



Alaska History News

Volume 35, No. 3 Quarterly of the Alaska Historical Society Fall 2007



ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2007 CONFERENCE HOMER • SEPT. 26-29, 2007

Food for Thought: The Role of Food and Nutrition in Alaska History

Homer nodded" is an ancient phrase used to reassure poets that even the great blind bard had times when he couldn't compose the exact words he needed. Today we can change that to the town of Homer's reaction to the question of the Alaska Historical Society annual meeting there. "Would you like to have us?" Homer nodded. Okay, it's all a bit of a stretch, but we're getting ready to assemble all around Alaska and descend upon the fabled city on the Kenai. See pages 6-7 for conference schedule.

(photo left) Bill Ritter cooking crabs at the Alaska-Fresh Crab Plant in Homer, Alaska, 1952. University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, UAA-HMC-0015q.

Notes from around the state

The young and strong like to come to Alaska, which was perfect for the **McCarthy Kennicott Historical Museum** this past May. Just as they needed a very heavy glass case moved, here came some Swiss sorts, who took care of the problem in short order. It was more than an even trade; in return they got coffee, smoked salmon, and lots of local stories. The society is very proud that their exhibits are put together by local people who really know their field. The tram-braking system on display is a good example.

Just a glance at the class schedule for Fall 2007 and Spring 2008, of the **Totem Heritage Center** of Ketchikan shows dedication to not only guarding heritage but teaching today's carvers, painters, and weavers to become the future guardians. Bentwood box design, cedar bark weaving, vest making, and marketing and portfolio preparation are just some of the offerings. Contact them at 629 Dock Street, Ketchikan, Alaska 99901 or phone 907/225-6177 for details.



(Continued page 3.)

Message from the President

Food Glorious Food

So many of my childhood memories have to do with food. Juneau in the 1950s and 60s offered some culinary twists, courtesy of necessity and family economics. For example, beef was non-existent at our dinner table. Instead, like so many Alaskans, we feasted on what the ocean and forest provided: salmon and halibut, lots of venison and moose, occasional king or Dungeness crab, clams, and shrimp. Mom packed our school lunches and we sometimes found surprises, like a sandwich made with moose tongue. Blueberries and salmonberries were plentiful, as was rhubarb from the garden. We didn't become a two-car family until I was a teenager but as early as I can remember, we had both a refrigerator upstairs and a freezer downstairs, the freezer packed with nature's bounty.

We drank powdered milk, reluctantly, because of the exorbitant cost of fresh milk. Leftover hot dogs were recycled, reappearing the next day, sliced up and floating in split pea soup. And we had Jell-O for dessert, either red with embedded banana slices or green with canned peach sections.

Juneau's grocery stores celebrated passage of the statehood bill in 1958 by staging a watermelon war, dropping the price down to just 2 cents per pound. Kids pooled their change

**Unangan boys with
candy and soda, 1945.**
Alaska State Library Historical
Collections, ASL-P338-0173.



and bought whole watermelons, an unheard of luxury, and sat outside spitting seeds like Mississippi farm boys.

At the IGA grocery store where I got my first job bagging groceries, cases of canned evaporated milk were kept up front by the cash registers because so much of it was sold. Canned fruit and vegetables took up a lot of floor space, reflecting their prominence in Juneau cuisine. Everything in the store arrived on the weekly Alaska Steam freighter except bananas and "airborne eggs," flown in and presumably worth the premium paid to avoid inferior "boat eggs."

Saturday was the best day of the week because that was allowance day, payday. My brother and sister and I did chores to earn 50 cents each week. With my two quarters I could run down the hill to the Capitol or 20th Century Theater, get

(Continued page 2.)

Message from the President

(Continued from front page.)

into a matinee and have enough left over for a bag of popcorn or a candy bar from the vending machine with the big chrome pull knobs. I usually chose popcorn and made myself wait until the cartoon started before diving in. It never lasted past the *Zorro* or *Three Stooges* serial and I was starved again by the time the main feature started.

I wasn't the only one eating in the theater. Most of us were kids, plus a scattering of parents with little ones. There was also, always, a woman whose name I never knew but who we called "the popcorn lady" because of the ever-present box of popcorn resting on her lap, or what would have been her lap if there had been room for one. I figured she was the biggest woman in town, wedged into the theater seat and leaning back as she picked at her snack, one kernel at a time. We couldn't help staring but when we talked about her, we pretended to be kind. "She can't help it," we ten-year-olds would say, explaining the mysteries of endocrinology to each other. "She has glands."

