PROJECT: Rehabilitation of Historic Structures, Skagway National Historic Landmark District

LOCATION: Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Skagway, Alaska

DATE: 1981-93

ROLE: Co-authored Historic Structure Reports, Moore House Cultural Landscape Report, developed schematic rehabilitation designs, team captain construction documents, project architect and contracting officer's representative during rehabilitation construction.

DESCRIPTION:

The boomtown of Skagway, Alaska provided a gateway to the Klondike during the 1897-98 Gold Rush. By 1898, city fathers boasted that Skagway was the "Metropolis of Alaska". The White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad and Skagway's deep-water wharves supported the transport needs of commercial mining in the Yukon. This insured that Skagway would remain a viable town after the rush was over. With the decline of Yukon Territory commercial mining in later decades, so declined the fate of Skagway.

The Secretary of Interior designated Skagway a National Historic Landmark district in June 1962. Several buildings from when Skagway was the "Metropolis" of Alaska still stood in the 1970s. However many of the historic buildings had fallen into near ruin. That decade saw the National Park Service (NPS) begin their planning for the proposed Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park.

Designated in 1976, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park began the mission of telling the story of the Klondike Gold Rush and protecting the resources that are part of the story.

NPS acquired a variety of historic buildings on a willing seller basis. NPS handled the physical investigation and documentary research, rehabilitation designs and construction efforts. The plan included the leasing of many of the buildings back to the private sector that would return commercial activities to the buildings. The successful leasing program also provides income for continued building maintenance, a critical element is this harsh sub artic climate.

1980 saw the start of building rehabilitation. The White Pass General Office and Broadway Depot were finished in 1984. That same year the preservation and general management planning team members received a Federal Design Achievement Award from the Presidential Design Award Program.

The work has included seismic & structural upgrading, interior rehabilitation, and exterior restoration, new mechanical, accessibility modifications, fire detection and fire suppression systems. The project held the additional challenge of construction at a remote location with most supplies being brought in by ship much as had been done during the Klondike Gold Rush. Five of the historic structures support park administrative and interpretative operations. The National Park Service has leased the remaining buildings to the private sectors for commercial retail use.

Aerial view looking north along the Skagway River valley and Skagway town site.

National Endowment for the Arts Award 1984.

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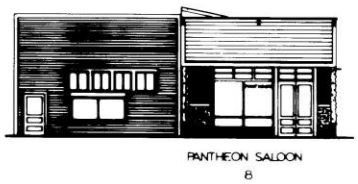
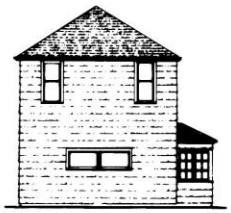
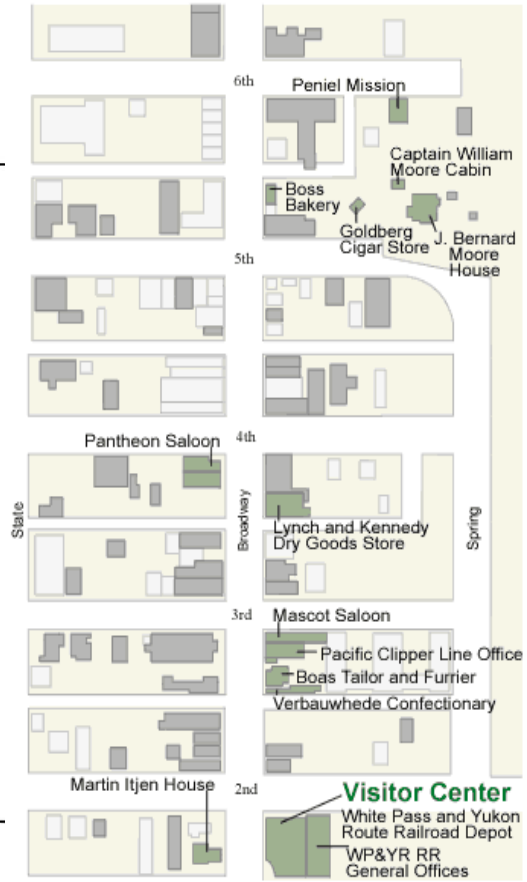




KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK



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General Offices and Broadway Depot:

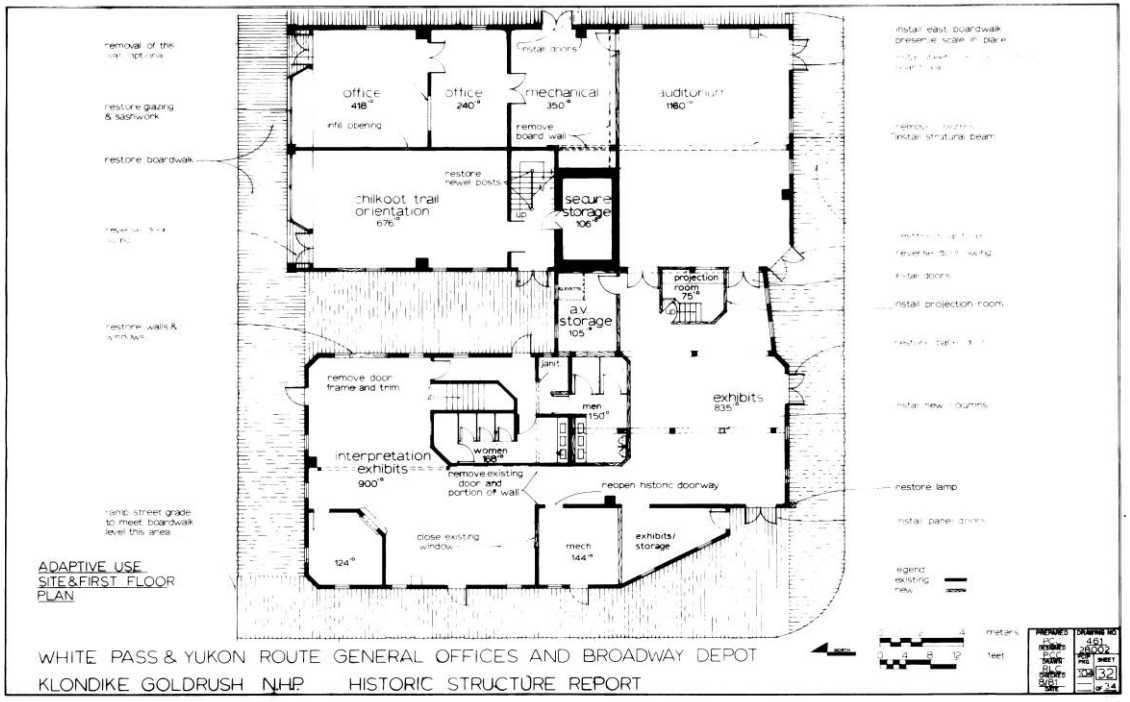
The White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad constructed the Broadway Depot and General Offices and in 1898 & 1900 respectively.

The Broadway Depot was hurriedly constructed during the frantic 1898 gold-rush boom. From the second-floor bay windows the dispatcher could see the tracks that once wrapped around the cut-a way southwest corner and headed north on Broadway. The depot's long eaves, since clipped back, sheltered passengers from the rain. Wall paper and painted trim adorned the interior.

Unlike the depot, the later office building was carefully planned and has walls and ceilings of plaster on lath. Quality woodwork, stained and varnished, provided a handsome interior. The entire building was erected around a two story fireproof vault made of brick and steel over a stone foundation.

The National Park Service completed this 12,000 square foot building rehabilitation in 1984. These buildings now serve as the Park's Visitor Center and headquarters.

General Offices and Broadway Depot, late 1970s before rehabilitation.



General Offices and Broadway Depot 1984.

