



# Alaska History News

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## Notes from around the state

(above) The work of Frances Caroline Brooks Davis is featured in an exhibit at the Juneau-Douglas City Museum.

Juneau-Douglas City Museum, 89.26.007.

There's something about spring that makes a thorough cleaning of the house, the garage, the shed, seem the thing to do. Perhaps it's the sun shining through the dirty windows or maybe it's just impossible to walk around the place. Whatever, time to get out the soap and hot water. The **Resurrection Bay Historical Society** cleaned and rearranged the museum's "living room" and "bedroom" and a couple of displays. They also now have all storage in acid free boxes. Time to relax with a cup of coffee and enjoy the view.

They also found a recipe for porcupine stew, which is said to be tasty once the meat has been soaked for 12 hours before cooking. It's the skinning of the porcupine that has always worried me.

And they continue to report on the **Kenai Peninsula Historical Association**. They met in early May in Hope to hear about Sunrise City's history.

Guided walking tours of **Genuine Juneau, 1925**, are being offered by the **Juneau-Douglas City Museum** this summer. The one-hour tour includes admission to the museum. Sounds like a very slick way to show off your town. There is also a featured display of the work of Frances Caroline Brooks Davis, the artist who impressed Juneau for many years.

The history of the Coast Guard Auxiliary is the current newsletter theme of the **Gastineau Channel Historical Society**. The auxiliary was formed in 1941 with the succinct purpose "To assist the Coast Guard." Since the naval defense of Alaska at the time consisted of five WWI destroyers and six Patrol Bombers from Catalina (PBYS) to patrol the coast, local fishing and pleasure boats were a sensible choice to help. Members had to learn Morse code and the use of blinkers as most boats did not have radios. They also had to paint the hulls gray. Since the paint was cheap and good quality, it was also used to paint porches, foundations, basements, and whatever else seemed to need it. The nightly patrols continued until 1944, when the military decided the auxiliaries were redundant. The auxiliary was revived in 1956 with four women among the charter members, which caused quite a stir. To visit the Juneau site, go to <http://a17000101.uscgaux.info>. It will take a bit of clicking, but info and a nice photo of Juneau will come up.

The society has also begun a history of Juneau and Douglas high schools from the beginning to 1956, when the two schools were consolidated. Write them at Post Office Box 21264, Juneau, Alaska 99802, call 907/586-1682, 586-1652, 364-2597, 789-7469, or send an e-mail to [mblack3@attglobal.net](mailto:mblack3@attglobal.net) if you can help.



The summer trail from Bear Lake to Primrose Campground and the Winter Creek trail have added 9.4 miles and almost 6 miles respectively to the Iditarod Trail reconstruction, the **Iditarod**

(Continued page 3)



Eating dinner or soon to be eaten for dinner? A porcupine is fed by Harry Becker, ca. 1932-45.

Alaska State Library Historical Collections, PCA 67-121.

## Message from the President

### We're all hitched together

My wife was having her hair cut the other day when talk turned to a Sitka black-tailed deer that has been seen and photographed in south Anchorage, outside its traditional range. No doubt the deer found its way through a pass leading from Prince William Sound, across the mountains from Turnagain Arm. But the hairdresser insisted that the deer "swam here from Sitka." I imagine the brave little thing far out in the Gulf of Alaska, head held high, tiny hooves flailing at the icy water.

Coastal villages are washing away. A tuna from the tropics was caught by a fishing boat out of Homer a few years ago. Polar bears are threatened by the melting polar ice cap. Bird-watchers report an Alaska infestation of European starlings.

Our climate is changing, affecting the balance of glaciers and oceans, plants and animals. Regardless of how much humans have to do with this, we can't deny it. The natural order tips. We struggle to make sense of what is going on and to understand the complexity, the meaning of it all.

We're surrounded by change, be it natural, political, cultural, you name it. That's what makes growing older such a source of delight for some of us and such a cause for dismay in others.

History helps us figure things out by drawing lines between people, places, and events. At its best it goes beyond the mere chronological record of the past. It adds context to the facts, an analysis, an explanation. Good history always addresses the essential question, "Yes, such-and-such happened, but so what?"

John Muir wrote more than a century ago, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." The deer that crossed the mountain pass, the explorer who turned north instead of south, the prospector who decided to pan in just one more creek, the citizen who reluctantly ran for political office — they're all hitched together. There isn't much that happens in isolation either in nature or in history. It's all hitched together. We're all hitched together.

*Bruce Merrell, President*

#### John Muir.

Photo by W.E. Dasonville, California Historical Society, Photography collection, portrait, FN-26339, VIP05509.

