



Alaska History News

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Earthquake Anniversary remembered around the state

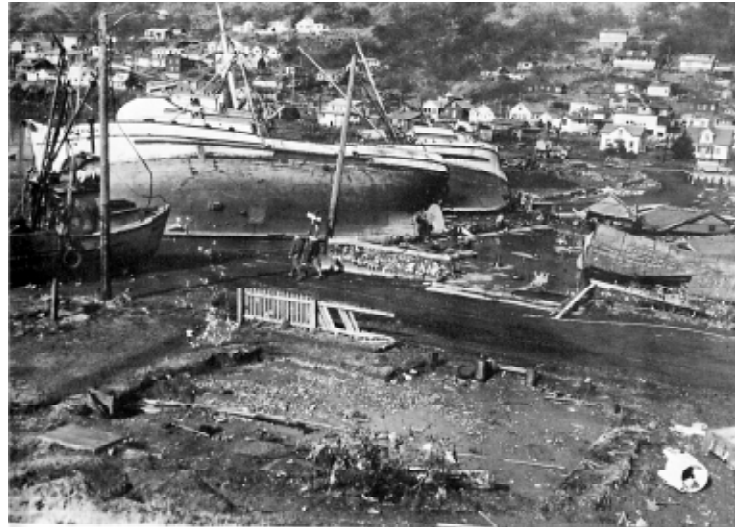
It's not every town where the old-timers can wander down to the beach and take a look at the old place. Talk about the sunken cathedral! Valdez didn't have one, but certainly the Post Office foundation is still there. The old town itself was mostly destroyed in the lethal 9.2 earthquake of 1964 that remains one of the largest such in U.S. history. The newsletter of the **Valdez Museum and Historical Archive** reports on the highly successful opening of *Remembering Old Valdez*, a new temporary exhibit honoring the 40 years' anniversary of the earthquake. Apparently stories flowed freely, aided by the scale model of the original community, and a most entertaining evening was held.

The museum is operating on the smolt-grow-into-big salmon theory by educating the children about the history of their town. Others might be interested in their methods:

- ❖ Integrate local history into classroom curricula when teachers request.
- ❖ Provide kids with hands-on, active experiences.
- ❖ Take advantage of historical sites around town.
- ❖ Use original documents and artifacts wherever possible.
- ❖ Focus on major historical events and topics, but toss in interesting trivia.
- ❖ Make activities fun for students and easy-to-use for teachers.
- ❖ Use the latest technology to research the local archive and the Internet, scan photographs and create computerized slide and video presentations.



The 40th anniversary of the "Big One" is also commemorated by the **Kodiak Historical Society** this year. Their newsletter contains pictures and a long letter written at the time.



Foundations of structures in downtown Kodiak were swept away by seismic sea waves that followed the earthquake.
photo by U.S. Navy, March 28, 1964

They have a busy year as it happens to be the 50th anniversary of the society, founded in 1954. One of their early triumphs was saving the Erskine House, built in 1808 and the oldest Russian structure in the United States, from the ravages of Urban Renewal. It became their museum and they glory in the fact that the society provides the bulk (\$214,000 of the \$314,000 budget) of the annual cost of running the building and services. That's certainly something for much larger and more affluent communities in Alaska to contemplate.

They also remind readers that for a fee, prints can be ordered from the large photographic collection in their archives. Of course, anyone who would like to donate photographs or other memorabilia is highly encouraged to do so. Visit www.baranov.us for details as soon as the site is upgraded.



Another society that whiled away the winter by having an evening of reminiscences was the **Palmer Historical Society**. With the impetus of a 45-minute video produced by the government, *Though the Earth Be Moved*, about the 1964 earthquake, a good evening was had. As their newsletter explains, "It was much more fun to live it again at the meeting than it was to experience it the first time."

(Continued on page 3)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I would like to express my gratitude to all of you who responded to the recent alert about the FY 2005 operating budget for the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums. Your efforts made a difference. Barbara Smith and Frank Norris, co-chairs of the Society's Advocacy Committee did a terrific job working with Museums Alaska and the Friends of the Alaska State Museums getting the word out.

