Volume 39, No. 1 Quarterly of the Alaska Historical Society

Spring 2011



ome singers are soloists while others prefer the chorus. And through a common tune, both can be heard by others. Being silent, we have no voice.

Our tune is support for the cultural resources programs in Alaska which are charged in statutes with protecting Alaska's heritage. In particular, it is important to show statewide support for capital funds to build a consolidated Library Archives Museum building. More information about the agencies and the building project can be found at www. alaskahistoricalsociety.org.

Please raise your individual voice now: e-mail, call, write a letter to members of the House and/or Senate FINANCE Committees and copy to your local representatives. The legislative session will end April 17<sup>th</sup> so the committees are NOW hard at work. The Alaska Legislative website (w3.legis.state.ak.us) and your local Alaska Legislative Information Office provide the names and contact information for your representatives and the House and Senate Finance committee members.

Your letter is important. Your letter together with those of others will demonstrate statewide concern and commitment. Let's raise our voices and sing out together!



Benny Benson holding the Alaska State Flag, Jesse Lee Home, Seward. ASL-P01-1921

The members of the Alaska Historical Society urge Alaska legislators to:

- fully support the Governor's FY 2012 operating budget for the Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums. The Alaska State Library serves legislators, state agencies, and citizens seeking information about our state's past. The Alaska State Museums, State Library with its Historical Collections, and State Archives comprise the division and are within the Department of Education and Early Development.
- fully support the Governor's FY 2012
  operating budget of for the Alaska
  Office of History and Archaeology,
  Department of Natural Resources.
  This year the Governor's budget
  makes technical changes which move



Children singing, Solomon school room, February 1942. Evelyn Butler and George Dale photo collection. ASL-P306-0654

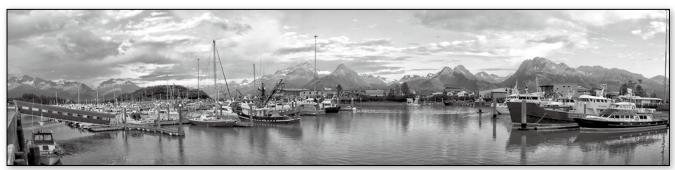
federal Historic Preservation Fund grant and state match monies from the capital to the operating budget. The Alaska Office of History and Archaeology is part of the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation within the Department of Natural Resources.

• appropriate funds in the FY 2012 capital budget sufficient to complete construction of a combined Alaska State Library Archives and Museum building. This project will provide a secure and safe building for the protection and sharing of invaluable collections and records and for providing statewide services for all Alaskans.



he Valdez hosts for the 2011 Alaska
Historical Society/Museums Alaska conference
have lots of plans in the works. The Alaska
Historical Society program has selected the theme
"Northern Waters," and Museums Alaska has its theme

"Looking Back, Thinking Ahead." Both themes carry resonance with Valdez's rich history as the United States' northernmost year-round ice-free port and as a community that has reinvented itself again and again. The meetings are scheduled for September 21-25.



Valdez, July 29, 2007. Photograph by Saket Vora.

Valdez has much to offer. **The Valdez Museum**'s permanent exhibits tell the history of Valdez, the Copper River Valley and Prince William Sound from the earliest days to the present day. Exhibit highlights include the history of the area's Alaska Natives, the Gold Rush, Fort Liscum, the building of the Richardson Highway, and the





Top to bottom, this column: Native baskets; interior miner's cabin; the Pinzon Bar. These images from the Valdez Museum and more can be viewed online at: http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?pid=366643&id=150484781647506&fbid=150547054974612

Exxon *Valdez* Oil Spill. In a building four blocks from the main museum is the **Remembering Old Valdez** exhibit about the town in 1964, on the eve of the Good Friday Earthquake. There will be a walking tour of Valdez as part of the conference that will highlight buildings relocated from the old town site.

The Maxine & Jesse Whitney Museum has one of the largest collections of Native Alaskan art and artifacts in the world. Maxine Whitney collected between 1969 and the mid-1980s. She donated the collection to Prince William Sound Community College in 1998. The collection is in a new state-of-the-art museum adjacent to the college.



The Valdez conference planners have included a visit to the Whitney Museum,

Historic sites in the area include Valdez's **Pioneer**Cemetery, the final resting place of many of the '98ers who arrived with the Gold Rush, and the **Old Town**Site where Valdez once stood. Tours are being planned to both along with one to Worthington Glacier and historic Copper Center. The meeting will start with a dinner cruise. The agenda includes optional hikes amid the presentations, workshops, trade fair, and each group's silent auctions. Registration materials will be available in July.

