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
St. Peter's Church (AHRS Site No. SIT-029)

AND/OR COMMON
St. Peter's Episcopal Church; St. Peter's by the Sea

2 LOCATION
STREET & NUMBER
611 Lincoln Street

CITY, TOWN
Sitka

STATE
Alaska

3 CLASSIFICATION
CATEGORY
DISTRICT
X BUILDING(S)
X STRUCTURE
X SITE
X OBJECT

OWNERSHIP
PUBLIC
PRIVATE
PUBLIC ACQUISITION
IN PROCESS
BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS
X OCCUPIED
UNOCCUPIED
WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
YES: RESTRICTED
YES: UNRESTRICTED
NO

PRESENT USE
AGRICULTURE
COMMERCIAL
EDUCATIONAL
ENTERTAINMENT
RELIGIOUS
GOVERNMENT
INDUSTRIAL
TRANSPORTATION
MILITARY
OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY
NAME
Mrs. Clyde Tennant
Senior Warden

(907) 747-3503

STREET & NUMBER
St. Peter's Church, P.O. Box 1156

CITY, TOWN
Sitka

STATE
Alaska

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
District Recorder

STREET & NUMBER
P.O. Box 910

CITY, TOWN
Sitka

STATE
Alaska

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITLE
Alaska Heritage Resource Survey (AHRS)

DATE
October 24, 1972

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Alaska Division of Parks, Suite 210, 619 Warehouse Avenue

CITY, TOWN
Anchorage

STATE
Alaska
### DESCRIPTION

<table>
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<td>_UNALTERED</td>
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<tr>
<td>_GOOD</td>
<td>_ALTERED</td>
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<tr>
<td>_FAIR</td>
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**DESCRIPT THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

The general plan for this building was described at the organizing conference of the Building Committee in June 1899, as follows:

The Chapel is designed to seat one hundred and thirty people and is 30 x 50 feet inside, and of a composite gothic style of architecture. The foundation, walls and buttress are of stone masonry, above which walls are of open timber frame work to a height of 9 feet, filled with stone, allowing the timbers to show on the wall. Above the roof, the walls will be finished with stained shingles. A small belfry will be mounted on the roof.

Windows and door of stained glass will add attractiveness to the interior which will be finished in oiled spruce with open roof trusses also oiled. The interior finish of the roof will also be ceiling spruce in panels, oiled in the same manner.

This is how it was envisioned, that is how it was built, and that is what it looks like to this day. There are some additional details, not mentioned above, such as the entry porch, but these are mere details, and were integrated into a design fully envisioned by the architect from the instructions communicated to him in person by Peter Trimble Rowe, The Bishop of Alaska. While the structure is in the Gothic style, it has little of Gothic structural elements, but embodies effectively the centre pointed design throughout its major interior and exterior elements in the major design finish and fenestration of the lights in the entrance (south) and altar (north) walls, in the parallel rows of stained glass small windows along the side (east and west) walls of the chapel. A soft north light illumines the altar through a large nine panel centre pointed window, while the view from the front steps is of the harbor and the sea, literally at the doorstep of this church, set here for the beauty of the site, which this building has enhanced since 1899.

This country church is deceptively simple in appearance. Its design at first glance appears similar to many other small country churches, and to a few others in Alaska. Upon further examination, it appears that the design has been executed with a unity of purpose, in complement to the site, that results in a building whose form is expressive of its function in every dimension.

At a later date an adjoining building lot, adjoining the church lot on the north, was acquired, and the See House was built to a design complementing the church building. The remains of the first Episcopal Bishop of Alaska, Peter Trimble Row, and those of his first wife and one of their sons, are buried on the front lawn of the Church, marked by unobtrusive ground level grave stones.
# SIGNIFICANCE

<table>
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<th>PERIOD</th>
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<tr>
<td>1500-1599</td>
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### SPECIFIC DATES

1899

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Builder: John W. Dudley, Sitka, Alaska</td>
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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This country church is significant for its architectural design. It embodies design elements, and a unity of conception related to its distinctive site location, that give it high artistic value and represent the work of master builders of that time and place.

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE:

Tradition relates that Episcopal lay services were held in Sitka, Alaska, between 1867 and 1885, first by an anonymous Army colonel and subsequently by a Mr. Austin. After 1885 there were no Episcopal services in Sitka until the arrival of the First Episcopal Bishop of Alaska, Peter Trimble Rowe, in 1896.

