



2012 Award Winners: Alaska on the World Stage & Museums Matter: Connecting with Our Communities

*T*he Alaska Historical Society 2012 awards, presented at Sitka in October, recognized individuals, groups and projects for excellent research, writing, and promotion of Alaska history. Congratulations to each award recipient!

Marilyn R. Knapp received the *Evangeline Atwood Award*, given to an individual for significant long-term contributions to Alaska state or local history. The award is named for a founder of the Alaska Historical Society. It is long overdue that Marilyn is recognized for her work as a historian, curator, archivist, educator, and author. In all of her work, Marilyn contributed in substantive ways. In Sitka, she worked for the Sitka Historical Society, Sheldon Jackson Museum, Sitka National Historic Park, and University of Alaska Southeast.
(continued)



Peaks of the Wrangell Mountains surrounding
Radovan Gulch. Photograph courtesy of Samson
Ferreira, National Park Service, 2007. From *Tunnel
Vision* by Katherine J. Ringsmuth

Award Winners: Alaska Historical Society / Museums Alaska 2012 Conference



The Liuknax.adi Frog Sculpture. From *Carved History* by Marilyn R. Knapp

Marilyn authored *Carved History*, still a popular introduction to the totems at the national park. In Anchorage, Marilyn was Curator of History for the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center. There, she prepared the Constitutional Convention 50th anniversary traveling exhibit and researched paintings from the 1830s of Sitka and the Russian governor Baron von Wrangell and his wife. Marilyn served on the Alaska Historical Society's board of directors, was its secretary, and always writes thoughtful book reviews for our journal, *Alaska History*.

The Awards Committee expanded the *Elva R. Scott Local History Award* to recognize local historical societies work in addition to their newsletters. Elva Scott was a founder of the Pratt Museum in Homer and for more than 20 years the tireless editor of the newsletter of the Eagle Historical Society. The **Port Alexander Historical Society** received the award for publishing its newsletter, *Ebb and Flood*, for more than six years and for opening a museum this year as well. The nomination noted "Creating a museum in a remote community with no power grid and 60 miles from the nearest hardware store is a challenge. The community has watched in amazement as the Historical Society has taken a decrepit 1930s shack and turned it into a warm and homey place in the rainforest for residents and guests to learn about local history."

Nick Golodoff, Rachel Mason and Frank Broderick received the *Esther Billman Award of Excellence* given to a historical society, museum, government agency, or other organization for a notable project contributing to the preservation and understanding of Alaska history during the past year. This award is named for the long-time curator of the Sheldon Jackson Museum. The team collaborated to produce *Attu*

Boy. The book is Golodoff's memoir of his experiences as a child on Attu when the Japanese occupied the island in 1942 and as a prisoner of war in Japan. The remarkable account is enhanced with Rachel Mason's historical information, and Frank Broderick's evocative design profiling some incredible historic photographs.



Nick Golodoff. Photograph courtesy Brenda Maly from *Attu Boy*

J. Penelope Goforth received the *Pathfinder Award* that recognizes contributions to the discovery and description of resources relating to Alaska history. Her "Lost Ledgers of the Alaska Commercial Company Project" made 1890s ledgers from Aleutian Island trading stations available to researchers. Most of the ACC's records were lost when the company's San Francisco headquarters burned after the 1906 earthquake there. Penelope digitized the ledgers, translated them, and secured permission from the private owner of the ledgers to make them available at the major research archives in Alaska.



Sitka's Nua Kahidi dancers performed for AHS/MA conference attendees. Photograph courtesy of Shana Loshbaugh

Katherine J. (Katie) Ringsmuth received a *Contributions to Alaska History Award* for two significant contributions last year: coordinating for the Alaska Historical Society the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes centennial commemoration,

