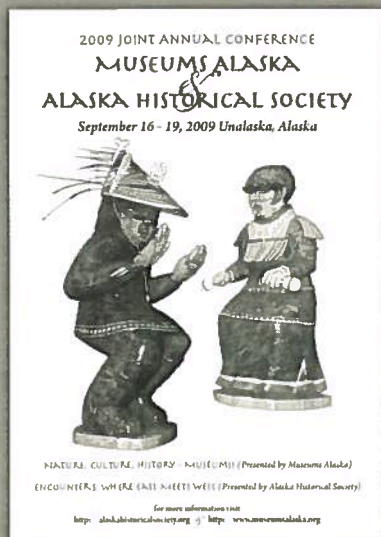




Alaska History News

Volume 37, No. 3 Quarterly of the Alaska Historical Society Autumn 2009



ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2009 CONFERENCE UNALASKA • SEPTEMBER 16-19, 2009

Encounters: Where East Meets West

It's annual meeting time. The schedule is full with a wonderful variety of presentations. The schedule includes tours around Unalaska and Dutch Harbor and social events. Hope to see you there!

Program



Unangan carving of a sea otter hunt on whalebone spear.
St. Petersburg Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography



Sea otter hunters, Unalaska, Alaska 1896.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

9:00-10:00 Keynote Address

- Dr. Yuri Berezkin, Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), St. Petersburg, Russia
Opportunities for Future Collaborations

10:30-12:00 Session: Encounters between Modern Humans and the Animal World: The Ethics, Economics, and History of Appropriating Nature in Alaska

- Alex Simon
Wolves as Members of Mixed Communities
- Daniel Montieth
Examining Historic Fisheries, Hatcheries, and Climate Change to Better Understand Changing Landscapes and Ecologies
- Britteny Cioni
Economic Valuation of Non-marketed Environmental Services of Alaskan Wildlife
- Shana Loshbaugh
Otterly Crazy: The Hitherto Untold Inside Story of the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Sea Otter Rehabilitation Project

1:30-2:30 Keynote Address

- Dr. Andrei Znamenski, University of Memphis, author of *The Beauty of the Primitive: Shamanism and Western Imagination*
Patriot Games: Alaska in Modern Russian Nationalist Rhetoric

3:00-5:00 Session: When East Meets West: Russian America

- Mark Cassell and Katie Oliver
Unearthing Encounters at the Baranov Museum, Kodiak
- J. David McMahan
Exploring China's Tea Road to Russian America through Investigations on the Mongolian-Russian Border
- Salena Kaye Bias
An Analysis of the Kolmakovskiy Blockhouse Exhibit at the University of Alaska Museum of the North
- Ryan Jones
Lisianskiy's Mountain: Changing Views of Alaska's Nature in Russian America
- Melissa Chapin
Encounters Through a Melting Ice Curtain: The Sister Cities Experience of Yakutsk and Fairbanks
- Alexander Krivonosov
Presbyterian-Orthodox Competition in 1890s Alaska

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

8:30-10:30 Session: Pacific Encounters: Competition and Collaboration

- Elizabeth Tower
Glasnost 1904: John Rosene and the Northeastern Siberian Company
- Lee Higbie
Robert Fiske Griggs in Alaska
- Anastasia Tarmann Lynch
Northern Native Alaskan Artistic Expressions Through Letters in the Donald Burrus Papers, 1917-1975
- Toby Sullivan
When Crab was King: An Oral History of the Kodiak King Crab Fishery
- Patricia Roppel
East Meets West: Alaska's Timber Resources
- Steve Henrikson
Bales of Alaska: Bear Guide, Author, Curio Collection, and Interpreter of the Alaska Peninsula

11:00-12:00 State of the State of Alaska's Cultural Resources Programs

- Judy Bittner, State Historic Preservation Officer
- Glenn Cook (for Linda Thibodeau), Alaska Libraries, Archives and Museums

1:30-3:00 1:50-3:00 Session: Primary Encounters: Picturing the Aleutians

- Katie Ringsmuth
Alaska and the Pacific World: Moving Beyond the Frontier Narrative
- Anne Foster and Jeff Dickrell
Picturing the Aleutians

