed park units barely managed to address the maintenance issues associated with aged facilities or provide protection to natural and cultural resources within park boundaries during the war years. Problems were further compounded by an exponential increase in visitors as Americans flooded the parks, buoyed by a strong post-war economy. Visitor rates surged from "17 million in 1940 to 33 million in 1950," and it was

forecasted that by 1960 more than 72 million people would visit national parks. The national parks were ill-equipped to deal with the record visitation rates. Criticism of the NPS soon abounded, with an outcry over overcrowded campgrounds, overused and outdated facilities, deteriorated trails, too much traffic and too little parking, and trampled vistas. It became increasingly apparent that new facilities were required throughout the park system to accommodate current and future visitation.

Before Conrad Wirth, an experienced NPS recreational planner, assumed the agency's directorship in 1951, the parks were instructed to continue to address repairs on a park-by-park basis. Wirth's approach was a departure from individual park management focus, and he advocated a new style of administrative planning for the agency. Inspired by an increase in federal public works spending and multi-year initiatives, Wirth convened a committee of architects, historians, foresters, naturalists, and economists to formulate and promote a ten-year funding program to revive the national parks in advance of the service's 50-year anniversary in 1966. If funded, this program would allow the NPS to repair and construct roads, bridges and trails; hire additional employees; build and improve visitor facilities and employee housing; and obtain land for current and future parks. Wirth also requested that all park superintendents prepare a "prospectus," detailing specific park needs. In addition to these individual needs, the program also sought to standardize the parks with "uniform entrance markers listing park resources, a minimum number of employees, paved trails to popular points of interest and other basic amenities."

Adopting the name "Mission 66," Wirth's program "captured the sense of a crisis," by employing military nomenclature with the word "mission," while avoiding the language of the New Deal. The urgent language succeeded, and after Wirth's presentation of the proposed program at a January 1956 cabinet meeting, President Eisenhower personally endorsed the proposal. After receiving executive approval, the Mission 66 Program was officially introduced to the general public at an American Pioneer Dinner held at the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) on February 8, 1956. This event featured a presentation given by Wirth, the Disney film "Adventure in the National Parks," and the distribution of a promotional booklet, "Our Heritage." That spring, Congress demonstrated its enthusiastic approval with appropriation of 68 million dollars for the 1957 NPS budget. Eventually, the Mission 66 requested appropriations of 787 million over ten years would be met with more than \$1 billion in actual appropriations. This was by far the largest investment the country had made in its national park system since the inception of the National Park Service.

Executive approval and financial support from Congress, however, did not necessarily translate to widespread public support. The emergence of the 1960s postwar environmental movement and several publications that linked human action to environmental degradation, led to growing concern of overdevelopment in the parks. Even though the underlying philosophy of NPS planners was to minimize the impact of new development, Mission 66 was criticized for "emphasizing capital construction as a one-dimensional solution to the distinct social and environmental problems" of the parks. Bitter controversies would emerge over development projects in some parks. Wirth maintained that Mission 66 was not a development program, and he promoted the idea that parks were created for public enjoyment and that any preservation

outside of this context was “simply not what the parks, nor the Park Service, were intended to achieve.”

When Stewart L. Udall was appointed Secretary of the Interior in 1961, further tensions within the DOI emerged. A native Arizonan, sympathetic to environmental causes, Udall disagreed with Wirth about the level of intervention required by Mission 66. In 1963, Wirth resigned and was replaced by George B. Hartzog, Jr., a South Carolinian, who guided the program to its culmination. Hartzog, trying to build on momentum generated by Mission 66, attempted to launch his own initiative, “PARKSCAPE, U.S.A.” The Parkscape program continued many aspects of the earlier Mission 66; however, it did not represent the same scale or level of planning.

Sitka National Historic Park Visitor Center Design and Construction

The Mission 66 Program was far reaching, impacting almost every park in every region of the country. In Alaska, in addition to the Sitka Visitor Center, the two other large-scale, visitor-focused manifestations of the program included the 1960 Eielson Visitor Center at Mount McKinley National Park (now Denali National Park and Preserve) by the NPS Western Office of Design and Construction (WODC), and the iconic 1965 Glacier Bay Lodge complex as designed by Seattle architect John Morse. As the Mission 66 projects developed, the aim for efficiency was achieved by incorporating traditional interpretive programs, visitor services, and administrative functions into a single building. In Sitka, the program for a new visitor center was debated and several schemes explored. The final design, reflecting the collaboration of Cecil Doty of the WODC and Seattle architect John Morse, was executed in 1964.

The preliminary objectives for Sitka called on the NPS “to suggest suitable native or Russian design elements as needed to harmonize with the historical theme of the park; to so modify such design elements that they will not be mistaken by visitors for authentic historical objects.” A “Preliminary” drawing that identified NPS architect Cecil Doty as the designer and drafter was dated May 3, 1963. This design proposed a simple rectangular building with a central hallway surrounded on three sides by rooms for wood carving, painting, stone carving, lapidary, jewelry, an office and storage. Titled “Indian Arts and Crafts Shop,” subsequently entitled the “cultural center,” this earliest design did not include visitor or interpretive facilities. A subsequent drawing was completed on August 27, 1963 with Doty again listed as the designer and drafter. This “preliminary” drawing depicted a “Visitor Center” with a T-shaped plan incorporating additional building program in a building wing oriented perpendicular to the original building, containing an exhibits wing, theater and ranger office wing, and lobby wing with porch connected to a large irregular-shaped exterior deck. Five months later, another supplemental drawing appeared, dated January 1, 1964, indicating Doty as the designer and a staff person, Hunter, as the drafter. This plan modified the cultural center and the lobby. The hallway in the cultural center would run the length of the wing with traditional art rooms on each side instead of the traditional art rooms arranged around a u-shaped plan. The information desk in the lobby was moved from the interior elevation of the cultural center to the interior elevation of the theater and office wing, where it would purposefully guide visitors toward the theater and the view out towards the deck and Sitka Sound. This change necessitated some rearrangement of office and theater spaces as well.

Doty's evolving plan used modernist architectural designs and effective spatial orientation to place interpretive, visitor, and administrative functions in a single accessible structure at the center of the monument. Moreover, his design incorporated architectural elements of the traditional Tlingit clan house including use of exposed wood beams and rafters, vertically oriented cedar board siding with hand tool-textured corner boards, and the use of a house screen prominently displayed on the Sitka Sound side of the building. After approval from the WODC, Doty's design was transferred to Seattle architect John Morse for further development into construction documents.

The final set of construction drawings for the Sitka Visitor Center was completed in June 1964. The title block on the cover page of this set of drawings identifies "Doty" as having designed the project, "various" individuals as having "Drawn" the project, and "Swatek" as having "Checked" the drawing set. The title block is standard to National Park Service WODC. However, subsequent pages in this set, while having the same NPS title block, do not identify Doty as the designer. Instead, the title block on the additional pages includes the following information: "Designed" is left blank, the box for "Drawn" is filled with "RW & LD" while the box for "Checked" is marked with "RWM." Robert W. Murphy, of Seattle is listed with John Morse as attending the building's dedication ceremony.

Although the name John M. Morse & Associates is not on the drawing set, Morse's involvement is almost certain. This is evidenced by archival records that note several site visits by Morse to Sitka during summer 1964. The Daily Sitka Sentinel reported on July 30, 1964 that "the National Park Service yesterday informed Sen. Ernest Gruening (D-Alaska) of a \$12,870.00 contract award to the architectural firm John M. Morse and Associates of Seattle, to supervise construction of the visitor center at Sitka National Monument. Contractor on the visitor center is C & R Builder, Inc. of Seattle."

It seems logical that if NPS hired Morse to supervise the construction, that he had a hand in the design of the visitor center. The final June 1964 drawing set includes eighteen pages revealing specific architectural details as well as interior display arrangements. Sixteen of the drawings appear to be from the original set of drawings dated June 1964, with an additional two drawings describing audio-visual design components added in October 1965. The drawings indicate that Stanley G. Webster served as the mechanical engineer, and B. A. Travis & Associates served as the Electrical Engineer.

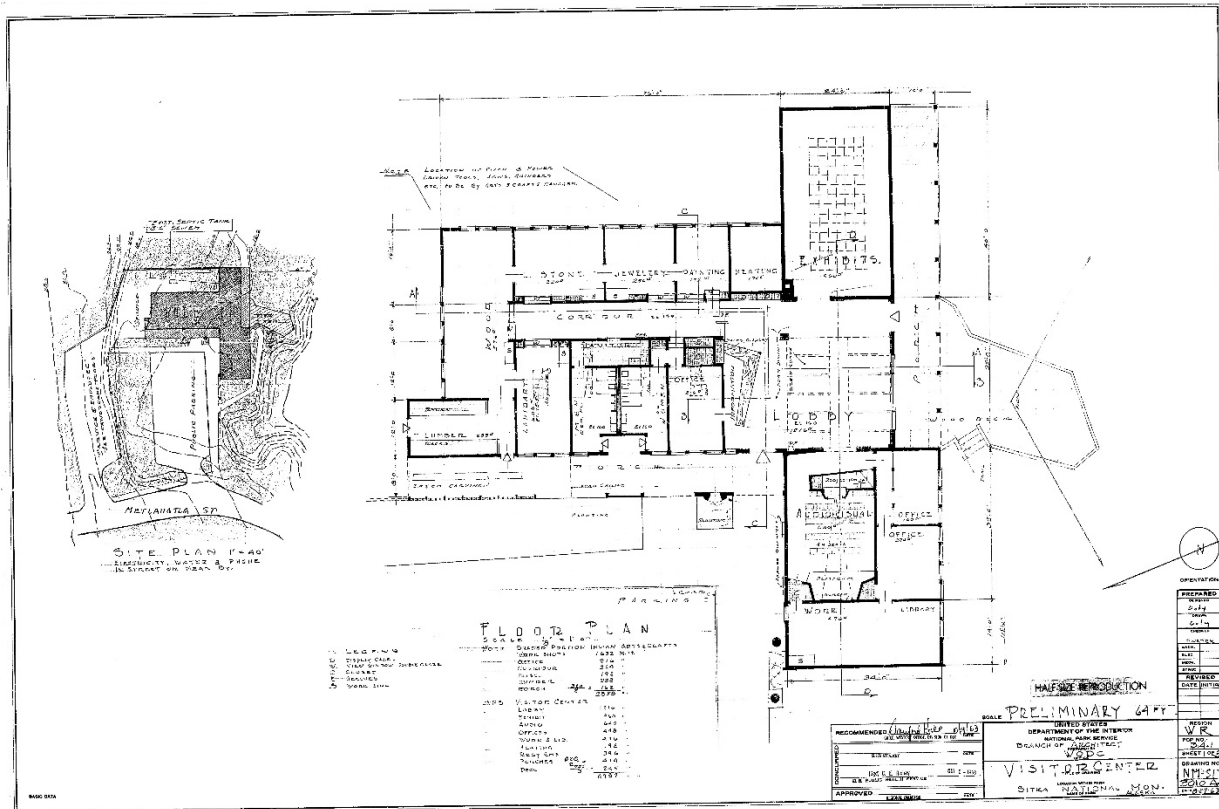
Morse also made a few modifications to Doty's basic design. Where Doty had a staff entrance on the southwest elevation of the Theater Wing between the theater and the library, Morse relocated that entrance to the northeast elevation, creating a small hallway between the staff library and office. Where Doty had placed a small closet for chair storage in the theater, Morse created an exit door for the public allowing them to transition seamlessly from the theater's audio-visual presentation directly to a trail leading to the site of the 1804 battle. Morse also softened the contours of the hallway leading from the lobby into the theater by removing Doty's rougher angles and inserting a curved ramp from the higher elevation of the lobby floor to the lower theater level. Finally, Morse made a substantial alteration to the deck at the south elevation of the lobby. Where Doty had a large polygonal deck spanning out toward the Sitka Sound, Morse placed a simple rectangular porch with an overhanging roof supported by

exposed wood beams and log columns. The porch connected simply and directly to the shoreline trail via a concrete stair sized for the full width of the porch.

Construction of the visitor center commenced in the fall of 1964 under the direction of C&R Builder, Inc. of Seattle with removal of the 1955 comfort station at the entrance of the site as well as three houses fronting Metlakatla Street. The building was completed the following summer in 1965 and prepared for dedication. The visitor center was designed to handle 8,000 visitors per year, the majority of whom were expected to be visiting tourists, rather than locals. Consequently, the layout gave “maximum benefit to the visitor whose time in the park is severely limited by ferry or airline schedules.” Time-conscious visitors could pass quickly through the short and intuitively obvious interpretive path, stopping at whichever displays called their attention. Visitors with more time could visit the cultural center or stroll through the monument along the Totem Trail once known as “Lover’s Lane”.

