



# Alaska History News

Volume 32, No. 3 Quarterly of the Alaska Historical Society Fall 2004

Message from the President

## Museums Alaska & Alaska Historical Society Joint Conference

The Alaska Historical Society's program for the Anchorage conference, September 15-18, *Leading the Way: Statesmanship in Alaska*, is nearly complete. Bruce Merrell and Thom Eley of the program committee have put together an excellent list of presenters. We will enjoy talks on some of Alaska's past dynamic leaders and other local characters. Keynote speaker will be Walter Borneman, the author of *Alaska: Saga of a Bold Land*. Take a few moments to look through the conference flyer that was mailed to you and please see the AHS website for more information about registration and the program. One highlight is the Friday evening Wandering Feast tour of Anchorage cultural institutions, including a visit to the Alaska Native Heritage Center. We will see their traveling exhibit, *Samit: Alaska Boazoalbot, The Sami Reindeer People of Alaska*, honoring the Sami herders from Norway brought over to teach reindeer herding to the Yup'ik and Inupiaq at the close of the 19th century. Another highlight is the Thursday luncheon talk by Kes Woodward providing a behind-the-scenes look at the Fred Machetanz exhibition, the major 2004 effort at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art. The schedule also includes a Saturday morning tour of the National Archives-Pacific Alaska Region office in Anchorage.

Of special interest, George Smith, Acting Director of the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums, Judy Bittner, Chief of the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, and Clark Gruening, our legislative advocate, will speak Friday, September 17. We will be discussing legislative priorities and hear about the budget cuts for FY 2005, needs, and set plans to educate legislators and Governor Murkowski.



Sami reindeer herders.  
University of Alaska Fairbanks Archives, 1967-17-43.

On July 16, Governor Murkowski vetoed \$5 million from the state budget. The Governor vetoed all of the incremental funding increases for the state library, archives, and museums passed by the Alaska State Legislature, including \$100,000 from the library's contractual services and \$69,000 from the archives that would have funded an electronic records archivist. Due also to increased charge-backs from the Department of Education, the library is now left with only \$75,000 (versus \$275,000 in FY 2004) for funding all contractual services, which include Internet costs, equipment maintenance, conservation needs, mailings, printing, and training. The museum will likely have no funds for acquisitions.

Please join us in Anchorage!

*Bruce Parham, President*



ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUMS ALASKA  
Joint Conference Awards Banquet features  
singing and dancing group

*Pamyua*

Saturday, September 18th

(Conference Schedule inside)

# Conference Schedule — Wednesday, September 15 - Saturday, September 18

Most sessions take place at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art. This schedule is subject to change.

## WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

Noon-1:15 Alaska Bar Association Historians Committee Lunch, Marriott Hotel

## THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

9:00-10:30 Board meeting, Alaska Historical Society  
11:00-12:15 Keynote, Fred Wilson: The Silent Messages of the Museum  
12:30-1:50 Optional luncheon, Kes Woodward: The Art of Fred Machetanz  
2:00-3:30 Alaska Constitutional Convention panel: Vic Fischer, Tom Stewart, George Rogers  
3:45-4:15 Plenary, Richard Cameron: National Historic Preservation and Records Commission, National Archives  
4:15-5:15 Alaska Historical Society annual meeting  
5:30-7:30 Opening reception

## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

7:00-8:15 Joint board meeting, Alaska Historical Society and Museums Alaska  
8:30-9:15 State of the State Historical Programs Reports: Judy Bittner, George Smith, Clark Gruening  
9:30-10:55 Historical papers:  
Alexander Baranov, Evolution in Leadership: Allan & Elton Engstrom  
William Sulzer, Alaska's Cheerleader: Chuck Hawley  
Sailing the Mail to Alaska: Penelope Goforth  
11:05-12:05 Keynote, Walter Borneman: Searching for Alaska Statesmanship  
12:05-1:15 Lunch on your own  
1:15-2:40 Historical papers:  
The Battle of Wonder Lake: Frank Norris  
Privatizing Alaska's Federal Lands: Robert E. King  
Native Protest and the Barrow Duck-In: Mike Burwell  
2:50-4:15 Historical papers:  
Conversations with a Resolute Mariner: Jackie Pels  
A New England Capitalist in Prince William Sound: Chris Wooley and Bruce Merrell  
The Women of Snug Harbor: Katie Johnson  
6:30-9:00 Wandering feast: Troopers Museum and Alaska Native Heritage Center



## SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

8:30-10:15 Open house, National Archives  
10:30-noon Historical papers:  
Two Women in the Klondike: Terrence Cole  
Life at Fort Ray, Sitka: Mike Dunning  
Women's Army Corps at Ladd Field: Kathy Price  
12:00-2:30 Lunch and optional field trips  
1:00-2:30 Board meeting, Alaska Historical Society  
2:45-4:15 Recent Alaska History Projects:  
Alaska Humanities Forum's Alaska History and Cultural Studies Curriculum Project: Ira Perman  
Alaska's Virtual Library Digital Archives Project: Arlene Schmuland and Anne Foster  
Creating Alaska Project: Joseph Hardenbrook and Terrence Cole  
Anchorage School District's Alaska Studies Curriculum Project: Patricia Partnow  
4:45-6:00 Historical papers:  
Alaska's First State Legislature: Gary Stevens  
Valdez and its Floating Court: Michael Schwaiger  
6:30-9:00 Banquet, awards, and entertainment, featuring singing and dancing group *Pamyua*

## Notes from around the state



Fur trade & exploration exhibits at the Wrangell Museum.  
photo by Ivan Simonek.

Banners flying, jet planes doing flyovers in congratulation, townspeople dancing in the streets; well, not really, but close to it for the **Wrangell Historical Society**. After years of debate, sometimes acrimonious, the brand new James & Elsie Nolan Center held its grand opening on July 2, 2004. The 20,000-square-foot complex houses the Wrangell Museum, the Wrangell Visitor Center and a civic center/convention facility. Approximately 1,800 people attended the opening.

The 3,000-square-foot museum was professionally designed and installed. Highlights of Wrangell's diverse history, the only town in Alaska to be under three flags (Russia, England, and the United States), are shown with displays such as Native Culture, Fur Trade, Logging, Fishing, Military, and the 20th Century. In addition, there are videos, several interactive features, and other hands-on exhibits.

Two totems, a canoe and the original Chief Shakes' houseposts welcome the visitor entering the spacious lobby. Programming during the fall and winter will be scheduled for the public. The visitors' center includes a 24-seat theater with a plasma television and surround-sound for showing movies to small groups. The civic center in the near future will have a projection system to show current films.



Another group that seemed to be having a very jolly summer is the **Homer Society of Natural History**. From early June they had all sorts of things, from art shows to kayak building to a chowder cook-off and more. They also featured their harbor and botanic garden walking tours. A lively bunch at the Pratt.



For a very long time about the only way a town could celebrate its centennial was with a parade, speeches, and perhaps a plaque or statue. The **Resurrection Bay Historical Society** took full advantage of

the 21st century and released their film, *Seward, Alaska: the First 100 Years* this past summer. You, too, can have your very own copy in VHS or DVD for \$19.95 and \$3.50 shipping, and view it from the comfort of your home. Write them at Post Office Box 55, Seward, Alaska, 99664. Popcorn not included.



*A Northern Adventure: the Art of Fred Machetanz (1908-2002)* is the title of the comprehensive exhibit honoring one of Alaska's most popular artists at the **Anchorage Museum of History and Art**. Not only are there 92 paintings plus studies, etc., but the silent films he and Sara used to show and narrate on their lecture tours are there. And there's more! Fred's uncle sent him hundreds of Native artifacts collected from his trading post at St. Michael, and these are also on display. Wait — there's more! A re-creation of his studio and best of all, a 120-page catalog by curator Kesler Woodward. Fred would have loved it all.

Something for the children? Of course. *The Blue Guitar: an exhibition of music in art* explores the connection through all sorts of hands-on experiences.

And naturally the museum has its usual busy programs of films, artists at work, crafts, jazz; it's one of the busiest spots and stops in town. Take a look at [www.anchoragemuseum.org](http://www.anchoragemuseum.org) and be sure to drop by when you can.



*Winter Harvest*, painting by Fred Machetanz.  
photo courtesy Anchorage Museum of History and Art.