3:30-5:00 AHS annual meeting

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

9:30-10:30 Session: Tragic Encounters: World War II and Its Wake

- Doug Beckstead
The Long Trip Home: The Crew of the *Iceberg Inez*, B-24 #42-40910
- John Cloe
Mission to the Kuriles, the Secret War of Deception in the North Pacific
- Ross Coen
"If One Should Come Your Way, Shoot It Down": The Alaska Territorial Guard and the Japanese Balloon Bomb Attack of World War II
- Leighton Quarles
Simple Honor: The Life of Dashiell Hammett

11:00-12:00 Session

- Steve Henrikson
The Peter the Great Museum: Perspectives From Alaska



"Woman holding up large king crab in Kodiak, Alaska, 1970s."
Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center. AMRC. Wien Collection, AMRC-b85-27-1347.



Alaska Territorial Guard poster.
UA Museum of the North. Senator Ernest Gruening Collection, UA1969-7-1.

Avoiding Historical Amnesia

History is a guide to navigation in perilous times. History is who we are and why we are the way we are.

~David C. McCullough

In 1861, faced with the reality of civil war, newly elected president Abraham Lincoln observed, "America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves." That sentiment seems as relevant in 2009 as it did nearly 150 years ago. In Alaska, racism, discrimination, and fear-mongering make daily headlines and divide our diverse society. Fueling the flames of such destructive behavior and thinking seems to be, in part, the misuse and misunderstanding of history by politicians, community leaders, the media, and ordinary citizens. We are living in perilous times and it seems to me, we need our history more than ever.

One need only look to the previous century to find similarities with the present. In 1901, for example, a Republican named Theodore Roosevelt used the power of the presidency to bust corporate trusts, protect our food, conserve our wilderness, and provide all Americans a "square deal." In 1939, when the conservative group Daughters of the American Revolution refused to allow African-American opera singer Marian Anderson to perform at Constitution Hall, Eleanor Roosevelt arranged for Anderson to sing at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial where she dazzled an interracial crowd of more than 75,000 with "God Bless America." In 1950, freshman Senator Joseph McCarthy created a toxic cloud of hysteria when he told a women's club in West Virginia that he had a "list of 205 known communists." And, in 1957 at Little Rock, Arkansas, nine students were met by a hateful mob. Such hate was fed by the belief that it was sinful to allow black children to attend school with their white children.



Marian Anderson, 1940.
Photograph by Carl Van Vechten.

When we gather at Unalaska, we should use the opportunity to discuss the role of history—or lack thereof—in today's Alaskan society and policy making decisions. We should talk about who identifies with Alaska's historical narrative and how we can make it more inclusive. We need to question those who use history to "spin" the truth. We need to discuss ways in which history might serve as a roadmap for the present to better guide us into the future. We must avoid historical amnesia at all costs, for the consequences are too great. If we historians



Unangan woman standing at Russian Orthodox grave, Southeast Alaska internment camp.

Alaska State Library Evelyn Butler and George Dale Collection, ASL-PCA-306.

do not rise to the occasion, then the old adage will ring true: those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Or, to quote George Santayana: "A country without memory is a country of madmen."

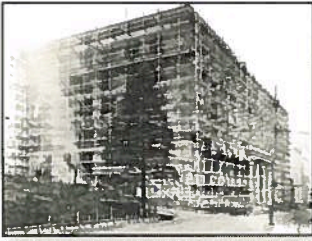
Katherine Ringsmuth
President

Visit our website:
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



Capitol building under construction, Juneau, Alaska, September 1, 1930. Alaska State Library - Historical Collections. Early Prints of Alaska. Photographs, ca. 1870-1920 Collection, ASL-P297-328.



Capitol building, Juneau, Alaska, ca. 1931. Alaska State Library - Historical Collections. Winter and Pond, Photographs, 1893-1943 Collection, ASL-P87-0902.

