



NHL Executive Summary



Name of Property: Fort William H. Seward (Updated Documentation)

City, State: Haines, Alaska

Period of Significance: 1902–1945

NHL Criteria: 1

NHL Theme: IV. Shaping the Political Landscape

3. Military institutions and activities

VIII. Changing Role of the United States in the World Community

1. International Relations

3. Expansion and Imperialism

Previous Recognition: 1978 National Historic Landmark designation

National Historic Context: N/A



NHL Significance:

- Fort William H. Seward is nationally significant for its connection to the Alaska gold rush of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and for its relationship to the Alaska boundary dispute that occurred during the same period.
- The fort is the most intact remaining example of the twelve military forts that were constructed in the Alaska territory to maintain order during the gold rush. The gold rush precipitated a border dispute between the United States and Canada, both of whom laid claim to inland waterways and trails that led to the gold fields in the Klondike region. In 1903, an international tribunal voted in favor of the United States' preferred boundary, reflecting the country's growing international influence following victory in the Spanish-American War.
- Fort Seward was constructed between 1902 and 1904 following plans for a permanent U.S. Army installation, illustrating the United States' confidence in its claim to this area of Alaska, as well as broader trends in consolidation and standardization of army forts.
- From 1925 until 1940, Fort Seward was the lone active army installation in Alaska. During World War II, the fort served as a recruitment station, rest stop, and training ground for troops involved in the Aleutian Campaign and the war effort throughout the territory.
- The updated NHL documentation revises and clearly defines the NHL boundary, identifies and maps each contributing resource, and improves and expands the historic context. The original NHL nomination did not provide detailed descriptions of the buildings and structures within the fort's boundary. The update also proposing renaming the NHL Fort William H. Seward (Chilkoot Barracks) to acknowledge the extended period when the fort was known as Chilkoot Barracks.
- The period of significance for Fort William H. Seward (Chilkoot Barracks) is unchanged from the original NHL designation in 1978. It begins when clearing and construction started in 1902 and ends in 1945 with the conclusion of World War II and decommissioning of the fort.

Integrity:

- Fort William H. Seward (Chilkoot Barracks) retains all seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.
- The majority of the officers' quarters, one of two barracks, and the hospital remain as prominent buildings around the central parade ground. The contributing resources also include non-commissioned officers' quarters, civilians' quarters, and support buildings such as warehouses, a bakery, and a post exchange. The contributing buildings are in good condition and in their historic locations and in keeping with the fort's setting during the historic period of the early 1900s.
- There has been very limited development to the area surrounding the fort. When approaching from the Chilkoot Inlet, the fort's prominent Colonial Revival buildings and open parade ground dominate the landscape just southeast of Haines.
- Based on historic photos and design plans, the fort has retained much of its core design. The Haines Borough requires building permit applications for the Fort Seward area to follow historic preservation design guidelines and standards.

Owner of Property: Multiple private owners, with several individual owners controlling multiple resources, and Haines Borough.

Acres of Property: 37



Origins of Nomination: National Park Service, Alaska Regional Office

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

High. Revision of NHL nomination is supported by owners and interested parties.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of September 18, 2024):

- Annette Smith, Haines, Alaska
- Rebecca Hylton, Tourism Director, Haines Borough Tourism Department, Haines, Alaska
- Christina Baskaya, Haines, Alaska
- K.A. Swiger, Haines, Alaska
- Allan P. Gregg, Haines, Alaska

Landmarks Committee Comments:

- Staff summarized two proposed changes to the updated boundary in response to public comments: keeping a portion of the historic waterfront within the NHL boundary and including a resource that was moved to Fort Seward during the period of significance and used as a recreation center. The Committee had no objections to the proposed changes to the boundary.
- If available, include information on where the segregated all-Black 93rd Engineer Regiment was billeted during their month at the fort.
- Add Chilkoot Barracks to the name to acknowledge the extended period of time that it was known by this name.
- In the physical description, add reference to the viewsheds to and from the shoreline and the parade ground.
- Revise use of “Canada” in summary of the Treaty of St. Petersburg since that name was not in use at that time.

Landmarks Committee Recommendation:

The Committee recommends that the National Park System Advisory Board recommend to the Secretary of the Interior the acceptance of the updated documentation for Fort William H. Seward (Chilkoot Barracks) NHL in Haines, Alaska, with any additions and corrections as noted by the Committee being made prior to the nomination being forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior for action.

Advisory Board Recommendation:

The National Park System Advisory Board recommends to the Secretary of the Interior the acceptance of the updated documentation for Fort William H. Seward (Chilkoot Barracks) National Historic Landmark in Haines, Alaska.