

**Gravina Access Project**  
*Phase I Historic and Archaeological Sites*  
**Technical Memorandum**



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**Prepared for:**



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## **1.0 Introduction**

Cultural resources are the physical manifestations of the past, including historic and archaeological objects, sites, and structures. By passing the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, the U.S. Congress declared that "the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved..." and that "the preservation of this irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest..." The NHPA authorizes the Secretary of the Interior "to expand and maintain a National Register of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture" (36 CFR 60.1). A site's significance is evaluated according to criteria established by the Secretary of the Interior for use in determining the eligibility of properties for the National Register (36 CFR part 60).

The NHPA defines "historic properties" as prehistoric and historic sites, buildings, structures, districts, and objects included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, as well as artifacts, records, and remains related to such properties.

Archeological and historic sites are extremely sensitive to physical disturbance and can be adversely affected by direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts associated with any proposed project. Section 106 of the NHPA requires that the possible effects of Federal undertakings on properties included in or eligible for the National Register be considered. Section 110 of the Act also requires that Federal agency heads take steps to minimize harm to National Historic Landmarks (properties designated by the Secretary of the Interior as Landmarks) that could be directly and adversely affected by their undertakings.

## **2.0 Overview**

### **2.1 Archaeology**

To date, archaeological surveys in southeastern Alaska have recorded more than 2,100 sites. A large percentage of these are shell middens, although numerous other types of prehistoric and historic resources are known (Autrey 1992). A four-part cultural sequence for southeastern Alaska proposed by Davis (1990:197) includes a Paleomarine tradition (9000-4500 B.C.), a Transitional stage (4500-3000 B.C.), a Developmental Northwest Coast stage (3000 B.C. to European contact), and a Historic period.

The Paleomarine tradition is used to define the earliest cultural stage yet identified within coastal southeastern Alaska. It is characterized by a well-developed microblade industry with wedge-shaped microblade cores, few or no bifacial tools, and an economy based on coastal-marine subsistence (Davis 1990:197). The Paleomarine tradition is followed by a transitional stage. While this stage has not been well defined, its existence is inferred because of the appearance of a ground stone tool industry which becomes dominant over the microblade and unifacial stone tool industry by 5,000 years ago. The Developmental Northwest Coast stage is differentiated from the Paleomarine and transitional stages by the presence of shell midden deposits, ground stone and bone technology, human burials, and the establishment of large settlements or winter villages, specialized camps, and fortifications.

Previous archaeological fieldwork in the Ketchikan area has been limited to small-scale surveys, such as Charles Mobley's (1995) work on U.S. Coast Guard facilities at Base Ketchikan and Point Higgins. Also, archeologists from the State Office of History and Archaeology have tested a prehistoric site at Refuge Cove (Doug Reger, personal communication 1999).

## **2.2 Ethnography**

The early historic Native peoples of southeast Alaska represent three broad groups: the Tlingit, the Alaskan Haida (Kaigani), and the Tsetsuat. Of these, the Tlingit are the most widespread and numerous within the region. Ethnographic Tlingit culture embodies most of what is usually thought of as northern Northwest Coast culture. This culture included an economy based upon fish (particularly anadromous fish); settled villages; a sophisticated wood working industry; a highly developed and distinctive art form; a social organization structured around lineages, clans, and phratries; and a ritual life focused upon totemism, shamanism, and the attainment of status through potlatching.

At least one principal village was established in each Tlingit tribal area. It was occupied in winter, but was usually deserted in summer when families dispersed to fishing and hunting camps. Village sites were preferably located on sheltered bays with views of the approaches. A sandy beach was important for landing canoes and for access to salmon streams, fresh water, timber, and good hunting, fishing, and gathering grounds. Aboriginal houses were planked rectangular structures, with excavated centers and low-pitched gabled roofs. They could accommodate six or more families and slaves, often totaling 40 to 50 persons. Single houses or whole villages were occasionally surrounded by palisades (de Laguna 1990:207).

The Tlingit were distributed in a number of localized, clan-based, territorial groups across southeast Alaska, with some 10 or more such groups being known. At the time of historic contact, the Ketchikan area was situated within the territory of the Tongass (Tan-ta kwan) Tlingit, which included the southern portion of Revillagigedo Island; Annette, Gravina, and Duke Islands; and the area around the mouth of Portland Canal (de Laguna 1990:204).

The last village of the Tongass before they moved to Ketchikan was south of Nakat Inlet on Tongass Island (Goldschmidt and Haas 1946:140). There was a Tongass summer fishing camp at Ketchikan Creek by 1881 (Welsh 1999:6), and the 1883 Coast Pilot noted three Indian Houses in the area. However, except for a totem pole, all evidence of this Native settlement has apparently been destroyed by modern construction (Sealaska Corporation 1975:90).

