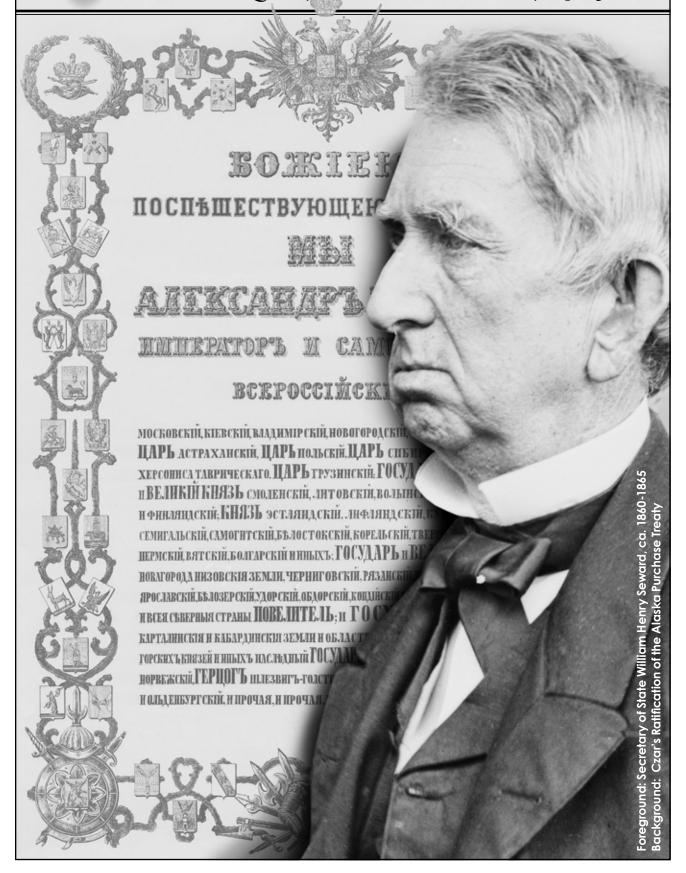
# Alaska History News

Volume 42, No. 1 Quarterly of the Alaska Historical Society Spring 2014





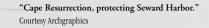
# The Alaska Historical Society Annual Conference

# Gateways: Past, Present and Future

Resurrection Bay has been a gateway for travel and trade since prehistoric times. The Alaska Natives who lived along the coast traveled long distances by boat or on trails to the interior to visit groups in other areas. Russian fur traders built a shipyard in what is now the city of Seward. In the American era, the ice-free, protected port became a hub of steamship commerce. A railroad was built to bring goods and passengers to the Interior of Alaska. Seward was also the beginning point of the original Iditarod trail. The city played a major role for the military as the port of entry during the World War II buildup. It became the start of a highway to Anchorage and the terminus of a ferry line to Kodiak and the Aleutian Chain. Its access to fishing, wildlife, and glaciers continues to make it a gateway to commerce, education and recreation. Please join us in Seward to explore this gateway and many others in the history of Alaska and the region.

ALL ARE INVITED TO SUBMIT PROPOSALS FOR PAPERS (20 MINUTES), PANELS (1- 1/2 HOURS ) AND POSTER SESSIONS FOR THE ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN SEWARD, ALASKA, OCTOBER 1-4, 2014. ALL PRESENTERS MUST REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE.

PAPER AND SESSION PROPOSALS ARE DUE APRIL 1, 2014. PLEASE SEND TITLE AND ABSTRACT (100 WORDS OR LESS) TO RACHEL MASON, PROGRAM CHAIR, RACHEL\_MASON@NPS.GOV OR BY U.S. MAIL TO THE ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P.O. BOX 100299, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510.



## Message from the President—Naming Alaska's Newest City

n August 23, John Ballaine and fifty-eight other "pioneers of 1903" sailing aboard the *Santa Ana* set foot upon an alluvial deposit at the head of Resurrection Bay. Their plan was to commence construction on what would soon be Alaska's shipping-railway hub. These early pioneers considered a variety of names for the new town. There was "Almouth" because its place represented the mouth of Alaska. Rivaling that beauty was "Vituska," a combination of Captain Vitus Bering and Alaska. These awkward names for Alaska's newest beacon did not satisfy Ballaine. In an article he later wrote for the *Seward Gateway*, Seward's founder described how he sought approval from Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States, to officially name his town after the purchaser of Alaska:

"I decided as a last recourse to go straight to the President, state the case briefly, and appeal to him to have the Interior and Post Office Departments cut their red tape. His Secretary, William Loeb, on the 8th of October, 1903, gave me an appointment with the President for 10 o'clock next day. I stated the situation to the President, both as to the approval of the railroad survey and the naming of the new town. He listened closely, and then, looking me straight in the eye with his characteristic squint through his double-lens glasses, he said, verbatim: "Mr. Ballaine, you write me two letters on these subjects, covering each subject in a separate letter in just about the language you have used here, and bring them to me tomorrow morning. If it is proper for me to indorse them, I will do so."