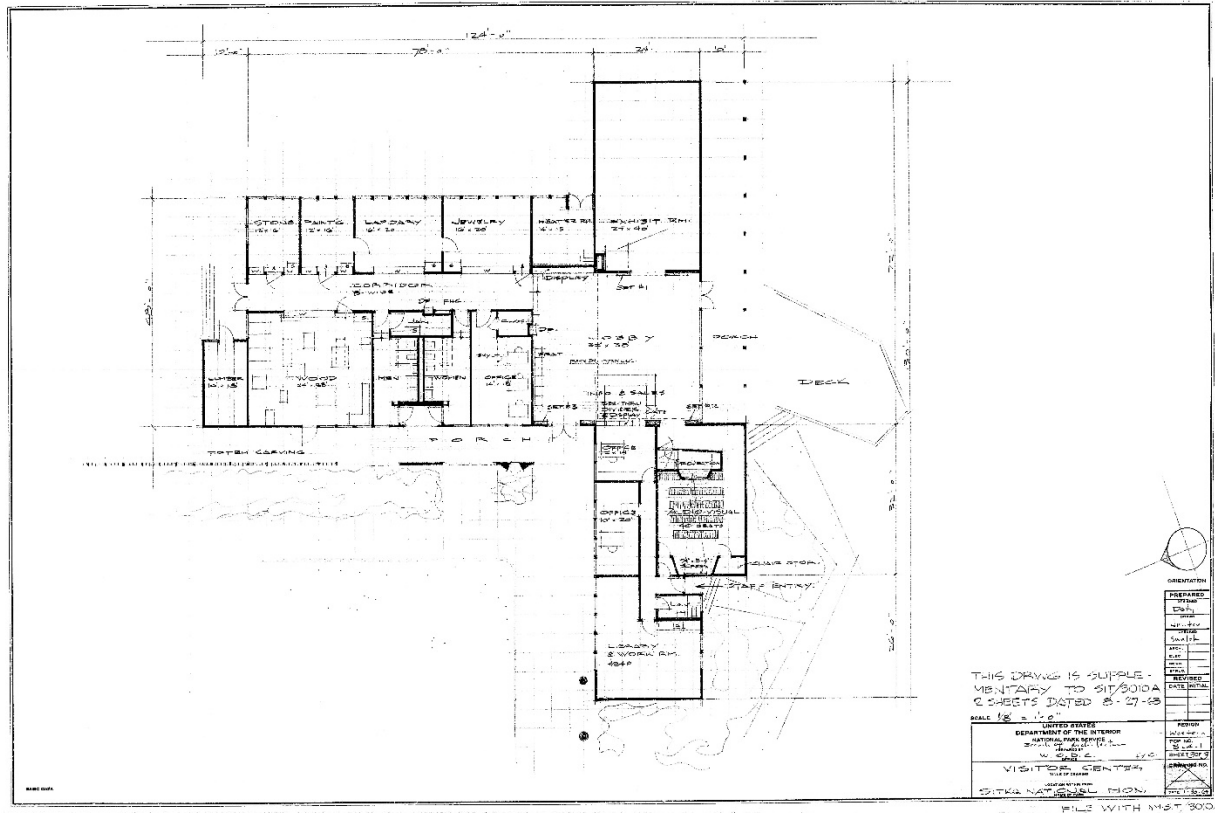
The NPS, the Kiks.ádi and Kaagwaantaan clans of Tlingit and the public gathered on August 14, 1965 to dedicate the Sitka National Monument Visitor Center. The ceremony illuminated both the impetus behind the development of the visitor center and foreshadowed its future use as a cultural center. NPS Western Regional Director Edward Hummel addressed the crowd proclaiming “the Visitor Center . . . is designed to interpret and perpetuate the meeting of [the Native and Russian] cultures.” He went on to quote Omar Khayyam, an ancient Persian poet, saying: “The course of history momentarily balances on scenes like these — and then, ‘the moving finger writes; and having writ, moves on.’” Hummel described developing traditional Native arts and crafts into a modern profession as a primary objective of the cultural center, stating: “This building is a community house for the people of Sitka, of Alaska and indeed of the whole nation.”

Hummel’s address was followed by the Tlingit ceremony directed by Andrew Hope, a native Tlingit and a co-founder of the Tlingit Clan Conference. Hope provided an introduction to Tlingit life followed by an explanation from David Howard of the Kiks.ádi clan and comments on the Frog Hat and Herring blanket. Patrick Paul commented on the Kaagwaantaan clan and the Wolf posts. Paul then translated the story of “Eagle Mother” as told by Alex Andrews in Tlingit. Andrews, a Tlingit elder, had provided key oral history interviews about the Tlingit to NPS staff and was an important Tlingit linguist. The ceremonies continued with several welcome dances, with Andrew Wanamaker noted in the official program as explaining the dances. Then Paul spoke on the importance of giving names in Tlingit culture and Andrews named the visitor center Lingit Aaní Hídi meaning “World House,” because people from all over the world were expected to visit. Paul translated for Andrews, and park historian George Hall also spoke before a collection of five Alaska Native songs and dances were performed. Hall, who was appointed in October 1957, was a “part of the Mission 66 program of the national park service to provide more adequate research required in advance of the museum and visitor center at the monument.” Shortly thereafter, the ceremony completed, and the public was invited to tour the new center.

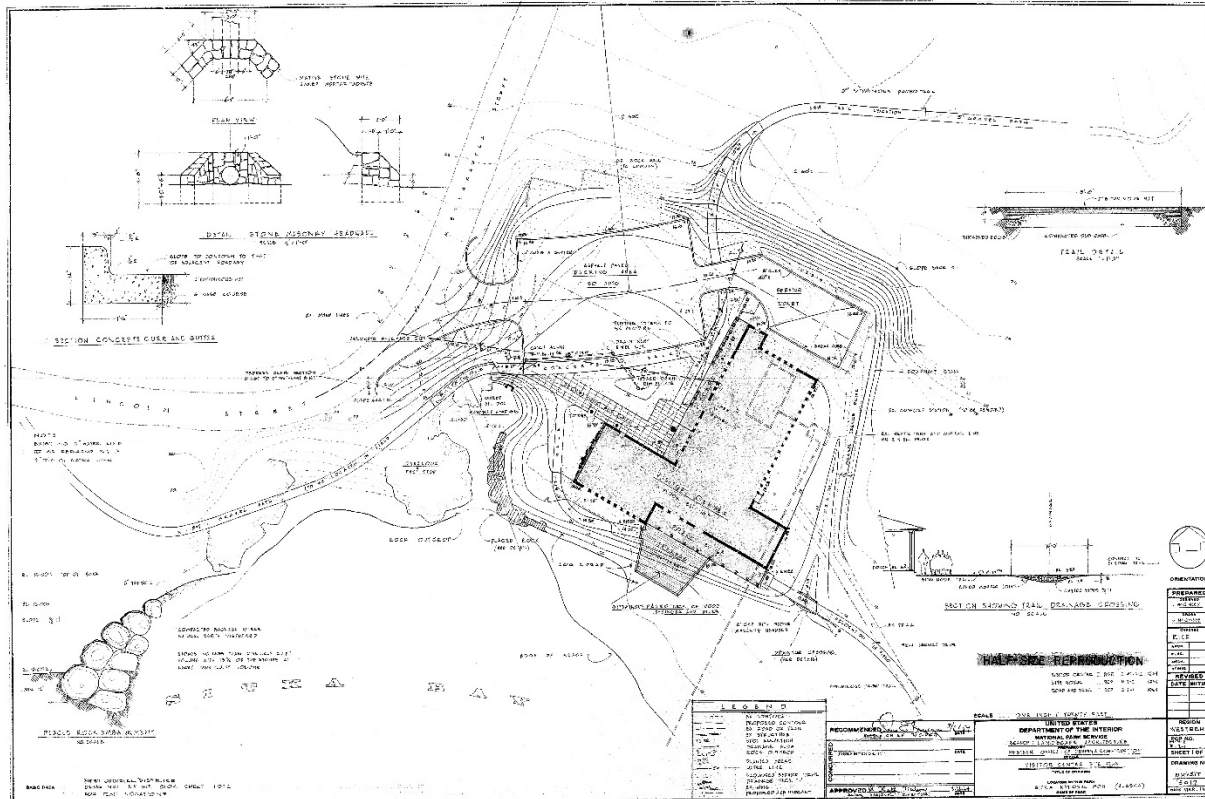


Early drawing by NPS architect Cecil Doty of the visitor center and landscape (NM-SIT 3010A), 27 August 1963.

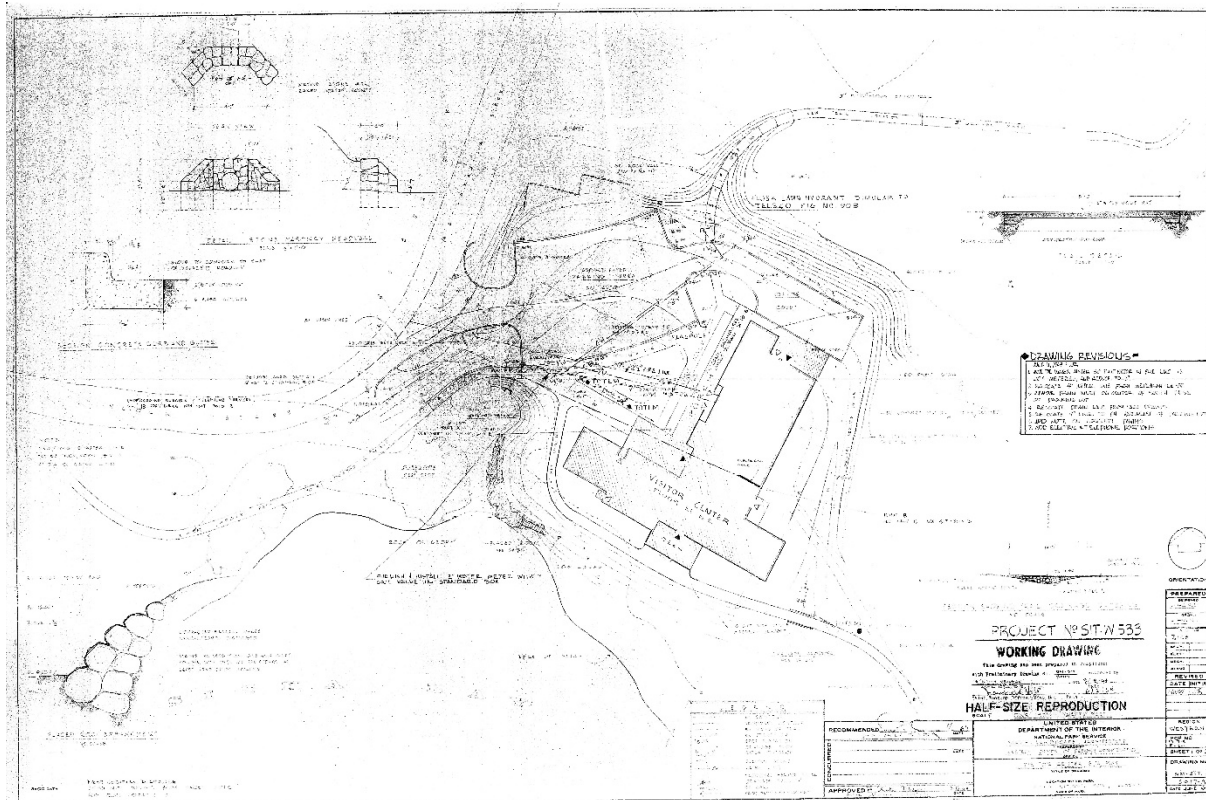
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE INVENTORY