# Pick.Click.Give.

GENEROUS ALASKANS donated almost \$1,000 to the Alaska Historical Society when they filed for their Alaska Permanent Fund dividend last year. The society is included in the contribution list for 2011. Please consider giving to the society when you file—it's greatly appreciated!

## Notes from around the state



William H. Seward.
Engraving by A. H. Ritchie.
Alaska Purchase Centennial Collection.
ASL-P20-023

Resurrection Bay Historical Society has some of the slickest ideas for scenic shots. Videos? Of course; Seward - the First Hundred Years is only \$19.95 and can be ordered, adding \$3.00 postage, from the society at Post Office Box 55, Seward, Alaska, 99664 or phone 907/224-3902. So what else is scenic? Try Bits of History, short videos of people, places, and events. These can be viewed for free at sewardcitynews.com, Seward History or, showing just how clever they are, at www.youtube.com/bits of history. Impressive.

Also in Seward, a new tribe formed in 2009; the Qutekcak is a group of all Alaska Natives who live in the Seward area. They have free classes and demonstrations in basket weaving and carving. Call 907/224-3118 and ask for Mariah Simons.

Seward residents also are interested in, oddly, the restoration of William Henry Seward's birthplace in New York State. (Could there be some jealously on the part of other towns that aren't named after him?)

November is Native American Heritage Month and no place took it more seriously than Sitka, the Sheldon Jackson Museum newsletter reports. Tlingit dancers, local Native artists in the schools, and the Sitka Cultural Center made sure all of Sitka was aware of its great Native heritage. Other museums might want to take notice of the Artifact of the Month the museum features in the local newspaper as well as its newsletter.



Reproduction of old Tlinget carving. Sheldon Jackson Museum February 2011 Artifact of the Month

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Even more use of the Internet - the Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance at Post Office Box 2323, Seward, Alaska 99664 tells us they can be found at www. iditarodnationalhistorictrail.org. The site has all the historic trails in the U.S. listed along with lots of other information on the history of the trail and photographs. Is Seward an offshoot of Silicon Valley? A little more understandable to us low-tech sorts is news from February 1911 that the Alaska Road Commission is marking the actual mail route miles from Nome to Unalaklik; not the estimated 235 miles but exactly 206.8 miles as measured by their state-ofthe-art cyclometer, a bicycle wheel with a measuring device, backed up by a second wheel. Superintendent W. L. Goodwin remarks about the 35-50 below zero temperatures: "indeed it is none too comfortable nor safe on the trail when it is below 40." Some things haven't changed at all.



Colonel Walter Goodwin with distance-measuring cyclometer attached to sled. Courtesy Bureau of Land Management

Perhaps it is the geography or the water of Prince William Sound. The **Valdez Museum** reports it not only can be found at www.valdezmuseum.org, where general information and more on their spring display of artifacts seldom seen (nudge, nudge, other museums), but also are now on Facebook. Look for Valdez Museum and click "like".

The museum staff are upgrading the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill exhibit. Good for them; effects still linger in the Sound.

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Nothing like a complete change in views of Native culture. The **Alaska State Museum** bulletin notes the Duncan Cottage Museum in Metlakatla, after years of neglect, was renovated and is now open to the public through assistance from the state staff. Museum exhibits stress the glories of the town's Tsimsean heritage. Father Duncan may be whirling in his grave.

A thought for other museums: the state museum is going to put exhibits on seven cruise ships this summer. Have any ships regularly coming your way?

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The Sitka Maritime Heritage Society newsletter has great news. The boathouse they have been so industriously preserving finally is going to be renovated due to some grants obtained and support from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. They are seeking an executive director; for details call 907/747-3448, or send letter of interest to SMHS, Post Office Box 2153, Sitka, Alaska 99835 or heritage@sitkamaritime.org. For more news about their activities visit www.sitkamartime.org.

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Partnering with local schools is not only a fine community effort, but is a great sneaky way to insure children feel part of the museum. The **Anchorage Museum** is sponsoring classes and hosting the 38th annual *Anchorage School District Art Exhibition* until March 27. They also are partnering with Fairbanks and Kenai Learning Centers in a NASA grant to educate Alaska's rural schoolchildren about climate change.



Start of the Iditarod sled dog race, Anchorage, Alaska, March 8 2009. Photograph by Frank Kovalchek.

