

Alaska History News

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Spring 2012

apers, 2012



Alaska on the World Stage, October 10-13, Sitka

he Alaska Historical Society invites paper and panel proposals for its 2012 annual conference, *Alaska on the World Stage*, to be held in Sitka from October 10-13. The AHS also welcomes proposals for facilitated discussions, round-table sessions, workshops, and "reports from the field."

In spite of being the most eastern, western, and northern of frontiers during the course of its history, Alaska is an international land. The international encounters among peoples originated with the complex relations among the dozens of Alaska Native groups. With the advent of Russian colonization, Alaska became a linchpin to the Pacific world and a site of international trade and contact. Since then, Russian fur traders, Scandinavian fishermen, Asian cannery workers, American gold seekers, Alaskan Natives, Japanese and American servicemen, and a host of international scientists, artists, and others have comingled in the Great Land. The state is perhaps most famous for its global exports, including oil, minerals, and seafood. The ethos of Alaska has been sold to the world's imagination through travelogues, contemporary television series, ethnographic collections found in international museums, and past and current scientific expeditions. Alaska as an intellectual export includes its central place in global debates over climate change and resource extraction.

The AHS welcomes all papers that explore the theme of *Alaska on the World Stage* for its Sitka conference. Sitka, the former capitol of Russian America, is a fitting place to explore Alaska's global connections. For consideration, individuals should send an abstract of no more than 250 words with their name, affiliation, and contact information to Anjuli Grantham, Program Chair (anjuligrantham@gmail.com) by May 1, 2012.

Message from the President

t the founding meeting of the Alaska Historical Society in November 1967, attendees were invited to join at an individual membership rate of five dollars. Twenty-eight Alaskans signed up. Additional membership applications continued to trickle in over the next several weeks.

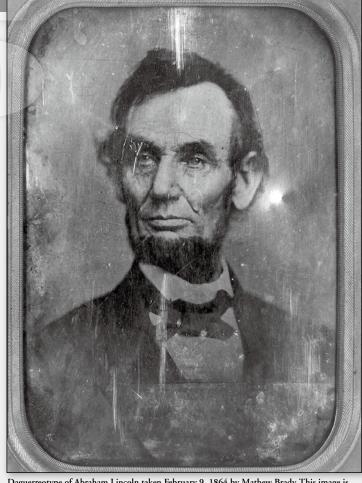
"While there are no large amounts, obviously, an interest is being generated over a wide area..."

—Treasurer Homer Thompson in a letter to Tom Beirne, the first AHS president, early 1968

I recently have been doing some research in the AHS archives held at the University of Alaska Anchorage, Archives and Manuscripts Department in the Consortium Library. I suppose it is a bit like the tiger eating its own tail, a historian with AHS studying the AHS itself—but it is an interesting exercise to see just how our organization came together. Thompson's letter quoted above shows that AHS has always relied on contributions from members. Thankfully we've grown and today have significantly more than twenty-eight!

By now you have received your membership renewal form in the mail. I encourage you to renew with a contribution that helps AHS fulfill its unique and important mission.

Ross Coen, President



Daguerreotype of Abraham Lincoln taken February 9, 1864 by Mathew Brady This image is a mirror of Lincoln's portrait that appears on the redesigned \$5 bill issued March 13, 2008. The daguerreotype process required long exposures with subjects' heads at times supported by unseen armatures to help hold them motionless. Images were "developed" by subjecting exposed plates to heated mercury fumes. Repeated contact with these toxic vapors caused severe health problems or death in photographers using the daguerreotype process. Image courtesy Library of Congress

I can make more generals, but horses cost money.

