



# Alaska History News

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Rescuing objects from the Customs House, Eagle.



Photos by Dan Helmar.

*Alaskans don't give up...*

## The Aftermath of Break-up at Eagle

Many Alaskans have been very concerned about the terrible news of break-up at Eagle. Reports have been spotty, not making it clear whether the ice destroyed both Eagle Village and Eagle or just one. As Eagle was the site of the first judge and courtroom in the Interior, and a customs station, a lot of history could be destroyed. Jean Turner, the museum curator, sent the following report:

The days of May 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 seem like a distant dream for people in Eagle now. Yet our surroundings, and the rebuilding of lives and structures just begun, are a constant reminder that the events of those days have changed our lives forever. But Eagle people are Alaskans—and we all know Alaskans don't give up.

One of the museum buildings in the Eagle Historic District was impacted by the flood and ice devastation—the Customs House on the waterfront. Of all of historical buildings, it is probably the most beloved in the hearts of Eagle residents, and a favorite of visitors as well. After abandoning our homes, we waited that first evening, nervously watching the water rise and recede. Most of us were already exhausted from moving goods and vehicles to high ground, and those of us who sensed we no longer had a home were in a state of numbness and shock. At that moment, someone said, "We've got to get that stuff out of the Customs House!" Out of nowhere, a team of about 20 gathered with pickup

trucks. A window was broken and planks found for access, and suddenly we were a bucket-line rescue team.

When the water level began rising suddenly, it was time to leave, as it was apparent the ice could strike the building at any moment. By then, the most endangered artifacts were in a safe place. Later, when the water receded, a second group went back and retrieved the rest. Thanks to Alaska State Museum's Scott Carrlee's technical help, and the willingness of many others to stand ready, we were able to triage everything and care for objects needing attention. Virtually everything will be saved, although a few items will need special treatment in the future.

It is now the Customs House structure that needs attention. Emergency funding is being sought, an architect is coming to assess the damages and make recommendations, and we are hopeful the building can be saved. Getting those rescued objects back into their real home would be the fairytale ending to this heart-wrenching story.

We have learned that the Alaska historical community is a rare breed of caring folks, always willing to help. All of Eagle sends sincere thanks for the many words of concern, hope and encouragement received in the recent weeks.

Jean Turner  
*Eagle Historical Society & Museums*

## Message from the President

With summer upon us, Alaskans will begin flocking to many of our national parks, monuments and wildlife refuges, seeking adventure and time away from the hustle and bustle of daily life. Many will come to experience nature, but let's not forget that our parks are also caretakers of Alaska's cultural history.

For example, when we think of Katmai National Park and Preserve, the first image that comes to mind are the Brooks River bears, or, if you happen to be an avid angler, the 25" rainbow trout. With erupting volcanoes present in our lives lately, some may think of the grandeur of the Valley of 10,000 Smokes and its beautiful yet lonely landscape. Although places like the Valley appear untouched by human hands, this stark natural wonder world not only shaped the course of human history in the region, but, rather than bears or fish, was the impetus for establishing Katmai as a national monument.

The cataclysmic event that occurred 97 years ago created the volcanic landscape known as the Valley of 10,000 Smokes. The eruption of an unknown geological formation called Novarupta, or 'new eruption,' exploded with such force that mountains collapsed, ash darkened summer skies, and earthquakes rocked population centers as far as Washington D.C. The blast completely buried the villages of Old Savonoski, Katmai, and Douglas with ash and pumice. American Pete, who was in the process of moving his belongings from Ukak to Old Savonoski, witnessed the eruption: "The Katmai mountain blew up with lots of fire and fire came down trail from Katmai with lots of smoke. We go fast Savonoski. Everybody get hidarka. Helluva job. We come Naknek one day, dark, no could see. Hot ash fall. Work like hell."

When Robert Griggs explored the volcanic region with the National Geographic Society in 1917, the botanist considered the Valley of 10,000 Smokes a landscape "unparalleled anywhere in the world." Griggs's descriptions of the Valley captured such national attention that it inspired the creation of Katmai National Monument in 1918. In 1931, the expansion of the monument's boundaries absorbed Katmai's lake country, which inadvertently impacted local trapping lifeways. By the 1940s, commercial aviators, taking advantage of military airfields and communication technology, began to fly tourists over the Valley from Anchorage. Increased tourist activity in 1950 led directly to the construction of the 23-mile road from Naknek Lake to the Valley, establishing Brooks Camp as the hub of Katmai National Monument. Since then, the Valley has become a destination for wilderness seekers and other adventures, whose conservation values helped inspire passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980 that established Katmai National Park and Preserve.

