

2026 Ten Most Endangered Historic Properties

Preservation Alaska
Alaska Association for Historic Preservation, Inc.



Regret Goes Only One Way

Regret goes only one way. The preservation of historic buildings is a one-way street. There is no chance to renovate or to save a historic site once it's gone. And we can never be certain what will be valued in the future. This reality brings to light the importance of locating and saving buildings of historic significance—because once a piece of history is destroyed, it is lost forever.

From “Six Practical Reasons to Save Old Buildings” by Julia Rocchi
<https://savingplaces.org/stories/six-reasons-save-old-buildings#.YjwN-fMJD8>





Tolovana Roadhouse

<https://tolovanaroadhouse.com>

60 river-miles downstream from Nenana Confluence of Tanana and Tolovana Rivers

The Tolovana Roadhouse sits in a clearing on the bank of the Tanana River 60 river-miles downstream from Nenana, and is only accessible by boat (summer) or trail/air (winter.) It is a 100+ year old log structure approximately 25' x 80' comprised of four separate rooms with a log walls between. One room contains a kitchen/common area, one is a bunkroom, the other two are private bedrooms/living spaces.

The structure underwent significant restoration in the 1980s prior to designation. It is in fair condition and has been utilized as a rustic lodge for winter tours for the past fifteen years. It is also available year-round as a shelter cabin for travelers in the area.

Although the shoreline has been stable for 100 years, the main channel of the Tanana river has been shifting over the last decade, causing new and now increasingly rapid erosion of the bank in front of the Roadhouse.

The goal of this preservation effort is to stabilize the shoreline to the greatest extent feasible and move the Roadhouse structure to a location on the property under less threat from the river, placing it on a more secure foundation, replacing rotten sill logs and addressing other minor repair concerns in the process.





The structure is under imminent threat of being undermined by the river – the upstream corner is now only 53' from the bank, with an eddy eroding within 25' just a few yards upstream (as of March 2025). Some outbuildings have already been moved. Between 50- 75' has eroded in the past seven years, the majority of this in the last three. Although impossible to predict precisely, the river is likely to reach the structure within two to four years.

The site has been continuously occupied since 1904, with the installment of a telegraph line by the US Army Signal Corps from Nenana to Ft. Gibon. It was the first exchange point for diphtheria antitoxin during the Serum Run of 1925. It remained in continuous use as a Roadhouse through the late 1940s, operating as a store, post office, sternwheeler stop supporting gold exploration both in the immediate area and further afield. It fell into disrepair once air and road travel shifted traffic from the river and trails. It is deeply tied to Alaskan and American history through its role in the gold rush era, communications and federal mail-route development, and the history and legacy of dog sled travel. It remains open as a shelter cabin for backcountry travelers to this day.





Wolf Creek Boatworks

Near Hollis on Prince of Wales Island

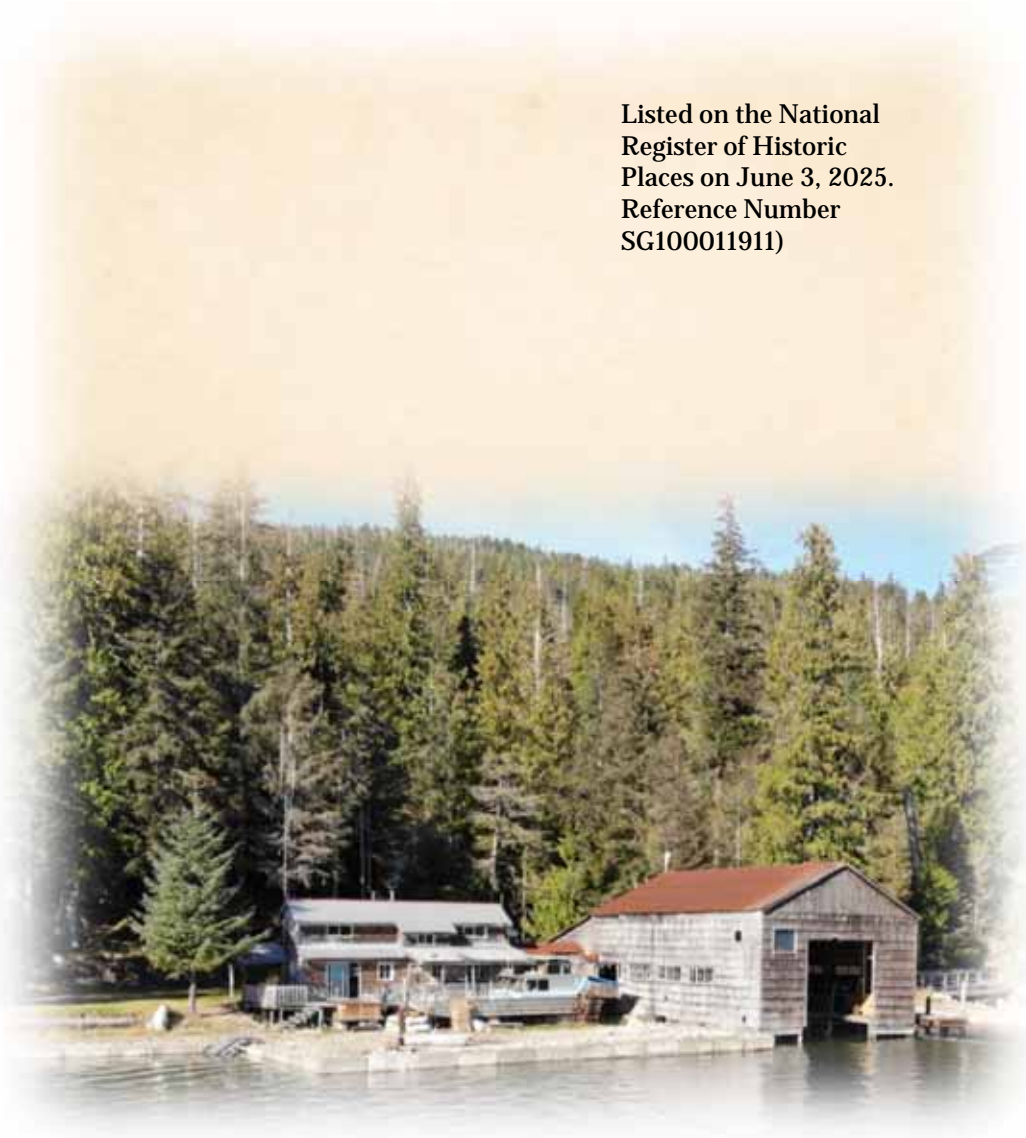
www.SaveWolfCreek.com

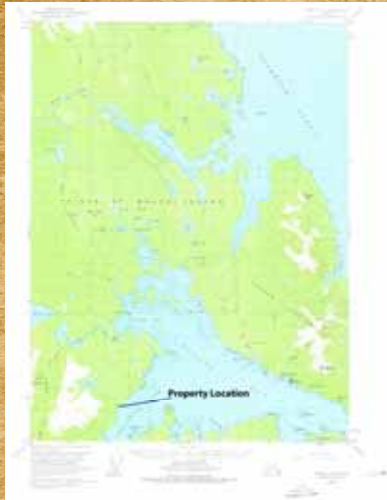
Originally called Twelve Mile Arm Boat Shop, this beautiful landmark started out in 1939 building boats out of local SE Alaska timber. For years, Isreal Stevens built and sold skiffs using the same belt driven tools that still operate inside the boat house today. Originally powered by water from the water flume off of Wolf Creek, it was later powered by a large S. Morgan Smith Francis style water turbine. All of the original equipment is still housed within the building, and while modern aluminum skiffs are now built in the boatworks, the building still serves the same function as it did in 1940. Since 2015 and the uncertainty of the land and no current lease or sale Wolf Creek has ceased commercial operations and has now become a nonprofit museum.