Our legislative advocate in Juneau, Clark Gruening, reported that legislators received a steady stream of phone calls, emails, and letters about the division. Thanks especially to Representatives Kevin Meyer, Mike Hawker, and John Harris, the House proposed modest budget increases for FY 2005 for Libraries, Archives, and Museums. The additions included an electronic records archivist in Juneau and a records analyst in Anchorage for the Alaska State Archives. It restored the curator's position at Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka, and restored a proposed \$100,000 cut to the Alaska State Library. In the end, the Legislature approved only one new position, likely to be the electronic records archivist. The Legislature added \$75,000 to the Library's budget to cover retirement system increases and restored \$25,000 of the proposed larger cut. The capital budget did not include funds for architectural design for expansion of the Alaska State Library, Archives, and Museums building in Juneau. If the Legislature has a special session, however, funds could be put in a bond measure.

Please mark your calendars to attend and participate in our annual meeting to be held September 16-18, 2004, in Anchorage. The theme for the meeting is "Leading the Way: Statesmanship in Alaska." Walter Borneman, author of *Alaska: Saga of a Bold Land* (HarperCollins, 2003), will be the keynote speaker. Borneman is a historian, attorney, and outdoors enthusiast from Estes Park, Colorado, who also produced three award-winning CD-ROM programs on Alaska for the National Park Service. Bruce Merrell and Thom Eley, Program Committee, have received proposals for papers on the first State Legislature, the Constitution Convention, Klondike women, life at Fort Ray, federal lands, the Barrow Duck-In, and the Battle of Wonder Lake. I look forward to an interesting and informative meeting.

Bruce Parham, President



Board of Directors

Bruce Parham, *President, Anchorage*
bruce.parham@nara.gov

Barbara Sweetland Smith, *Vice President, Anchorage*
barbarassmith@gci.net

Dorothy Moore, *Treasurer, Valdez*
dmmoore@cvinternet.net

Phyllis Movius, *Secretary, Fairbanks*
pdmovius@gci.net

Geoff Bleakley, *Copper Center*
geoff_bleakley@nps.gov

Mike Dunning, *Ketchikan*
mike.dunning@uas.alaska.edu

Thom Eley, *Anchorage*
aftje@uaa.alaska.edu

Susan Grigg, *Fairbanks*
ffslg@uaf.edu

Steve Haycox, *Anchorage*
afsw1@uaa.alaska.edu

Jim King, *Juneau*
kingfarm@ptialaska.net

Dee Longenbaugh, *Juneau*
deelong@alaska.com

Bruce Merrell, *Anchorage*
merrellbd@ci.anchorage.ak.us

Frank Norris, *Anchorage*
frank_norris@nps.gov

Kay Shelton, *Juneau*
Kay_Shelton@eed.state.ak.us

Candy Waugaman, *Fairbanks*
candy@mosquitonet.com

Vicki Wisenbaugh, *Tenakee Springs*
wisentenakee@juno.com

Jo Antonson, *Assistant to the President* joa@alaska.com

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

Tel: 907/276-1596; E-mail: ahs@alaska.net

www.alaskahistoricalociety.org

Notes From Around the State

(Continued from page 1)

They have also decided to ameliorate the fading of the agricultural base of the town and its increasing population of commuters by planning now to keep the character of Palmer as much as possible. Fortuitously, two professors and fifteen students from the University of Washington's College of Architecture and Urban Planning are planning a nine-month study "...to find ways the City of Palmer can preserve and enhance the downtown area's character while managing growth during future annexations." The project will conclude January 31, 2005.

The society is urging written answers to these questions:

- ❖ What is it about Palmer that makes you want to call it home?
- ❖ What do you want to see preserved?
- ❖ What direction should we go from here?

Urban sprawl is a continuing problem across the nation; how fortunate Palmer is to have a group concerned before it happens.



