

PROJECT: Restoration of the Russian Bishop's House

LOCATION: Sitka National Historical Park, Sitka, Alaska

SIZE: 5400 sf **DATE:** 1980-1988

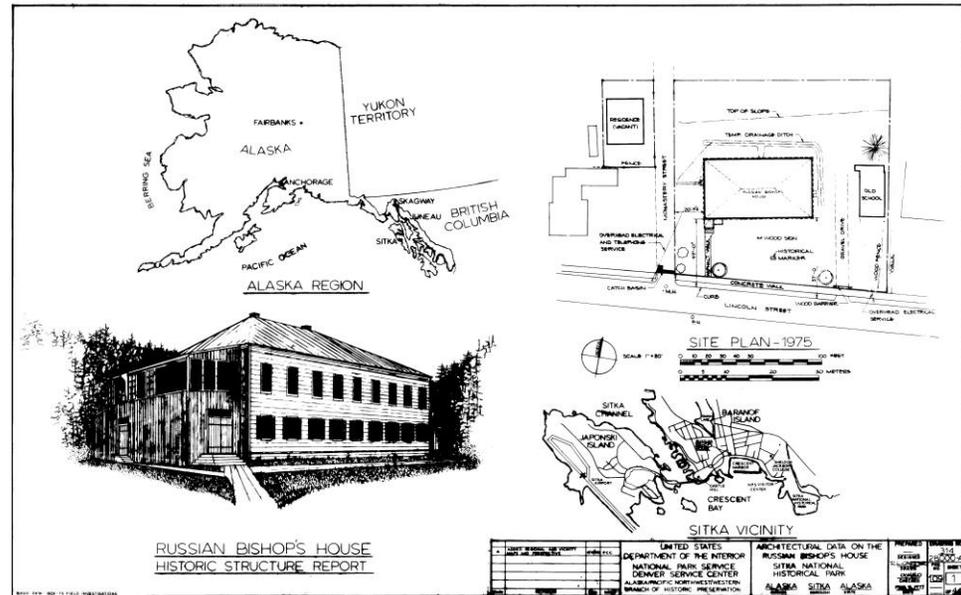
ROLE: Job Captain-Historic Structure Report, Job Captain-Design Phase 4 and Design Team Member-Phase 5.

DESCRIPTION: Original construction on the Russian Bishop's House began in 1842 with major rehabilitations in 1856 and in 1886. It was built by the Russian American Company at the order of the Czar to house the clergy. The church was considered an integral part of the colonizing effort both for the well being of the colonists and the conversion of the Tlinglit Native Americans. The National Park Service assumed responsibility for the structure in the early 1970s via agreements with the Russian Orthodox Church of North America. By this time Sitka's rainforest climate had caused extreme deterioration to the building's heavy spruce timber construction. The restoration project entailed 6 million dollars and 14 years of research, by a team of historians, archeologists, engineers, and historical architects. The project also entailed construction work by skilled craftsmen over a ten year period.

Structural rehabilitation entailed the installation of lifting poles north and south of the structure, threading needle beams into the window openings and lifting the original 60 by 40 foot main portion of the two story solid timber building. The first floor exterior walls required reconstruction from the historic stone foundation up to the 1st floor window sill level. The building received a new concrete foundation faced with the historic salvaged stonework. The rehabilitated structural system design accounts for the seismic loads anticipated for this area. The reconstruction of the original east and west galleries as they looked in the 1840s caused controversy because of limited evidence. The opportunity to better interpret the Russian colonial period lead to the Park Service's decision to reconstruct the galleries as authentically as possible. One unusual detail, documented through historic photographs and document research was the use of false windows and doors as an economical way to have symmetrical facade in the Georgian architectural fashion of the day.

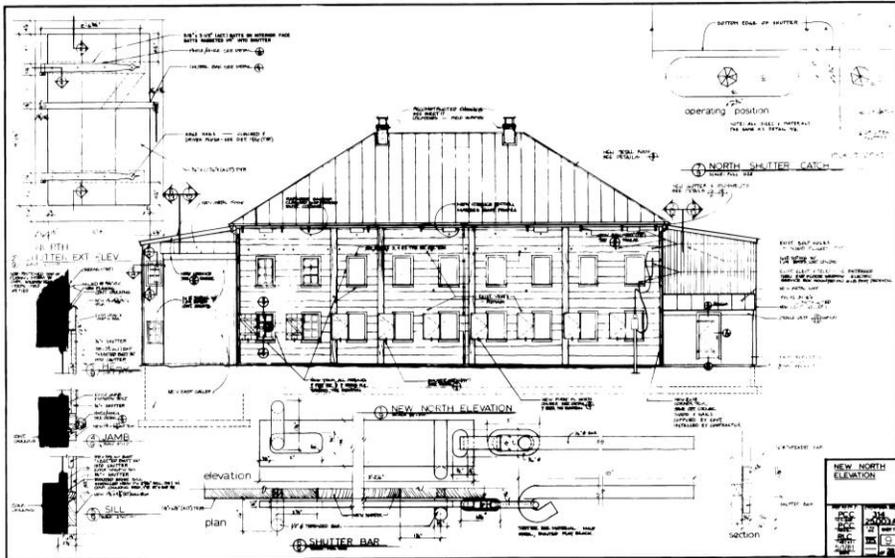
The lower floor is exhibit space and the upper floor is a fully restored historic house museum. Minimizing the visual intrusion of the fire detection; fire suppression, heating, and lighting systems presented a crucial design challenge.

On October 18, 1988 the Russian Orthodox Bishop of Sitka dedicated the newly restored structure. The National Park Service conducts public tours through the house museum through out the year.



Southeast view of Russian Bishop's House in 1975 prior to restoration project.

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Construction drawing for Phase 4.



East Gallery heavy timber restoration construction underway.



Russian Bishop's house with structural support system in place.



South elevation after restoration.