

ON THE RAGGED EDGE OF EMPIRE

*Art and Architecture in Sitka, Alaska, by
Eadweard Muybridge and John Fuller, 1867-1868*



Edited and Notes by Chris Allan

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2022

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Lynn Horvath, Mark Kirchhoff, James Poulson, Rebecca Poulson, Jo Antonson, and Rolfe Buzzell for their help in editing and image selection. I am also indebted to Katherine Arndt who, along with the late Richard Pierce, produced the definitive study of Sitka's Russian-era cityscape for the National Park Service.

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Front Cover: Eadweard Muybridge's view of St. Michael's Cathedral and downtown Sitka from the grounds of the Russian-era Governor's Residence, 1868. The blurred spear-points in the foreground are cast-iron finials on a garden gate, and the building at the bottom right is a "wash and bath-house" associated with the Governor's Residence. Mount Verstovia can be seen on the right as well as one of a group of mountain peaks known locally as the Three Sisters. University of California, Berkeley, Bancroft Library, Lone Mountain College Collection of Stereographs and Other Photographs (1971.055: 464).

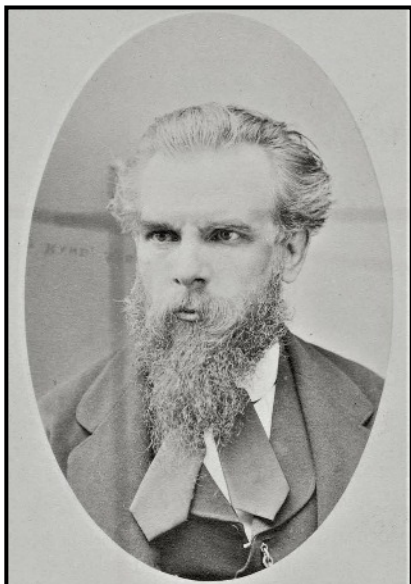
Title Page Inset: John Fuller's "North West View of Sitka, showing Mount Edgecumbe in the distance." Mount Edgecumbe is a dormant volcano on the southern end of Kruzof Island about fifteen miles from Sitka. Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, John A. Fuller, Drawings of Alaska and Tatoosh Island, Washington (S-2595).

Back Cover: John Fuller's "Our City Front." This view from the sea shows Sitka on the right and the Tlingit village and its cemetery to the left. Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, John A. Fuller, Drawings of Alaska and Tatoosh Island, Washington (S-2595).

Biographical Sketches (Page 1): The portrait of Eadweard Muybridge was taken to promote his traveling photography studio based in San Francisco, California, ca. 1869. The image can be found at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (1991.435). The portrait of John Fuller was taken when he was mayor of Napa, California, ca. 1899. It appears in W.F. Wallace's *History of Napa County, California* (1901).

Archival Collections (Page 3): Eadweard Muybridge's logo for Helios' Flying Studio, ca. 1869. California State Library, California History Section Picture Catalog (Stereo-1026).

Eadweard J. Muybridge



Eadweard J. Muybridge was born in London, England, in 1830 and emigrated to the United States in the early 1850s. He eventually moved to San Francisco where he worked as a sales agent for the London Printing and Publishing Company. In 1860, in northern Texas, he suffered a head injury when a stage coach he was riding in crashed, leaving him with double vision and an altered personality. While recovering in London, it is believed Muybridge developed an interest in photography when he saw a demonstration at the Great London Exhibition of 1862.

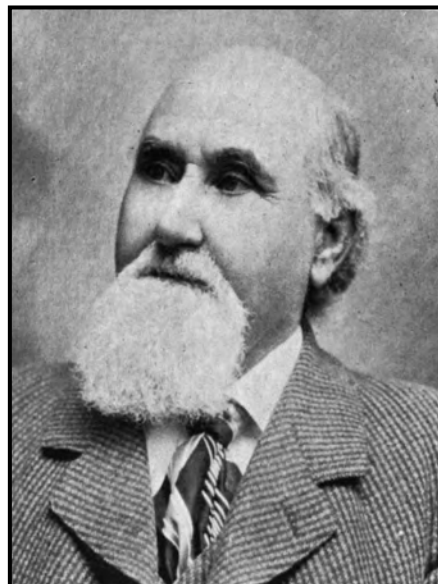
When Muybridge returned to San Francisco in 1867, he adopted the name Helios after the Greek sun god and transported his photography equipment, which he dubbed *Helios' Flying Studio*, in a horse-drawn wagon. Muybridge photographed the new Central Pacific Railroad and received commissions to document California's lighthouses and government buildings.

In 1868 the War Department asked him to travel to Alaska with Major General Henry W. Halleck to document America's latest acquisition. After sailing from San Francisco, Muybridge took photographs at Fort Tongass and Fort Wrangel in southeast Alaska before reaching the former Russian outpost of Sitka. When the trip was done, Halleck wrote to the photographer,

I have to acknowledge the receipt of copies of your photographs of the forts and public buildings at Sitka and other military posts, taken for the use of the War Department, and also views of scenery in Alaska. These views besides being beautiful works of art give a more correct idea of Alaska, its scenery and vegetation than can be obtained from any written description of the country.

The roving photographer did not become famous until later when he sold images of Yosemite Valley and began his studies of animal locomotion using multiple cameras to reveal details otherwise imperceptible to the naked eye. These experiments led to his invention of the zoöpraxiscope, a forerunner of the motion picture camera. In 1874, at the height of his celebrity, Muybridge gunned down his wife's lover but escaped prison when his case was dismissed as justifiable homicide. Muybridge died on May 8, 1904 at age seventy-four.

John A. Fuller



John A. Fuller was born in Lincolnshire, England, in 1828 and as a young man he sailed to India and Australia as an employee of the East India Company. From there he crossed the Pacific to join the 1848 California gold rush, working first in the Calaveras mines and then wandering from one gold district to another. Fuller suffered the same booms and busts as most gold-seekers, and during one particularly lean period in 1866 he decided to express affection for his new home country in an art project.

Using an ordinary ink pen, he created an elaborate broadside he called *Freedom's Footsteps*, with an American eagle at the top, vignettes on the original thirteen colonies, and a full transcription of the Declaration of Independence in a central oval with the Founding Fathers' signatures. The piece also included the presidents' names and dates of birth and death, and columns at the sides containing the names of Revolutionary War battles and of the states as they were admitted to the Union. He had his work lithographed in San Francisco, and sales were brisk.

After this success, Fuller landed a job as a supply officer for Army posts and joined Major General Jefferson C. Davis on his mission to Sitka for the October 18, 1867 transfer ceremony during which the Russian authorities removed their flag and the American flag rose over what is today Castle Hill. For Fuller, life in Sitka under American sovereignty was a blur of activity. He was elected as the town's first surveyor, made drawings of buildings and landmarks, and then served as postmaster. He assisted in editing the town's first newspaper—the *Sitka Times*—and he later operated a sawmill and managed Sitka's lumber yards.