We craved candy and pop and consumed all that our parents would allow. If I found money on the sidewalk I'd run down to the Owl Delicatessen and choose between a Big Hunk, a Charms sucker, or Sugar Babies. If I had enough change and it was hot out I'd go for the pop, which was kept in a big horizontal cooler full of circulating ice water. The locally-bottled pop was cheaper so I would choose black cherry, grape, strawberry or cream soda over national brands like Coke or Nesbitt's orange drink.

All this came at a price. Once a year I found myself in Dr. Polley's upstairs office, gripping the arms of the dental chair and enduring the agony of a rotten tooth being drilled and filled. Dr. Polley didn't use Novocain, at least on children, and so I would hang on, tears dripping down my cheeks, until he stopped and let me spit the remnants of a tooth into the white porcelain bowl with water swirling around inside. I got what I deserved.

It's a wonder we weren't all "husky," the discrete term used by the mail-order Sears and Wards catalogs to describe jeans for fat boys. Most of us wore "regular" or "slim." We were on the go, all the time, especially in summer when school was out. Across the street from our house on Chicken Ridge was the elementary school. An asphalt playground surrounded the school and had playground equipment like monkey bars and a merry-go-round, but the big attraction was that we could ride laps around the school on our bikes. Around and around we'd go, red-faced and sweaty, burning up calories and surviving spectacular crashes at the blind corners, until the five o'clock whistle at the sawmill down on the docks called us home for supper.

Growing up in Juneau was a series of adventures, punctuated by meals.

At the end of September the Society will hold its annual meeting in Homer where we will consider the meaning of food in Alaska's past. Please join us and hear for yourself what our keynote speaker, Alaska's foremost food historian Ann Chandonnet, and almost thirty other presenters, have to say about food in the north. It promises to provide yet another series of adventures, punctuated by meals. I hope to see you there, and I promise not to talk with my mouth full.

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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.

As interest and writing on Alaska history seem to be sprouting like fireweed in the spring, a useful and popular feature is the society's new publication *The Alaska 67* with annotated recommendations of good books on Alaska history. Send your application to Alaska Historical Society, P.O. Box 100299, Anchorage, Alaska 99510-0299; or join through the website: www.alaskahistoricalociety.org.

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Notes from around the state

(Continued from front page.)



Miniature copies of early Sunrise buildings built for Hope and Sunrise Historical Society by Harry Meens.

The two most optimistically named towns in Alaska have a nice combined newsletter. The recent issue from the **Hope & Sunrise Historical Society** shows us some of the ten miniature Sunrise buildings on display there. Hope offers an hour-and-a-half walking tour of the historic district. Among other factors in locating the town was the desire to shovel less snow and chop less firewood. Clever people.

Fifty years is a while for any group; this year the **Sitka Historical Society** celebrates its Big Five-O. From early minutes the exciting find of a mystery axe made of laminated copper alloys was brought up. It could have been from prehistoric times, it was speculated, but as it disappeared, it seems we'll never know. Among more solid artifacts brought out were some antique bricks marked "Stenwik" from the Netherlands, brought over as ship's ballast. The group was given permission to meet in the first floor of the Russian Orphanage if they would paint it and clean and heat the room. As the Russian Orphanage is now the Russian Bishop's House and restored, it is good the society found another meeting place.

For a monthly visit to old Wrangell, subscribe to Pat Roppel's "Wrangell History". Recent issues have told about an early storekeeper and the establishment of his store, a saloon shoot-out that engaged the town, a young woman who was determined to take a boat trip up the Sitkine River in 1914 to the point she signed on as a crew member on a vessel that carried dynamite so refused passengers, and a story of the island that became a farm for many years. There's more, including an amusing official police report on a practical joke that involved horse manure. To get in on the fun, contact the Wrangell Museum at museum@wrangell.com or write them care of the city.

Seeing photographs of old baidarkas (kayaks to you non-Russians) is very common, even viewing models in Alaska museums is not unusual, but the **Kodiak Historical Society** newsletter reports the conservation planned for their prized 26-foot, three-hatch baidarka. It is said to be one of only two of its kind in the Western hemisphere and one of five left in the world.