—Abraham Lincoln



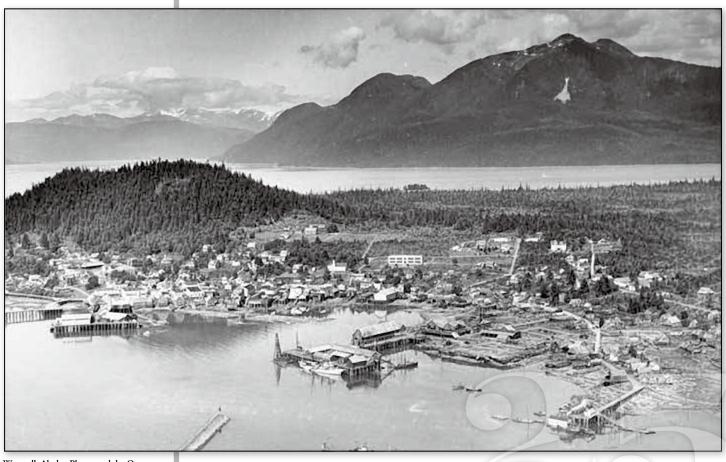
Eugene Delacroix, A Young Tiger Playing with its Mother, 1830, oil on canvas, 52" × 76.6". Louvre, Paris

In terms of buying power, a 1967 five dollar bill is now worth approximately \$34.30. The cost of membership in the Alaska Historical Society today – \$35.00. Go figure...

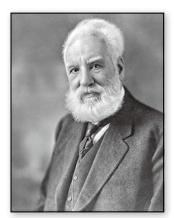
Notes from around the state

Mr Watson—Come here—I want to see you.

—Alexander Graham Bell, March 10, 1876



Wrangell, Alaska. Photograph by Otto Clarence Schallerer. ASL-PCA-44



The innovator Alexander Graham Bell, circa 1914 – 1919. Bell is generally credited with invention of the first practical telephone, but was accused in 1876 (and the controversy continues today) of stealing the patent from the inventor Elisha Gray. Gray employed a water transmitter in his design, whereas Bell eventually used an electromaganetic transmitter.

Library and Archives Canada / C-017335

Did you celebrate the International Year of Forests last year? Southern Southeast Alaska students from kindergarten to eighth grade did. Educational packets were distributed early on, and poetry, murals, watercolors, journals, and videos resulted in A Forest of Words: Youth Voices Celebrate the Tongass National Forest. The Ketchikan Museums newsletter reports a Funday and exhibit of the work through most of February at the Tongass Museum. The Otto Schallerer photographic exhibit at the museum closed at the end of 2011, but you can Google O.C. Schallerer and VILDA and enjoy his photos. And, of course, the Totem Heritage Center continues its Native Arts Studies classes. Cedar bark weaving, tool sharpening, carving, design and more are taught by masters.

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The Cooper Landing Historical Society has changed bylaws. They changed their annual meeting from January to October because last year's meeting had to be cancelled as they didn't have a quorum, it was -4F, and the museum's gas

heaters wouldn't start. Perhaps July would be better. They also had a little moneysaving idea. Dropped the landline for a cell phone on the \$25.00 per month plan. Call 907/598-3502 and ask how they like it.

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Another great recipe from the Chugiak-Eagle River Historical Society is in their newsletter. This is for scrapple - Pennsylvania Dutch unite! They also report an item from 1963. A resident, newly returned from an African safari, was charged by a mama moose whose calf was separated by the road. Mama came down on his car, "in one squishing leap" he reported, leaving him unharmed but shedding pulverized glass and moose hair. Mama and calf trotted off. Another news item, from 1959, "The Serve-Yourself coffee counter at the Moose Horn Lodge is proving a boon to bachelors. The poor, uncared for, unshackled, misguided hungry wretches are taking home the paper cups—they sure hate to wash the dishes."

