Fraser Hall
East & North Elevation Restoration

Historic Restoration Team – Summer 2018
Sitka Fine Arts Camp – Sheldon Jackson Campus, Sitka, Alaska

Report by Althea R. Wunderler-Selby
Photography by Julie Simmons, Justin Han, and Larry Jackson

Cover Illustration: Sheldon Jackson Campus archives
In 2011, the non-profit Sitka Fine Arts Camp (SFAC) was given 20 buildings on the Sheldon Jackson Campus in Sitka, Alaska. Many of the campus buildings including the central half-quadrangle of five buildings built in 1910-1911 were given National Historic Landmark status in 2001. At the time the SFAC was gifted the campus, the Sheldon Jackson College had been closed and shuttered since 2007. Buildings were in great disrepair not only from the dormant period, but from many years of deferred maintenance and the effects of Sitka’s maritime rainforest climate. In the following several years, the SFAC undertook a massive volunteer effort to rehabilitate the Sheldon Jackson buildings and turn the campus into a vibrant year-round arts education facility.

In 2012, a summer internship program began, bringing college student volunteers for one month to focus on restoring/rehabilitating the five historic quadrangle buildings. That year, Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, a Sitkan, recruited fellow Yale students to start the program (under the rubric “Bulldogs on Baranof”). The program became known more formally as the SFAC Historic Restoration Internship. The program began with twelve interns in 2012. Over the seven years of the program 111 interns from a broad range of US colleges have participated. The program activities were typically overseen by 2-3 general contractor(s), SFAC staff, and/or other volunteers. Interns worked approximately 15 days over a 4-week residence period, using free time to explore Sitka and Southeast Alaska. Initially work focused on interior with some exterior rehabilitation of Allen Memorial Hall. Subsequently, work shifted to exterior building rehabilitation/restoration of the other 1910-1911 central quadrangle buildings. The latter work included reroofing and repairing the Power Plant & Laundry Building, residing/repairing the ocean/quad facing facades of North Pacific, Whitmore, and Fraser Halls. A major aspect of the exterior work was not only stabilizing and repairing the siding, but restoring original exterior decorative elements that were missing, in disrepair, or covered over.

This report describes the work conducted on the Sheldon Jackson Campus by the Sitka Fine Arts Camp—Historic Restoration Internship Program during the summer, 2018 (July 16-August 13). The Historic Restoration Team was composed of eight intern volunteers working under the supervision of Pete Weiland—the general contractor, Randy Bartholomew—the volunteer woodshop foreman, and myself as the volunteer crew leader. This year, work focused on restoring/rehabilitating the east and north facades and decorative elements on Fraser Hall, and replacing/repairing missing key decorative elements on North Pacific and Whitmore Halls and on the Power Plant & Laundry Building (aka the Smokestack Building).

The work was supported by the SFAC who provided intern housing and board and through a 60-40 matching grant from the City and Borough of Sitka as a Certified Local Government via the Historic Preservation Fund administered by the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Office of History and Archaeology. Rebecca Poulson was the grant developer and manager. This report was prepared by Althea Wunderler-Selby in partial fulfillment of her Historic Preservation Internship Learning Agreement through the University of Oregon College of Design.

On behave of the Sitka Fine Arts Camp, we thank this year’s interns for their dedication and hard work in helping to restore the Sheldon Jackson Campus to its historic grandeur and supporting the SFAC arts education program in SE Alaska.

Larry Jackson

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2018 SITKA FINE ARTS CAMP HISTORIC RESTORATION INTERNS

Bob Avery  
Beloit College  
Beloit, WI

Quinn Evangelakos  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, MA

Justin Han  
RISD/Brown University  
Providence, RI

Kate Latimore  
Williams College  
Williamstown, MA

Murielle LeMaire  
Eckerd College  
St. Petersburg, FL

Mikayla Rudolph  
Yale University  
New Haven, CT

Julie Simmons  
Baldwin Wallace University  
Berea, OH

Althea “Al” Wunderler-Selby  
University of Oregon  
Portland, OR

Historic Restoration Supervisors:

