CHAPTER 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND

J. David McMahan

During the summers of 1995, 1997, and 1998, the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology (OHA) conducted phased field investigations at Baranof Castle State Historic Site, commonly called Castle Hill, in Sitka, Alaska (Figure 1). Castle Hill, known to the Sitka Tlingit as *Noow Tlein*, is one of Alaska's most important historical sites because it is identified with events significant in national, state, and local history. In 1962, the site was designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL).

- The site was the location of clan houses of the historic Tlingit settlement of *Noow Tlein* until 1804.
- In 1804, following a battle with the *Kiks.ádi* Clan of the Sitka Tlingit, the Russian-American Company founded the settlement of New Archangel (present day Sitka) on and around Castle Hill.
- From 1808-1867, New Archangel served as the capitol of Russia's American settlements. Castle Hill was the location of the administrative headquarters of the Russian-American Company and manager's ("Russian Governor's") residence during that period.
- In 1867, Castle Hill was the site of the formal ceremony through which Alaska was transferred from Russia to the United States. A re-enactment and celebration of this event occurs annually on October 18.
- In 1959, one of the first official raisings of the 49-star U.S. flag took place at Castle Hill.

The archaeological investigations at Castle Hill, performed in conjunction with park renovation, are grounded in federal and state laws that address the effects of public construction on cultural resources. In particular, the use of federal funds mandates compliance with Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). 36 CFR 800, which implements Section 106, sets forth the review process for historic properties affected by federal undertakings (*i.e.*, any project which receives federal funds, licenses, or permits). Funding for the archaeology was provided as part of an Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) grant from the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) to the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) to conduct repairs and make the park handicap accessible. Through a Reimbursable Services Agreement (RSA), the ADOT&PF partnered with OHA, within the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR), to address cultural resources under the NHPA. Inasmuch as Castle Hill is under the management of DPOR as a state park, the ADOT&PF executed a concurrent RSA with the DPOR Design and Construction Section to perform construction design and engineering for the project.

Figure 1.1. Overview of Castle Hill, looking northeast, around 1970.
(from a photo postcard in the collection of Dave McMahan)

Aside from a few small test pits excavated by OHA in 1985 in disturbed deposits, no archaeological work had taken place at Castle Hill prior to this project. The investigations were progressively phased so that larger areas were opened with each successive field season. Work in 1995 consisted of subsurface testing of the proposed construction area to locate and evaluate buried deposits. The need to excavate large (2 m x 1 m) pits to penetrate a thick mantle of disturbed soil on top of the hill precluded excavation of a more widespread array of smaller pits, as would have been preferable. As a result of the 1995 field program, Castle Hill was determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under 36 CFR 60.4 Criterion D, due to its potential to yield important archaeological data (Ballard 1996; McMahan 1996). This was in addition to the qualities for which the site had already been designated a National Historic Landmark. In assessing the effect of the proposed construction on the Criterion D qualities of the site (*i.e.*, its scientific value), the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred with ADOT&PF and FHWA in a finding of "conditional no adverse effect," provided that a data recovery program be conducted (Bittner 1996). A draft data recovery plan (McMahan 1996) was prepared, and the comments of a broad array of interested parties were taken into account prior to finalization (McMahan 1997). As required under Section 106, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) was given an opportunity to review this document. The ACHP chose not to comment, accepting the data recovery plan and allowing work to proceed as planned. In the spring of 1997, OHA archaeologists began data recovery in the proposed footprint of the trail system and equipment staging area. Due to the discovery of extensive undisturbed archaeological deposits in 1997, and with overwhelming support from the community of Sitka, a 1998 field season was added. Excluding backhoe tests and excavations done in association with construction monitoring, a total of 172 square meters were excavated to an average depth of about 50

centimeters. This produced a collection of 19th century Russian-American artifacts unprecedented in size and diversity.

CHAPTER 2: ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

J. David McMahan

Location and Physiography

Sitka is located on the west coast of Baranof Island, one of the largest of the numerous islands that comprise the Alexander Archipelago of southeastern Alaska. Baranof Island extends some 105 miles between Peril Strait to the north and Christian Sound to the south. It is bordered on the east by Chatham Straight and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. Although Sitka is located on the outer coast, the community is sheltered from the direct impact of storms by Kruzof Island and several smaller islands to the north and west (Figure 2). These islands form the north and west sides of Sitka Sound.

Figure 2.1. An aerial view of Sitka, looking northwest, circa 1945-1955. Castle Hill is in the foreground at left. (Photo Shop Studio, Sitka. Photo postcard in the collection of Dave McMahan)

Physiographically, Baranof Island is within the Chilkat-Baranof Mountains Section of the Pacific Border Ranges Province (Wahrhaftig 1965:42). This province consists of several mountain ranges along the Pacific Coast, along with an adjacent coastal shelf. The Chilkat-Baranof Mountains Section, a highland of diversified topography, has been subdivided into four subsections: the Alsek Ranges, Glacier Bay, Chichagof Highland, and Baranof Mountains. Sitka is located in the Baranof Mountains subsection, a rugged asymmetric chain 3,000-5,300 feet in altitude, having a steep eastern slope and a more gentle southwest slope deeply indented by fiords (Wahrhaftig 1965:42). Drainage in this subsection is via short, swift streams that flow directly to the ocean. Indian River, which flows into Sitka Sound between Crescent and Jamestown Bays, drains a watershed of about 12.6 square miles (SNHP 1998:101). This small river, which

originates in the mountains of central Baranof Island, is the largest freshwater stream in the community of Sitka. Cirque glaciers and small icefields are located on mountains higher than 4,500 feet on Baranof Island. Permafrost is nonexistent.

Castle Hill, strategically overlooking Sitka Sound, has long been a defining landmark of the local landscape. This majestic 60-foot-high promontory is a rocky headland typical of the erosional landforms which characterize coastal southeast Alaska. Formed by differential weathering of geologic strata by wave action, it was once cut off from the mainland by the highest tides. Due to filling and parking lot construction around the base of the hill in the 1960s, and the construction of a towering bridge to Japonski Island around 1970, the hill has lost much of its dramatic appearance. However, it remains a popular overlook for viewing Sitka Sound and the town of Sitka (Figure 3).

Figure 2.2. A view of Castle Hill looking north, 1998.
(photo by McMahan)

Geology and Soils

Geological survey and mapping of northern Baranof Island in the early 1960s has provided baseline data on the type, age, and stratigraphy of rock formations in the vicinity of Sitka (Berg and Hinckley 1963; Loney, et. al. 1964). Such mapping is useful to archaeologists attempting to identify source materials available for tool manufacture by pre-contact inhabitants of the area. Geologic deposits in the region are believed, based on correlations with adjacent areas, to range in age from Paleozoic to Mesozoic (Berg and Hinckley 1963:01). The strata are tightly folded, intricately faulted, and regionally metamorphosed. Bedded gneiss and schist predominate along the shore of Peril Strait. Dark-green and dark-gray amphibole-rich rocks, interlayered with metachert and subordinate marble, form a northwest-trending belt about a mile wide along the southwest coast of Catherine Island, Dead Tree Island, and part of the southwest shore of Portage Arm (ibid:3-5). A geologic complex termed the Nakwasina Group, comprised primarily of metachert, volcanic rocks, and greenstone, outcrops along a portion of the

western shore of northern Baranof Island (ibid:6-9). Another geologic complex, termed the Kelp Bay Group, is widespread on northern Baranof Island, forming the shoreline from north of Rodman Bay to Kasnyku Bay and from Louise Cove to north of the mouth of St. John Baptist Bay (ibid:10). This group is mostly comprised of fine-grained thin- to medium-bedded rocks that include fissile quartzose greenschist and phyllite, graywacke, slate and sheared conglomerate, calcareous and quartzose slate with scattered lenses of metachert and volcanic rock, and granular moderately platy siliceous greenschist interbedded with jasper or slate and argillite lenses (ibid). Mesozoic age outcrops in the immediate vicinity of Sitka, probably including Castle Hill, have been termed the Sitka Group by Berg and Hinckley (1963:12-14). The Sitka group consists of a thick sequence of slate, graywacke, and conglomerate that crops out from Old Sitka (6 miles north of Sitka) southeastward to Silver Bay and makes up many of the smaller islands near Sitka. Principal rock types of this group are "thin- to medium-bedded interstratified graywacke and argillite and slaty argillite" (ibid:13). Conspicuous outcrops from Old Sitka to Sitka are comprised of beds of massive graywacke, conglomerate, and breccia as much as 50 feet thick. Overlying the Sitka Group on the south half of Kruzof Island are post-glacial basaltic and andesitic lava and pyroclastic debris from Mount Edgecumbe (ibid:14-15).

Overlying the bedrock on northern Baranof Island are unconsolidated deposits of alluvium, glacial debris, and volcanic ash. In Sitka, the Indian River delta and much of Sitka National Historical Park is comprised of alluvium that has been reworked by marine processes (SNHP 1998:100). Regional uplift has occurred over the last 9,000 years due to isostatic rebound, tectonic forces, and compression of crustal plates (ibid:100-101). This, coupled with local volcanic activity or earthquakes, has resulted in the uplift of the Indian River delta along with beaches, flood plains, and abandoned channels (Chaney, Betts, and Longenbaugh 1995). Land in the Sitka area is now rising at a rate of approximately 0.12 inches (0.3 cm) per year (SNHP 1998:101).