Notes from around the state



Fort Egbert lookout post. ASL-PCA-245

Far right: Major E. M. George. Associated VILDA data below:

Collection Name: Kay J. Kennedy Aviation Photograph Collection Identifier: UAF-1991-98-834 Title: Major E. M. George. Description: Title from verso. "Major E. M. George, constructing quartermaster to be in charge of construction of new four million dollar airbase to be installed near Fairbanks 1936. Ladd AF Base, 1st trip up to begin Subject.TGM: Men; Military officers; Uniforms; Government officials Personal Name: George, E. M. Location: Fairbanks (Alaska) Ladd Air Force Base (Alaska) Region: Interior Alaska Time Period: 1913 to 1939 Date.original: 1936 Type: Image (Photographs) Image: (Portrait photographs) Ordering & Use: For information on ordering and using this material: http:// library.uaf.edu/order-photos Holding Institution: Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.; mailto:UAF-APR-reference-Service@ alaska.edu -- (907) 474-2791--PO Box 756808, Fairbanks, AK 99775-6808.

A cannon ball can turn up in unlikely places, and the Eagle Historical Society newsletter speaks of this. Cleaning out storage is one of those jobs we all put off. Stuff is stored because we want to save it, and once saved it's ignored. The storage space gets filled and needs attention. So Eagle folks had a bunch of Blazo boxes. They are an Alaskan necessity; what else is so versatile? Chairs, end tables, shelves; the list of uses for them in the Bush is almost endless. One box was heavier than others; opening the plastic bag revealed a cannon ball from Fort Egbert. But the ball was still live. After a lengthy wait, two explosive experts arrived. Although they tried to preserve it, it had to be exploded, an impressive performance. For full details, read the newsletter. Post Office Box 23, Eagle, Alaska. 99738. www. EagleAk.org, or ehsmus@aptalaska.net.

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VILDA is one of the slickest affairs going in Alaska. The State Historical Library has been digitizing its 500,000 photographs for some years now, with the University of Alaska in Fairbanks and Anchorage and various other Alaska libraries doing the same. The **Anchorage Museum** newsletter reminds us the work continues; their contributions of images now number over 10,000. The museum has a Tlingit blown-glass exhibit and ongoing weekly planetarium *Cosmic Light Show*. Two other spring exhibits show Mt. McKinley climbers and photos of the mountain. The Smithsonian programs at the museum for March can be found at http://alaska.si.edu/

Of course, it's not just Seward that is mastering the Internet. The Iditarod Historic Trail
Alliance reports there will be a convention of non-profit groups operating under formal agreements with government land management agencies to be held in early March at Las
Vegas. For more information on this, Google the Association of Partners for Public Lands
Partnership Convention and Trade Show. You can also visit www.facebook.com/appl.fb. Oh, no – the Alliance is based in Seward!

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The annual meeting of the **Sitka Maritime Heritage Society** offers far more than elections.
This year it included a program on the Sitka herring fishery and biographies, with photographs, of a couple of famous Alaska Native boat builders, and exhibited tools just acquired from one.
Google sitkamaritime.org, or take your pen in hand and write them at 419 Marine Street, Sitka, Alaska, 99835 for more information.

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The Cold War Mission of Ladd Air Force Base, 1946-1960 was the topic for the February meeting of the **Tanana-Yukon Historical Society**. Need more information? 907/488-3383. As always, if the temperature is -20, the talk will be rescheduled.



Like other societies, the **Palmer Historical Society** has scheduled local speakers monthly and is reviewing its membership files this winter. They do urge everyone to renew for all the happy reasons the society provides. Go to www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org to see the good reasons to join or renew.

Notes from around the state



The Resurrection Bay Historical Society is one of the busiest in Alaska. Always coming up with different ways of telling Seward's history. The Bits of History productions can be seen at the museum, or one can go to www.youtube. com/bitsofhistory and see the current ones, then tap on the sidebar there and see some of the older ones. All this familiarity with cutting edge technology makes us wonder if the whole community of Seward has taken classes and now spends much time in Silicon Valley, perhaps teaching. For example, the producer and director of a documentary on the Serum Run to Nome needs \$85,000 to complete the production. To learn more and perhaps donate, Google: Icebound by API Arts & Outreach - kickstart, and there you are! Or, the newsletter inform us, the National Park Service has expanded its preservation sites and Tech Notes - just go to www.nps.gov/tps. Do you suppose Sewardites (Sewardians?) are working on these as well?

