The Resurrection Bay Historical Society is hosting the Alaska Historical Society and Museums Alaska conference and annual meetings this fall. The society’s conference theme is Gateways: Past, Present and Future. Dr. Paul Hirt, professor of history at Arizona State University specializing in the America West, environmental history and policy and sustainability, will start off the program. Museums Alaska’s theme is Milestones: Interpreting Events that Change the Course of Communities. Dr. Jan Ramirez, National September 11 Memorial and Museums in New York City, will headline their program. The incredible organizing committee has arranged receptions, meals, tours, and special events and along with the papers, panels, and roundtables, the conference promises to be a hectic but wonderful extravaganza. What an opportunity to “talk shop” and plan for the year ahead as well as pleasantly converse with folks from around the state. Register for the conference by August 31” to get the early bird rate. To do so, and to find information about the schedule of events, paper and session abstracts, and details about getting to Seward, conference hotels and tours, go to www.resbayhistorical.org.
Message from the President—“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”

Although the above quote might sound like the start of a Dickens novel, it actually represents this year in Alaska history. In some ways 2014 has been a great year. The State of Alaska funded a number of history and museum programs and projects, most notably making the final appropriation for the new State Library Archives and Museum building. The year, however, saw the National Archives and Records Administration close its regional facility in Anchorage, and make access for Alaskans to the historical records of federal agencies more difficult. 2014 in many ways is a cautionary tale, reminding us to make history a priority in our lives. One way to show that history matters to you is to join the Alaska Historical Society and Museums Alaska in Seward, October 1-4, for our joint conference. It's a time to discuss important episodes of the past and to prepare our platform to speak out for history in 2015.

Katherine J. “Katie” Ringsmuth
President

“Please, sir, I want some more.”
—Oliver Twist

Getting the nomination is like gravy. Winning would be like whatever is better than gravy.
—Billy Bob Thornton

Nominations please!

Time flies, and it is time to nominate individuals and groups for recognition with an Alaska Historical Society award for their commitment to Alaska history and outstanding accomplishments. Alaska History News has reported on many exhibits and projects undertaken this past year that have brought to light new information and deepened understanding of Alaska's history. Hard-working individuals and groups deserve attention and recognition! Nominations are due August 22, 2014. They can be sent to the AHS, P.O. Box 100299, Anchorage, AK 99510, or e-mailed to Michael Hawfield, Awards Committee Chair, at mchawfield@kpc.alaska.edu. A quick summary of our annual awards:

- The Evangeline Atwood Award recognizes an individual who has made significant long-term contributions to Alaska state or local history.
- The Elva R. Scott Local Historical Society Award recognizes a community organization for its programs, a special project, or significant recent accomplishment.
- The Historian of the Year Award is given to an Alaska resident for a book published the past eighteen months with notable new material about Alaska history.
- The Barbara Sweetland Smith Pathfinder Award recognizes work that contributes to the description of resources relating to Alaska history.
- A Contributions to Alaska History Award recognizes notable achievements to the study, understanding, and interpretation of Alaska history.

The two Student and Beginning Professional Travel Award recipients already have been selected. Congratulations to Elizabeth Figus, a University of Alaska Fairbanks graduate student, and Ulyana Korotkova, who is working at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Library and a graduate student in UAF’s Northern Studies program. Both will be attending and presenting papers at the Seward conference in October.

In other award news, Ross Coen, former president of the AHS and now a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Washington, won the Alaska History award for 2012-2013. His article “Edna Ferber’s Ice Palace: Gender, Race, Statehood, and the Novel as History,” was selected by the Editorial Advisory Board as the best article published in the journal those years. The article was the initial contribution to a new series that Alaska History will publish intermittently. The series, “Revisiting a Classic,” is to provide fresh perspectives on classic texts through articles that consider a book’s impact when it was first published and then examines its relevance today. Bruce Merrell is the series editor.

Notes from around the state

A good idea to tuck away for next spring, when everyone is tired of the scenery, town, and other residents and something new sounds marvelous. The Sitka Historical Society and Museum had an exhibit and auction accompanied by an elegant dinner with live Classical music. This was to show and sell 22 works Sitka artists produced, all inspired by the museum’s artifacts, photographs, and paintings. Word is the event was highly successful. In addition, the recent newsletter has two interesting histories. The first is the continuing commemoration of a 1943 airplane crash near the town by the society and family members; the second the history of building a road out of town.