By 1872, Fuller left Alaska because of ill health and settled in Napa, California, where he became a city bookkeeper, joined the board of trustees, and then, at the age of seventy-one, began a long stint as mayor. When he died on March 18, 1909, at age eighty-two, the *Napa Weekly Journal* described him as "a man among men" and declared,

Abrupt, blunt, determined and of strong and fixed opinion and convictions, he always did his duty according to the dictates of his heart and conscience, and no person ever questioned his sincerity of purpose or his honesty.

Introduction

In 1867, Sitka, Alaska, was changing hands—again. Sixty-three years earlier Alexander Baranov and a combined force of Russians and Aleuts had taken what he called Novo-Archangelsk, or New Archangel, from the Tlingits, and now the Americans were arriving, having purchased Russia's North American colony for \$7.2 million. On October 18, Major General Jefferson C. Davis and 200 Army soldiers landed at Sitka's harbor for the ceremonial transfer of Alaska and Davis stayed on as the interregnum governor. Second only in size to the Louisiana Purchase, the acquisition of Alaska was a dramatic expansion of American sovereignty. But Alaska's status was uncertain—Was it a colony? Would it become a territory? Or would it remain in administrative limbo as a “district” under military authority?

The Russian approach to Alaska had been a blending of imperial expansion and commercial monopoly, with Sitka acting as the headquarters of a vast fur trading enterprise directed by the Russian-American Company. As a company town, Sitka was home to Russian aristocracy and a diverse workforce that included Native people from Kodiak, the Aleutians, and California; Native people the Russians called Creoles (of Russian and Indigenous heritage); and Germans, Scandinavians, and Siberians. The Sitka Tlingits lived along a stretch of beach to the west of the town, outside of a defensive log palisade twenty-five feet in height. Although the Tlingits resented the Russians' presence, an interdependence developed over the years between the two groups. This detente allowed the Russian-American Company to profit without controlling all of *Lingít Aaní*, or Tlingit territory.

Even before the 1867 transfer, American merchants, gold miners, and others rushed to Sitka hoping to acquire the assets of the Russian-American Company and to stake claims to land. Some established legitimate businesses but others brought whiskey and molasses used to brew the rotgut liquor called hootchinoo, which had a destabilizing effect on the entire community. The artist and miner John Fuller was one of these newcomers. After circling the globe as a sailor, he was not done with adventure and arrived from California looking for opportunity. During his first year in Sitka he participated in the formation of a municipal council and was elected town surveyor. It was then he began drawing local buildings and landscapes.

Eadweard Muybridge came to Alaska to document military efforts to secure the new lands and to counter the perception that Alaska was a frozen wilderness. Muybridge—who advertised himself as a “photographic view artist”—accompanied Major General Henry W. Halleck who commanded the Division of the Pacific and, with Senator Charles Sumner, suggested “Alaska” as the name of the new territorial acquisition. Traveling with bottles of processing chemicals and the canvas and tent poles for his portable darkroom, Muybridge captured some of the first photographic images in this part of the world. When he arrived in Sitka, a *Daily Alta California* reporter wrote,

The photographic artist ‘Helios’ . . . had come to Sitka with dismal forebodings that the fog would so obscure the face of nature as to render his art valueless; but now he has struck a streak of sunshine and was determined to make pictures while it lasted. With shirt-sleeves rolled up, and hair on end, he trotted his flying studio through the town while the daylight lasted, and was enabled to get a number of excellent views.

The environment Muybridge and Fuller found themselves in was strange to their eyes. The population was a curious multi-ethnic hybrid; the Russian Orthodox church was unfamiliar; and even the money—much of it printed on walrus or seal skin—and the Russians' use of the Gregorian calendar seemed alien. The glimpses they got of grand imperial trappings, like the Governor's Residence on the hill, contrasted dramatically with the drab, damp hamlet where employees were accustomed to having their lives ordered by the company. And seemingly overnight, everything was changing. As one reporter noted, the Russian-American Company's power and paternalism had now been swept away:

The company claimed the services of all when it needed them—punished the lazy, stimulated the indifferent, rewarded the industrious, housed the homeless, fed the hungry, took care of the unfortunate and attended the sick. Under the new regime the people are thrown upon their own resources.

As part of the city council, John Fuller took part in efforts to bring some order to Sitka's disorderly scene. And he was not the only one sketching Sitka's buildings and landscapes—the German business agent Emil Teichmann was also making drawings that were later published with his 1868 diary. But Fuller's drawings, seven of which appear in this booklet, have spent a century and a half in obscurity. While Muybridge's work is better known to historians, the images have not been published as a group, and Muybridge's Alaska journey remains merely an aside in biographies of the photographer.

In addition to showcasing the work of Muybridge and Fuller, the purpose of this booklet is to draw attention to a pivotal moment in Alaska's past when Americans were struggling to understand just what their nation had purchased from the Russian emperor; Sitka residents scrambled to adapt after losing their jobs, their social safety net, and in many cases, their homes; and, the Tlingits were asking questions about sovereignty and power, and, in the coming years when the Army left Alaska, some considered taking Sitka back by force. My hope is that this booklet will encourage further research into Alaska's history and this period of profound transformation when Sitka existed on the ragged edge of empire.

Archival Collections

Eadweard Muybridge's photographs are from the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, in a collection called Long Mountain College Collection of Stereographs and Other Photographs by Eadweard Muybridge (1971.055). Forty-one photographs from his Alaska journey can be viewed online in the UC Berkeley Library Digital Collections; reproductions of thirty-three photographs are in the Alaska State Library's Eadweard J. Muybridge Photograph Collection and can be viewed online in Alaska's Digital Archives. Examples of Muybridge's stereograph cards of the same images can also be found at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California.

John Fuller's drawings are held at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, in a collection called John A. Fuller, Drawings of Alaska, and Tatoosh Island, Washington (S-2595). All eleven drawings can be viewed online in the Beinecke Library Digital Collections. Fuller's earlier work—the broadside *Freedom's Footsteps*—can be seen online in the University of Virginia Library's Digital Collections.



Beginning in the 1860s, this logo appeared on Eadweard Muybridge's advertising cards along with an explanation of his services:

Having the most complete PHOTOGRAPHIC APPARATUS in the United States; LENSES constructed for every variety of subject, embracing from 10 to 100 degrees of visual angle, and a WAGON completely fitted up as a PHOTOGRAPHIC WORK ROOM, I am prepared to execute all descriptions of OPEN AIR PHOTOGRAPHY, anywhere upon the Pacific Coast, in a manner guaranteed to command perfect satisfaction.

