Sitka

NATIONAL MONUMENT • ALASKA

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The monument is within walking distance of downtown Sitka, where hotel accommodations and taxi service are available. The town can be reached by scheduled airline from Juneau, and is a port of call on the Alaska Marine Highway system.

ADMINISTRATION

Sitka National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the great natural, historical, and recreational places of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.

A superintendent, whose address is Box 1089, Juneau, Alaska 99801, is in immediate charge of the monument.

For information about the craft workshops, write to the Supervisor, Indian Arts and Crafts Board, Box D, Sitka, Alaska 99835.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR — the Nation's principal resource agency — has a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Sitka National Monument commemorates a battle fought in 1804 between the Tlingit Indians and the Russians. The Indians lost the battle, their independence, and gradually much of their culture and way of life. The Russians won an overseas empire, a source of furs, and a stronghold on the American continent against their rivals from Spain, England, and New England. Finally, in 1867 the Russians sold for money what they had bought with bravery, bullets, and blood. Alaska became an American possession.

The monument, designated a public park in 1890 and a national monument in 1910, preserves and interprets the fort and battle site, the totemic art and culture of the natives, and the history of Russia's American adventure.

HISTORICAL SITKA

Soon after the battle, Sitka became the flourishing capital of Russian-America. Under the able leadership of Alexander Baranof, "New Archangel" teemed with docks, shipyards, and warehouses. From the bay, the Governor's Mansion, called "Baranof's Castle" sat in hulking dominance over the town. On shore, the onion-shaped domes of St. Michael's Russian-Orthodox Church symbolized a scene that spanned two cultures.

FEATURES OF THE MONUMENT

A self-guiding trail, which begins behind the visitor center, leads into the heart of an Alaskan forest. A few minutes spent here will give you a better understanding of the totem poles, the historical scene, and the natural environment.

The visitor center houses the information desk, exhibits, audiovisual room, native craft workshops, and administrative offices. Exhibits depict the story of native history and culture and describe life in Sitka while it was a stronghold of the Russians. Park interpreters will be on hand to help you understand and enjoy your visit.

Totem poles and house posts: Three sets of carved monuments were brought to the park for preservation; no totem poles were ever erected here by the Tlingit.

