



Sitka National Historical Park Celebrates its Centennial in 2010

Sitka National Historical Park, one of the oldest properties in the National Park system, celebrates its Centennial in 2010. We would like you to be a part of that year-long celebration.

On March 23, 1010, Congress officially designated the present-day National Park as a National Monument in commemoration of the Battle of 1804 between the Russians under Alexander Baranov and the Kiks.adi clan of the Tlingit under Katlian. The land originally had been set aside as a federal park to preserve the battle site by President Benjamin Harrison in 1890.

This makes Sitka National Historical Park the first federally-designated park in Alaska and one of the oldest federal park properties in the United States. Less than five of the existing 391 National Park Service managed properties pre-date the federal status accorded Sitka National Historical Park in 1890. The Sitka Battlefield Monument was re-designated Sitka National Historical Park in 1972 with the addition of the Russian Bishop's House to the Park property.

To mark our Centennial milestone, a 12-month series of events will kick off with our official Birthday Party, beginning with community events on Saturday, March 20, 2010 and ending with our 100th birthday on Tuesday March 23, 2010. This long weekend event will include community activities for all ages, the dedication of a specially-commissioned Centennial Robe from nationally-renowned Tlingit artist Teri Rofkar, a designated National Treasure, and a day of lectures and exhibits marking the pillars of the Park's enabling legislation: the Battle of 1804, the site of the Kiks.adi fort and village, and the establishment of the Park as a preservation and display site for totem poles.

For the following 11 months, ending in February 2011, Sitka National Historical Park will play host to a number of events to continue our celebration.



- In April, the Visitor's Center at Sitka National Historical Park will host a rotating exhibit of the historic work of renowned photographer and Sitka National Historical Park figure E.W. Merrill.
- The first display will open on our Birthday, March 23, 2010, with weekly change-outs through the month of April to show the breadth of his work that focused on the Park itself, on the natural beauty of the surrounding land, on Native culture and life ways, and on other Sitka peoples and scenes.
- In May, the Park will host a reunion of all present and past employees and volunteers who have contributed to the Park and its in-house partner, the Sitka Cultural Center (formerly the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center). The Park/CC reunion will gather April 13-15 for story-telling and celebration.
- In June, the Park will host a cultural sharing in Sitka between Alutiiq and Tlingit students. Alutiiq hunters played a major part in the Russian fur trade, and participated in the Battle of 1804. In the process of dislocation to Southeast Alaska, they brought unique songs with them, which were preserved among the Tlingit here in Sitka. The songs will be offered back to the Alutiiq students, who will be able to return to Kodiak with that part of their history and culture.
- In July, the Park will commemorate the Centennial with the traditional raising of a new Centennial Totem Pole. The pole will be raised on Saturday, July 24, 2010 on the Park grounds at a site specifically set aside for this latest addition to the Park's totem pole collection.
- In August, the Park will co-sponsor the 2010 Conference on Russian America with the International Association of Specialists on the Study of Russian America. The primary venue for this event will be Centennial Hall in downtown Sitka. Conferees will examine the life ways of the various peoples who lived in Russian America, and their interactions. In the process, the Conference will seek to answer the question, "Was Sitka the Paris of the Pacific?" Conferees will use all the tools of historical research including oral history and historical archeology.
- In September-January, the Park will play host to a number of additional events and activities focused around Alaska Day, Native American Heritage, Natural Resource Awareness and Cultural Awareness. Details of those programs will be announced soon.
- In February 2011, the Park's year-long Centennial celebration will conclude with a look-back program that reviews the year, and the Park's history, and also asks the question, "what will the next 100 years bring"?

Full details of each event through the year will be posted on the Sitka National Historical Park website, www.nps.gov/sitk. We hope to see you with us in 2010-11.