The Alutiiq Museum is very active in the statewide, even nation-wide, interest in the revitalization of Native languages. They have expressed their initiative is “To bring back the sound of Alutiiq to the voices of our youth, through the words of our Elders.” (One of the bills passed by the recent Legislature was to officially recognize 21 Native languages in Alaska along with English.) Always busy; in addition to the language project, a museum team has been working on skin sewing of the old style, and surveying Koniag-owned land for archaeological sites. They are actively acquiring new artifacts as well as loaning some to other museums, and sending staff to Juneau to help and learn from the curators at the State Museum. As to Chirikof Island’s ground squirrels, of course they had to discover if the early Russians or Americans introduced them. (Won’t give the spoiler; you’ll have to contact them at info@alutiiqmuseum.org or www.alutiiqmuseum.org for the answer!) While you’re at it, you might want to join the museum for $25.00, or $50.00 for the family. Mail check to 215 Mission Road, Suite 101, Kodiak, Alaska 99615.

Marvelous to get an issue of the Tenakee Springs newsletter, The Store Door. The issue is primarily about the bathhouse, (the reason Tenakee exists) with many wonderful photographs. But it also has a letter from 1902 about Killisnoo, three obituaries of longtime residents, and a fine 1948 article on a pilotless small plane that took off from Nome and was last seen over the Bering Sea (something like an early drone?) Want to get your own copies of the newsletter? If you’re alone, $15.00 or if you’re a family, $25.00. Mail check to Tenakee Historical Collection, Post Office Box 633, Tenakee Springs, Alaska 99881 and you’re set for a year.

We knew the Sheldon Museum & Cultural Center was busy with puppets this spring, but it was startling to read they have nearly 100 puppeteers in Haines. If you hear odd voices as you walk down the street or encounter little people dancing in the distance, do not assume you are going mad. Right now the museum’s exhibit is Jeff Brown: A Funny Guy - his punny humor that makes ice-cream sundaes out of the local mountains is on display. Want more? office@sheldonmuseum.net is for you.

A great opportunity! The Sheldon Museum has offered to host the American Association for State and Local History’s excellent collections management workshop next May. The two day workshop gives a comprehensive overview of collections management from mission to accessions, and addresses databases, legal issues, care of collections, and storage. If you think you would like to attend, please let Helen Alten, Sheldon Museum Director, know this summer so she can make necessary arrangements, director@sheldonmuseum.net.

Eighty-five years ago the population of Anvik watched the first airplane land in town, the Anvik Historical Society newsletter tells us. In 1924 the radio, known then as the public utility code message, made its appearance there. And they are pleased to tell us to check out http://www.uas.alaska.edu/arts_sciences/humanities/alaska-languages/ellen-savage.html for stories in both Deg Xinag and English, told by Elder Ellen Savage. The joys of the internet! Want to become a member? Send $10.00 to Post Office Box 110, Anvik, Alaska 99558.

A new burl log for their arch is badly needed by the Hope and Sunrise Historical and Mining Museum. The old one fell down last September. The great Good Friday Earthquake is remembered by a letter written at the time. May Third was the annual meeting and after a discussion of books written and being written on the history of the area, the group opened the museum for the season. Want to get the newsletter via email? hopehistoricalsociety@gmail.com is the way to go, or call Diane at 907-782-3115. Website is www.hopeandsunrisehistoricalsociety.org.

Explore the renewal of Alutiiq weaving traditions, the inspirations of contemporary weavers, and the chain of knowledge that continues to grow.

Notes from around the state

Nearly all the recent issue of Gastineau Channel Historical Society’s newsletter is a snapshot of the Juneau paper, The Empire, by an often-times reporter, photographer, and women’s editor. Betty Annis worked for the newspaper from 1955 to 1957, a hopeful, busy time for the capital city; statehood was beckoning, politicians abounded, and the owner of the paper was pathological. Her frank account of the newsroom and its inhabitants makes us wonder and laugh, and her story of the 1939 opening of the grand new Hotel Baranof makes us feel we were there. Both articles have numerous photographs. Readers may be surprised to discover world famous artist Rie Munoz was a cartoonist for the newspaper during the mid-1960s. Dying to get your own copy of the newsletter? ghnews1880@gmail.com, call 907-789-9423, or write the society at Post Office Box 21264, Juneau, Alaska 99802.

A DVD is available that shows the Three Helens, all community activists, the Cooper Landing Museum newsletter tells us. Go to museum@arctic.net or telephone 907-598-1042 or if you can locate pen and paper, write them at Post Office Box 542, Cooper Landing Alaska 99572. Ketchikan was founded as a fishing town, so the winter-summer exhibit of the Tongass Historical Museum First in Fish has some spectacular photographs of the fishers at work. In addition, fishers and their families will share their experiences through a slideshow of personal images and stories. The museum also had a traveling exhibit “Voices of the Wilderness” to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act and the U.S. Forest Service’s artists’ residencies begun in 2010. The museum participated in sending staff to aid and learn when the Alaska State Museum packed its collection for the move to the new state museum, archives, and library. This spring the Totem Heritage Center held a two weekend class on the history of Northwest Coast Visual Art.