Note: If you look closely at his Sitka photographs, you can see he signed many of them 'Helios.'



From Frederick Schwatka, "The Great River of Alaska," Century Magazine 30 (September 1885).



On July 29, 1868, Eadweard Muybridge and Major General Henry W. Halleck boarded the steamer *Pacific* in San Francisco with troops to be stationed in Alaska and a large quantity of cattle, sheep, and poultry. The Department of War wanted Muybridge to photograph Army forts and Alaska's scenery to educate Americans about the distant, and somewhat mysterious, new territory. Soon after arriving in Sitka, he took this photograph from nearby Japonski Island showing the *Pacific* (left with smokestack) and three-masted schooners with the Governor's Residence on the promontory in the background. A reporter living in Sitka wrote this about the harbor and the veteran mariner who boarded ships to guide them into port:

The harbor of Sitka is a very picturesque one, with plenty of water for the largest ships to pass in and out, but a dangerous one, owing to the large number of little islets and rocks, between which pass narrow channels . . . [with] hardly enough sea-room to be safe; however, the old Russian pilot seems to have no difficulty getting through them when required.

"Letter from Sitka," *Daily Alta California*, July 4, 1868.



Muybridge's view of Sitka's main street shows the Russian Orthodox St. Michael's Cathedral in the background and a large log building that housed a bakery, a furniture-maker's workshop, and stores selling food and house wares. Once the Americans arrived, Major General Jefferson C. Davis named the thoroughfare Lincoln Street and began public works. The Tlingits seated in the foreground are from the nearby village and entered Sitka during the day for work or trade. A reporter noted this about the town's layout and the sidewalk built by Sitka's newly formed municipal government:

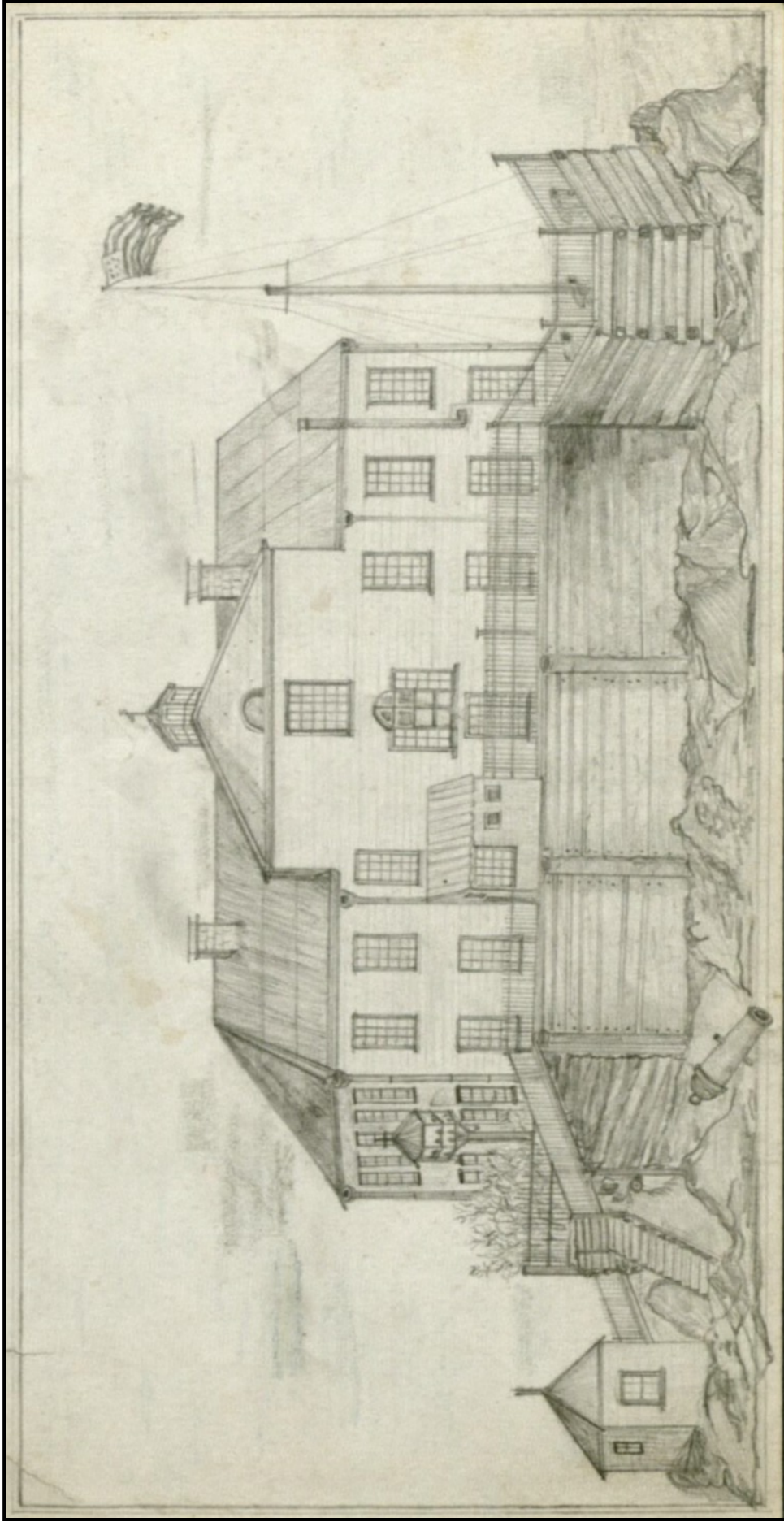
Before the American occupation it was, undoubtedly, the filthiest town on the continent. By the energy of General Davis many of the nuisances have been abated. He has caused the main street, leading from the wharf along the beach to the river, to be gravelled and graded. The Common Council have erected a substantial sidewalk along the side of it. All the other streets are zig-zag alleys. Every house is planted at an angle differing from every other, as if each householder was at mortal variance with his neighbor, and would not permit even his dwelling to conform to the same line.

"Going to Alaska," *Daily Alta California*, September 11, 1868.

