A

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME: ETOLIN CANOE

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ALASKA, Wrangell-Peterburg

DATE RECEIVED: 5/02/89 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/16/89
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 88001061

NOMINATOR: FEDERAL - USFS

DETAILED EVALUATION: Y

✓ ACCEPT ___ RETURN ___ REJECT 6/5/89 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Revision addresses all my comments made on 7/15/88

RECOM./CRITERIA C+D
REVIEWER Kuwel
DISCIPLINE Archeology
DATE 6/8/89

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

CLASSIFICATION

___count ___resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

___historic ___current

DESCRIPTION

___architectural classification
___materials
___descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

___summary paragraph
___completeness
___clarity
___applicable criteria
___justification of areas checked
___relating significance to the resource
___context
___relationship of integrity to significance
___justification of exception
___other

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

___acreage ___verbal boundary description
___UTMs ___boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

___sketch maps ___USGS maps ___photographs ___presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

_____ Phone _____

Signed _____ Date _____

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

MAY 02 1989
NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Etolin Canoe Site
other names/site number 49-PET-089

2. Location

street & number Tongass National Forest ☐ not for publication
city, town Wrangell ☒ vicinity
state Alaska code AK county Wrangell-Petersburg code AK 280 zip code 99929

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
☐ private	☐ building(s)		buildings
☐ public-local	☐ district		sites
☐ public-State	☒ site	1	structures
☒ public-Federal	☒ structure	1	objects
	☐ object		Total
		2	

Name of related multiple property listing:

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Evan J. McMorris — 4-25-89
Signature of certifying official — Date

USDA Forest Service
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Judith E. Bittner — 2/24/89
Signature of commenting or other official — Date

Alaska
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☒ entered in the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other, (explain:) _____

John J. Knoerl — 6/5/89
Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation, water-related

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

Other: dugout canoe

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation

walls

roof

other Wood, log

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Etolin Canoe (49-PET-089) is located on Etolin Island, approximately 400 meters (1,300 feet) inland from the head of Burnett Inlet. It lies on the hillside above the inlet, not more than 30 meters (100 feet) above sea level, in a stand of large, old timber. The canoe is resting on its starboard side, perpindicular to the ground slope, and is oriented generally northeast-southwest, with the gunwales facing downslope (Arndt 1979:1).

The canoe is cut from the base of either a Western Redcedar, Thuja plicata Donn, or an Alaska Yellow-cedar, Chamaecyparis nootka (D. Don) Spach. The tree stump, which is 1.1 meters (43 inches) in diameter, is 4 meters (13 feet 2 inches) to the northeast. The unworked portion of the tree extends off to the southwest of the canoe's bow. The canoe is 9.45 meters (29 feet 7 inches) long. Approximately 3.7 meters (12 feet) of its midsection is currently resting on the ground, although at one time the canoe was apparently lying on wooden braces. The bow, stern and keel of the canoe are up off the ground and unsupported (Hoveman 1983:1).

The top of the canoe has been flattened, and hollowing by the burn-and-chop method has been started. The hollowed area is 38 centimeters (1 foot 3 inches) wide and 33 centimeters (1 foot 1 inch) deep, and extends the length of the canoe. The bow and stern have been partially shaped with an adze. Adze marks are visible on the underside of the shaped ends, but any adze work on the upper surface has been covered by moss. The midsection of the canoe bottom is unworked (Arndt 1979:1).

The bow or southwestern end of the canoe is broken and the parts which have fallen to the ground are lost or completely rotted. The upper surface of the canoe is covered with moss and at least two young hemlock trees are growing out of the stern. The surface also suffers from soft rot, which gives it a wet and spongy appearance. The depth of the rot varies from 1 to 25 centimeters (½ to 10 inches), depending on the area of the canoe and its ability to retain moisture. Otherwise, the canoe is relatively sound and unaffected by insect infestation or other rots (Hoveman 1983).

The age of the canoe is unknown. A single radiocarbon sample (Beta-9496) from the charred interior of the canoe was dated "modern" (post-1950). The

[X] See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☒ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Architecture	Late 19th-early 20th	N/A
Archeology Historic-Aboriginal	century	

Cultural Affiliation: Tlingit Indian

Significant Person: N/A

Architect/Builder: N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Etolin Canoe is a unique Alaskan example of an early Northern type Indian canoe. Although unfinished and somewhat deteriorated, it retains enough distinctive characteristics to be recognizable as a member of this class. It also embodies traditional methods of canoe manufacture and shows a portion of the construction process that would not be readily apparent in a finished canoe. The builders of this canoe were apparently following the ethnographically described construction sequence, from the felling of the tree through the initial hollowing and shaping of the hull.