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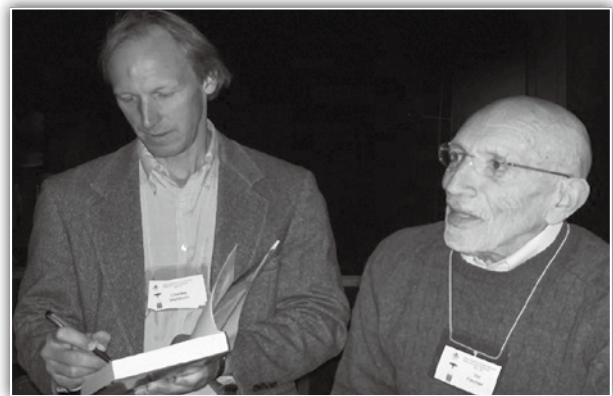
Objects in the collection of St. Michaels Cathedral. Photograph courtesy of Shana Loshbaugh

and writing *Tunnel Vision: The Life of a Copper Prospector in the Nizina River Country* for the National Park Service. The centennial of the eruption of Novarupta included a student poster contest, a public lecture series, and publicity. About *Tunnel Vision*, the nominator wrote: "Attention was paid to a prospector's fierce determination, the American dream, the last frontier, and our Wrangell Mountain area. The book captures the spirit of the country."

Thomas F. Thornton, editor of *Haa Leelk'w Has ani Saaz'u: Our Grandparents Names on the Land*, also received a *Contributions to Alaska History Award*. A book reviewer noted "this is a very important work, it makes a huge contribution to ethnohistory, and particularly to place names in Southeast Alaska." The author has written, studied, and published about the Tlingit and Haida people for many years. The State of Alaska created an Alaska Native Language Council earlier this year, the result of works by Thornton and others concerned about preservation of Native languages.

Laurence A. Goldin, Aurora Films was honored with a *Special Recognition Award* for his videoproduction *Statehood!* The work includes insightful interviews with participants in the writing Alaska's constitution and the early leaders after statehood. The production has a treasure-trove of archival film footage and

historic photographs. Larry prepared materials for teachers and students to accompany the production, and provided copies of it and the video to all school districts in the state.



Charles Wohlforth and Vic Fischer spoke at the Alaska Historical Society / Museums Alaska conference in October and autographed hot-off-the-press copies of *From Russia With Love*, Vic's biography they collaborated to write.

President Ross Coen selected **Katie Ringsmuth** to receive the *Beaver Log Award*. In his remarks he said that Katie is "the hardest working historian." The editorial advisors of the Alaska Historical Society's journal, *Alaska History*, selected **Chris Allan** for his article "All the Hell I Needed": The U.S. Geological Survey and the Search for Arctic Oil" to receive its annual award and check for \$500. This award was endowed by Morgan and Jeanie Sherwood.

The restored bells of St. Michael's Cathedral in Sitka produce a soul-filling tone, a music produced from a complicated web of rope and foot pedals that likely sounds very similar to what Father Veniaminov heard over one hundred and fifty years ago. The music of church bells, bluegrass, and Tlingit drummers commingled with fascinating presentations and ever-enlightening hallway conversations to create a memorable soundtrack for a remarkable conference in Sitka. A heartfelt thank you to the local arrangements committee, the Sitka Historical Society and Museum staff, and all of the other volunteers for coordinating a wonderful, successful conference.

We may be in the dark days of winter, but one thing is certain—the Alaska Historical Society has good energy. In addition to holding an annual conference, publishing the only scholarly journal that exclusively covers Alaska's history, and advocating for the preservation and understanding of our history, we are taking on an ambitious list of new initiatives this year. You can expect to see a more robust digital presence from us. We are beginning an AHS history blog, starting a Facebook page, and revamping

our website. Our education committee is gathering resources and making contacts so teachers of Alaska history have better tools as well as compelling content. We also are starting a special project in which we will begin the monumental yet absolutely critical task of documenting Alaska's historic canneries. Did I mention that these are all volunteer-run initiatives?

When you take a minute this new year to contemplate the many things that you are grateful for, I hope that the Alaska Historical Society comes to mind. Your membership, donations, advocacy work, and goodwill help drive the organization. Please consider giving a friend a gift membership to the Alaska Historical Society for 2013. Think of the Alaska Historical Society when you file for your permanent fund—donations can be made through Pick. Click. Give. Add a donation when you renew your membership. You know that our work matters. With your financial support, the AHS can walk confidently into the future, with an eye ever on the past.