Promptly at 10 o'clock the next morning, October 10, President Roosevelt came to the door of his ante-room of his office, where I was waiting my turn, and announced: "Mr. Ballaine, good morning; come right in." Without a word [he] heard my two letters. He first endorsed the one concerning action on the Alaska Central Survey, and then intently read the one about the establishment of a post office under the name, "Seward." As he indorsed it on the margin, he commented to me: "I entirely agree with you, Mr. Ballaine."... As the President Roosevelt handed me the two letters he said, with a twinkle of a smile: "I think these indorsements will bring the results you are after."

Thanks to John Ballaine and Teddy Roosevelt, the 2014 AHS-Museums Alaska joint annual conference will not be held at Almouth or Vituska! I will see you all in SEWARD, Alaska on October 1-4. Be sure to submit your paper proposals by April 1.

Katie Ringsmuth, President

Sources: Mary J. Barry, Seward Alaska: A History of the Gateway City, Vol. 1, 1986. John Ballaine, Seward Gateway, December 5, 1925.

What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

~William Shakespeare



William Shakespeare, 1610.

National Portrait Gallery

Everyone with a sense of history (everyone reading this newsletter, in other words) knows this March will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Alaska Earthquake and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. All month the Alaska Historical Society's blog will feature articles by Alaskans on these two landmark events. Writers include Brian O'Donohue, Rachel Mason, Toby Sullivan, Anjuli Grantham, Andrew Goldstein, and John Cloe. Bookmark the site – http://49history.blogspot.com – and check back through the month for historic perspectives and first person accounts of two very significant events in Alaska history.

One of the reasons the Alaska Historical Society exists is to advocate for Alaska history programs and projects. In January, Advocacy Committee members traveled to Juneau and participated in the first annual Culture, Humanities, Art and Museums Partners (CHAMP) fly-in. The AHS delegation

met with members of the Senate and House Finance Committees to present our advocacy priorities. Full funding for the State Library Archives and Museum (SLAM) building was one topic, along with speaking to how the programs of the Office of History and Archaeology and Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums serve Alaskans around the state.

We are home from Juneau, but the work isn't done. Your legislators need to hear *from you* that the SLAM building matters around the state. They need to understand that OHA and LAM provide services in your community. Please advocate for these important programs that help document, preserve, and interpret Alaska's history.

Do you have questions about our advocacy priorities, do you need more information before you call or write, or are you interested in joining the advocacy committee? If so, please contact Anjuli Grantham, anjuligrantham@gmail.com.

## Notes from around the state



Winter have you feeling blue?
"Look up and shut up."

Everyone is getting so high techie - amazing! As someone who still misses her electric typewriter, your editor can only be astounded. The **Anvik Historical Society** is organizing its 1,200 or more photographs and will get them scanned and into a computer for public enjoyment. And their newsletter notes one can learn about the Deg Xinag language at http://ankn.uaf.edu/ANL/course/view.php?id=7 and read stories at http://www.uas.alaska.edu/arts\_sciences/humanities/alaska-languages/deg-xinag.html. The Anvik folks also report gifts of old fishing gear, some woven items, and a new mask for the museum. Want to see photos? Write them at Post Office Box 110, Anvik, Alaska, 99558.

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The **Talkeetna Historical Society** is gearing up the museum for this summer; new exhibits, update the interior, improve the gift shop; all the usual. Busy times are coming.

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A new and improved **Museum of the Aleutians** has reopened this winter. Gone are the old glass cases and posters, replaced by exhibits featuring Aleut culture, the commercial fishing industry,

World War II, and the U.S. Coast Guard. A two-day celebration started things off; the first day featured dignitaries and high-level financier benefactors, and the next presentations by local historian Jeff Dickrell and former local pilot Burke Mees on kayaks and the demise of the Grumman Goose amphibious airplane respectively.