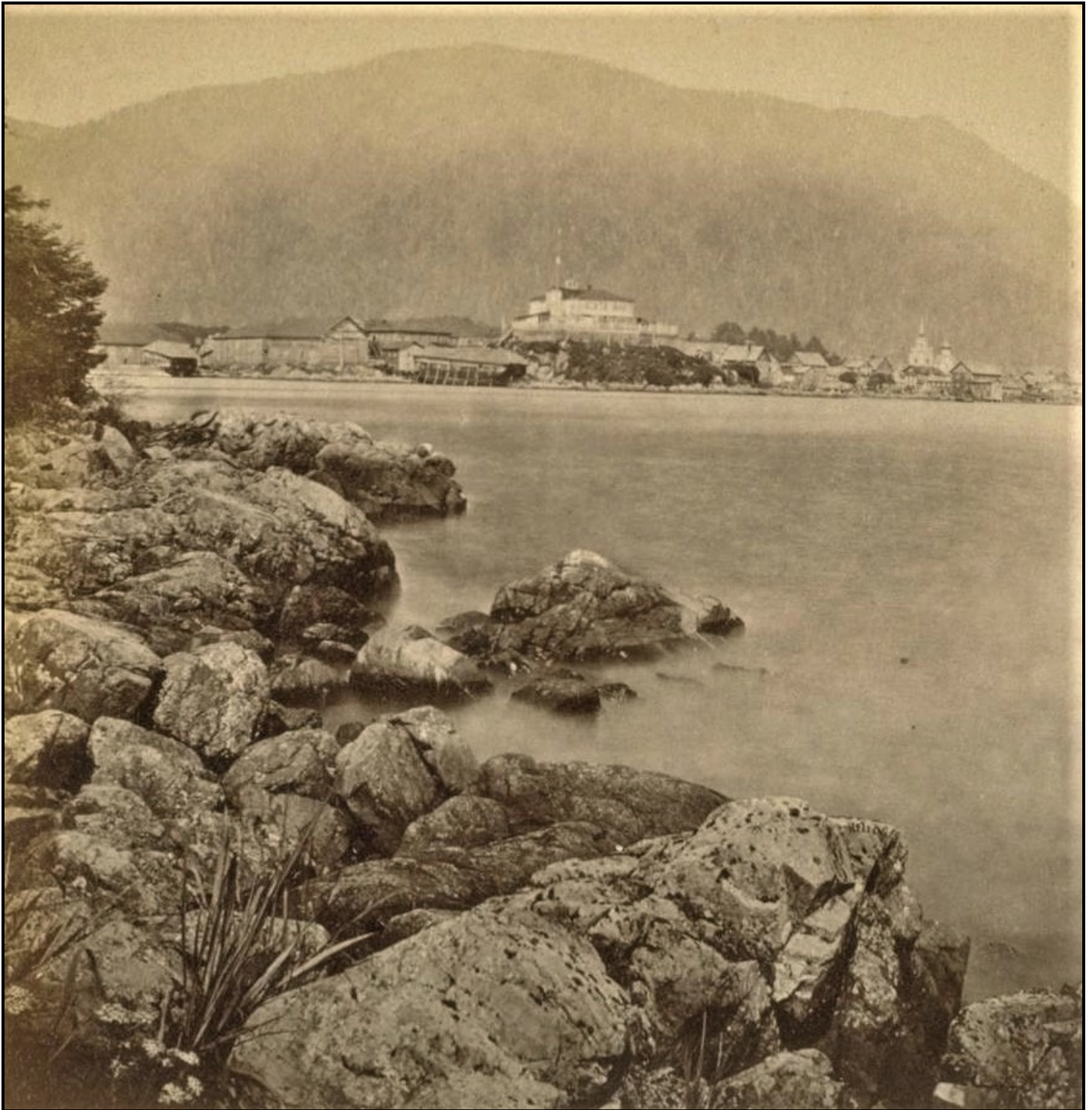


Muybridge's portrait of a Tlingit leader and his companions in front of the Russian-era hospital building. The man with a pole has salmon from Indian River a mile or so out of town—though it looks like he is holding a spear, it is really a gaffing pole with a hook on the end just out of frame. In *The Tlingit Encounter with Photography* (2008), Sharon B. Gmelch comments on what Tlingit people might have thought about Sitka's first photographer:

Since Muybridge was working with the cumbersome wet-plate technology of the time which required using a tripod-mounted camera, composing the scene through the lens while hiding underneath a black cloth, then emerging to prepare the glass with chemicals, then disappearing again under the cloth to expose the image—for perhaps several minutes more depending upon the available light—it is easy to understand the bewilderment of the Tlingit watching him.



John Fuller's "The Governor's Residence" shows the Russian house built in 1838 for a series of Russian-American Company governors. After the Alaska transfer ceremony on October 18, 1867, the Russian governor Prince Dmitrii P. Maksutov and his wife Maria moved out and Major General Jefferson C. Davis and his family moved in. In the drawing, one can see a derelict cannon, a pigeon-coop on a pole (at left), and the flagstaff where the ceremony took place. The building was eventually abandoned when the U.S. Army left Sitka in 1877, and it burned down on March 17, 1894. The promontory called Castle Hill, or *Noow Tlein* (meaning Large Fort), was the site of a Tlingit fortification before the arrival of the Russians. Today it is a National Historic Landmark and is managed by the State of Alaska as the Baranof Castle State Historic Site.



In this view from Aleutski Island one can see Russian-American Company warehouses, the hulk of a Russian ship, the Governor's Residence, and St. Michael's Cathedral. In the background is Gavan Hill named after the Russian term meaning Harbor Peak. Today this photograph would include the John O'Connell Bridge, completed in 1972, that connects the island and the town. The Governor's Residence, as one reporter observed, served as a hub of Russian commercial and social activities in Alaska:

The Governor's house is built in accordance with Scripture, on a rock, where the 'winds may blow and the waves dash': it is high up and overlooks the town and bay, is a very large structure, and heretofore furnished not only a residence for the Governor but for many of the officers of the [Russian-American] Company, besides large rooms on the second floor, readily converted into one immense room, by portable partitions, for entertainments, which were given by the Governor very often, he being allowed a fund for this purpose by the Company.

"Letter from Alaska," *Daily Alta California*, July 4, 1868.



U.S. Army troops in the garden of the Governor's Residence with the islands of Sitka Sound in the background. Of the roughly 200 soldiers in Sitka, some were new recruits but most had seen battle in the Civil War and had fought American Indians in the West. In the days after the transfer ceremony, the reporter Byron Adonis commented on the uneasy peace that existed between the military and the Tlingit community:

The house of the Governor of the colony is built upon a huge rock, and was intended as a citadel for all to retreat to in case of an attack by the Indians . . . It has a barricade about its base and small guns are mounted there which could sweep the steep sides of the hill. The 'Boys in Blue,' however, are lounging carelessly about the steps leading up to the top and here and there around the town is seen the stalwart form and light blue cloak of one of Uncle Sam's soldiers as he leans upon his musket, the impersonation of a veteran; and I think the whole tribe could stand but small chance against the two companies of soldiers now here, for they have the bronzed faces and stern port and phlegmatic air of men who have seen service, and plenty of it too . . .

"Alaska," *New York Herald*, December 26, 1867.