Today, the Valley's smokes are gone, but the geological forces that caused the eruption are still at work. As a result, volcanologists and other geologists use the Valley as a laboratory to better understand the tectonic activity that shapes our planet. With the eruption of Mount Redoubt this spring, clearly Alaska's volcanoes continue to demand our attention—and our respect. Volcanoes possess a wonderfully seductive combination of qualities: beautiful and dangerous, unpredictable and unforgettable; it is volcanoes that contain the building blocks for life, and simultaneously hold the power to destroy it. University of Alaska Fairbanks volcanologist Stephen R. McNutt put it simply:



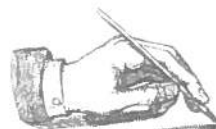
W.A. Hesse taking moving pictures of Katmai Volcano, 1913.  
Alaska State Library Historical Collections, Michael Z. Vinokourov Photograph Collection, ASL-P66-368.

"Although we tend to think about volcanoes primarily while they are erupting, their products and images are found in many places in both ancient and modern life. A world without volcanoes would be a duller, less economically viable and certainly less interesting place."

Like the confluence of rivers that endlessly sculpt the ash-filled floor, the story of the Valley of 10,000 Smokes is an intersection of nature, science, and culture that continues to this day. So when you head out this summer to experience Alaska's natural wonder worlds, don't forget the human history contained in places like the Valley of 10,000 Smokes, and how just by being there you continue the story.

Katherine Ringsmuth  
*One-time Katmai interpretive park ranger*

Visit our website:  
[www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org)



We welcome your letters, news and pictures. Please send them to the editor:  
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## Notes from around the state



Herring seining at the City Float, Ketchikan, 1955.  
Photo by Paul T. Saari. Courtesy of the Tongass Historical Museum.

Ketchikan has a local resource many societies would envy; a huge collection of professional photographs taken from 1950 to 1982. From the thousands of pictures the **Tongass Historical Museum** has put on three different exhibitions, all highly successful. The latest, "plus fifty..." was another smash hit with locals crowding in to see grandparents, friends, and even themselves in the Ketchikan of the 1950s.

The **Totem Heritage Center** reports another successful Native Arts Studies Program. Fall 2008-Spring 2009 concluded with classes in various traditional Tlingit crafts taught by extremely qualified teachers.

May 30th was a very big day for the **Anchorage Museum**. It opened its lavish expansion with some lavish displays and a most lavish party. Gold was the theme, ranging from an exhibit on loan from the American Museum of Natural History to Alaska's prospectors to two plays, *The Gilded Tusk* and *Wheelman*, and various activities with golden touches. To see what else is going on, head for [www.anchoragemuseum.org](http://www.anchoragemuseum.org).

The **Cook Inlet Historical Society** had lectures on *The Hatcher Mines* and *Alaska Before Statehood* at the Alaska Public Lands Information Center.

Ever wanted to visit a voyeur site? The **Pratt Museum** has a voyeur village. Well, not quite, but they do have the Seebird Cam at Gull Island and the Bearcam filming at Katmai National Park and Preserve all summer. Sit in the museum and watch the action of seabirds and bears. There's a film on the Homestead Cabin (pity that's not a cam); and lots of nature activities for everyone, art for sale, and on Fridays and Saturdays a *Historic Harbor Tour*. Worth going to Homer just for the museum.

Running shoes would have been a good idea May 23rd in Fairbanks. The **Tanana Yukon Historical Society** celebrated Museums Day with free tours of thirteen local museums and historic sites. Am sure it was a smash success.

"Moving house" is a term the English use for our sparer "moved". In the case of the **Kenai Historical Society** one can see a Brit rather confused, as the KHS is literally moving five old log cabins from Fort Kenay to a new central location. This requires a great deal of repairs as well as time and money, but the project is moving right on schedule. On the literary side, the book containing short pieces on the different Kenai Peninsula communities at the time of statehood is coming along. So far 20 places, an amazing amount, have been written up and now await indexing and more funds.

Museums come and go; the one at Fort Kenay was a private collection that lasted about three years. Most of the collection was absorbed into the KHS museum, but a 1915 Evinrude outboard motor and a stuffed sea otter are at the local visitors' center. Now you know.