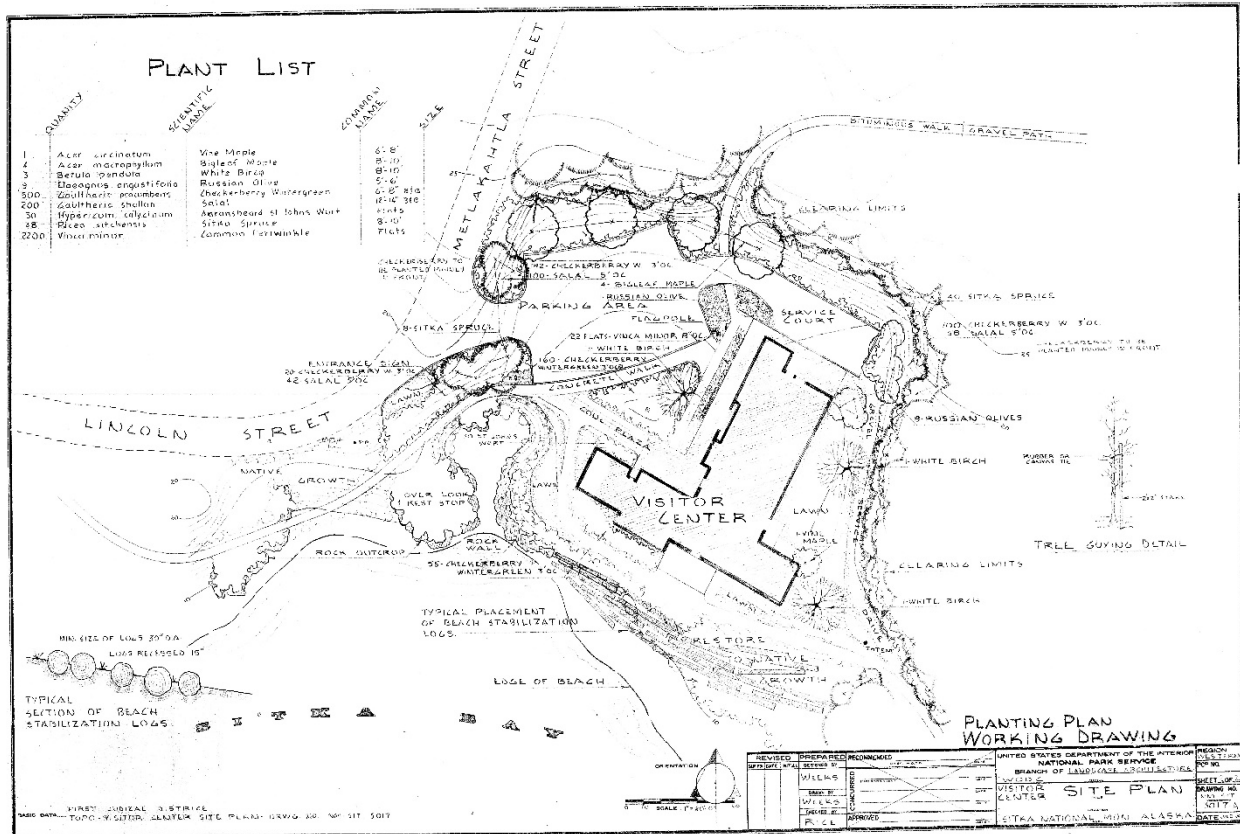
Early drawing by NPS architect Cecil Doty and drafter Hunter of the visitor center and landscape (NM-SIT 3010A), 30 January 1964.



March 1964 drawing (314_3017) of the site design developed by landscape architects at the NPS Western Office of Design and Construction.



June 1964 drawing (314_3017A) by landscape architects at the NPS Western Office of Design and Construction with refinements to the shape of the porch, locations of totems and flagpole, the alignment of the path between the parking lot and the service court.



June 1964 planting plan (314_3017A) indicating a mix of mainly non-native, but a couple native (*Gaultheria shallon* and *Picea sitchensis*) plants for the areas around the site, and lawn along the building's south and east sides. Lawn is not specified for the triangular space between the parking lot and visitor center entrance, but a non-native species of *Gaultheria*, (*Gaultheria procumbens*).



August 1965 photo by Morse of the visitor center's western façade. Landscape features which were constructed by this time include the flagpole, entry sidewalk, lower parking lot, park entrance sign, and a portion of the inlet with a masonry head wall. Vegetation includes a small deciduous tree located to the right or south of the flagpole, a triangular planting area that could be lawn, Sitka spruce trees flanking the vehicular entrance to the lower parking lot, and small shrubs and groundcover plantings in those planting areas (SITK 15655 C).



1965 photo of the completed visitor center with the lower parking lot, entry sidewalk, young Sitka spruce trees, fire hydrant, park entrance sign, and inlet with a masonry head wall visible. The alignment of the Shoreline Connection Trail and path between Metlakatla Street and the entry sidewalk are visible, but their material cannot be discerned. A small deciduous tree is planted in the triangular "lawn" area though it is unclear if grass has been planted. Small groundcover plants are visible in the planting beds with the Sitka spruce trees (SITK 15651 A).



Circa 1965 photo following the installation of two totems and lawn in the triangular area and around the edges of the visitor center. This photo also provides a good view of the small inlet whose edges were stabilized with logs and a stone masonry wall. The inlet is no longer present. The Shoreline Connection Trail and the path between Metlakatla Street and the entry sidewalk appear paved and edged with metal, though the material of the path nor its edging is clearly discernable (SITK 15654).



Circa mid-1960s photo looking northeast towards the lower parking lot and upper terrace with five totems. In the foreground are the Sitka spruce trees flanking the entry to the lower parking lot, the entry sign, and the bike rack. Though its material is still undiscernible, the path between Metlakatla Street and the entry sidewalk is paved, edged, and maintained (SITK 15659 J).



August 1965 photo by Morse of the landscape around the southeast corner of the visitor center. The Shoreline Connection Trail (left side of the photo) extends past the porch east towards the totem trail (the photograph is standing at that trail's entrance). Though its material is unclear it appears to be paved of crushed gravel. The portion of the Shoreline Connection Trail that extends to the right of the image does not appear as defined or paved. A clump of evergreen trees remain in this location at the intersection of these two paths and the beginning of the totem trail, but the deciduous trees did not survive (SITK 15655 A).



July 1965 photo looking west of a prepped, but unplanted planting bed and a portion of the entry sidewalk. In the distance are portions of the Shoreline Connection Trail and the path between Metlakatla Street and the entry sidewalk, which appear paved with asphalt. Near the entry sign are the newly planted Sitka spruce and the fire hydrant (SITK 15659 A).



Circa mid-1960s photo showing a bike rack near the fire hydrant and lower parking lot. A different bike rack is currently located in this same location (SITK 15659 C).



August 1965 photo by Morse of the visitor center's porch and a portion of the south façade. A small section of the paved Shoreline Connection Trail is visible, along with the lawn planting on the north and south sides of the trail. In the foreground, along the edge of the shoreline are native shrubs (SITK 15655 B).



Circa mid-1960s photo of the rock log riprap that was placed along the shore just south of the visitor center with Sitka Sound in the foreground (SITK 15659 P).

Mission 66 Visitor Center Typology

The visitor center is often defined as the most “complete and significant expression” of Park Service Modern architecture and the reinvention of planning and design during the Mission 66 Program in post-war America. The term “visitor center” was coined by Mission 66 planners to describe a distinctly modernist building that would serve as the “centerpiece of a new era of planning.” The design process began in both the eastern and western NPS Offices of Design and Construction (EODC and WODC). These offices were formed as part of the park service’s 1954 reorganization and were overseen by the central planning and design office in Washington, D.C. Ill-prepared for the amount of work generated by Mission 66, EODC and WODC often contracted out work on a project-by-project basis to private architectural firms, such as John Morse & Associates, involved with the Sitka Visitor Center. Generally, the NPS would provide a preliminary design for the contracted private firm to further develop and refine into construction drawings. After the working drawings were complete, the NPS would typically assume responsibility of construction supervision and management. Throughout the entire process, even if consulting architects were hired, the NPS maintained direct control over the location and significant design aspects of the individual project.

Designed to represent a modern image of NPS, the creation and refinement of the visitor center, in many ways, represented the emergence of “new attitudes towards resource conservation, visitor responsibility, and Park Service stewardship.” The building type was intended to centralize interpretive displays and presentations, administrative offices, restrooms and various other visitor facilities, making it possible for visitors to park their cars at a central point allowing them pedestrian access to a “range of services and attractions.” The centralization of these activities allowed parks to more effectively and efficiently serve the increasing numbers of visitors: a vast improvement over the decentralized, rustic “park villages” reflective of earlier NPS planning practices. Concentration of public activities also contributed to park resource preservation by consolidating visitor impact. Visitor centers were carefully sited by Mission 66 planners to intercept visitors at park entries and near significant park sites, provide a point of orientation, and efficiently guide visitors through the park or monument’s natural and cultural resources. If properly sited and designed, it was assumed that visitor centers would further facilitate interpretation and stimulate public interest. Depending on the character of the park or monument, there were three potential placements for a visitor center: at the entrance, en route, or at major park attractions. Each placement fulfilled a different purpose, for example a visitor center constructed at the entrance of a park or monument “established the mood” of the park and immediately introduced the visitor to the interpretive materials. The Sitka Visitor Center was an entrance-focused building sited at the beginning of the established Totem Trail.

After designers and NPS staff chose the location of the visitor center, the architects, landscape architects, and engineers examined the cultural and natural resources unique to the park or monument. Based on these observations, “visitor sequence diagrams” or flow diagrams were developed to establish the most effective interior floor plan for efficient visitor circulation. Typical floor plans had a central reception/information/lobby area surrounded by the additional visitor facilities. Although the “classic” design for the visitor center was used throughout the 1960s, planners refined the layout of the building type after gauging visitor responses to earlier Mission 66 buildings. In some cases, the centralized, single building plan was replaced as architects began to experiment with two basic types of designs – an entry lobby with distinct wings or a series of independent buildings grouped around a central courtyard. The Sitka Visitor Center falls into the earlier category with a central lobby and several radiating wings.

As with an earlier era of park buildings, vistas were the “driving force of design” and the most important views were often visible through the “large window of plate glass and metal sash of the modern visitor center.” These buildings were intended to be “seen from, not to be seen,” they were conceptually designed as a “viewing platform, in which views from interior spaces, roof terraces, and adjacent outdoor terraces or amphitheaters were calculated as a flowing sequential experience.” This is true at Sitka where the visitor parked, made their way to the west-facing lobby entry and into the lobby for orientation. From the lobby, the visitor could engage with a ranger at the centralized information desk, view interior exhibits, watch an orientation movie, observe Alaska Native traditional art demonstrations, and then progress to the dramatic south-facing porch for views of Sitka Sound and access to the Totem Trail, the park’s primary attraction.

The Mission 66 program made funding available for desperately needed improvements at parks and monuments with lower annual visitation rates. By the completion ceremonies of Mission

66, “even the most remote parks enjoyed basic utilities, a visitor center, maintenance yard, and standard housing for employees.” Soon the construction of the visitor center became directly associated with a park’s ability to successfully preserve and interpret its natural and cultural resources for the general public’s benefit. In many ways, although intended to visually recede from its surroundings, the visitor center became the focal point in many national parks, without which park visitors would “drive almost aimlessly about the parks without adequate benefit and enjoyment from their trips.” Cecil Doty, the principal designer of visitor centers in the WODC, further underlined the importance of the visitor center at the 1958 visitor center planning conference when he explained that the “parking area, walks, terraces, and everything in and around the building are part of the Visitor Center ensemble, and are on exhibit as something constructed by the National Park Service. They can be more important than the exhibits.” Doty certainly imparted this design philosophy on the planning for the Sitka NHP Visitor Center.

Park Service Modern style

In order to transform the NPS to meet post-World War II (WWII) visitation expectations and create an image imbued with the promise of progress, the initiators of Mission 66 recognized the need to both maintain a certain level of consistency and to depart from past architecture and planning programs. As a result, Mission 66 managed to continue established NPS planning and design traditions, while also responding to the social, demographic, and economic conditions of post-WWII America. In the period that followed the war, mainstream American architectural design was largely influenced by the work of European modernists such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, and Le Corbusier. Modernism quickly became the “ubiquitous stylistic choice of corporations, government agencies, cultural institutions, housing developers, and retailers who together were remaking the American landscape.” Across the nation, labor-intensive, craft-based construction was abandoned by government agencies, for more economically competitive, efficient, labor-saving modernist architectural design. Constructed with industrial materials, such as concrete, steel, glass, and plywood, Modernism offered a departure from historical styles. Similar to its application in other government agencies like the 1950s and 60s Embassy Building Program of the State Department, NPS designers felt contemporary modern architecture was well-suited for the “new programmatic and technical requirements faced by National Park Service architects of the era.”

With the Mission 66 Program came a replacement of earlier Park Service Rustic style or “Parkitecture.” Park Service Modern put forward contemporary designs that “expressed progress, efficiency, health and innovation” and represented the “values the NPS hoped to embody over the next decade.” Soon the designs of park architects, such as Cecil Doty of the NPS Western Office of Design and Construction (WODC), combined the tenets of modern architecture with past precedents of rustic design to create a “distinctive new style of park architecture that amounted to a Park Service adaptation of contemporary American modern architecture.” In a few special cases, with NPS oversight, contemporary architects in private practice and some firms were engaged to design unique modern park facilities through the Mission 66 program. Firms such as Richard Neutra, Eero Saarinen, Anshen & Allen, Taliesin Associated Architects, Welton Becket & Associates, Spencer, Ambrose & Lee, and John Morse & Associates for the Sitka building, were engaged to design unique modern park facilities.” The widespread application of the Park Service Modern style in park architecture indicated a growing awareness of nationwide social, economic and political change. Buildings designed in

this style were not intended for “atmosphere, whimsy, or aesthetic pleasure, but for change: to meet the demands of an estimated eighty million visitors,” in a “reasonable efficient way, considering the availability of new building technologies and higher costs of labor and materials.”