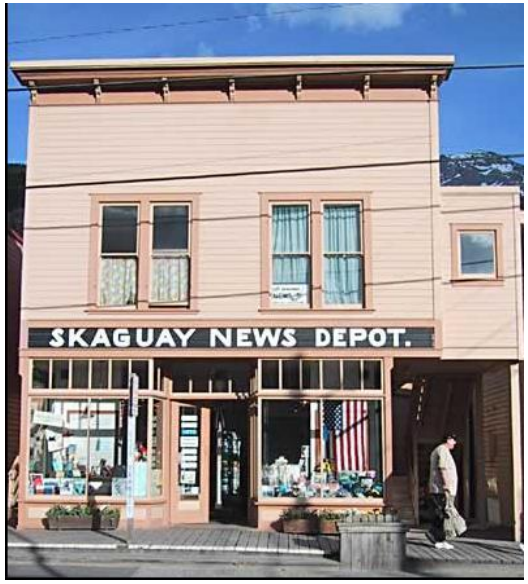
Boas Tailor and Furrier Shop

Henry Boas constructed the Boas Tailor and Furrier Shop, in 1899. This shop fits the stereo typical appearance of a western boomtown false fronted building. Its original uses consisted of a small shop downstairs and the shopkeeper's residence upstairs. During the first decade after its construction the building was owned by four different merchants: a tailor & furrier, a restaurateur, a furniture maker, and a jeweler.

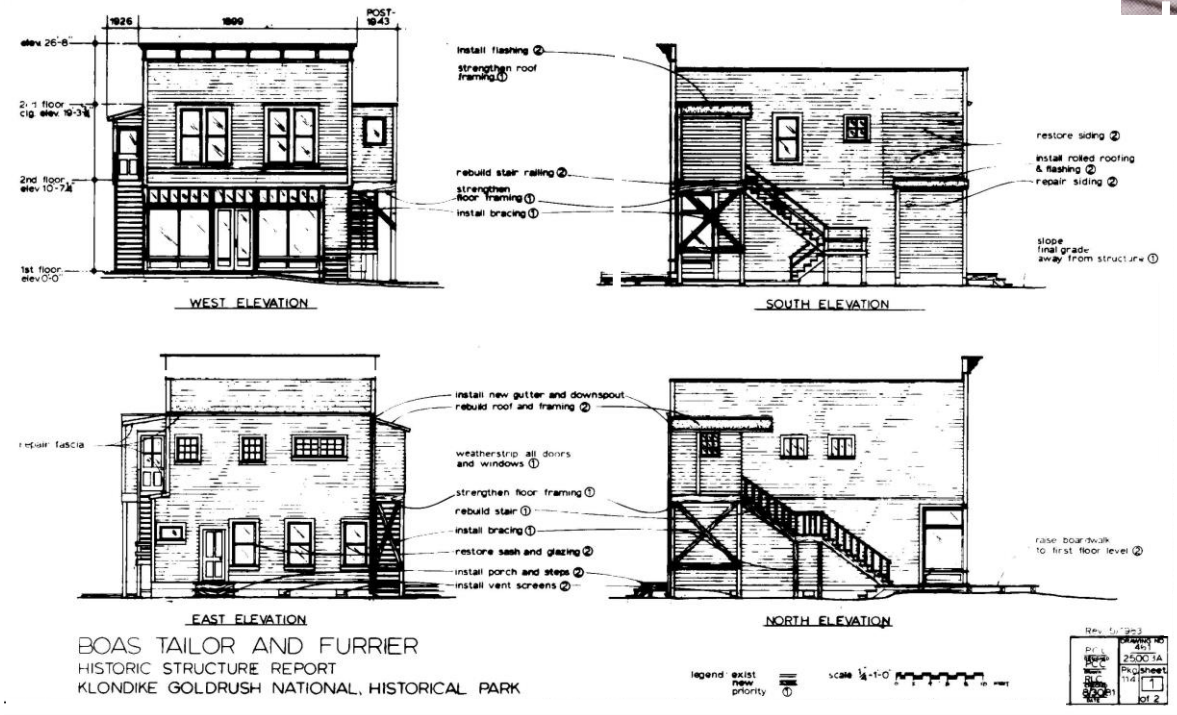
Boas operated a tailor shop in this building and probably a laundry service as well. Later he formed a partnership and sold furs. As Skagway travelers changed from stampeders to summer tourists, a curio shop replaced the furrier. When business waned in the late 1920's the building was moved one block down Broadway to its present site near the depot.