Larry Jackson  
Crew Leader

Pete Weiland  
General Contractor

Randy Bartholomew  
Woodshop Manager
Sheldon Jackson Campus History
The Sheldon Jackson Campus, a National Historic Landmark, is located within the city of Sitka, Alaska situated on a hill facing south to the Sitka Sound and Pacific Ocean. The core of the campus is composed of six architecturally distinct buildings all constructed between 1910 and 1911. These buildings were designed by the New York architecture firm of William Orr Ludlow and Charles Samuel Peabody to accommodate the then training schools growing student body. Officially founded in 1878 by Presbyterian missionary Sheldon Jackson, the Sitka Training School was formed to educate and assimilate Alaskan natives into Euro-American culture. The school’s initial site was destroyed by fire in 1882, and it was moved to its current site later the same year. By 1895 the missionary training school had about 100 students, and by 1909 the campus included fifteen buildings. In 1909, the school’s founder, Sheldon Jackson, passed away, and after the construction of the new campus center from 1910-1911, the school was renamed in his honor. In 1917, the school removed lower grades and became a boarding high school remaining so until 1967. As the school developed into a junior college in the early 1940’s the school began admitting non-native students. In 1966, the campus became an accredited four-year academic institution, the Sheldon Jackson College. The campus was used in this manner until 2007, when the college was forced to close its doors due to financial issues. After sitting abandoned for a period of years the core of the historic campus was transferred to the Sitka Fine Arts Camp in 2011.

Sheldon Jackson Campus, looking north, 1940s. Fraser Hall to far right.

Historic Restoration Internship Program History
A year after the Sitka Fine Arts Camp gained access to the Sheldon Jackson Campus a group of Yale University students became the first group of Historic Restoration Interns to work on campus. Recruited by Johnathan Kreiss-Tomkins, a Sitka native and Yale student, about a dozen Yale students descended on campus to kick off restoration efforts. Over time the program has expanded to included students from various universities and groups have ranged in size from less than ten to more than twenty. The current intern group represent the seventh year of the program and was composed of eight students ranging from rising sophomores to graduate students, most with little or no prior experience in construction or restoration.
Fraser Hall: History & Architecture

Fraser Hall, designed by William Orr Ludlow and Charles Samuel Peabody, was constructed in 1911 as part of the campus’ new main quad. The hall’s namesake was Thomas Fraser, a prominent member of the Presbyterian church. Its original function was as a dormitory to house up to twenty-eight of the youngest boys living on campus at the time. From the 1950s until most recently in the 1990s, various interior renovations have occurred to include classroom and office space within the building. Fraser Hall’s exterior appearance has undergone few major changes, albeit the removal of two second-story porches (on the north and south elevations of the building), the reposition of the main entryway, the later removal of fire escapes, and the addition of an ADA exterior second story staircase on the south elevation. Additionally, decorative recessed panels below the hall’s first floor windows were covered at some point prior to 1998.

The Hall was designed with a T-shaped plan with the main entrance originally centered in a recessed porch on the west elevation in the shorter portion of the T. The two-story building can be characterized as a combination of craftsmen, stick-style, and eclectic Tudor gothic architecture. It features a cross gable roof with a jerkinhead front gable over the recessed porch and main entryway. Cedar shingle siding is present on the first floor and half of the building while the top half-story is clad in board and batten siding. Numerous decorative elements were employed in the building’s design, including: recessed window panels, intricate trim and molding, wide window casing, corner boards, two types of corbels, and columns on the recessed porch. The fenestration of the building is composed of nine over nine double hung wooden sash windows on the first floor, and six by six double hung wooden sash windows on the second floor laid out in a relatively symmetrical pattern. The building sits on a poured concrete foundation and the roof has been re-shingled with asphalt shingles.

2018 Restoration Scope of Work

- Uncover historic panels below windows and fabricate window casing and trim as necessary on Fraser Hall.
- Fabricate and install corbels on Fraser Hall and other buildings on campus as determined necessary.
- Repaint Fraser Hall to the building’s historic color scheme.
Day 1

Tuesday, July 17th

Notes from the Field...

