

GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE

and the

SEALASKA HERITAGE FOUNDATION



CARVING A YUXWCH'EE YAKW

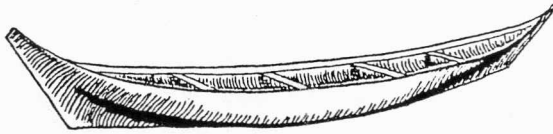
As part of the bicentennial of the Constitution celebration in 1987, the National Park Service and the Sealaska Heritage Foundation are sponsoring the carving of a Tlingit canoe using traditional tools and methods. The canoe sometimes called in Tlingit, "Yuxwch'ee yakw", which means "sea otter canoe", was the indigenous canoe of the village of Hoonah and was photographed by the Harriman Expedition in Glacier Bay in 1899.



NAA KLAA

A portrait of Jessie K. Dalton of Hoonah, Alaska
1982 stone lithograph by R.T. Wallen

The canoe construction will take place at Bartlett Cove during August of 1987. This project combines the traditional knowledge of Tlingit elders with the woodworking art of renowned Northwest Coast carvers. George Dalton Sr., born in Hoonah in 1897, and other elders with personal knowledge of canoe making traditions will serve as cultural advisors to the project. Two carvers with international reputations, Nathan Jackson and Steve Brown, will incorporate the elders' memories of design and technique into the construction. The carving will be done from a single Sitka Spruce log using the "xot'ah", or Tlingit adze, and other native tools.



CONSTRUCTION

A Sitka Spruce log, 25 feet long and four feet in diameter, will be split and the hull rough-hewed and blocked out with adzes. The outside is then carved into its final form. Holes are drilled into the hull from the outside and plugs of a contrasting grain of wood inserted. The inside is then shaped until the plugs are revealed and the carver thus knows the exact thickness of the hull. Water is poured into the hull and hot stones added to bring it to a boil. The outside of the hull is warmed by slow fires and hot water splashed on all parts of the hull. Progressively longer stretchers of fir are then driven between the gunwales until the hull is spread to the proper width. The final stretchers are lashed into place with hand-made rope and become the three thwarts. Removable shelf-like seats are carved for the bow and stern. A gunwale cap is attached. The hull is then scorched and polished with dogfish or other natural oil. The canoe will be made watertight and any cracks repaired with indigenous materials. Only natural materials processed by traditional methods will be used in this project. Any additional construction time will be used in making traditional accessories including paddles, stone anchor, bailer, cover, harpoons or halibut hooks.