The **Juneau-Douglas City Museum** draws our attention to a compilation of photographs, *Federal and Territorial Building: Constructing the Capitol*. Hie thee to www.juneau.org/parkrec/museum and see the work in progress.



The **Cape Decision Lighthouse Society** (CDLS to initial lovers) had a hectic but fruitful summer. Lots of volunteers, including a seasoned ship's captain who not only hauled the massive amount of freight for the light, but brought three volunteers along for the voyage. Much was accomplished in repairs; the need had been characterized as everything was leaking or rotten except for metal items which were rusted. A twelve-year-old volunteer reported having a lovely time, with baby deer, whales and good fishing to spell off the work. Now there's a new-to-them wood stove and new flooring among other jobs done. Should you be fascinated, try www.capedecisionlight.org for photographs and information, or you can write the group at 224 Katlian, Sitka, Alaska 99835. You can join the society for \$25.00 per annum, shop at capedecisionlighthouse@yahoo.com, and receive your own copy of the newsletter with the modest mermaid on the cover.



Just when you think you have heard of every worthy non-profit history-loving group in the United States, here comes another one. The newsletter of the **Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance** informs us the 12th Conference on Scenic and Historic Trails was held in July, complete with workshops and field trips. Enough to make you want to hit the road.

The alliance can be contacted at www.iditarod100.org or, if your fingers hold out, www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/sa/iditarod.html. Nice sites. They also report the grandson of one of the participants in the 1925 Serum Run has been awarded their Seppala Heritage Grant.



Do you sometimes despair over the need for new material to exhibit, and are desperate to replace some of the old stalwart displays? The **Tongass Historical Museum** has a history of clever ideas. The latest is their upcoming winter exhibit. *Off the Wall Too: More Ketchikan Art in Private Collections* will feature Ketchikan artists and works relating to the city and residents. Both two and three dimensional works will be accepted. Results can be seen by early December; visit museum@city.ketchikan.ak.us and get some ideas for your local artists and collectors.



If there's one thing that characterizes real Alaskans, it's optimism. This will be the year the house is finally finished or the better trail to

the cabin cut through; if not, then surely next year. The **Chugiak-Eagle River Historical Society** newsletter tells the story of the 82-foot long, 18-foot beam, 100-ton fishing boat *Chacon* which fits that cheerful attitude completely. Its owner spotted it, grounded, in 1984, paid the owner some money and has been working on it since as time and money become available. Currently it's resting comfortably along the Glenn Highway but who knows, it might yet sail around the world.



The **Gastineau Channel Historical Society** has issued another of its at-length treatments of one aspect of Juneau-Douglas history. The current one also brings a new word to our attention; tap. A lake tap, to be precise; it involves driving a tunnel towards and under a lake, leaving a short rock plug between the tunnel and the lake. The removal of the plug usually results in high drama. Juneau is getting to be an old hand at lake taps; the fourth in 90 years just occurred when another lake was brought on line for hydroelectricity. A tip for other societies; these longer pieces easily lend themselves to a book-length history of the area.✦ The well-respected *Native Arts Studies Program* of the **Totem Heritage Center** has issued its fall schedule. More information is at http://www.city.ketchikan.ak.us/departments/museums/totem_native.html or Gasp! write them at 629 Dock Street, Ketchikan, Alaska, 99901.



Quickly now, **Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park** is located where in Alaska? Let's see, Lieutenant William Abercrombie explored and mapped part of the Copper River in 1884, so probably around Valdez. Ha, ha, the park in question is located in Kodiak, reason unknown. Located there is the **Kodiak Military History Museum**; much simpler. This year they have added a U.S. Navy DC-powered quenched-gap spark transmitter and early direct-conversion receiver. The radio is nearly 100 years old, they proudly announce, and is among other military items recently acquired. It was found in the ruins of an old barracks-style building, quite a distance from its surely original location in a radio beacon station that burned down years ago. Another Kodiak mystery.