## Notes from around the state

**Tongass Historical Museum** and the **Totem Heritage Center** are offering traditional Alaska items this summer. The museum has *Bottles, Beads, & Bass Guitars: What Ketchikan Collects*, showing 68 local collections ranging from buttons to pigs to fossils, and a lot in between. Teenagers, a group that usually thinks of history as last week's dance, have been showing up in surprising numbers. The curator says favorites are ice-skating Barbies, lunch boxes, model cars, rhinestone brooches, and the watermelon-theme collection.



Israel Shotridge demonstrates carving techniques to apprentice Robert Jackson at the Tongass Historical Museum.  
photo courtesy Tongass Historical Museum.

They are also delighted to receive the Mather Family collection. Paul Mather, a Tsimshian and early Episcopal priest in Ketchikan, supplemented his meager income with Native curios his wife and children made and sold to tourists. The family also donated papers concerning early Native organizations in the area.

The center features noted carver, Israel Shotridge, as he works on one of the three new totems commissioned by the Ketchikan Indian Community. Like all good carvers, Shotridge is aided by his apprentices.

Life in Tenakee has revolved around Snyder Merchantile for many years, and the newsletter of the **Tenakee Historical Collection** features the store and some of its events, including a murder in which the victim, according to lore, "fell against the cookie shelves."

The fortunes of the Tenakee Fisheries Company are gone into, as well as memories of working the slime line there in 1916. Early telecommunications are also featured; namely the days when there was one telephone for the entire community.

The current newsletter of the **Gastineau Channel Historical Society** devotes 19 pages that continue the history of Juneau's dairies. Photographs and even a locale map add to the enjoyment. There's also a good article on the early craze for collecting souvenir spoons, with a nice quote on tourist purchasers polishing old Tlingit mountain sheep horn spoons with glass and sandpaper: "...although it takes a great deal of elbow exercise, each one tries to outdo his neighbor."

It was a proud moment for the GCHS when the Sentinel Island Lighthouse was officially transferred to its ownership in April. Several members have spent six years working on its preservation.

The **Valdez Historical Society** museum came up with a nifty combined display and fundraiser this past summer. Forty quilts and fiber art pieces were on exhibit and tickets were sold for a drawing. Ten lucky winners will get a quilt and the proceeds will go to ten local non-profit organizations.

The **Alaska Masonic Library and Museum** is another place to visit in Anchorage. The curator, Gerald R. (Jerry) Fairley, is in charge of both the books and displays. He started about four years ago with five books and some discards (does that sound familiar to anyone?) and so far has added about 2,000 books and



Tenakee Springs.  
photo courtesy Alaska State Library, Historical Collections, TS-31.



Alaska Masonic Library and Museum.

pamphlets along with better artifacts. The location is the corner of F Street and 4th Avenue, upstairs at Suite 201. He is anxious to learn from real museum people, so let's hope politeness prevails and there are no fights over him.



50 years of the **Kodiak Historical Society** are celebrated this year in their newsletter. Avid gardener Nellie Erskine, who lived for years in the old Russian structure that now contains the museum, found gardening very different from California.

Summer photographs from long ago are also featured. Hmmm; what a great idea for a museum display, although the dead of winter might be a better time.

The grass baskets of the Aleuts and Alutiiqs have been world-famous since the first Europeans encountered their exquisite linen-like texture. Handed down for thousands of years, the craft was in danger of extinction until the museum held its first workshop in 1957. Since then there has been a real resurgence of interest. Weaving classes continue this summer and are open to all.

The discovery in 2003 of the Russian bark, *Kad'yak*, sunk near Kodiak since 1860, made news nationally. Now the museum has a video for viewing and for sale. Enjoy a virtual visit to Kodiak via [www.baranov.us](http://www.baranov.us).

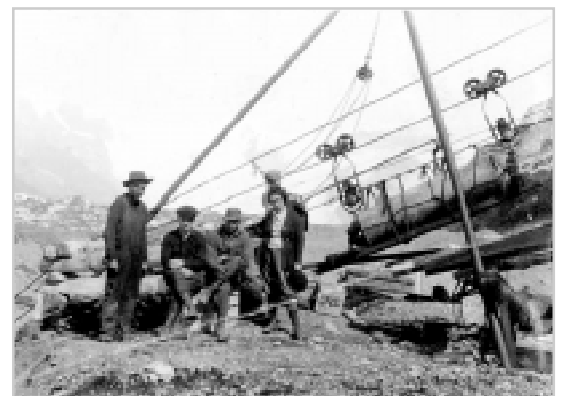


The **Palmer Historical Society** has an odd problem. Too many people want to start museums to show the history of the Matanuska Colony. A new non-profit organization; the *Matanuska Cultural and Historical Project* is being formed to pull the community together in the spirit of the original colony.