The land that Wolf Creek Boatworks sits on was involved in a land swap between the USFS and the State Mental Health Trust in 2019. Of the 1544 acres set to be logged, approximately 20 acres surround the historic boathouse, powerhouse, penstock, cabin, and boat grid. Since the land was transferred to Alaska Mental Health Trust in 2019 the Trust has made it clear that the land will be logged and they have no interest or desire to fulfill the obligations agreed to with the preservation and protection of the Historic Wolf Creek Boatworks.

Although they have been offered financial compensation for the historic site, or an exchange for 7 acres further down the beach (owned by Sam Romey) to continue occupying the site, Mental Health Trust has been unwilling to waiver on their decision to allow for the sale of the land that the buildings, seawall, dock, pilings, and equipment from the slotted 1544 acres.... while they log the entire mountainside.

Listed on the National
Register of Historic
Places on June 3, 2025.
Reference Number
SG100011911)



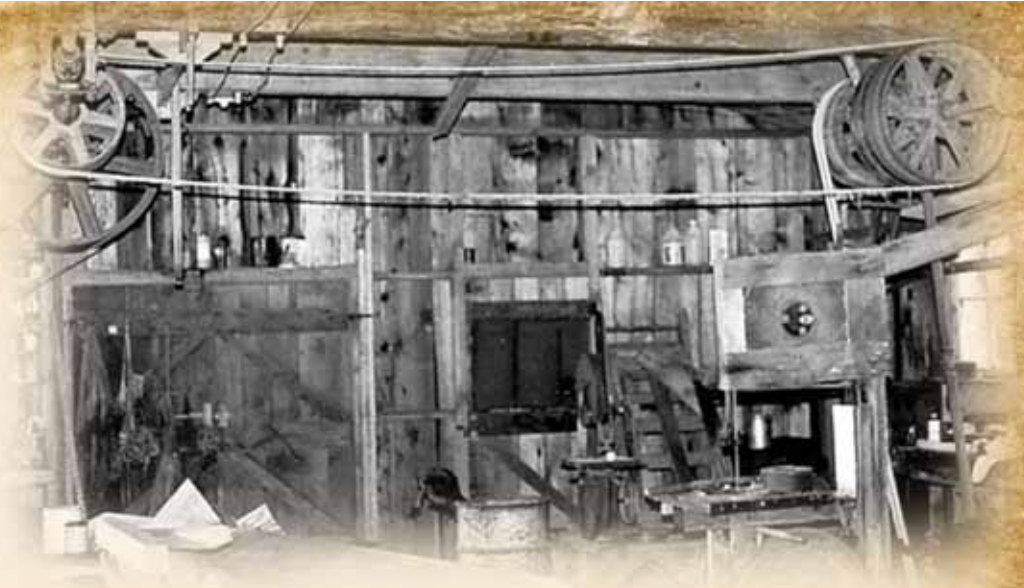


Located on this site for about 80 years, 25 years of restoration, maintenance, improvements, and preservation have been invested in Wolf Creek Boatworks. The boatworks is situated on a 7-acre site with very little of the land allowed by law to be logged. AMHLT intends to log the entire 1544 acres to fund its programs.

Information from Cultural Investigations at the Wolf Creek Boatworks, Prince of Wales Island, Alaska by Charles Ottar Mobley was conducted in 2015 and the nomination was submitted to the SHPO in 2018 and again in 2023. The Site was unanimously approved as historic site meeting the criteria for inclusion to the National Register for Historic Places but to date has not been forward by the SHPO.

The 2015 field investigations at the Wolf Creek Boatworks were successful in identifying additional cultural resources not previously reported.

In addition, John Autrey's USFS original finding that the Wolf Creek Boatworks is eligible to the National Register under criteria A and D are indeed correct. The Wolf Creek boatworks does have important historical and archaeological information to yield and the 2015 field survey indicates that features are numerous. It should also be noted that the AHR number CRG-346 should be expanded to include the associated house and other architectural and archaeological features associated with the property during the period of significance as they are a collective site. The culturally modified trees located during the survey demonstrate a long pattern of timber use in the area of the boatworks. In 2000 Mobley discussed the possibility that the CMTs located in the survey area may be eligible to the National Register; however, the precedents set by previous determinations of eligibility of CMTs on forest service land make it difficult to make determinations without extensive sub surface testing to demonstrate associated artifacts. Therefore, no recommendations are made in regards to the CMT collection in the surrounding area.



For almost 30 years the Romey family has worked to restore, preserve and protect the Historic Wolf Creek Boatworks from destruction for the harsh weather and environmental forces that can destroy in short order the foundation and remains of the site. Hundreds of thousands of dollars and hours of manpower have been invested to keep the site as original as possible. The short-term projects that are ongoing are the preservation and restoration for the piling that the building set on as they approach 100 years of age, they have been reduced down to almost nothing in some areas and so emergency repairs have been put in place to save the building from collapsing. The roof on the shop as well is in dire need or replacement and will require about \$150,000 to \$200,000 to replace it. The preservation of the buildings were to become the responsibility of the Land Trust but they have now stated the conditions mentioned are more of guidelines and suggestions then requirements.



