



Alaska History News

Volume 39, No. 4 Quarterly of the Alaska Historical Society

December 2011



Above: School Children, Ruby, Alaska, 1916.
Wickersham State Historic Site Collection,
ASL-P277-004-118

Below: Terrance Cole (right) accepting the 2011 Historian of the Year award from Ross Coen, new AHS President.

The Alaska Historical Society Annual Awards

One of the joys of the annual meeting is announcement of the awards recognizing the time and work spent to reward the field workers in Alaska's history.

This year the **Evangeline Atwood Award** for an individual's long-term contribution to the state or local history, went to **Jane Norris Williams** of Fairbanks recognizing her work with the **Central Historical Society**, her help with the relocation of the Wickersham House in Fairbanks, aid to the **Friends of Creamer's Field**, and her efforts to promote preservation of moving picture images at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The **Esther Billman Award of Excellence** honors the contribution of a historical society, museum or other organization to Alaska history during the past year. The **Anchorage Woman's Club**, Karen A. Kizis, President, was the recipient this year for their annual recreation of a day in the life of a 1916 Anchorage school student. Volunteers in period dress have done this since 1980; over a thousand students participate each year.

The **Historian of the Year** was awarded to **Terrence Cole** for his new book, *Fighting for the Forty-Ninth Star: C. W. Snedden and the Crusade for Alaska Statehood*, an astoundingly fresh treatment of an old topic.



The **Pathfinder Award** recognizes contributions to the discovery and description of resources relating to Alaska history. This year the honor goes to the *Lost Alaskans: Morningside Hospital History Project* and its primary researchers. **Marylou Elton, Ellen Ganley, Meg Greene, Vivian Hamilton, Sally Mead, Karen Perdue, Robin Renfroe, Deborah Smith, and Nijse Steinkruger** were recognized for their research and website.

This year the Society awarded three **Contributions to Alaska History Awards**. The first recognizes **Ray Bonnell** and the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* for Bonnell's weekly column "Sketches of Alaska." The column has included pen-and-ink sketches and accompanying narratives about historic structures in Alaska, with coverage ranging from the Skarland Cabin on the university campus to the Lacey Street Theatre. The column feeds community interest in the built environment of Fairbanks and captures the essence of these structures before, as Bonnell notes, "time, vandals, and development permanently erase these pieces of our history."

The second **Contributions to Alaska History Award** recognizes **Mike Blackwell, Marie Darlin, and Jim Geraghty** for their energy to organize the **Friends of the Juneau-Douglas City Museum**, and for their success at bringing an important work of art back to Juneau. The group secured at auction an original Sydney Laurence oil painting, *Early Morning, Juneau*, now held in the public trust. The three demonstrate both how to build a successful support group and the good work such an organization is capable of doing.



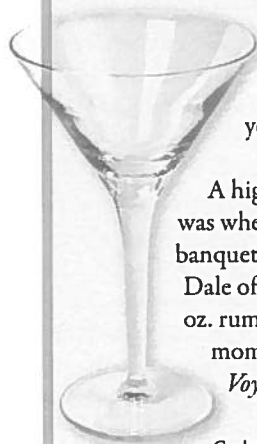
Early Morning, Juneau, Alaska by Sydney Laurence.
Courtesy of the Juneau-Douglas City Museum/JDCM 2010.24.001

The third **Contributions to Alaska History Award** honors **Suelyn Wright-Novak** for her work to establish the **Alaska Veterans' Museum**, which opened its doors in Anchorage in April 2011. Suelyn is president of the Board of Directors, spearheaded the *Alaska Veterans Oral History Project*, generated public interest for the museum, raised funds, and secured a location for the museum.

The Society gives two **Student and Beginning Professional Travel Scholarship Awards** to help individuals attend and participate in the Alaska Historical Society/Museums Alaska conference. This year the recipients are **Rachel Seale** and **Erin Shew**. Rachel is a new employee of the Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and Erin is a graduate student in the Northern Studies Program at the university.