Iver Nearhouse is the featured person in the **Hope & Sunrise Historical Society** newsletter marking the statehood of Hope. A list of Hope's buildings explains why. In 1959 the town consisted of the airstrip, Bill Nutter's two-way radio, cemetery, Doc's Cabins ('Doc' was Nearhouse's nickname), Doc's Cafe, Doc's generator, Post Office, school, social hall, Iver Nearhouse's general store, the Methodist church, and a bakery. He was quite popular, not easy for the leading business person in a very small town. In 1957 the ice suddenly went out and the

Notes from around the state



Frame cabin and barn, Hope, Alaska. Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks. Mary Whalen Photograph Collection, UAF-1975-84-586.



Iver Nearhouse general store, Hope, Alaska. University of Alaska Anchorage. Consortium Library. Archives & Special Collections. Christine M. McClain Collection, UAA-hmc-0370-series 15a-11-236.

resulting flood filled his store with three feet of muddy water. Doc was asleep when this occurred, but neighbors came to the rescue in a rowboat. Soldiers arrived from Fort Richardson and spent some days dynamiting and clearing the ice. Life is not dull in Hope.



Lake Clark National Park and Preserve and the **Pratt Museum** of Homer have been best buddies for awhile. This summer they were able to do some work in the Athabaskan Kijik Village area. The village has been known to exist since the early 1800s but oral history and archaeological evidence both point to much, much older habitation.

The museum also conducted a one-day outdoor field lab for 5th and 6th-graders. Anything outdoors that involves real expertise is wildly popular and apparently the lab lived up to its promise. The museum staff is seeking suggestions as to what will improve a museum. If you want to help them with their planning contact Michele Miller at mmiller@prattmuseum.org or call 907/435-3343. They are in real need of more space, so new building, extend the current one, or ?? Put in your two pennies worth.



Fairbanks is a very busy place. The **Tanana-Yukon Historical Society** held their annual family-friendly free museums day in July. Cookies, coffee, and punch fueled the thousands of people who made the rounds, which included the *Wickersham House Museum* as well as the other seven museums around the city. If you weren't able to attend, you can assuage your sorrow by pointing your browser to www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org and look for the Tanana-Yukon society.

They also presented, along with the Fairbanks Choral Society, an August evening of music to celebrate the Big Five-Oh of Alaska. How long does it take to sing the "Alaska Flag Song" you ask? Nope; here is the list of titles, "Hail to Alaska", "Alaska My Homeland", "Alaska to Thee" "The 49th Star in Old Glory", "Dear Alaska", "Alaska and the USA", then "The Alaska Flag Waltz" before the audience was invited to join in the state song.

Candy Waugaman, famed collector, and a couple of friends put on a massive garage sale of historic items in early August, the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* reported. The proceeds went to various non-profit groups in Fairbanks, including the TYHS's Wickersham House. (If you haven't noticed, Candy's photographs are often used in articles and books; a most generous woman.)



Palmer has all sorts of goings-on during the summers. The **Colony House Museum** is the site of speakers and potluck picnics, and quite delightfully requests locals stopping by the museum to please bring treats to share. A re-read of the newsletter calls for treats during the *Colony Days Open House* in June, but we can't imagine any museum turning down tasty treats from locals at any time.



The *Exxon Valdez* slammed onto Bligh Reef twenty years ago this year, spilling its toxic cargo. Big Oil is hoping the resulting devastation is forgotten, but Alaska hasn't. The **Valdez Museum** has hired a respected design firm to update and upgrade their display on the event.



News & Information

SO WHAT DO YOU DO when your project is a nearly total success? **The Friends of Kennicott** began in 1988 to secure funding and stabilize buildings of the Kennicott Mill in the McCarthy area while working with the National Park Service to add it to their holdings. Now it's twenty years later and their hard work has paid off. The original members have died, moved on, or simply found other interests. The McCarthy-Kennicott area has also expanded. This is a very interesting dilemma, and we must admire the group for its honest assessment. They plan to meet and discuss their future.

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THE NEWSLETTER WOULD NOT BE COMPLETE without a mention of the **Alaska Yukon Pioneers**. They publish a monthly newsletter with news about and from members. A great way to keep up with old friends and membership is a paltry \$12.00 per annum. Contact Recorder Joyce Penman, 27833 85th Drive, NW, Stanwood, Washington, 98292 for details.