This building was known to the Americans as the Double-Decker. In 1868, Russian-American Company governor Maksutov was busy liquidating the company's assets and realized he needed a way to help the town's neediest residents. For this he turned to Sitka's newly elected mayor, William S. Dodge. The following is the deal they struck to allow the building's residents to remain:

Russian American Company to William S. Dodge, as trustee, for \$1. Trustee for Russian subjects and naturalized citizens of the U.S. who were Russian subjects by birth, now residing in or who may hereafter reside in Sitka and who may be destitute of a place to live; the trusteeship to terminate and the building to become the property of W.S. Dodge when there shall no longer be any who need such a dwelling.

The building served as a tenement for Sitka's poor until it was destroyed by fire in 1881.

From "Russian American Co. Saw to Its Employees," *Daily Sitka Sentinel*, October 17, 2017.



Above: Fuller's "The Greek-Russian Church" portraying St. Michael's Cathedral that was built between 1844 and 1848 and served as the architectural centerpiece of Sitka. The congregation was composed mainly of ethnic Russians, Alaska Natives, and people of both Russian and Indigenous ethnicity employed by the Russian-American Company. A second Orthodox church—the Church of the Holy Resurrection—was built for Tlingit parishioners and straddled the palisade between Sitka and the Tlingit village. Although Russian Orthodox priests hoped to attract Sitka's Tlingits, few converted.

Left: Muybridge photographed the church's altar and the area where worshipers stood during lengthy services. The newly arrived Americans often disparaged the rest of the town but were impressed by this church and the devotion of its congregation. The building caught fire on January 2, 1966, but the church's icons, vestments, and art works were saved by residents. A replica of the building, re-consecrated in 1978, continues to serve the community today.



Muybridge's photograph of St. Michael's Cathedral with its characteristic onion domes. Behind and to the right is the Sitka Lutheran Church attended by Germans, Finns, and other Scandinavians who worked for the Russian-American Company. Today traffic on Lincoln Street splits and moves around the church in the heart of Sitka's business district. An observer who arrived in 1867 for the Alaska transfer ceremony explained [note: the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches are here seen as synonymous],

I attended the Greek Church the first Sunday after arrival (our Saturday). Their religion is somewhat like the Roman Catholic, differing in that they deny the supremacy of the Pope and priests are allowed to marry once, but not a second time. The ceremonies are conducted in the Slavonic language, which appears to be perfectly understood by the congregation. There are no seats in Church—the congregation all standing. There were, I should think, at least eight bishops, priests or assistants, who conducted the ceremonies. The music was delightful. I was much surprised when I learned that the singers were all boys. I never saw a religious ceremony where I was so much impressed by the devout manner and apparent fervor of the members.

“Alaska Items,” *British Colonist*, November 18, 1867.



Russian Orthodox clergy outside of the Bishop's House: (left-right) Archpriest Paul Kedrolivankii, Vicar Bishop Paul Popov, and the missionary formerly of Nushagak, Alaska, Archimandrite Feofil Uspenskii. After serving as an archbishop in Siberia, Bishop Paul Popov was assigned to Sitka at a moment of radical transformation. With the transfer of sovereignty, Sitkans witnessed a flood of Army troops, merchants, gold-seekers, and opportunists of various stripes. Many Russians, including the bishop and other clergy, decided to return to Russia, and staffing at the Bishop's House and St. Michael's Cathedral remained low for many years.

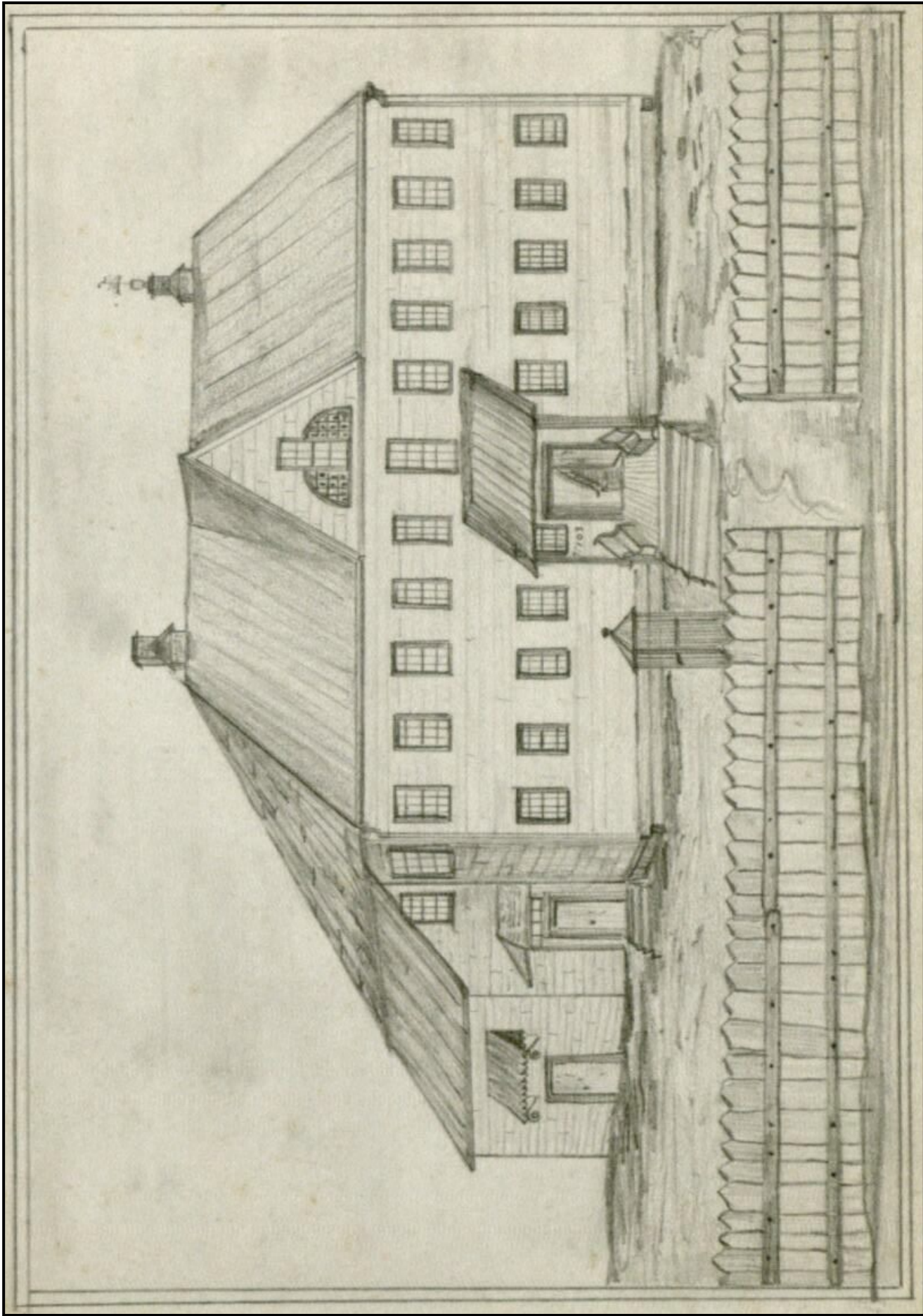
The Bishop's House was built in the early 1840s for Ivan Veniaminov, the first Bishop of Alaska, who made Sitka the administrative center for all of Kamchatka and Alaska. Three years after the arrival of the Americans, the diocese was moved from Sitka to San Francisco which prompted a period of decline for the building. In 1973, the National Park Service acquired the property and began sixteen years of much-needed restoration work. Today the Bishop's House is part of the Sitka National Historical Park and is one of the few surviving examples of Russian colonial architecture in North America.