So much is always going on at the **Anchorage Museum of History and Art** it's hard to single out top features, but the spring 30th annual *All Alaska Juried Exhibition*, 900 entries resulting in 96 works by 74 artists has to be one. Paintings, photographs, and sculptures are all welcomed for judging. Another big event was the unveiling of the *1964 Earthquake Robe* by master weaver Teri Rofkar. This is now at the new Anchorage airport terminal, thus giving waiting passengers something to see.

The Alaska Railroad Corporation has donated thousands of photographs to the museum's library and archives. Now more than 12,000 images of the railroad from construction to the 1980s are available for viewing. The library is also pleased to announce a grant to catalog the 800 maps and architectural drawings of Anchorage in their possession.

The big summer exhibit is a retrospective of the art of Fred Machetanz. His paintings of Alaska's north are widely collected. An illustrated catalog by Kesler Woodward will be available from the museum shop.

There's also a display of E. W. Merrill's stunning photographs of Tlingits and visitors to Sitka that will run through the summer. As always, if you want to see what's on tap, set your browser to www.anchoragemuseum.org.



A new book by Andrei Znamenski, *Through Orthodox Eyes: Russian Missionary Narratives of Travels to the Dena'ina and Abtna, 1850s-1930s* contains 20 pages about Father Paul Shadura, Orthodox priest in Kenai from 1907 to 1952, mostly drawn from his papers and journals loaned by his daughter-in-law. The **Kenai Historical Society** prints excerpts in its March newsletter. In 1913 saloons were a problem in town, but in 1917, after the Russian Revolution and cessation of funds to the Alaska churches, personal life was extremely difficult for the father of six. His son, Paul Shadura Jr., of Kenai, is a well-known fisherman and activist.

The big economic news of Kenai this year is the renovating and remodeling of an old cannery into an art and hotel complex. The cannery, originally built in 1912, was a small city unto itself. Besides the huge cannery building, there were dormitories, mess halls, a bakery, laundry, store, and even a hospital. It pumped a lot of money into the local economy, but as is still true in Alaska, the really big money went to the outside interests that controlled it.



The **Cook Inlet Historical Society** ended its Thursday brown bag lunches and evening programs for the season in May. They will resume in September and are definitely worth taking your munchies along or showing up after dinner.



Raven's tail robe woven by Teri Rofkar to commemorate the 1964 earthquake.
photo by Chris Arend

Notes from around the state



From the exhibit, *Bottle, Beads and Bass Guitars*, at the Tongass Historical Museum.

photo courtesy Tongass Historical Museum

Bottles, Beads, and Bass Guitars: What Ketchikan Collects is the intriguing title of the summer exhibit of the **Tongass Historical Museum**. Local collectors can show off their treasures and get good advice from the expert museum curators.

A new building, much larger and featuring a dramatic display of the restored Grumman Goose airplane, pride of the **Tongass Historical Society**, is the idea. So far it's a conceptual design only, but everything has to start somewhere.

Want to be sure your silver and silver-plated treasures will last for generations? Chris Hanson, Tongass museum curator of collections, gives some great tips in the current newsletter. Some of these are: use the right polish, don't polish too often, and never store near wool or rubber.

When a real expert looks at an object the revelations can be astonishing. The "Thorne River Basket," made from spruce roots and dated circa 6,000 years old, is an example. As might be expected, remnants only were left. An amateur would see only some old weaving. Delores Churchill, famous Haida weaver, gave it a thorough examination and replicated it from photographs and the basket itself. She decided it was a work basket made by an inexperienced weaver, likely was Tsimshian rather than Tlingit, and jokes that if her duplicate is purchased by the Alaska State Museum

that they will also buy one of her other baskets so her reputation won't suffer. "The Thorne River replica basket is not the one I want to be identified with!"

If you go to www.city.ketchikan.ak.us then click on the museum link you can download the whole newsletter. You can also phone 907/225-5600 or if you are fond of your quill pen, write them at 629 Dock Street, Ketchikan, Alaska, 99901.