Cordova is the proud home of the Ilanka Cultural Center. To learn what they are up to find them on the internet at www.nveyak.com. Ketchikan was founded as a fishing town, so the winter-summer exhibit of the Tongass Historical Museum has some spectacular photographs of the fishers at work. In addition, fishers and their families will share their experiences through a slideshow of personal images and stories. The museum also had a traveling exhibit “Voices of the Wilderness” to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act and the U.S. Forest Service’s artists’ residencies begun in 2010. The museum participated in sending staff to aid and learn when the Alaska State Museum packed its collection for the move to the new state museum, archives, and library. This spring the Totem Heritage Center held a two weekend class on the history of Northwest Coast Visual Art.

It’s always great to hear from the Interior Alaska societies and museums when spring finally comes. Especially nice to hear from the doughty Eagle Historical Society and Museum. They update us with news about the winter weather and activities, announce the winner of the last quilt the museum folks plan to raffle, have some excerpts from Evelyn Shore’s fine childhood memoir Born on Snowshoes, and have a piece about Ben Downing, longtime winter mail and freight carrier from Dawson, traveling his 600-mile route on the frozen Yukon River to the mouth of the Tanana. Need to read more? www.EagleAk.org; contact viaehsmus@aptalaska.net or telephone 907-547-2325.

Have you always longed to be a museum caretaker? Now’s your chance. At the time of writing, the McCarthy-Kennicott Historical Museum will be lonely in August. For a place to stay and a bit of pay, contact Sunny Cook at gramasunny@hotmail.com or the museum at crnw2011@gmail.com. Community quilters just finished a glorious McCarthy solstice quilt. The newsletter has a short biography of Kate Kennedy, not your usual madam. And the Wrangell Mountains Center’s True Story workshop takes place July-22-28 with Tom Kizzia and Frank Soos in residence. The workshop is limited to 16 participants, so if interested check www.wrangells.org/writing.

Kodiak is not only the oldest extant European town in Alaska, its Baranov Museum is in the oldest Russian building in Alaska; built in 1808 as a warehouse, or magazin, for the Russian American Company. The museum’s permanent exhibits are being redesigned. Staff welcome memories, photographs, objects, and anything else with island connections to help the effort. www.baranovmuseum.org, email baranov@ak.net or telephone 907-486-5920 if you’re a bit old-fashioned. As with most of Alaska’s south coast, the great 1964 earthquake...
and the enormous damage it caused, destroying most of the town of Kodiak, were remembered on the 50th anniversary in March.

The Resurrection Bay Historical Society newsletter in Seward mentions that this spring they premiered the DVD *This is Now and That was Then, Historical Vignettes of the Eastern Kenai Peninsula*. A local store donated its antique cash register to the society, and it was pushed to its new locale by a couple of strong society members causing some who saw it to stare. A heist in broad daylight? The newsletter reported the papers of the Seward family, housed at the University of Rochester, New York, are being digitized.

The newsletter’s article from yesteryear was about Senator Ernest Gruening in 1961 approving the idea of staging the Pribilof Islands fur seal processing and auction in Seward. Another yesteryear article was from 1989 about the Exxon *Valdez* oil spill. Exxon was being totally unhelpful about such basics as extension cords and insuring hot water for cleansing birds, while the frantic workers were trying to save birds and marine mammals. It’s hard to believe the disastrous oil spill was 25 years ago.

At the annual meeting of the Kenai Peninsula Historical Association last spring the group made plans to reprint Mary Barry’s *History of Mining on the Kenai Peninsula* as well as sponsor the State of the State lunch at the October AHS/MA conference. A thank you to the association for both actions!

The Valdez Museum and Historical Archive is marking the destruction of the town in the Good Friday Earthquake with spring and summer programs and a special museum exhibit. All are invited to share their earthquake stories at #64Quake.
This past February 13 women were added to the Alaska Women’s Hall of Fame: Eleanor Andrews, Jane Angvik, Beverly Dunham, Mary Jane Fate, Katie John, V. Kay Lahdenpera, Janie Leask, Mrs. Jack (Kay) Linton, Jane Vallett Sutherland Niebergall, Verna E. Pratt, Barbara Sweetland Smith, Francine Taylor, and Gertrude Wolfe. Want to know more and why they were selected? http://alaskawomenshalloffame.org will give details, or telephone Bonnie Jack at 907-279-4836. It’s not to early to think about nominating someone worthy. The website has a “Nominate A Woman” tab, and November 1, 2014 is the deadline. Here’s cheerful news for the older crowd — a nominee can be deceased, but if living she must be at least 65 years old.