On Gravina Island, at the head of Vallenar Bay, there were Tongass Wolf clan smokehouses. At Bostwick Inlet, there was a large summer village that was used by the Tongass for drying fish and meat and gathering berries (Goldschmidt and Haas 1946:142).

Saxman, a village two and a half miles south of Ketchikan, was founded in 1894 by Cape Fox Natives (Roppel 1998:10-11). At one time, the Saxman Tlingit claimed all of Revillagigedo Island:

Apparently at one time George and Thorne Arms and Carroll Inlet and the Tongass Narrows area were a portion of the Saxman territory...Though this area

is [now] claimed by the Tongass people, and their right is recognized by the Saxman people, both groups actually use the area for hunting and fishing at the present time (Goldschmidt and Haas 1946:134, 140).

### **2.3 History**

Captain George Vancouver sailed along the western shore of Gravina Island in 1793, "but did not explore or name any of the small bays" (Roppel 1998:229).

Ketchikan began as a fishing town, although it quickly grew into a regional hub supplying surrounding communities and nearby mining and logging camps. Settlement began in the area around Ketchikan Creek where a saltery was built in 1884. A second saltery was located at Ward Cove at about the same time. The Ketchikan Cannery was established 1889 and a year later George Clark and Mike Martin opened a trading post at the mouth of Ketchikan Creek (Welsh 1999:6).

Ketchikan was a supply center during the gold rush of the 1890s. The resulting influx of settlers and gold miners increased the population to 454 by 1900, the year Ketchikan was incorporated as a city. The city charter described the town as the center of the Ketchikan Mining District and:

the distributing depot and furnishing station for the vast mining industries therein; that said town is the great high-way of commerce between the state and Alaska on the inland passage, and said point is the only available anchorage on the Tongass Narrows...

As the city outgrew the area surrounding Ketchikan Creek, the "Newtown" area, north of the present day tunnel, quickly developed into an important part of the city (Welsh 1999:6).

### **2.4 Study Methods**

All available archeological literature and the records of the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS) were reviewed to compile information about previously recorded archaeological and historical sites. Special status sites--properties which have been determined eligible for the National Register and which might be subject to visual impacts--were defined to focus consideration on properties having particular designations reflecting agency priorities for in-place preservation or public interpretation.

### **2.5 Description of the Affected Resource**

The AHRS lists approximately 250 archeological and historical properties in the study area. The vast majority of these are historic buildings concentrated in Ketchikan. Other recorded sites in Ketchikan include a former city garbage dump (KET-435), two totem sites, a burial locale, and culturally modified trees on the U.S. Coast Guard base. There are five recorded properties in Saxman, including two petroglyph sites (one with canoe runs), a totem park, the Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall, and a clanhouse.

Nineteen properties in Ketchikan and Saxman are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and another 30 have been determined eligible for the Register. Among these are the Headquarters Building of the 16th Lighthouse District (KET-279) and the Coast Guard Supply Warehouse (KET-356) in Ketchikan, and the Chief Kashakes House in Saxman. The latter, built in 1889, is associated with two totem poles and three burials.

On Pennock Island, opposite Saxman, there is a late nineteenth and early twentieth century cemetery (49-KET-055) (Sealaska Corporation 1975:106). This was originally a burial ground of the Saxman Tlingits with grave houses and commemorative totems, although it was also used by the people of Ketchikan (Roppel 1998:8).

On Revillagigedo Island, northwest of Ketchikan, there is the Ward Cove Packing Company (KET-292) and the Refuge Cove site (KET-303). The Ward Cove Packing Company, originally the Walsh Moore Canning Company, was built in 1912 (Roppel 1998:220-221). The Refuge Cove Site is a small shell midden that was occupied about 800 to 1500 years ago.

The Port Gravina site (KET-027), on Gravina Island at the northern end of the Ketchikan airport runway, was established in 1893 by a group of Tsimshians from Metlakatla who had attended the Sitka Industrial Training School (Roppel 1998:226). Originally consisting of a sawmill, residences, a store, a government school, and a church, Port Gravina was the first business to be built, managed, and operated entirely by Alaskan Natives. The village was sited along the waterfront "with one street leading to the store, dock, and sawmill at the north end" (Roppel 1998:226). The settlement was abandoned after the sawmill and more than half of the other buildings were destroyed by fire in 1904 (Roppel 1998:227).