Notes from around the state

The museum just opened Mammoths and Mastodons: Titans of the Ice

Age traveling exhibit. See what else is on at anchoragemuseum.org. Along those lines, the Cook Inlet Historical Society is continuing its popular lecture series with a tie-in to the exhibit. Lectures on the theme Man, Mammoths, and Mastodon will continue on the third Thursday of every month through May. The Society is partnering with the museum in planning two major museum exhibits: Dena'inaq Huch'ulyeshi in 2012, and Arctic Ambitions: Captain Cook and the Northwest Passage in 2014. If you want to help, contact CIHS@anchoragemuseum.org.

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The **Cape Decision Lighthouse Society** in Sitka has information about its preservation work and other activities at capedecisionlight.org.

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Preserving old buildings can be very tricky, especially when a new foundation is needed and gravel must be hauled by wheelbarrow to level the basement floor. The **Wasilla-Knik Historical Society** did so to add a historic warehouse to the Knik Museum/Bjorn Cabin complex. In Wasilla, the **Dorothy G. Page Museum** reports the move of a cabin and the old post office to their original sites. Doesn't this area have a tradition of moving buildings around? They are becoming very successful at it, and are saving their heritage.

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The Baranov Museum in Kodiak is hosting *The Big One: Earthquakes in the Pacific Northwest,* a traveling exhibit created by the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture. Museum staff developed companion displays that explore the impact of the 1964 Alaska earthquake and tsunami on Kodiak residents and the landscape. The exhibit opened with a First Friday Family Fun Night with earthquake-themed activities, free admission, and of course, refreshments. If you can't get to Kodiak to see the exhibit before April 30, you can get more information at www.baranovmuseum.org or www.facebook.com/BaranovMuseum.

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Short biographies under the title "What's Our Story?" celebrate longtime local residents in the **Chugiak-Eagle River Historical Society** newsletter. How about your society? What a great way to build reference material for the future. So nice to think future researchers will bless you.

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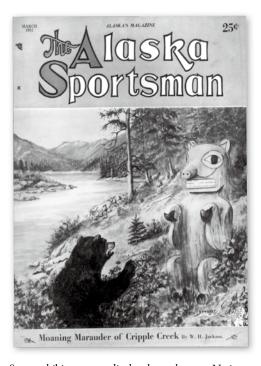
It's not every day that a museum has such a handy location to celebrate a centennial. July 8-9 the McCarthy-Kennecott Museum is marking the 100th

birthday of the first train to arrive from Cordova into McCarthy and Kennecott. The museum is located in the old CR & NW railway depot. They also have a great story of a drunken miner years ago who promised some doubters in a bar that if they could bring proof of his nearby secret gold mine he would buy them beer. A few days later the doubters showed up with the anvil from the mine. They all agreed, before diving into their brews, the anvil was too heavy to carry back to the mountain, so it's still in McCarthy, now in the museum.

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The **Sitka Historical Society** and **Sitka National Historical Park** have put the proceedings from the 2010 International Conference on Russian America on line at www.2010RAC.com. In addition to the abstracts and papers, there is a great slide show of the many events.

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Some exhibits seem to display themselves; try Native clothing or the history of dog mushing in Alaska. Others leave you scratching your head. Exactly how Ketchikan's **Tongass Museum** is able to make an exhibit of the famous old *Alaska Sportsman* magazine, that icon of Alaska from 1935 to 1969 when the name was changed to the current one of *Alaska Magazine* we don't know, but knowing that creative crowd it's an exhibit worth seeing. The display will be up until mid-April. For a handsome picture, search the web for Tongass Historical Museum, and don't forget to check the **Totem Heritage Center.** Or you can write Ketchikan Museums, 629 Dock Street, Ketchikan, Alaska, 99901.



http://haysvillelibrary.wordpress.com/2010/02/11/

sequencing-the-mammoth-genome/

Captain Cook, oil on canvas painting by John Webber, 1776. Museum of New Zealand Tepapa Tongarewa, Wellington