Soil development in southeast Alaska has been influenced by climate, topography, parent material, drainage, organisms, and time. They are typically classified as spodosols. Soils around Sitka have been classified by Rieger et al. (1979:152-154) as "typic cryohumods, loamy, hilly to steep humic cryorthods, very gravelly, hilly to steep." This soil association is found on steep hills in areas that are largely covered by volcanic ash from Mt. Edgecumbe (ibid). The ash is many feet thick in lower areas, where it overlies glacial till, but is thinner on higher slopes due to erosion. During the 1995 testing program on top of Castle Hill, stratified soils believed to be of volcanic origin were identified below cultural deposits. Soils on and around Castle Hill consist largely of organic-enriched cultural deposits. It appears that reworked cultural soils were moved from the slopes to the top of the hill during construction of the agricultural research building in 1898. In some areas, these overlie primary cultural deposits and preserved volcanic soils. Considerable variation occurs across the top of the hill, however, where cultural deposits rest directly on the high points of undulating bedrock in some locations. On the natural terrace near the southeast base of the hill, where intensive archaeological investigation occurred, highly organic cultural deposits were underlain directly by sterile gravels. These probably date from the end of the Pleistocene (*i.e.*, around 8,000 to 10,000 years ago), when sea levels ranged up to 15 meters higher along the Pacific Northwest coast than at present (Clague et al. 1982; Swanston 1967).

Vegetation

Baranof Island is within a Western hemlock – Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis – Tsuga heterophylla*) forest ecosystem (Viereck and Little 1972:detached map; Viereck and Dyrness 1980; Viereck, et al. 1982). This is the coastal temperate, closed-canopy rainforest that is typical of southeast Alaska. Understory components include: blueberry/huckleberry (*Vaccinium spp*.) thickets, devil's club (*Oplopanax horridum*), skunk cabbage (*Symplocarppus foetidus*), dwarf dogwood (*Cornus canadensis*), watermelon berry (*Streptopus amplexifolius*), and ferns. Disturbed areas support a dense growth of alder (*Alnus spp*.) and wild celery (*Heracleum lenatum*). A more complete list of understory plants is presented in Table 1. Due to extensive clearing and logging in the 19th and 20th centuries, few areas of old growth forest are preserved around Sitka. Some of the largest trees in the area are found in the northeast corner of Sitka National Historical Park, where scattered stumps provide evidence of only selective logging (SNHP 1998:103). Old growth characteristics in this area include multiple canopy layers, trees of varying diameters, dead standing trees, and woody debris (ibid). Because this area was once used as an artillery target range by the U.S. military, loggers may have avoided extensive timber harvest due to the potential for sawmill damage by the shrapnel said to be imbedded in the trees (Joe Ashby, personal communication 1997). Descriptions of the original old growth forest are provided in early 19th century descriptions by visitors to Sitka, such as the account which resulted from naturalist Baron von Kittlitz's 1827 visit:

> The woods consist for the most part of two kinds of stately spruce Pinus canadensis, L. [*i.e.*, Sitka Spruce, *Picea sitchensis*], and P. Mertensiana, Bongard [*i.e.*, Western Hemlock, *Tsuga heterophylla*]... Here and there in these swampy patches [at the base of Harbor Mountain] grow many of the well known North American tamarack (Pinus palustris) [spruce?], here a bit stunted; whereas the forest proper looms very high, giving the town's surroundings a magnificent wild appearance... A very typical characteristic of the trees here is their inclination to grow like parasites on their own kind. The forest floor was covered all over with more or less well preserved logs and roots of trees, some of which had fallen over a long time before, on which grew not only shrub like Baccinia and high, very picturesque tussocks, but also numerous young seedlings of the forest trees in lush abundance. Obviously the remains of the former trees had long since turned into fertile earth and housed the roots of tall younger trees even though they themselves were still covered by bark and retained their outer layer – altered little or not at all. Lush carpets of moss and various lichen covered the earth formed from such remains, which were profusely covered in shady places by white flowers marked purple-black on the inside, probably Corvus canadensis or C. Succica [*i.e.*, dwarf dogwood, *Cornus canadensis*]. Many carmine-red flowers of the salmonberry (Rubus spectabilis), whose fruit we saw ripening later in July, were still in bloom [Kittlitz 1987:131-132].

The present second growth forests around Sitka are the product of extensive logging throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Even by 1827, Kittlitz (1987:132) noted that the

Table 2.1. Common understory plants of Alaskan hemlock-spruce forests.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Fir Clubmoss	*Lycopodium selago* L.
Stiff Clubmoss	*Lycopodium annotinum* L.
Deerfern	*Blechnum spicant* (L.) Roth
Maidenhair Fern	*Adiantum pedatum* L.
Bracken	*Pteridium aquilinum* (L.) Kuhn
Spreading Woodfern	*Dryopteris dilatata* (Hoffm.) Gray
Oakfern	*Gymnocarpium dryopteris* (L.) Newm.
Beechfern	*Thelypteris phegopteris* (L.) Slosson
Swordfern	*Polystichum munitum* (Kaulf.) Presl.
Salmonberry	*Rubus spectabilis* Pursh
Pacific Red Elder	*Sambucus callicarpa* Greene
Devilsclub	*Oplopanax horridus* (Sm.) Miq.
High Bush Cranberry	*Viburnum edule* (Michx.) Raf.
Rusty Menziesia	*Menziesiaa ferruginea* Sm.
Red Huckleberry	*Vaccinium parvifolium* Sm.
Alaska Blueberry	*Vaccinium alaskensis* Howell
Early Blueberry	*Vaccinium ovalifolium* Sm.
Salal	*Gaultheria shallon* Pursh
Stink Currant	*Ribes bracteosum* Dougl.
Trailing Black Currant	*Ribes laxiflorum* Pursh
Five-leaf Bramble	*Rubus pedatus* Sm.
Fernleaf Goldthread	*Coptis asplenifolia* Salisb.
Laceflower	*Tiarella trifoliata* L.
Baneberry	*Actaea rubra* (Ait.) Willd
Yellow Skunkcabbage	*Lysichitum americanum* Hult./St. John
Deerberry	*Maianthemum dilatatum* (Wood) Nels./Macbr.
False Hellebore	*Veratrum viride* Ait. subsp. *eschscholtzii* (Gray) Love/Love
Kruhsea	*Streptopus streptopoides* (Ledeb.) Frye/Rigg
Simple-stemmed Twistedstalk	*Streptopus roseus* Michx. subsp. *curvipes* (Vail) Hult.
Clasping Twistedstalk	*Streptopus amplexifolius* (L.) DC
Heartleaf Twayblade	*Listera cordata* (L.) R. Br.
Menzies Rattlesnake Plantain	*Goodyera oblongifolia* Raf.
Single Delight	*Moneses uniflora* (L.) Gray
One-sided Wintergreen	*Pyrola secunda* L.
Liverleaf Wintergreen	*Pyrola asarifolia* Michx.
Greenishflower Wintergreen	*Pyrola chlorantha* Sw.
Arctic Starflower	*Trientalis europaea* L.
Bunchberry	*Cornus canadensis* L.
Sugarscoop	*Tiarella unifoliata* Hook
Alaska Violet	*Viola langsdorffii* Fisch
Stream Violet	*Viola glabella* Nutt.

[1] Adapted from Robuck (1977).

best trees had been "felled long ago for building purposes." Following the founding of New Archangel, Baranov attempted to burn the surrounding forests which provided ambush locations for the Tlingit, but his efforts were largely unsuccessful due to the dampness (Litke 1987:45). Extensive timber harvest for buildings, ships, firewood, and charcoal continued throughout the Russian occupancy of Sitka. Rakestraw (1981:4), in writing a history of the U.S. Forest Service in Alaska, noted that yellow-cedar (*Chamaecypari nootkatensis*) was depleted around Sitka, but that impacts to Alaska

forests in general were insignificant. The most significant impacts to old growth forests around Sitka occurred with the development of technology which allowed widespread clear-cutting, the development of logging into a major regional industry, and the construction of a large sawmill and pulp mill at Sitka during the 1950s.