The first official day of work after our arrival on Monday was mostly talking about history of the campus and workplace logistics. We were led by our Crew Leader, Larry, and the construction manager, Pete. Kenley Jackson, SFAC program director, and Roger Schmidt, the SFAC executive director, stopped by to assist with the talks. We discussed the history of the campus, the inception of the Historic Restoration Internship program by Johnathan Kreiss-Tomkins, and work completed by interns during previous summers. We then devoted a lengthy conversation to workplace safety and were introduced to our personal protective equipment, or PPE. Afterwards we discussed the scope of work for the next days: setting up a decontamination chamber for working with lead paint on the shingling of Fraser Hall.

We also performed a group teambuilding activity to enhance our communication skills. It involved carrying around large pieces of wood with a partner while one, and then both, of us were blindfolded. This helped us learn to better communicate on the worksite and also aided in learning to trust each other.
Day 2

Wednesday, July 18th

Notes from the Field...

Today’s focus was on lead safety and constructing the decontamination chamber necessary to begin uncovering the decorative window panels covered by lead painted shingles. To meet both EPA and OSHA lead safety standards we had to cover every first-floor window on Fraser Hall’s north and east elevations with plastic. We also constructed a fence around the work site with gates and put up numerous “lead present” warning signs and “construction personnel only” signs. The decontamination chamber was constructed with scaffolding and encompassed two chambers. The first chamber is accessed through a tri-flap door system and is where we will all take off most of our PPE after shingle removal. Then we will move in to the next chamber through another tri-flap doorway where we will lastly remove our booties and wipe down our shoes before exiting through the last door.

We also constructed a small containment structure from scaffolding around the farthest south window on the east elevation as the worksite was too small for the required ten feet of plastic sheeting to be placed in front of it on the ground. Lastly, we cut and laid out all of the ground plastic necessary for the site, stapled one side of it to the building, and then left it rolled up until work started the next day.
Day 3
Thursday, July 19th

Notes from the Field...

Work today centered on removing the shingles that covered the original decorative panels below each first-floor window on Fraser Hall. First, we finished setting up the efforts for containment and then we suited up in our PPE. This included a full Tyvek suit, N100 particulate respirators, safety glasses, nitril gloves, work gloves, and booties. After getting suited up we rolled out the plastic ground covering, weighed it down with wood, and began the removal process. To remove the shingles, we used hammers and crowbars to take off each row down to the bellyband and out to the width of each window casing. Once the shingles were removed there was a layer of wood boards and tar paper placed over each panel which also needed to be removed. This process had to be more delicate as to not damage any of the panels or trim. Once the tar paper and boards were removed any remaining nails in the panel were pulled using a crowbar or pliers.

After following the appropriate clean up and decontamination process for lead, we split up in to two groups. One group went to the workshop to begin chunking wood for corbels, molding, and casing while another performed a measuring exercise with Larry. By the end of the day we had uncovered every panel on Fraser Hall and had a good idea of what work needed to be completed to restore each panel.
Detail: Window Panels

Window Panel #6 on Fraser Hall east elevation immediately after being uncovered.

Window panel after completed restoration.
Day 4
Monday, July 23rd

Notes from the Field...

Today marks the start of our first full-length workweek, after starting our first week on a Tuesday. To begin the day, we split up into two groups: one larger group focused on painting Fraser Hall, and a second smaller group went to work in the woodshop with Randy, the woodshop supervisor. The painters painted the bellyband, panels, and trim with a dark brown color after Pete used a sprayer to paint the shingles over the weekend. Some interns used a lift to paint the second story which required training and the use of safety harnesses and ties. The interns in the woodshop worked on fabricating the drip edges needed to be replaced under each panel, the casing needed to be replaced on the side of each panel, as well as the trim needed to go around the exterior edge of the panel. The casing was finished quickly and installed below the original casing running vertically to the bellyband.
Day 5
Tuesday, July 24th

Notes from the Field...