The mighty Iditarod sled-dog race consumes Alaska every March, with everyone cheering on a favorite. We can all take pride that a member of the **Resurrection Bay Historical Society** won this year. The society also was a sponsor of Mitch Seavey, who powered through the 1,200 mile ordeal in 9 days, 12 hours, and 20 minutes. You might say they were in the habit of this; in 1973, the first year of the race, they paid the entrance fee for Dan Seavey, Mitch's father as the original trail began in Seward. In 1995 they also sponsored a dog in Mitch's team when he ran from Seward to Nome in commemoration of the old trail.

A big welcome-home party was given at the **Sealife Center** for Mitch, who nicely donated part of the proceeds from the sale of the 2004 Iditarod tee-shirts at the celebration. Couldn't make it? There are still some left for \$15.00 plus shipping. You can write them at Post Office Box 55, Seward, Alaska, 99664.

In 1918, the newsletter notes, at-large dogs were forbidden by federal law from running within one mile of the Post Office in the towns of Seward, Hope, Kenai, Roosevelt, Seldovia, and Sunrise.

They also note that the newspaper in the little up-start, Anchorage, blamed Seward in 1920 as the source of rats over-running their town. The editor spoke darkly of the "source of bubonic plague" that was infesting the place. (The plague didn't actually happen, but you never know.)



Drawing of the remnants and reconstruction rendering of the Thorne River Basket.

© Margaret Davidson



O.G. Herning in 1901.
photo courtesy Wasilla-Knik
Historical Society

The lively **Eagle Historical Society** continues to produce astonishing amounts of work on their local history. A member found the first mention of the famous Jeffery Quad in the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, circa 1914-1915. This was the first four-wheel-drive vehicle produced and several were ordered to replace horse-drawn wagons on the trail between Fairbanks and the coast. They were fitted out to carry passengers as well as freight up to two tons.

A gazebo is being built in Amundsen Park in memory of **Elva Scott**, the dynamic woman who did so much for so many years to keep Eagle's history alive and vibrant.

The local Improved Order of Redmen Hall has its centennial this year, which was celebrated with an open house, raffle, potluck and auction. It's still a town center for social events. In addition, another raffle quilt is ready, and the town hosted the mushers on their way from Fairbanks to Whitehorse during the 2004 Yukon Quest. See what I mean about busy?



A *Treasures and Things Yard Sale* got summer off to a good start for the **Wasilla-Knik Historical Society**. Their big exhibit at the museum is the premier fine-art photography exhibit traveling from the **Alaska State Museum**. *Alaska Positive 2004* features 32 of the best photographers in the state and Wasilla is its first stop.

A good argument for keeping a diary is the value it can have in the future. Instruct the beginner to be sure to include local names and events and he or she will be blessed in the memory of locals by 2050, just as the diary of early settler O. G. Herning is valued today. Herning founded the general store that became the recently renovated Herning-Teeland-Mead building with the downstairs ready to lease by the society.

They also report a record-breaking *Famous Desserts Auction* last Alaska Day. "A glass of wine, an empty stomach, and the smell of good food" is held responsible.



Celebration 2004 is the big event for Juneau this summer. Every other year the Northwest

Coast Indian tribes get together for visiting, feasting, dance contests, and a general good time. If you are in town June 3, be sure to take in the magnificent display of regalia, dancing, and drumming in the parade. The **Juneau-Douglas City Museum** is featuring a *Tlingit Regalia* display in honor of the event. They also feature the charming *Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag* that's been touring the state, as well as planning an exhibit on rods, reels, and general local sports fishing paraphernalia.