The Park Service Modern style reinterpreted the NPS’s “long-standing commitment” to constructing buildings that harmonized with park landscapes. Wirth and his collaborators diverged from the rustic architecture used in previous decades and embraced an architecture intended to spatially integrate with the park landscape and place primary emphasis on the surrounding natural and cultural resources. Ideally, the modern architecture of Mission 66 was “nearly transparent: a composition of functional, overlapping spaces and outward views, not of structural mass and decorative façades.” However, instead of using “pseudo-vernacular imagery and rough-hewn materials,” Park Service Modern style buildings harmonized with the landscape “through their plainness rather than by identification with natural features.” By exploiting the functional advantages of post-WWII architectural theory and construction, the Park Service Modern style encouraged park architects to take advantage of prefabricated materials, open plans, free façades, flat or distinctive roofs, ribbon windows and other established elements of modern design to create spaces in which “larger numbers of visitors could circulate easily and locate essential services efficiently.”

The centralized nature of the Mission 66 Program allowed for a consistency of design procedures and construction policies that conceptually linked individual parks to an overall park system. Modernist visitor centers and lodges soon became an easily “recognizable point of reference for visitors,” and in parks across the nation, visitors knew what interpretive materials and lodging amenities to expect for a pleasant, efficient, and educational visit. On the other hand, proponents of earlier park service rustic architecture negatively reacted to the blatant use of modern materials and construction techniques in a park setting. The more modern style was viewed as an unnecessary, radical departure from the underlying, naturalistic intent of parks. National Parks Association board member, Devereux Butcher, asked in a 1957 National Parks Magazine article: “Why has the Service abandoned its long-established policy of designing buildings that harmonize with their environment and with existing styles?” Director Wirth, however, argued for the Mission 66 intent, following the 1956 Great Smoky Mountains Public Services Conference:

“Structures should be designed to reflect the character of the area while at the same time following up-to-date design standards. Park structures are to conform, to some extent with the trend toward contemporary design and the use of materials and equipment accepted as standard by the building industry. However, restraint must be exercised in the design so that the structures will not be out of character with the area and so that the structures will be subordinate to their surroundings.” Although often criticized, in retrospect, the Park Service Modern of the Mission 66 Program has become as “influential and significant in the history of American national and state park management as the Park Service Rustic style.”

Northwest Regional Style

As Director Wirth noted, “structures should be designed to reflect the character of the area.” Through the Mission 66 program, this manifested itself in various ways: buildings such as the

Grand Canyon Visitor Center employed a stone that blended with the desert landscape; the Lodgepole Visitor Center in Sequoia-Kings Canyon was built of a dark wood reflecting the Giant Sequoias nearby; and the Quarry Visitor Center at Dinosaur National Monument appeared as if it were excavated out of the rock, like a prehistoric artifact. This was also true at Sitka where architect John Morse brought the regional Pacific Northwest traditions into his final design for the building.

When the radical ideas of both European and American modernists reached the Pacific Northwest in the 1930s, they profoundly affected the region's architects. Pulling away from traditional Beaux Arts design, a new preference for limited ornament, clean lines, buildings that reflected their function rather than concealing it, and employing natural materials all permeated this new approach to architecture. These early Northwest Modernists included: Pietro Belluschi and John Yeon both of Portland, Oregon; Lister Holmes, Lionel Pries, and Paul Thiry of Seattle, Washington; and Robert A. D. Berwick, C. E. Pratt, and Peter Thornton of Vancouver, B.C. Recent scholarship by David E. Miller and others has resulted in a broader appreciation of these regional architects and their contribution to American Modernism.

Usually trained in the Beaux-Arts tradition, these regional architects began to embrace the International style, as it had become known, using articulated post-and-beam designs, that allowed the true nature of the structure, often wood, to show or read rather than hide behind decorative ornament. Yet while Thiry employed flat roofs and cubic stucco forms, Belluschi and Yeon employed heavily influenced rural vernacular designs with added attention to light, and Berwick and Pratt espoused an open floor plan that interplayed internal and exterior spaces, all in pursuit of this nascent regionalism. These early regionalists each "adopted their own regional environmental strategies." Nonetheless, their larger projects "showed little regional influence," instead allowing the Northwest Regional style to manifest "in the everyday world of housing, schools, churches, and small office and commercial projects."

After WWII, a second generation of architects, designated the Northwest School by writer and architect David E. Miller, completed the rejection of "the old ideas of past forms," replacing them "with a strikingly consistent brand of regionalism." Particularly prominent in this development was Professor Lionel Pries of the University of Washington who trained Fred Bassetti (John Morse's partner), Paul Kirk, Victor Steinbrueck, Roland Terry and Gene Zema. Typically, small practices advanced the school, such as the firm of Bassetti and Morse. The style achieved widespread recognition when the Seattle chapter hosted the national American Institute of Architects (A.I.A.) convention in 1953. Subsequently, in July 1959, University of Washington Professor of Architecture Wendell Lovett traveled to Europe to speak at the ninth meeting of the Congr s Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne, further promoting the regional expression.

The Northwest Regional style of the 1950s and 1960s is characterized by a series of key fundamentals that respond directly to the surrounding environment, interweaving "elements of conceptual clarity, simplicity, and appropriateness of form." Elements include wood frame, post-and-pier construction, large expanses of glass, and consistent use of indigenous materials. These designers espoused a naturalistic approach and, "adopted an architecture that shelter[ed] people in a sustainable way." The primarily unpainted, natural wood construction also reflected

imported Japanese building traditions with post-and-pier construction, broad eaves, and intricate use of exposed exterior and interior structural members. Architects placed a great emphasis on blending the buildings with the site, so that they were subordinate to the surrounding landscape. Pacific Northwest regionalist buildings are often tied to their surroundings through utilization of dramatic expanses of glazed glass that combine with their open plans to maximize natural light, creating a seamless indoor-outdoor experience.

Miller's history of the Northwest Regional style connects the Pacific Northwest School of John Morse and others with the past and present. "The history of environmental architecture in the Pacific Northwest," he noted, began "several thousands of years ago" with two types of post-and-beam structures: "the shed-roof house and the gable-roof wakasham." The latter was common amongst the Haida and Tlingit natives of Alaska. Describing the style today, Miller finds three "inherent conditions that both expand and define the style known as Northwest Regionalism." They are the unique conditions of the region's natural light, the dramatic landscape, and the extensive use of wood as a primary building material.

Master Architect: NPS Employee Cecil Doty (1907 – 1990)

Although five of the first Mission 66 visitor centers, all of which opened in 1957, were the work of prominent modernist architects, the majority of NPS Mission 66 visitor centers were designed by NPS architects, such as Cecil Doty. With the creation of the San Francisco-based WODC in 1954, Doty became its principal architect. Doty's hand can be seen in almost half of the original 109 Mission 66- era visitor centers. In addition to the Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center, other examples of Doty's work or collaborative participation include: the South Rim Visitor Center at Grand Canyon National Park (1954); the Canyon Village Visitor Center at Yellowstone National Park (1955); the Montezuma Castle National Monument Visitor Center (1958); Arches National Park Visitor Center (1958); Zion National Park Visitor Center (1959); and numerous others. As noted above, sometimes these projects were a collaboration with outside firms or designers. However, Doty often developed a preliminary scheme that would be further enhanced by these private consulting architects.

Doty began his architectural career with the NPS in 1934. After graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Architecture degree from Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Oklahoma State University) in 1928, Doty found employment with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Oklahoma. In 1934, he was hired by the NPS to complete the plans for a museum at Glacier National Park. The next year, Doty advanced within NPS to an associate engineer for Oklahoma and Kansas. In 1936, he was elevated to regional architect. The following year, when the NPS Region Three Headquarters moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, Doty was called upon to design the NPS Southwest Regional Office Building. Built in 1937 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the adobe building exemplifies Doty's early work for the NPS in the rustic style.

In 1940, Doty moved to the NPS Region Four Headquarters in San Francisco. There, prior to the war, he designed structures for Bandelier and White Sands National Monuments. Doty spent the war years working with the Navy Seabees and just after the war on recreation projects in Oklahoma and California. He returned to NPS duty in 1947.

Doty's long career with the NPS allowed him to participate in the transition from the "rustic" designs of the early period to the Modernist-influenced Mission 66-era. Doty is quoted as saying that his transition from rustic architecture to modern architecture was part of a national progression in architectural style. He felt it would have been unnatural to design buildings that ignored contemporary design. According to Doty, if the visitor centers were to appeal to the visitor, they had to consider the visitors' aesthetic. The more modern, more familiar design would attract the visitor's attention and reflect the modern efficiency of the visitor center and Mission 66.

Doty is credited with developing a visitor center prototype that fulfilled the programmatic requirements of Mission 66. Ideally the visitor center would influence park use by informing the visitor about site visitation, traffic direction, local amenities, and to provide amenities to relieve weary road travelers. Mission 66 studies identified three public areas essential to meeting these goals: public recreation, assembly, and interpretation. Doty's visitor centers illustrate a consistent approach to the arrangement of these public use areas. His designs typically incorporated two assembly areas. The first was a partially covered outside terrace that housed the entrance to the restrooms, payphones, and vending machines. Visually linked to the terrace, the second assembly area was the lobby, which served as the main public gathering area and information center. The connection between the second assembly area (i.e. lobby) and the exterior was not considered the primary entry. Circulation sequences were designed to keep visitors flowing in one direction from parking towards the park exterior resources. Interpretive services were provided in an auditorium that also served as an assembly area and exhibit space. Doty typically organized these areas off the centrally located lobby, which contained the information and sales desk. This arrangement created an interpretive path that led from one public area to the next culminating in an expansive view of the park designed to lure the visitor outside. This design flow is evident at the Sitka NHP Visitor Center as the visitor moves from the parking lot to the lobby where they are provided with choices to view exhibits, a movie, native traditional arts, or proceed directly to the Totem Trail beyond the South Entry Porch.

Doty designed visitor centers to respond to their setting and reflect the local culture. To maintain a modern appearance, he deliberately avoided copying indigenous architectural design, but instead integrated distinctive indigenous design elements into his designs to give the feeling of the local architectural style. At Sitka NHP Visitor Center, Doty's early design called for incorporating Alaska Native carved-wood house screens and panels into the building's design, and these features remained in the design as it evolved.

Although Doty did not choose the location of the visitor center, this was done collaboratively with the NPS Landscape Architecture Branch, as evidenced by drawings from March 1964, Doty's body of NPS visitor centers demonstrates a knack for designing and placing buildings to suit the location. At Sitka, Doty prepared the initial drawings for the visitor center, and the design was furthered by Pacific Northwest Modernist John Morse.

Master Architect: John Moore "Jack" Morse (1911-2000)

An easterner, John Moore "Jack" Morse relocated to Seattle, Washington during World War II. Born in Brookline, Massachusetts, Morse received a Bachelor of Arts from Harvard College in 1934 and subsequently earned a Bachelor of Architecture, also from Harvard, in 1940. While at

Harvard, Morse would have been exposed to several prominent faculty including Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer. Two years later, in 1942, he relocated to Seattle, first working for the architect George Stoddard, then was employed in the Engineering Department at the Boeing Company from 1943 to 1945. By 1947, Morse had developed a partnership with fellow Harvard graduate, Fred Bassetti (1917-2013). In 1960, Morse served as the president of the American Institute of Architects (A.I.A.) Washington Chapter. After an amicable split with Bassetti, Morse established his own practice, John Morse & Associates in 1963. In 1978, Morse reorganized his firm as the Morse Stafford Partnership. In 1985, Morse again reworked his practice, creating John Morse Architect/Planner, which was active until his death in 2000. Throughout his long career Morse primarily worked in the Pacific Northwest with most of his work located in Washington State.

By the 1960s, Morse had gained considerable professional recognition in the Seattle area due to his successful projects in the Pacific Northwest Modern style. Over the years, Morse received many recognitions and awards from the national and Washington Chapter of the A.I.A. for his work in the state. Morse was most often acknowledged for his “complimentary qualities of creativity and practicality.” He was elevated to A.I.A. Fellow (FAIA) in 1968, joining only fifteen other architects so recognized in Seattle at the time. In 1996, Morse received the highest honor from the Seattle Chapter of the A.I.A., the “Seattle Gold Medal,” a lifetime achievement award for his service to the profession of architecture. His long-time partner, Fred Bassetti argued that Morse “offered his services at once, civic warrior from the beginning, endlessly pressing for a more congenial, workable city [Seattle]... as an architect, he was an innovator.”