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[www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org)

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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, P.O. Box 100299, Anchorage, Alaska 99510-0299; remember to include your address and students, the school you're attending.

## Notes from around the state



Front St. from Hansen Dock, 1913, Ketchikan.

Tongass Historical Museum, THS 62.4.3.82.

**National Historic Trail** people report. Bit by bit, guys. They also report on the importance of tripods in the 1910-1911 traverse. "...three sticks of timber each, two of which were eight feet long and the third ten or eleven feet. These are so fastened together that the longest of the three sticks projects two or three feet over the others at the top and is directly over the trail. Mr. Goodwin says it is the best marked trail he ever traversed in Alaska."



A contest for locals or anyone who thought they knew Kodiak's buildings was held to celebrate May, National Preservation Month, by identifying historic structures shown on the **Kodiak Historical Society** website. Try [www.baranov.us](http://www.baranov.us) if you want to play or just enjoy.

The society's newsletter discusses the local street and mountain named for the first Kodiak postmaster, Harry Proctor Cope. The story mentions Mr. Cope "attended a quite unfortunate dinner at the Alaska Commercial Company house where his host, Mr. Benjamin McIntyre and the then post-in-charge, Mr. Wocke, were shot at the dinner table." Some social evenings just become a disaster.



The newsletter of the **Tongass Historical Museum and Totem Heritage Center** not only features the handsome totems donated to the center but some nice stories of the century-ago Ketchikan. The town was growing rapidly and needed lots of new planked streets and walkways. Where to get the money to pay for this? Why, by doubling the local liquor license fees to \$1,000, of course. We assume part of the rationale was that if saloon patrons were going to stagger home, they

would have nice smooth walkways and streets on the way. Alaska property assessors, please note.

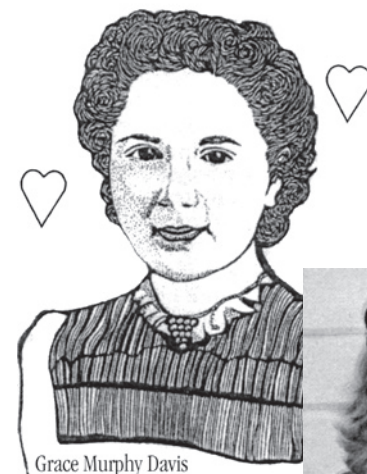


The city of Kenai around 1918 or 1919 had its picture taken by a teacher who climbed a telegraph pole to obtain a sorta aerial view. This has recently been copied and circulated around the town with the buildings identified, the **Kenai Historical Society** reports. At that time the Orthodox church pretty much comprised Kenai, although a building that served the secular community (pool hall, dance hall, restaurant) is shown. Today the building is a popular restaurant called "Veronica's Coffee House." Seems the original owner lost her beloved dog, so painted her portrait, complete with angel wings and name, and placed the sign on the roof. Owners have changed, but the sign remains.

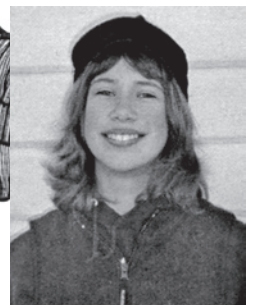


The **Tenakee Historical Collection** newsletter reports tidbits from an oral interview of an eleven-year-old student, Hannah Meyer, with an old-timer, Grace Murphy Davis, who remembered rowing out with her mother to their gardens, two miles west of town. On the way, they always had a fish line in the water with a lure at the end, the reel tied to the oarlock. "When a big one came on, I just loved that. Mother would row as fast as she could to the beach. I'd jump out and pull that fish onto the beach." As all old-timers do, she remembered the fish as bigger then.

There's also a lively account of the plans in the 1920s to turn Tenakee into a major canning, shipyard, industrial center, and resort town, all by the same man. He liked to write prospectuses as each vision came to him. Sadly, he never did buy any land or buildings. Tenakee remains small, which is just the way they like it.



Grace Murphy Davis and oral historian, Hannah Meyer of Tenakee Springs.



