CONFIRMATION OF CONSENSUS NOMINATION

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

1. NAME
   COMMON:
   Chief Shakes Historic Site

2. LOCATION
   STREET AND NUMBER:
   Shakes Island
   CITY OR TOWN:
   Wrangell

3. CLASSIFICATION
   CATEGORY (Check One):
   Site
   OWNERHOSh (Check One):
   Public
   PUBLIC ACQUISITION (Check One):
   In Process
   STATUS:
   Unoccupied
   ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC (Check One):
   Restricted

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY
   OWNER'S NAME:
   United States of America
   CITY OR TOWN:
   Washington

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
   COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
   District Recorder
   STREEl AND NUMBER:
   Box 501
   CITY OR TOWN:
   Wrangell

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISlNG SURVEYS
   TITLE OF SURVEY:
   None
   DATE OF SURVEY:
   DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
   STREET AND NUMBER:
   CITY OR TOWN:
# 7. DESCRIPTION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CONDITION</th>
<th>[ ] Excellent</th>
<th>[ ] Good</th>
<th>[X] Fair</th>
<th>[ ] Deteriorated</th>
<th>[ ] Ruins</th>
<th>[ ] Unexposed</th>
<th>(Check One)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Altered</td>
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<td>Original Site</td>
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**DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

The present site encompasses .704 acres and is dominated by a 1940 replica of an early 19th Century Tlingit community house. Incorporating four ancient houseposts of Chief Shakes' "Shark House", as well as an original pair of Raven Clan houseposts, the house is surrounded by nine totem poles. Seven of these are copies of older poles, while two are originals. All were carved in 1940 as Civilian Conservation Corps project.

The community house also contains two carvings representing killer whale fins, a recently-painted screen representing the first Chilkat blanket design, and relics of the Shakes lineage.

A central square fire pit is the focus of the structure's interior. The fire pit is surrounded by a planked platform that would have served as living quarters for several families, each allotted its own space but sharing the common fire.

Structurally, the house is dominated by massive posts and beams that support the cedar shake roof with its smoke hole and the heavy, adz-hewn planking that is the facade. A stylized raven on the front is unusual; few houses were so decorated.

Poles outside the house include a Sealion Prince, Kadashan Red Snapper, Kadashan Crane, Underwater Grizzly, Three Frogs, Bear Up Mountain, and Sea Serpent.
### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Shark House houseposts incorporated in Chief Shakes Community House have been characterized in an Alaska State Museum report as perhaps "the oldest and finest set of houseposts in existence." At least one source states that these dogfish totems were brought from Old Wrangell to Wrangell in 1832, while another suggests that they were carved eight years before the first Russian ship arrived in the Lituya Bay area. It is not inappropriate to categorize these unique carvings as national treasures.

While the houseposts are superb and paramount objects of historic interest, the replica Tlingit community house of which they have become a part is not without its own interest. One of three such structures extant, it was built about 1940 as a part of a Civilian Conservation Corps project that became a departure point in efforts to preserve the heritage of the state's original occupants. An analysis by Dr. Joe Clark (a Wood Pathologist with the U.S. Forest Service who contributed to the Museum's report) testifies to the intrinsic value of the house:

I was much impressed with the framing design, the perfection of joinery fit in the complex framing of heavy members around the smoke hole, and the overall fine workmanship exhibited including the perfection of adzed wood surfaces and the practice of pegging rather than using metal fasteners.

(continued)
9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY

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<td>SW</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
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APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 0.704

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

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<th>STATE:</th>
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11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: William S. Hanable, State Park Historian

ORGANIZATION: Alaska Division of Parks

STREET AND NUMBER: 323 E. Fourth Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Anchorage

DATE: December 21, 70

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

- National [X]
- State [X]
- Local [X]

Name: THEODORE G. SMITH

Title: Director, Division of Parks

Date: December 21, 1970

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Signature: [Signature]

Date: November 5, 1971

ATTEST:

Signature: [Signature]

Date: October 19, 1971
8. A traditional chieftains' campsite, Shakes Island carries its own values through association with a revered lineage in Alaska Indian heritage and was, in fact, owned in part by the last Chief Shakes at the time of his death. Oral history reports that at the end of a fierce war between the Wrangell people and the Tsimpsians, the former were accorded the right to use the "Kit" (whale killer symbol) on their canoes and the right to use the Tsimpsian word "Shakes" (whale killer). A succession of Wrangell leaders used the name until 1944, when the last Chief Shakes of Wrangell died. In 1970 "Shakes" was assumed again, this time by an heir from another village.

This connection with heroic folklore creates a special distinction for Chief Shakes Historic Site in local tradition; just as the community house, a three-dimensional recognition of the Tlingit's unique folkways, is significant in a statewide chronology of white and native contact. Overshadowing these considerations, though, is the transcendent artistic and historic value assigned to the Shark House houseposts. Relics of a major aboriginal American culture that chose wood as its dominant material, in an environment that destroys wood, they are without parallel.