Throughout his career, Morse primarily focused on private residences and institutional buildings, including a number of schools and libraries. He designed the Lake View School and the Mercer High School, both on Mercer Island (1954-56), Lake City Seattle Branch Library (1965), and Kincaid Hall at the University of Washington (1971). He taught at the University of Washington School of Architecture for a short time from 1946-47. In 1969, Morse worked with the architectural firm of Kirk, Wallace & McKinley on the Pike Place Market Urban Renewal project.

Morse completed a number of projects for the NPS. In 1963, the Sitka NHP Visitor Center was the first project he designed for the NPS. This was followed quickly by the Glacier Bay Lodge Complex outside of Gustavus, Alaska. In 1966, Morse received an Honor Award from the Washington Chapter of the A.I.A. for his design at Glacier Bay, one of only a few Mission 66-era lodges constructed in the parks. In 1973, Morse was hired by the NPS to rehabilitate the Camp Muir Guide Shelter (1916) at Mount Rainier National Park. Three years later, Morse was engaged to analyze the structure of Mount Rainier’s Paradise Inn (1917). Morse’s design of the Sitka National Monument Visitor Center expanded on the preliminary scheme by Cecil Doty, and he was later hired to design an addition to the visitor center.

Influences of Alaska Native Building Traditions at the Sitka NHP Visitor Center

Cecil Doty’s earliest design for the Sitka NHP Visitor Center clearly included Alaska Native artifacts woven into the design. These elements brought traditional Tlingit practices into a modern building.

Tlingit tribes typically created permanent dwellings collected into villages only in the winter months. While size denoted importance and prestige, all Tlingit houses were structurally similar: rectangular, low-pitched, front-gabled buildings. Constructed with interlocking, heavy, hewn spruce timbers, cedar and, at times, hemlock, these houses were built without extraneous fastenings. The exteriors were typically clad in wide, horizontal or vertical planks, and the roofs featured heavy staves that were held in place with heavy stones and saplings. A smoke hole in the roof was protected from the weather by a movable cover, which could be propped open to vent the interior. At each corner was a broad plank that was rabbited along the edge where it interlocked with the wall planks. The tops of these planks rose approximately a foot or more above the eaves. The front entry gable usually faced the shoreline, and a doorway was often cut into the wall planks at ground level. Typically accessed by a step or two, this forced entrants to duck, an excellent defensive construction technique. The front façade of an important house was sometimes ornamented with an elaborate carving known as a house screen or could include house posts. These features depicted important events in the life of the clan and revealed its name and key symbols.

Passing through the doorway, an entrant would step downward. Important houses featured interiors that were often excavated four to six feet below ground level and reached by descending one or more step like platforms, which were used for lounging and sleeping. Heavy, smoothed planks were laid directly on the earthen ground as flooring. Independent of the exterior walls, the roof was supported by heavy, often elaborately carved, interior house posts. Two large roof beams running the length of the house, and set in a shallow groove, rested on the tops of the carved posts. An intricately carved and painted wood partition was frequently placed between the two rear house posts, separating the more public areas with a sleeping chamber reserved for the family.

Completion of every construction stage of the house was a significant moment for celebration, culminating in the naming of the structure and the sponsoring of a potlatch. Although all houses were given a name, larger, principal houses were traditionally given the most honored names, those that “referred to the totemic emblems or crests of the lineage.” Lesser houses were named by their position, shape, or materials. Once a house was assigned a name, that name stayed with the building even beyond its existence or once abandoned. When a building's inhabitants moved to a new village, it was often customary for them to name their new house after the one they had left. Each Tlingit tribe consisted of two moieties, a social or ritual group. It was custom for the moiety who did not occupy the house to provide the labor for construction. In return the moiety that occupied the house rewarded the laborers of the opposite clan with an elaborate potlatch celebration.

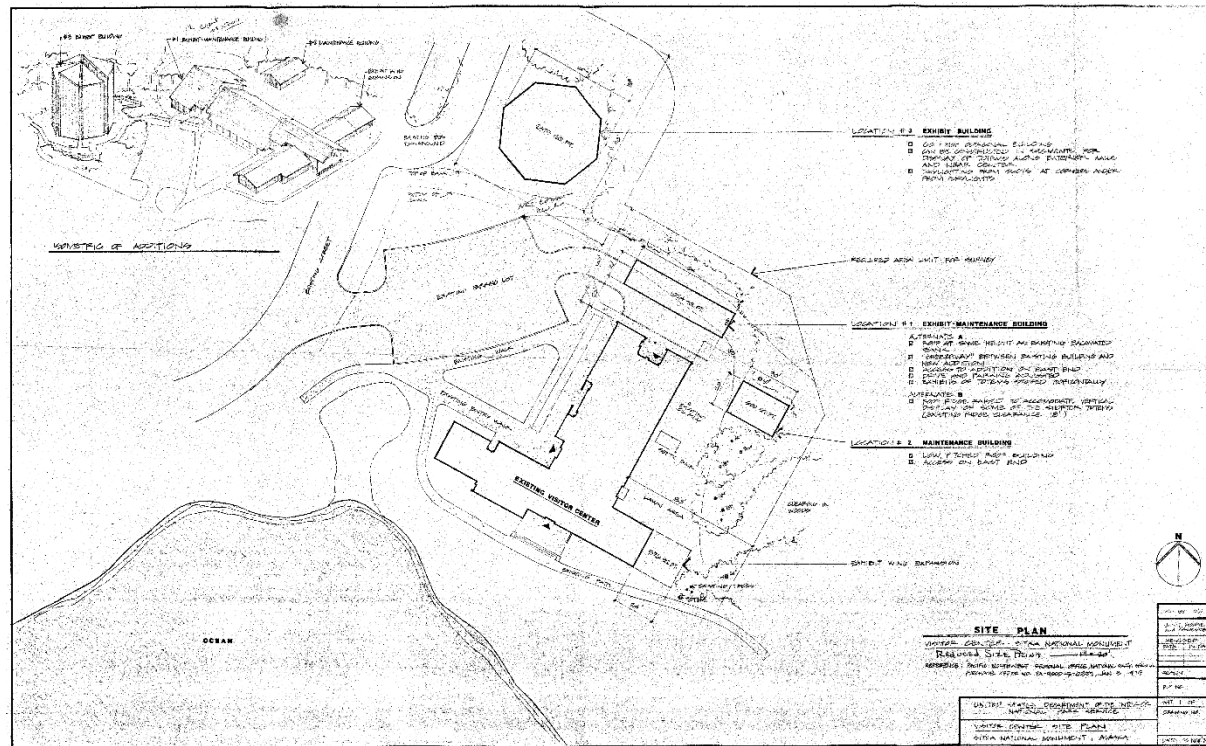
At the Sitka NHP Visitor Center, the primary elements that clearly reflect the Alaska Native building traditions include orientation of the front building gable towards the water, installation of log columns and heavy beam elements supporting the Lobby and South Entry Porch roof, use of low slope roofs with deep eaves, differentiation of building frame and wall infill elements, and incorporation of Alaska Native carvings, particularly with the original installation of the house screen at the South Entry Porch gable. Clan houses were essential to the identity of individuals of the Tlingit society, providing a way to identify relatives and where people were born or lived. Additionally, the placement of the artist studios down the hall of the Cultural

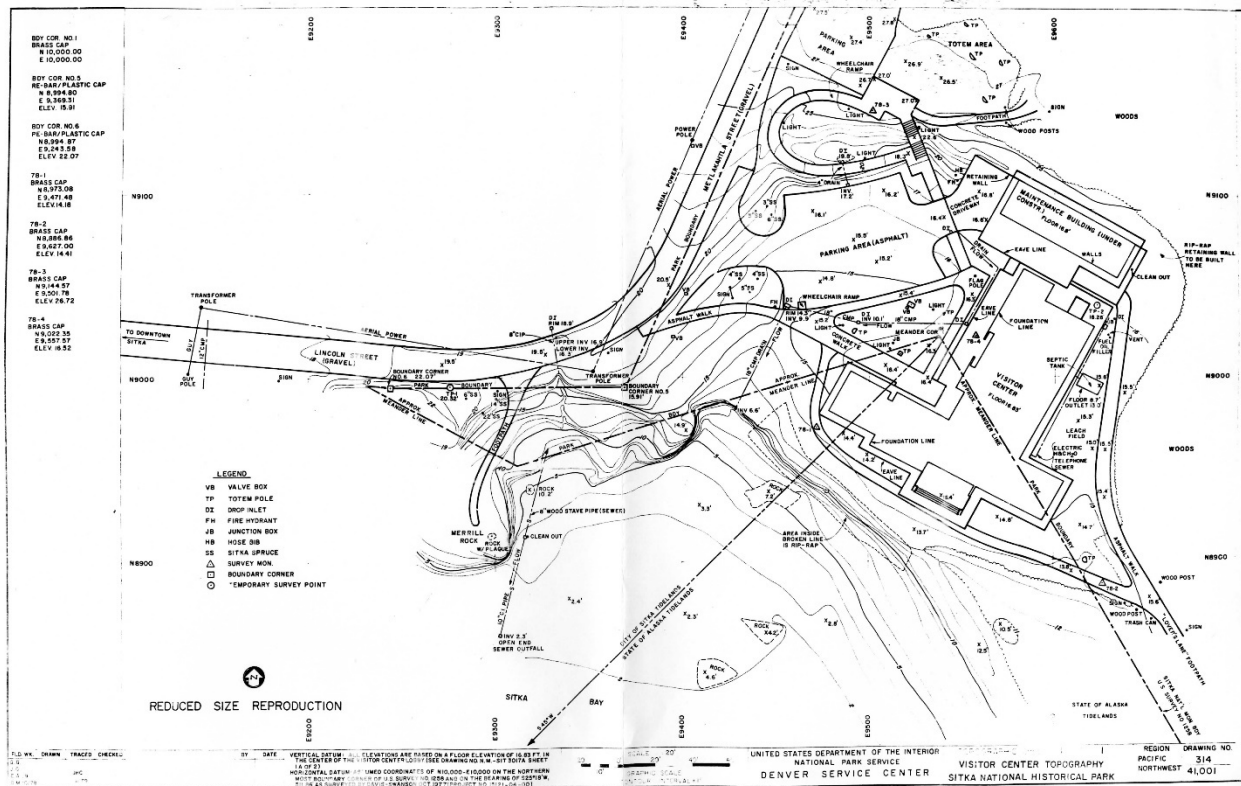
Center Wing on the landward side of the building is significant as it parallels a traditional clan house hierarchy where these types of spaces were placed deeper into the building and reserved for higher status individuals.



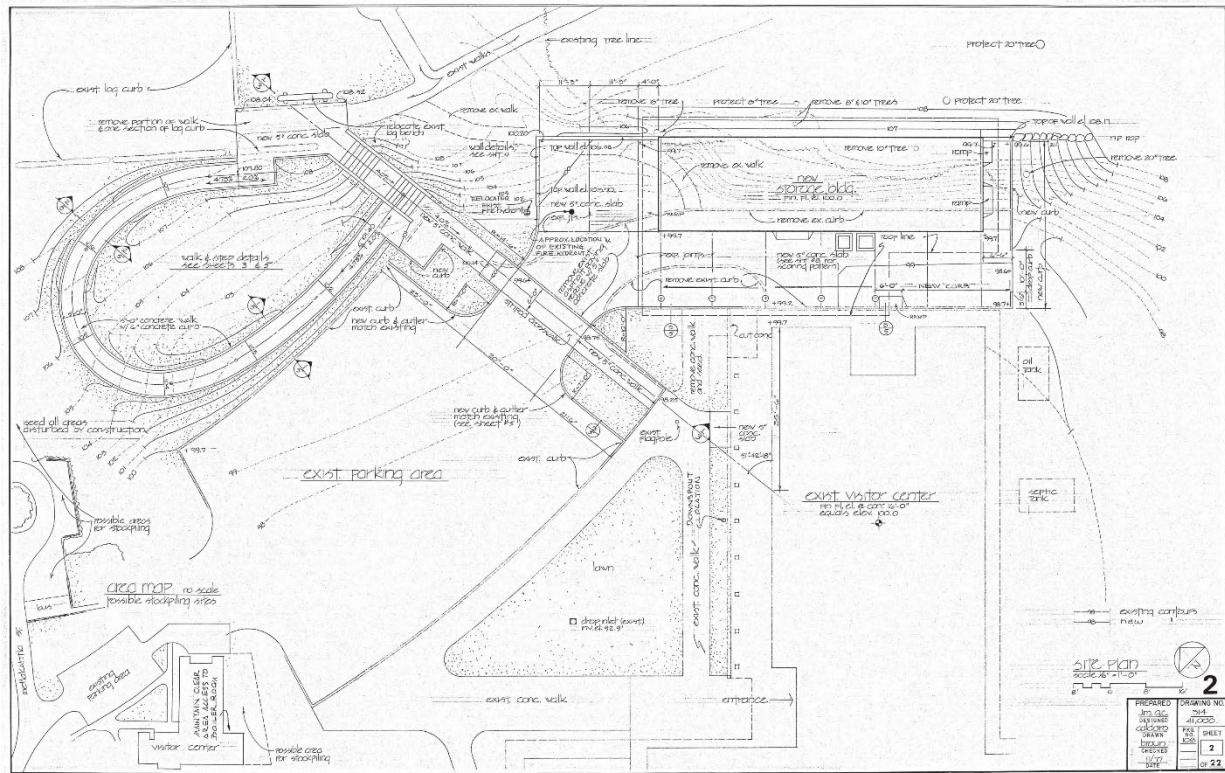
Circa 1971 photo of the triangular lawn area with the flagpole in its original location and a portion of the concrete entry sidewalk that was removed in the late 1970s. A deciduous tree that was planted near the entry sidewalk and flagpole is no longer present. A pedestrian pathway was installed in 2000 that matches a section of this historic alignment (SITK 15656 D).