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WANT TO KNOW the state of national funding for Alaska history projects? The ten most endangered Alaska sites? Just need to keep up with history award news? Then head for **Heritage**, the monthly newsletter found at www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/. Send comments and suggestions to jo.antonson@alaska.gov. Subscribe at oha@alaska.net with "Heritage, subscribe" as the subject. Tired fingers? Write Heritage at 550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1310, Anchorage, 99501-3565, or phone 907/276-8721.

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MEMBER JOHN BOCKSTOCE has a new book out. *Furs and Frontiers in the Far North: The Contest Among Native and Foreign Nations for the Bering Strait Fur Trade*. Yale University Press. \$35.00 Bockstoe's prior award-winning books ensure a lively but factual account of a little-known segment of the history of the Bering Strait fur trade in the 18th and 19th centuries.

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MEMBER PHYLLIS MOVIUS urges us to visit the newly opened **Antique Auto Museum** in Fairbanks. Hunt it up on Google as "Fountainhead Antique Auto Museum".

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"FOR THE RIGHTS OF ALL" is the title of Alaska's fight for Civil Rights for Natives. Filmed by Jeff Silverman, it will premiere in November on 58 PBS stations. Call your local station for time. Thanks to Frances Paul Germain for the notice on this. For a preview try <http://www.alaskacivilrights.org/index.html>

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Cartoon by Oliver Pedigo, from the *Adakian*, Dashiell Hammett, editor.
Courtesy Museum of the Aleutians.

Alaska Historical Society

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Flood and Recovery at State Archives

Approximately 400 to 500 boxes of documents in the Alaska State Archives in Juneau were damaged by rainwater sometime late August 16 or early August 17.

A contractor, CBC Construction of Sitka, has been repairing the roof at the State Archives on Willoughby Street in Juneau. The contractor's inflated plastic bubble that allows workers to repair roofs in the rain blew off its fastenings.

In two areas, rainwater entered a second-story room that contains archives. A lesser amount of rainwater dripped down to the first-story vault, which also contains archives, and onto the nearby loading dock. Approximately 400 to 500 cardboard boxes containing court, legislative and Governor's Office records have been damaged, as were some maps.

Archives staff first noticed the water damage at 7 a.m. and implemented the emergency response plan. The bubble was quickly repaired.

By 10 a.m. nearly all of the standing water on the floors had been removed, principally by vacuums. Dehumidifiers and fans operated in the affected areas. Some of the damaged boxes were removed to the Juneau Arts & Culture Center, which is near the archives. The boxes' contents are being air-dried there. Some of the boxes are being frozen, and the contents will be dried later.



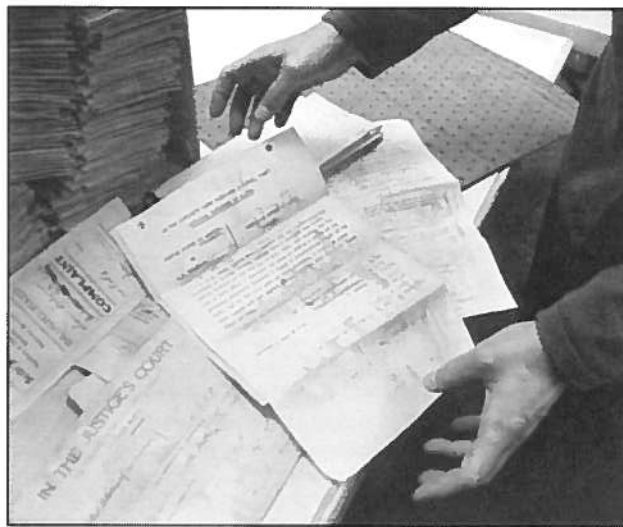
The State Archives, Laura Wood and Abby Focht at table.
Photograph by Damon Stuebner, LAM.