Rehabilitation occurred in 1985-86. This was the first structure leased to the private sector under the park's general management plan. Boas became the home of the *Skagway News* in 1987

1920s view of Boas Tailor & Furrier, center.



Summer 2001 view of Boas Tailor & Furrier.
The sign reflects a historic spelling of Skagway.



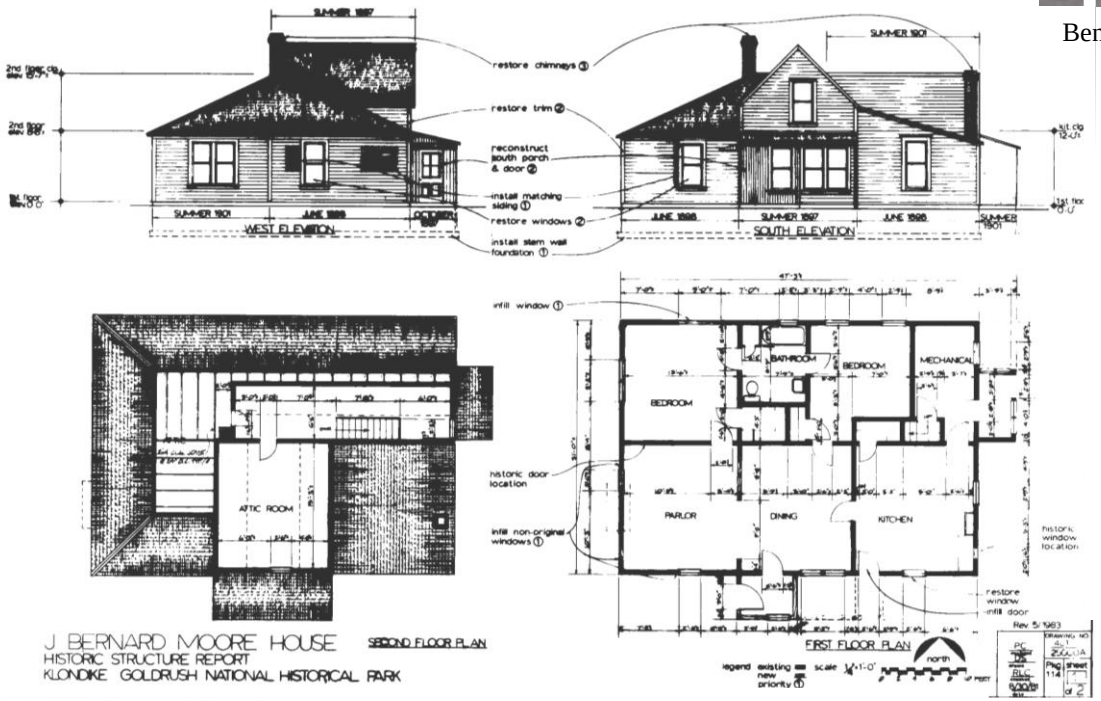
Benjamin Moore House

The Benjamin Moore Residence was constructed 1897-1904 with rehabilitation completed in 1998. Ben Moore constructed a frame house just south of his father's homestead cabin. This small beginning became the nucleus of the present Ben Moore house. Over the years, continued additions and remodeling created a sizable home.

By 1906, Ben Moore and his family had move away. The house was rented by a jeweler, Herman Kirmse, and later purchase by his wife Hazel. Continued remodeling changed the interior but the building still retains the basic configuration of the Moore house as it was in 1901.

The restoration depicts the house in 1904. The house museum is open to park visitors from May through September.