Fauna

Important terrestrial mammals of the Coastal Western Hemlock–Sitka Spruce forest community include masked shrew, dusky shrew, little brown bat, red squirrel, northern flying squirrel, deer mouse, red-backed vole, long-tailed vole, porcupine, gray wolf, black bear, brown bear, pine marten, ermine, wolverine, lynx, Sitka black-tailed deer, and mountain goat (Selkregg 1976:128). Important species of the freshwater community include water shrew, beaver, northern bog lemming, tundra vole, muskrat, mink, and river otter (Selkregg 1976:138). Major marine mammal species in Sitka Sound include harbor seal, sea otter, sea lion, and several species of whale (Selkregg 1976:134, Figure 130). A more complete list of marine species in the southeast Alaska region is presented in Table 2. Birds associated with southeast Alaska coastal forests include goshawk, sharp-shinned hawk, bald eagle, blue grouse, great horned owl, rufous hummingbird, hairy woodpecker, downy woodpecker, western flycatcher, Steller's jay, common raven, chestnut-backed chickadee, winter wren, varied thrush, hermit thrush, golden-crowned kinglet, ruby-crowned kinglet, Townsend's warbler, pine grosbeak, and pine siskin (Selkregg 1976:128). Several high density areas for waterfowl occur within Sitka Sound (Selkregg 1976:134, Figure 130). The numerous waterfowl species are included in Table 2. Saltwater and anadromous fish of the region include walleye pollock, Pacific cod, sablefish, Pacific pomfret, Pacific herring, albacore, sockeye (red) salmon, coho (silver) salmon, chinook (king) salmon, chum (dog) salmon, pink (humpback) salmon, steelhead trout, black rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, eulachon, sculpins, halibut and other flatfishes, and salmon shark (Selkregg 1976:136). Freshwater fish (excluding the anadromous fish reported above) include cutthroat trout, rainbow/steelhead trout, dolly varden char, sculpins, and northern pike (Selkregg 1976:138). Locally, pink and chum salmon spawn in the intertidal and lower floodplain portions of Indian River from mid-July through September, while coho salmon, steelhead trout, and dolly varden char migrate upstream (SNHP 1998:104).

It was the abundance of fur-bearing mammals, particularly the large sea otter populations, which prompted Russian exploration and settlement along the North Pacific coast. Shortly after the founding of New Archangel, Langsdorff (1993:57-61) described some of the more important land mammals, sea mammals, birds, and marine resources of the region:

> Mammals found here include whales, seals, sea lions, sea, marsh, and river otters, brown and black bears. The latter I have never had an opportunity to examine closely. On account of the size and the nature of the fur I have often seen, I have concluded that the American black bear must be a very different species from the brown bear ...
> Individual birds belonging to this species of beautiful, white-headed, white-tailed eagles can be seen here almost the entire year... Their meat is edible.

Table 2.2. Marine species of the southeast Alaska region.

Important Animals of the Marine Community

Invertebrates

Bacteria	*Schizomycetes* (Phylum)
Sponges	*Porifera* (Phylum)
Protozoa	*Foraminiferida* (Order)
	Radiolaria (Subclass)
Jellyfish	*Scyphozoa* (Class)
Sea anemones	*Anthozoa* (Class)
Marine worms	*Polychaeta* (Class)
Arrowworms	*Chaetognatha* (Phylum)
Comb jellies	*Ctenophora* (Phylum)
Shrimps	*Pandalus* and *Pandalopsis* sp.
Dungeness crab	*Cancer magister*
King crab	*Paralithodes camtschatica*
Tanner crab	*Chionoecetes bairdi*
Other crabs	*Decapoda* (Order)
Barnacles	*Cirripedia* (Subclass)
Other crustaceans	*Copepoda* (Subclass)
	Mysidacea (Order)
	Euphausiacea (Order)
	Amphipoda (Order)
Butter clams	*Saxidomus giganteus*
Other clams	*Pelecypoda* (Class)
Weathervane scallop	*Patinopectin caurinus*
Snails	*Gastropoda* (Class)
Chitons	*Amphineura* (Class)
Sea stars	*Asteroidea* (Class)
Brittle stars	*Ophiuroidea* (Class)
Sea urchins	*Echinoidea* (Class)
Sea cucumbers	*Holothuroidea* (Class)
Tunicates	*Urochordata* (Subphylum)

Fish

Walleye pollock	*Theragra chalcogramma*
Pacific cod	*Gadus macrocephalus*
Sablefish	*Anoplopoma fimbria*
Pacific pomfret	*Brama japonica*
Pacific herring	*Clupea pallasi*
Albacore	*Thunnus alalunga*
Sockeye (red) salmon	*Oncorhynchus nerka*
Coho (silver) salmon	*O. kisutch*
Chinook (king) salmon	*O. tshawytscha*
Chum (dog) salmon	*O. keta*
Pink (humpback) salmon	*O. gorbuscha*
Steelhead trout	*Salmo gairdneri*
Black rockfish	*Sebastes melanops*
Pacific Ocean perch	*S. alutus*
Eulachon	*Thaleichthys pacificus*
Sculpins	*Cottidae* (Family)
Halibut	*Hippoglossus stenolepis*
Other flatfishes	*Pleuronectidae* (Family)
Salmon shark	*Lamna ditropis*

From Selkregg (1976:134, Figure 130)

Birds*

Arctic loon	*Gavia arctica*
Red-throated loon	*G. stellata*
Red-necked grebe	*Podiceps grisegena*
Horned grebe	*P. auritus*
Black-footed albatross	*Diomedea nigripes*
Northern fulmar	*Fulmarus glacialis*
Sooty shearwater	*Puffinus griseus*
Short-tailed shearwater	*P. tenuirostris*
Fork-tailed storm-petrel	*Oceanodroma furcata*
Leach's storm-petrel	*O. leucorhoa*
Double-crested cormorant	*Phalacrocorax auritus*
Pelagic cormorant	*P. pelagicus*
Whistling swan	*Olor columbianus*
Canada goose	*Branta canadensis*
Black brant	*B. nigricans*
Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*
Pintail	*A. acuta*
American wigeon	*A. americana*
Greater scaup	*Aythya marila*
Bufflehead	*Bucephala albeola*
Common goldeneye	*Bucephala clangula*
Harlequin duck	*Histrionicus histrionicus*
White-winged scoter	*Melanitta deglandi*
Surf scoter	*M. perspicata*
Red-breasted merganser	*Mergus serrator*
Bald eagle	*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*
Peregrine falcon	*Falco peregrinus*
Shorebirds	*Charadrius* spp.
	Limnodromus spp.
	Arenaria spp.
	Calidris spp.
Northern phalarope	*Lobipes lobatus*
Parasitic jaeger	*Stercorarius parasiticus*
Pomarine jaeger	*S. pomarinus*
Long-tailed jaeger	*S. longicaudus*
Glaucous-winged gull	*Larus glaucescens*
Herring gull	*L. argentatus*
Mew gull	*L. canus*
Black-legged kittiwake	*Rissa tridactyla*
Bonaparte's gull	*Larus philadelphius*
Common murre	*Uria aalge*
Thick-billed murre	*U. lomvia*
Pigeon guillemot	*Cepphus columbus*
Horned puffin	*Fratercula corniculata*
Tufted Puffin	*Lunda cirrhata*
Rhinocerous auklet	*Cerorhynca monocerata*
Cassin's auklet	*Ptychoramphus aleuticus*
Marbled murrelet	*Brachyrhamphus marmoratus*
Ancient murrelet	*Synthliboramphus antiquus*
Parakeet auklet	*Cyclorrhynchus psittacula*

*Many of these species, particularly waterfowl and shorebirds, may be found associated with fresh water.

Mammals

Steller sea lion	*Eumetopias jubatus*
Pacific harbor seal	*Phoca vitulina richardii*
Black right whale	*Balaena glacialis*
Gray whale	*Eschtrichtius robustus*
Minke whale	*Balaenoptera acutirostrata*
Sei whale	*B. borealis*
Blue whale	*B. musculus*
Fin whale	*B. physalus*
Right whale dolphin	*Lissodelphis borealis*
Humpback whale	*Megaptera novaeangliae*
Common pilot whale	*Globicephala melaena*
Killer whale	*Orcinus orca*
Harbor porpoise	*Phocoena phocoena*
Dall porpoise	*Phocoenoides dalli*
Sea otter	*Enhydra lutra*

> The Russians, in the first year after their arrival, here killed and ate two hundred of them. I have often stilled my hunger with their meat and found it tasty. The intestines have to be carefully removed. The liver is said to be very harmful, indeed, even poisonous [Langsdorff 1993:57-60].

The naturalist von Kittlitz (1987:132-148), who visited Sitka in 1827, also described the birds and fish of the region in some detail. By that time, he reports that the economically important sea otter was already disappearing due to harvesting for trade (ibid:145).

CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

J. David McMahan

Prehistory

Much of the outer Northwest Coast was entirely ice-free and habitable 12,000 to 13,000 years ago, although local events influenced the extent, intensity, and time of occupation (Mathews 1979; Fladmark 1982). The earliest known sites in the region coincide with a general warming trend accompanied by resultant vegetation changes, local glacial events, and receding sea levels at the close of the Pleistocene. However, most research in the region has focused on sites associated with the modern sea level and dating within the last 5,000 years. Because few prehistoric archaeological sites in the immediate vicinity of Sitka have been intensively investigated, the local cultural sequence is best understood in the context of studies elsewhere in southeast Alaska and adjacent British Columbia. Stanley Davis (1990:197), who conducted substantial work at the Hidden Falls site on the opposite side of Baranof Island, has proposed the following chronological cultural sequence for the region: (1) the Paleomarine tradition, 9000-4500 BC; a transitional stage dating 4500-3000 BC; the Developmental Northwest Coast stage, divided into an early phase 3000-1000 BC, middle phase, 1000 BC – AD 1000, and late phase, AD 1000 to European contact; and the Historic period. This scheme parallels the two-stage sequence developed by Knut Fladmark (1982) for the Northwest Coast Culture area, based primarily on work in British Columbia. Fladmark's model consists of (1) a Lithic Stage comprised of an Early Lithic Substage (prior to about 10,000 years ago) and a Late Lithic Substage (10,000 to 5,500 years ago), differentiated primarily by the presence of microblades in the latter; and (2) a Developmental Stage which gave rise to the indigenous Northwest Coast societies which are known ethnographically. The Developmental Stage is characterized by "increased artifact diversification, the appearance of specialized fishing and sea-mammal hunting technology, woodworking, large houses, wealth-status objects, art, and large population aggregates" (Fladmark 1982:110). More recently, broader issues of northern Northwest Coast culture history have been addressed by Kenneth Ames, Jon Erlandson, Herbert Maschner, and Madonna Moss (Ames and Maschner 1999; Erlandson and Moss 1996; Maschner 1992; Moss 1998a, 1998b, 1992, 1989; Moss and Erlandson 1998, 1995, 1992). The summaries which follow are largely derived from Madonna Moss' (1998a) recent northern Northwest Coast regional overview, which divides the prehistoric cultural sequence into three periods. The summaries also draw heavily from Stan Davis' descriptions of sites

and associated industries reported in the Handbook of North American Indians (Davis 1990).

The Early Period (ca. 10,000-7,000 BP):

The earliest dated sites in southeastern Alaska include: Ground Hog Bay 2, on the point of the mainland between Icy Strait and Lynn Canal (Ackerman 1968, 1974, 1980; Ackerman et al. 1979); Hidden Falls, on the inner central coast of Baranof Island (Davis 1984, 1980, 1979); Chuck Lake, on Heceta Island (Ackerman et al. 1985; Ackerman 1988); and Thorne River, Prince of Wales Island (Holmes et al. 1989). The earliest known archaeological components in the region, termed "Paleomarine tradition" by Davis (1984, 1980), are characterized by a well-developed microblade industry with wedge-shaped cores, few if any bifacial artifacts, and an economic pattern based on coastal marine subsistence (Davis 1990:197). Despite morphological variations, these earliest southeastern Alaska assemblages share attributes with similar-aged components in coastal and interior Alaska outside the region, suggesting a common origin in northeast Asia (Moss 1998a:100). Of recent interest is On-Your-Knees Cave, Prince of Wales Island, which has produced the oldest human bones from Alaska and some of the oldest in the U.S., approaching 10,000 BP (Dixon et al. 1997). Due to the paucity of northern Northwest Coast sites dating between 6500 BP and 5000 BP, the transition between the Early and Middle periods is poorly understood. Emerging data, however, suggest the continuation of a mid-Holocene microblade tradition in the absence of a ground slate industry (Moss 1998a:100).

The Middle Period (ca. 5000-1500 BP):

Moss' (1998a:100) Middle Period generally corresponds to the three-part Developmental Stage originally defined by Fladmark (1982) for the Northwest Coast, and to the Early and Middle phases of Davis (1990) Developmental Northwest Coast Stage for southeast Alaska. This period is best represented by Components II and III from the Hidden Falls site, but is also known from several large assemblages from other sites in the region. A number of sites in southeast Alaska have occupations that span both the Middle and Late periods, suggesting cultural continuity (Moss 1998a:100). A major technological change during this period was the innovation of wood stake fishing weirs for mass salmon harvest, some with dates older than 3000 years (Moss 1998a:100; Moss and Erlandson 1998). The artifact assemblage from Component II at Hidden Falls, representing the early Middle Period, includes "ground stone points, ground single-edge tools, small planing adzes, abraders, unilaterally barbed bone point fragments, labrets, beads, ribbed stone, and utilized flakes" (Davis 1990:199). There was a notable absence of bifaces, burins, flaked stone points, and a microblade industry (Davis 1990:199). Faunal remains associated with the Component II occupation included dog, deer, sea mammals, and anadromous and marine fish (Davis 1984). Component III at Hidden Falls is representative of the later part of Moss' (1998a:101) Middle Period (*i.e.*, the Middle Phase of Davis' Developmental Northwest Coast Stage). In addition to the artifact types found in Component II, the Component III assemblage included unilaterally barbed bone points without lashing spurs or holes, gravers, bone tubes, incised bone and stone, and drilled mammal teeth (Davis 1990:200). Present in Component III were extensive shell

deposits, fire hearth areas, and evidence of structures. Faunal analysis suggested a winter-spring occupation (Davis 1990:200).

The Late Period (post-1500 BP):

The Late Period (Moss 1998a:101) provides cultural continuity between the preceding Middle Period and the following historic period. It corresponds to the Late Phase of Davis' (1990:200-202) Developmental Northwest Coast Stage. The Late Period, primarily associated with Tlingit place names, is best known from de Laguna's work at *Daax Haat Kanadaa* and Old Town, and Ackerman's work at Grouse Fort (Moss 1998a:101). Moss and Erlandson (1992) have documented numerous defensive sites which date primarily from the last 1000 years, including *Noow Tlein* (Castle Hill). The large number of sites from the Late Period suggest that "the population of the northern Northwest Coast was as large during the Late Period as at any time in prehistory (Moss 1998a:103). There is evidence that this population growth was accompanied by increased raiding and warfare that might be explained by "territorial circumscription, scalar stress, and potentially Neoglacial conditions" (Moss and Erlandson 1992), and by the introduction of the bow and arrow (Maschner 1992). Based on the excavation of eight sites on Kuiu Island, Maschner has proposed that villages did not appear until the Late Period.

Davis (1990:200) associates the Late Period with a transition to larger structures believed to be an indication of winter villages, as well as defensive sites. Artifact assemblages retained many elements of the preceding period, including ground stone technology, bone technology, labrets, chisels, splitting and planing adzes, and some chipped stone (Davis 1990:200). New elements include copper tools, stone bowls and lamps, harpoons with lashing holes, the increased use of obsidian for chipped stone tools, and the introduction of drift iron for tool manufacturing during protohistoric times (Davis 1990:200).

Historical Overview of Russian-America

The conquest of Siberia by Russian cossacks in the late 16th century opened the way for exploration and expansion into North America. The Pacific port of Okhotsk, established in 1649, became an important staging area for 17th and 18th century expeditions. At the beginning of the 18th century, the Russians began exploration and occupation of the newly discovered Kurile Islands to the south. By the mid-18th century, Russian fur traders began to explore eastward along the Commander and Aleutian Island chain. These Russian fur trappers or *promyshlenniki* reached destinations progressively farther east as they searched for furs. The 1732 voyage of Gvozdev and Fedorov marks the first sighting of the northwest coast of America, and the first contact with Native Americans there (Smith 2000). Vitus Bering, however, is given credit as the first European to make landfall on American soil in 1741. The Russians established a settlement at Unalaska around 1770. In 1784, Siberian merchant Grigorii Shelikhov established the settlement of Three Saints on Kodiak Island. From this settlement, he launched exploratory expeditions around Kodiak and the adjacent Alaska mainland. Through force and taking hostages, he eventually subjugated many of the coastal Native groups he contacted. Aleksandr Baranov, who served as Chief Manager of Russia's North American settlements from 1790 to 1818, is credited with much of the success of these early commercial activities in Alaska. After Shelikhov's death in 1795,

Baranov continued exploration and expansion into new coastal areas. A hallmark of Russia's operations in North America occurred in 1799, when Paul I granted the newly formed RAC a monopoly over hunting and mining on the coast of North America, the Aleutians, and the Kuriles.

Sitka's Contact History

At the time of first European contact in the Sitka area around 1795, *Noow Tlein* (Castle Hill) was occupied by the Kiks.ádi clan of the Tlingit. The rocky 60-foot-high promontory at the edge of Sitka Harbor was surrounded by water on three sides and was cut off from the mainland at high tide. In the 1960s fill was placed around the base of the hill, resulting in its present appearance.

Tlingit oral history states that four Kiks.ádi clan houses were located on the hill. Representing the major clans, these were "On-the-Point House," "Inside-the-Fort House (Nu-to-hit)," "Herring Flutter House (Yah-ooo-hit)," and "Sun House (Gagan-hit)" (Andrews 1960:24). The houses on top of the hill, due to limited ground area on the promontory for large residential structures, likely represented ownership of the area by the Kiks.ádi clan (Hall 1997). Andrew Hope of the Sitka Kiks.ádi's Point House, in relating the story an elder told to him, states that there were four "communal" houses on top of the hill and a fifth house on a natural bench toward Indian River. He stated that other houses were located "across from the cold storage (Hope 1967).