St. George the Victorious Church

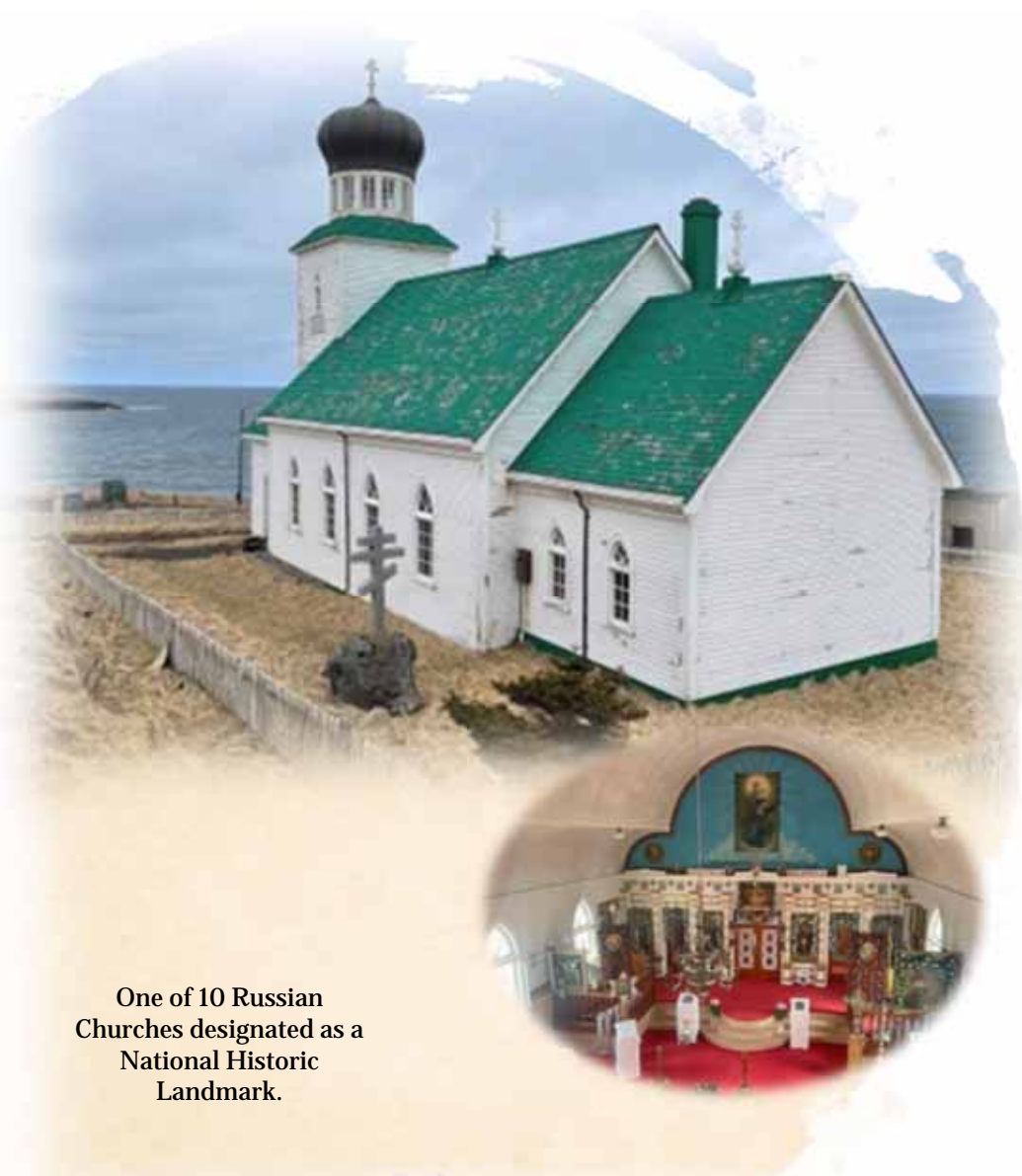
at St. George Island
RossiAlaska.org

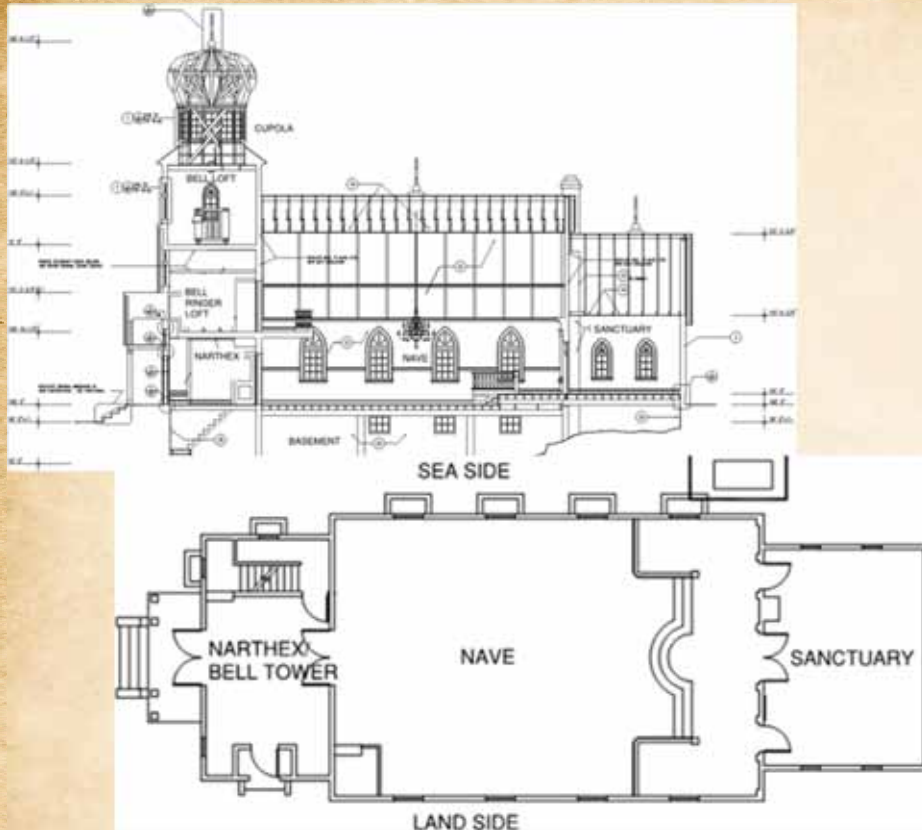
According to the National Park Service Historical American Buildings Survey (HABS), the St. George Orthodox Church has historical significance. It was built in 1936 by Aleut parishioners, with earnings from the seal trade.

The urgency of this project is high. The roof of the church began leaking from the bell tower and windows of the cupola some time ago. The parishioners have been unable to combat the leak and keep water out.

The water has been seeping into the internal walls, and it has damaged the flooring and ruined the interior dry wall. Mold has developed in the sheetrock, which is a health hazard for the most vulnerable parishioners. The damage is worsening at a rate the local parish is unable to mitigate. Internal structure is beginning to be compromised as water leaks to the internal framework.

One of 10 Russian Churches designated as a National Historic Landmark.





Text, photographs, and graphics from condition report by NorthWind Architects, Juneau.



The building is not heated due to the high cost of fuel. The parish cannot hold standard-length services (60 to 90 minutes) due to the intense smell of the mold, which permeates the building and especially impacts elders and small children.

The immediate goal is to support mitigation of a roof leak high in the cupola of the church. The secondary goal would be a complete roof replacement and damaged dry wall. The first floor (Narthex) and second floor (Bell Ringer's loft) have been severely damaged due to water infiltration at the Cupola level. The ceiling has been removed in the Narthex, original framing can be seen and is fair condition. The hanging light fixture in this space has been ruined.

Water infiltration in the bell tower appears to be from the joint between the copper cupola and the cupola windows. As the copper cupola was not removed during the restoration, the joint was never flashed properly and has been reliant on sealant joints to shed water. Apparently, the sealant joints failed, perhaps due to some movement, perhaps due to age. Careful inspection of the dome framing reveals significant soft rot at the wood plates between the base of the dome and top of the windows.



