

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED AUG 15 1979  
DATE ENTERED OCT 18 1979

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC **Pioneers' Home, Sitka** (AHR SITE NO. SIT-097)  
AND/OR COMMON  
**Sitka Pioneers' Home**

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
**Katlian Avenue and Lincoln Street** St.  
CITY, TOWN  
**Sitka** --- NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
VICINITY OF **Alaska, at Large**  
STATE **Alaska** CODE **02** COUNTY **Sitka Division** CODE **220**

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME **State of Alaska** (907) 465-4400  
STREET & NUMBER  
**Department of Administration, Pouch C - 0200**  
CITY, TOWN  
**Juneau** VICINITY OF **Alaska** STATE **99811**

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. **Department of Natural Resources, Division of Lands (Virginia Ryder)**  
STREET & NUMBER  
**323 East 4th Avenue**  
CITY, TOWN  
**Anchorage** STATE **Alaska 99501**

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE **Alaska Heritage Resource Survey (AHR)** (907) 274-4676  
DATE **4 January 1977** --- FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS **Alaska Division of Parks, 619 Warehouse Dr., Suite 210**  
CITY, TOWN **Anchorage** STATE **Alaska 99501**

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Sitka Pioneers' Home is built of reinforced concrete with a tile roof and is in excellent condition. It is a three story building plus a full basement and attic, one of the largest structures in the downtown area of the City of Sitka, completely dominating the waterfront of Sitka Sound channel between Baranof and Japonski Islands. The Home Campus is bounded by Katlian Avenue on the West, Lincoln Street on the South, Barracks Street on the East, and Seward Street on the North. This area is composed of approximately 2.43 acres. Another area of .57 acres, known as Totem Park, is shared by the Pioneers' Home, Department of Administration, and the Division of Lands, Department of Natural Resources. This area is bounded by Lincoln Street on the South, Katlian Avenue on the East, and the easement on the North side for a roadway connecting Katlian Avenue with a float for small boats. At one time, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (B.I.A.) operated small boats from this float as ferries, which were the only means of transportation for the public from Sitka to Japonski Island, Mount Edgecombe B.I.A. School, and the airport.

The Pioneers' Home has a total of 69,479 square feet and maintains a complete living facility for 150 residents, including a skilled nursing section for 50. Two additional two-story structures are also a part of the Pioneers' Home. These buildings are of a sturdy stucco finished construction on a solid concrete base. Heat, water, and electricity for these buildings are supplied through the Pioneers' Home. The smaller building, of 1,800 sq. ft., is the Manager's Residence. The remaining structure, of 2,040 sq. ft., is for nurse-employees who find it difficult to locate private housing. These two buildings were constructed in 1935 and are in fair condition, needing some interior repairs. The main Pioneers' Home was completed in December 1934. The Pioneers' Home complex was completely remodeled and modernized inside in 1972-1975 at a cost of approximately \$1.5 million.

"The Prospector," a 13 & 1/2 foot high statue stands on a base of native rock in front of the Pioneers' Home. It was created by the late Alonzo Victor Lewis, who used William "Skagway Bill" Fonda, an Alaskan Pioneer as his model.

Plans for the Nurses' Quarters, Manager's Home, and Pioneers' Home, were drawn by Heath, Gove, and Bell, of Tacoma, Washington. Date of the first two is March 7, 1935. "As built" of the Home were supplied by the architect in December 1942, and are on file with the Division of Construction, Maintenance and Design of the Department of Public Works, in Juneau, Alaska.

"The Prospector," the statue which stands on the terrace in front of the Pioneers' Home, was unveiled on Alaska Day, October 18, 1949. That event culminated 20 years of effort and planning on the part of several organizations and a great many individuals to raise money and to create a suitable memorial to the spirit of the Alaska Pioneers. "The Prospector" was designed as a tribute to all the brave men and women who have contributed to the progress and growth of the Territory and of the State of Alaska.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Original construction 1934, 1935; additional wing, 1956 BUILDER/ARCHITECT 1934-1935: Heath, Gove and Bell Tacoma, Wash.; 1956: Lin Forrest, Juneau, AK

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sitka Pioneers' Home is significant as the first facility in Alaska designed to provide Senior Citizens with a safe haven during their mature years. Men and women, who suffered, labored, and exhibited the virtues which created present day Alaska, out of the raw material of the last American Frontier, have lived here since 1914, and in these present buildings since 1935. U.S. Senator Ernest Gruening, in his autobiography, stated that the old age pension passed by Alaska's first legislature, in 1913, was the first old-age pension ever enacted by any American legislative body. The law establishing the Sitka Pioneers' Home was derivative from that 1913 legislation, and gave each Pioneer the option of either a pension or a place in the Pioneers' Home.