In 1948 two major events on the Kenai Peninsula were noted in the local news. Captain James Cook had sailed up Cook Inlet in 1778 and 170 years later a Kenai resident was murdered by his jealous neighbor.

Every Alaska historical society is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Statehood, of course, but no one has held a more diverse program than the **Chugiak-Eagle River Historical Society**. Over two days they had dog team demonstrations, fireworks, an Italian buffet dinner, musical performances, kids' entertainment, a museum exhibit, Statehood tea, a classic wood dogsled display, bowling tournament, dogsled photo opportunities, a pancake breakfast and free hot dogs, hot chocolate and coffee. And this in early January in subzero weather. Whew!



Photo courtesy of the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center.

## Notes from around the state

Their newsletter also contains a short biography of a long-time resident and two photographs of students with information requested on identities, year, etc. No idea if prizes are awarded, but you can check out the society at [www.CERHS.org](http://www.CERHS.org), or send information to [info@cerhs.org](mailto:info@cerhs.org) or [cerhs1@gmail.com](mailto:cerhs1@gmail.com).



Until quite recent times the king of organized school sports all across Alaska was basketball. It requires a small number of players so is perfect for a small school, uses an enclosed court which means it can be played year-round, and is fast-moving so entertaining to watch. The **Juneau-Douglas City Museum** is featuring the game in Juneau and area this summer. This year will also see the 63<sup>rd</sup> annual Lions Club Gold Medal Basketball Tournament. This tournament did more to fight racism in Southeast Alaska than any other one thing. All the towns around sent teams; their very best players. It did not matter if they were native or white; the crowds came to Juneau in March to see and cheer their favorites. As the years went on, it became a social event where families and players mingled and reminisced.



Gold Medal championship ANB basketball team, 1956.  
Alaska State Library Historical Collections, Skinner Foundation Photograph Collection, ASL-P44-05-117.

The museum also plans a Fourth of July bang-up celebration of Statehood's enactment during its 50<sup>th</sup> year. More things are going on; check out [www.juneau.org/parkrec/museum](http://www.juneau.org/parkrec/museum) if you're not going to be in town.



Your editor may have to attend the **Resurrection Bay Historical**

**Association** meeting next year. The meeting started at 9:00 with coffee, tea, and breakfast breads. The business meeting began at 10:00 and lunch was served at noon. My kind of group. Seward also had a heavy-hitter line-up for the Statehood Symposium in early May. Just when we begin to long for the famous Good Old days, something comes along to make us glad we're here in 2009.

The newsletter sends along the DNA report on the famed feral cattle of Chirikof Island, which had always been referred to as of Russian origin. A scientific study showed these cattle had little in common with various Siberian cattle breeds, not to mention even less with European. Not only should these cattle be preserved for their uniqueness, but as they have been on a harsh, cold

island for at least a hundred years without humans, they could be extremely useful for breeding.

They also note Alaska's first **National Heritage Area** has been created. The Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm Heritage corridor honors the Native Alaskans, Russians, explorers, gold miners, and settlers who passed through the area.



Highly informative and entertaining news of Fort Egbert from 1908 to 1910 was contained in letters printed in the current issue of the **Eagle Historical Society and Museum** newsletter. H. L. McCary, the author, was a bugler with a vivid memory of notes played through a large metal megaphone. "The notes of my bugle there in the silence and stillness of the winter nights, would go off through the night, and bounce off the icy walls of the canyons, out over the frozen Yukon, and back around, echoing and re-echoing. The malamutes would always howl when I sounded "Taps". They would sit on their haunches, point their muzzles to the flaming *aurora borealis*, and howl out their ancient tunes as if they were trying to communicate with the spirit of their ancestors." He also gives a detailed description of their uniforms, the social life, and how the real sourdoughs would transfix the youngsters with their tales. Good stuff.

You can get your own subscription for \$15.00 per annum and have three delightful issues mailed. Post Office Box 23, Eagle, Alaska 99738 or point your browser to [www.eagleak.org](http://www.eagleak.org).



The **Palmer Historical Society** has been having a nearly impromptu contest about the oldest different objects around the town. Seems the oldest business is the Valley Hotel, dating back to at least 1949. Must say the liquor store sounds more fun. The owner would refill old whisky bottles from a keg and slap on a tax stamp to keep it legal. Recycling the bottles was the first job for various Palmer kids, which I expect stood them in good stead later on.