Historically, Etolin Island was inhabited by the Stikine tribe of the Tlingit Indians (Krause 1956:73). The Tlingits are a linguistic group who once occupied all of the Alaska panhandle except for a portion of Prince of Wales Island (Drucker 1965:103-104). The dominant and almost universal 19th century canoe design of this area, indeed, of all the area extending from the northern end of Vancouver Island to Yakutat Bay, was known variously as the "Northern", "Alaskan" or "Haida" type. The latter designation arises from the fact that, of the tribes in this area--the Tlingit, Tsimshian, Haida and Kwakiutl, it was the Haida who were the master canoe builders. The Tlingit obtained most of their canoes from the Haida, since the available cedar, except in the southern part of Tlingit territory, was of inferior size and quality. Locally made large canoes among the northern Tlingit were crude and nondescript (Olson 1955:23; Durham 1960:46).

The Northern type canoe had a distinctive profile, with a strong sheer and a high, pointed bow and stern. They were semi-circular in cross section on the bottom, but flared out above the waterline and curved sharply outward just below the gunwales. The ends, at the waterline, were sharp and narrow, with a hollow entrance and run. At the bow, the often vertical cutwater consisted of a triangular fin projecting from the hull. The end pieces which were added to the bow and stern were similar in form, although their size and shape varied from one canoe to another. Some were large and boxy, while others were small and wedge shaped (Durham 1960:44-45).

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Arndt, Katherine
1979 Etolin Canoe (PET 089). Ms on file, Stikine Area Office, Tongass National Forest, Petersburg.

de Laguna, Frederica
1972 Under Mount Saint Elias: The History and Culture of the Yakutat Tlingit. Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology Volume 7. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.

Drucker, Phillip
1965 Cultures of the North Pacific Coast. Chandler Publishing Company, New York.

[X] See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- [X] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- [ ] previously listed in the National Register
- [ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register
- [ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:
- [ ] State historic preservation office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [X] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository:
Stikine Area, Tongass National Forest
Petersburg, Alaska

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	08	658409	6221845 0
B			
C			
D			

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is limited to the land surrounding the canoe, the tree from which it was being manufactured and the tree stump, all located in the NW ¼ of the SW ¼ of Section 5, Township 66 S, Range 84 E, Copper River Meridian.

[ ] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes only the area surrounding the significant elements of this property.

[ ] See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael R. Yarborough / Archeologist
organization Cultural Resource Consultants date January 6, 1988
street & number 3504 East 67th Avenue telephone (907) 349-3445
city or town Anchorage state Alaska zip code 99507

MAY 02 1989

NATIONAL
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rate of wood decay and the accumulation of moss, however, suggests the canoe predates 1950. In fact, examination of the physical evidence and a review of ethnographic accounts suggests construction of the Etolin Canoe was started sometime between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The flat surfaces of the tree stump and the unused portion of the tree appear to have been cut with a metal saw. Metal saws did not become readily available on the northwest coast until the late 19th century (Neary 1981:10). Apparently the Tlingit use of dugout canoes continued until the end of canoe making in the early 20th century (Rousselot et.al. 1988:156). According to Durham (1960:78), "very few sea kayaks were built after 1920 because they could not compete with powerboats." Therefore the evidence suggests the canoe was started sometime between 1880 and 1920.

Variations in the proportions of the basic elements of the Northern canoe were limitless. Although the Indians considered every canoe to be a member of some standard group, the traditional size and type classes appear to have graded into one another. There was probably also a good deal of local variation within the range of a single class of canoe (Durham 1960:44). There were four basic classes of Northern canoes: hunting, family, voyaging and war (Niblack 1970:294-295). Based solely on its size, the Etolin canoe would probably have been considered a family canoe. These were 18 to 35 feet long, with a beam of three to six feet. Larger family canoes could transport up to fifteen individuals and two to three tons of personal possessions and trading supplies. This class of canoe "was the most useful, and had the most attractive proportions (Durham 1960:44).

Western Redcedar was the most popular wood for making dugout canoes, although the Yakutat Tlingit made some of their smaller canoes out of Alaska Yellow-cedar (Durham 1960:68; Krause 1956:118). Aboriginally, when canoes were made from standing trees rather than drift logs, the trees were felled either by chiseling or controlled burning (Durham 1960:68). The Etolin Canoe, started during the historic period, was being made from a tree felled with an axe and a one- or two-man cross-cut saw.

Trees growing along the shore or stream banks were seldom suitable for making canoes. The additional sunlight which these trees receive causes them to have lower branches and, therfore, more knots and other irregularities. For this reason, the most desirable trees, those with a long branchless bole, grew in the densest part of the forest (Drucker 1965:27). The location of the Etolin Canoe is an example of this selectiveness among Tlingit craftsmen, showing that they preferred a specific type of tree even if it had to be shifted some distance to the beach.