Potato Patch Lake came by its name honestly; traditionally, potatoes have been grown there in

raised beds, fertilized with kelp. That changed after the 1964 earthquake, but the memories continue.

Governor Palin has selected the design for the Alaska quarter, the **Resurrection Bay Historical Society** reminds us. The obverse side will show a grizzly bear that has just caught a salmon from a river.

What does a very small historical society do with \$10,000 it made from book sales? The **Kenai Peninsula Historical Association** has decided to spend it on grants to museums or historical societies affiliated with it. That's generosity! Send proposals by September 22 to Mona Painter, Post Office Box 711, Cooper Landing, Alaska, 99572.

Cooper Landing Historical Society and Museum is making progress. They now have two historic buildings they are filling with their Dead Bear Walking articulated skeleton exhibit, home-made quilts, an 8-foot tall aerial photograph of the area, and more.

If there's anything more fun than watching old home movies, it's watching a well-done documentary about your hometown. *Alaska Far Away* entertained several hundred Palmer area residents recently, the **Palmer Historical Society** reports. They're also very proud of their slick new website at palmerhistoricalsociety.org, as well they should be.

Where else in Alaska can you find traditional Native art, modern Native art, movies, children's activities, traveling exhibits, lectures, live jazz, and construction going on simultaneously? No prizes for guessing the **Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center**. If you're not in town, go to www.anchoragemuseum.org and feast your eyes.

PA is not just the postal abbreviation for Pennsylvania; it is also the local shorthand for **Port Alexander**, the tiny fishing town near the tip of Baranof Island. Folks there are trying to found a museum and historical society. If you have stories to share or items to send, contact Karen Lucas at 907/747-7803, 224 Katlian Street, Sitka, Alaska, 99801 or call Phyllis at 907/568-2237. They have lots of gratitude to give you.



Port Alexander.
Alaska State Library Historical Collections, ASL-P01-2580.

Notes from around the state

SNYDER MERCANTILE SINCE 1899



Tenakee Springs, with Synder's Mercantile building on the far right.

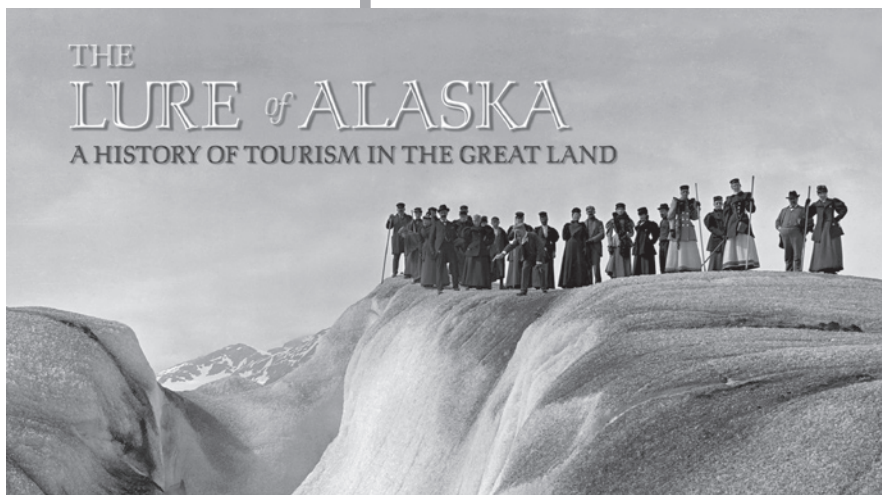
Alaska State Library Historical Collections,
ASL-P01-4052.

Tenakee Springs, that charming little town centered around the store, bathhouse, gardens, and general quiet life-style, is facing catastrophe. According to the **Tenakee Historical Collection Newsletter**, Snyder Mercantile, the heart of the community, is faced with closing. The current operators are retiring and no successors have so far been found. The building is for sale.

If it closes, as the 37 people of the less than 100 residents heard when they attended a meeting in May, not only will it rip the heart out of the town, but one of the oldest surviving commercial buildings in Alaska, 1899 when it was built, will be in danger. Anyone with ideas for grants or looking for a place to make a donation is urged to contact supporters via tenakeehistoricalcollection@yabogroups.com. You can also write them at Post Office Box 633, Tenakee Springs, Alaska, 99841.