Although ethnographic accounts mention a number of localities used by the Tlingit in the Ketchikan area, only three prehistoric archaeological sites have been officially recorded on the AHRS. However, as mentioned previously, much of the project area has not been intensively inventoried, and the possibility of locating additional sites should not be ruled out. The few known prehistoric sites in the project area—such as the Refuge Cove site and petroglyph sites in Saxman—are all along the coast.

In addition to the properties listed in the AHRS, there are numerous historic sites along the shores of Tongass narrows mentioned in *Land of Mists...*, Patricia Roppel's (1998) geographical and historical guide to Revillagigedo and Gravina Islands. Roppel only occasionally mentions the condition of any remains at these sites, although her narrative does give a sense of the intensity of historic settlement in the region.

Ward Cove was used by the U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey as an anchorage during survey trips in the area in the late 1880s (Roppel 1998:218). By 1898, there was a small village on the western side of the cove including a wharf, a store, a post office, and "a few dwellings." Several salteries were built in the cove during the late 1890s and early 1900s. At the head of the bay, "on the west point of the entrance to what is now called Ward Creek," was the Revilla sawmill (Roppel 1998:219). Opposite the sawmill, Eugene Wacker, who homesteaded in Ward Cove in 1910, platted a townsite. Wacker, as the settlement was called, had a school and post office,

although several attempts to incorporate it as a second class city failed. Ketchikan Pulp Company purchased the town and built much of its plant on the site (Roppel 1998:221).

On Charcoal Point, which was ultimately incorporated in the Ketchikan's waterfront, there was an arrastre to grind ore from nearby gold claims. In 1904, Davis and Son had a boatyard at the point. A Marconi wireless station, a shipyard, and a cannery were built there in the 1910s and early 1920s.

North Saxman, also called Port Dundas, was a small settlement on a point about three-eighths of a mile northwest of Saxman. The Verney Brothers Lumber Company built a steam sawmill there in 1900 and owned practically all of the town's buildings (Roppel 1998:11).

The earliest farm on Gravina Island was apparently settled by F.H. Fedler in 1907 (Roppel 1998:7), although the largest settlement on the western channel of Tongass Narrows was at Clam Cove. Antone Stensland homesteaded there in 1913, and in 1914 the U.S. Forest Service built a boathouse and shipyard. This marine station, which included a one-room school and several houses, operated until about 1950 (Roppel 1998:6-7). The U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey constructed a boat house and wharf in East Clump bight in 1921 (Roppel 1998:227). The Goldstream mine, claimed around 1900, was on the southern end of Gravina Island. (Roppel 1998:12). There were two other groups of claims about one-quarter mile south of the Goldstream mine, where exploratory work took place prior to 1908. Here, there are reportedly the remains of an ore mill (Roppel 1998:13).

Dan Whipple homesteaded on Gravina Island in 1910, but in 1919 he moved to a homesite on the northern end of Pennock Island (Roppel 1998:213). Fred Borg built a house and a small boathouse on the northern end of Pennock Island in 1903. Heckman and Company had a storehouse on the island in 1908 (Roppel 1998:8). In Whisky Cove, opposite the U.S. Coast Guard base, there were two boathouses and a machine shop dating from the late 1910s or early 1920s. Erik Forss also had a ranch at the cove (Roppel 1998:9). In Radenbough Cove, there was a shipyard built by Charles Radenbough sometime before 1911, as well as cabins, wharves, and docks (Roppel 1998:9). Snow Island, at the northwestern end of Pennock island, was the home of Major Ray Snow, who settled there in 1926 (Roppel 1998:8).

### **3.0 Environmental Consequences**

#### **3.1 Methods**

The principal impact issue identified for cultural resources is the loss or degradation of prehistoric and historic archaeological sites, either through direct disturbance during construction or indirect disturbance due to changes in public accessibility. This project should have no significant cumulative impacts on historic properties.

The principal measure to mitigate projected impacts on cultural resources is a commitment to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Cultural resources will continue to be considered through all phases of the project. Once a final alternative is selected, cultural resources within the project's area of effect will be identified and evaluated in accordance with the requirements of 36 CFR 800.4. In consultation with appropriate land

managing agencies and the State Historic Preservation Officer, specific measures would be developed and implemented to mitigate any identified adverse impacts.

Potential impacts can be mitigated by avoidance or data recovery. Avoidance measures can include modifying the project through redesign or reorientation of construction. When historic properties cannot be avoided, mitigation can include documentation of buildings or structures that must be destroyed or altered, relocation of historic properties, and recovery of archeological or architectural information and materials.



## 4.0 References

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