The final award, the **President's Award**—better known as the **Beaver Log**—was awarded by President Katie Oliver to **Ron Inouye**, characterized by Oliver as a tireless advocate for the state's history and museum programs, a key organizer of last year's meeting in Fairbanks, and a great piano player.

A highlight of the Alaska Historical Society and Museums Alaska meeting in Valdez was when Pat Roppel, bankrolled by Dorothy Moore, offered a "Windjammer" toast at the banquet to historian R.N. "Bob" DeArmond (1911-2010). During the holidays Bob and Dale often entertained friends. Bob would serve his famous "Windjammer" punch: 12 oz. rum; 12 oz. crème de cacao, 36 oz. pineapple juice, and 12 oz. of milk added at the last moment. Anyone who rowed a boat from Sitka to Puget Sound, as Bob did in 1931 (*A Voyage in a Dory*, Sitka: Arrowhead Press, 1999), deserves such a commemorative toast.



Cocktail glass. Photograph by Evan-Amos

Behind the Curtain...

If you've ever done archival research at a library, museum, or some other repository of historical documents, you know the routine. You fill out a slip, take a seat at one of the tables in the well-lit research room, and wait for the documents to be brought to you, usually wheeled on a cart from some back room that you only glimpse as the door swings open and shut.

But then, once in a while, a pleasant and accommodating archivist offers to give you a tour of the stacks.

This happened to me recently at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. The archivist wasn't familiar with the documents I requested (so obscure was the topic) and he invited me behind the curtain. We took a freight elevator to the sixth floor and entered a dimly lit, cool but not drafty room with shelves, desks, and fixtures that surely dated from the Eisenhower era. We walked up and down the aisles, looking at box after box with such enticing labels as "84th Congress, Hearings on Interstate Highway System." (If you recognize that my use of the word "enticing" in that sentence is not sarcastic but reflects genuine excitement, then I have news for you: we're both history nerds.)

I've had the same experience at the State Library in Juneau. You can truly grasp the weight of Alaska history when you see so many boxes of documents in one room. Many of those boxes have likely never been opened since the day an archivist placed them on the shelf. But they're there, and one day a historian will look and we'll learn something about ourselves.

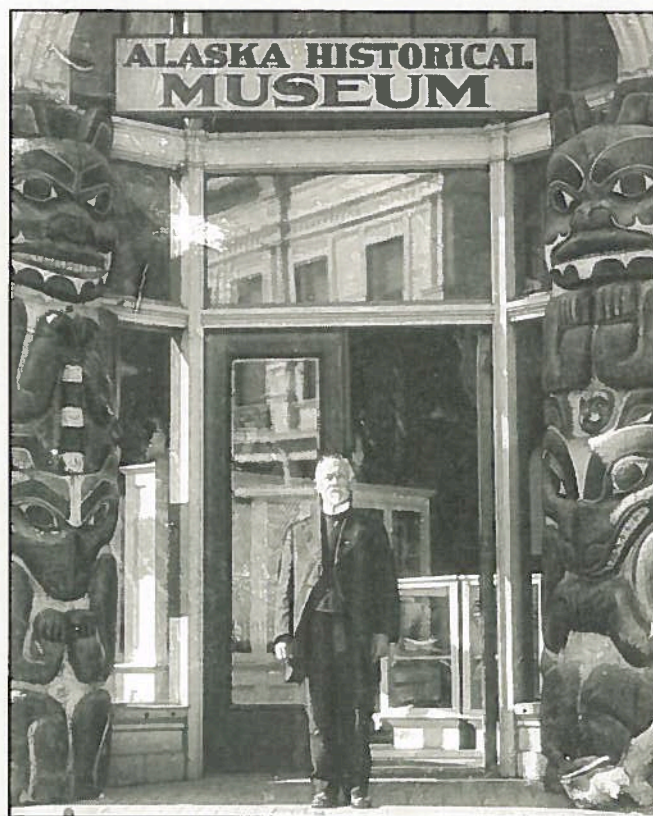
...every document and artifact is invaluable.

I'm preaching to the choir here to say that preserving our heritage is important for many reasons, not least of which is that the true historical value of a document or artifact may not become clear for decades or even centuries after the fact. And in that sense, every document and artifact is invaluable.