The architectural design is distinctive. The intrinsic conception is appropriate to the site and to the community, and graciously serves its purpose. The complex gives focus and architectural scale to a community already notable for the quality of its public and private structures.

In these qualities, the character and significance of the present group of buildings, constituting the Pioneers' Home, precedes the time frame of its construction. It justifiably lays claim to direct descent, in function, to the group of buildings which originated in the 19th century and were removed in 1934 in order to provide space for this larger and more appropriate habitation for the resident Pioneers of Alaska.

### Historical Narrative:

The Sitka Pioneers' Home is owned and operated by the State of Alaska. The site has been used for public purposes since acquisition of Alaska by the U. S. in 1967. Upon transfer of Alaska to the U.S., the Navy established headquarters in the area now occupied by the Home. Barracks and service buildings were built here during subsequent decades, including a Marine Corps hospital. The greater part of the turf functioned as a military parade ground. Along the edge of the reserve Alaskan Native women would pitch canopies and tents to sell their home-made wares to tourists visiting from the ships, which berthed at the end of the Governor's Walk. A 1905 photo by A. E. Hegg shows the barracks, the parade ground, and the Commandant's House, which had been built in 1903. A 1911 visitor noted that the "sentry boxes", which were to protect the inhabitants from surprise raids by the Indians from the Sitka Indian Village, had disappeared, ". . . But,"

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3.0

QUADRANGLE NAME Sitka (A-5)

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1: 63, 360

UTM REFERENCES

A 

0	8	4	7	9	7	3	3	6	3	5	4	7	0	1
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 

0	8	4	7	9	5	0	0	6	3	2	2	9	0	0
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D 

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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Approximately 2.4 acres bounded by Katlian Avenue on the West side, Lincoln Street on the South side, Barracks Street on the East side, and Seward Street on the North side. Approximately .6 acres bounded by Lincoln Street on the South side, Katlian

~~LISTEN STATES AND COUNTIES FOR INTERSECTING OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES~~

Street on the East side, and Sitka Sound Channel on the West and North side, known as Totem Park. Both parcels are in the Townsite of Sitka.

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE	Alfred Mongin, Architectural Historian Alaska Div. of Parks
Frank C. Sisson, Administrative Officer/	619 Warehouse Dr., Suite 210, Anchorage, AK 99501
ORGANIZATION	DATE
Division of Pioneers' Benefits, Dept. of Administration	March 2, 1977
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
Pouch C, Mail Station 0215	465-4401
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
Juneau	Alaska 99811

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  STATE  LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE *William Sherah*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE August 6, 1979

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
<i>Frank C. Sisson</i>	DATE <i>10-18-79</i>
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
ATTEST: <i>Kristen J. O'Connell</i>	DATE <i>10/18/79</i>
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION	

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1 of 3

she wrote, "the parade ground is there still, with trim-looking barracks and marine hospital. . . . And the blue coat of a sentry, pacing to and fro, gives a warlike and modern touch to the scene that accentuates the contrast of the rest. For the town is sleepy, very sleepy. A dramatic past has mellowed softly into a charming, appealing present. . . ."

The U. S. Marine Guard at Sitka was withdrawn in March 1912, leaving the barracks empty. When the first Territorial Legislature met in Juneau in March 1913, Representative Arthur Shoup, of Sitka, youngest Member of the First Legislature, introduced a bill in the House of Representatives which provided for the establishment of the Alaska Pioneers' Homes. The purpose of the Homes was to provide care and comfort for the early settlers and pioneers of Alaska who had reached retirement age and were no longer able to provide adequately for themselves. Care and comfort included provision for peace of mind, freedom from worry and hardship, companionship with others, and a home they could look upon as their own. The Navy granted permission to the Territory to use the vacant buildings at Sitka as temporary facilities for the first Home. The old barracks buildings, although in a state of disrepair and inadequate for the purpose, remained in use until March 1934.

Even though buildings of that period were inadequate, they sufficed in the spirit that many make-do things sufficed for the Pioneers. An Alaskan journalist told of the home and its inhabitants in a 1930 book. When Barrett Willoughby crossed the green parade ground [in 1929?], she said to herself, "[This is the . . .] end of the trail! . . ."