On a more cheerful note, the new bus stop is now open. It has evolved "from a place to wait for the plane or the post office to open to a freebie drop off." It is noted that after two or three weeks, the donor is requested to dispose of unwanted items.

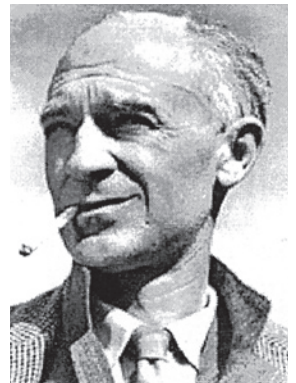
The question of tripods is usually limited to surveying or camera equipment; what on earth does it have to do with dog-mushing? The **Iditarod National Historic Trail** people take it very seriously. The first shipment of landscape timber tripods has been made and installation at 500-foot intervals is set for this winter. Oh, *those* tripods. Otherwise, how will mushers find their way across the treeless areas when the winds are blowing? *Inuksuk* are not used on the Iditarod trail.



They also report that the three bank robbers at Iditarod itself in 1911 managed to drop their gold pokes along the way. They also discarded their masks; one of which was made from a breakfast food carton. The good folks quickly subscribed \$3,000 in rewards for catching the bunglers.

Here is an idea for summer and museums. The **Juneau-Douglas City Museum** sponsored one hour walking tours of 1925 Juneau, a very successful venture. How about showing off your city from an earlier time?

May of 1937 lucky Juneau had a visit from beloved journalist Ernie Pyle. He had a visit to the vast Alaska-Juneau gold mine, strictly a big-business operation. Pyle also visited one of the three radio stations then in the territory. He was impressed with the "impromptu distress service" that got messages out, such as notifying a fox rancher his wife was gravely ill. The other two stations were also mentioned. Ketchikan got to broadcast the breathing and flopping of a live whale when one was cast up on the beach by the station.



Ernie Pyle.

Anchorage broadcast a movie maker's plea for a live wolverine. Unfortunately, they didn't specify how many, as an old trapper promptly flew in with one, then another arrived, and another, until ten wolverines arrived and ten trappers waited to be paid.

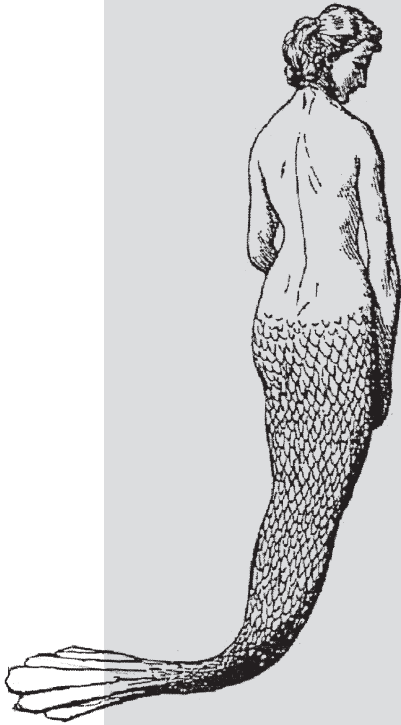
A well-traveled jewelry exhibit, *Arctic Transformations: the Jewelry of Denise and Samuel Wallace* has graced the **Alaska State Museum** over the summer, as has a museum display on tourists. *The Lure of Alaska: A History of Tourism in the Great Land* gives a look at those quaint visitors who have visited us since shortly after we became a U.S. possession.

You can also ask a conservator how to get the bugs out of your displays; we're talking bugs that lay eggs here, not software. The secret is freezing, which should be simple in the Interior in the winter (just joking).

Tourists at crevasse in Muir Glacier.

Alaska State Library Historical Collections, ASL-PCA 87-2031.

News & Information



THE CAPE DECISION LIGHTHOUSE SOCIETY

The **Cape Decision Lighthouse Society**, headquartered at 224 Katlian Street, Sitka, Alaska, 99835, publishes a nice newsletter about their struggle to save and restore the lighthouse. Write them at cape-decision@gmail.com if you have items, money, or time to help. They're on their tenth year and the light celebrates its 75th this year.