Less techie and glamorous, the Seward folks report their obituary index work continues. They had files for 2,827 people at last listing, all born, lived, or died in Seward, Moose Pass, Hope, or Cooper Landing. What a gift for families searching for members from long ago.

Nice, too, is a reprint of a 1940 Seward paper's article on one of the early women photographers and shop owners.

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Unfortunately, the **Tanana-Yukon Historical Society**, which had noted the early February meeting would be cancelled if the temperature was -20F had to do so. I am sure the temperatures will rise and they will get back on schedule.

News & Information

THE ALASKA COMMERCIAL COMPANY, the successor to the Russian American Company, kept ledgers at each of its stores. In a happy discovery, six ledgers from posts dating between 1875 and 1895 surfaced. Pennelope Goforth received generous grants from the Alaska Humanities Forum, the Alaska Commercial Company, and Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association to digitize the fragile records. The project title is Bringing Aleutian

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History Home: the Lost Aleutian Ledgers.

THE NATIVE VILLAGE of Eyak's Ilanka Cultural Center at Cordova was affected by the heavy snow this year, as was the Kawerak Beringia Center of Culture and Science in Nome. Both made national news; heavy snow in Cordova, and the first ever delivery in winter of fuel and oil to the Northwestern coast. The Coast Guard icebreaker, Healy, successfully broke ice for the large Russian tanker. A major storm had prevented delivery in the autumn.

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THE ALASKA HUMANITIES FORUM published a year-end report. They were able to give close to \$140,000 in grants to 16 Alaska communities. State funding was reduced this past year, but the U.S. Department of Education funded the Cross-Cultural Immersion program to help retain rural teachers. Greg Kimura, President and CEO, just announced he is leaving the Forum to head a Japanese-American museum in Los Angeles. Visit akhf.org for more information of programs, activities and lots more. (Ed. note: let's tell our legislators about the state cuts.)

IF YOU'D LIKE TO HELP the Aleutian Pribilof Islands

Association, have dinner and take part in a silent auction March 10^{th} at the Sheraton Hotel in Anchorage. RSVP to Kim Leming at 907/ 222-4289 or e-mail at Kiml@apiai.org.

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THE WRANGELL MOUNTAINS CENTER is a blend of hikes, classes, and various other activities that enhance appreciation of the Wrangells and mountains in general. They also are preserving the McCarthy General Store, and work with local residents interested in the history of McCarthy and Kennecott. For more information, go to www.wrangells.org.

News & Information

It got hot in those barabaras. We pull off our clothes. We soak them in water and put them over our face. Those peoples who have mosses in their barabaras pour water over those mosses and put them over their nose and mouth so they can breath. After while we open door and try to see out. All black, everywhere. A little bird fly into barabara. He can't see where to go. We children wash his eyes with water and he stay in barabara with us.



Katmai barabaras covered with volcanic ash, 1915. The Alaska Historical Society, U.S. Geological Survey, Alaska Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys, and Katmai National Park & Preserve are planning events to commemorate the centennial of the Novarupta-Katmai eruption of 1912. For a schedule of events go to the AHS webpage, alaskahistoricalsociety.org.

UAA, National Geographic Society Katmai Expedition Collection, Box 1, 3946

AND HOW COULD YOUR EDITOR FORGET the

biggest memory bargain going in the Northwest? If you have lived a long time in Alaska or the Yukon and want to tell your old friends how life is going while you find out what they have been doing, and all this for \$12.00 per annum, you cannot do better than send that amount to the **Alaska Yukon Pioneers**, attention Joyce Penman, Recorder, 27833 85th Drive, Stanwood, Washington, 98292. Telephone is 253/709-0158 or 360/629-3554 or olwomn@wavecable.com

WONDER HOW national historic preservation plans and events affect Alaska? Wonder what is going on in those fields here? Interested in buying a Russian American Company flag? You can find such things in Heritage, the publication of the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, 550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1310, Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3565. Telephone 907/269-8721, or saddle up, pardner, and mosey over to www.dnr.state. ak.us/parks/ or subscribe at oha@alaska.net. Questions? Jo Antonson, jo.antonson@alaska.gov.