Anjuli Grantham, President



Church member Ana Dittmar, on right, rings the restored bells of St. Michaels Cathedral for AHS/MA conference attendees. Photograph courtesy of Shana Loshbaugh

Notes from around the state

U.S. made, Lend-Lease P-39 Airacobras in support of Russian ground troops during the battle for Stalingrad.

"Stalingrad Story" Bellringer magazine, August 1943. Courtesy of Niagara Aerospace Museum collection, Niagara Falls, NY.



54th Fighter Squadron pilot, Aleutian Theatre. Photograph courtesy of Archgraphics

A fun evening celebrating World War II pilots was hosted by the **Tanana-Yukon Historical Society** at the Pioneer Air Museum in Fairbanks. A bit earlier they had celebrated the 70th anniversary of the war's Lend-Lease program, joined by the **Fairbanks-Yakutsk Sister City Committee** and the **Fort Wainwright Cultural Resources Office**.

Sometimes we can solve a minor mystery. For some reason, that can be more entertaining than solving a major one. The **Talkeetna Historical Society** reports one of those happy moments when it discovered why its 1936 school, unlike all others in the Territory, was painted red and not white with dark green trim. Seems a local store could supply lots of red paint at a great price. At the same time, the railroad buildings had changed from white with green trim to tan with brown trim. The society is returning both buildings, now parts of their museum, to their original colors. The society also plans to expand the popular *Moose Dropping Festival* from one event to a series. The theme in 2013 is *One Hundred Years of*

Mountaineering in celebration of the first ascent of Mount McKinley.

Thinking of visiting next summer? Point the browser to www.talkeetnahistoricalsociety.org for more information.



The recent **Sitka Historical Society** newsletter completes its story of the building of the local dam that supplies water to the town. Three local men who worked on the project from the initial surveys to the actual building, around 1951 to 1959, tell great stories. They recount learning to be a powder man from a drunk, teetering around on ladders during construction, witnessing rock slides, and more. If you want to read more go to <http://www.sitkahistory.org/newsletters/2012-Spring-newsletter.pdf>. The first part of the story is also on the same website.

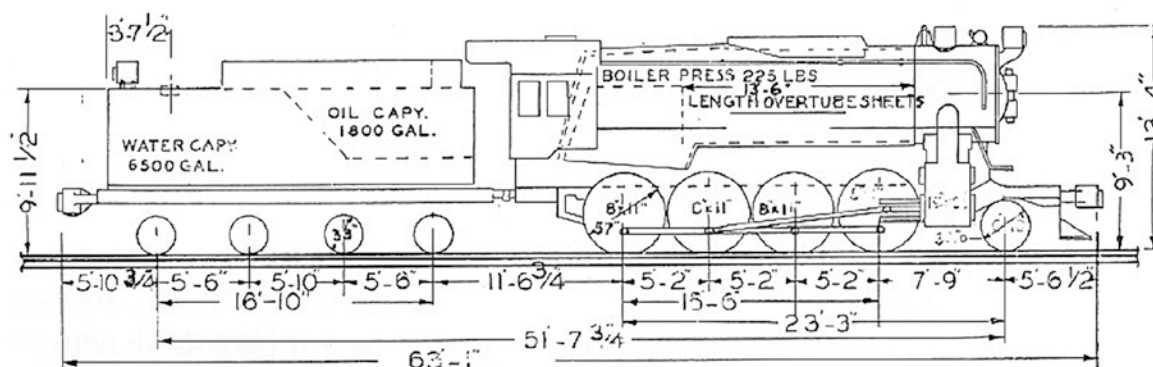
Hopefully, society members are relaxing after doing a great job hosting the annual AHS and Museums Alaska conference last October.



Notes from around the state



NO. 557



Above: Alaska Railroad steam locomotive #557, Anchorage railyard 1959. Below: Schematic of #557.

Photograph courtesy of Pat Durand. Visit <http://www.alaskarails.org/pix/former-loco/ARR-557.html> for more images and information.