The hill, with its commanding view of Sitka Sound, was the major defining characteristic of *Noow Tlein*, translated "big fort" (Moss and Erlandson 1992: Table 2). The site has been described as a "rocky prominence on which the Sitkas [Sitka Tlingit] had a small redoubt" (Hopkins 1959; Andrews 1960:24) and as "a fort [that] belonged to the Kiks.ádi clan" (Sealaska 1975:386-387). *Noow Tlein* is typical of the Tlingit defensive positions described by George Emmons in the 1880s and 1890s:

> Generally, villages were unprotected, and natural defense positions on bluff headlands or rocky islands near at hand were fortified, to which inhabitants might flee in time of danger... Ordinarily the forts of this people were smaller affairs not surrounding the village, but near at hand, on some rocky island or precipice headland and belonging to a single family, when they might find refuge upon a sudden attack, for the strategy of coast warfare consisted of surprise attacks... and rapid retreats, so their strongholds were not calculated to stand sieges, and were but temporarily occupied when necessity might require [manuscript of George T. Emmons, quoted by Moss and Erlandson 1992:5-6].

During the 1998 excavations at Castle Hill, a stratified midden (refuse) deposit was discovered on the northeast side of the hill, perhaps associated with the "the natural bench towards Indian River" as referenced above (Hope 1967). Samples of charcoal from the midden produced C-14 dates of 460 +/- 60 BP, 640 +/- 50 BP, and 1070 +/- 60 BP. This confirms oral tradition of a long occupation at the site by Sitka Tlingit prior to the establishment of the Russian settlement.

Founding and Destruction of St. Archangel Mikhail (Old Sitka)

Due to its strategic position, *Noow Tlein* was the first choice for a redoubt location when Aleksandr Baranov, Chief Manager of the Shelikhov Golikov Company, came to Sitka in September 1799 to establish a settlement (Bancroft 1959:429; Lisiansky 1814:155; Tikhmenev 1978:75). Baranov had constructed the *Novorossiisk* settlement at Yakutat Bay in 1796, but found that the year-round ice free harbor and other conveniences of Sitka offered a better location for a Russian settlement (Tikhmenev 1978:43, 61). Because the hill at *Noow Tlein* was already occupied by the Kiks.ádi, Baranov negotiated for land six miles to the north on which to build a fort (Bancroft 1959:387-388; Khlebnikov 1994:1). The settlement constructed there during 1799-1800 was named for the St. Archangel Mikhail (Bancroft 1959:390; Khlebnikov 1994:3). After Baranov returned to Kodiak in the autumn of 1800, relationships deteriorated between the Sitka Tlingit and the Russians at the Archangel settlement, apparently encouraged by English and American traders (Bancroft 1959:397, 401). During the summer of 1802, the Sitka Tlingit attacked and burned St. Archangel Mikhail, killing 20 Russians and 130 Aleuts (Tikhmenev 1978:65). The English ship *Union*, commanded by Captain Henry Barber, rescued several survivors and transported them to Kodiak (Tikhmenev 1978:65), where they gave detailed (albeit slightly conflicting) accounts of the incident (Pierce and Donnelly 1979:134-139; Bancroft 1959:401-420). Kiks.ádi oral history related by Herb Hope states that the attack was a concerted effort of several villages (Houston and Cochrane 1992:3). The location of St. Archangel Mikhail, called Old Sitka after its abandonment, is presently a state park. Archaeological excavations there during 1934-35 by the U.S. Forest Service produced an assortment of Native and Russian artifacts, the most notable of which is the only surviving cast metal plaque marking Russian possession (Barnett and Schumacher 1967; SNHP 1998:97).

The 1804 Battle of Sitka

Baranov, determined to reestablish a Russian fort at Sitka, returned to the area in September 1804 with several vessels and a large force of Aleuts. Landing near *Noow Tlein*, he occupied the hill without hostilities. He then met with a group of Tlingit from whom he demanded permanent possession of the bluff (*i.e.*, Castle Hill) and two additional hostages (Bancroft 1959:429; Lisiansky 1814:155-157). The Tlingit did not consent to Baranov's demands. Instead they rejoined other members of the village who had already moved to a fort which they had recently constructed about a mile to the east, a location that is presently within Sitka National Historic Park. This location was better protected from cannon bombardment than *Noow Tlein*, as shallow waters prevented ships from approaching near shore. Assisted by Captain Iurii Fedorovich Lisiansky on the sloop *Neva*, the Russians attacked the Tlingit fort around the first of October [reported dates vary] (Bancroft 1959:429; Langsdorff 1993:46; Khlebnikov 1994:4; Lisiansky 1814:157). After several days of fighting, the Tlingit abandoned the fort and walked overland, settling in several locations before constructing a fort in the Peril Straits area (Andrews 1960:6; Houston and Cochrane 1992:7; Jacobs 1987:7). This overland journey, called the "Sitka Kiks.ádi Survival March," was described to Houston and Cochrane (1992:6-8) by Herb Hope. Unlike the 1802 attack which involved several villages, the 1804 battle was limited to the Kiks.ádi (Houston and Cochrane 1992:3). Numerous, and sometimes conflicting, accounts of the 1804 battle have been published or passed down through oral history. Nora and

Richard Dauenhauer (1990:6-23) summarized various accounts of both the 1802 and 1804 battles at the 2nd International Conference on Russian America. A detailed analysis of documents relating to the battle is beyond the scope of this research.

Castle Hill: 1805 to 1817

Immediately upon arriving in Sitka in the fall of 1804, Baranov began constructing a fortified settlement on the hill at the former *Noow Tlein* village site. The Russian settlement was named *Novo-Arkhangel'sk* (New Archangel) to commemorate the St. Archangel Mikhail fort. John D'Wolfe (1968:37-38), an American sea captain who spent the winter of 1804-1805 at New Archangel (Sitka), described the location as "a singular round piece of land with a flat top, standing out in the sea, and bearing the appearance of a work of human hands." Lisiansky described the settlement when he returned in June 1805:

> The next morning I went on shore, and was surprised to see how much the new settlement was improved. By the active superintendence of Mr. Baranoff, eight very fine buildings were finished, and ground enough in a state of cultivation for fifteen kitchen-gardens [Lisiansky 1814:218].

Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov, a founder and board member of the Russian-American Company, arrived at the new settlement on August 26, 1805, where he found "numerous log buildings with stone foundations" (Pierce 1990:419; Tikhmenev 1978:89). In a letter to the Directors of the Russian-American Company dated November 6, 1805, Rezanov presented a detailed description of New Archangel:

> There is a lighthouse on one of the islands... The fort is placed on a high rocky promontory, or *kekur*, extending out into the bay. On the left, half way up the hill, stand enormous barracks with two sentry boxes or turrets for defense purposes. Almost the whole building is built of wood good enough for shipbuilding, on a foundation of logs and cobblestones, with cellars. The building is on a slope and the foundation reaches the water. Close to the barracks is a building containing two stores, a warehouse and two cellars. Next to it is a big shed (*balagan*) for storing food supplies, built on posts, and under it a workshop. Facing the fort and next to this shed is a goodsized warehouse (*sarai*) and a store connected with it built of logs and facing the sea. The wharf is between this warehouse and the fort. To the right, at the foot of the mountain, is a building containing a kitchen, a bath and several rooms for company employees. A big log blacksmith shop nine sazhens long [1 sazhen = 2.13 m or 7 ft.] and five wide is built in three sections on the shore. In the middle section are three forges, in the other two sections -- work shops. Then comes the barn for the cattle. On the hillside above these buildings is another bathhouse. Beneath the fort there is one more bathhouse, with a room. On the hill is a temporary log house five sazhens long and three wide with two rooms and a porch. I have one of these rooms and the two ship apprentices the other. I have enumerated to you many buildings but the men were living in tents till the first part of October. As soon as a roof is placed on a building, they move right in. There are some broken down Kolosh yurts in which live the native workers and Kadiak Americans [Rezanov 1805, in Pierce and Donnelly 1979:153-154].

The physician and natural scientist Georg Heinrich Langsdorff, who accompanied Rezanov, also illustrated (Figures 4 and 5) and described the infant settlement :

> The citadel hill had been fortified with cannon. Several Company ships armed with cannon lay at anchor and regular watch was kept day and night... Quarters were, for the most part unfinished and consisted of small rooms without stoves. Their roofs were so bad that the frequent rains continually penetrated them. All of the promyshlenniks had to work every day on the construction of the barracks, warehouse and other quarters that were so desperately needed... Altogether there were almost two hundred people at the settlement, including overseers and assistant overseers, naval officers, master shipwrights, promyshlenniks and Aleuts [Langsdorffff 1993:48].

Baranov and Lisiansky are reported to have made a treaty with a Tlingit envoy in August 1805, after which the chief was presented with a token of friendship consisting of "a staff on which were the Russian arms, wrought in copper, decorated with ribbons and eagle down" (Bancroft 1959:438-439). Lisiansky (1814:221-225) reported that the negotiations took place in Baranov's house, and that pewter medals were also distributed. No Russian accounts which describe the terms of the treaty have been located (Bancroft 1959:439, footnote 29). Tlingit accounts of the treaty have been presented by Alex Andrews and Mark Jacobs, Jr. In a transcribed interview, Alex Andrews (1960:6-7) explained that the Indians did not know the value of the plaque presented by the Russians, and it was believed to be a retribution or atonement for the dead. He further stated that Baranov came to Peril Straights to negotiate the treaty.