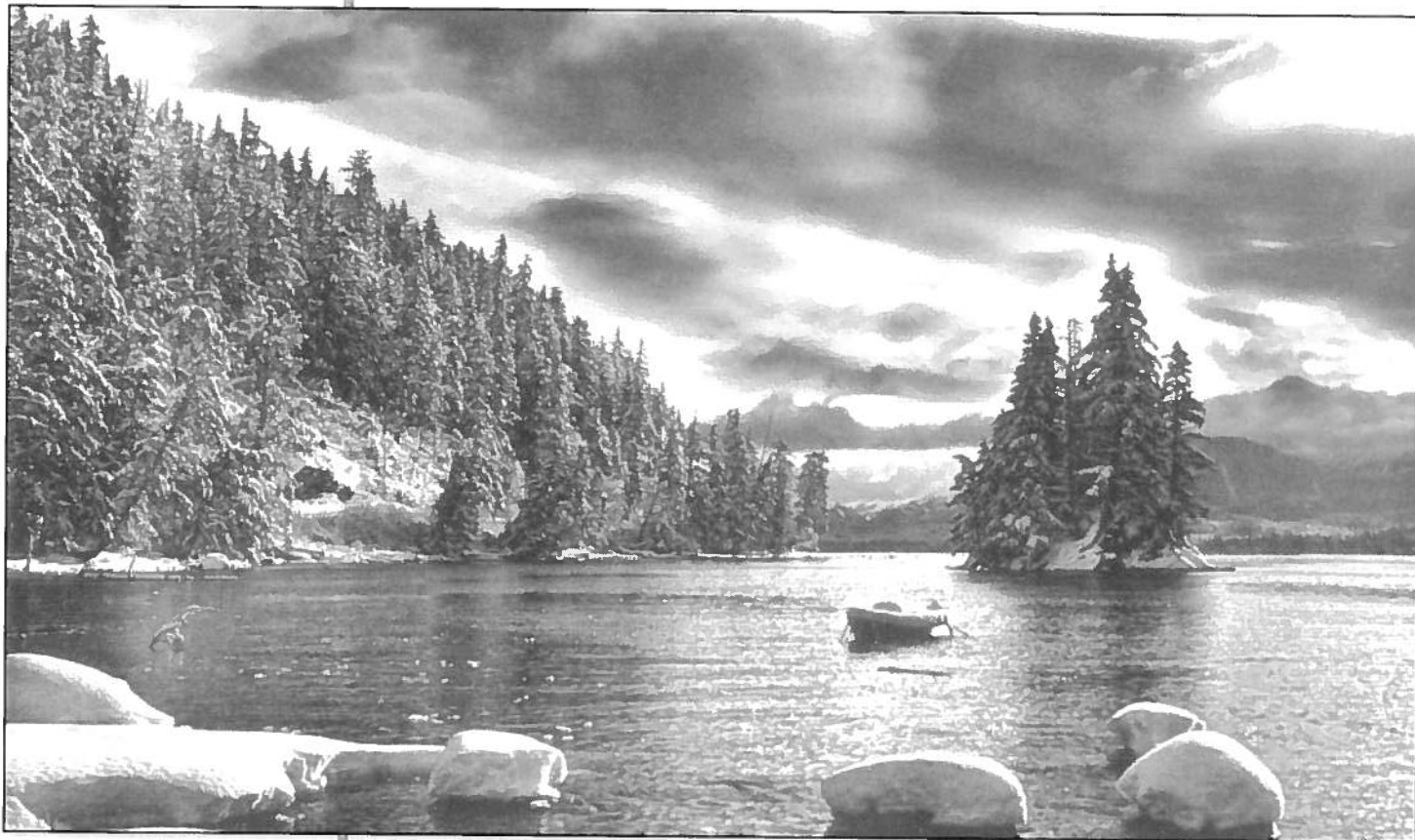
I ask you to contact your governor and legislators and urge them to support funding for the State Library and Museum (SLAM) project.