Painting continued today as the interns split into three groups: one painting, one working on the fabrication of corbels, and another one fabricating the trim for the exterior edge of each window panel. The painters kept working on touch-up, the corbel group continued chunking 8x8 lumber and tracing corbels, and the woodshop work involved a six-step process for trim fabrication. This process involved cutting lumber down into the necessary smaller dimensions, using a router to create a half-circle profile on one edge of each piece, using the table saw to cut off this profile, and running the remaining rectangular piece through the table saw twice to create a “L” shaped piece of trim. Next the half circle profile pieces were glued on to the “L” shaped trim with wood glue and nailed in place with small gauge brad nails. This effectively replicated the profile of the original trim present on the exterior edge of the panels. Before moving to installation, each piece of trim was cut at a 45-degree angle on one edge so only one cut had to be made on site after measuring.

To install the trim a small block of the trim was used to mark out the corners of each panel and measurements were taken between corners. Then each piece was cut to size and the end not already cut to an angle was cut. The pieces were then installed one at a time using a nail gun. To accurately install the bottom piece of horizontal trim the bottom edge needed to be beveled at an angle to sit flush on the drip edge below.
The most intricate pieces of woodwork to fabricate during the restoration of Fraser Hall were the various trims used on the building’s elevations. With the help of our woodshop manager Randy and crew leader Larry, four kinds of trim were fabricated for this summer’s restoration effort. These included cove molding installed below the band between the buildings first and second stories, trim installed below the building’s belly band, trim installed on the exterior of the panel flush with the window casing, and trim installed on the interior of the panel.
Day 6
Wednesday, July 25th

Notes from the Field...

Today we continued working in groups on corbel fabrication, painting, and trim installation. The trim installation was finished by lunch but the trim on two panels had to be removed and re-installed. Original wood behind the new casing projected too far, creating a gap between the casing and trim as the trim could not be installed flush. After carefully removing the trim a vibrating saw was used to cut back the projecting wood flush with the new casing. Then using more trim that had to be fabricated and salvaged pieces taken off the panels, the trim was remeasured, cut, and installed flush with the casing. Once this trim was installed it was painted and all of the panels were finished except for more coats of paint.

After the workday today, Larry took some of the interns up in to the attic of Rasmuson Center. While there we were allowed to look at documents and drawings relevant to Fraser Hall and the campus’ other historic buildings. This provided insight into the changes of the building over time as well as the process of documenting the buildings.
Day 7  
Thursday, July 26th  

Notes from the Field...  

The last day of week two saw the interns working on corbel fabrication, painting touch up, and epoxying the northeast corner of the bellyband. The corbel fabrication team continued cutting out specific corbel types from the chunked pieces of wood using both the bandsaw and circular saws. After producing both parts of a corbel, the corbel and bracket, the two were glued together and once dried, painted dark brown. On some of the corbels, lines were carved in to indicate the original joinery of the two pieces. When a set of corbels for one building elevation was completed they were transported to that location to await installation.

As touch up painting continued, the deterioration of the northeast corner of the bellyband was addressed. Where the two sections of bellyband met was completely rotted away and needed to be rebuilt. This was accomplished by using epoxy mixed with wood pulp to add more body. This same mixture was also used to fill large holes in wood on the building as well as hide seams between replaced and original pieces of bellyband. After the corner of the bellyband was built up with epoxy it was left to set overnight and be sanded down.
Week three began with the interns splitting into three groups again to continue working on the same tasks as Thursday. The corbel group worked on fabricating the last of the corbels needed for Fraser Hall, Whitmore Hall, North Pacific Hall, and the Smokestack Building. The painting group expanded their efforts and began painting the Smokestack Building. Pete used the sprayer to paint under the eaves with the darker brown. While one intern worked on touching-up the eaves, two others continued perfecting Fraser Hall and finishing the porch, which had not been painted fully last summer. The painting group also painted dark brown new cove molding, fabricated by Randy and Larry in the woodshop for later installation.

Although the epoxied northeast corner of bellyband on Fraser Hall was left to set overnight it was still gummy the next morning. Instead of sanding the corner down Larry suggested using the vibrating saw to remove the excess epoxy. This along with the use of scraping tools allowed the epoxy to be sanded down enough. The corner was then painted brown to blend in with the original wood.
Over the course of the month-long restoration project, interns fabricated and installed corbels and brackets on Fraser Hall, Whitmore Hall, North Pacific Hall, and the Smokestack Building. Four different kinds of corbels and brackets were fabricated for replacement, each a replica of the type originally in place. The corbel fabrication and installation processes were intensive but the presence of these character defining architectural features will help the campus buildings retain their integrity as nationally significant structures.
Day 9
Tuesday, July 31st

Notes from the Field...