Ascension Church of Our Lord Chapel at Karluk on Kodiak Island RossiAlaska.org

The Ascension of Our Lord Orthodox Church was constructed in 1888 and is believed to be the second Orthodox church in Karluk, the first Russian post on the western side of Kodiak Island. The church was situated inland from the cliff's edge high above the mouth of the Karluk River and Shelikof Strait. In August 2021, the church was lifted from its foundation and moved about 80 feet inland for a temporary placement. Although the church does not currently have a resident priest, a visiting priest conducted services throughout the year prior to the move to its temporary location.

Early photos illustrate the church was built above the original village; however "in 1978, the village nearly washed away during a winter storm that reshaped the mouth of the Karluk River, collapsed a bridge, and destroyed the local fuel supply." (M. Graham: *Hope for a Haven*, Saving Places National Trust for Historic Preservation. Summer 2021.)

Listed on the National
Register of Historic
Properties August 14, 1979
(AHR SITE NO.
KAR-032)





By 2021, erosion washed away most of the cliff, leaving the church a mere 10 feet from the edge and threatening to expose numerous gravesites on the property.



Although this iconic Orthodox church has been moved away from the bluff from its original site, coastal erosion in an age of climate change shows no sign of letting up. A permanent site is necessary to ensure long-term preservation and continued use of the church in Karluk.

Architectural historian Alison Hoagland in her book *Buildings of Alaska*, notes that the Karluk church “is the oldest extant Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska, as well as being one of the most professionally designed.” The church’s location, high above the Karluk River and Shelikof Strait makes it one of the most dramatic settings for a historic building in Alaska. The architectural design is attributed to Charles Smith Hursh and is a model for a small church embodying eclectic features of mainstream Russian Orthodox rural church design, while the materials were purchased by the Alaska Packers Company and the Karluk Packing Company at the request of the local Alaska Native Chief Melety, who led the effort to have a church built in the community of Karluk.

Negotiations are currently underway to find a new permanent location upriver and closer to the contemporary village where it will retain the same east-west orientation as well as serve as a beacon above the Karluk River for the community and fishermen returning home as it has for over 135 years.

The new location is approximately five acres in size to accommodate not only the church, but also a new cemetery for graves that will need to be relocated as the cliff continues to erode and expose human remains in the old cemetery.



Steamer Nenana

AKA SS Nenana

Fairbanks

FriendsOfSSNenana.com

The Steamer Nenana is a five-deck, wooden-hulled western rivers style steamer sternwheeler packet built from clear, vertical grain, kiln-dried fir. The ship is a blend of steam, wood, and paddlewheel technology that is 237 feet long and weighs a total of 1128 tons.

The steamer was commissioned and built in 1932, by the Alaska Railroad. She was prefabricated in Seattle, assembled in Nenana, launched into service in 1933, and run by the Alaska Railroad. The original design contained 24 berths, a dining salon, a smoking room, an observation room, a kitchen, a bakery, and men's and women's bathrooms along with passengers' and officers' rooms with porcelain sinks and electric lights.

She is located in Pioneer Park in Fairbanks. Years of neglect and deferred maintenance have brought the SS Nenana – a beautiful piece of Alaskan history – to deplorable conditions. In April 2018, the Fairbanks Northstar Borough blocked all entrances to the sternwheeler and closed off this beloved historic landmark to the public due to safety concerns.

Dedicated community members organized into the non-profit Friends of SS Nenana and had the vessel inspected by the Principal Naval Architect of Columbia-Sentinel Engineers Inc. from Seattle, WA during June of 2019. A report of needed repairs was generated for the group.



The National Park Service, Alaska Interior Region, is offering technical assistance for the repairs and restoration of the vessel. Without substantial fundraising, advocacy, and a close partnership agreement with the borough, we will lose the SS Nenana, a historic sternwheeler that is the last of its kind.

2021 Update: The Fairbanks North Star Borough, in response to strong community support, has committed maintenance funds for work on the SS Nenana. They hired a design firm with a historic preservation consultant to prepare bid documents for repairs to the vessel. Work will start with the cargo deck. They will be seeking further funds for interior and exterior restoration work.

2022 Activities under way to save property: The FNSB adopted the cargo deck for repairs in the CIP Phase I repairs. Phase II is projected out past 2030 for the remainder of the boat.

2024 Update: The cargo deck is slated to reopen to the public this summer, 2024. This spring, repairs will start on the upper decks and bow, replacing decking and railings.

2025 Update: The Friends of S.S. Nenana were awarded \$500K through an appropriation by Senator Lisa Murkowski. The funds are coming through the Save America's Treasures program. While the funds are available it requires the North Star Borough to agree to signing a 15-year maintenance agreement to ensure that the boat will continue to be maintained. To date, the borough is not willing to sign the agreement.

The Friends of S.S. Nenana are working on repairing the stern, paddle wheel, and transom (the back wall of the boat) for the 2025 construction season. They are donating their own money to this project and raising the remaining funds needed.

The boat still needs to be painted. There are not enough remaining funds for the borough to do that. It is one of the most important deterrents to causing more damage to the boat. Raw wood is being exposed all over the boat to the elements because of peeling paint.

The Friends of S.S. Nenana continue to work to raise funds for repairs and are working with the Fairbanks North Star Borough to restore the entire vessel.



Listed on the National Register
of Historic Places on
June 27, 1972
#72001581
Alaska State Landmark



Pioneer Hall (U.S. Customs House) Ketchikan

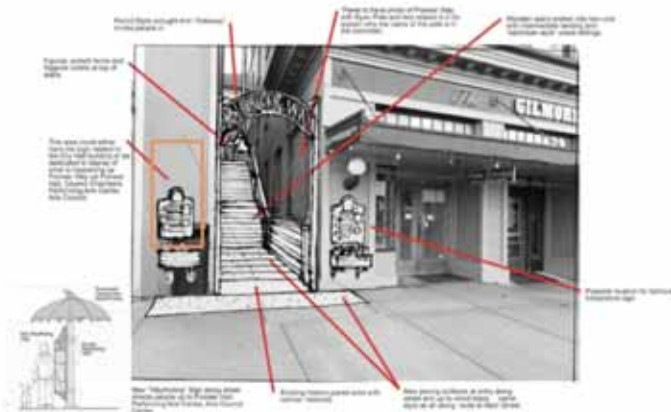


Pioneer Hall is a two-story, wood frame building on post foundations constructed over bedrock. The building footprint is approximately 1,786 sf. It has a steep, modified hip roof with an unfinished attic. The building has been altered on all four elevations and in its interior. Modifications were made to its Front Street facade in its early years and continued to be made to visible facades along Pioneer Way. It was built on a prominent site overlooking the waterfront and its 50' flagpole was a beacon for early seafarers coming to Ketchikan.

As the town grew rapidly in the years that followed, many—now historic—buildings began to surround Pioneer Hall. By the late 1920s, the commanding view earlier enjoyed by the Pioneer Hall was eclipsed by larger buildings including the Gilmore Hotel and the City Hall. The building is situated on historic Pioneer Way which is a stairway/pedestrian alley connecting Front Street to Main and Grant Streets.

