

**ALASKA**

## POPULATION

1819 - 391 Russians, 244 Creoles, 8,384 Native Americans  
 1836- 699 Russians, Finlanders, etc., 1,890 Creoles,  
 7,398 Native Americans

In 1784, Gregory Shelikof, a Russian trader, established the first white settlement in Alaska, then called Russian America, on Kodiak Island. In 1799 Russia chartered the Russian American Co., a fur trading firm. Alexander Baranof became the firm's chief manager and moved the company's headquarters to Novo Arkangelsk (New Archangel, now Sitka), which he captured from the Tlingit Indians.

At the same time that Russia was trying to develop several industries, including coal mining, ship building and whale hunting, the Hudson's Bay Co. was entering the fur trade in the deep interior of Alaska. In 1847 Alexander Hunter Murray built Fort Yukon near the confluence of the Porcupine and Yukon Rivers just inside the Arctic Circle.

One of the earliest known letters in English was written from the interior of Alaska by Alexander Hunter Murray on May 20, 1849. Dated "River Youcon" (the western most post established by the Hudson's Bay Co. in North America), it was carried outside the mails to its destination in Scotland.

The declining fur trade plus the expense of the Crimean War influenced Russia to sign the March 30, 1867 treaty selling Alaska to the United States for \$7,200.00 (about 2 cents per acre). An American force of 200 military and 60 civilians raised the American flag at Sitka on October 18, 1867, and soon after this date the American post office at Sitka (the first in Alaska) opened for business.

Alaska was governed at different times by the U.S. Army (1867-77), the Department of the Interior (1877-79) and the U.S. Navy (1879-84). In 1884 Congress passed the 1st Organic Act which established Alaska as a "civil and judicial district". It provided for a governor, code of laws and a federal court. These laws were the laws of Oregon, however, and were not adapted for Alaska. Congress kept the power to make laws for Alaska until 1912 when the 2nd Organic Act passed which gave Alaska a territorial legislature with limited powers. The state was created January 3, 1959.

At the time of Alaska's purchase by the U.S. the use of postage stamps was compulsory, but free franked and official business covers are known from an early date.

1867 Post Office - Sitka  
 1869 - Kodiak added  
 1871 - Fort Tongass and Fort Wrangel added

Sitka R.A. (Russian America)(Nov. 8, 1867;Ms;Black)\* . . . . --

\*Although this cover is franked with a 3 cent 1861 #65, this marking is recorded here as the earliest known American postmark from Alaska.

SITKA/ALASKA T.(April 17, 1869; C--;Black)\*. . . . . 1,500

\*On envelope with U.S. military imprint "Head Quarters, Sitka, Alaska Territory, "OFFICIAL BUSINESS".

ALASKA

Town Postmark	Dates Seen	Size • Color • Value	Town Postmark	Dates Seen	Size • Color • Value
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