ALASKA YUKON PIONEERS

Don't forget the perennial favorite for finding and keeping in touch with friends and neighbors from Alaska and the Yukon. Write to **AYP**, Ethel La Rose, 9512 First Avenue NE, #204, Seattle, Washington, 98115-2018, or phone 206/523-6574, or just tap in elbellarose@botmail.com. For \$12.00 per annum you will receive their regular newsletter.



A DOCTOR'S SECRETS

Dr. Vincent Hume, an early physician of the Matanuska-Susitna Valley had some personal secrets that threw his small town into an uproar. *Cure and Chaos* is a new book by Joe Homme on the good doctor. Contact the Palmer society at Post Office Box 1935, Palmer, Alaska 99645-1935, or buy it from Amazon.



HERITAGE ALASKA

What is *Heritage Alaska*? It's a publication that brings you national budget news, endangered buildings and historic sites, and grants available. It is produced by the Office of History and Archaeology, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Please send your comments, suggestions, and information via e-mail to jo.antonson@alaska.gov, to 550 West 7th Ave., Suite 1310, Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3565, or telephone 907/269-8721.

A one-stop shop for answers to all sorts of questions about preserving Alaska history. The current issue states funds have been slightly increased by Congress for national historical programs. However, the Bush administration has proposed flat funding, so contact your representatives.

The recent newsletter notes some money has been supplied by the state to begin stabilization of the **Jesse Lee Home** in Seward. It's most famous resident was Benny Benson, 13 years old when he submitted the winning design for the Alaska flag. The Nike Site Summit, a relic of the Cold War, is inching towards preservation, and a new postage stamp honors Five Finger Lighthouse. For more information on the Nike site contact Judy Bittner at the OHA, e-mail her at oba@alaska.net. Need that lighthouse stamp? Jennifer Klein of Juneau can sell you one at 907/364-3632 or try jla_688@botmail.



ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD INSIGNIA

What would a Fellow of the Heraldry Society of England find interesting in Alaska? It's tempting to say clan crests, but that would be wrong. Stephen Slater was in the state some years ago and put together a small collection of the Alaska National Guard insignia, which some day he would like to return to Alaska. In the meantime, he is interested in adding the insignia of new military units, such as the 49th Missile Defense Battalion at Fort Greely. Anyone who can help him or would like to correspond is invited to write him at Flat 8, Portway House, The Portway, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA 12 8QQ, United Kingdom.



Alaskan insignia from the collection of Stephen Slater.
Photo courtesy of the collector.

Visit our website:
www.alaskahistoricalociety.org

ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2007 CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Food for Thought: The Role of Food and Nutrition in Alaska History

H O M E R - A L A S K A

Remember, the following program is provisional only, so be prepared for some changes when you arrive.

Wednesday, September 26

Ellen Frankenstein: *Eating Alaska*: an independent documentary film
The film, a contemporary look at what is on our plates, is meant to stimulate conversation about Alaskan's food, past and future. Serious yet humorous, it includes narration with archival shots about self-reliant Alaskans who often eat high on the food chain.

Thursday, September 27

7:45-9:00 a.m. Concurrent Sessions

Session A: Trail Mix

Facilitator: Marie Darlin

Linda Chamberlain: *Mushing the Mail in Alaska*
Food had a central role in the sled dogs' ability to survive on winter mail routes. This paper maps how U.S. Postal Service Star Route contracts were established and describes the typical life of a dog team mail carrier on the trail.

Shane Lopez: *The Flight of the Lebedevsky: A Tale of Trade and Turmoil on the Kenai*

Although violent relations existed on the Kenai Peninsula after 1791, a vibrant trade market took place. This study looks at the early quarrel between the Lebedev-Lastochin Company and the Shelikhov Company, and how the Dena'ina became caught in the middle.

Jim King: *A Classic Alaskan Roadhouse: Bethel's "Tiltin' Hilton"*
Burgie Leen, at Bethel's Leen Lodge, was the best roadhouse cook in Alaska in the 1960s. King will share a few of his stories of the "Tiltin' Hilton," the roadhouse in which he stayed in 1962 for two lively months.

Session B: Succulent Sources

Facilitator: Marilyn Knapp

Christy Garrett: *The Miriam Bell Collection: Providing Online Access to the History of Health Care in Alaska*

From the 1950s to the 1990s, nutritionist Miriam Bell studied Alaska Native traditional foods and diet. This presentation focuses on the collection of Alaska's nutritional health history donated by her to the Health Sciences Information Services (HSIS) at the University of Alaska Anchorage. It will explain results as well as challenges such as cultural and proprietary privacy.