Next question is finding the oldest road in Palmer. (The results were mixed, but it seems something about 1915 could be correct.) A fun way to keep the town interested; other societies may want to copy. Contact them at Post Office Box 1935, Palmer, Alaska, 99645-1935 or hie thee to the computer and write [info@palmerhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@palmerhistoricalsociety.org).

Palmer likes to keep celebrations going. This year it's Alaska's 50<sup>th</sup> year as a state; next year the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Matanuska Valley Colony.



The Friends of the **Alaska State Museum** report that Grants-In-Aid, an important part of the Alaska State Museum, distributed \$105,000 to 30 museums around the state in 2008. The staff also provided technical assistance to 39 different Alaska



# Notes from around the state



*Science on a Sphere* at the Alaska State Museum.  
Courtesy of the Alaska State Museum

museums and historical societies. [See related article on Eagle.] And the museum received a three-year \$163,275 federal grant for 18 interns to work in Alaska museums and historical societies. Your state museum at work, helping the small places become and remain professional.

*Science on a Sphere* is a room-size global display system that uses computers and

video projectors to show planetary data on a six-foot globe. State of the art and family oriented, resulting from a partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).



The **Wasilla Knik Historical Society** has a clever little photograph in their newsletter to advertise their recent yard sale—it shows a dog team and driver out on the snow. The caption asks if you have good stuff. If so: "Mush on over and bring it to us." This group has something going practically year-round. After the yard sale come the weekly Farmers' Market, the **Page Museum** with some dandy new exhibits and gift shop all summer. And don't forget the **Knik Museum** and **Mushers Hall of Fame**. They're a lesson to us all.

The restoration of a historic warehouse is about to begin. They've also rented out the Herning-Teeland-Mead building downtown to a local restaurant. That makes a lot of sense. Various towns rent out listed historic buildings for business or even residences. Not only does the money help, but tenants can report leaks, frozen pipes, etc. before they become major problems.



The play, *Libby*, about a woman who spent a winter on the Pribilof Islands in 1879, was staged by the **Hope and Sunrise Historical Society** in the 1902 Hope Social Hall, appropriate for a play about Alaska's history. Their newsletter also mentions the Alaska Commercial Company, purchaser in 1867 of the defunct Russian American Company's goods and trading posts, later moved into development of the Kenai Peninsula's gold fields. Their ships carried around 3,000 prospectors in 1896 and 1897 to the area. The ACC transported the lumber to build Hope Station at that time. [Editor's note: As the ACC became notorious for its greedy practices, it would be nice to know if they mended their ways on the Kenai.]



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H. McIntyre, Capt. M.C. Erskine, George Davidson and Capt. Gustave Niebaum in the Alaska Commercial Company's office in San Francisco, 1904.

Alaska State Library Historical Collections, Michael Z. Vinokourov Photograph Collection, ASL-P243-2-168.

## News & Information

### FOUR NEW CABINS

The **Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance** reports a bunch of wusses have sprung up on the Chilkoot Trail. Over the past decade the number of hikers has dropped from 3,000 to 2,000 a year. The superintendent of the trail can only assume traditional camping is going out in favor of more amenities. It is suggested 300 cabins be erected as well as allowing motorized access to the trail. What would the pioneers of '98 have said? (Aside from those who would have cheered, of course.) Go to [www.iditarodnationalhistorictail.org](http://www.iditarodnationalhistorictail.org). They also report national stimulus funds will be used to build at least four new cabins on the Iditarod Trail, a rather novel use.

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### THIS PLACE MATTERS!

For national Historic Preservation Month, the theme this year is *This Place Matters*. Take part yourself—take a photograph of a favorite historic place, add a sign that reads *This Place Matters* and upload it at [www.preservationnation.org/thisplacematters](http://www.preservationnation.org/thisplacematters). If nothing else, go to the site and enjoy the photographs and enthusiastic supporters.

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### REGION 10 WINNER

For Historic Preservation Month the U.S. General Services Administration honors old government buildings. Anchorage's **Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse** was the winner this year in Region 10 and featured on a poster. Built in 1939 it was on cutting edge of architecture.