The word of the society this summer is "Have fun!" They're doing their bit with a series of picnics, including a tour of the cabins a member collects. Many amass coins, maps, or buttons; but cabins? Should be fun, as ordered.



A caretaker/curator cabin is now complete and inhabited for the **McCarthy-Kennicott Historical Museum**. They also report heavy objects were moved out of the museum building so foundation repairs could be made. These included a safe, boat, sled, and tram, so muscles were indeed involved.



Tramway at Kennicott.  
photo courtesy University of Alaska Anchorage, UAA HMC 0138.

## News & Information

### NEW CONTACT NUMBERS

The Anchorage office the the National Archives and Records Administration has new telephone and fax numbers, but remains in the same location. The main number, with recorded message, is 907/261-7800. Reference is 907/261-7820. Fax 907/261-7813. Hours: M-F 8 to 4 except for federal holidays; open first Saturday of each month (usually).

National Archives and Records Administration,  
Pacific Alaska Region, 654 West Third Avenue,  
Anchorage 99501-2145. E-mail: [alaska.archives@nara.gov](mailto:alaska.archives@nara.gov)  
<http://www.archives.gov/facilities/ak/anchorage.html>

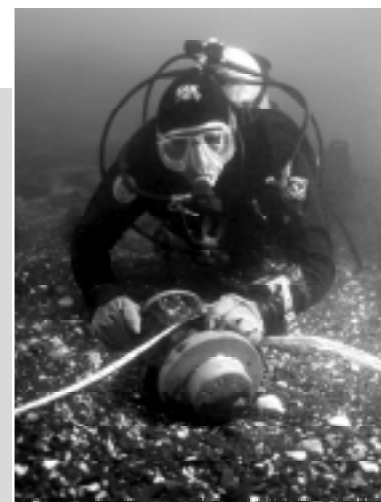


### NATIONAL REGISTER

The **Office of History and Archaeology** announces some new National Register sites in Alaska:

The Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places added the riverboat *Judith Ann* near Wrangell on July 7, 2004, to the nation's list of significant historic properties. The *Judith Ann*, a cargo and passenger boat built in 1950, operated for nearly twenty years on the Stikine River. The river is navigable for about half its length, from its mouth in Alaska near the city of Wrangell to the small community of Telegraph Creek in British Columbia about 170 miles upriver. The wood-hulled *Judith Ann*, built expressly for commercial service on the Stikine, was the last boat to offer regularly-scheduled service. It is the only survivor of the commercial vessels that have worked on the river since the 1800s. The last voyage was in 1969. Today the boat is on the beach south of downtown Wrangell. Its owner, the Stikine River Historical Foundation, plans to rehabilitate the *Judith Ann* and operate it on the river.

On July 14, 2004, the Keeper added the *Kad'yak* shipwreck site near Kodiak to the list. The *Kad'yak*, a Russian-American Company ship loaded with a cargo of ice and trade goods bound for San Francisco, sank near Kodiak on April 2, 1860. The wooden hulled sailing ship hit an uncharted rock shortly after it left the dock. It drifted for three days before sinking in a bay off Spruce Island. The Russian-American Company had purchased the *Kad'yak* in 1851. The company initially used the ship to transport workers, supplies, and mail between its settlements in Alaska. Beginning in 1857, the ship carried ice to San Francisco to trade with Americans. Divers found the wreck of the *Kad'yak* in 2003. It is the only



Nautical archeologist recovers a brass object clearly inscribed with the *Kad'yak's* name.

photo courtesy NOAA, the National Science Foundation and East Carolina University.

Russian era shipwreck discovered in Alaska waters to date. It offers archaeologists and historians a unique opportunity to better understand the maritime trade of the Russian-American Company and life aboard one of its ships.