The newsletter of the **Sitka Maritime Society** includes a history of boat building in Sitka, complete with photographs. Go to www.sitkamaritime.org for a full picture. The group also recently joined the Sitka Conservation Society to host the annual wild foods dinner; sitkawild.org if your organization is thinking of planning something similar.

donate.html where you can see a great photograph of the doughty old girl. The **Alaska Railroad Corporation** is actively involved, and features the project their newsletter, www.AlaskaRailroad.com

The society, of course, hosted its annual Colony Christmas Open House.

Some groups are downright amazing. Seward's **Resurrection Bay Historical Society** is among them. They spent several months moving to their new location (still not totally moved in; don't we all shudder at the thought of moving a museum?), but managed to keep producing their monthly newsletter. They deserve the Perseverance Trophy.

They also have found time to host a program on an oral history project about Exit Glacier prior to 1980.

Palmer's history in agriculture properly includes root cellars. A nice recipe for mixing and baking root vegetables is in the **Palmer Historical Society's** recent newsletter. They are raising funds to restore the last steam engine in Alaska, as of two months ago stored in a Wasilla warehouse. They have a matching grant--find out more and give at www.alaskarails.org/pix/former-loco/557/support/

Carving, basket weaving, design, robes; even a marketing and portfolio development class. Where else could all these be offered except at Ketchikan's **Totem Heritage Center**?

Nunavut's Culture on Cloth is an exhibit touring the world, showing wonderful cloth applique and embroidery of the Inuit people of Canada. **Ketchikan Historical Museum** is its first stop in Alaska, and special programs featured family fun and school class activities to introduce the exhibit. As we always say, "get 'em young!"

One of the best things families can do with inherited photographs, letters, and diaries is to donate any or all of them to the museum in the town they are from. Ketchikan was the happy recipient of photo negatives dating from around 1900. Definitely something to keep in mind next summer when chatting with visitors.

Notes from around the state



Lavrenty Zagoskin
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

The Pole House? Don't you mean Poll House, or Poor House, or perhaps Poland House? No, the **Eagle Historical Society & Museums** newsletter assures us. The owner writes about taking it apart. It was built of small poles because logs were unobtainable. Insulation was the usual Alaska make-do; moss, old cardboard, newspapers, and anything else available. The owner found 14 layers in the walls as it gets very cold in Eagle in the winter.

The newsletter also has a nice succinct account of construction of the Taylor Highway. Want to buy a copy? P.O. Box 23, Eagle, AK 99738 or www.eaglehistoricalsociety.com

A new series on local families who lived in the area for several generations has begun in the **Chugiak-Eagle River Historical Society** newsletter. They also provide news to the local newspaper; members write a weekly local history column and go through bygone newspapers for good ads and social events from the 1960s.

A dinner and antique auction as a fund raiser? Kodiak's **Baranov Museum** had a nice twist to their event, a 1940s themed dinner. The event

included 1940s cocktails, and a slide show of Kodiak photographs from guess-when? Attendees were urged to dress appropriately. Sounds like good fun and an idea worth copying.

The **Cook Inlet Historical Society** has teamed with the **University of Alaska Honors Program** for their monthly lecture series, this year marking the Centennial of Flight in Alaska. Details are at www.cookinlethistory.org, or be at the Anchorage Museum auditorium at 7:30 p.m. the third Thursday of the month.

Lieutenant Lavrentiy Zagoskin is one of your editor's all-time favorite Russians. He explored between 1842 and 1844 in the lower Yukon-Kuskokwim area and wrote a delightful book about his travels. Marvelous to read in the **Anvik Historical Society** newsletter that for the second time a small group of Russians traveled to Anvik as Zagoskin did. Other news tells of the new Anvik Tribal Hall, and of the big celebration of the 125th anniversary of the founding of the first Alaska Mission of the Anglican Episcopal Church in Anvik.



"Group of people at the Christ Church Mission in Anvik greeting the first mail of the season, which has arrived by stern wheeler."