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE





Circa 1976 drawing showing the existing conditions of the visitor center landscape as they were building the maintenance addition (SITK 25380 Oversized Box 1012). Some items of note include the inlet has been filled in and a drain installed to the catch basin located in the southwest corner of the lower parking lot, there are three lights in the triangular lawn area, the flagpole is in its original location, the path between Metlakatla Street and the entry sidewalk is marked as asphalt, and the entry sidewalk is concrete. Metlakatla Street is unpaved.



November 1977 drawing (314_41000) of the site associated with modifications to the north side of the visitor center and sidewalk connecting the upper plateau (now upper parking lot) to the visitor center. While this made changes to the 1965 circulation it was a more compatible design solution than the 2000 modifications since the sidewalk located parallel to the eastern side of the lower parking lot also matches the historic alignment. Though this drawing shows no impact to the entry sidewalk that parallels the porch, photographs from the early 1980s indicate it was removed.



1983 photo of the lower parking lot from the new curved sidewalk connecting the upper terrace with the lower parking lot and visitor center. The deciduous tree that was in the triangular planting area is gone along with the concrete sidewalk that paralleled the porch, and three totem poles have been added. The parking lot's location, shape and material remain the same from its 1965 construction. Tall deciduous shrubs are planted in the beds located between the entry sidewalk and the visitor center's west wing (SITK 15656 A).



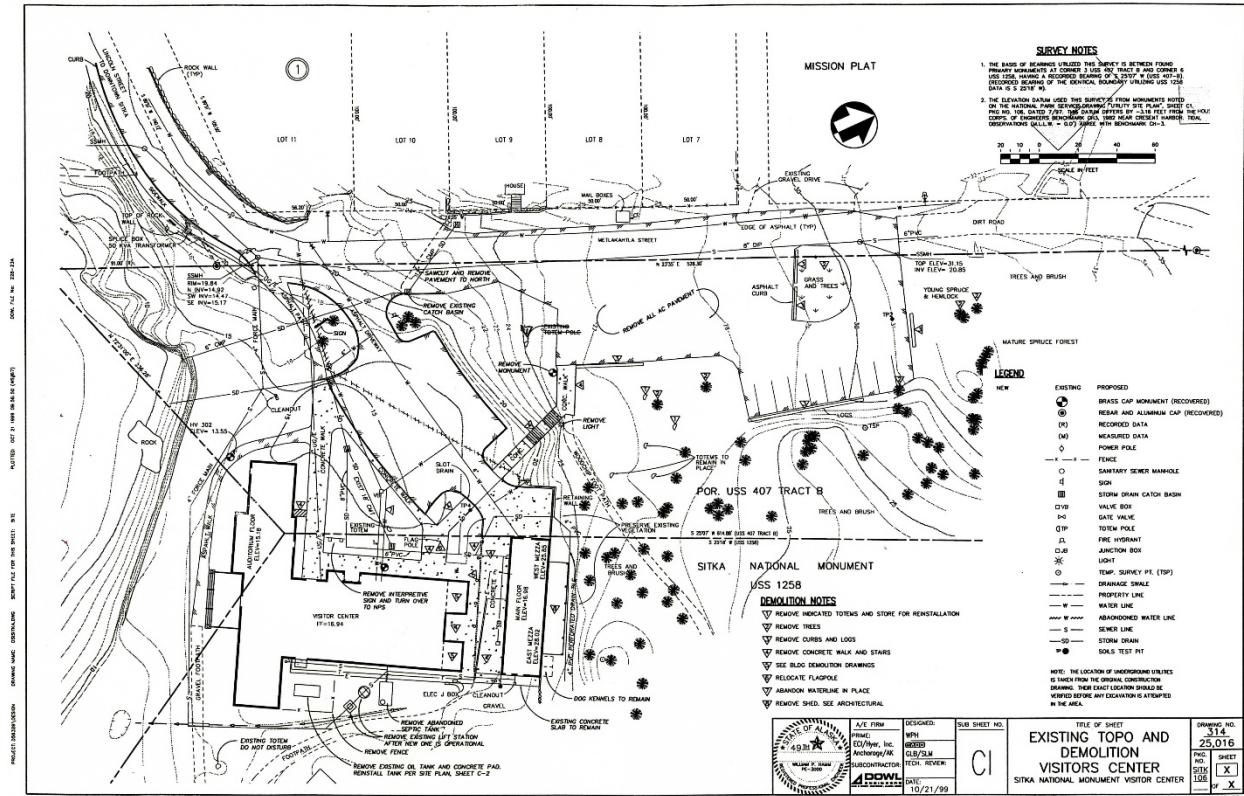
1983 photo of the rock and log riprap, which is starting to host deciduous trees, including one located near the edge of what used to be the inlet, but is now filled in. The path between Metlakatla Street and the entry sidewalk appears in the foreground and the Shoreline Connection Trail in the background. Both are narrow and appear to be paved, though the material is not discernable (SITK 25380 B178 F021).



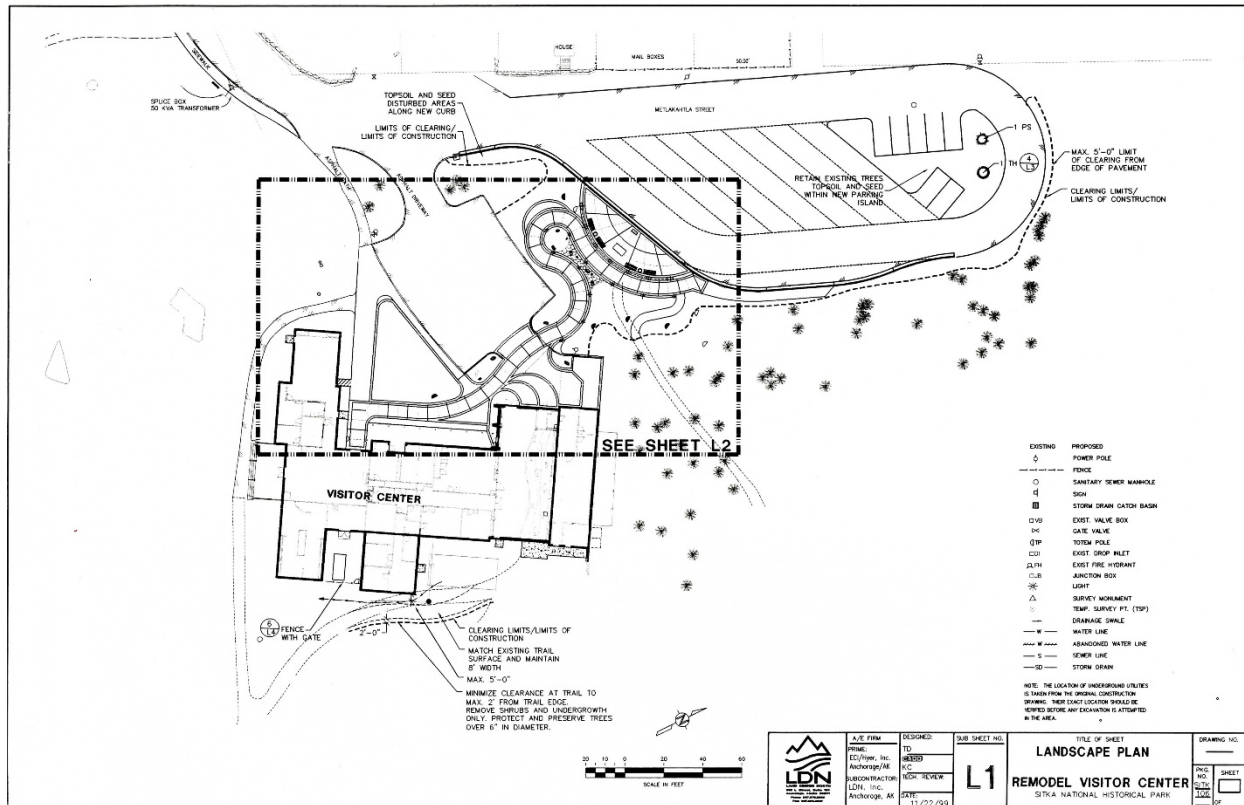
1988 photo looking northeast showing the position of three totems in the triangular lawn, the entry sign and Sitka spruce, the entry sidewalk, and a portion of the path between Metlakatla Street and the entry sidewalk. The bike rack has moved to a location south of the Sitka spruce trees. The new addition is the sidewalk in the lower right corner which does not align well with the park's pedestrian circulation network and (SITK 15663BB).



1994 photo of the stairs and new pedestrian circulation that was constructed in the late 1970s which eliminated a portion of the entry sidewalk that paralleled the porch. A totem is located where a deciduous tree was planted in 1965 (SITK 25380 B025 F09).



October 1999 plan (SITK 25380 Oversized Box F08019) showing the existing conditions prior to the 2000 construction of the new pathway linking the upper parking lot with the visitor center. The path between Metlakatla Street and the entry sidewalk and the western portion of the Shoreline Connection Trail (to the point where it intersects with the visitor center porch) are indicated to be paved in asphalt. The eastern portion of the Shoreline Connection Trail is gravel. The locations of totems and the flagpole are also noted. The sidewalk built to the end of Metlakatla Street is shown, but the path between Metlakatla Street and the Shoreline Connection Trail is not yet present.



November 1999 drawing (SITK 25380 Oversized Box F07) of the site for the visitor center remodel project which indicates some of the locations and materials of the circulation features that were constructed in 1965 including the lower parking lot, Shoreline Connection Trail, entry sidewalk, and path between Metlakatla Street and the entry sidewalk. There is no distinction to the type of paved material that is used for the lower parking lot, west side of the Shoreline Connection Trail, and path between Metlakatla Street and the entry sidewalk other than they were paved. The alignment of the trail located east of the visitor center is also visible and notes are made for how it will be adjusted with this project. Finally, this plan shows how the new accessible ramp connecting the upper parking lot with the visitor center impacted the historic circulation features located on the east side of the lower parking lot.

SITKA NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

VII. Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity

Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity Narrative Summary

Under the National Register of Historic Places criteria, there are seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Assessing the overall integrity of a property assists in measuring the ability of the property to convey its historical significance. Retention of specific elements of historic integrity to the defined period of significance is important. The aspects of integrity apply to the entire site: the building exterior and interior, landscape, as well as site features. Overall, the historic integrity of the Sitka National Historic Park Visitor Center is good. Over time some significant alterations have occurred, including a major rehabilitation project in 2000, that moderately impaired the integrity of design and materials. As a whole, the visitor center maintains integrity of location, material, workmanship, design, setting, feeling, and association. The character-defining features, exceptional importance, association with the Pacific Northwest Style and the centralization of visitor services with administrative functions all collaboratively make the Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center district an outstanding example of a Mission 66 visitor center.

Park planning during the Mission 66-era adjusted to focus on the influx of vehicles into the parks and how to manage vehicular circulation and parking. This resulted in prioritizing parking areas near new park visitor centers funded during this era. After a visitor parked their car, the site design was developed to funnel pedestrian traffic to an entry into the visitor center, accessed from the parking area. In the visitor center, individuals were oriented to the park, its resources, and mission, and were then disbursed out into the park to experience the resources for themselves, usually via an exit separate from the entry oriented toward the parking area. This allowed the visitor to go from the visitor center directly out into the park to experience its unique resources or views. All aspects of this circulation concept and design remain at the Sitka NHP Visitor Center.

While the district has been modified and the building added to over time, it retains a strong association with the development and interpretation of Sitka National Historical Park. Overall, the district retains integrity of location, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association. Its integrity of design and materials has been moderately impaired by past alterations and additions. For the cultural landscape those modifications are primarily associated with the addition of a curvilinear accessible ramp that links the upper parking lot with the lower parking lot and main visitor center entrance, the modification of the shoreline with the filling in of the inlet, the introduction of a path between Metlakatla St. and the Shoreline Trail, and the creation of a gravel gathering area located near entrance to the Totem Trail.