John P. Cook: *The 1900 Alaska Federal Census*

In 1900 migrants to Alaska came from 2,100 towns, 48 states (except South Carolina), and 36 foreign countries. Occupations, both before and after moving to Alaska demonstrate the adaptability of these immigrants. This presentation will profile these new Alaskans and provide an historical evaluation of the statistics.

Bruce Parham: *"Food Will Win the War": The U.S. Food Administration in Alaska, 1917-1919*

Alaska's branch of the U.S. Food Administration, created in November 1917, had a pervasive influence on the daily lives of Alaskans. This paper focuses on operations and activities of the U.S. Food Administration in Alaska.

9:15-10:15 a.m. Conference Welcome and State of the State

Facilitator: Bruce Merrell

Speakers: James King, Judy Bittner, Kay Shelton, Clark Gruening

10:30-11:30 a.m. Keynote Address

Facilitator: Bruce Merrell

Ann Chandonnet: *Our Daily Ice: Global Warming and Arctic Alaska's Menus*
Alaska has been termed the "poster child" for global warming because the Arctic is warming about twice as fast as the rest of the world. Summer days without snow in Barrow have increased from fewer than 80 in the 1950s to more than 100 in the 1990s. Bering Sea ice has shrunk by

about 5 percent over the past 40 years. The black guillemot population is declining from 1990 levels; melting sea ice has increased the distance birds fly to forage, and has reduced the number of available resting sites.

These changes inevitably manifest themselves on the dinner tables of Alaska's indigenous Arctic Alaskan cultures. Tribal representatives talk about lakes so shallow from lack of rainfall that they freeze to the bottom, killing the fish. The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment of 2005 stresses that marine species dependent on sea ice such as polar bears, walrus, and some seals are likely to decline. Northern hunting and food-sharing culture will be disrupted – perhaps even destroyed – as reduced sea ice causes the creatures on which that culture depends to decline and become less accessible.

11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. Local Historical Societies' Round Table Lunch

1:00-2:15 p.m. Session: Recipe for War

Facilitator: Kathy Price

Mary Breu: *Letters From Nowhere: The True Story of the Alaska Pioneer and World War II POW Etta Jones*

Connecticut-born Etta Schureman left home for the wonders and adventures of Alaska in 1922. Etta had a natural gift for storytelling, as does her great-niece, Mary Breu, who will share her great-aunt's remarkable experiences. For 19 years, Etta taught in Alaska villages until the invasion of Attu where she was taken prisoner. This paper will look at the atrocities of war against a backdrop that is rarely explored in accounts of World War II.

Christopher H. Roe: *Feeding the U.S. Armed Forces in Alaska during World War II*

Napoleon Bonaparte reportedly said that "An army marches on its stomach." The United States had thousands of military personnel in many parts of Alaska during World War II. This paper discusses the logistical problems of supplying food to men and women in often isolated parts of Alaska.

John Cloe: *A Time of Starving, the Fate of Attu Aleuts in Japan during World War II*

When the Japanese occupied Attu in early June of 1942, they found 42 Aleuts in six family groups and a BIA couple. Two Aleuts died prior to being moved to Japan. Twenty islanders died due to an inadequate diet, including four of the five infants born during internment. One BIA employee died from a gunshot to his right temple and the other survived prison.

2:30-4:30 p.m. Session: Fast Food Frontier

Facilitator: Gladi Kulp

Frank Norris: *Lake George: the Monument that Never Was*

National Park Service historian, Frank Norris will provide the audience with "food for thought" in this interesting discussion of a proposed national monument near Anchorage.

Timothy Rawson: *Big Mac: Eating and Climbing on Denali*

Far from supermarkets, visitors who climb Alaska's big peaks are required to carry and prepare foods appropriate to the physical and environmental challenges. Poor food choices can and have thwarted months of planning, much expense, and great efforts in attempts to reach the peak tops. This paper examines the foods of Denali expeditions from James Wickersham's first attempt in 1903 to the present.

