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Commissioner

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Department of  
Natural Resources

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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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## Beloved Sitka House Listed in National Register of Historic Places

**(Sitka, AK)** – A famous Southeast Alaska property has been nationally recognized for its association with U.S. women’s history. The Sitka Women’s Club Building was listed by the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places in Washington, DC on October 15, 2024.

“The Sitka Women’s Club building is a physical reminder of how women’s rights reached the furthest corners of the United States at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and helped transform Sitka from a Russian colony into a modern, quintessentially American community,” said **Lieutenant Governor Nancy Dahlstrom**, who serves as chair of the Alaska Historical Commission.

The historic building was constructed in 1895 by Hans Christian Pande, an immigrant from Tønsberg, Vestfold Fylke in Norway, for his daughter Ragnhild who used it initially as a hat shop. The building retains features that illustrate and convey a wood-frame Norwegian vernacular cottage. When the building was constructed, it sat alone prominently on the rocky outcropping directly on the water. Local Sitkans called the house the "Cottage by the Sea." By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the house became the property of William Parker Mills of the W.P. Mills Company (a lumber company that made the Mills family one of the wealthiest in Southeast Alaska) and his wife Florence Edith, one of the founders of Sitka’s Woman’s Club who sat near the top of Sitka’s social hierarchy. Through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the house was an epicenter for Sitka’s Progressive Era ideals such as professionalism, social clubs, women’s suffrage, temperance, volunteerism, and the traditional feminism espoused by the town’s pioneering upper-middle-class families.

Embedded in Sitka’s social fabric, the building’s historic use supported women’s clubs that conducted philanthropic and community work. To honor Florence Edith Mills, her children W. P. Mills Jr. and Loretta May Mills sold her former house to the Sitka Woman's Club for \$1 in 1951. Today, the building serves as the first permanent home for the organization, representing the culmination of earlier efforts and achievements of Sitka women by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

“Listing the building on the National Register is wonderful news,” said **Anne Pollnow**, who submitted the nomination on behalf of the [Sitka Woman’s Club](#). “The Sitka Woman’s Club thanks the Alaska Historical Commission and State Historic Preservation Office staff for shepherding the nomination through the process.”

The [Alaska Historical Commission](#) considered the nomination at its meeting on Nov. 16, 2023, initiating comments from Commission members. The State Historic Preservation Office prepared the nomination package and submitted it to the Keeper on August 30, 2024.

*The Department of Natural Resources' mission is to develop, conserve and maximize the use of Alaska's natural resources consistent with the public interest.*

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