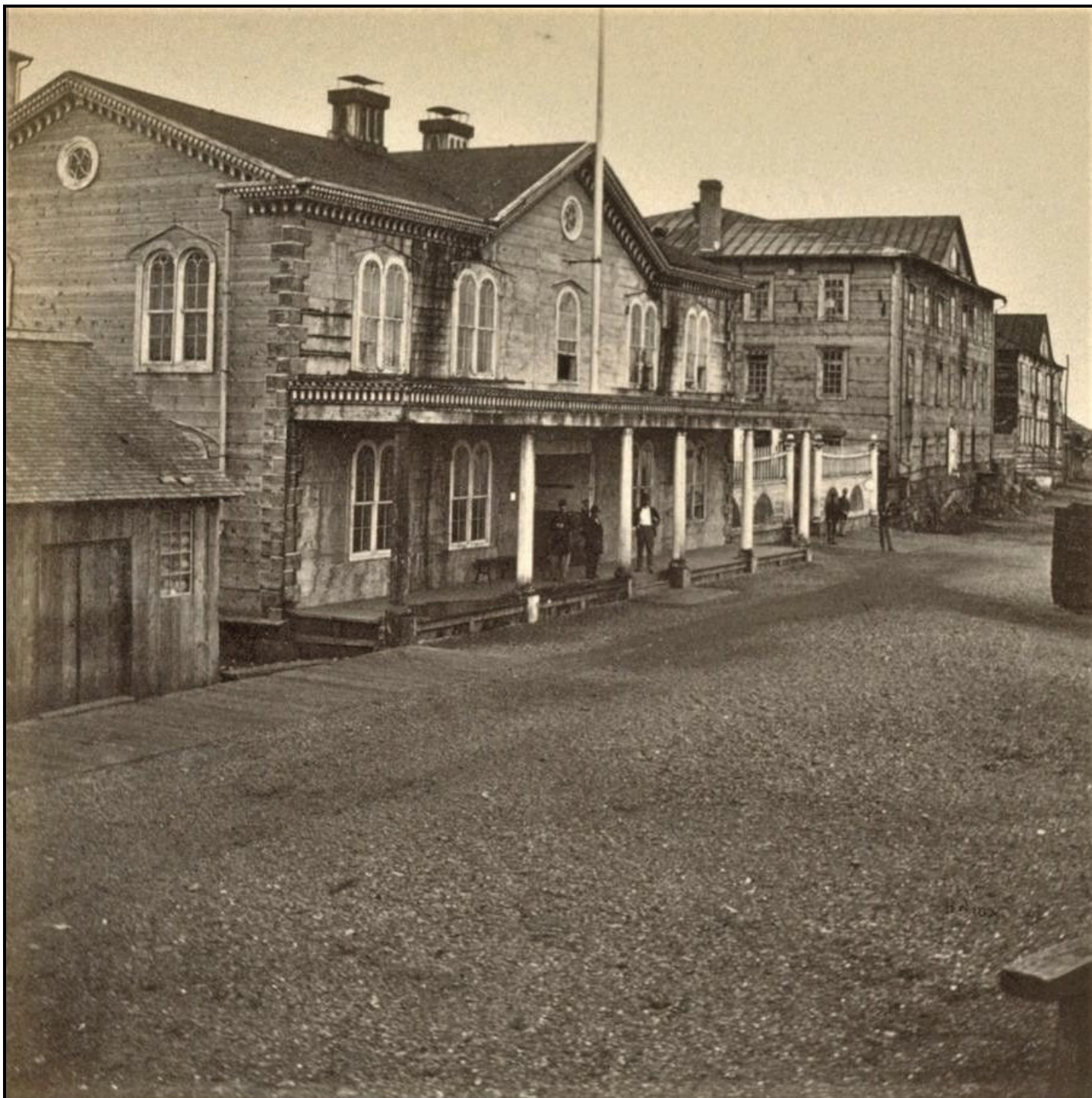
The building in the foreground is the Russian-era hospital, which, after the transfer of sovereignty, was staffed by Army surgeon Alexander H. Hoff of Albany, New York. Hoff served in battlefield hospitals during the Civil War and was known for criticizing other surgeons for amputating soldiers' limbs that might have been saved. In the background is the Bishop's House, and both buildings were described by a reporter who witnessed the rejuvenation of the neglected hospital:

The Bishop's house is a large, dilapidated old structure, affording a lodgment for several priests and their families, the upper part being occupied by their Bishop; attached is a small chapel. The hospital is a large building, about as dilapidated as the rest, but having fallen into the hands of the army, has been dug out à la Pompeii, for when I first saw the inside of it I concluded from the accumulations of filth in its interior that any attempt at its reconstruction would be a failure, but to my surprise it is fast assuming an air of neatness and comfort, and bids fair to be one of the most comfortable establishments of the kind on the coast.

“Letter from Alaska,” *Daily Alta California*, July 4, 1868.



Fuller's "Our City and Government Hospital." This building began as a seminary associated with the Bishop's House, but in 1858 it was transferred to the Russian-American Company for use as a hospital. The U.S. Army maintained the hospital for many years, and it later served as the Sitka's first Presbyterian mission school. The building burned down in 1882.



The two-story building in the foreground with a colonnaded porch was a Russian-American Company office building that became the U.S. Customs House. To the right of the building are twin gates at the bottom of the stairs leading to the Governor's Residence. Beyond is a three-story barracks building and then a residence for Russian-American Company officers. The transfer of buildings from Russian to American ownership and the occupation of those buildings by the U.S. Army was an awkward and sometimes contentious issue in the early weeks and month after the transfer. A reporter commenting on the transfer and its aftermath wrote,

It seems that many of the Russian officials had not made sufficient preparations for this change of government, and it has occasioned them much embarrassment. Habitations with 'apartments to rent' are not numerous in these parts; still, Gen. [Jefferson C.] Davis and his command can't be kept long out in the cold. Besides this, there are complicated questions about titles which seem quite perplexing [and] dissensions as to what is Government property, which personal, and how much goes to the Fur Company. More bitterness of feeling has been manifested than all told is worth.