Benjamin Moore House 2000.



Benjamin Moore House 1904.

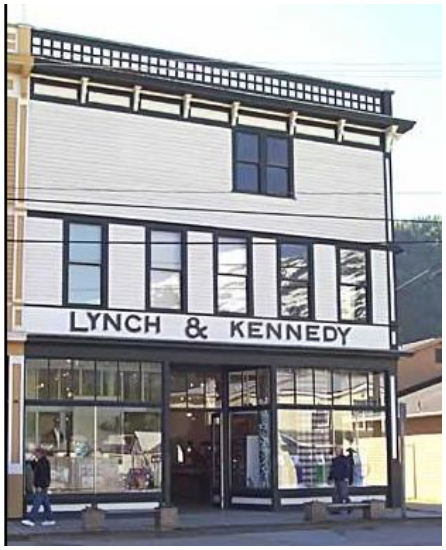
Lynch and Kennedy Dry Goods and Haberdashery

Originally constructed in 1900 as a two-story army barracks, the building housed the all African American, Company L, 24th Infantry. The barracks were a part of Camp Skagway, established after Camp Dyea burned to the ground in July 1899. Brought here to protect American territory during the Klondike Gold Rush, the troops departed in 1904 for the newly completed Fort William Seward at Haines.

In an attempt to centralize the downtown area and capitalize on new gold strikes in 1908, several businesses and buildings like this one moved to their present locations along Broadway. Upon moving the barracks to its present location a facade was constructed to match the adjoining structure. A fine example of false-front architecture, Lynch & Kennedy reflected confidence and hoped for stability in Skagway. Inside, an open store area was built with a flowing stairway leading upstairs. Partners Lynch & Kennedy were the first owners of the new store and sold men's attire and dry goods. Although several businesses opened here over the years, the building remained vacant from the early 1960s to the early 1990s.

The National Park Service rehabilitated the Lynch & Kennedy Dry Goods during 1991-1993. The building is currently leased as retail space.

Lynch-Kennedy Building in 1972 prior to rehabilitation work.



Lynch and Kennedy Building in 2000.

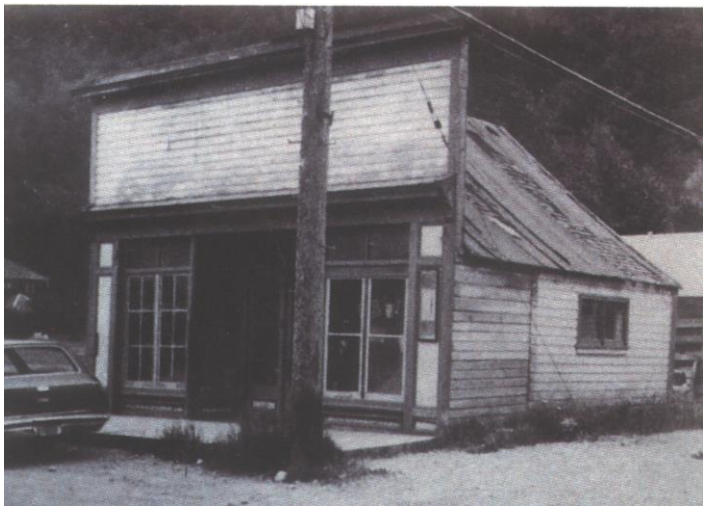
Boss Bakery:

This building was originally constructed in the fall of 1897 by the son of George Brackett, builder of the Brackett toll road to White Pass City. James Brackett operated a small trading post here until his expanding business forced a move to a larger structure.