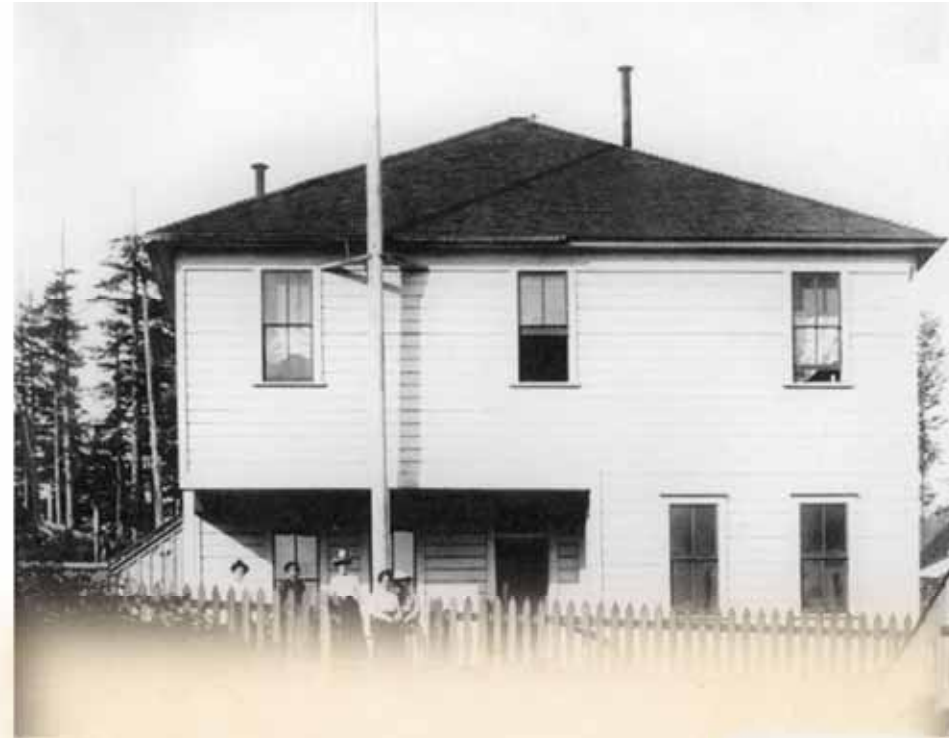
The Pioneer Hall is an iconic Ketchikan landmark from the community's earliest days. It was the first Customs House located in Ketchikan (1900-1907) and has been a prominent landmark in the community since 1900. In 1922, it began a new life of serving the Pioneers of Alaska (Igloo No. 16 and Igloo 7). The Pioneers have continued to meet in this building over the ensuing nearly 100 years and continue to carry out many civic activities. This is the Downtown Historic District's and the City of Ketchikan's oldest building and a contributing building to the District's National Register of Historic Places designation. While the building has been altered over the years, the Pioneer Hall is individually eligible for the National Register by virtue of its place in Ketchikan's history.

The building needs considerable rehabilitation to meet health and safety standards that would enable the Pioneers to continue to use the property. The building needs immediate attention to its foundation and structural deficiencies as well as extensive



Pioneer Way - Pedestrian Entrance Concept

Prepared by HISTORIC KETCHIKAN / Stephen Reavis & Dennis Egan / January 2023



upgrades to its mechanical and electrical systems. There are numerous code issues that render the building unsafe to its members and visitors and that, if corrected, would enable older members to visit the building and remain active in the organization for a longer period. The building's deficiencies have been enumerated in the draft report of the Historic Building Assessment.

US Customs House, circa 1901. Restoration of the building would return many of its double-hung windows, channel siding and architectural detailing.





Bristol Bay Boats

Naknek

<https://www.bristolbaymuseum.org/home-1-1-1>

This historic collection of 14 wooden Bristol Bay fishing boats that demonstrates the evolution from the days of the sail that began in the 1880's to the first powerboats legally allowed to fish the waters of Bristol Bay in 1951. This unique collection features rare, and one-of-a-kind boats that range from early 1900's sailboats to "Conversions" which are sailboats that have been converted to host gas powered engines and retrofitted with cabins to replace the ridge pole tents formerly constructed with oil skins and wooden oars.

The Conversions range from those with the first small, enclosed cabins and the later version with stand-up cabins. The collection also features several boats built by Bryant, which are some of the first wooden power boats designed at built specifically for our fishery. The collection also includes some of the last models of wooden boats designed and built by American Commercial that were made in the late 1970's before wood was replaced with other construction materials. A keystone in the collection is a fully restored 1932 sailboat, Libby's Koggiung #5, which is fully restored, with sails, and all the riggings, anchor, and a net. [Pronounced Kah-gee-yung] (Historically there was a village site named Koggiung located right by this Libby cannery that was built on the Kvichak River . [Pronounced Kwee-Jack.]





In 1951, 86 boats were motorized, while 631 were still powered with sails. Within two years, in 1953, 1108 boats were motorized and only 62 boats in the fleet that remained were double-ender sailboats. The historic wooden boat collection of the Bristol Bay Historical Society represents an important part of fishery management in Alaska and remains an icon of the history, culture, and economy of Bristol Bay. These boats must be preserved, maintained, and displayed to protect the maritime cultural resources of Bristol Bay.

This historic collection of Bristol Bay fishing boats are all constructed with wood—in order to preserve and maintain them, they must be stored under cover and out of the elements. A number of the boats are stored under cover in warehouses, but others are stored outside in the elements and thus are subject to deterioration that comes with exposure to wind, rain, and snow.



The Bristol Bay Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and sharing the history, culture, and values of Bristol Bay. The Bristol Bay Historical Society currently owns and operates a museum facility located in the historic A.R. Davey Mercantile Building in Naknek, AK. The current exhibition space available in the historic building is however limited and the surrounding property needs to be developed to include a warehouse facility large enough to house the societies extensive historic wooden boat collection.

Packers Association Diamond <O> Cannery located in South Naknek that was slated to be torn down. The earliest structures in this cannery campus were built in 1901 and this structure is one of the last relics of this historic sites that survived a devastating fire 1985. All warehouse building materials have been relocated to Naknek and plans to reassemble the building to serve as a new Boat House storage facility are underway.

Construction of this facility will enable the society to centralize the boat collection and get the boats that are currently stored outside and subject to deterioration outside in the elements to finally be stored safely under cover.