"Letters from Alaska," *San Francisco Bulletin*, November 23, 1867.



These figures on Japonski Island are gazing across the channel at the Tlingit settlement flanking Sitka (which is out of view to the right). The mountains to the rear are obscured by clouds. A fragile truce existed between the Russians and the Tlingits who lived just beyond the town's palisade. As this reporter explains, the situation changed only slightly when the Americans arrived and Major General Jefferson C. Davis implemented his own restrictions for what was in effect an Army fort:

The Indian village fronts on the bay, and contains about one hundred large huts, built of hewn logs, and very substantial—built for defence as well as to live in. There are from eight to twelve hundred warriors, with their squaws, children and dogs. Up to the time of our arrival they were not permitted to come into the town, except as they were wanted by the Russians to work. A few passes were given to the more distinguished chiefs; but since the Stars and Stripes have floated from the flag-staff, Mr. and Mrs. Indian have been permitted to pay us their respects any time between reveille and retreat; but after that, if caught in town, are locked up in the cells until morning, and possibly, for example sake, for two or three days.

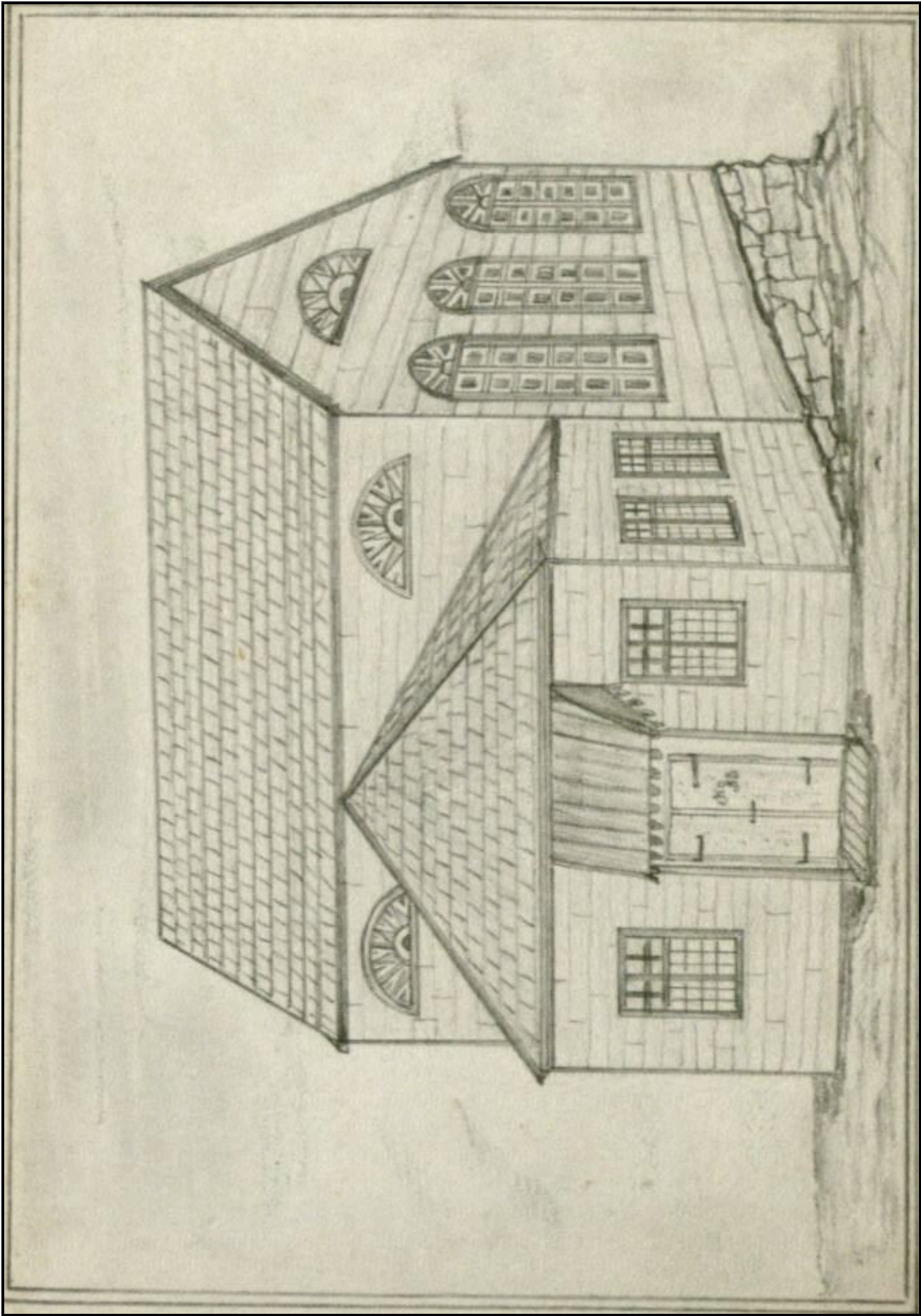
“Letter from Alaska,” *Daily Alta California*, July 4, 1868.



Members of the Sitka Tlingit community pose with an Army soldier and a civilian at the rear. For the Tlingit, blankets served as both clothing and a medium of exchange or a sign of wealth. During potlatches, for example, the host often gave away blankets as a demonstration of affluence and generosity. One young woman is wearing black face paint, likely to show she is in mourning for a deceased family member. The transition from Russian to American authority in Sitka, and Alaska in general, was abrupt and disorienting for Indigenous people. For the Tlingit it was particularly galling to learn that their traditional territory had been sold to another group of foreigners. As this American sailor explained, one of the village's leaders staged a protest following the October 18, 1867 transfer ceremony:

At the Indian village the head chief Michael Kaukan [Kukhkan] hauled down the Russian flag from the staff in front of his house and after a pow wow hoisted it up again and they all came to the conclusion that although they gave the country to the Russians they did not agree to give it to everyone that happened to come along, so Uncle Samuel must move off.

From the journal of Navy midshipman Andrew A. Blair, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.



Fuller's "Our Lutheran Church, Russian America." Sitka's Lutheran Church was built in 1843 with the permission of Alaska's Russian Orthodox leadership. Not wanting competition with the nearby St. Michael's Cathedral, the Russian Orthodox bishop insisted that the building not look like a church. For this reason the building had no spires or cross, though it did have large stained glass windows (appearing at right).