The two Civil Works Residential Dwellings, also known as the Brown's Point Cottages in Anchorage, were listed July 21, 2004. The U.S. Army built the houses on Government Hill in 1941. They are associated with Captain (later Brigadier General) B.B. Talley who was in charge of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers construction projects in Alaska between 1941 and 1943. The Alaska Railroad general manager, Otto Ohlson, invited the U.S. Army to build the houses on Government Hill. The site offers a panorama of Upper Cook Inlet, Mount Susitna and the Alaska Range. The houses represent the impact of World War II on Anchorage. They have not been significantly changed since their construction. Anchorage Historic Properties, Inc. now manages the houses.

Also added to the National Register on July 21, 2004, was the Agricultural Experiment Station barn at Kodiak. The barn is the last remaining building of the Kodiak Station, opened by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1907 and operated until 1931. The Russians, and later the Americans, thought Kodiak Island would be a good location for cattle breeding and agriculture. The agricultural experiment station had fields, barns and houses near Kodiak. Workers conducted experiments to determine if it was possible to raise animals in the coastal areas, the breed of stock best suited to the environment, and what housing and feed were best for the animals. During the 1920s a number of people started ranches on Kodiak Island and benefited from the advice of the agricultural experiment station staff and the results of the experiments. The barn was constructed in 1922, replacing an earlier one.

For more information about the National Register of Historic Places program, contact Jo Antonson at 907-269-8714 or email [joa@dnr.state.ak.us](mailto:joa@dnr.state.ak.us).

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### BOOK HONORED

Aron L. Crowell, Amy F. Steffian, and Gordon L. Pullar, editors of *Looking Both Ways: Heritage and Identity of the Alutiiq People*, received the prestigious biennial **Joan Paterson Kerr Book Award** from the Western History Association for the best illustrated book on the American West. It's always great when some of our own are recognized for their outstanding work.

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### AASLH MEETING

The **American Association for State and Local History** is going to meet in St. Louis September 29-October 2, 2004. The theme is *Exploring Resources for Growth*. There are all sorts of ways to obtain more information. Call 615/320-3203, or click on [www.aaslh.org](http://www.aaslh.org), or get personal and e-mail Natalie Norris at [norris@aaash.org](mailto:norris@aaash.org).

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### GETTING IN TOUCH

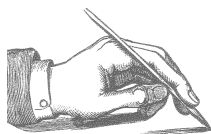
Lived in Alaska or the Yukon and have lost touch with old friends? The best way to find them is through the **Alaska Yukon Pioneers**. Write 2725-71 East Fir, Mount Vernon, Washington 98273 or phone 360/428-1912 or e-mail [aypvera@isomedia.com](mailto:aypvera@isomedia.com) to subscribe to the newsletter or just pass on your news.

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### OBITUARY

Longtime Juneau resident, Paul Robert Emerson, 89, died June 8, 2004. An ardent conservationist, Paul worked with many community organizations and was a long-time member of the Alaska Historical Society. He was co-author and editor of two books on Juneau trails. He was beloved by many.

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## Letters & News

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

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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.

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.

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### *Editor's Comments*

IT IS SAID THAT ALASKANS ARE OBSESSED WITH WEATHER. True. Weather forecasts versus reality; hard winter versus hardest winter; lovely summer versus usual summer; we discuss them all, all the time. The other day a man I thought Alaskan simply stared when I asked him how his winter had gone. He was from Los Angeles. It took a man from the Interior to instantly understand the question and answer it was an old-fashioned winter; 50 below for a few weeks.

This leads into how much Alaskans enjoy a pretty day, year round. With what gratitude we see the sun come up on a sparkling day, with what relish we plan that day. And how we gloat at a string of sunny days; we decide how we intend to spend them, then we lovingly spend them, followed by long reminiscences about how we spent them.

This being a big election year, there is much to dislike and complain about. The other party, the other

photo courtesy Alaska State  
Library, Historical Collections,  
P240-300.



candidates, the mistakes our party and candidates make, and the utterly rotten policies of the opposition. How about taking some time out and show a bit of gratitude? Seek out your representatives and thank them for their help in preserving our guardians of the past; our historic buildings, our museums, libraries, and archives. Think of it as a sunny day. Plenty of time to go back to gritted teeth and dark vows of revenge, but in the meantime you've spread some sunshine.

Have a good autumn, and don't forget to vote.  
D. L.