The various types of recovery work are being performed by archives employees, employees from the state museum and state library, maintenance employees of the state facilities office, workers from CBC Contractors, and community volunteers. Professional conservators in Juneau for the Western Association for Art Conservation conference have assisted, as well.

From the *Friday Bulletin, News From the Alaska Division of Libraries, Archives & Museum*, 21 August, 2009.



Chris Hieb and damaged boxes in Archives stacks.
Photograph by Damon Stuebner, LAM.



Damaged boxes mean damaged documents. These are from Alaska's Court System.
Photograph by Damon Stuebner, LAM.

ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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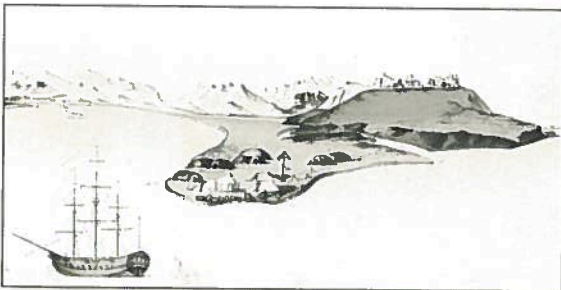
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It's quick, it's easy, and you receive the semiannual *Alaska History*, the quarterly newsletter *Alaska History News*, and discounts on publications.

As interest and writing on Alaska history seem to be sprouting like fireweed in the spring, a useful and popular 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.



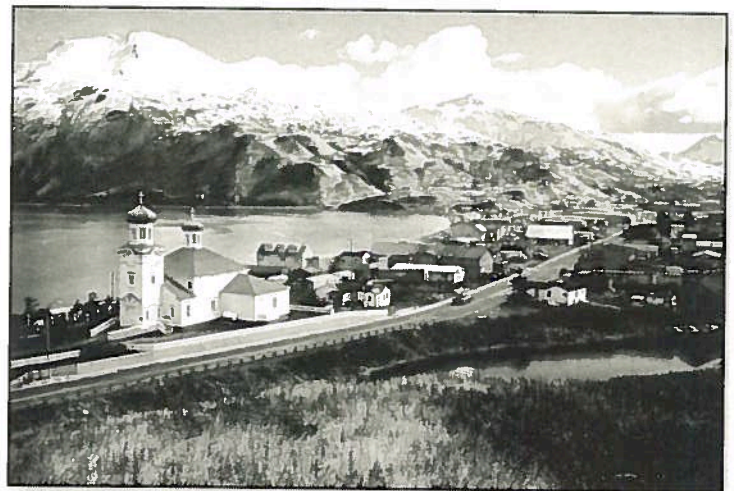
Sketch of the Russian settlement on the Unalaska spit by Captain Gawriil Sarychev, 1786. Today this area is the commercial heart of Unalaska City.

University of Washington Libraries

Editor's Comments

Dutch Harbor is a wonderful name for a great Alaska mystery. The Russians called it that or Holland Harbor because they believed a Dutch vessel had anchored at Unalaska Island. The maddening part of this information fragment (no date, no source named) is that it could well be true. The small country that produced some of the greatest sailors ever known certainly was represented by Marten Vries in the *Castricom* and Hendrick Schaep in the *Breskies* in 1643. They sailed north of Japan and are known to have found two of the Kurile Islands, so it's not much of a stretch to think of them in Unalaska. But how did the Russians know they were Dutch? Would the resident Aleuts have cared to ask the home of these strange pale savages? Was a plaque left behind? No answers; just a name. And another reason to rejoice that the annual meeting is being held in Unalaska. So much Aleut and Russian history out there, not to mention later fox farms, fishing, U.S. military, and goodness knows what else. Many of us have dreamed of seeing the island where Captain Cook and later Joseph Billings came ashore and talked with the people; the place the Russians bartered for sea otter pelts; all sorts of history to be explored. There is simply nothing like being on the ground. The tentative program is presented in this issue. Sounds like another winner! See all you history buffs there soon.

D. L.



City of Unalaska, April 7, 2006.
Photograph by Wanetta Ayers.