THINGS SEEM TO BE MOVING on the new combined building in Juneau that will house the state **Museum**, **Libraries**, **and Archives**, but tell your legislators it should be a priority project to fund it completely. For an update on the project go to http://alaskalamp.blogspot.com/

Pick.Click.Give.

VARIOUS LOCAL SOCIETIES AND MUSEUMS are on the list for those applying for the Permanent Fund Dividend. Consider using the "Pick, Click, Give" to donate to them.

NEWS OF SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

Take a moment...for history!

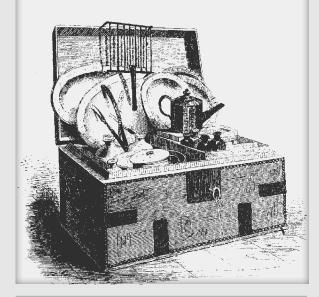
Take 30 seconds to let Governor Parnell and state legislators know you support the full funding for a much-needed State Library, Archives, Museum building. Send e-mails, call, or write our leaders. The new structure will ensure the safety, security, and preservation of Alaska's physical and intellectual history for more than our lifetimes. But without YOUR help, our state's legacy continues endangered by leaking roofs, aging infrastructure, and unfulfilled vision.

For information on the facility: www.alaskaslamp. blogspot.com

For information on contacting the governor and legislators: www.Alaska.gov or your local Alaska Legislative Information Office.

SEEKING TREASURES

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



Visit our website:

www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org



We welcome your letters, news and pictures. Please send them to the editor: Dee Longenbaugh
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Alaska Historical Society

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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

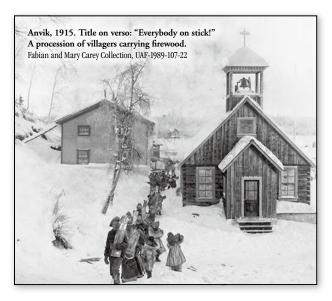
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Become a member... or if you're already a member, sign up a friend or relative. Join the hundreds who want to stay in touch with historic Alaska by sending \$35.00 for individual membership (\$25.00 for students; \$45.00 for family.)

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



Editor's Comments

t is very true that winter weather brings problems to many U.S. museums and historical societies. Alaska, however, can produce some variations on the troubles. Not many places like tenacious Cordova, accustomed to heavy snowfall in the winter, have so much more the National Guard has to help out. And, as mentioned above, sturdy little Nome was in danger of running out of gasoline and heating oil when a big fall storm prevented delivery by barge. So a Coast Guard icebreaker led the way and a big Russian tanker brought the fuel; a first ever event on the western coast.

Anchorage and Fairbanks are both used to snow and cold, but this year has brought extra of both. Juneau and most of Southeast had a great deal of snow but the end of January brought much more. Thirty-five inches was registered in Juneau from January 20th to January 31st, and like quantities over the area. Your editor came up with two scientific theories for this. The first was the Southeast Snow Gods were jealous of all the national attention Cordova was attracting and wanted to show they could produce as well. (Sadly, no national attention resulted.) The other was that the private snowplow owners had a snow dance. They brought their trucks, of course, and had a fine time. "In a circle/ here we go/ swing those blades/ and dosey-do." If anyone can confirm either of these, please notify your editor.

The nicest thing about extreme weather is that it is the gift that keeps on giving. We get through the winter by exchanging information about shoveling, etc. Then the year goes past and the new winter is compared with the last one. All information goes into the record books and can be trotted out for many, many years, pleasing the exact information folks. It is best if remembered with photographs; don't forget to take some.

So – best wishes for some good winter stories for you all, without any real damage to selves or belongings.

D.L.

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