While the painters continued to work on touching up Smokestack Building, the Corbel group began installation and another group of interns started uncovering more panels on other campus buildings. The panel group removed shingles underneath multiple windows on the back of Whitmore Hall to see if the historic decorative panels were present. To their surprise almost every window revealed something different. Some had no panels, some had well preserved panels, and others were filled with insulation and plywood. The discovery of completely removed panels meant that complete panels had to be fabricated in the woodshop. Larry and Randy began the fabrication process by using fir lumber to match the original panels.

The corbel installation process involved sending three interns up in the lift to the top of the jerkinhead gable the corbels needed to be installed beneath. Wearing hardhats, safety glasses, and tied in harnesses, the three interns first prepared the opening for the corbel. Where original corbels are missing there are visible areas in the gables fascia that have been filled in to replace the notch originally present. In some instances, the interns simply had to re-cut the notch in the same place, while in others completely new notches had to be cut. For example, three windows placed in the gable of Whitmore Hall changed the location of the corbels forcing the interns to create new notches for installation.
Day 10
Wednesday, August 1st

Notes from the Field...

Today the interns continued installing corbels across campus, painting the Smokestack Building and the recessed porch of Fraser Hall, and fabricating and installing panels and panel trim. The painters focused on painting under Smokestack Building’s eves, the window casing, bellyband and trim with dark brown. Shingles were touched up with the reddish-brown body paint and the muntins, rails, and stiles of the buildings original 6 over 6 double hung wooden sash windows were repainted white.

Another intern used a two-part epoxy system coupled with Bondo, a filler and resin for boat and car repair, to fix a section of the bellyband on Smokestack Building and re-visit the northeast corner bellyband on Fraser Hall. A southwest corner of the bellyband on Whitmore Hall (on the northern half of the building which originally housed the boiler) was severely rotted. Instead of removing this piece a liquid rot prevention solution was used to stabilize the bellyband. After mixing the solution a small squeeze bottle was used to saturate the cracks of the wood. After letting this set for some time, the two-part epoxy system was used to recreate the corner of the bellyband as well as another section where the bellyband met and terminated at a wall. Then Bondo was mixed and applied with a tape knife along an approximately 8-inch section of the wood. Once both the epoxy and Bondo had set they were sanded using an orbital sander to achieve a smooth appearance.
Day 11
Thursday, August 2\textsuperscript{nd}

\textit{Notes from the Field...}

The interns continued working in three groups: corbel installation, painting, and panel fabrication and installation. Today was our first work day working in actual rain, after almost two weeks of sunshine and 60 degree plus temperatures. While the corbel group toughed it out and continued going up in the lift to work on installation, the painting and panel groups got a break from the rain. Some of the painters continued working on the windows and siding of Smokestack Building, while another moved to work on painting the dark brown elements of the maintenance building. The panel group joined in on painting the maintenance building for a bit before helping another volunteer, John Little, put a first coat of dark brown paint on some blue benches. In the large maintenance storage shed the panel group also painted fully fabricated panels and window casing to be installed on Whitmore Hall.
Day 12
Monday, August 6th

Notes from the Field...

The fourth and final week of work kicked off today with the installation of the last corbels, the beginning of the installation of new panels on Whitmore Hall, the continued painting of Smokestack Building, and the painting of maintenance facilities. The corbel group moved the lift across camp to work on installing the corbels on North Pacific Hall’s main façade. The addition of these corbels will complete the restoration of North Pacific Hall to its 1911 appearance. Meanwhile, the panel group installed the painted panels on the back elevation of Whitmore Hall. Due to a lack of fir lumber the panels fabricated in the woodshop had to be made slightly smaller than the openings of the original panels. To cope with this the interns working on installation had to center each panel perfectly, so the trim had enough overlap with the panel to be nailed in flush with the window casing. As the corbel and panel groups worked, another intern began using Pete’s sprayer to paint the shed recently shingled by the Outer Coast program high school students. Although this building is not historic, the application of the paint scheme used across campuses historic buildings makes it more sympathetic to the overall character of the campus.
While the 2018 Restoration interns did not restore windows, the continuing restoration of the campus’ windows by volunteer John Little has played an integral role in restoring the character of the National Historic Landmark. These restored windows, coupled with the uncovered and restored decorative panels, enhance the integrity of Fraser Halls historic architecture.