## News & Information

ROBERT N. "BOB" DeARMOND was one of the finest historians Alaska has ever produced and certainly the most prolific. He and his artist wife, Dale, lived in Sitka, Ketchikan, Pelican, Juneau, and then Sitka after 1991. Bob was author of many books: From Sitka's Past, Staking Her Claim, Stroller White, Lady Franklin Visits Sitka, Old Gold, Founding of Juneau, Raven Town, Names on the Charts, and the charming memoir of his teens, Voyage in a Dory. He died November 26, 2010, at the Pioneer's Home in Sitka at the age of 99. Dale died in 2006. Bob grew up in Sitka, and then went to work for newspapers in Ketchikan, Juneau, and Sitka. He was the editor of the Alaska Sportsman, Alaska Journal, and served on various historical commissions, as well as writing around a thousand newspaper columns. A few years ago the Juneau-Douglas City Museum established Digital Bob, a searchable database of many of his columns, which pleased him very much. A memorial fund in his name has been established at the Alaska State Museum. More complete obituaries are readily found in the Sitka, Juneau, and Fairbanks newspapers, as well as a fine article about Digital Bob (http://bit.ly/he2p0L), a long column reprint, and photographs in the Gastineau Heritage News. Congratulations to all fortunate enough to know him.

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WELL, SHE WARNED US several times, but we were still hoping Pat Roppel would change her mind about continuing her anecdotes and histories of Wrangell and Southeast Alaska in general, but in her December issue she ended her newsletter that raised funds for the Wrangell Historical Society. As a sop to her readers, she now writes columns for the Capital City Weekly, a free paper issued in Juneau and elsewhere in Southeast, and can be found at CapitalCityWeekly.com. In her farewell issue, Pat thanks her readers for their faithfulness and promises to continue to support the Wrangell City Museum and hopes they will as well. Thank you for the past six years of highly readable histories, Pat. The last issues discuss Stikine River boats, salmon salteries and fox farms, a funny bootlegging story, and the thought-to-be sinking of a Japanese submarine off Prince of Wales Island in 1942.

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YES, WE'VE PRAISED this again and again, but if you are an old-timer in or from Alaska, you still can't spend \$12.00 per annum better than to subscribe to the **Alaska Yukon Pioneers Newsletter**. Every month it brings you news of former and present Alaskans and Yukoners and their meetings in the Seattle area. Send your check to Joyce Penman, Recorder, 27833 85th Drive NW, Stanwood, Washington, 98292, phone 253/709-0158 or 360/629-3554, e-mail oldwomn@wavecable.com.

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Another site necessary if you want to keep up with history news in the state and elsewhere is the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology's **Heritage** monthly electronic newsletter. To subscribe, go to oha@alaska.net and put Heritage, subscribe, as the subject. For questions contact Jo Antonson at jo.antonson@alaska.gov.

IF YOU ARE NOT INTO RUSSIAN AMERICA (Alaska pre-1867) you well may not know why Fort Ross in northern California will be celebrating in 2012. That will be the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the farthest south Russian post in North America. The fort was not the hoped-for huge success, and closed in 1839. The site became one of California's first state historic parks in 1906. Last fall the oldest wooden building in California, home of the last governor of Ross, Alexander Rotchev, officially opened as a museum. The house has been restored and furnished with appropriate period objects. With California's financial woes, the project took dedication and participation of many people and organizations. Next year the park has great things scheduled each month to commemorate the anniversary, involving Native Alaskans, local Indians, and Russian Orthodox Church members. In the meantime, if you can donate time or work, do notify Robin Joy: frinterp@parks.ca.gov or Tom Wright: tomwright61@gmail.com. Want to check out the site? Try www.fortrossinterpretive.org. If you want a copy of the Fort Ross - Salt Point newsletter or to order from the gift shop, telephone 707/847-3437.

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## ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2011 CONFERENCE STUDENT AND EMERGING PROFESSIONAL TRAVEL AWARDS

The Alaska Historical Society offers two travel awards for a post-secondary student and an emerging professional to attend its annual meeting. This year the meeting will be in Valdez, September 21-24, 2011. Each award is for reimbursement for documented travel expenses up to \$750 and a conference registration package.

Eligibility: An applicant must be a 2011 member of the Alaska Historical Society at the time of applying. Student applicants must be graduate students or upper-division undergraduates in spring or fall 2011 with a course of study related to Alaska history. Emerging professional applicants must be employed in Alaska historical or cultural work and have been so employed for less than five years. Applicants are expected to attend all days and to make a presentation. Each recipient will have a host from the Alaska Historical Society's Board of Directors before and during the meeting.

**Application process:** Each applicant must submit 1) a letter with a statement of eligibility and an explanation of how attending the meeting will enhance academic or professional development, 2) title and abstract of presentation, and 3) a résumé. Applications will be judged on the applicant's achievement in Alaska history relative to current status and the likely benefit of the meeting for the applicant.

