



**Bering Expedition Landing Site National Historic Landmark
Kayak Island, Alaska**

The 1741 Bering Expedition landing at Kayak Island in the Gulf of Alaska is considered by many as the first scientific investigation of Northwestern North America. Georg W. Steller, a surgeon and naturalist, accompanied Vitus Bering on the Russian sent Great Northern Expedition. Steller spent 10 hours on the island - the first documented attempt at contact between Europeans and Alaska's Native people. While the explorers saw no people, there were dwellings in the area and obvious signs of recent human activity. Steller's journal entries, and his collections of natural specimens and cultural items, provided knowledge of the natural and human history of this area of the world to the explorers. While his collection of cultural items from around the landing site was the first of such collections from Alaska it is also an example of the European colonial practice of taking various belongings of indigenous peoples without their consent.