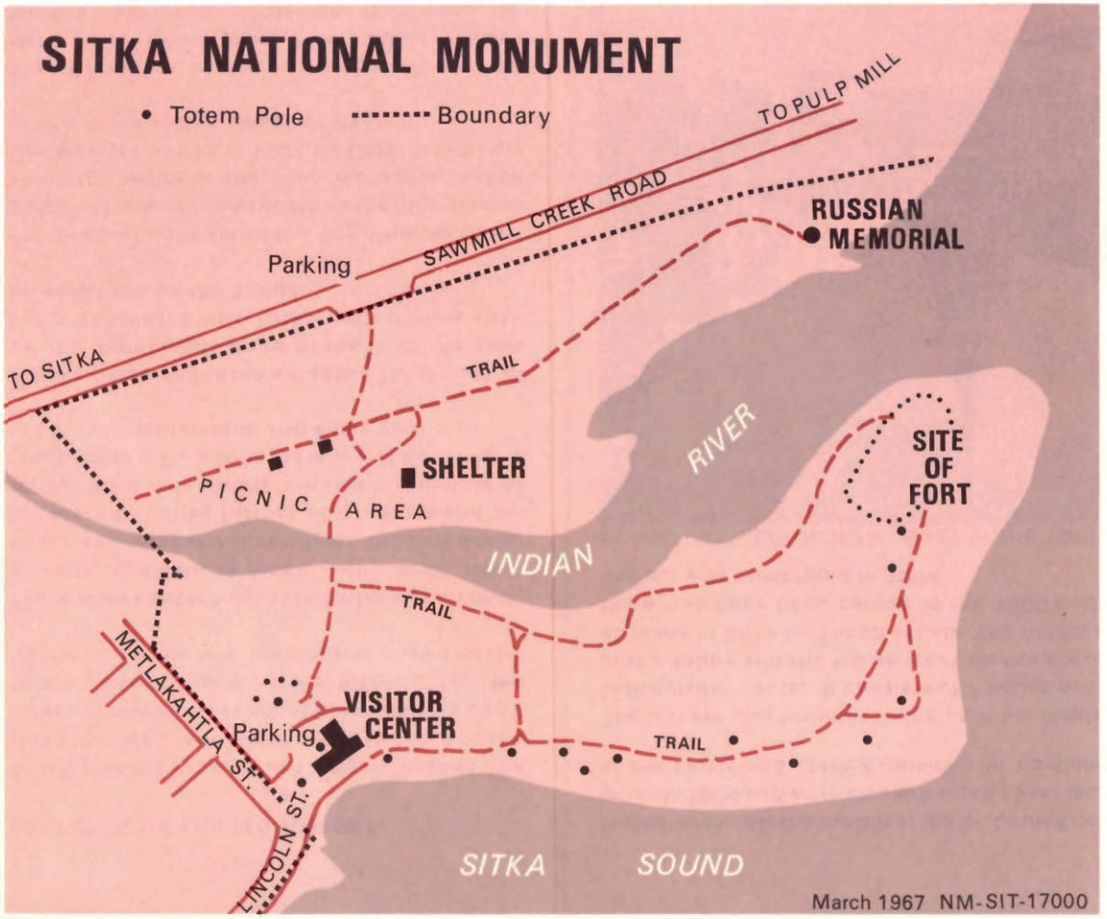
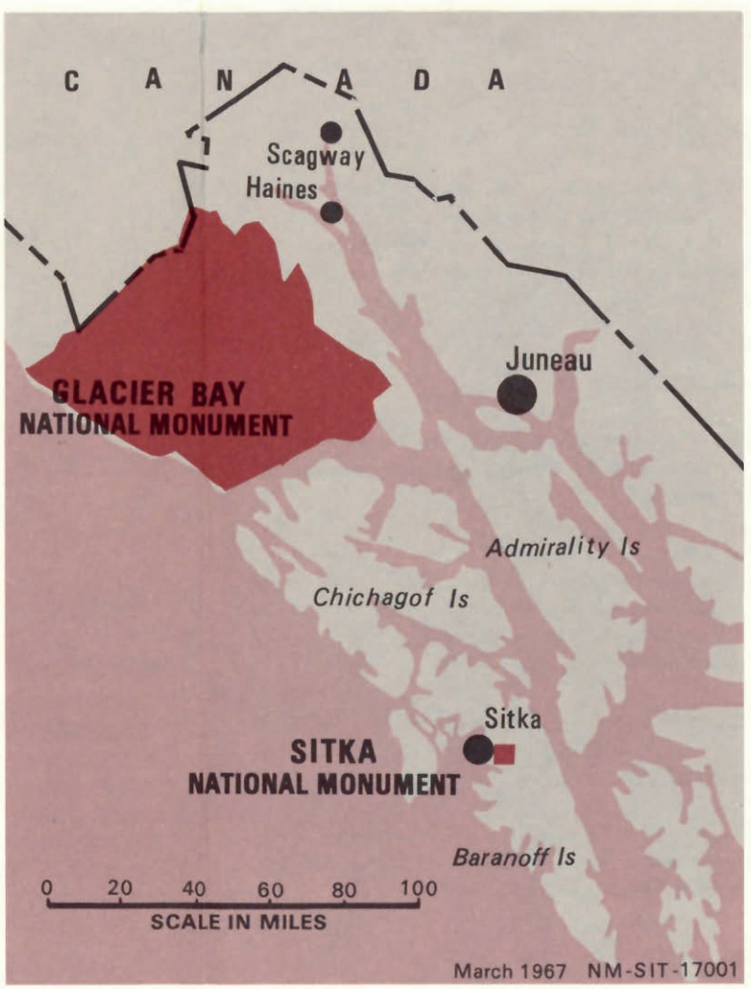
The first set consists of the Fog Woman totem pole and the four house posts on the high ground above the visitor center. They were given to the Governor of Alaska in 1901 by Chief Son-I-Hart of the Haida Indian village of Kasaan.

The second set, scattered along the trail, consists of 13 totem poles from Indian villages (mostly Haida) near Ketchikan. They were collected for the Alaska exhibit at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904 and were also exhibited a year later at the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland.

The last set was brought to the park for display in the visitor center. It consists of 7 house posts in the lobby and the house front on the porch, all made in Sitka by Tlingit artists. The oldest of them may have been carved in the 1860's; the newest was completed in 1904.

ST. MICHAEL'S CATHEDERAL, BUILT IN THE 1840's,

WAS DESTROYED BY FIRE IN 1966.

Sitka Battleground, near the mouth of Indian River, is the site of the Tlingit-Russian battle in 1804. Broad tidal flats separate the Russian anchorage from the Tlingit fort. The fort, 14 shelters with a palisade of young tree trunks, occupied the clearing under the trees, now outlined by white stakes. After the battle the Russians burned the abandoned fort. Archeologists found the charred logs when they excavated the old wall in 1958.

THE LAST RUSSIAN BLOCKHOUSE