Sitka Indian Village

Sitka

The Sitka Indian Village is an 11 acre site in downtown Sitka that used to contain roughly 43 Lingít (also spelled Tlingit) clan houses. Clan houses are units of matrilineal lineage, not just a physical structure but a person's heredity. As described by Dr. Rosita Worl "The clan house is at the center of Lingít identity. A Lingít is born into a clan house and our body goes to the clan house for the final time-when we leave this world. A clan house is the place for ceremony, it is where authority for decision-making derives, it is at the foundation of Lingít government. The clan house is utilized in child rearing and the teaching of clan history and tradition. It holds the songs and the crests of the clans, it is a house of respect for the opposite moiety. The clan house is a community gathering place and a shelter to those who are traveling or in need. In the words of a Point House clan member "it is integral to every part of traditional Lingít life". In 1926, the Tlingit people petitioned for the Alaska Native Townsite Act, managed under the BIA. Through complex titles, and not aligning with Tlingit rules of inheritance, many of the clan houses have fallen into disrepair or sold to non-native families.



CAPTION: Sitka Indian Village c.1900
CREDIT: Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons

Today, the Sitka Indian Village continues to display distinctive Tlingit cultural patterns, particularly as they existed through the Russian and early decades of American rule, when all clan houses were actively used. The Sitka Indian Village Historic District feels like a distinct neighborhood as you walk through the Village. The elements of the District contribute to the feeling of time and place through their unique placement in the Village, and the sense of Tlingit culture and design. The Sitka Indian Village displays the history of the community through its unique lot sizes and the architectural styles which are distinct from the entire community of Sitka.

The noncontributing structures in the Village today detract slightly from the historical nature of the Village, but do not detract from the overall sense of the Village. Many of the historical buildings in the Village are in need of rehabilitation, and current efforts are underway to have the four significant examples of clan houses restored. This project will only enhance the integrity of the Sitka Indian Village Historic District. The Alaska Native Brotherhood, which was central to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) is situated in the Sitka Indian Village and may be one of the only native buildings in Sitka with historic designation.

Broadly speaking, the Village could be revitalized if the effects of Western practices were confronted and remediated, through public education, tourism, and historic preservation efforts. The village landscape and indigenous architecture are under imminent threat of being lost; however, the Tlingit living in Alaska today maintain the living culture of their ancestors. The process of cultural transmission is dedicated to and enabled by elders with intimate knowledge of our traditions, but elders are aging. In other words, we are talking about losing not just historical architecture, but the living historical knowledge that goes with these structures.

It is their deepest wish that the historic built fabric of the village is saved--there are several 1 ½ and 2 ½ story clan houses still standing that are in desperate need of historic preservation efforts. The architecture of the Tlingit people is underrepresented in past historic preservation efforts, both on a local and state level. A nomination will help us draw attention to our efforts to revitalize existing structures, and making them functional would go a long way toward revitalizing resilient indigenous cultures embedded in these structures.

National Register of Historic Places recently submitted.



CAPTION: L'ook Hít (Middle Coho House) L'uknax.ádi Clan, Sitka Indian Village, 2024
CREDIT: Photo by James Poulson



CAPTION: DaGinaa Hít or "The far out house," L'uknax.ádi clan, Sitka Indian Village, 2024

CREDIT: Photo by James Poulson



CAPTION: Ch'aak' Hít "Eagles Nest House" of the Kaagwaantaan Clan, Sitka Indian Village, 2024
CREDIT: Photo by James Poulson