Bishop Rowe arrived in Sitka in April 1896, following his November 30, 1895, consecration in the Cathedral of St. John the Devine, New York City. The newly installed Bishop immediately obtained quarters for his family, and departed for the Yukon River, via the Chilkoot Trail, to observe firsthand the nature of the responsibility which he had accepted. Upon returning to Sitka in November, Bishop Rowe conducted services on Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 1896 -- a year following, and a world distant, from the scene of his consecration. From then onward Bishop Rowe conducted services regularly when he was in Sitka. He immediately saw the need for a church for his new Bishopric one that would be somewhat more imposing than the cabin-chapels he then had available, but not so expensive as to be unreachable.

An affluent couple from Utica, New York, who visited Sitka the summer of 1897, contacted Bishop Rowe upon returning to their home, and offered $2,000 toward the building of a church in Sitka. It was remarked, in later years, that the Bishop was ". . . such a darned human, lovable cuss, somehow, that wherever he goes he starts a stampede for heven." This offer was the first move in what became a stampede to build this church.

A committee formed to locate and purchase a suitable site. The committee included the U.S. Attorney for Alaska, Burton E. Bennett, William Millmore, and Edward de Groff. A committee of women raised money for the purchase. These women included Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. DeGroff. A lot of the crescent of the harbor was chosen and purchased for $800 (some accounts say $750) from Peter Panamarkoff.
**MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

See continuation sheet

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**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY** less than one acres

**UTM REFERENCES**

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<th>EASTING</th>
<th>NORTHING</th>
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<tr>
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<td>C</td>
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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Lot C115, Block 13.

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

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<th>COUNTY</th>
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**FORM PREPARED BY**

**NAME / TITLE**

Alfred Mongin, Architectural Historian

**ORGANIZATION**

Alaska Division of Parks

**STREET & NUMBER**

619 Warehouse Avenue, Suite 210

**CITY OR TOWN**

Anchorage

**DATE**

March 15, 1977

**TELEPHONE**

(907) 274-4676

**STATE**

Alaska

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**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

NATIONAL ___  STATE X ___  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**

[Signature]

**DATE**

8/23/77

---

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

[Signature]

**DATE**

3/1/77

---

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

[Signature]

**DATE**

[Signature]

**DATE**

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTRY
The road along the crescent then called Beach Road, is now called Lincoln Street. While the largest individual contributors included Bennet, Millmore, deGroff, James Shoup, and W. P. Mills, the full list of donors was a long one, including such names as C. L. Andrews, later notable for his writings on Alaskan and Sitka history, and C. C. Georgeson, an official of the Department of Agriculture and pioneer experimenter in Arctic farming techniques.

Bishop Rowe prepared specifications of his conception of what the church should look like and how it should be designed, and what the Rectory (the "See House") should look like and contain. A meeting of a committee of the town's leading citizens convened early in September 1898 at the Bishop's house to discuss these ideas and their execution. Present were Messrs. deGroff, Bennett, and W. L. Distin; John W. Dudley, and G. D. Clayett. Following discussion, a motion carried unanimously that the Bishop's conceptions for the church and house be conveyed by the Bishop to an architect to translate into working drawings and specifications, during the Bishop's forthcoming trip to the East Coast. The meeting also elected a building committee for the project, with deGroff as Chairman, Dudley as Secretary, and C. S. Johnson, Col. W. L. Distin, and W. P. McBride, completing the membership.

Soon after the meeting in Sitka, Bishop Rowe traveled to the East Coast on the business of his See. A Philadelphia philanthropist, George C. Thomas, engaged Philadelphia architect, H. L. Duhring, Jr., to prepare plans and specifications for the church and the See House. George C. Thomas, many times a benefactor of missionary work in Alaska, was Treasurer of the Board of Missions of the Episcopal Church. In his professional life he was Manager of the banking firm of Drexel, Morgan and Company, a major affiliate in Philadelphia of J. P. Morgan and Company. Mr. Thomas' interest in Alaska might have been related also to the investment activities in Seattle and in southeast Alaska of J. P. Morgan's little known, but most important, son-in-law, William Hamilton.