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### REMEMBERING DR. ROBERT FORTUINE

It's our sad duty to report the death of a longtime supporter of the Society. **Dr. Robert Fortune** died at his home in Wasilla on May 11, 2009 at the age of 75. Dr. Fortune was in the United States Public Health Service for many years, retiring in 1987. The last several years he became known for his interest in Alaska's medical history. He was a reviewer for our journal, and twice named **Historian of the Year**; in 1990 for his book *Chills and Fever* and in 2005 for *Must We All Die? Alaska's Enduring Struggle With Tuberculosis*. He will be missed.

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### FAREWELL WAWONA?

The **Resurrection Bay Historical Society** tipped us off to the sad fate of the sailing ship *Wawona*, listed as a historic vessel in 1970. Built in 1897, the schooner sailed the coastal waters of Alaska for many years hauling lumber and later fishing. In 1964 a Seattle group formed and bought it, but in spite of their long and difficult work were unable to raise the money to rebuild the ship. Seattle City thought she was an eyesore as they want to extend a park. Perhaps the captain's quarters will be saved.

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### DUST OFF THE GOLF CLUBS, BRUCE!

**Bruce Kato** recently announced his retirement at the end of June as Chief Curator of the **Alaska State Museum**. While he has collected all the usual well-earned accolades for his service, a colleague gave a lively

memory that sums up his effect:

Bruce has worked his entire 30 years at the museum, starting out as an exhibits guy. Not sure of his title back then...he had hair past his waist and used to smoke, but successfully quit some years ago. He knows *everything* about the facility—which inches of the ceiling have asbestos and what to do when the steam boiler's pipes are glowing orange. He has lived through floods at the museum, and knows how to find money enough to get us through seriously rough patches. Governed by consensus. Loves a good joke. Really knew priorities for the museum: high priority on kids—anything for kids would always be first and foremost.



Who wouldn't love to be remembered in such fond words?

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### CELEBRATE 12% INCREASE

Happy news from President Obama. His budget for 2010 has a 12% increase for historic preservation. **Senator Mark Begich** is pushing for approval. Say "thank you" to Mark when you see him next.

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### HERITAGE HAS GOT IT ALL

What's the source of knowledge of grants, funding for historic preservation projects, interesting dates, places to commune with the like-minded, and generally see what's going on in the national world of history? Why, **Heritage**, of course. *Heritage* is produced by the Office of History and Archaeology, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Please send your comments, suggestions, and information via e-mail to [jo.antonson@alaska.gov](mailto:jo.antonson@alaska.gov), mail to 550 West 7<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 1310, Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3565, or telephone 907/269-8721.

All issues are posted to [www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/) and distributed via e-mail. Paper copies can be sent to individuals and organizations that specifically request them.

To be added to the subscription list, please send an e-mail to [oha@alaska.net](mailto:oha@alaska.net) with "*Heritage*, subscribe" in the subject line.

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### PIONEER NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY

A few days ago I exchanged e-mails with a long-time Mat-Su Valley resident, and although we had never heard of each other, we discovered we know various people in common. Want to do this via a monthly newsletter plus reading some great stories of an earlier Alaska and Yukon? Send \$12.00 for a subscription for **Alaska-Yukon Pioneers** to Joyce Penman, 27833 85<sup>th</sup> Drive NW, Stanwood, Washington, 98292, or phone her at 253/709-0158 or 360/629-3554. e-mail is [olwomn@wavecable.com](mailto:olwomn@wavecable.com).

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## ANTIQUE AUTO UPDATE

Always nice to know people do read the newsletter. Willy Templeton sent along news on the vanished White car we wrote about in the Spring issue. He knows where it went; seems it's not gone after all. From his letter:

I noticed a note regarding the White touring car which was used as a taxi between McCarthy and the Kennicott mine. I am familiar with that car and it is not lost. During the '60s and '70s, it was at the Wells place at the end of Klatt road. (Carr-Gottstien has since developed the area into an upscale subdivision.) I used to see the White touring car when I visited the Wells and I took photos of it in 1972. (I am unsure where in the house I have them stored.) The touring car was fairly complete with an aluminum body and in pretty good shape back then. In the late 1970s or early 1980s, Ward Wells brought the touring car to the Palmer area. It was stored at Hank Raymond's place, behind the old Pole-Lock Farm. Recently, Dave Syrin purchased the car with the intention to restore it. However, it is now in very rough shape so Dave purchased a similar model White touring car he found in California. During last year's *Fur Rondy*, Dave had the car on display with the *Antique Auto Mushers*. Dave also had a historical note on the White touring car with the display. The car will probably be on display this year too. I am also familiar with some of the other autos from the Chitina/McCarthy/May Creek area. Please feel free to pass my name and phone numbers—907-786-4005 work and 907-563-6610 home—to whomever had questions about the car.