Canoe trees were customarily felled in early autumn and the preliminary shaping done in the woods (Durham 1960:69; de Laguna 1972:342). After the tree was felled, it was raised into a convenient position, the bark and sapwood removed, and the ends roughly pointed. After the inside was slightly hollowed, the log was turned over and the bottom was shaped close to its final lines. This is apparently the stage that the Etolin Canoe had reached before, for some unknown reason, it was abandoned. Next the hull was righted and the inside hollowed out until the canoe was light enough to drag to the beach. Half-finished canoes were usually left in the woods to season through the winter (Durham 1960:69-70).

Traditionally, adzes, mauls, wedges and chisels were used for shaping and hollowing canoes (Durham 1960:68-69; Niblack 1970:297). Controlled burning, as was used on the Etolin Canoe, was also favored in some areas for shaping the hull. After contact, steel was quickly adapted for adze bits and chisels, but the ax was little used for almost a century. Abercrombie, describing canoe making

at Yakutat in 1884, says that the rough work was done with an ax, although the hollowing was still done with a hand-adze (de Laguna 1972:343). Presumably, the adze marks left on the underside of the Etolin Canoe were left by a steel-bladed adze.

Two men, working only a few hours each day, needed three months to construct a 25-foot canoe. Such a canoe could also be made in only two weeks if there was any particular need for haste (Durham 1960:67-68). Because it was important to complete a canoe before it could be cracked and warped by the summer heat, work on larger canoes was often done through the winter (Durham 1960:68; Krause 1956:118).

To date, the Etolin Canoe is the only partially finished Native canoe of this type found in situ in southeast Alaska. Other canoes and canoe "blanks" have been found on the coast of British Columbia, especially the west coast of Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte Islands. Few of these, however, have been reported in any detail and almost none in published form (Grant Keddie, personal communication, 1987). One that is well documented in print is a partially finished Westcoast or Nootka style canoe that was found near Kyuquot Sound on Vancouver Island. This canoe, of Western Redcedar, is 6.5 meters (21 feet 4 inches) long, 1.23 meters (4 feet 4 inches) wide and 67 centimeters (2 feet 2 inches) deep. Although smaller than the Etolin Canoe, it is more completely finished. The outside had been worked to its final shape and the inside almost completely hollowed. Even the scarf joints at the bow and stern, for attachment of the end pieces, had been completed. Shaping of the hull had been done with an ax. This canoe was probably abandoned because of a large hole in the hull, caused by an in-grown bark seam on the tree (Neary 1981).

The Etolin Canoe Site has the potential to yield additional information about Tlingit Indian forest utilization and, more specifically, about the construction of Northern canoes. The site offers a rare opportunity to document traditional techniques employed in canoe construction. Archeological investigations at this site may lead to discovery of artifacts and cultural features associated with the manufacture of this canoe. Further study may also lead to a better understanding of the frequency of use of metal tools during the historic period. Examination of the physical remains could yield information about the inherent social processes associated with forest utilization. Knowledge gained from research of the Etolin Canoe could also be incorporated into an interpretive program for the public.

Durham, Bill
1960 Canoes and Kayaks of Western America. Copper Canoe Press, Seattle.

Hoveman, Alice
1983 Preservation of the Etolin Canoe (PET 089). Ms on file, Stikine Area Office, Tongass National Forest, Petersburg.

Krause, Aurel
1956 The Tlingit Indians; Results of a Trip to the Northwest Coast of America and Bering Straits. Translated by Erna Gunther. University of Washington Press, Seattle.

Neary, Kelvin
1981 Salvaging a Kyuquot Canoe. In Heritage Conservation Branch Newletter 6(4):6-10. Heritage Conservation Branch, Ministry of the Provincial Secretary and Government Services, Province of British Columbia, Victoria.

Niblack, Albert P.
1970 The Coast Indians of Southern Alaska and Northern British Columbia. Johnson Reprint Corporation, New York.

Olson, Ronald L.
1927 Adze, Canoe, and House Types of the Northwest Coast. University of Washington Publications in Anthropology No. 2. University of Washington Press, Seattle.

Rousselot, Jean-Loup, William W. Fitzhugh and Aron Crowell
1988 Maritime Economies of the North Pacific Rim. In Crossroads of Continents, by William Fitzhugh and Aron Crowel. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

MAY 02 1989

NATIONAL REGISTER

The following information is the same for all the photographs listed:

Item No.

1) Etolin Canoe, 49-PET-089

2) Vicinity of Wrangell, Alaska

3) Larry Roberts

4) April 21, 1983

5) Stikine Area Office, Tongass National Forest, Petersburg, Alaska

Photograph No. 1, Item No. 6- Stern of the canoe and surrounding vegetation. View to the southwest.

Photograph No.2, Item No. 6- Close-up of the stern showing the gunnels and hollowed area. View to the southwest.

Photograph No.3, Item No. 6- Bow of canoe. View to the west

Photograph No.4, Item No. 6- Bow and midsection of the canoe. View to the north

Photograph No.5, Item No. 6- Full length of the canoe as seen from the bow. View to the northeast.

Photograph No. 6, Item No. 6- Parent stump. View to the east.