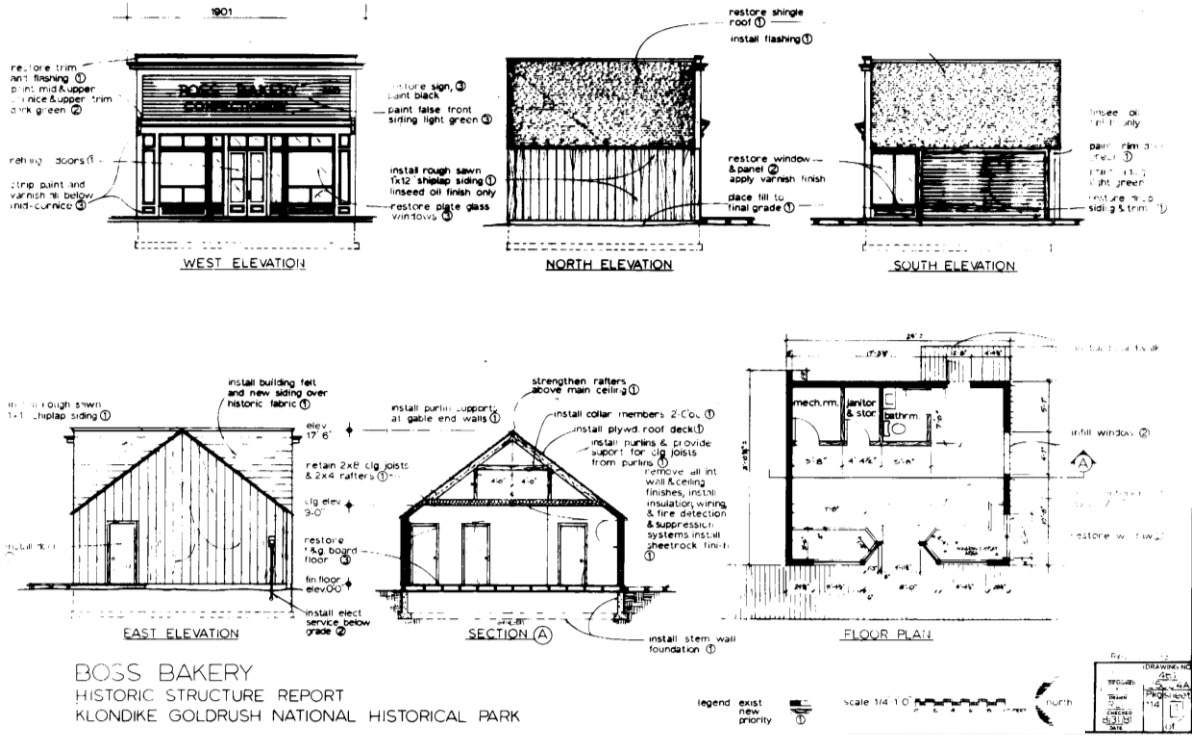
Early in 1898, baker Stephen Baur bought Brackett's store and moved there from a canvas-covered building across the street. Baur, "the Boss Baker," opened a restaurant specializing in fresh pastries and breads. He made minor repairs to the building and extended the false front. The bakery remained a successful enterprise throughout the Klondike Gold Rush and was later sold to another baker. The new owner initiated a complete remodeling. He extended the building, and added a double-door entry way, larger display windows, and a false facade on the side that served as a billboard.

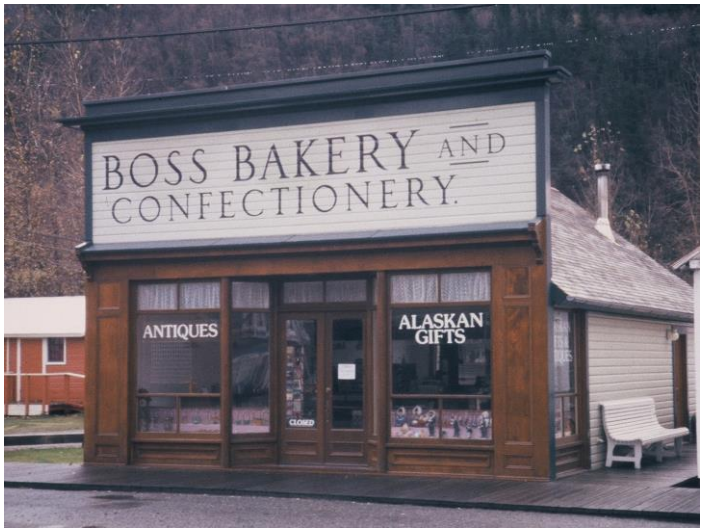
This building also served as a grocery store, a restaurant, a military mess hall during World War II, and a museum. It was last used as a curio shop before the move to its present location. Although it has seen many owners, the Boss Bakery still looks much as it did during the Klondike Gold Rush.