The cornerstone laying was scheduled for Thursday, June 29 -- St. Peter's Day, and the church would be called "St. Peter's-By-The-Sea". John W. Dudley, Recorder in Sitka for the General Land Office (now the Bureau of Land Management) had undertaken to supervise construction according to the architect's plans. Only the church was to be built at that time, the See House deferred to a later date. Mr. Dudley had completed the foundation work by June 29, and had erected a temporary shelter over the foundation, large enough to accommodate the town's clergy and the congregation. This was fortunate, because rain fell, in typical Sitka fashion, all day, without intermission, and continued through the 4:00 p.m. hour set for the cornerstone ceremony. Consequently, in typical Sitka fashion, the turnout for the impressive and solemn service was relatively large and enthusiastic.
Forming with Bishop Rowe for the ceremony were Father Anthony and Father Kaiakokonok of the Russian Orthodox Church, and Rev. M. D. McClelland of the Presbyterian Church. Following the Order of Service -- Psalm, Versicles, Special Prayers, Scripture Lesson, and Psalm 136 -- Bishop Rowe introduced Lt. George T. Emmons, USN, who delivered a paper on the History of Sitka -- written for deposit in the cornerstone. Bishop Rowe then read a list of the materials to be deposited in the cornerstone of the church:

The Alaskan issue of June 24, 1899.
A list of Bishops of the American and Anglican branches of the Catholic Church from the Apostles to the present day.
The historical sketch of Sitka, prepared and read that day by Lt. George T. Emmons, USN.
A list of the clergy of Alaska.
Names of the church building committee, contractor, etc.
Coins of the National currency, a Queen's Jubilee crown, a Columbian half-crown, a cent of 1803, a half-cent of 1804 and other coins presented by Mr. F. Woodcock, a Russian coin presented by Father Anthony; an English penny, half-penny, and a Canadian five cent piece, presented by Miss M. G. Hindshaw.
A shell from the Sea of Galilee.
Two small size American flags.

Rev. W. M. Partridge next delivered a short address relative to cornerstones and the historical significance of laying cornerstones. The choir and congregation sang, "All Hail the Power of Jesus Name," and the service closed, with the Benediction, pronounced by the Bishop.

In September 1899, as the church construction near completion, an offer was accepted from a Mr. and Mrs. Bauer to furnish three stained glass windows, and from Miss Mary Rhinelander, of New York City, to provide a communion service. Miss Rhinelander, like Mr. Thomas, shared family and business interests with J. P. Morgan and Company, and was a benefactor of many good causes.

As construction progressed, Bishop Rowe, in his characteristic way, did much of the stone work himself, and the front wall of the church he built entirely with his own hands. The Bishop's biographer, Thomas Jenkins, wrote that one day while Bishop Rowe worked at the wall a man came sauntering along. "Well, Bishop," he remarked, "you are working to beat the devil." Replied the Bishop, "Yes, he's the very one I'm trying to beat!"
The new church witnessed its initial service on November 26, 1899, a Thanksgiving Service in which Bishop Rowe shared the rostrum with Father Anthony of the Greek Cathedral, and at least 10 different denominations of Christians were in attendance. A formal service of consecration for the building was held on Easter Sunday, April 15, 1900. As the home church of the Bishop, this was the most important Episcopal Church in Alaska. This picturesque building lost its importance with the decline of Sitka, when the capital was removed and all the courts and officials of the District were removed to Juneau, where the District would become a Territory. Due to other factors than merely the decline of Sitka with the removal of the capital to Juneau, Bishop Rowe moved his See to Seattle, and continued his yearly crusades from there, both to the farthest reaches of Alaska, and to the far reaches of the Eastern United States, from whence had to come his moral and legal support and the wherewithall for him to serve his flock throughout Alaska.

This lovely little church, conceived in the fertile brain of one of the most in-describably of men who ever served humanity in Alaska, Peter Trimble Rowe, continues its serene way, serving the Episcopal congregation now as in 1899, while continuing to draw attention to itself as an architectural jewel in the diadem of Sitka's Crescent Harbor shore.

One visitor, Ella Higginson, poetized her impressions of St. Peter's-By-The-Sea, and sent it to Bishop Rowe. It reads, in part:

The little Church at Sitka--
It is so dim and still!
The doors stand open to the sea,
The wind goes through at will
And bears the scent of brine and blue
To the far distant hill.
Alaskan, The, August 6, September 10, 1898; May 27, June 24, July 1, August 26, September 9, December 2, 1899.


Hardcastle, Romaine, Alaska Day Festival, Inc. /Sitka, 1954?/.

Henson, Alice Pace, "The Real Sitka." Travel, Vol. 19, May 1912, Pages 26-29.

Historical Sketch of St. Peter's-By-the-Sea, 1899-1949. 3 pages. /Sitka, 1949?/.


"Our Church." 3 pages. Mimeographed pamphlet history of St. Peter's Church, Sitka. n.d.


St. Peters Episcopal Church (AHRS SITE NO. SIT-029)

Miss Isabel Miller
P.O. Box 1672
Sitka, Alaska 99835 (907) 747-3405