UAF-1985-72-148, Walter and Lillian Phillips Photograph Collection

News & Information



Phyllis DeMuth and Ron Inouye did the ceremonial groundbreaking for the new State Library Archives Museum building. Phyllis, former head of the Alaska Historical Library, was on the first state museum building committee in 1967. The Alaska Historical Society, represented by Ron, organized in 1967 has, and continues to, steadfastly support the historical library, archives and museums programs. Marie Darlin, a tireless hard worker for the building and cultural programs in Juneau and statewide, looks on. The building is scheduled to be completed in 2016.

To commemorate the centennial of the **Alaska Native Brotherhood & Alaska Native Sisterhood** six interpretive panels were written, designed and produced. A second set of the panels were made and are available as a traveling exhibit to museums, libraries, and other organizations. The only charge to bring them to your community is to pay for shipping. For more details and to schedule getting the exhibit, contact Bob Medinger at the Sitka Historical Museum, sitka.history@yahoo or call 907-747-6455.

The **Pratt Museum** in Homer is conducting a survey to learn how the museum can help visitors connect to the culture and history of Kachemak Bay. The survey is open

to everyone and there's even a prize. Go on: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/_Pratt_Full_OnLine_Survey

The **Alaska State Archives** has added 500 Governor's slides to *Alaska's Digital Archives*, <http://vilda.alaska.edu/>. The Governor's official photographer took 2,000 photographs in the early days of the Exxon *Valdez* oil spill. Content varied from tanker and Valdez port aerials, to spill response in progress, to affected animals, birds, and people in communities impacted by the spill. A narrated PowerPoint by project archivist Sara Bornstein also is available, telling about the Exxon *Valdez* Records Project underway at the archives. An index to all of the slides is available at http://archives.alaska.gov/for_researchers/for_researchers.html/#exxon and the 1,500 slides not digitized in the collection are available at the State Archives.

Do you worry sometimes about keeping up with Alaska history news, from funding to the status of preservation of buildings? Fret no more; subscribe to *Heritage*, a monthly news update from the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology. Please send your comments, suggestions, and information to jo.antonson@alaska.gov, or mail them to 550 West 7th Ave., Suite 1310, Anchorage, AK 99501, or telephone 907.269.8721. To subscribe send an e-mail to oha@alaska.net.

The *Peninsula Clarion*, Brian Smith reporter, ran an interview and photograph in the October 27-28, 2012 issue with **Jon Ross**, 40, a Dena'ina intent on becoming fluent in his language. He did not grow up with the language or even hear it spoken until after he began his study through audiotapes and books. Quite an inspiring story for any Alaska Native or anyone who believes, as many do, no culture can be understood without knowing the language. Contact the paper in Kenai or through Google.

Sven Haakanson director of the Alutiiq Museum in Kodiak, and the **Alaska Native Heritage Center** in Anchorage, were honored by Governor Parnell with awards last fall for their "Distinguished Service to the Humanities". These recognitions are well deserved. Congratulations to both.



Seiners overhaul gear, Emery Tobin photograph, circa 1930.
THS 76.1.3.129

And, as always, if you lived a long time in Alaska or the Yukon and want to stay in touch with old friends as well as meet occasionally in the Seattle area, the biggest bargain around is the \$20.00 yearly subscription to the **Alaska Yukon Pioneers Newsletter**. Checks should be sent to AYP, Joyce Penman, Recorder, 27833 85th Drive, NW, Stanwood, WA, 98292.



No one knows local history like the people who live there, but local historians usually gain fame only in town. It is especially nice to report two Seward historians, **Amy Carney** and **Lee Poleski** were awarded Certificates of Excellence by the **Alaska State Historical Records Advisory Board** for a series of videos they did on Seward called *Bits of History*.