Ross Coen, President

Right, above and below: Reverend A.P. Kashevaroff, Curator and Librarian of the Alaska Territorial Museum and Library, Juneau.
Michael Z. Vinokourov Photograph Collection, ASL-P243-3-005 and ASL-P243-3-007 respectively



Notes from around the state



South Tongass Highway, circa 1940.
Photograph by Otto C. Schallerer.
Donated by James Moody, THS 70.7.26.137



Non-commissioned Officers Quarters,
U.S. Army, 1901. This Swedish-style
structure is presently displayed by the
Eagle Historical Society as a period
military residence with a furnished living
room, bedroom and kitchen.

The winter exhibit at the **Tongass Historical Museum** is *Otto Schallerer: Alaska Photographer* and obviously a Ketchikan favorite. Fall and winter Native Arts Studies Program classes are underway at the **Totem Heritage Center**. The classes run all the way from *Introduction to Power Tools* to advanced mask carving classes. Google both names and enjoy!



Eighty-eight root beer floats, homemade pies ditto, fiftieth anniversary t-shirts and a lovely donated handmade quilt sold. Where else but at the **Eagle Historical Society**? The current *Wireless* newsletter also features a number of photographs of historic local buildings, mostly past but some present. Check out their slick website at www.eagleak.org.



The **Cooper Landing Society and Museum** newsletter mentions an elk head mount, field radios, and a local family's photography exhibit among the new acquisitions; sounds so familiar to small places, as does the request for more

volunteers. www.cooperlandingmuseum.com will give you more news.



The first phase of the Japonski Island boathouse renovation project is complete, the **Sitka Maritime Heritage Society** happily reports. A hefty grant from *Save America's Treasures* mightily aided that, and another grant will fund a heat pump. Nothing better than well-deserved grants aided by individual money and work donations. The newsletter also features Peter Simpson, the Tsimpsean-Tlingit boat builder in Sitka.



Art is the thrust this winter and next year of the **Anchorage Museum**. *True North: Contemporary Art of the Circumpolar North* opens next summer. To complement this, the **Cook Inlet Historical Society** has scheduled monthly lectures until next July entitled *True North: the History of Art in Alaska* with some outstanding speakers. Try anchagemuseum.org for more details. The museum is also hosting *Earth, Fire and Fibre XXVIII* it will go on tour in January. Fifty stone lithographs of Fred Machetanz bring more art to the museum this winter.

Notes from around the state



Eskimo Mask – Young Woman, 1965
by Dale DeArmond. Donated by Mrs.
Charles D. Ferris. UA1985-9-5

Planning for a possible new museum has been absorbing the members of the **Sitka Historical Society and Museum**. The building would be part of an enlarged complex of public buildings on the waterfront, an idea causing much comment and controversy. Am sure they'll keep us posted. They also report acquisition of the collection of noted Alaskan artist, Dale DeArmond. She lived most of her life in Sitka and Juneau.



Trees and Leaves could be the name of the three art exhibits featured this winter at the **Alaska State Museum**. It isn't, but two of the featured artists like nature. The third teaches cartoon illustration. The newsletter also has an article on a visit to the Pribilof's St. George Island and its famed fur seal rookery. Can't make the meetings but want to know what's happening? Point your web browser to www.museums.state.ak.us.



Next time you're in Wasilla stop by the **Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry**. For more information, go to www.museumofalaska.org or telephone 907/376-1211. To be a supporter send a check for \$25.00 individual or \$35.00 for the whole family to MATI, Post Office Box 870646, Wasilla, Alaska 99687.



The **Alutiiq Museum** recently became the seventh museum in Alaska and the second tribal museum in the United States to achieve national accreditation. Congratulations! It took only fourteen years of hard work. The accreditation is for 15 years. They also thank the Alaska State Museum for its aid and provision of an exceptional summer intern. The museum hosted an outstanding series of lectures over the summer and weekly during September.