Terrence Cole: *Hard Boiled and Rotten: The Gold Rush Egg*

Of all the precious gold rush delicacies that miners came to cherish, few were as fragile and as delicate as the ordinary chicken egg. In Alaska and the Yukon, hens' eggs were anything but ordinary—more like "eggs-traordinary." This paper will describe the insatiable demand for eggs during the Gold Rush and explore the numerous ways in which inventive men tried to bring in an adequate supply.

Friday, September 28

8:15-10:15 a.m.

Session: Alaska's Food Chain: Linking Land and People

Facilitator: Bob King

Alexandra A. Maloney: *New Food and Words Introduced to Native Alaskans by Russians in the 18th & 19th Centuries*

Native Alaskan languages borrowed many Russian words for various foods. Woven into each word is the change in the diet of Alaskan Natives. Parallel influences among Native Siberian peoples also will be considered.

Daniel Monteith: *Haa Atxaayii: Our Food or Subsistence*

The Tlingit of Southeast Alaska have harvested a wide variety of resources, although anthropologists and historians have focused primarily on fish and game. This paper will examine the historical importance of horticulture and gathering of plants, roots, berries, and sprouts. Also examined are different perspectives about foods and changes in harvesting techniques or food preferences during the historic contact period.

June McAtee: *Reindeer and Potatoes on the Kuskokwim River*

As reindeer herding spread across western Alaska, the Sara and Spein families delivered 100 head of deer to the Moravian Mission at Bethel. A. H. Twitchell was a fur trader in the Kuskokwim region when the two families settled in Bethel in 1903. McAtee, a descendent of the Sara and Twitchell reindeer-herding families, will share stories of those times.

Elizabeth Kunibe: *Ten Thousand Years of Humankind's Enchantment with the Tobacco Plant: Spiritual, Medicinal and Deadly Qualities*

When and how tobacco plants arrived in Alaska is a mystery. The Tlingit and Haida people chewed a mixture of the plant and powdered shell when the first Europeans arrived. This presentation will discuss species and uses of tobacco plants as well as its medicinal, spiritual, and addictive qualities. The presentation starts with tobacco's history of 10,000 years, progressing to its use today in Alaska Native cultural practices and the different species used by today's tobacco industry.

Virginia Lacy: *More than Subsistence: How Diet Sustained Culture and Identity in Prince William Sound*

This autobiographical paper tells the life of Pete Nicholoff's grandmother, half Russian, half Aleut, born at Nuchek. She married a German sailor, and together they lived a subsistence lifestyle on a fox farm near Cordova. They raised pigs, goats, chickens, and maintained a huge garden. This paper will explore how diet played an important role in maintaining their culture and identity.

10:30-11:30 a.m. Museums Alaska Keynote Address

Facilitator: Michael Hawfield

Speaker: Elaine Heumann Gurian

1:00-2:15 p.m. Session: Planting Alaska

Facilitator: Katie Ringsmuth

Joshua J. Riley: *Veteran Homesteaders: How Postwar Homesteading Shaped Homer's Modern Economy*

Following World War II, Homer experienced its largest period of settlement prior to statehood in 1959. World War II veterans such as William Wakeland, Bill Marriot, and Clem Tillion flocked to the area, lured by the prospects of free land and a wilderness experience. This paper will look at Homer's postwar economy based upon commercial fishing and small-scale agriculture, and the rise of its service-oriented businesses.

Ryan Morgan: *Producing History: The Story of the Matanuska Colonists and a Legacy of Giant Vegetables*

The legacy of Alaska's produce began with the New Deal colonists, who, shortly after they arrived, created what would become the Alaska State Fair and its legendary event—the giant vegetable contest. Today the valley is home to the Alaskan Grown, Matanuska Maid Dairy, and other companies that have roots back to the New Deal colonists. This presentation will discuss how the Matanuska Colony literally “produced” history in Alaska.

2:30-3:45 p.m. Session: Tales from the Kitchen

Facilitator: Ron Inouye

Jackie Pels: *Good as Gould: Feeding a Family of 143: A Tribute to Miss Anna Irene Gould of the Jesse Lee Home*

A tribute to Miss Gould must include a visit to the Jesse Lee kitchen in the times before instant mashed potatoes or disposable dishes. This paper remembers the women who made sure “every one was got his

fill on Christmas Day, especially if you were lucky enough to be sitting at Miss Gould's table.”