Location

The visitor center has very strong integrity of location. It remains in its original location along the Sitka Sound within the Sitka National Historical Park, near the termination of Metlakatla Street in Sitka, Alaska. The original orientation of the building is intact, with the primary visitor entrance at the west elevation, easily accessible from the parking area. The South Entry Porch, facing Sitka Sound, also retains its original orientation and location. The parking lot has been expanded but remains in the same general location with easy access to the west entrance.

Design

The visitor center has a moderate level of integrity of design. The design of the Sitka NHP Visitor Center has been somewhat impaired over the years through miscellaneous rehabilitation work and in replacement of original materials and features. The building was originally designed with a main lobby and three radiating wings housing a theater, an exhibit room and a cultural center. This was slightly modified in 1977 when a free-standing Maintenance and Storage Building was constructed to the north by the original architect, John Morse. However, in 2000, the building was substantially rehabilitated including the Theater and Cultural Center wings. Totem Hall was inserted between the visitor center and the Maintenance and Storage Building, creating a single structure. Lastly, an Administrative Wing was added at the east elevation with its orientation parallel to the Exhibits Wing.

The Mission 66 Multiple Property Documentation Form discusses alterations and additions to the visitor center building type, noting that “an addition will not disqualify a resource, if it is compatible with the original building and not opposed to the intention of the original design, and if it does not obscure the qualities for which the building is significant.” John Morse designed the free-standing maintenance and storage addition in 1977. Furthermore, his 1975 design proposal suggested the need for additional space including a totem exhibit; however, this was not built in 1975. The 2000 addition of Totem Hall enclosed the open space between the original visitor center building and Morse’s 1977 addition. Totem Hall is a heavily glazed, tall, one-story addition. The new Administrative Wing was added to the east elevation north of the original Exhibits Wing. It sits away from the primary west and south building components. The design of the Administrative Wing employed similar building materials and matched the Exhibits Wing in its footprint and roofline. Additional interior changes to the Theater and Cultural Center wings were made during the 2000 rehabilitation. Overall, the cumulative additions and alterations have moderately impacted Doty and Morse’s original design concept for the visitor center.

The design of the landscape has moderate integrity, having been impacted on the east end of the lower parking lot by the introduction of a curvilinear walkway that is not compatible with the form and materials of the historic landscape. Though the inlet was a feature of the historic landscape, its removal before the end of the period of significance does not affect the landscape’s integrity of design. The landscape continues to provide an orientation to the park and its surrounding landscape through critical orienting views of the site and Sitka Sound.

Setting

The setting of the Sitka NHP Visitor Center remains largely unchanged and retains a high level of integrity. The visitor center was originally situated among a number of small cottages at the termination of Metlakatla Street. Some of these cottages have been altered or removed, and a newer apartment complex has been constructed in the vicinity. The construction of this apartment building altered the view and perception of the visitor center from the water. The new building overwhelms the older building, distorting the clean look of the visitor center from Sitka Sound. However, the visitor center still serves as an introduction to the cultural significance of the site, forming an entryway to the historic Totem Trail and the 1804 battle site of the Tlingit-Russian conflict along a peninsula formed by the Sitka Sound and the Indian River. Further, when originally constructed, the Sitka Historical Park provided the setting for the display of a number of Alaska Native Totem Poles. While some of these poles have been moved within the

site or replaced with replicas for conservation purposes, these important cultural elements still contribute to the setting.

Materials

Overall, the integrity of materials of the Sitka NHP Visitor Center building were somewhat impacted by the 2000 rehabilitation. This project replaced all the original windows in the building with double-hung metal sash replacements of similar configuration to the original. For the most part, these new windows were placed in original locations with some exceptions, including at the Theater Wing, where new openings were inserted. The roofs have been replaced and repaired over time, but cedar shakes remain the primary roofing material. At the interior, the original Lobby reception desk has been removed, and the location changed. The original Lobby flooring has been covered with carpet. The original floor plan and interior materials of both the Theater and Cultural Center wings were substantially changed in 2000. However, the Lobby and Exhibits Wing only received minimal changes that impacted historic fabric.

The materials associated with the Mission 66-era landscape design include vegetation such as Sitka spruce, lawn areas and native vegetation along the shoreline, all of which are intact. The proliferation of shrubs and forbs in other planting beds contrasts with what was implemented but is in line with the intention of the planting plan to have a simple palette of shrubs and forbs. That simplicity is at risk, however, given the variety of species that currently exist. Other materials include paving materials which included asphalt, concrete, and a finely crushed compacted gravel. The asphalt and concrete remain in nearly all of their historic locations, but the finely crushed compacted gravel has been replaced with a larger uncompacted gravel surface in those areas. Wood continues to be used for signs and totems, and features such as the bike rack, fire hydrants and catch basin reflect their historic materials.

Workmanship

The integrity of workmanship at the visitor center exterior has been maintained through retention of the vertical siding and cedar shake roofs. The exterior of the 2000 Administrative Wing addition reflects the original design intent of Doty and Morse in its style and architectural details, which convey the same sense of workmanship as the original building. The Totem Hall addition, particularly with the building's use of similar roof slopes to the original building and use of overlapping roofs, which minimizes the difference between the two-story and single-story components of the building, helps to ensure the integrity of the workmanship. At the interior, the changes to the Theater and Cultural Center wings altered the original materials and workmanship in these spaces. However, the Lobby retains many of its original materials and workmanship.

The workmanship of the Mission 66-era landscape remains relatively intact due to the retention of some primary design elements, such as the asphalt-paved and concrete-curb-edged lower parking lot, the lawn areas, which provided a simple landscape setting to the visitor center entrance, the framed and signed entry experience for visitors arriving by vehicle or on foot, and the views through the site and to the surrounding landscape, which help orient the visitor to the site's cultural and natural history and significance.

Feeling

The building and landscape retain integrity of feeling, and both components feel similar to the historical conditions, especially when viewed from the edge of the Sitka Sound looking north. However, the overall feeling of the west entry sequence has been somewhat altered with the expansion of the parking lot. The addition of Totem Hall changed the low scale, horizontal feeling of the building. Further, with the relocation of the house screen from the South Entry Porch exterior to the interior, the focal point and feeling of the Lobby has been moderately altered.

Association

The building retains a strong association with the Sitka National Historical Park and with the Mission 66-era. It also retains an association with architects Cecil Doty and John Morse. This continuity has preserved and enhanced the association of the building with the Pacific Northwest style that the NPS adopted in Sitka, Alaska. Consequently, visitors to the park still have all of their needs met through the visitor center as Doty and NPS Western Office of Design and Construction (WODC) intended when implementing the Mission 66 program's vision for a visitor center in Sitka.

Landscape Characteristics and Features

Vegetation



Sitka Spruce

Part of the original planting plan, eight Sitka Spruce were planted to flank the entrance to the Lower Parking Lot. Five remain today, two on the south side of the vehicular entrance near the entrance sign and three on the north side of the vehicular entrance (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing

**Entrance Lawn**

In photographs taken at the opening of the Visitor Center, the Entrance Lawn surrounds five Sitka Spruce and forms the setting for the Entry Sign. To mitigate impacts to the lawn by visitors who are standing in front of it to take photos, several circular concrete pavers are located in the lawn in front of the sign. With the exception of this addition, the Entrance Lawn remains in place from the original design (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing



Triangular Lawn

A triangular-shaped lawn area located north of the Visitor Center's theater wing, is bounded by the Entry Sidewalk and the curvilinear walkway. Original plans show that this area was intended to be planted with a non-native groundcover (*Gaultheria procumbens*), but that was either never implemented or didn't survive. A deciduous tree, possibly a white birch (*Betula pendula*) shown on an original planting plan, was planted on the east side of the lawn in 1965, but it had disappeared by the early 1970s. Alterations have been made to the eastern edge of the lawn on two occasions, when the pedestrian walkway was altered in the late 1970s and again in 2000. The flagpole was originally to the northeast of the lawn and has since moved inside its boundary (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing

**Shoreline Lawn**

Though originally designed to be restored to native vegetation, a lawn was planted in the linear space between the Shoreline Connection Trail and the Rock and Log riprap. The shoreline lawn initially extended north and west around the inlet, but that has since been filled in and the lawn has expanded into this area. The shoreline lawn contributes to the historic character of the landscape, but three additions that are located in this area do not. Those include: the lawn's expansion into the former inlet area, a Sitka spruce, two tree stumps, and a bench located east of the Sitka spruce (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing



Planting Beds

Planting Beds are located around the edges of the Visitor Center's theater wing between the building's façade and the pedestrian circulation features. An original planting plan shows that the planting bed on the north side of the building was slated for St. John's wort (*Hypericum calycinum*) and the southern planting bed slated for a non-native groundcover (*Gaultheria procumbens*). However, it does not appear that these were planted. Though photographic evidence is inconclusive, no shrubs or forbs appear in any of the images during the period of significance. Today, these planting beds contain a variety of native shrubs, forbs and lawn including, but not limited to Deer Heart (*Mainantheum dilatatum*), Cow parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*), Nootka rose (*Rosa nutkana*), and Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: The planting bed areas are Contributing, but the plants themselves are not.

Land Use



The land the Sitka Visitor Center sits on has served as the entrance for the park since the placement of two totems by the Alaska Road Commission in 1925. The siting of the lower parking lot in 1940 marked the formalization of the entrance. The development of the Mission 66 Visitor Center has further established its use as an entry to the park, which continues today (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing

Circulation



Entry Sidewalk

The concrete Entry Sidewalk connects the Lower Parking Lot with the Visitor Center. The concrete sidewalk includes a section which borders the Lower Parking Lot's southern end and a section which connects the Path Between Metlakatla Street and the Entry Sidewalk with the Visitor Center entrance. This section initially ended at the southwest corner of the lower parking lot, but now extends a few feet to the west. A third section, which originally connected the southeast corner of the lower parking lot with the Visitor Center's entrance, was removed in the late 1970s and modified in 2000. In the late 1970s, this section was removed, and the sidewalk located under the porch provided a connection between the parking lots and the Visitor Center entrance. In 2000, a new walkway was built just west of the porch in a similar location to the original sidewalk, however the form and materials were not the same being curved (not straight) and built of pavers and concrete (not concrete). Drawings from 1965 indicate the Entry Sidewalk was concrete. Though a portion of the entry sidewalk is missing, and a small section has been added to its western end, the remaining sections associated with the 1965 construction contribute to the historic character of the property (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing



Path Between Metlakatla Street and Entry Sidewalk

This path connects Metlakatla Street and a sidewalk that terminates at the end of Lincoln Street with the Entry Sidewalk, providing a connection for pedestrians who are coming to the park from the city's center. In the 1965 plans this path follows the current alignment but was much narrower and had a more defined edge. Though photographic evidence is not definitive, the path appears paved in asphalt or a fine crushed and binded gravel substance. A circa 1976 existing conditions plan notes that the path is asphalt, but earlier drawings note it was a bituminous paved surface which can sometimes be characterized as asphalt since they are similar. Today, the path consists of a larger sized gravel (roughly half-inch to one inch) that is not edged and has expanded beyond its original width, but it does follow the original path's alignment. Its expanded width is exacerbated by the introduction of the Path Between Metlakatla Street and Shoreline Connection Trail (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing



Shoreline Connection Trail

The Shoreline Connection Trail was designed to be a narrow trail tracing around the southern and eastern elevations of the Visitor Center and connecting the Entry Sidewalk with the Totem Trail. Photographs from 1965 indicate that the trail's surface material between the Entry Sidewalk and the Totem Trail was paved in a similar material to the one used for the Path Between Metlakatla Street and Entry Sidewalk. Like that path it was also edged. Later evidence from plans and photographs indicates that the trail was paved between the Entry Sidewalk and the Visitor Center porch. The surface between the porch and the entrance to Totem Trail and extending around the east side of the Visitor Center may have been gravel. It is not clear if this change in surface material occurred before the end of the period of significance. Today, the width of this path has extended beyond its original footprint and it is no longer edged or compacted. Its expansion is due in part to its relationship to the more recently added Path between Metlakatla Street and the Shoreline Connection Trail but is also connected to the trail providing vehicular access to Totem Trail. Following the construction of the Totem Viewing Area, a portion of the Shoreline Connection Trail was moved north and east of the visitor center's new northeast corner location. There is very little documentation of this area throughout the site's history, but 1965 drawings allude to a connection along this side of the visitor center that connected a north entrance to the totem trail and the southern entrance to the totem trail. The trail connection still exists, but its location has been altered (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing



Lower Parking Lot

Designed by Cecil Doty and landscape architects associated with the NPS Western Office of Design and Construction and finalized by John Morse, the location, shape, size, material, and connection to Metlakatla Street remains as it was when it was built in 1965. Drawings from 1964 called for an asphalt paved parking area lined with a curb that would fit 20 automobile parking spaces, a catch basin located in the parking lot's southwest corner, and roads connecting the lower parking lot's west end with Metlakatla Street and the eastern end with a service court. The expansion of the Totem Hall and the curvilinear path that links the lower parking lot to the upper parking lot has impacted the far eastern edge of the road associated with the lower parking lot that connected the eastern edge of the lower parking lot to what was originally a service court and is now exhibit and office space, but the parking lot itself was not impacted (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing



Path Between Metlakatla Street and Shoreline Connection Trail

This path (on the left) was not part of the 1965 landscape design but is a formalized desire trail that connects Metlakatla Street with the Shoreline Connection Trail. Though it is not clear when it was added, it does not appear in any drawings or photographs before 2000 (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Non-Contributing

Buildings and Structures

Totems

While totems were planned as part of the original design and were installed during the period of significance, only one of the totem poles (Frog/Raven Pole) was present during the period of significance and is close to its original location. The other totem poles express the design intention of the Visitor Center to have totem poles around its entrance, but they are not original or in their original locations. Details about each of the totem poles located in the immediate vicinity of the Visitor Center are below (MIG, 2019).