\*

The Tanana-Yukon Historical Society held its fifth program of the 2013-2014 season on February 19, 2014, at Pioneer Hall, Pioneer Museum, at Pioneer Park, Fairbanks.

A quoting from past newspapers usually enlivens the newsletters of the Resurrection Bay **Historical Society**. No exception in the latest issues. December contained a 1961 plea for Christmas tolerance, which included "An ear to the ground' may be good political advice, but it is bad 'living advice' for it leads to a worm's eye view of the world and fellow man." At the end of this and other charming philosophical sayings, we come down with a thump. The advice is "Look up and shut up." The latest issue brings a nice 1914 report on Col. H. E. Revell, well known guide and a pioneer being awarded the mail contract for four years, using "the best dog teams available." The route will go from Seward to Iditarod November 1, 1914 to April 1, 1915, making 24 trips during that time. A magnificent bear gut parka given to the Seward museum has been on loan to the Dena'ina exhibit at the Anchorage Museum.

...

The Anchorage Museum is already telling us of its 2015 exhibits and programs. These include an Anchorage centennial exhibition, one on Captain Cook and the Northwest Passage, and "Take Me Out to the Ballgame," Baseball as Alaska's Pastime. 2014 brings Riskland, the story of the 1964 major earthquake. The Smithsonian's Arctic Studies Center at the museum continues hosting talks by Alaskans. Contact Dawn Biddison there for details.

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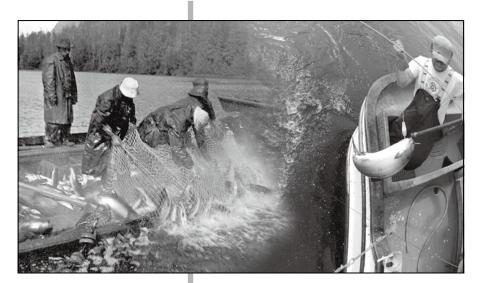
The Cook Inlet Historical Society programs the next two years will help the museum celebrate Anchorage's centennial. They also co-sponsor Polaris Lectures to emphasize their ongoing relationship with the UAA Honors College. All are invited to explore their nifty new website, www.cookinlethistory.org and, while you are online, www.anchoragecentennial.org.

The CIHS has created two new grant programs to encourage research and writing about the history of the Cook Inlet area and Alaska. The two programs were created to honor two long-time board members. The *Brian Davies Memorial Grant for Alaska History* supports creative projects and in-depth research undertakings that make a significant contribution to the study of Alaska history. The *John Reeder Memorial Travel Grant* must be for conducting research in a library or archives in Alaska. Each grant will be for \$400-\$1,000. This year's application deadline

Grumman Goose and Cathedral of the Holy Ascension, Unalaska. Watercolor by Burke Mees



## Notes from around the state



Left: Hand seiners near Loring, 1908. Con Giebel photo. THS 73.16.28 Right: King Salmon catch, 2013. Marvin Scott photo



FIRST IN FISH: Ketchikan's Commercial Fishing Traditions

Tongass Historical Museum Beginning February 28th, 2014



is April 1, 2014. Applications are available on the website, and more information is available from Ayse Gilbert, vonkotzebue@gci.net.

\*

A busy bunch, the **Kodiak Historical Society**. Last fall they had a program, Way Back in Kodiak, on the local radio station, and one program was on the 1886 murder in what is now the museum. Their newsletter mentions a mysterious gravestone, visit with a local basket weaver, a Russian New Year celebration, fur and fish exhibits, spoon carving, and Russian traditional doll painting. They also had a lecture on the museum, which is in the oldest extant building in Alaska, and a poster contest on the 1964 giant earthquake and tsunami--something for all age groups.

\*

Did you know Palmer has an underground? The Palmer Historical Society newsletter details the fun third annual Palmer Underground Tour. With the help of the Palmer Arts Council, the participants went underground from the old jail to a basement containing treats and a grand piano, and places in between. The November newsletter announced a brother and sister speaking. It also had an item on a local author who found many true articles and research in an aunt's old trunk that she has used for four volumes of Alaska history so far, with at least one more in the works. Another issue of the newsletter had a nice Veteran's Day reflection by a local writer and pilot. The famous and popular Christmas at the Colony House Museum was better than ever. And they found time to hold a fundraiser for the Engine 557 Restoration project.