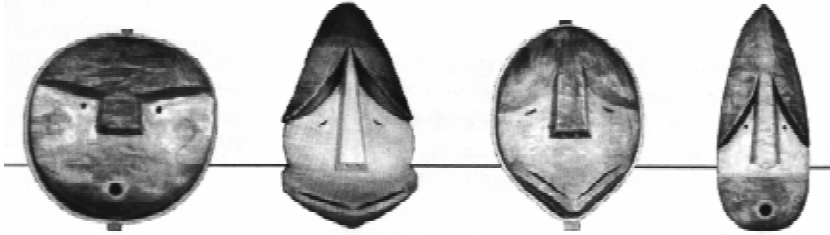
Benny Benson presents a signed flag to Miss Alaska, Ginny Walker, while Elk's Club Exalted Ruler, Dale Robinson watches. photo courtesy *Anchorage Daily News*



If you're going to rescue a culture that's in danger, the first thing you must do is find those who still speak the language and have them write it down, beginning with the alphabet. Then teach it along with the proper pronunciation. This is an extra problem with the Sugpiat (Alutiiq) language because there are two distinct dialects; Southern and Northern. However, the **Alutiiq Museum** people are now in their fifth year of developing teaching aids, including an interactive CD ROM, and they're free for the asking to non-profit groups. You can also buy them, at cost, at the museum shop.

While restoring the culture, it's important to treat the material objects as far more than simple examples of yesterday's life. Alutiiqs believe everything has a *sua*, a spirit that is aware of and sensitive to humans. To preserve that, storage must be in keeping with that knowledge. For example, some things must never be shown, others never handled by women, and oil lamps kept

Notes from around the state



"Four Old Men," carved masks by Perry Eaton.

upside down. For more information, go to the collections page at www.alutiiqmuseum.com, phone them at 907/486-7004 or write 215 Mission Road, Suite 101, Kodiak, Alaska, 99615. Perry Eaton, noted Alaskan politician, photographer, and carver, describes the power of his ancestors on him when he was allowed to take private photographs of the Pinart collection in France.

"Alone with the masks.
Quiet as a deserted museum...
but I could hear the songs.
Still as an unopened tomb...
but I could see the dance.
And we talked."

He has now carved four masks named *Four Old Men*.



Less than a decade after the rough mining camp turned into civilized Juneau, a dairy was established. Since Juneau is in the shadow of the Coast Mountains, an outsider might consider lack of pasture a major problem. According to the newsletter of the **Gastineau Channel Historical Society** in the first of a two-part series on the 13 dairies established over the years, that was rarely the case. Transportation; now that was a big

problem. Puzzling in two compact communities, Juneau and Douglas, until you think about the snow in winter and the channel dividing the towns. Wagons, sleds, sleighs, ferries, and later trucks were utilized, because by their nature dairies take up space. Pasture, barns, outbuildings all need room. As the towns grew, the dairies had to move further and further away. There were little troubles as well, such as blasting in the mines disturbing the cows and women replacing men as milkers during World War I (when the bull was brought to service the cows, the women were asked to leave) but one way and another the day of the local dairy didn't end until 1965.

The *Douglas Island News* continues to explore the early families of Douglas with thumbnail biographies and photographs. A lovely starting point for genealogists.

The Juneau High School Centennial Reunion is planned for this summer. The editor recalls years ago being told of a Juneau class reunion that took place in one house. All five graduates had several jolly days together. All graduates for all years are invited, so I expect more than one house will be needed.



Joe Kendler and his Douglas Dairy Wagon, about 1919.
photo courtesy Alaska State Library, Dairy Collection

News & Information

The origin of the Quonset hut, history of the Jesse Lee Home in Seward and discussion of its possible restoration, and the history of the Non-Commissioned Officers' Quarters at Fort Egbert, Eagle, are topics of the latest newsletter of the **Alaska Association for Historic Preservation**. Fascinated with one or more of these? Phone 907/929-9870, fax 929-9872, e-mail preservation@gci.net or play for a while on their Web site at www.alaskaAHP.org. Remember: these friendly folks are also the ones to apply to for preservation grants, although these are handled through the **Western Office for the National Trust**: wro@nthp.org.

If you would like to check on old friends from Alaska or the Yukon, a dandy way is to contact the *AYP News* people. This monthly newsletter of the **Alaska Yukon Pioneers** contains reminiscences and news about everyone in the group. Call 360/428-1912, e-mail aypera@isomedia.com or write the pioneers at 2725-71 East Fir, Mount Vernon, Washington 98273.