## Notes from around the state

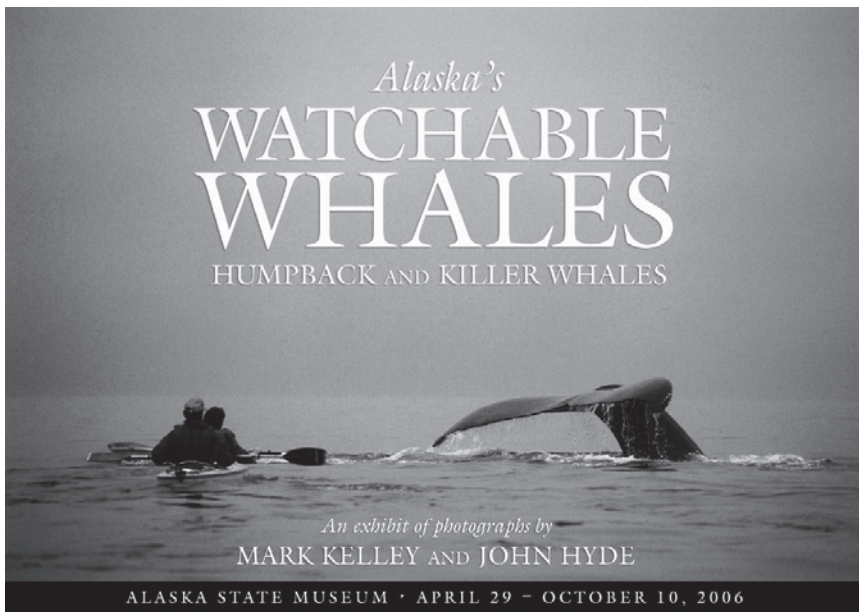


Photo of kayakers and humpback whale from Alaska State Museum exhibit *Alaska's Watchable Whales*.

Photo by Mark Kelley.

Three Alaska heavyweights are featured at the **Alaska State Museum** this summer. Artist Rie Muñoz, famed for her colorful, cheerful renditions of Alaska and its people, and noted photographers Mark Kelley and John Hyde, who collaborated on *Alaska's Watchable Whales*, first a book and now the name of an exhibit.



The **Friends of Sheldon Jackson Museum** will once again have Alaska Native artists demonstrate their traditional arts at the museum over the summer. Visitors can watch the artists at work and the artists can study the extraordinary collection in the museum. Endangered arts such as spruce root, cedar bark, and willow root basketry and Raven's Tail and Chilkat weaving are emphasized.



Anyone who has ever sat down to organize and label the family photographs can feel complete empathy with the **Chugiak-Eagle River Historical Society**. They have hundreds of donated photos to sort and store, but it sounds as though they're far more persistent than this editor.

They also offer a scholarship of up to \$500.00 to any area school graduate who plans to attend an Alaska college or career center. It's closed for this year, but write them at Post Office Box 670573, Chugiak, Alaska, 99567-0573 about next year. Or check with a member of the society. They know where you went to school.



You'll not see the frieze for the forest when the expanded **Anchorage Museum of History and Art**

is finished. Birches are planned, with openings and paths. The museum is slated to open in 2010.

As always, the museum is the place to see all sorts of displays pertaining to Alaska life, from Native ivory carvings to the Alaska Railroad, to traveling exhibitions like the Smithsonian's *Sharing Knowledge* that highlights nineteenth century Alaska Native art and culture. *Hunters of the Sky*, on birds of prey, is on loan for the summer from the Science Museum of Minnesota.

And, of course, all sorts of lectures, concerts, art, movies, and fun things for kids to see and do are on tap. Combined passes for the museum and the **Native Heritage Center**, with free shuttles running between, are offered again this summer. To check out this cornucopia direct your clicks to [www.anchoragemuseum.org](http://www.anchoragemuseum.org) or write them at 121 West Seventh Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska, 99501, or just drop by.

The popular Brown Bag Lunch programs have resumed at the museum, courtesy of the **Cook Inlet Historical Society**. Evening programs are on as well.



Image of bald eagle from the exhibit *Hunters of the Sky* at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art.

Photo courtesy of Science Museum of Minnesota.



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

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## News & Information

### GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

So what exactly does the **Alaska Humanities Forum** do? Their official mission is "...to enrich the civic, intellectual and cultural life of all Alaskans." And how do they do that? By providing grants totaling around \$115,000 after April 1 and October 1 applications. They make it easy; pop over to [www.akhf.org](http://www.akhf.org), contact Anne Rennick, the Grants Officer, at [grants@akhf.org](mailto:grants@akhf.org), or speak to her at 907/272-5341. If none of this appeals, write them at 421 West First Avenue, Suite 300, Anchorage, Alaska, 99501.