The busy, busy summer at the **Sitka Maritime Heritage Society** continued into the fall and winter. A nice feature story in the current newsletter is on building boats on Jamestown Bay. Another is on renovating a boat over seventeen years. Both are complete with photographs. They are searching for a new executive director. Interested? www.sitkamaritime.org, or email sitkamaritime@gmail.com, or gasp! pick up the telephone and call 907-747-3448.

\*\*\*

The Sheldon Museum and Cultural Center in Haines is truly an all-round, community-minded institution. After hosting the wonderful AHS and Museums Alaska conference, they got busy with a Six Week Artist Spotlight exhibit series, and shortly will open a puppet exhibit to coordinate with the schools' puppet workshop. (Do tell us more about Geppetto's Junkyard, please.) They also have all sorts of education activities, from learning Tlingit to student researchers working on the history of Haines. Write them at Post Office Box 269, Haines, Alaska, 99827 if you want to learn more about some of their ideas and programs.

\*

Lots of moving around and expansion of research and office space is happening at the Ketchikan Museums. A generous grant helped buy two custom-made collections storage cabinets. Preservation of collections is a constant duty of museums, but it is expensive and sometimes overlooked. The newsletter also reports the ship's bell from the Canadian National Line steamship Prince George has been donated to them. The ship, sadly, caught fire at the Ketchikan dock in 1945, resulting in the death of a crewmember. The ship was towed to a nearby beach to burn out, then to Seattle for scrap. The newsletter also calls for stories and photos for a summer exhibit on commercial fishing, First in Fish. Send contributions to the museum at 629 Dock St., Ketchikan, Alaska, 99901 or museum@cityketchikan.ak.us.

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The **Totem Heritage Center** is readying its 2014 spring schedule of courses in Northwest Coast art form carving. There will be beginning to advanced classes on bentwood boxes and weaving, all taught by practicing artists. For details or to sign up call 907-225-5900 or go to www. KetchikanMuseums.org.

## News & Information

The Alaska Railroad Corporation's fall issue of its quarterly newsletter had news of real estate investments planned for Seward, Anchorage, Wasilla, and Fairbanks. The winter issue discusses plans to conserve electricity in their equipment to turn a bit greener and also save money. Want to know more about our railroad? Website is www. AlaskaRailroad.com and contains all sorts of good stuff, including special rates for Alaskans.

Want to cruise through some Alaska history? Lived up here for years and lost track of some old friends? Want to meet in Seattle occasionally? Well, folks, not for the first time are we recommending AYP, The Alaska-Yukon Pioneers. Twenty dollars gets you monthly newsletters for a full year. Contact AYP, Joyce Penman, Recorder, at 27833 85th Drive NW, Stanwood, WA, 98292, phone 253-709-0158 or 360-629-3554, email olwomn@wavecable.com.

**>>>** 

The Russian Orthodox Church brought the first Christian religion in Alaska, so some of the oldest church buildings in Alaska are of that denomination. Given our climate, that means a constant struggle to maintain them. ROSSIA, a group working to preserve Russian Orthodox Sacred Sitka in Alaska, recently used generous grants for projects at Holy Assumption Church in Kenai and St. Nicholas Church in Juneau. Your editor has marveled for years how so many Alaska parishes, faced with the shortage of priests and money, have kept the buildings and lay services going, welcoming priests when they can come for weddings, funerals, and other holy services. If you would like to know more, try www.rossialaska.org or write them at Post Office Box 212315, Anchorage, Alaska. 99521-2315.



The **Friends of the SLAM**, is the old Friends of the State Museum since the new building under construction will be the home of the State Library, Archives, and Museum. (The planners tried other acronyms, but SLAM it remained; ALMS or MALS just don't cut it.) The new building will be done in two years. [Ed. note: The present staff have been accused of enjoying the tunnel built to the underground vaults far more than is necessary, but they laugh and stress how important the work is.]

**>>>** 

Do you have artifacts from old shipwrecks and wonder what to do to preserve them? The Alaska State Museum's Office of Museum Services, which sounds like something with paper records and a specialty in accounting, is just the place to go. Their current bulletin details how they treated the amazing variety of artifacts donated from the salvage of the luxury vessel, S.S. Islander, that went down when it struck an iceberg near Juneau in 1901. Actually, copper, iron, lead, stone, wood, ceramics, cloth, and leather are among the items the bulletin offers solutions for. Very useful advice for anyone wanting to preserve old items.