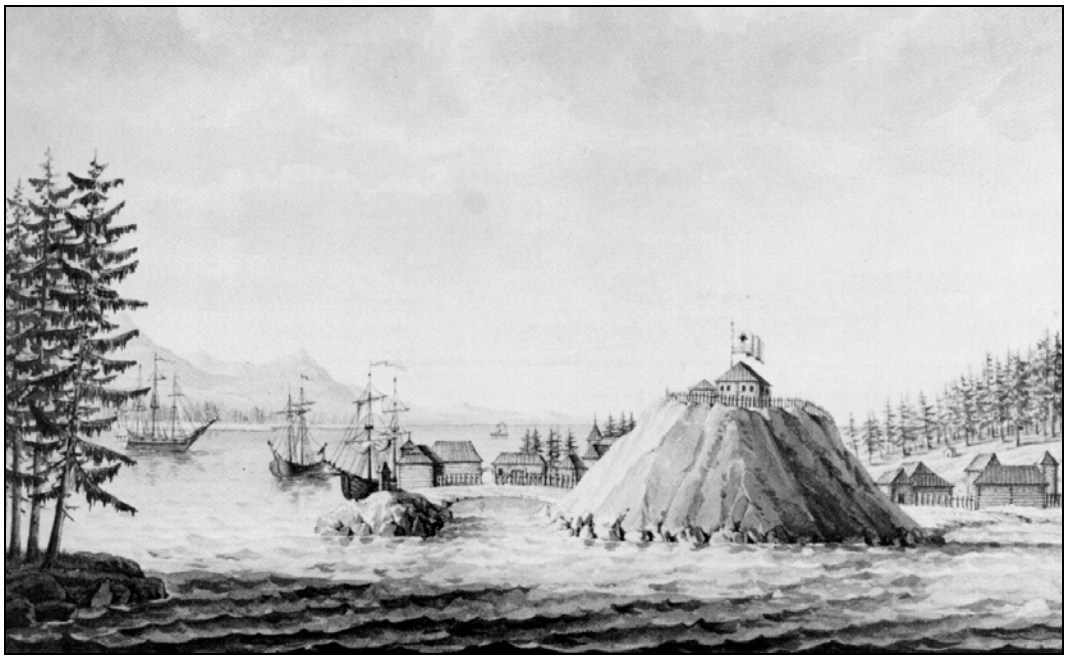

Figure 3.1. "View of the Establishment at Norfolk Sound," 1805-06 (from a watercolor by G.H. von Langsdorff)

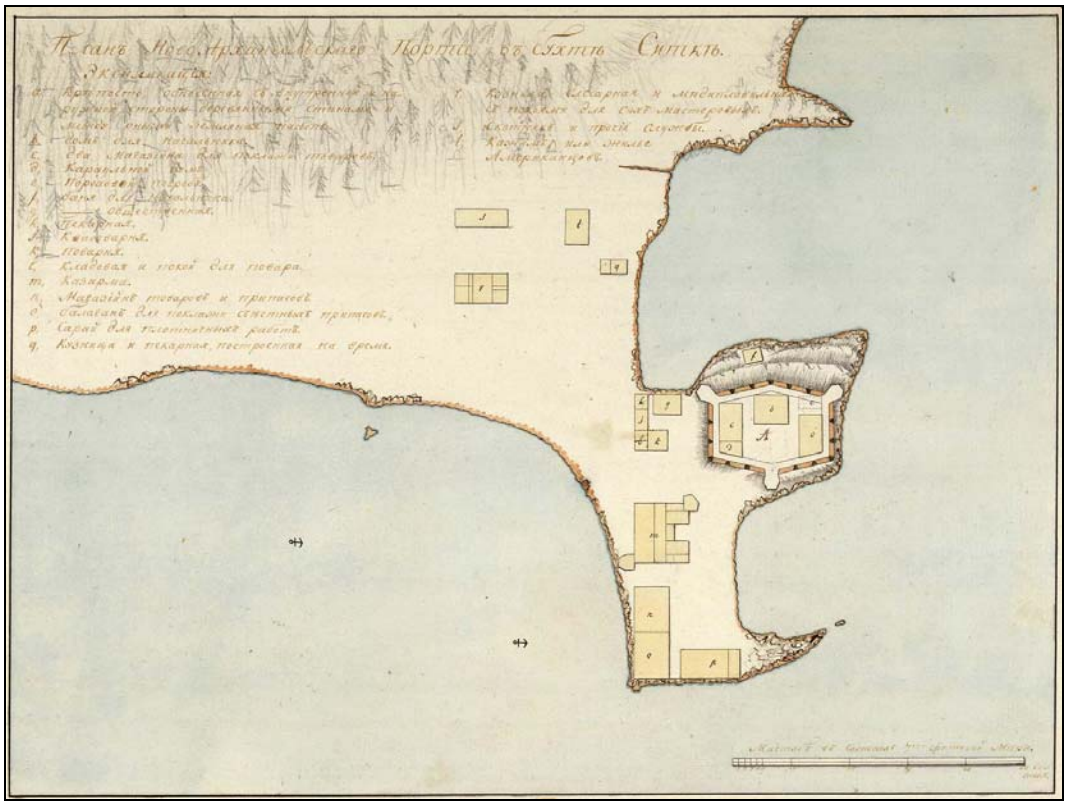

Figure 3.2. A plan of New Archangel, 1805-06. The "commander's bathhouse" (f) is in the vicinity of 1997-98 archaeological excavations (watercolor by G.H. von Langsdorff, California Digital Library).

Mark Jacobs account of the treaty was related in a speech at the Second Russian-American Conference in 1987:

> It was finally decided by the Kiks Adi's to return and sit down for the peace talks. It was at this peace treaty that the present Castle Hill was given to Baranov in exchange for a double-headed eagle badge, which is depicted on the totem pole [in Totem Square, Sitka]. It was explained to mean, "From now on and forever, we will be brothers. You look one way and we the other way." The round knob on the bottom of the totem pole represents Castle Hill. The only piece of real estate ever given to the Russians [emphasis in original document]... The double-headed eagle badge, received from the peace talks, is now in the State of Alaska Museum in Juneau [Jacobs 1987:9].

Despite peace negotiations with the Kiks.ádi, tensions remained between the Russians and the Tlingit of southeast Alaska in general. This culminated in the destruction of the Yakutat settlement in September 1805 (Bancroft 1959:45). The years following the founding of New Archangel were difficult for the settlement's inhabitants. A well-founded fear of the Tlingit prompted the Russians to adhere to military discipline, with cannon always loaded and sentries posted (Bancroft 1959:451; Pierce and Donnelly 1979:157). The settlement was impoverished due to difficulties in obtaining supplies, a shortage of vessels, and an unsuccessful trade in sea otter skins (Bancroft 1959:450; D'Wolfe 1968:39;

Khlebnikov 1994:7). The shortage of supplies would have been more profound if foreign ships had not, after the spring of 1805, began to frequently sail into New Archangel (Khlebnikov 1994:13, 19). Despite the difficulties mentioned above, New Archangel became the seat of the Chief Manager and the center of Russian possessions in America in August 1808 (Fedorova 1973:134). Baranov remained Chief Manager of the Russian-American Company until 1818. Advanced age, failing health, and unfounded charges of mismanagement of company affairs had prompted an investigation by Captain-Lieutenant and Cavalier L.A. Hagemeister (Khlebnikov 1994:26; Tikhmenev 1978:155-157). By authority of the Russian-American Company, Hagemeister took over command of the Russian-American colonies in January 1818, appointing K.T. Khlebnikov office manager at Sitka. In July of the same year Hagemeister made a trip to California for supplies, and placed Lieutenant S.I. Ianovskii in charge of the colony. Hagemeister returned from California to Sitka in the autumn of 1818, and in November departed for Russia.

