



THE STATE
of ALASKA
GOVERNOR MICHAEL J. DUNLEAVY

Department of Natural Resources

DIVISION OF PARKS & OUTDOOR RECREATION
Office of History & Archaeology

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May 29, 2019

Dr. Don Lehmann
President
Board of Directors
Sitka Summer Music Festival
P.O. Box 3333
Sitka, Alaska 99835

SUBJECT: Stevenson Hall Renovations

Dear Dr. Lehmann,

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) would like to express our continued objection to the proposed work on Stevenson Hall. Our office does not approve the project as currently designed. We are writing to you, as a Sitka Sound Music Festival Board member, to remind you of the organization's stewardship responsibilities as an owner of a contributing property to a National Historic Landmark (NHL). Your organization was aware of Stevenson Hall's significance as part of the Sheldon Jackson NHL when it purchased the property and accepted the responsibility to appropriately care for the resource to ensure its preservation in accordance with the Plat Notes.

Stevenson Hall is one of the prominent buildings on the main quad of the Sheldon Jackson School NHL. The Sheldon Jackson School is nationally significant for its important role in the education of Native Alaskans during the first half of the twentieth century. The school also played an important role, through its students, in the development of Native Alaskan political organization and the pursuit of legal rights for Native Alaskans. The Sheldon Jackson School buildings and quadrangle retain a high degree of architectural integrity and together are recognized as the first formal campus plan in the state and the best example of an institution for Native education in Alaska.

We recognize the best way to save historic buildings is their use, and this often requires buildings to be rehabilitated to accommodate new uses. However, when rehabilitating a historic property, and more importantly an NHL, extra steps must be taken to ensure that work follows *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Standards)* so that these priceless treasures retain their historic integrity for generations to come. This means retaining, preserving, and repairing historic features rather than replacing them. Replacement should be limited to only extensively deteriorated or missing components.

The SHPO reviewed Sitka Summer Music Festival's Stevenson Hall Renovation project under the 2014 Covenant between Dirk White, Owner, and the State of Alaska for the purpose of the preservation of Stevenson Hall. This Covenant was put in place as a condition of the Historic Preservation Fund grant from the Office of History and Archaeology that the Sitka Summer Music Festival, Inc. received for foundation repair at Stevenson Hall in 2014. The owner agreed to, among other things, assume the cost of the continued maintenance and repair of the Property to preserve the architectural, historical, or archaeological integrity of the same to protect those qualities that made the property eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The owner also agreed that no visual or structural alterations would

be made to the property without prior written permission of the SHPO. Under this Covenant our office reviewed the proposed work to ensure it meets the Standards. The current Stevenson Hall project, as currently designed, does not meet the Standards.

In our January 22, 2019 letter to Principal Architect, Sean Boily of NorthWind Architects, LLC, we asked to continue the dialogue about the replacement of the historic windows and wholesale replacement of the historic shingle siding in the plans. Our office does not find that the proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, namely:

1. Standard 5- Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterizes the property will be preserved.
2. Standard 6- Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of the deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence. The National Park Service guidelines do not recommend the removal and replacement of a character-defining feature, such as windows, with a new material if the feature could reasonably be repaired and thus, preserved.

To meet the Standards the historic wood windows should be retained. New interior storm windows can be added to gain additional thermal value. If it can be proven that the windows are too deteriorated to restore, then the preferred replacement windows should be true divided light double hung wood windows with interior storm windows. Replacement windows should match the original in size, pane configuration, color, trim details and material. If it is determined that replacing the windows is necessary, then scaled drawings comparing the existing windows with the replacement windows should be provided.

Every effort should be made to retain as much of the original siding as possible. The successful preservation of other campus buildings demonstrates that preservation of the historic siding and windows is feasible. Wholesale replacement of these historic features would only be justified under the Standards if materials were too deteriorated to be repaired.

There are also plat notes on the property that call for any work to follow the Standards. Sheldon Jackson College, recognizing the significance of the National Historic Landmark designation, voluntarily agreed to abide by and add plat notes to Sheldon Jackson Campus Subdivision Number 2 to ensure the future preservation of the campus. In reference to Stevenson Hall the Plat Note states:

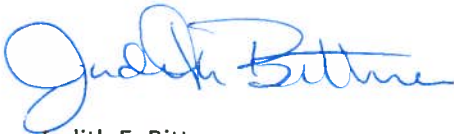
- a. Stevenson Hall on Lot 3-2 of Sheldon Jackson Campus Subdivision Number 2, is a contributing building to the Sheldon Jackson School National Historic Landmark, independently for its important architectural significance. Stevenson Hall also flanks the western boundary of the campus Quadrangle, a two-acre planned open space in the campus core. As a consequence, permanent incompatible alteration of or loss of Stevenson Hall could jeopardize the integrity of the National Historic Landmark. Any major modifications, alterations, repairs, and/or maintenance to the exterior of the Stevenson Hall or the surrounding landscape on Lot 3-2 needing professional architectural services shall utilize the services of an architectural historian or historical architect who meets the professional qualifications for Architectural Historian or Historical Architect under the Secretary of the Interior's *Historic Preservation Professional Qualification Standards [As Amended and Annotated]* and shall be consistent with *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings [As Amended and Annotated]*. This does not include minor maintenance or grounds keeping.

Sitka has a rich history. This history is reflected in the 24 properties and districts listed in the National Register in the City and Borough, including an astonishing 8 National Historic Landmarks. Today, tourism is a major economic generator for Sitka with many people visiting to experience its rich heritage. The City and Borough of Sitka became a Certified Local Government in 1994. Through this certification process, Sitka made a commitment to historic preservation and to work in partnership with the State and Federal preservation programs. Since being certified, Sitka has received more than half a million dollars in grant money for the preservation of historic properties. This grant money has helped Sitka save some of its most important sites and is a sign of the City's commitment to preserving its historic resources.

Sitka's commitment to historic preservation has been recognized nationally. In 2005, Sitka was named a Preserve America Community, an honorific designation recognizing communities that protect and celebrate their heritage; use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization; and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs. In 2010, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named Sitka one of its Dozen Distinctive Destinations because it represents the richness and diversity of America's cultural heritage, and in preserving its historic fabric and spirit of place is a model for other towns and cities. The preservation of Stevenson Hall, and the Sheldon Jackson NHL, is vital to continuing the legacy of preservation in Sitka. It is important that Stevenson Hall's historic integrity not be destroyed by inappropriate renovations.

We wish to continue our conversation with the Sitka Sound Music Festival to find a solution that meets the Music Festival's needs while meeting the Standards. Work should not begin on this project until these issues are resolved and you have received a letter from our office approving the design of the project.

Sincerely,



Judith E. Bittner
State Historic Preservation Officer

JEB:sl

Cc Kayla Boettcher, Executive Director, Sitka Sound Music Festival
Zuill Bailey, Artistic Director, Sitka Sound Music Festival
Paul Cotter, Sitka Sound Music Festival Project Manager (liaison to Building Committee)
Herbert (Bert) Frost, National Park Service Regional Director
Gary Paxton, Mayor, City and Borough of Sitka
Amy Ainslie, Planner I, City and Borough of Sitka
Roberta Littlefield, Chair, Sitka Historic Preservation Commission
Rebecca Poulson, Alaska Historical Commission