The restoration of historic windows is a delicate process. The jamb and weighted sash cord must be removed to take out each sash. Once removed the sash can be individually restored, which often involves re-glazing lights, replacing broken lights with comparable quality and color glass, and restoring woodwork like muntin’s.
Notes from the Field...

On our second to last full day devoted completely to work, the corbel group finished installing the last corbel on North Pacific Hall’s main façade. The group painting the Smokestack Building finished painting all of the dark brown elements and focused completely on painting the white of the windows and touching up shingles with reddish-brown. The panel group completely installed all but two panels on the backside, north elevation of Whitmore Hall. One panel still needed exterior trim applied, and the other needed additional work. The lumber placed behind the panel sat too far back in the opening, so the panel did not come up far enough to meet the casing. By the end of the work day the interns had attached two shims to the lumber in an effort to raise the profile of the panel but it was still too far recessed. Another intern continued to paint maintenance buildings using the sprayer. The Outer Coast newly shingled shed had two full coats of reddish-brown body paint applied, the north and west elevations of the large maintenance shed had one coat applied, and the north and west elevations of the main maintenance building had one coat applied. While none are likely to be completely painted by the end of the week, owing to rain in the forecast, the elevations painted are those most visible from campus.
Notes from the Field...

Today was our last full day of work as tomorrow will be spent cleaning up. The morning began with four of the interns going to Raven Radio to be interviewed about the internship program and our work so far this summer. While they were gone the remaining four interns began working on installing the last window panels and finishing touch up painting on the Smokestack Building. To place the panel that sat too far back in its opening, a third ½ inch shim was cut and nailed into place in the opening. This brought the panel far enough forward for it and the exterior trim to be installed. Another panel opening was also prepared for installation by using the vibrating saw to cut back plywood placed in the opening.

Once the radio interviewees returned they started on two projects: filling cracks on the smokestack of the Smokestack Building and chunking out 8x8 lumber for the fabrication of corbels by next summer’s interns. To fill cracks on the smokestack the interns created a cementitious mix and applied it from the lift. Historic masonry repairs can be difficult as it is essential the new mortar mix matches the historic cement in color and texture once dried. The corbel group took note of the types and number of corbels still needed on campus and chunked out the lumber into manageably sized pieces that on which corbel and bracket stencils could be drawn.
Day 15
Thursday, August 9th

Notes from the Field...

Our final day as restoration interns was spent tidying up the woodshop and Smokestack Building meeting and equipment storage area, putting all supplies away, and packing up Pete’s trailer. Two interns quickly installed the last panel on Whitmore Hall in the morning, another painted the panel and the shingles that had been replaced around the other panels on Whitmore, and Pete used the sprayer to finish some details on the maintenance building. We took group photos, in a pyramid and in a more serious formation, and gave cards to Pete and Larry to thank them for our experiences as interns. Despite the rain and cold we finished cleanup before lunch, ending our tenure as Sitka Fine Arts Camp Restoration Interns.
Before & After

Fraser Hall East Elevation: before.

Fraser Hall East Elevation: after.

Fraser Hall East Elevation Corbels: before.

Fraser Hall East Elevation Corbels: after.

Fraser Hall North Elevation: before.

Fraser Hall East Elevation: after.
2018 Sitka Fine Arts Camp Historic Restoration Team

From Left: Pete Weiland, Julie Simmons, Mikayla Rudolph, Althea Wunderler-Selby, Justin Han, Kate Latimore, Murielle LeMaire, Bob Avery, and Quinn Evangelakos. Not shown: Larry Jackson, photographer, and Randy Bartholomew.