Castle Hill: 1817 to 1836

Baranov departed New Archangel for Russia on Hagemeister's vessel in November 1818, after paying a farewell visit to the colony at Kodiak (Bancroft 1959:513-514; Pierce 1990:186). Before reaching his final destination, however, he died at sea. Ianovskii served as Chief Manager until the renewal of the Russian-American Company charter in 1821, at which time he was replaced by Naval Captain M.I. Murav'ev (Bancroft 1959:534-535). One of Murav'ev's first orders of business was to invite the Sitka Tlingit to return to their former village, separated from the fort by a palisade. Under Hagemeister's management, and that of his interim successor S.I. Ianovskii, virtually all of the decaying buildings from Baranov's tenure were replaced (Khlebnikov 1994:30, 138). Khlebnikov (1994:30) reported that the barracks was so dilapidated that it was on the verge of collapse, for which reason the employees had built five small houses outside the fort. Khlebnikov (1994:138-140) reported new construction for the years 1818 to 1830, as follows:

> **1818.** Tower No. 1, with two stories, octagonal, with eight cannons.
>
> **1819.** (1) Tower No. 2, two-storied, octagonal,with eight cannons; (2) pier near the shore; (3) windmill.
>
> **1820.** (1) Chief manager's house in the upper fortress, eight sazhens [56 ft. or 17.04 m] in length; (2) tower No. 3 in the upper fortress, the same size as the others, with six cannons; (3) a battery on the seaside, with eight cannons; (4) lower barracks, divided into three parts by hallways (with a mezzanine on both sides) these rooms can house 80 men, they are nine sazhens [63 ft. or 19.17 m] in length, there are three rooms for officials upstairs; (5) an apartment house, two-storied, nine sazhens [63 ft. or 19.17 m] in length, they house the priest, the doctor, two officials, the office, pharmacy and hospital; (6) house of the office manager; (7) bathhouse for officials; (8) bathhouse for the garrison; (9) spinning (weaving) shop; (10) bakery; (11) a new harbor on pilings to replace the old one, eaten by worms; (12) three stairways to the upper fortress and a reviewing stand; (13) a two-storied arsenal for small arms; (14) gates and a wall for the middle fortress from the barracks to the priest's house, with a battery of two cannons.

> **1826 to 1828.** (1) A three-storied store 18 sazhens [126 ft. or 38.34 m] in length, the lower floor contains a section for storage in general, there are two rooms for storing materials, and two for storing goods and supplies, the central floor is for materials and furs and supplies, the floor under the roof is used for storing various types of goods; (2) a two-storied house for apartments of officials, downstairs there is a barracks, a school, three separate apartments for officials, upstairs -- six separate rooms and two kitchens, both buildings are covered with metal roofs.
>
> **1830.** (1) Two new pilings... for the building of the harbor area; (2) a large warehouse 18 sazhens [126 ft. or 38.34 m] long...; (3) some of the old buildings can still stay up awhile, others are falling apart, these include: in the central fortress: general store, trading store; inside the fort: workshops, blacksmith's shops, quarters for the shop workers and a metalwork shop, the general kitchen, the stable, three kazhims for the Aleuts, the carpentry shop and saw shed [Khlebnikov 1994:138-140].

In 1822, the Chief Manager's new residence (begun in 1820) in the fort was finished (Fedorova 1973:222). Its roof was covered with iron from St. Petersburg, and the lower walls and adjacent floors were sheathed with flattened lead to deter rodents (Fedorova 1973:222-223). Only the Chief Manager's house and the barracks were covered by iron. Other buildings were covered with tree bark bartered for from the Tlingits (Fedorova 1973:223). Frederic Litke, who visited Sitka in 1827 described the settlement:

> The settlement is at present made up of two parts -- the fortress and the outlying areas. The first encloses the governor's two storied house, situated on the highest point of the rock, at around eighty feet above sea level, surrounded by towers and by batteries armed with thirty-two cannon, which makes it like a citadel... All of the structures in the fortress are company property; they are well maintained, although not without difficulty for the magnificent wood of conifers and saplings used here, because of its poor quality and the effect of the climate, does not last very long. One of the towers along the fortress walls houses the arsenal, with enough firearms and hand arms for over a thousand men, kept in good order [Litke 1987:46].

The Baroness Wrangell, wife of the chief manager in the early 1830s also provided an account of the manager's house:

> ...the town consists of small houses, dwarfed by the imposing appearance of the fort, in which our house plays a great role. It stands on a knoll, surrounded by four small towers, from which cannon look in all directions... [1831 letter from the Baroness Wrangell, quoted by Pierce 1989:30].

By some accounts, apparently based on oral history, the house was constructed of "bricks... acquired from a passing ship," and torn down in 1833 due to damage from an earthquake (Hanable 1975:2; Hall 1997). The bricks are described as yellow bricks, engraved "Stenwick," from Holland (DeArmond 1995). While the OHA excavations produced no Stenwick bricks and only a small number of yellow brick fragments, examples of collected Stenwick bricks were observed in Sitka during 1997-98. Written descriptions of the period mention bricks only in the context of their scarcity, and their use in the manufacture of

Russian stoves (Fedorova 1973:223). Also, an 1827 engraving by F. H. von Kittlitz (Figure 3.3), who accompanied Litke on his voyage to New Archangel, seems to depict a log or frame building with a gabled roof (Henry 1984:55). By the 1830s, this house -- sometimes called the "original castle," was already deteriorating. Wrangell obtained permission from the main office at St. Petersburg to build another, in the meantime moving into the port headquarters (Pierce 1989:32). Construction efforts were generally less profound before the

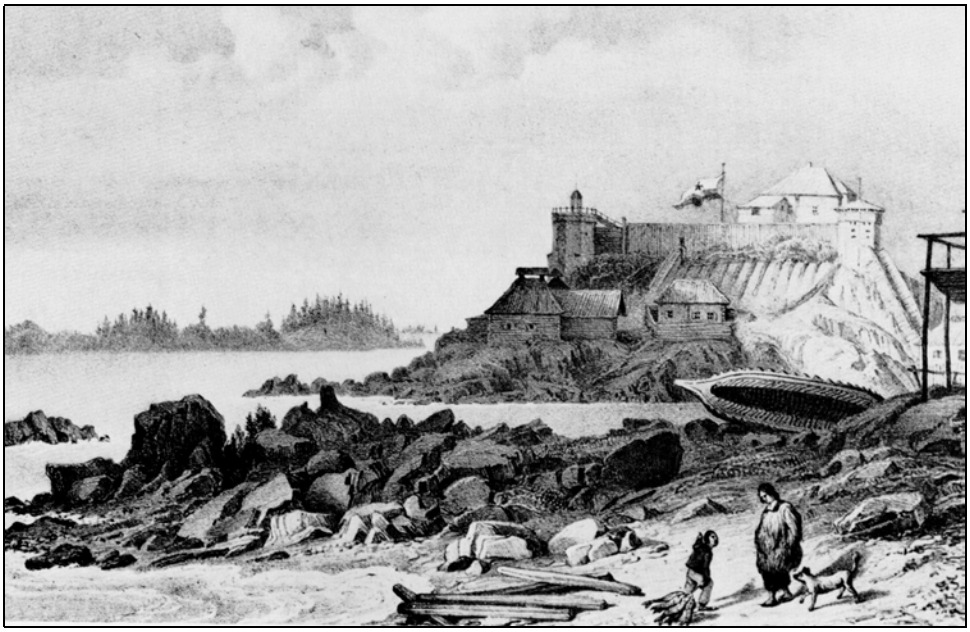

Figure 3.3. "Novo-Arkhangel'sk on Sitkha Island," 1827. Illustration by Friedrich Heinrich Baron von Kittlitz. (courtesy the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana).

1830s, when the shareholders of the Russian-American Company confirmed a decision to transfer the colonial capital back to the Kodiak settlement (Fedorova 1973;143). The transfer did not occur, largely due to a lack of manpower for new construction on Kodiak (Fedorova 1973:145).

Castle Hill: 1836-1867

Construction of a new two-story residence on the hill finally began in November 1836, under the management of the next governor, I.A. Kupreianov (Pierce 1989:32). The structure measured 12 by 7 sazhens (84 by 49 ft., or 25.56 by 14.91 m)(Pierce 1989:32). It is this structure, the largest and last of a series of Russian buildings to occupy the hill, that was popularly called "The Castle." Ironically, it is often referred to as "Baranov's Castle," even though its construction was initiated some 18 years after Baranov's departure from Sitka. By April 1837, workers were ready to place sheet iron on the roof, and work had begun on new towers and batteries (Pierce 1989:32). Kupreianov modified the construction plans to add a small observatory and lighthouse to the pitched roof of the house, said to be visible from a distance of 20 miles (Pierce 1989:32). Captain Edward Belcher, on the British vessel *Sulphur*, visited Sitka in 1837 while construction was in progress. Although he exaggerated the structure's dimensions, Belcher otherwise described it as follows:

> The building is of wood, solid; some of the logs measuring seventy-six and eighty feet in length, and squaring one foot. They half dovetail over each other at the angles, and are treenailed together vertically. The roof is pitched, and covered with sheet iron. When complete, the fortifications (one side only of which at present remains) will comprise five sides, upon which forty pieces of cannon will be mounted, principally old ship guns, varying from twelve to twenty-four pounders. The bulwarks are of wood, and fitted similarly to the ports on the maindeck of a frigate [Pierce and Winslow, eds. 1979:21].