Sarah Crawford Isto: *Veterinary Adventures at the Fur Farms described by Dr. E. F. Graves and Dr. J. B. Loftus – Alaska's First Two Territorial Veterinarians*

Fur prices and enthusiasm for fur farming were close to their height in 1927 when the Territorial Legislature under Governor George Parks created the office of Territorial Veterinarian. This paper discusses the veterinarians who were hired to travel to Alaska's nearly 500 fox farms, assess problems, treat animals, and educate farmers.

Rogan Faith: *Tucking it in with Dynamite Johnny*

This paper will focus on Captain John O'Brien of the Alaska Steamship Company and look at menus from his steamship table in the 1910s.

Saturday, September 29

8:00-10:15 A.M. Session: Catch of the Day

Facilitator: Katie Oliver

William E. Simeone: *Ahtna Knowledge of Salmon in the Copper River of East Central Alaska*

For over 1,000 years the Ahtna Athabaskan people have fished for salmon in the Copper River and its tributaries. This paper provides an overview on the Ahtna taxonomy of salmon and other fish, salmon life history, factors influencing the movement of salmon, harvesting devices and the preparation of fish, the traditional management system, and legends and stories about salmon.

John Branson: *Fish Meal: A History of the Canned Salmon Industry in Bristol Bay*

Since 1884 there have been about 50 canneries built on the Bristol Bay tidewater supplying the world with millions of cases of canned salmon. Most are now gone; victims of diminished salmon runs, changing economics, fire, coastal erosion, and dismantling. This paper will survey the canned salmon industry on the three great rivers of the region: the Nushagak, Kvichak, and Naknek rivers.

Katie Ringsmuth: *Mug-Up: The Role of the Messhall in Cannery Life*

Both men and women workers from around the world have made a living either catching or cleaning Alaskan salmon. The common tie between these men and women was the cannery messhall. This paper will look at how the food served not only fed the workforce, but shaped cannery culture.

Bob King: *Dying for Salmon: Myth and Mortality on Deadman Sands*

Alaska salmon are to die for. In Bristol Bay, almost every memoir recounts the story of Deadman Sands, a dangerous shoal in Kvichak Bay where the winds and tides were said to have crushed many a fishing boat and sent its crew to their deaths. Is the story of Deadman Sands fact or fish tale? This paper follows the leads and discovers the underlying truth about Deadman Sands.

10:30-11:45 a.m. Session: Alaska's Original Cuisine

Facilitator: Paul Ongtooguk

Jennifer Johnson, Anore Paniyauraq Jones, Zona Spray Starks: *Alaska's Original Cuisine*

Above and adjacent to North America's Arctic Circle, there is an important cuisine. Comprised of hundreds of dishes, the centuries-old gastronomy reached its pinnacle in Alaska and continues to flourish amidst the elders. The panel will define traditional Arctic cuisine and how it influenced Inupiat and Yup'ik women's early socio-economic activities; discuss how Inupiat women used the climate to perfect unique drying, freezing and fermenting in preparation and cooking methods; elaborate on dishes suitable for Arctic and Western diets; explain how and why indigenous products nourished Arctic nations for thousands of years; and compare the nutritive value of traditional foods with modern western dishes.


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Sarah John cooking for potlatch, Venetie, 1939.
Alaska State Library Historical Collections, ASL-P306-0811.

What's cookin' at the **ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2007 CONFERENCE?**

Editor's Comments

*J*ourney" is one of the most evocative words in the English language. A journey takes us places, sometimes familiar, as coming home from college, sometimes new, as travel to a different country. Life itself is a journey from birth to death, with all of its adventures in-between.

There are, of course, journeys on another plane. Philosophy; how we have come from the simple musings about death and life to sophisticated theories of what is actually essential to humans. Religion is a part of that; as we grow, we address the spiritual side of our

nature and may make a journey from wondering why it's necessary to believing it is a part of life as important as the physical.

But, you ask, what does all this have to do with history, charming idea though it is? Well, history is full of journeys, of course, but if you think about it, history itself is a journey, whether of the universe or our world, or evolution of species or humankind.

If you're the sort of procrastinator I am, it is comforting to have that perspective when faced with a phone call that should have been returned or a letter that hasn't yet been answered. So what's a few hours or days when you're thinking of the formation of Earth?

See you when we journey to Homer.
D. L.



"Northern Lights" by Rusty Heurlin.
UA Museum of the North Alaska Classics Gallery, UA1991-032-001.