

REDOUBT SAINT MICHAEL

Despite many setbacks and hardships, the Russian fort rapidly grew into a bustling community.



A NEW HOME

Life at the redoubt was not easy; food had to be secured and buildings constructed and maintained. Food shortages during the first winter lowered community morale; but, by the third year, the small population had settled in at the fort. The redoubt became more of a home, and less of a fort, as some of the men married Tlingit women and other families came from Kodiak.

BUILDING A FORT

In April 1800, approximately 25 Russians and Creoles, 50 Alutiq, Aleut, and Chugach hunters, and a few Native women were stationed at Redoubt Saint Michael. During this month, a highly symbolic Possession Plate was ceremonially buried in the ground to mark the birth of this new settlement and assert national claim over the land. By 1802, the settlement's population had tripled.



Collection of Sitka National Historical Park

In an effort to learn more about life at the redoubt, the Civilian Conservation Corps conducted an archaeological dig in the mid-1930s and uncovered this copper Possession Plate, the only one ever recovered from a Russian-American site.

Important artifacts are still found in the area today. If encountered, please leave them in place and contact Sitka Area Parks or The Office of History and Archaeology.

SETTLING FOR FURS

Between 1795 and 1800, sea otter hunts around Sitka Sound produced the greatest yields for the newly formed Russian-American Company (RAC). In July 1799, RAC manager Alexander Baranov, requested permission from Tlingit leaders to establish Redoubt Saint Michael here on Tlingit land. After exchanging gifts, he believed they had reached an agreement.



The Earliest View of Sitka, 1806 by V. Ushanoff, depicting Redoubt Saint Michael. Courtesy of the Sitka Historical Society & Museum

