

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Sitka Spruce Plantation (AHRS UNL 074)

AND/OR COMMON

"The Forest"

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Amaknak Island-Dutch Harbor

CITY, TOWN

Unalaska

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

☒ VICINITY OF

Alaska

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Alaska

02

Aleutian Islands

010

Division

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☒ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☐ OCCUPIED☒ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☒ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Unalashka Village Native Corporation (surface patent)

STREET & NUMBER

(907) 581-1299

CITY, TOWN

Unalaska

☐ VICINITY OF

STATE

Alaska

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Alaska State Office, U.S. Bureau of Land Management

STREET & NUMBER

555 Cordova Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Anchorage

STATE

Alaska 99501

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Alaska Heritage Resource Survey (AHRS)

DATE

December 15, 1975

☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Alaska Division of Parks, 323 East 4 Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Anchorage

STATE

Alaska 99501

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT

☐ GOOD

☒ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED

☐ RUINS

☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED

☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE

☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Sitka Spruce forestation site on Amaknak Island was naturally void of trees. The western limit of natural conifer trees occurs about 540 miles northeast of Unalaska Island on the Alaska Peninsula; the eastern limit about 1500 miles west in the Kamchatka Peninsula in the U.S.S.R.

Climatic conditions on the Aleutian Islands are unfavorable for tree growth, although forestry studies have concluded that conifer forests are slowly advancing from both the east and west towards the island chain. Dutch Harbor in Unalaska Bay, within two miles of the Sitka Spruce Plantation, receives an average rainfall of 58.61 inches, has an average temperature of 40.4, 49.6 during the summer months, and witnesses an average of 243 cloudy days a year. Improper soil and excessive winds further hinder possibilities for natural tree growth.

The plantation site is in the west central portion of Amaknak Island, next to a small pond that was partially filled with gravel by the military stationed at Unalaska during World War II, and about 100 yards from a road that begins at Unalaska Bay. Evidently, the fill backed up water that might have caused the death of four of the ten trees reported standing in 1958.

The number of trees originally planted is not available. In 1834, Veniaminov was the first source to cite the number of trees, 24, standing. Thirteen trees remained in 1943, and in 1958, ten. As of July, 1975, six trees were still standing at the plantation site, measuring 21 inches in diameter and averaging 44 feet in height. New Sitka spruce trees are growing in the vicinity of the trees from the 1805 planting. Since 1920, the United States Government has sponsored a number of tree planting projects along the Aleutian Island chain. Of all the trees planted on the Aleutian Islands before 1940, only 100, all in the vicinity of Unalaska, have survived. Trees planted since 1940 have received more attention and in a number of areas along the Aleutian chain are thriving.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input 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 1805

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Significance

The planting of Sitka Spruce in 1805 on the naturally treeless Aleutian Island of Amaknak is the oldest recorded afforestation project on the North American continent. The project reflects Russian interest in developing the Aleutian Islands and making them, as well as all Russian America, more self-sufficient. A unique record of men's efforts to alter the natural setting, the trees are dwarfed in size and gnarled in appearance to survive in the hostile environment. Originally next to a pond in an uninhabited area, today the trees are visible from a road through the region and close to a housing project for the natives on the island. The trees divide unsurveyed land to the west that is filed for by the Aleut Corporation, and land to the east where a surface patent was given to the Ounalashka Native Corporation on September 12, 1975.

Historical Background

The first written comment about the absence of trees on the Aleutian Islands was made in 1741 by Georg Wilhelm Steller, the natural scientist with the Bering Expedition. In subsequent years other travellers along the Aleutian Islands including Gregorii Shelikhov, Joseph Billings, and G. H. von Langsdorff also noted the lack of forestation.

Reportedly, the planting of spruce trees was ordered by Imperial Chamberlain Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov in 1805. How many two to three year old seedlings were shipped from Sitka and planted on Amaknak Island is not known. About ten years later the first extant description of the plantation was recorded by Adelbert von Chamisso, the naturalist with the Otto von Kotsibue Expedition, 1815-1818. Chamisso noted that most of the trees had perished, and the remaining young trees were barely surviving.

The first to date the tree planting project was the famous Russian Orthodox churchman, Bishop Ivan Veniaminov, while a missionary priest assigned to Unalaska. In his journal Veniaminov commented on his visit in 1834 and located the plantation next to a small lake. Noting slow and uneven rates of growth among the 24 remaining trees, Veniaminov recorded that

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Bruce, David and Arnold Court. "Trees for the Aleutians," The Geographical Review, XXXV:3 (1945), 418-423.
- Fernhow, B. E. "Forests of Alaska," Alaska: Harriman Expedition, Vol. II: 235-256, New York: Doubleday, 1902.
- Lutz, H. J. History of Sitka Spruce Planted in 1805 at Unalaska Island by the Russians. Juneau, Alaska: U.S. Department of Agriculture, May, 1963.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1

UTM REFERENCES

A | 0,3 | | 3 9 8 | 6,5 0 | | 5,9 | 7,2 | 4,2 0 |
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C | | | | | | | | | | | | |

B | | | | | | | | | | | | |
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D | | | | | | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

53° 51' 18" N, 166° 32' 31" W.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Joan M. Antonson, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Alaska Division of Parks

STREET & NUMBER

323 East 4 Avenue

CITY OR TOWN

Anchorage

DATE

December 15, 1975

TELEPHONE

(907) 274-4676

STATE

Alaska 99501

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Kenneth W. Callicott

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

Jan 22, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Sitka Spruce Plantation, Alaska (AHRS UNL-074)

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Alaska State Office, U.S. Bureau of Land Management (907) 277-1561
(under selection by Ounalashka Village Corporation)
555 Cordova Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

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several trees were over seven feet high with a base circumference of 18 inches or 5 1/2 inches in diameter. A man of action, Veniaminov sent a request to Russia that cultivation of the plantation trees be undertaken and additional trees planted. As a result, around 1835 a second tree planting attempt was conducted on Expedition Island about a mile south of the plantation, supported, if not carried out by Veniaminov.

In 1841, an article entitled "On Sowing and Planting trees on Unalaska Island" was published anonymously in a Russian forestry journal. Beginning with this article some confusion between the two plantings and possibly others, is encountered among reports about spruce trees in the vicinity of Unalaska.

The first professional report about the spruce plantation was prepared by Bernhard Fernhow, a forester, who visited Unalaska as a member of the Harriman Alaska Expedition in 1899. Two groups of trees were observed, one of twelve trees, the other of seven. The largest tree measured 24 inches in diameter and stood an estimated 30 feet. Since then, reports on the plantation trees have been for professional records. The six remaining trees represent the early interest in altering the environment by planting trees in a hostile environment, and not only should be preserved but also should be recognized.

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Veniaminov, Inocent. Journals. (trans.)

ALASKA RECONNAISSANCE TOPOGRAPHIC SERIES