A note just in from the Yukon Historical & Museums Association inviting all to an international conference in Whitehorse in May 2016 on World War I. Study tours will go to Dawson and Skagway. The University of Saskatchewan is partnering with the association to plan the conference, and already they have speakers coming from Canada, the United States, Britain, and Romania. More details are at yhma@northwestel.net or www.heritageyukon.ca, or telephone 867-667-4704.

Always wanted to write about well-known Alaskans who are Irish-American? Are you Irish-American and an Alaskan, and want to write about your life? Contact Donald McAuliffe, dpma@eircom.net who is compiling accounts from as many states as possible. His book The American Irish is not to be published until late 2015 or early 2016, so you’ve a little time.

In every newsletter, we must remind you of the wonderful Alaska Yukon Pioneers newsletter. It’s compiled by folks in Seattle, issued monthly, and dedicated to keeping former Alaskans and Yukoners in touch with former neighbors, friends, and acquaintances. They meet in the Seattle area from time to time. $20.00 per annum brings the news for a year. Mail your check to AYP Joyce Penman, Recorder, 27833 85th Drive NW, Stanwood, WA 98292. Telephone is 253-709-0158 or 360-629-3554 or email olwomn@wavecable.com.

Want to know more about ANDORE? Well, it stands for Alaska Native Dialogues on Racial Equity and is sponsored by First Alaskans Institute. A 30-month project, it had 54 community dialogues throughout Alaska, and continues to explore the topic of racism in Alaska. Get started with http://www.firstalaskans.org (don’t you love the motto of the Institute - “Progress for the next ten thousand years”?)

The Tanana-Yukon Historical Society of Fairbanks has a nice invitation to the interested: Please Help Wickersham House Museum. The museum, aka WHM, is owned and maintained by the Fairbanks North Star Borough. Since its opening, the Tanana-Yukon Historical Society has been responsible for staffing the museum, keeping it open between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day. Each year, that means rounding up and managing a group of docents to greet the thousands of visitors coming to us for a dose of real history. Now, they are looking for a WHM Manager, someone who knows Fairbanks well enough to help us find suitable staff, assist with their training, and schedule them for the 100 days the museum is open, noon to 8 pm. The manager also will be responsible for keeping track of sales in the gift shop. They also need more people who would like to greet visitors and tell them about Judge Wickersham, his house, and the times in which he lived in the Interior. They have both paid and volunteer positions available. If you are interested please Ron Inouye, 907-474-9403, or e-mail tyhs@alaska.net.

And, of course, for your monthly dose of Alaska news, conferences, and grant programs for historic preservation...
Alaska Historical Society

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Alaska Railroad locomotive #1, built 1899 by “H.K. Porter & Co., Pittsburgh Pa.” Porter and Co. primarily built small, narrow gauge locomotives that could be operated by one engineer if necessary.

We welcome your letters, news and pictures. Please send them to the editor:
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Alaska Railroad locomotive #1, built 1899 by “H.K. Porter & Co., Pittsburgh Pa.” Porter and Co. primarily built small, narrow gauge locomotives that could be operated by one engineer if necessary.

Pick. Click. Give.

THE ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY is on the list for those applying for their Permanent Fund Dividend. Consider using the “Pick, Click, Give” to donate.
Louis Payne, would-be assassin of U.S. Secretary of State William Henry Seward.

Hat do Seward, Alaska, and Auburn, New York, have in common? They both have Seward houses. To be fair, Auburn has only one: the Seward House that was home to the enterprising U.S. Secretary of State who negotiated the purchase of Alaska in 1867. His descendants owned the 30-room house until they gave it to the public in 1951. One of the museum’s exhibits is Imagining the Land: Perceptions of the Alaska Purchase. It looks at the transfer from the perspectives of the Alaska Natives, the Russians, and, perhaps to Alaskans’ surprise, William Henry Seward. If you’d like to learn more, visit www.sewardhouse.org, phone 315/252-1283, or write the museum at 33 South Street, Auburn, New York, 13021-3929.

And of Seward, Alaska. The Resurrection Bay Historical Society there is hosting the Alaska Historical Society and Museums Alaska members for our annual conference this fall. If you have not done so already, you can check out the program and register for the conference which will be held October 1-4, 2014. There is a full schedule of papers, panels, and poster sessions, along with social activities and tours that make the meetings not-to-be-missed events.