### RESCUE A BUILDING

Have a favorite old building that's been growing more decrepit every year? Stop wringing your hands and counting pennies and see if it might qualify for a national **Save America's Treasures** grant. The minimum grant request for a collection is \$25,000 and a building \$125,000. Maximum Federal share is \$700,000. Maximum community support is also essential, so start calling around. For more, click on <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/treasures/index.htm>. Don't be discouraged by the length of the URL; just do it!



### Imperial Russian Playing Cards.

From the *Meetings of Frontiers* Website presented by the Library of Congress, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/intldl/mfjhtml/mfjplashb.html>

### KEEP IN TOUCH

Don't forget the perennial favorite for finding and keeping in touch with friends and neighbors from Alaska and the Yukon. Write to **AYP**, 2725-71 East Fir, Mount Vernon, Washington, 98273, or phone 360/428-1912, or just tap in [aypvera@isomedia.com](mailto:aypvera@isomedia.com). They publish a regular newsletter.



### APPLICATION PERIOD EXTENDED FOR CONFERENCE TRAVEL AWARD FOR NEW PROFESSIONALS

The Alaska Historical Society offers \$500 travel awards to encourage students and new professionals to attend its annual meeting in Juneau on October 4-7, 2006. Each recipient will be introduced at the banquet and invited to submit a short article for the AHS newsletter. The award will be reimbursement for documented expenses up to \$500. Winners will also receive registration and a banquet ticket. The application period is closed for the student award but has been extended for the professional award.

Eligibility for the professional award: Each applicant must be a 2006 member of the Society at the time of applying. Each applicant for the professional award must be currently employed in Alaska historical or cultural work and have been so employed for less than 36 months.

Each applicant must submit 1) a letter of application with a statement of eligibility and an explanation of how attendance at the annual meeting will enhance professional development and 2) a current résumé or c.v. Applications will be judged on achievement in Alaska historical or cultural work relative to current status and the likely contribution of the meeting to professional development.

Send letter plus résumé or c.v. to [ffslg@uaf.edu](mailto:ffslg@uaf.edu) or mail three copies to: Susan Grigg, Chair, AHS Awards Committee, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, AK 99775-6808.

Applications must be sent by July 7. Electronic submission is preferred.



The **Office of History and Archaeology** has the depressing budget news that has become rather sadly routine. Here's the report on the budget proposals:

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUND BUDGET NEWS

President Bush sent his budget for FY 07 to Congress in February. It includes level funding for the state and tribal historic preservation offices, proposes changes to heritage preservation grants, and significantly reduces the heritage program within the National Park Service. The budget calls for \$71.858 million for Historic Preservation Fund programs, a small decrease from the FY 06 appropriation. Preserve America is proposed to be funded at \$10.000 million, double the appropriation for the program last year, Save America's Treasures at \$14.800 million, a reduction of \$10.060 million from last year, and Heritage Areas have been added to the budget at \$7.400 million. The budget includes no funds for historically Black colleges or the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers is campaigning to fund state programs at \$50 million and tribal programs at \$12 million.



### Editor's Comments

It's been a late and cold spring in much of Alaska, so it was mid-May before I ventured out to the local garden center to buy some plants for the deck planters. That is always a humbling experience since the real gardeners are tossing around references to plants by their Latin names like cheerful colored balls.

"Have you seen the *centaura cyanus*? Lovely this year."

"I'm sure, but will check later. These are the pinkest *pelargonium* I've noticed yet. Do you have other colors?"

"Yes, but do take a look at the *lathyrus ordoratus*. It'll go beautifully with the *centaura*."

They kindly ask me what sort of plants I'm looking for. I think of my planters containing tiny sickly pale pink geranium leaves clinging to large stalks, and the seasick hue of the large plant I call "beach grass" which over-wintered in the garage. The planters are now out on the deck, but the plants are not happy yet, although I praise them as survivors while I pull out last year's very dead whatever.

I ask timidly if the center has any petunias. The gardeners are still kind. They ask a few questions about shade and soil, then help me find some really, really sturdy plants that can survive in my garden.

Joining a historical society or volunteering in a local museum can have this effect on those of us who are new to town or even



Garden with two cats and woman with hat.

Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library,  
UAF-1989-0166-260.

the whole concept. Listening to people chatting about the finer points of local history can intimidate the bravest newcomer. You might like to mention that you saw a photograph of the Clemson house in 1922, but are afraid that if you do, they will note that the picture is so famous it appears on postcards, and ignore you the rest of the evening.

Go ahead and join or volunteer or both. You will find, like the superior gardeners, members will want to help and instruct you, if asked. They will be delighted to tell you about the current projects and why they're important. And, of course, they'll be very happy to add another nice person to the group.

Dee Longenbaugh