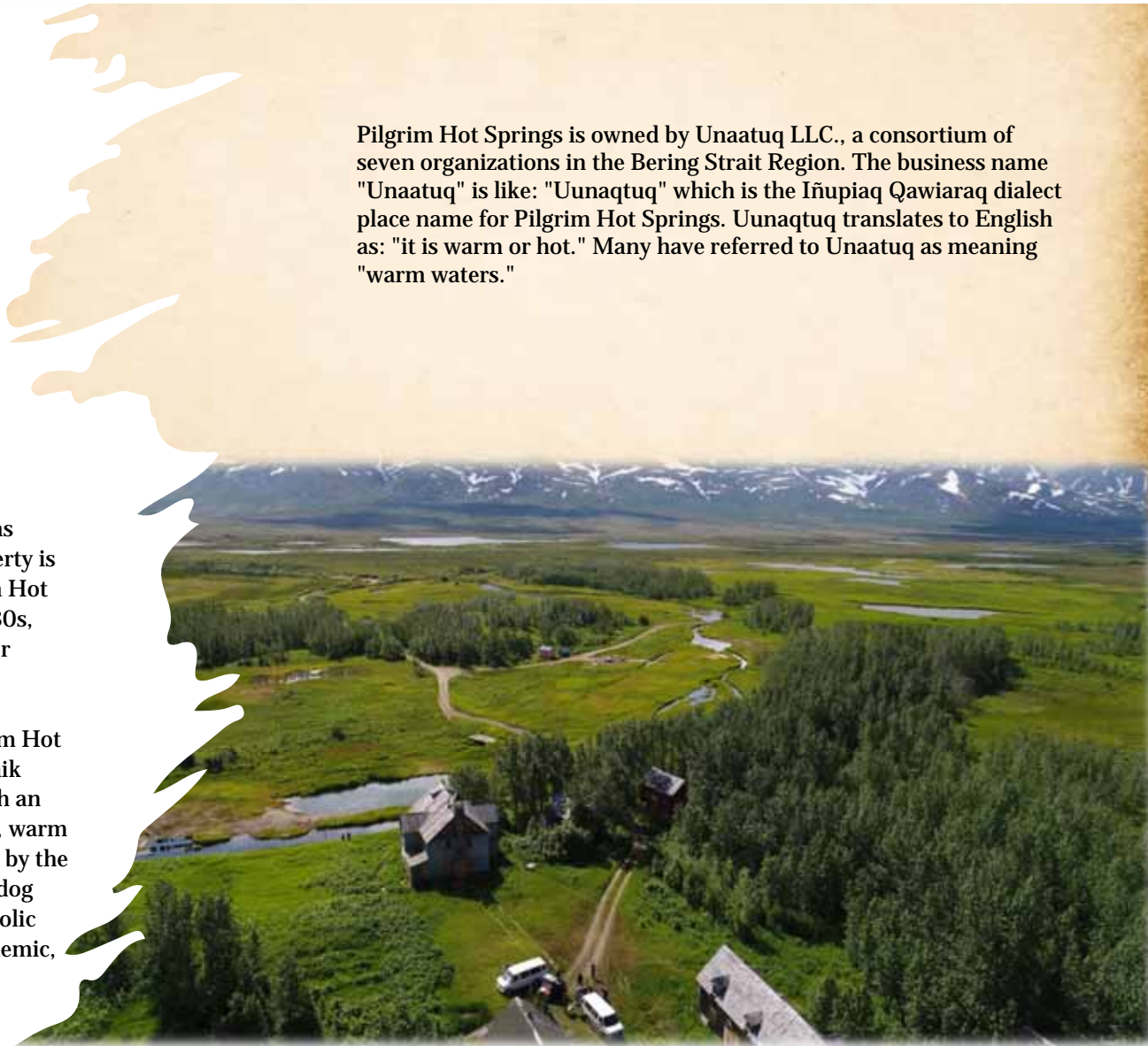
Pilgrim Hot Springs

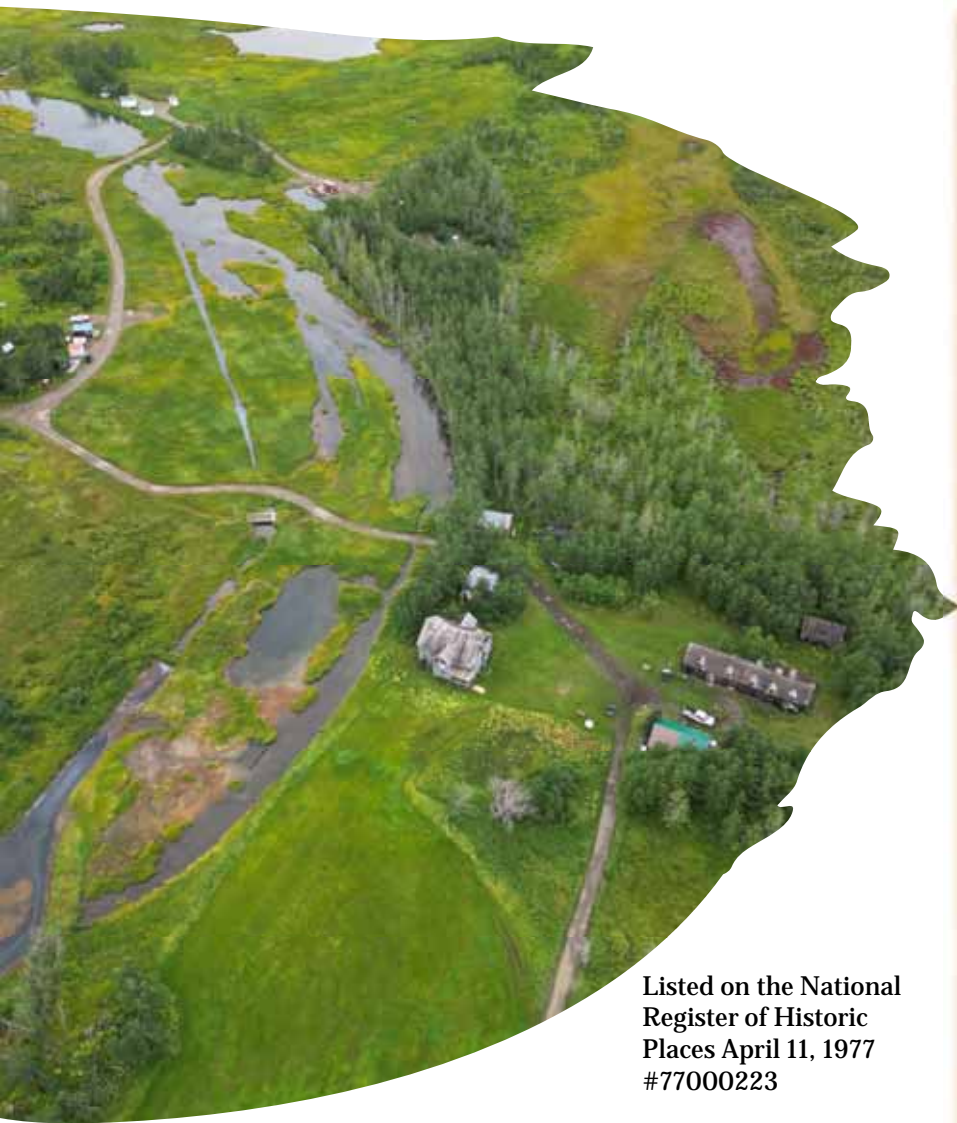
60 miles north of Nome
www.PilgrimHotSprings.com

Pilgrim Hot Springs is located on a 320-acre tract of land that was originally surveyed as a homestead in the early 1900's. The property is accessible during three or four months of the year via the Pilgrim Hot Springs access road, a 7 mile "frontier" road built in the early 1980s, which connects the property to the Kougarok Road (Nome-Taylor Highway).

A sub-Arctic oasis located in remote Northwestern Alaska, Pilgrim Hot Springs is nestled between Hen and Chickens Hill and the Kigluaik Mountain range. [Kiglawait] The property is a lush tree oasis with an abundant geothermal resource. Pilgrim boasts hot bathing pools, warm fertile soil, and a unique history including pre-contact utilization by the Indigenous population, Alaska Gold Rush history, railroads and dog sled trails, early aviation and military use, its time used as a Catholic mission and orphanage for the victims of the 1918-1919 Flu Pandemic, agricultural use, as well as its most recent use as a recreation destination and tourist attraction.

Pilgrim Hot Springs is owned by Unaatuq LLC., a consortium of seven organizations in the Bering Strait Region. The business name "Unaatuq" is like: "Uunaqtuq" which is the Iñupiaq Qawiaraq dialect place name for Pilgrim Hot Springs. Uunaqtuq translates to English as: "it is warm or hot." Many have referred to Unaatuq as meaning "warm waters."





Listed on the National
Register of Historic
Places April 11, 1977
#77000223

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

All of the buildings in the immediate vicinity of the Mission were constructed between 1910-1930. The church and the nun's quarters are still structurally stable and retain most of their original architectural attributes, though they have been diminished through weathering and some vandalism. Other structures at the mission have not fared as well. Nearly all present some level of instability, and some have collapsed (such as the machine shop). Because of the mission's history and its historical and personal importance to local residents, it is imperative that a baseline be established to determine what efforts need to be undertaken to stabilize and preserve the structures. Pilgrim Hot Springs is an important destination for visitors to Nome and many people travel there to visit the mission and soak in the hot waters. Stabilization of the buildings and the development of interpretive signage would add greatly to that experience and would preserve the ambiance and history of this important place in Alaska's history.

In 2021, Unaatuq, LLC worked with an expert contractor, Skip Lisle, to install beaver filtration systems to mitigate flooding and infrastructure damage due to beaver activity. Two "Beaver Deceivers" were installed in a culvert and within a local beaver dam to filter water through the property and reduce flooding. Since these devices were installed, the water level has dropped significantly on the property, and more of the original historic viewshed is visible. This is especially noticeable in front of the Our Lady of Lourdes church and the historic wooden bathing tub.

The next steps for preservation are focused on immediate stabilization and repairs, historic preservation planning as part of the master planning effort, and the continuous search for funding opportunities to support full restoration of the buildings, including modern amenities to support activities at the property (museum, educational displays, café and gift shop, staff housing, storage, guest housing, youth programs, workforce development, and more!)