"On the long veranda facing the sea . . . a dozen or more old, old men in flannel shirts and overalls faded from many washings . . . were sitting in the sun. Crutches and canes were stowed away beneath their chairs as if to get them out of sight. Thin corded hands lay idle on bony knees. Here and there a grizzled chin was sunk in slumber."

Miss Willoughby quickly altered her first conclusion. She continued, ". . . my conclusion was refuted by the set of every white head before me. After a moment of puzzlement I knew the reason: In that entire line of physically broken old men there wasn't a single dejected hat-brim! Up in front, up at the side, tilted over one eye, up at the back -- there were, every battered, weather-beaten hat set at a gallant angle that was a defiance to bad luck, decrepitude, Death itself!"

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ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2 of 3

The Superintendent of the home, Theodore Kettleson introduced her to his charges: "I want you to meet the boys," he said. As they moved down the line, Mr. Kettleson introduced each man, mentioning in each instance some distinguished act performed, some hopeful outlook., such as "Mr. John Blank, who made the big strike up on the Chandalar in 1902. . . John still has an interest up there, and any day we may hear he's 'in the money' again." Or, "Meet Mr. Jake Hanover, perhaps you read of the time he rescued four starving prospectors who were stranded at the foot of Portage Glacier in 1912? He's got a snug little cabin and a trap-line up in the Matanuska, and he'll be leaving us as soon as his neuritis is cured." The Superintendent knew the history of every man -- there were over a hundred and fifty -- and he introduced his 'boys' as a genial Sourdough presenting his Sourdough friends.

Miss Willoughby was escorted by Mr. Kettleson into the main building and on to the library and lounging-room, where several men were reading, through the big kitchen, ". . . spotless, and presided over by two white-jacketed, good-natured cooks. One long table . . . piled with brown, sweet-smelling loaves of bread, hot from the oven. Huge yellow crocks of peeled potatoes, carrots, and onions . . . ready for the evening's boiled dinner. Long pans of rice custard cooled before an open window."

"The hospital, modern to the last degree," she related, "is for the most part occupied by men who are bedridden with paralysis; yet I found an astonishing amount of cheerfulness there. The nurses, jolly young women of the pioneer type who have served in hospitals all over the Territory, understand how to handle these old-timers."

Each man had a small territory of his own, ". . . the small rooms," where, said Miss willoughby, "the meager belongings of the men were arranged carefully -- a gold pan, a full-rigged ship in a bottle, a faded photograph of a dog team, or a windlass with a fur-clad man hauling up a bucket from the shaft below. But nowhere did I see photographs that might have the the likenesses of kinsfolk. Then I remembered that these were men of the Long Trail, whom no bonds of kin had been strong enough to hold from the hills. A lone hand they had played in their questing, foot-loose youth, as all must play who lay the foundation of an empire, and a lone hand they will play to the end."

Miss Willoughby was moved by the eternal optimism of these men. Jack McCarren, ". . . a bowed, old, and strangely shrunken figure," believed that the next spring he would hit the trail and prospect on the Tolavana for his next gold strike. And every Pioneer there was equally optimistic and planning his future prospects. As she departed, walking across the greensward, Jack McCarren and the others seated on the porch came stiffly to their feet.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3 of 3

In March 1934 the land and buildings were transferred by the U.S. Government to the Territory of Alaska. The present main building was completed in December 1934 at a cost of \$341,687.62. In 1935, under a Public Works Administration grant of \$98,308.88, the Administrator's Home, Nurses' Quarters, and garage were built, and the grounds landscaped to conform to the new structural layout.

Until 1949 there were no facilities at the Home for women or for couples. In 1949 the legislature appropriated funds to acquire an adjoining property for women's quarters. The building purchased had been used as a church, and after remodeling was called the Cathedral Apartments. In 1956 a new wing was added to the Home by the Alaska Public Works Administration, at a cost of \$800,000, to provide rooms for married couples. The newer wing is of similar architecture and style and is consonant with the original design and construction of the main building.

Plans for the 1934-1935 construction were drawn by the firm of Heath, Gove, and Bell, of Tacoma, Washington. The drawings for the Nurses' Quarters and Administrator's Quarters were dated March 7, 1935. "As built" drawings of the main building were supplied by the architect in December 1942, and are on file in the Division of Construction, Maintenance and Design of the Alaska Department of Public Works, Juneau.