Why would you want to visit <http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=3426>? Because the **U.S. Geological Survey** has scanned 130 years of Alaska topographical maps. They are available for free in GeoPDG format or on a disk for \$15.00 plus \$5.00 handling. The **Alaska Mining Hall of Fame** recently inducted three early miners. Merton Marston who mined at Flat in 1908,

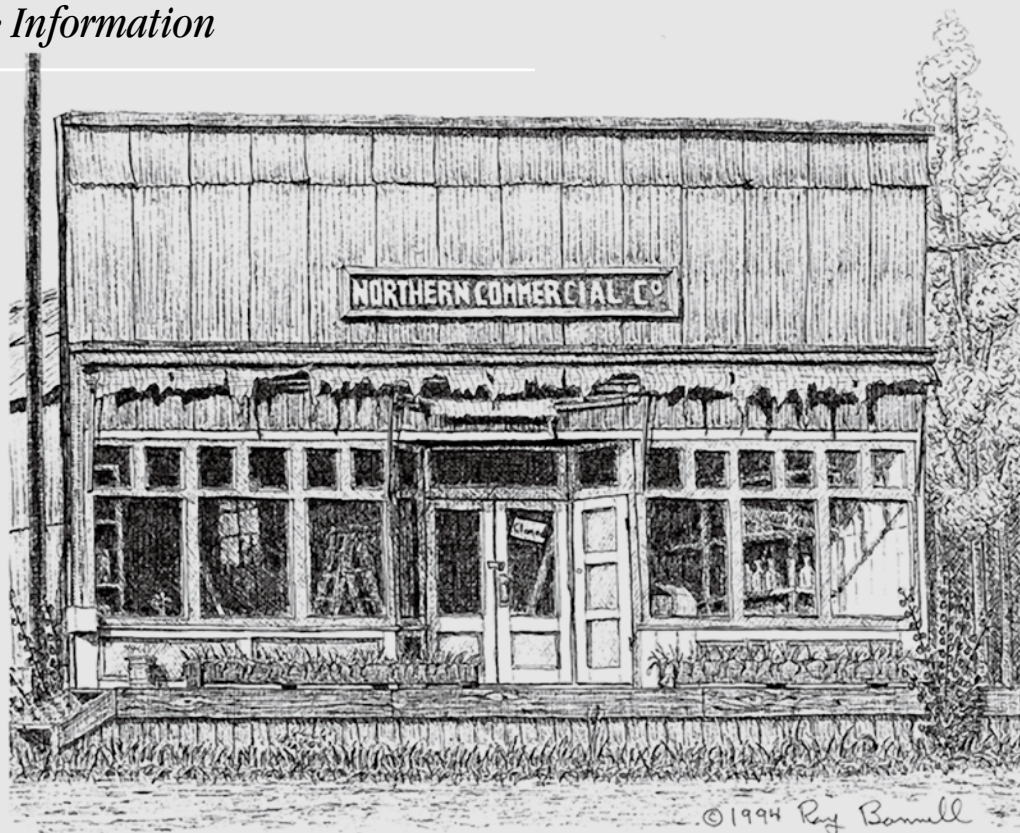
Mattie Crosby, a/k/a Tootsie from Flat, and Toivo Rosander, Finnish miner who was in Ophir-McGrath-Iditarod area for many years. Curious? Contact Tom Bundtzen at bundtzen@mosquitonet.com for more information about the honorees and the Mining Hall of Fame.



As recognized with an AHS award, Penelope Goforth spent the last year digitizing **Alaska Commercial Company** ledgers and records from Aleutian posts she discovered in an attic in Seattle. Then she learned the current Alaska Commercial Company had records from stores along the Yukon River. Penelope facilitated their donation to the University of Alaska Fairbanks archives. It is great to have the materials available to researchers. For more information about the donated records and the digitizing project email seacat@cybrccat.com or telephone 907/ 227.7837.



Elementary and middle school students getting bored? Suggest their class or they contact the **National History Bee**. It is a competition that is fun and can instill a love of history. Contact director Eric Huff for more information at www.historybee.com.



Northern Commercial Store—Manley, Alaska, Ray Bonnell, 1994, Pen & Ink on Bristol Board, Image size 8.5" x 11". Bonnell writes: At the time of the Fairbanks gold rush there were trading posts throughout Alaska. Some were small independent operations, but many were owned and operated by the Alaska Commercial Company, which also owned a navigation and transportation operation. The A.C. Company, which became the Northern Commercial Company in 1922, provided groceries and general merchandise to the local population. In many small settlements, the N.C. Company store also acted as the post office, social center and bank. The N.C. Company store in Manley remained open until the mid 1960s when declining population forced it to close. To view more of Bonnell's work visit: <http://www.pingostudio.us/>

A new memorial to the civilians of Attu Island in the Aleutians, taken to Japan during World War II has been placed on the island. The memorial is a gift of the **Alaska Veterans Museum** and installed with the aid of the Coast Guard. That action in 1943 is little known and little remembered by most people, including Alaskans.