This view of the Army's parade grounds shows cords of firewood and lumber from a local sawmill. In the background are four officers' quarters constructed in haste following the transfer ceremony. The building to the left in the background is the Holy Resurrection Church built to serve the Tlingit village, and at the left edge of the frame is Blockhouse No. 1, one of three fortified towers along the defensive palisade around Sitka. Transforming this former Russian outpost into an American town—while it also functioned as a U.S. Army fort—was a fitful process. As this reporter noted, by the time of the transfer about seventy would-be entrepreneurs had arrived looking for opportunities:

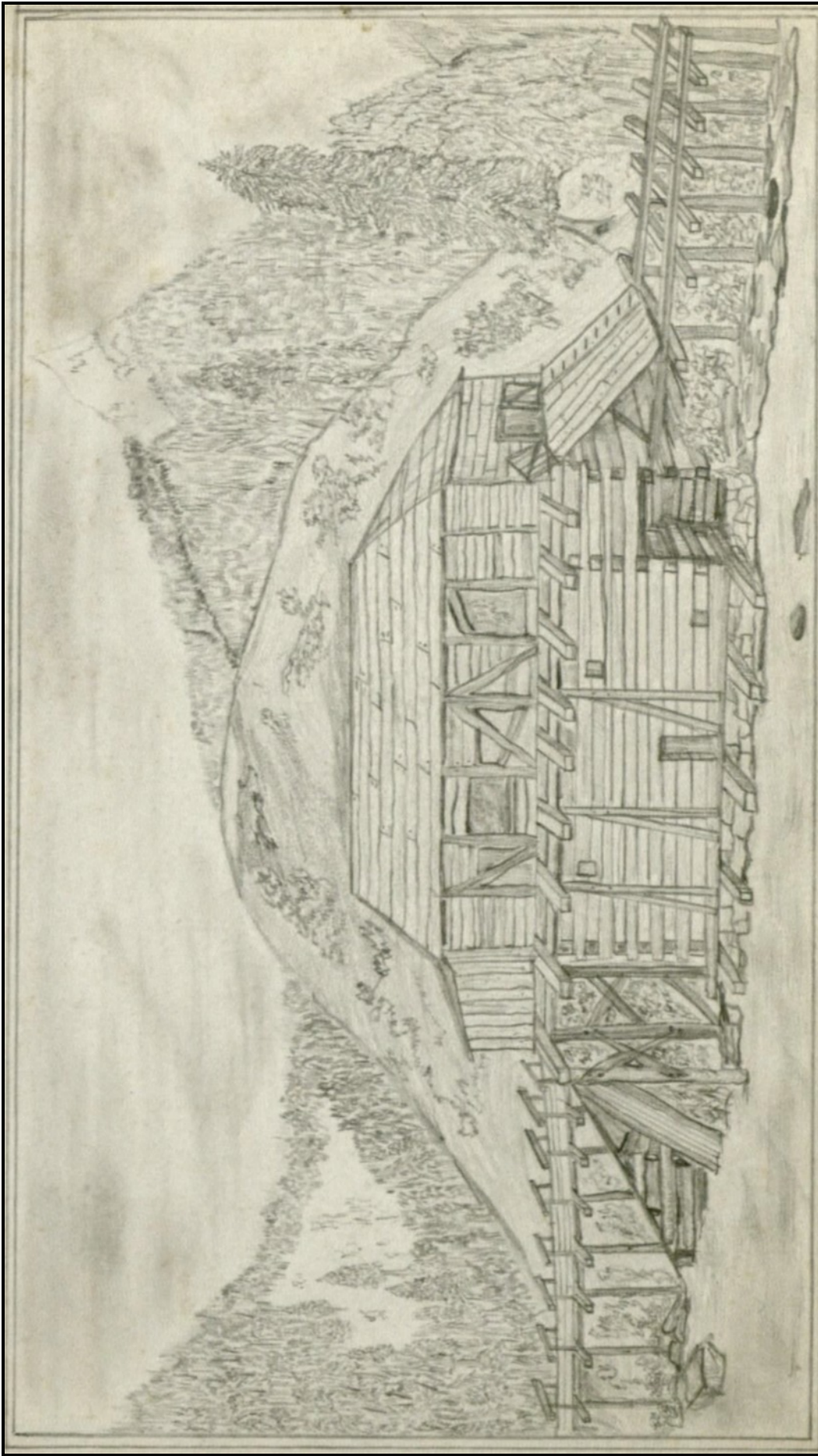
Among them were a few hardy miners and mechanics, but the majority were men of traffic—speculators, ready to embark in any business promising a profitable return. The American flag was hardly raised before trading shops were opened, vacant lots were covered with the framework of shanties, and negotiations were entered upon for the purchase of houses, furs and other property of the [Russian-American] Company. Sitka, which for two-thirds of a century had known nothing beyond the dull, unvarying routine of labor and supply at prices fixed by a corporate body . . . was profoundly startled, even by this small ripple of innovation. In less than a week, three stores, two ten-pin [bowling] alleys, two drinking saloons and a restaurant were opened.

“Acquisition of Alaska,” *Daily Alta California*, November 23, 1867.



Muybridge captioned this photograph “Group of Distinguished Chiefs—Sitka,” but it is clear these are Caucasian men in face paint wearing an assortment of animal furs and Indigenous clothing. The photographer took a second version (not shown) with the men seated and smoking long tobacco pipes. Although evidence is slim, it seems likely the men dressing up are officers from the steamship *Pacific*—the same vessel that brought Muybridge and Major General Halleck to Alaska—and they appear to be posing on the ship’s upper deck.

In *The Tlingit Encounter with Photography* (2008), Sharon B. Gmelch notes that early tourism in Alaska led to a “curio-buying craze” that involved not just basketry but also clothing, weapons and tools, and ceremonial items. Before the sale of Alaska, officers of the Russian-American Company in Sitka bought Tlingit and Aleut cultural material to decorate their homes, and it is possible the costumes in this photograph came from those collections. When commenting on this peculiar image, Gmelch writes, “True hobbyists and tourists sometimes carried appropriation a step further, even dressing up as Indians.”



Fuller's "A Ruined Saw Mill, believed to be haunted by the late Emperor Nicholas of Russia." This drawing depicts part of Ozerskoi Redoubt, a small outpost established by Russian-American Company manager Alexander Baranov soon after 1804. The location, about fifteen miles south of Sitka, was a convenient place for catching and salting salmon to feed company employees, and it offered water power for a sawmill and a flour mill to grind imported wheat and barley. In later years, Ozerskoi Redoubt had a small Russian Orthodox chapel and permanent residents. By the time Nicholas I sold Alaska to the United States, the settlement had fallen into disrepair.

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