**>>>** 

And speaking of museums, **Museums Alaska** has a nifty newsletter with all sorts of news, tributes to members, and among other articles, a report from the archives on the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill litigation records project. If you thought museums were just places where we use hushed tones and look at exhibits, discussing them in mutters, this will take you behind the scenes and you'll find a lively landscape. Website is www.museumsalaska.org if you'd like to see more what they're about.

**>>>** 

Thinking about perhaps attending the 2014 Pacific Northwest History Conference? It will be April 3-5 at the Red Lion Hotel Vancouver at the Quay in Vancouver, Washington. Hotel reservations, general information, and a schedule can all be found at http;//www.washingtonhistory.org/support/heritage/pnwhc/Questions? Contact Shanna Stevenson at shanna.stevenson@wshs.wa.gov or 360-586-0171.

**>>>** 

Always worth a reminder that if you're wondering what's going on with state and national preservation, such as archaeology in Alaska, state and national meetings on all aspects of heritage preservation activities, or state cultural resources programs, subscribe to *Heritage*, a monthly electronic newsletter by contacting jo.antonson@alaska. gov of the Office of History and Archaeology, 550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1310, Anchorage, Alaska, 99501, telephone 907-269-8721, or drop by if you're in town, calling first of course.

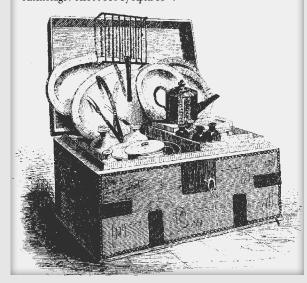
## News & Information

Decision Light is the annual newsletter published by the Cape Decision Lighthouse Society. This year they reported an outstanding 2013. Projects included restoration of a couple of things like the tower door that had been blown off and lots of scraping and painting. The volunteers enjoyed good eating for their efforts! Interested in helping? Write them at 224 Katlian Street, Sitka, Alaska, 99835 or telephone 907-747-7803.

Another very busy spot year-round is the **Sheldon Jackson Museum** in Sitka. They had a family scrimshaw lesson; children had a lovely time carving soap while parents offered advice (if they could). Lessons on petroglyphs, Yup'ik dog sleds, and later Yup'ik action figures are planned.

#### 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 April 15th.



#### Visit our website:

#### www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org



We welcome your letters, news and pictures. Please send them to the editor: Dee Longenbaugh The Observatory, ABAA 299 N. Franklin St. \* Juneau, AK 99801 Tel: 907/586-9676 \* Fax: 907/586-9606 Email: deelong@alaska.com

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THE ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY is on the list for those applying for their Permanent Fund Dividend. Consider using the "Pick, Click, Give" to donate.

#### ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 100299 Anchorage, AK 99510-0299

**Become a member...** or if you're already a member, sign up a friend or relative. Join the hundreds who want to stay in touch with historic Alaska by sending \$35.00 for individual membership (\$25.00 for students; \$45.00 for family; \$100.00 for a patron; \$600.00 for a life membership.)

It's quick, it's easy, and you receive the semiannual *Alaska History*, the quarterly newsletter *Alaska History News*, and discounts on publications.

As interest and writing on Alaska history seem to be sprouting like fireweed in the spring, a useful and popular book is the society's *The Alaska 67* with annotated recommendations of good books on Alaska history. Order it through the website!

Send your application for memberhsip to Alaska Historical Society, P.O. Box 100299, Anchorage, Alaska 99510-0299; or join through the website: *www.alaskabistoricalsociety.org.* 



Roman mosaic—"Four Seasons," Acholla, Tunisia, 3rd century AD.

#### Editor's Comments

he pleasant weather in Juneau recently has gone to my head. A few days ago I noticed it was getting dark after a lovely, sunny day. Goodness; must be later than I thought. 6:30 p.m.; the day had zoomed past. Then looked at my watch. A bit before 4:30 p.m. Ah, yes, it's late January. We're just not accustomed to this weather this time of year. Hope you're getting in on it.

A friend here has relatives who have been very, very cold in Texas. He says he has told them their winter is vacationing in Southeast Alaska. So, we can hope but be more than reasonably sure real winter will return. But now it's February so it can't stay. (Unless it's like the summer of 2012; there I found myself going through the mental checklist before leaving home for the shop. Radios off? Check. Lights off? Check. Heat turned down? Check. Wait! It's June 19; why does the heat have to be on? Since I keep the temperature at 67 degrees all winter, you know it was cold.)

Can only send best wishes for a speedy spring for you, unless you are skiing or racing dogs.

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