"The Prospector," the statue which stands on the terrace in front of the Pioneers' Home, was unveiled on Alaska Day, October 18, 1949. That event culminated 20 years of effort and planning on the part of several organizations and a great many individuals to raise money and to create a suitable memorial to the spirit of the Alaska Pioneers. "The Prospector" was designed as a tribute to all the brave men and women who have contributed to the progress and growth of the Territory and of the State of Alaska.

A series of paintings and drawings by Clint Potter, husband of Roberley Reh Potter, present Administrator of the Sitka Pioneers' Home, illustrates the integrity which has been maintained in the physical changes to the home during the past 63 years. The Home itself symbolizes healthy respect for tradition, pragmatic means of providing for the Pioneers of Alaska, and public buildings which provide a major physical feature of the Sitka community, while providing an enduring functional facility of architectural merit and of increasing financial value.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1 of 1

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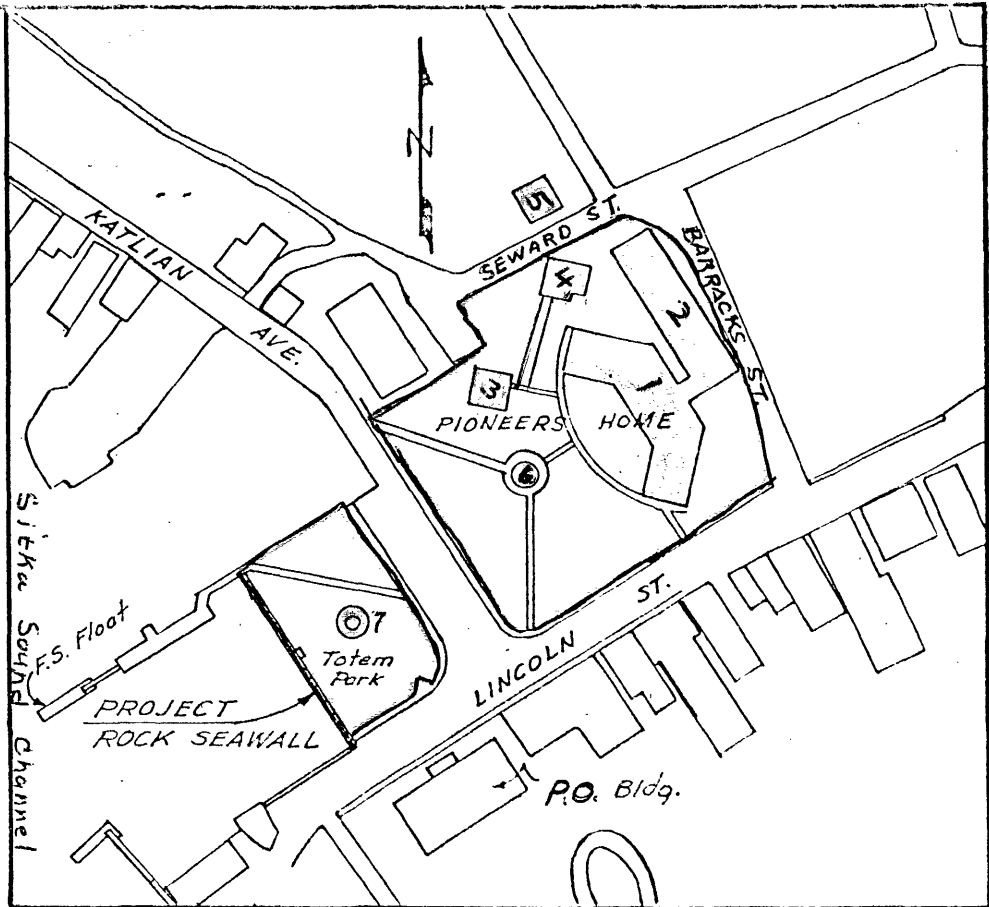
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City of Sitka LOCATION MAP  
1" = 200'

1. Original Pioneers Home - 1934
2. "Womens wing addition - 1956
3. Managers Residence - - - 1935
4. Nurses' Quarters - - - - 1935
5. Garage - - - - - @ 1934
6. Statue of The Prospector 1949
7. Totem Pole - - - - - ?

1. Sitka Pioneers' Home  
(AHRS SITE NO. SIT-097)  
2. UTM ZONE 08  
EASTING 479733  
NORTHING 6354701

AUG 15 1979