Our board member Steve Haycox has received the *Governor's Alaskan Muse Award* for "broadening the public's thinking and helping to advance the humanities through scholarship and the application of visionary ideas in Alaska." Well done Steve!



Jesse Lee home in Seward.

Don't forget the **Alaska Humanities Forum** awards grants for projects that fit their criteria in anthropology, history, theater, and allied fields. Both individual researchers and non-profit groups can apply. Deadlines for application are April 1 and October 1 of each year. Write 421 West First Avenue, Suite 300, Anchorage, Alaska 99501, phone 907/272-5313 or whip over to www.akhf.org for more information.

The **Arctic Studies Center** newsletter reports four Aleuts from St. Paul and Unalaska came to the **National Museum of Natural History** to look at some of the artifacts and discuss their history and use. The sessions were video and audiotaped to create a permanent record.

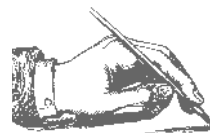
The **Kenai Fjords Oral History and Archaeology Project**, a collaborative effort of the National Park Service, the Arctic Studies Center, Pratt Museum, and lower Cook Inlet villages, has begun. This combines archaeology with the oral history of the Alutiq people of the villages.

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 \$30.00 per member (\$20.00 for students; \$40.00 per family.)

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

Right now a number of back issues of **Alaska History** are on sale; \$6.00 each to non-members, \$4.00 to members. As interest and writing on Alaska history seem to be sprouting like fireweed in the spring, a useful and popular feature is the listing of new books and publications found in each issue. Send your application to **Alaska Historical Society**, PO Box 100299, Anchorage, Alaska 99510-0299; remember to include your address and occupation or school you're attending.

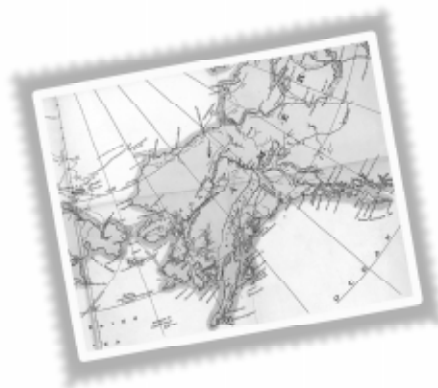


Letters & News

We welcome your letters, news and pictures. Please send them to the editor:

Dee Longenbaugh
The Observatory, ABAA
200 N. Franklin St.,
Juneau, AK 99801
Tel: 907/586-9676
Fax: 586-9606
Email: deelong@alaska.com


ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Editor's Comments

SUMMERTIME AND THE LIVING IS CRAZY should be the title of this piece. (You're welcome to sing along.) It's the season of perpetual guilt. If you're gardening, you really should be out in the boat or hiking. If you're enjoying yourself on the water or on the trail, a little voice is reminding you about the jolly slugs feasting on the lobelia and the day lilies that are forming a hollow circle and chanting "divide me, divide me." And of course the windows that formed their own sun shades during the dark winter are doing a bang-up job of filtering the sun. That's just as well, because when they are sparkly clean the dust in the house shows up.

And what about the painting you were going to do just as soon as it warmed up? The fence looks at you reproachfully as its paint curls up in discouragement and the weather side of the house is the one you try to ignore.

An even worse sense of guilt sets in. You are out in the sunshine and there are your friends toiling at the

Camping out.

photo by Trevor Davis, courtesy of
the Juneau-Douglas City Museum



museum. You recall how eagerly you volunteered in February and how you agreed it was criminal that more people didn't say they'd help with summer visitors. It's only a few hours a week, you remember, and you get to meet all those nice people interested in history and the artifacts on display. Sigh.

So you put some lotion on the sunburn, squash the nosee'ums and stray mosquitoes that have landed on your fair body, change your clothes and head for the museum. Good civic-minded person. Actually, it's rather fun seeing your friends and being able to tell tourists what makes your history so special.

Have a great summer and see you this fall.

Dee