Bishop Rowe Chapel

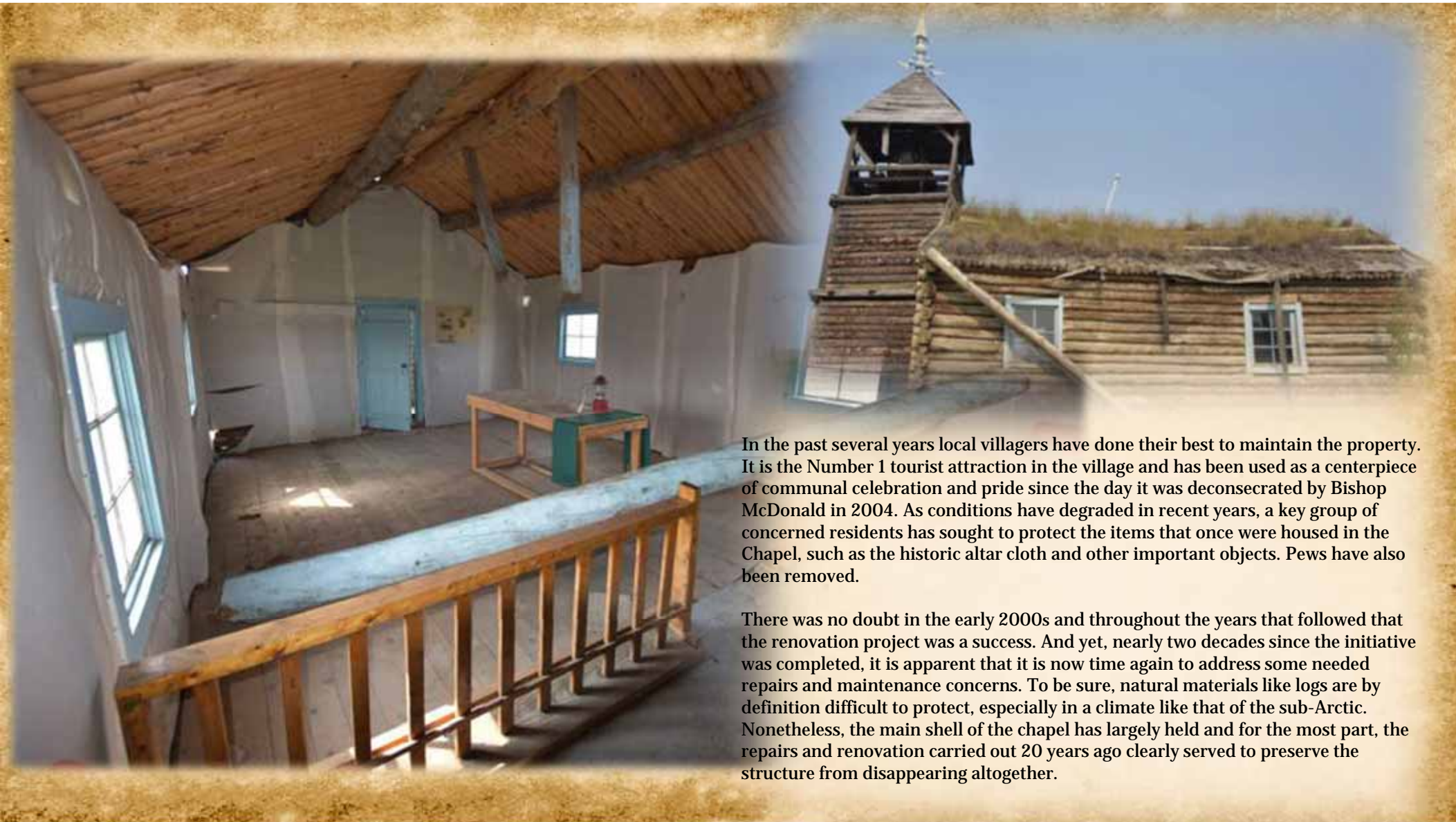
Arctic Village

The log Bishop Rowe Chapel in Arctic Village is an iconic structure, renowned not only in the sub-Arctic region bordering the East Fork of the Chandalar but indeed, across the state of Alaska. Built by local villagers during the post-WW II era, this extraordinary and unique chapel is the third iteration of a structure that was first created by one of the founding fathers of the village, Rev. Albert Tritt, at the turn of the 20th century. For decades the chapel, situated in the center of the village, served as a focus of social and communal activity. It was – and is – an homage to Gwich'in identity.

The church has been renovated over the years since it ceased to be used actively in the 1960s (most recently 2002-05) given its relevance and significance to Gwich'in culture and indeed, to the history and heritage of Alaska as a whole. However, given the harsh conditions of the region compounded by a changing climate, a recent *Condition Survey* (Nvision Architecture, 2019) has determined that after two decades, the structure is again endangered and in need of additional maintenance. Unless a series of repairs are undertaken soon, the building could be lost -- this time possibly for good.

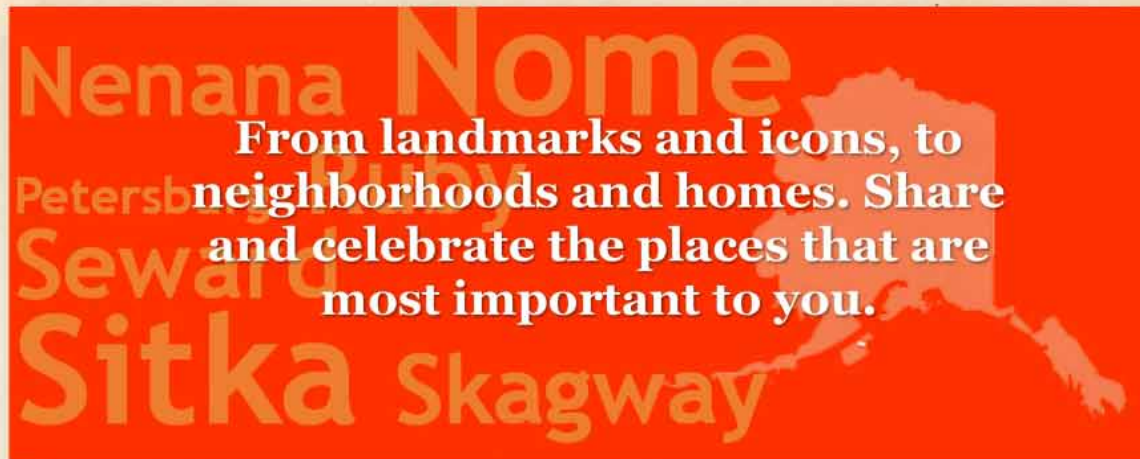


Listed on the National
Register of Historic Places on
April 22, 1977
#77001578
(AHRS Site No. ARC-0561)



In the past several years local villagers have done their best to maintain the property. It is the Number 1 tourist attraction in the village and has been used as a centerpiece of communal celebration and pride since the day it was deconsecrated by Bishop McDonald in 2004. As conditions have degraded in recent years, a key group of concerned residents has sought to protect the items that once were housed in the Chapel, such as the historic altar cloth and other important objects. Pews have also been removed.

There was no doubt in the early 2000s and throughout the years that followed that the renovation project was a success. And yet, nearly two decades since the initiative was completed, it is apparent that it is now time again to address some needed repairs and maintenance concerns. To be sure, natural materials like logs are by definition difficult to protect, especially in a climate like that of the sub-Arctic. Nonetheless, the main shell of the chapel has largely held and for the most part, the repairs and renovation carried out 20 years ago clearly served to preserve the structure from disappearing altogether.



Preservation Alaska

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