The Store Door is the newsletter of the **Tenakee Springs Historical Collection** and is noted for its stories of the quirky residents of the small town on Chichagof Island where people have enjoyed the hot springs for many generations. It is said to be an Alaskan retirement community where residents lie about their age; "she says she's 89 but I know she's only 78." It has been a while since the last issue, but the new one is glorious. Shipwrecks and boat fires, letters from 1900, 1901, and 1968, progress on the new museum, some fine photos and biographies of late inhabitants; all well worth the wait. Something to add to the next issue? Want to join the crowd?

Send \$15.00 for an individual membership and \$25.00 for the family to Post Office Box 633, Tenakee Springs, Alaska 99833 and enjoy.



A brief history of the Cape Decision Light Station from its founding in 1932 and a very ambitious renovation program is told in the newsletter of the **Cape Decision Lighthouse Society**. If the renovation sounds daunting, the list of projects completed is amazing. The most fun is the new electrical system which enabled them to explore the dark basement rooms. There is also a nice account of a summer class on *Discover Design Research* held on Kuiu Island that studied the lighthouse.



The barn, blacksmith shop, bunkhouse table, sewing, garden stakes, grave marker photographs; all duties helpers can do at the **Hope and Sunrise Historical and Mining Museum**, their newsletter reports. It is closed for the winter, but will open on request. They were also doing an archaeological dig at the old Social Hall. So far store tokens, banjo picks, and bottle glass have been reported.



A good season and plans for the usual *Colony Christmas* celebration and *Bake Sale* are set for the **Palmer Historical Society**. The current newsletter also has a short biography of Katie Hurley, amazing secretary to Governors Ernest Gruening and Bill Egan, for the Territorial Senate, and for the Constitutional Convention; known as Ms. Democrat. It also has mystery photographs. This newsletter features a cabin and two farmhouses and asks who lived there.



The **Chugiak-Eagle River Historical Society** newsletter took a trip down memory lane. It has a heartwarming story of the first non-native settler when Eagle River was opened to entry in 1919. He was a Finnish moonshiner who took his whiskey to Anchorage via skiff; sort of a modern-day Viking, you could say. In 1947-1948 six local families set up a telephone system for themselves using surplus battlefield wire and hand-cranked telephones. Electricity was supplied in 1950. www.cerhs.org tells more.



The **Resurrection Bay Historical Society** newsletter reports on a nearby creek, a section of the Iditarod Trail, and its clean-up and restoration



"Skak-ish-tin," Tlingit Native, Wrangell, Alaska, 100 years old.
Wickersham State Historic Site Collection.
Photographs, 1882-1930s, ASL-P277-013-002

Notes from around the state



Visit www.connectingtocollections.org to listen to a recording of December's Chat Event "Caring for Dolls." The online community's goal "is to help smaller museums, libraries, archives, and historical societies quickly locate reliable preservation resources." Image above: 1870 European bisque doll. Photograph by Andreas Praefcke. Zweigmuseum des Württembergischen Landesmuseums

by the local middle school class, and once again brings us a report on the Gold Rush from the *Seward Gateway* in 1940. This was by Sylvia, who ran a curio shop. She had come up to Skagway with her family in early 1898. Of the Atlin rush she reported a constant stream of gold seekers came by their place for about two days and about a week later half of them returned by the same route. (A lovely summation of what most of the rushes produced.)



The **Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance** newsletter reports on the centennial of the then-named Iditarod Kennel Club and its formation in 1911. The plan was to hold numerous short dog races and ease into longer ones. It was also reported in another 1911 story that time was not saved by traveling Flat to Seward before ample snow had fallen. www.iditarodnationalhistorictail.org will give more info.



From our neighbor, Yukon, came a most interesting newsletter from the **Yukon Historical and Museums Association**. One bit from the summer issue Fairbanks folks will like; a tourist who commented on how advanced Whitehorse is; everyone drives electric cars. Rather hated to admit they're winter plugins! There is also a piece on history student adventures at Fort Selkirk and the Adäka Cultural Festival in Whitehorse where the First Nations from the Yukon and beyond come to celebrate traditional ways and crafts. If your browser is anxious to get in on the fun, point it to Yukon's Cultural Days on Google and enjoy.