The Castle, which stood until 1894, has been described in detail by a number of visitors, and graphically documented in a numerous sketches and photographs. Various portrayals indicate that the Castle occupied all available space on top of the hill. The building was outfitted with furniture of sufficient quality to impress foreigners (Pierce 1989:32), and was the center of social life in Russian Sitka. The Castle was the location of the transfer ceremony through which the United States acquired Alaska on October 18, 1867. The often recounted ceremony has been described by Bancroft as follows:

> On Friday, the 18th of October, 1867, the Russian and United States commissioners, Captain Alexei Pestchourof and General L.H. Rousseau, escorted by a company of the Ninth Infantry, landed at Novo Arkhangelsk, or Sitka, from the United States steamer *John L. Stephens*. Marching to the governor's residence, they were drawn up side by side with the Russian garrison on the summit of the rock where floated the Russian flag; "whereupon," writes an eye-witness of the proceedings, "Captain Pestchourof ordered the Russian flag hauled down, and thereby, with brief declaration, transferred and delivered the territory of Alaska to the United States; the garrisons presented arms, and the Russian batteries and our men of war fired the international salute; a brief reply of acceptance was made as the stars and stripes were run up and similarly saluted, and we stood upon the soil of the United States [Bancroft 1959:599-600].

The name "Sitka" was most likely modified from *Sheet'ka*, the Sitka Tlingit People's name for their traditional territory (Polasky 1997). Use of the term “Sitka” or “Sitcha” (e.g. Langsdorff 1993) apparently was in common usage throughout the Russian occupation, along with “New Archangel,” although it is doubtful that the Native population ever used the latter (cf. Hall 1997). There is apparently no precise date when the name "Sitka" began to replace "New Archangel," but Bancroft (1959:599 footnote 17) is of the opinion that "Sitka" came into general use sometime around 1847.

Castle Hill: 1867 to Present

Following the transfer of Alaska to the United States, General Jefferson Davis (Chief, U.S. Army Department of Alaska) used the Castle as his residence and headquarters (Pierce 1989:42). Some of the earliest photographs of Sitka, in the Bancroft Library’s Eadward Muybridge collection, depict Sitka in August 1868 less than one year after the transfer. The images depict U.S. Army personnel on the Castle grounds, although the structure itself is not shown. The U.S. Army departed Sitka in 1877. In May 1878 the building was reported to be in dilapidated condition (Pierce 1989:42). During the 1880s the building served as offices for the Signal Service, and is mentioned in the papers of Fred

Fickett housed at the University of Alaska Anchorage archives. The 1890 census reported that:

> the castle or governor's residence has been let fall half to ruin, the ill usage and vandalism of the past ten years leaving it stripped and despoiled of every portable feature of its interior finish and sadly defaced. Different attempts to have the building preserved and repaired for government use have failed entirely, and as the castle plot was not made a government reservation its site may be taken up by any claimant, if the building should burn to the ground. [Eleventh Census 1890:52].

A number of photographs from the 1880s to early 1890s illustrate the deteriorated condition of the building (Figure 3.4). In 1893, the U.S. Government began to repair the structure for use as offices. On March 17, 1894, just before officials moved in, the building was destroyed by an early morning fire (Pierce 1989:42). This dramatic event was captured on film by an unknown photographer (Figure 3.5).

On July 18, 1898, President McKinley reserved Castle Hill for agricultural research and weather service reporting (Pierce 1989:42). On the site the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) constructed a building which served as the headquarters of the Office of Experiment Stations in Alaska. Photographs of the facility depict a two-storied frame structure, smaller than the Castle, with columns on the north side and a gabled roof (Figure 9). A map of the facility shows stairs on the north side of the hill in the same location as those present today, as well as a harbor light and water tank on top of the hill (Georgeson and Evans 1899:41). The headquarters moved to Juneau in 1931, and in 1932 both the Juneau and Sitka offices closed (Hill 1965:12). A 1939 writer (Colby 1940:169) described the building as a private house owned by the Department of Agriculture. The building was demolished in 1955, after which time the site became a grassy territorial and later a state park (Hanable 1975:2).

Figure 3.4. 1889 Photo of Castle Hill by Winter and Pond.
(photo courtesy of Candy Waugaman)

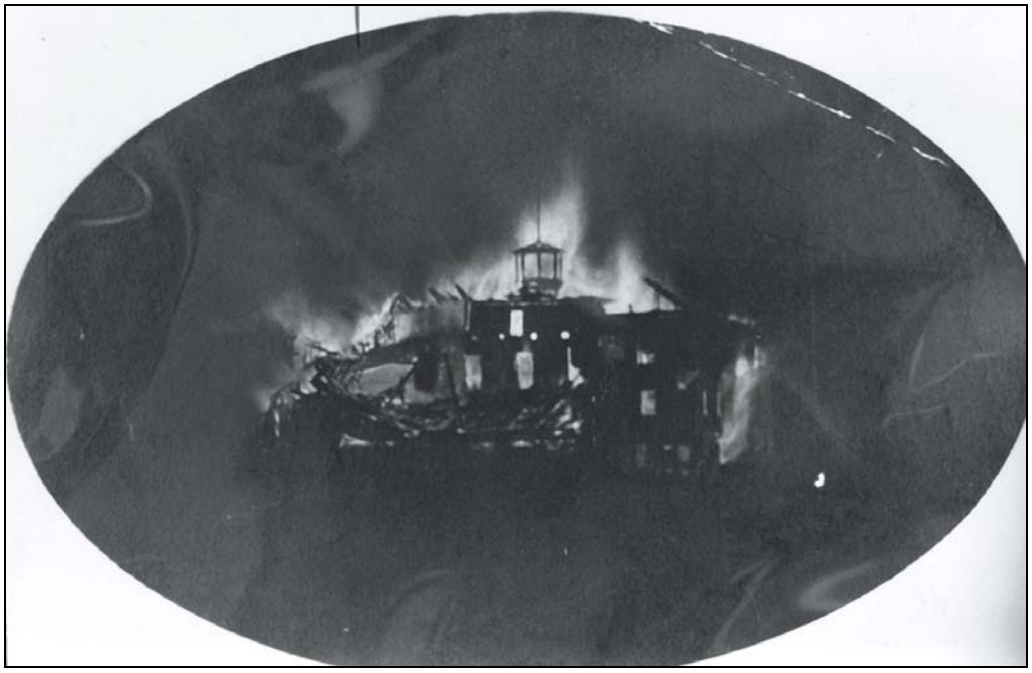

Figure 3.5. Photo of the "Castle" burning in 1894, by an unknown photographer. (Isabel Miller Museum, Sitka)

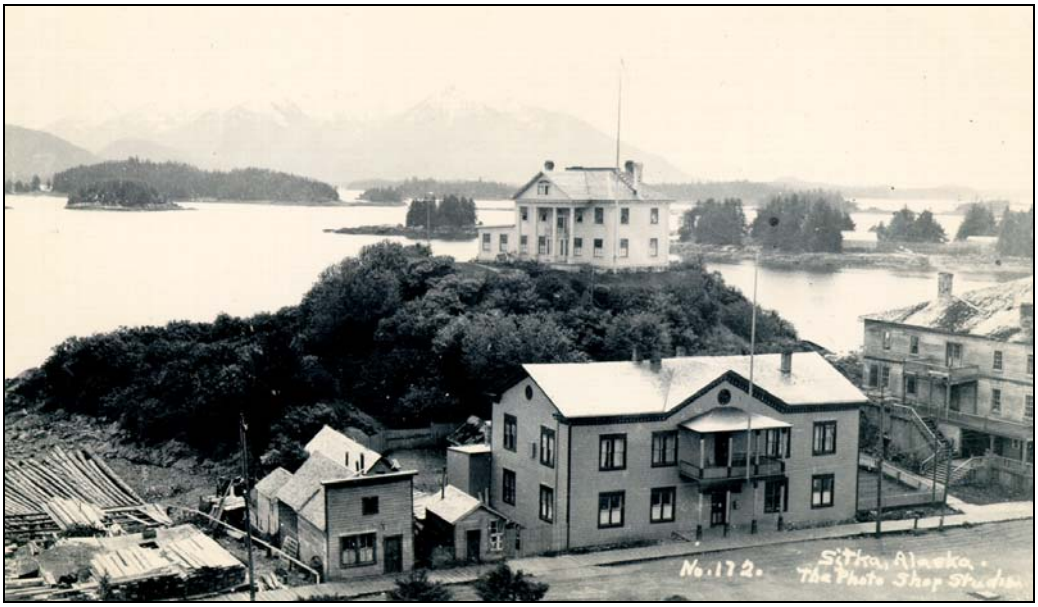

Figure 3.6. Photo of Castle Hill, circa 1940s or early 1950s, by The Photo Shop Studio, Sitka (photo courtesy of Candy Waugaman)

On October 18, 1959, after Alaska was a state, one of the first official raisings of the new 49 star flag took place on Castle Hill at the scene of the 1867 transfer ceremony. In 1962, the site was designated a National Historic Landmark as the scene of the formal transfer of Alaska to the United States, the seat of the Russian-American Company from 1806 to 1867, and the place where one of the first official raisings of the forty-nine star flag occurred. In 1965, in preparation for the 1967 centennial celebration of the Alaska purchase, a stone wall was constructed with spaces for six cannon, six interpretive plaques, and a flagpole (Hanable 1975:2). Also during the 1960s, fill material was placed around the base of the hill for road and parking lot construction. Since statehood, the site has been operated as a unit of the Alaska State Parks system, and is the locus of a formal flag raising ceremony on October 18th each year.