♦♦♦ ♦♦♦

## GOING ONCE....GOING TWICE....

Yep, Candy Waugaman is continuing her wonderful silent auction for benefit of the Society. Items can be found at the annual meeting, but if members don't chip in and send or bring items, there won't be much to bid on. Contact Candy at Fairbanks' beautifully named server; Candy@mosquitonet.com. She puts together the auction catalog but does need to know what to put in the catalog. Simple but necessary. Speaking of the annual conference, if you have a paper in mind, contact Kate Myers at kathrynmyers@gmail.com to see if there's space for another.

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## Summer Class —

### Denali National Park & Preserve

**When:** July 31 – August 2

**Where:** Denali National Park and Preserve

**Cost:** \$330

#### Description:

Alaska's first national park was set aside in 1917 as a game refuge to protect the Dall sheep in the region. However, the first park ranger did not start until 1921! Enforcing that protection and establishing the new park were not easy and could not have happened without the dedication of a few hardy and exceptional individuals. Join local historian and author Tom Walker on a journey into the past and discover the intriguing stories of the park's early developmental years. We'll walk in the footsteps of pioneer superintendent Harry Karstens and others who faced extreme challenges in laying the foundation for what is now one of the premier wilderness parks in the world. Tom Walker is the author of *Kantishna: Mushers, Miners, Mountaineers and McKinley Station: People of the Pioneer Park*.

#### Course includes:

- Small group size of 10 participants.
- Staying at a field camp located 29 miles inside Denali National Park along the Teklanika River.
- All meals, accommodations, transportation, and instruction.
- 10% discount available to members of *Alaska Geographic*.
- Professional development credit is available through University of Alaska Anchorage.

#### For more information or to register:

Visit [www.murieslc.org](http://www.murieslc.org) or direct link: *Pioneers of Denali: the Creation of Mt. McKinley National Park*, email [courses@murieslc.org](mailto:courses@murieslc.org) or call 1-888-688-1269.

(above) Two Mt. McKinley Park buses, and one automobile, under "Gateway to Mt. McKinley National Park" sign.

Alaska State Library Historical Collections,  
Skinner Foundation Photograph Collection, ASL-P44-05-002.

(left) A park ranger views the Alaska Range in Mount McKinley National Park.

Alaska State Library Historical Collections, Skinner Foundation Photograph Collection,  
ASL-P44-05-117.

## ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

Send your application for membership to Alaska Historical Society, P.O. Box 100299, Anchorage, Alaska 99510-0299; or join through the website: [www.alaskahistoricalociety.org](http://www.alaskahistoricalociety.org).

### Editor's Comments

I am not quite sure why humans are so determined to have a Golden Age that took place in the past. Sometimes it was in our childhood and sometimes thousands of years ago, but there definitely was a time when the world was shiny, the vegetation a glorious green, and all people virtuous, thoughtful and concerned only with the good of the community, the state, or the nation.

The sad contrast of today is hurtfully apparent.

There's only one problem with this. The Golden Age never existed except in imagination. Since recorded history began, and likely long before, the past was idyllic compared to the present. In fact, I can hear the hominid of around 39,000 years ago now. "I recall the stories about when we first came to the valley.

It was beautiful then, with gushing waterfalls and lots of animals to kill and eat. The young people were different too. They paid attention to their elders and learned how to sharpen spears and all the things they needed to know. Look at the young folks now. They think of nothing but their own amusement and how to get others to clean the kill and

prepare the food. They sit around the fire in the cave and tell silly stories rather than get out and hunt."

In Greek and Roman times there was a fuss made about the young men who abandoned rectitude and following the wise advice of their elders. Now they thought only of their own amusement; never of the state. The great orators of the day, such as Cicero and Demosthenes, railed against such degradation.

These laments continue to this day. Who hasn't heard about the youth wasting time with videos and Facebook and television? Far too busy with iPods and text messaging to get outside and get some exercise or read good books or help around the house. The world is going to hell in a handbasket.

Fortunately, one of the uses of history is to find and retain the records of humanity. The next time someone starts complaining about the kids of today you might remind them of the record.

D. L.