The application **deadline** is **June 1, 2011**. Electronic submission is preferred.

Send application to akhist@gci.net or mail two copies to:
Bridget Burke, Chair, AHS Awards Committee
P.O. Box 100299
Anchorage, Alaska, 99510-0299

## News & Information

The Alaska Historical Society invites paper and panel proposals for its Annual Conference in Valdez, September 21-24. The conference theme is "Northern Waters." AHS also welcomes proposals for unconventional sessions, such as round-table discussions, workshop-style presentations, and "author meets critics" sessions.

With two oceans, dozens of gulfs and seas, thousands of rivers, millions of lakes, and more miles of coastline than the rest of the U.S. combined, Alaska has a long and important relationship with water.

Water bodies allow for the movement of people and goods. They determine where people settle and build cities. Water plays a role in numerous industries, including mining, lumber, fishing, tourism, and others. This year's conference location, Valdez, sits on a body of water that has been a key part of its history, from its use by Alaska Native people for millennia, to the Spanish explorers who first arrived on ships and gave Valdez its name, to the 1964 earthquake and tsunami that destroyed the town, to the oil terminal and tankers that have provided both economic opportunity and environmental devastation. Alaska's water is often in the form of ice, which drives history in its own unique way. Glaciers offer a record of the past, thousands of years of history etched on their faces and frozen within their cores. When rivers freeze they become travel routes for dog teams and snow machines, blurring the distinction between land and water. Our northern waters are also a harbinger of changes to come, as the warming oceans and thinning ice pack bring new sea life and new ships that stand to alter the Alaskan way of life.

AHS welcomes proposals on any topic related to "Northern Waters." Presentations with a historical focus are preferred, but proposals from other disciplines and on other topics of interest to the historical community will be considered. Authors should send an abstract of no more than 300 words, name, affiliation (if any), and contact information to Ross Coen (ross.coen@alaska.edu) no later than May 1, 2011.

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A BOOKBINDER, MAX MARBLES, sent along a little article on preserving family Bibles. If you'd like some advice, write him at Max <br/>
<a href="mailto:kinder@teleport.com">kinder@teleport.com</a>>.

Visit our website:

### www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org



We welcome your letters, news and pictures. Please send them to the editor: Dee Longenbaugh
The Observatory, ABAA
299 N. Franklin St. = Juneau, AK 99801
Tel: 907/586-9676 = Fax: 907/586-9606
Email: deelong@alaska.com



Fort Ross, 1828, by A. B. Duhaut-Cilly. Fort Ross Historical Society Archives

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## ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

As interest and writing on Alaska history seem to be sprouting like fireweed in the spring, a useful and popular feature is the society's publication *The Alaska 67* with annotated recommendations of good books on Alaska history.

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



Mary Cumings, Dale DeArmond, Marquerite Fiorella cleaning the Alaska State Library June 1967.  $\rm ASL-P304-Juneau-PL-003$ 

### Editor's Comments

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## SEEKING TREASURES

The Alaska Historical Society's big fundraiser is its silent auction held as part of its annual fall meeting. Auction committee co-chairs Andrew Goldstein and Candy Waugaman are soliciting items. Please send a description of what you would like to donate to akhist@gci.net or Box 100299 / Anchorage / Alaska, 99510

f you were wondering why your editor was stuck on Halloween in the last newsletter, it was because our great newsletter designer became ill and the newsletter was therefore late. Happy to report he is well and I have a note-toself to avoid mention of holidays.

On a much larger and more important matter, it is time for all Alaska's societies and individuals to weigh in on the legislative bills and the budget. You can get information at www.alaskalamp.blogspot.com on the badly needed proposed new building to house Alaska's state archives, libraries, and museum. The architects have been busy working for at least two years on the design and drawings, and will present their latest information with cost estimates this spring. If all Alaska society representatives go to the city councils or assemblies and ask their support, the legislature will pay attention. Certainly the archives and museum buildings are at the point where maintenance of them will cost more than a new building, which will consolidate the sites. Write Kim.Mahoney@alaska.gov or phone 907/269-0822 for more information. It is embarrassing that Alaska, which loves to tout its prosperity at a time when most states are in dire financial straits, has a leaky archival building, a museum with bad maintenance problems, and state and historic libraries that are out of storage space. We can surely do better. Alaskans are proud of our history; let's be proud of its repositories.





Biblioteca Malatestiana, Cesena, Italy, the first civic library in Europe. Photograph by Uomodis08, July 2, 2009.