After years and years of planning, the actual construction of the new building in Juneau that will house the **State Library, Archives, and Museum** is getting underway. The groundbreaking ceremony happened January 16, and the completion date is April 18, 2016. Staff of all three divisions can testify to the need for the new building. What joy it will bring visitors, researchers and staff.



The University of Alaska Fairbanks Oral History Program has improved its famous **Project Jukebox**. This digital project, started in 1988, was one of the first in the United States. Check it out at www.jukebox.uaf.edu



The **Tanana-Yukon Historical Society** is publicizing an effort to document the history of the Interior. Alaskan artist and writer **Ray Bonnell** is working on a guide to over 50 historic sites in Interior Alaska. Although some of the sites are being preserved, many are fading away--the result of development, vandalism, accidents, and time. For the past 25 years, Bonnell has been tramping the roads and trails of Interior Alaska, visiting the old mining camps, roadhouses, cemeteries and villages. Many of his drawings have appeared in Sunday editions of the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* over the past two years. He has started a Kickstarter campaign to fund publishing a book of the columns. The book, titled "Interior Sketches," will be about 120 pages. If you are interested in supporting this publication, please go to <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/471492012/interior-sketches-alaska-history-through-an-artist>.



An Italian student sent along a request: I am writing my dissertation about the Swedish emigration to the USA. I am looking for people of Swedish descent willing to participate in an online anonymous survey that requires an estimated time of 20 minutes. Here is the link: <http://fluidsurveys.com/s/swedish-americans/>. Feel free to contact me if you need more info. Thanks. Stefania Forlani

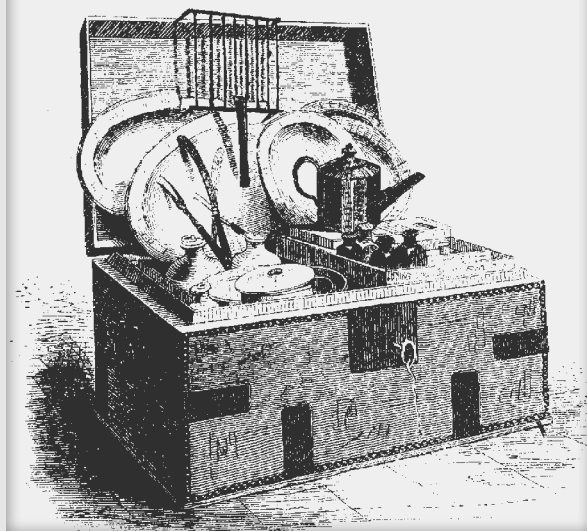
News & Information



We have started a blog, <http://49history.blogspot.com/>. Members of the Board of Directors are going to post information and respond to your questions about Alaska history. New posts will be added each week, so you will want to check back often! Ross Coen is our moderator and invites you to send your ideas, comments and questions about Alaska history and the historical society; rcoen@uw.edu

SEEKING TREASURES

The Alaska Historical Society's big fundraiser is its silent auction held as part of its annual fall meeting. The auction committee is soliciting items for this year's auction. Please send a description of what you would like to donate to akhist@gci.net or Box 100299 / Anchorage / AK 99510 by May 1st.



A great gift for a friend, relative, local school or library is a year's membership in the Alaska Historical Society. Your gift includes the newsletter and journal *Alaska History*, and supports important activities and programs. It's easy . . . go to the AHS website, www.alaskahistoricalociety.org and then click on "membership and giving."

Visit our website:

www.alaskahistoricalociety.org



We welcome your letters, news and pictures. Please send them to the editor:
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THE ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY is on the list for those applying for the 2013 Permanent Fund Dividend. Consider using the "Pick, Click, Give" to donate.

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