News & Information

WANT TO KNOW MORE about the nominations for the *Alaska Women's Hall of Fame*? The funding for federal history and preservation programs for Alaska? What about some internships coming up next year? All that and more is found in the **Alaska Office of History and Archaeology** monthly publication *Heritage*. Drop by their office 550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1310, Anchorage, or e-mail jo.antonson@alaska.gov, telephone 907/269-8721 or go to www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks for information, or if you'd like to subscribe, e-mail oha@alaska.net. Easy to reach and full of good information.



FAIRBANKS HAD A SMALL PROBLEM in awarding the city's **Distinguished Citizen Award**. They solved the problem by honoring two men; the well known twins, **Dermot and Terrence Cole**. As the council said, they both deserved it.



THE ALASKA STATE ARCHIVES HAS BEGUN **RELEASING** the digitized 220 hours of all plenary sessions and most committee meetings of the **Alaska Constitutional Convention**, November 8, 1955 to February 6, 1956. So far they've been posted to <http://bit.ly/nq9Eml> – listen in!

HAVE AN OLD ALBUM OR COAT in the museum that needs preservation but you're not sure what to do? Try the new *Connecting to Collections*. It's at www.connectingtocollections.org and offers a full range of experts and sites.



AND WE ALL ENJOY keeping up with the **Alaska Humanities Forum** and its busy doings. Great photograph on the cover of the current *Forum* and the usual informative and chatty contents. akhfblog.typepad.com/door-15/.



ADVANCE WORD HAS COME on the **Alaska Anthropological Association** meeting to be held in Seattle, February 29–March 3, 2012. For lots more information on this annual feast and potlatch contact the Alaska Anthropological Association. Post Office Box 241686, Anchorage, Alaska 99524-1686 or point your browser to www.alaskaanthropology.org. Hotel reservations, abstracts, student scholarships, the journal, awards; much to read.



THE ALASKA-YUKON PIONEERS NEWSLETTER

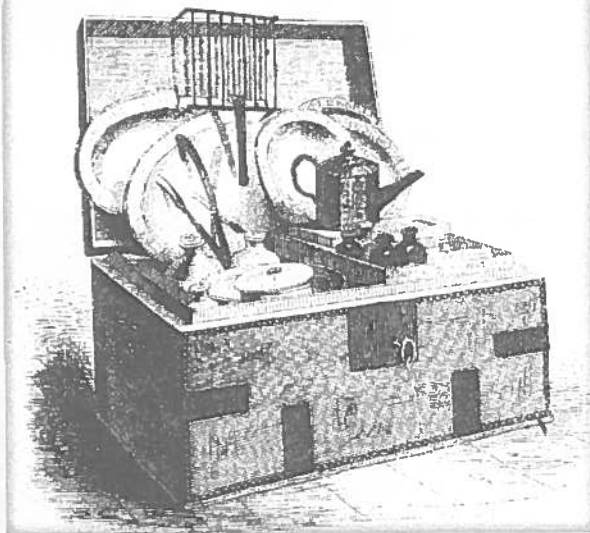
continues to come out monthly and contains news of all members; their reminiscences, health, and current doings. They often have meetings in Seattle – learn all about the group and receive their monthly newsletter, still only \$12.00 a year. Make check payable to AYP and mail to AYP, Joyce Penman, Recorder, 27833 85th Dr. NW, Stanwood, WA. 98292 or email olwomn@wavecable.com.

♦♦♦ ♦♦♦

CATHY SPUDE, KARL GURCKE, ROBIN MILLS AND RODERICK SPRAGUE, editors of *Eldorado! The Archaeology of Gold Mining in the Far North*, have arranged for members of the Alaska Historical Society to receive a 20% discount on the book, just published by the University of Nebraska Press. The book is an anthology with articles about historical archaeology of early 20th century towns, trails and mining sites in Alaska and Yukon. The paperback is \$55.00 and available at www.nebraskapress.unl.edu. The discount code is 6AF11. A generous, and appreciated, offer!