The National Park Service rehabilitated the Boss Bakery in 1985-86. The leased building serves as a gift shop.



Boss Bakery, 1972.





Boss Bakery, 1986.

Mascot Saloon, Pacific

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tin Itjen House

In 1901, David Rich constructed the building later to be known as Martin Itjen House.

From the 1920s to 1947, this was the home of Skagway's Martin and Lucy Itjen. Martin was to become the town's premier tour operator. He came to Skagway during the Klondike Gold Rush. He divided his time between working for the White Pass & Yukon railroad and dashing off to mineral strikes. Failing in his mining ventures, he finally returned to Skagway to settle. He and his wife then operated a small hotel, express service, and coal delivery. Before long they became attuned to the summer tourist trade.

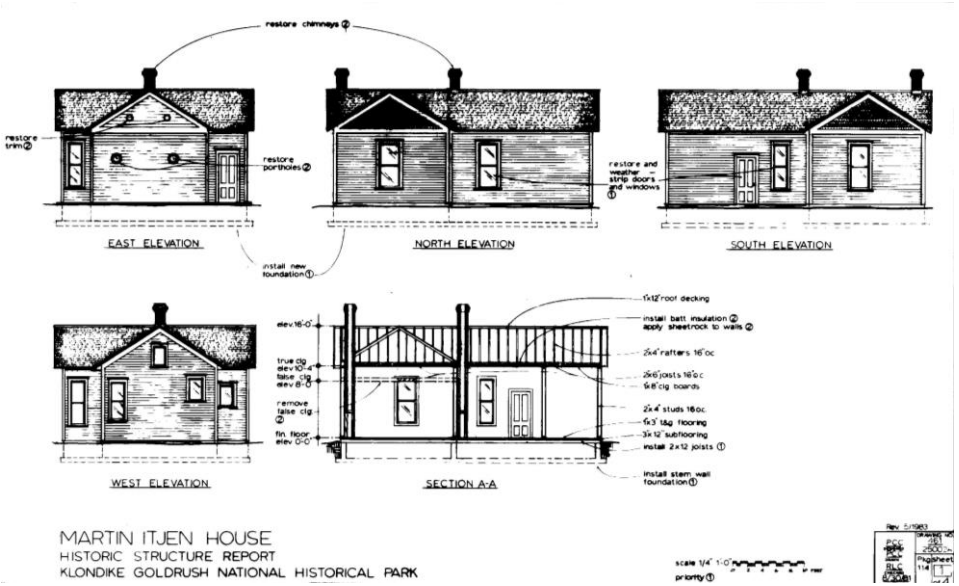
Martin and his wife Lucy greeted tourists as they arrived by ship. They sold the tourists fruits, candies, and magazines, and booked rides on the famous Skagway "street car."

His house originally stood on piers adjoining the wharf. The floor structure of the house consists of the original wharf construction of beams and 3 inch thick planks over which wood tongue and groove flooring was applied. Following Martin's death in 1942 and Lucy's passing in 1947, the building was moved off the wharf and onto land. The building remained vacant until acquired by the National Park Service in 1978.

Rehabilitation was completed in 1992. Rehabilitation design and construction entailed careful consideration of the original wharf construction that remained as new HVAC and plumbing systems were integrated into the house.

The Chilkoot Trail Center, jointly operated by the US National Park Service and Parks Canada, now occupies the structure.

Martine Itjen House –Chilkoot Trail Center 2000.



Martine Itjen House- 1982.