Bicentennial Pole

Located within the Triangular Lawn, the Bicentennial Pole was carved by Duane Pasco, the winner of a design competition in 1976, this totem pole is carved in the traditional style and is meant to depict 200 years of Pacific Northwest Coast Indian history. During the period of significance there were up to three totem poles located in the Triangular Lawn. The Bicentennial Pole appears to be close to one of the original locations (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing

***Yaadaas Crest Pole***

The newly carved reproduction of the Yaadaas Crest totem pole was carved during the spring and summer of 2006 as a collaborative project with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, The Kiks.ádi clan, and Haida people of Kaasaan/Haidaburg. The raising commemorated the 100th anniversary of the 1906 installation in the park of totem poles collected by Governor Brady and displayed at expositions in St. Louis (1904) and Portland (1905). It is located in a lawn area between the Path Between Metlakatla Street and Entry Sidewalk and the Path Between Metlakatla Street and Shoreline Connection Trail, where totem poles did not exist during the period of significance. The base is different than the other totem poles since it is surrounded by a circular concrete paver edge (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: While the totem pole itself is contributing, its location is not.



Frog/Raven Pole

At the entrance to the totem trail stands the Frog/Raven Pole which was recarved by George Benson (Lkeináa) and John Sam (Chináa) during the Civilian Conservation Corps restoration program that lasted between 1938 and 1941. It is located in or near its original location (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing



Wooch Jin Dul Shat Kooteeya- The Holding Hands Centennial Pole

The "Wooch Jin Dul Shat Kooteeya" or "Holding Hands Centennial" totem pole near the entrance to totem trail was commissioned to commemorate the Sitka National Historical Park's 100th anniversary. Numerous carvers shaped the totem, but the effort was led by Tommy Joseph, who supervised the project and who carved the top - a Raven/Eagle Juxtaposition. A totem pole did not exist in this area during the period of significance (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: While the totem pole itself is contributing, its location is not.



Visitor Center

The Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center has a primarily T-shaped plan set on a northeast southwest axis consisting of eight wings (lobby, exhibit hall, theater, cultural center, maintenance/storage addition, Totem Hall, outdoor totem storage addition, southeast addition). Four wings are original to the 1965 one-story building and a fifth, the maintenance/storage addition was designed by the original architect. The visitor center long axis is formed by the lobby (southwest portion) and the cultural center (northeast portion). The shorter axis of the T-shaped plan is formed by the theater (northwest) wing and the exhibit hall (southeast) wing. Although visitors enter the lobby via the northwest façade near the theater, the most visible façade faces Sitka Sound and is formed by the theater wing, the lobby, and the exhibit hall wing. In 1977, the fifth wing, a two-story maintenance shop and storage building, was constructed approximately 30 feet northeast of the visitor center. In 2000, the intervening space was enclosed with a sixth wing, the two-story Totem Hall. Simultaneously, a seventh wing was added to the rear (northeast) façade of the maintenance/storage building, a single-story outdoor totem shelter. A second southeast wing, located northeast of the museum wing and attached to the cultural center wing, was constructed in 2000, as the eighth and final wing (MIG, 2019).

The primarily T-shaped plan covered by a series of prominent, overlapping, gabled, cedar, shake roofs with wide, open, overhanging eaves, simple fascia, rake and barge boards, large purlins, soffits, and exposed rafter-tails. Set on a concrete foundation, the building's exterior walls are clad in 8-inch, rough sawn, tongue-and-groove, vertical board, cedar siding painted white to contrast with the dark brown rafter tails, soffits, purlins, fascia boards, barge boards,

skirt boards, corner boards and trim. The original T-shaped portion of the visitor center features 1/1, double-hung, metal-sash windows that are grouped with wide mullions and simple surrounds. The totem exhibit hall addition features large fixed rectangular and trapezoidal window walls divided into panels by wide muntins and horizontal mullions. The main entrances to the interior public spaces are wood, double doors (each door has two glass panels) and the exterior service and restroom doors are wood, flush panel. The building retains its physical characteristics when assessing the effect of four additions, all of which are compatible in both design and use. Moreover, the building has never been moved from its original location and also retains the original setting and feeling. The first addition to the property was designed by John Morse and Associates, the original architect and subsequent additions and alterations maintain design continuity. Although additional materials have been used in alterations and additions along with workmanship from new individuals, these changes conform to rehabilitation guidelines within *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and consequently sustain the association of the building with the work of John Morse. The Sitka Visitor Center embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Pacific Northwest Style—a variant of Modernism—including the use of a wood frame, post-and-pier construction, large expanses of glass, use of indigenous materials, and a siting that makes the building both subordinate and harmonious to the surrounding environment. As an example of the Pacific Northwest Style, the visitor center exemplifies a regionally appropriate approach to the Park Service Modern architectural style developed during Mission 66 (1956-1966).

Evaluation: Contributing



Rock and Log Riprap

An unobtrusive barricade of felled tree trunks and shot-rock (varying in size from 1' to 4' in diameter) shown on the original Doty/Morse landscaping plan provides a barrier to erosion. Photographs from the period of significance indicate that it was built as planned. The rip rap extended along the Sitka Sound shoreline and into the inlet which has since been filled in. Initial drawings indicate that the area was going to be allowed to revegetate with native plants, which it has done in many areas. In some areas, this vegetation limits views from the Shoreline Connection Trail to the water (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing

Small Scale Features



Entrance Sign

Originally designed in the 1940s, the Entrance Sign was moved when with the construction in 1965 of the Lower Parking Lot. However, it has always been located at an angle near the entrance to the parking lot and facing towards the city center. During the 1965 construction the Entrance Sign was placed in a lawn area in between the primary vehicular and pedestrian entrance to the park where it remains. Sitka spruce were planted to the east of the sign to provide a backdrop. When the name of the park was changed in 1972 the sign was re-carved. Likely, the Raven and Eagle poles were also re-carved in the 1970s. However, the basic shape, form, and function of the sign and posts remains the same (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing

**Flagpole**

Originally installed within the northeast corner of the Entry Sidewalk, the Flagpole moved to the northern corner of the Triangular Lawn after the construction of the curvilinear walkway. Though it has been moved, it remains in the same general location in relationship to the Visitor Center and retains the same form and function (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing



Fire Hydrants

Since the initial design and construction, there have been two fire hydrants near the southwest corner and northeast corner of the Lower Parking Lot. The hydrant models have changed over the years, but the form and function remain in their original locations (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing

**Bike Rack**

A bike rack has been close to the southwest corner of the Lower Parking Lot since it was constructed in 1965. While the actual structure has changed, the location, form and function remain the same (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing



Catch Basin

Since the initial design and construction, there has been a catch basin in the southwest corner of the Lower Parking Lot. The catch basin has been updated since its original construction, but its location, form and function remain the same (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing

Views and Vistas

During Mission 66, vistas were a “driving force of design” and the most important views were often visible through a “large window of plate glass and metal sash of the modern visitor center.” These buildings were intended to be “seen from, not to be seen,” and they were conceptually designed as a “viewing platform, in which views from interior spaces, roof terraces, and adjacent outdoor terraces or amphitheaters were calculated as a flowing sequential experience.” There are four primary historic designed views within the Visitor Center site, which are described below.



View from the Visitor Center Towards Sitka Sound

The View from the Visitor Center Towards Sitka Sound Views afforded views from the porch of captivating scenes such as Sitka Sound and its small islands, and views to Mount Edgecumbe. This view remains although is sometimes impacted by large cruise ships parked in Sitka Sound (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing



View Towards Visitor Center

When approaching the Visitor Center from the road either by vehicle or on foot, the visitor views the Entrance Sign, Sitka spruce serving as a gateway, the Visitor Center, and the forest backdrop. Alterations to this view since the period of significance include the placement of the Yaadaas Crest Pole, the addition of the Path Between Metlakatla Street and the Shoreline Connection Trail, and the expanded width of both this trail and the Path Between Metlakatla Street and the Entry Sidewalk (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing

**View Towards Shoreline from Entry Sidewalk**

As visitors entered the Visitor Center site, this would be the first point they would have a more expansive view of Sitka Sound and the surrounding forests and mountains. At the beginning of the period of significance the inlet would have been in the foreground of this view, but that was filled in before the end of the period. However, several new additions to this area of the landscape are contributing to an altered viewshed. These include the Yaadaas Crest Pole, a Sitka spruce tree near the shoreline, the widened gravel paths, and site furnishings (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing



View from Start of Totem Trail

At the beginning of the totem trail, and surrounding lawn, visitors can view Mount Edgecumbe. Developments outside the park boundary have altered this view, as well as the clearing of vegetation for the Wooch Jin Dul Shat Kootteeya Pole, the placement of benches and picnic tables, and the widened gravel path (MIG, 2019).

Evaluation: Contributing

VIII. Condition

Condition Assessment and Impacts

Condition Assessment: Good

Assessment Date: 06/26/2019

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

The Sitka Visitor Center landscape is in good condition. There is some wear on the circulation features such as the asphalt in the lower parking lot and the concrete and gravel of the sidewalks and pedestrian paths, but overall, they are being maintained very well. Similarly, some lawn areas have been worn away by consistent visitor use, especially on a desire trail that connects Metlakatla Street with the curvilinear path leading to the upper parking lot that passes by three Sitka spruce trees.

Impacts:

Type of Impact: Exposure to Elements

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Description:

Given the variable weather conditions at the site throughout the year and the site's exposed position on the edge of Sitka Sound, some of the site's older built features exhibit signs of exposure to the elements. Climate change is also resulting in changes to amounts and frequency of precipitation, evapotranspiration, and the potential increase in severe storm events. As severe weather events increase, the site's vegetation communities and built and natural features will be impacted.

IX. Treatment

Approved Treatment:

Rehabilitation

Approved Treatment Document:

Historic Structures Report

Approved Landscape Treatment Document Date: January 2020

Approved Landscape Treatment Explanatory Narrative:

Treatment for the cultural landscape associated with the Visitor Center historic district was developed as part of the Sitka National Historical Park Visitor Center Historic Structure Report.

X. Bibliography and Supplemental Information

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THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Natural Resources

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September 19, 2023

File No.: 3130-1R NPS / 2023-01026

Mary A. Miller
Superintendent
Sitka National Historic Park
103 Monastery Street
Sitka, Alaska 99835

Subject: Sitka National Historic Park, Visitors Center Cultural Landscape Inventory

Dear Ms. Miller.:

The Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (AK SHPO) received your correspondence (dated August 21, 2023) and a copy of *National Park Service Cultural Landscape Inventory, Visitors Center Sitka National Historic Park, 2020* (CLI) on August 28, 2023. AK SHPO has reviewed the subject document and offers the following comments for your consideration:

Our office would like to thank you for the well written and thorough CLI. Your report did a very good job of documenting the importance and development of the site including the involvement of two prominent architects. For this reason, we encourage you to consider the possibility of applying Criterion B to the property's eligibility.

Pursuant to Section 110(a)(2), we concur that the identified landscape is eligible for its significance under Criterion A and C as a Mission 66 era development at the state level with a period of significance from 1963 to 1977. We also concur with the list of contributing and non-contributing resources identified in the CLI.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment. Please contact Amy Hellmich at amy.hellmich@alaska.gov if you have any questions or we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Judith E Bittner".

Judith E Bittner
State Historic Preservation Officer

JEB:ash