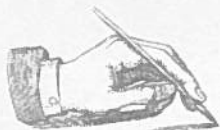
SEEKING TREASURES

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. Please send a description of what you would like to donate to akhist@gci.net or Box 100299 / Anchorage / AK 99510



Visit our website:

www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org



We welcome your letters, news and pictures. Please send them to the editor:
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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.alaskahistoricalsociety.org and then click on "membership and giving."


ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 100299
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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.)

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

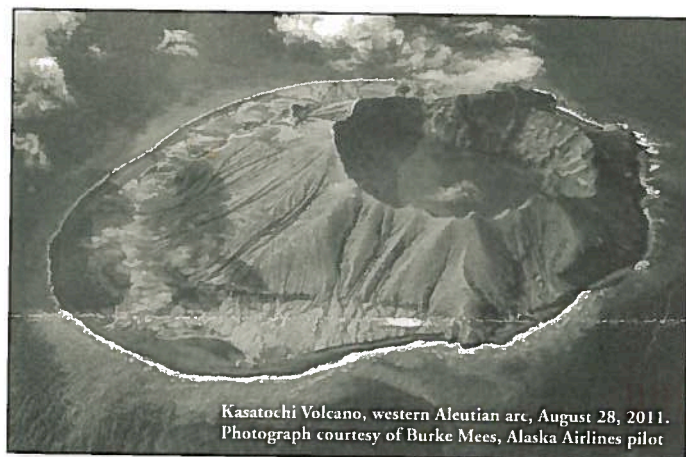
As interest and writing on Alaska history seem to be sprouting like fireweed in the spring, a useful and popular book is the society's *The Alaska 67* with annotated recommendations of good books on Alaska history. Order it through the website!

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

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Kasatochi Volcano, western Aleutian arc, August 28, 2011.
Photograph courtesy of Burke Mees, Alaska Airlines pilot

Editor's Comments

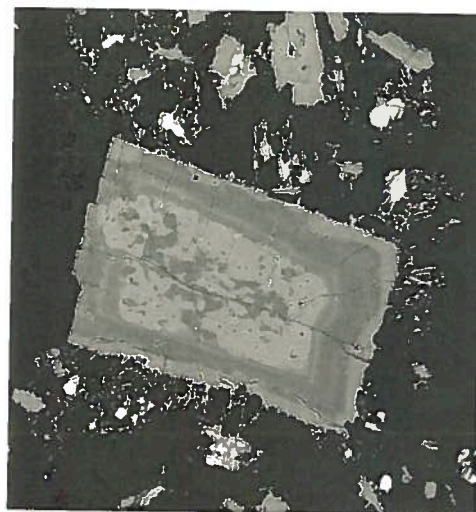
 kay, folks, I will admit it. I have a prejudice towards Alaska's historical societies and museums. There likely are various names for this, but I prefer the "creativity factor." It goes thusly; any place can have a great society and museum if there is a large population and generous acquisition funds. Yes, it's wonderful to visit the Prado or the Louvre or the British Museum; you get the picture, but I must admit my sympathy is with the very small places, such as most of the ones in Alaska. A small population and an even smaller one interested in local history, matched by small funds and usually no paid staff. Hours and hours of time and heavy creativity are necessary.

Time after time our small places have been astonishing. Special quizzes for school kids, (Cooper's Landing showed pictures of the 1964 earthquake accompanied by remembrances of local school children and asked which was the lightest ash from local volcanoes), talk locals into donating family photograph albums, root beer floats, bake sales, quilt raffles; whatever it takes.

And rewards on the cheap? One of my favorites was the inspired prize for a school contest – the winner got a ride to school in the fire truck. What could possibly top that to the child? And the firemen?

Almost every issue of the newsletter contains a clever idea and I adore citing them. Keep them coming, small societies; it's the old Alaska spirit of self-reliance, resourcefulness, and yes, creativity.

D. L.



Backscatter electron image showing zone plagioclase with coarsely sieved core from sample AT-1610, March 30, 2009, Redoubt Volcano. Photograph by Jessica Larsen. Image courtesy of the Alaska Volcano Observatory/University of Alaska Fairbanks, Geophysical Institute