

Volume 41, No. 1 Quarterly of the Alaska Historical Society March 2013



Message from the President

just returned from the Kodiak Senior Center, where I gave a brief presentation during lunch. There I was, the historian, amidst a room of individuals whose lives were brimming with history. From Betty, I learned that she attended Weight Watcher meetings in the oldest building in Alaska during the late 1960s. From Vern, I learned that he attended school in a one room building surrounded by a World War II tent city. Hazel related listening to Tokyo Rose over the radio every night from her family's island fox farm, also during the war. Alaska's historical societies and museums collect and preserve stories like these, the stories that become historians' fodder. Your support ensures that we can continue listening to peoples stories, and recording them for the future.

Thank you, Anjuli Grantham



Notes from around the state

Katie Oliver, director for many years and former president of our state society, has resigned from the Baranov Museum and become the new director of the Kodiak Arts Council. They miss her and thank her for her work, as we do.

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The Cape Decision Lighthouse Society of Port Alexander on Baranof Island sent out an illustrated newsletter detailing the beach cleanup last year around Kuiu Island, discussion on sea otters, and various doings of the group in 2012. Want to join? Contact them at 224 Katlian, Sitka, Alaska, 99835, or enjoy the photos at www.capedecisionlight.org.

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Juneau and Douglas in 1912 are entertainingly depicted in the newsletter of the **Gastineau Channel Historical Society**, nicely laid out with photographs and old advertisements. However, the variety of news, from the physical growth, to the mines, to the news that six local newsmen went on to become territorial governors, to ball games and parades, to tourism, to racism towards

Tlingits means the serious reader will have to obtain the 28-page issue, \$3.00 via Post Office Box 21264, Juneau, Alaska, 99802, or write ghnews1880@gmail.com for details.

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A surprise to most civilian Alaskans. U.S. Army Garrison Fort Wainwright has sent along their Quarterly Update for Alaska Native Tribes, its Issue 30. In it, one learns, the 70th anniversary of the World War II Lend-Lease that sent over 7,900 airplanes from Alaska to Russia was celebrated by the Tanana Yukon Historical Society, the Fairbanks-Yakutsk Sister City Committee, and Fort Wainwright with a full week of events. Also among the articles is the note that over 600 archaeological sites have been discovered on the fort and its training lands, yielding thousands of artifacts. The fort has its own archaeologist who explains how the artifacts are analyzed and cared for.



Chief Anotklosh, Taku tribe. Photograph by W.H. Case, circa 1913, Juneau, Alaska. University of Washington Digital Collection.

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Notes from around the state



Have local and/or family history relating to Anvik? The newsletter of the **Anvik Historical Society** begins with the traditional news that the Anvik Mission contains much local history. Although Anvik is at the confluence of the Anvik and Yukon rivers in western Alaska, the internet is the way to go. A favorite is Alaska's Digital Archives, http://vilda.alaska.edu

Back to tradition, the annual Athabaskan Fiddlers' Festival held in Fairbanks had its usual wonderful turnout. Many Anvik families were there, of course. The newsletter also tells the story of Max Simel, whose wife despaired after she heard nothing from him after he arrived in St. Michael in October of 1897, about a year after they married. He'd gone north to the Gold Rush. In 1901 a St. Louis newspaper carried the sad news she had not heard from him. How did he die? Accident, robbery, or hardship? Some recent research shows he was a merchant in the Anvik area according to the Alaska Census, newspaper ads, business directories, etc. from 1900 into the 1930s. He was a mail carrier for years. Makes you wonder why he didn't send for her, or if Mrs. Simel remarried or died still mourning.

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The **Baranov Museum** in Kodiak has many programs to keep winter blues away. Beginning in December, they host lectures on Russian icons, holiday card making, masquerade masks for the traditional New Year's celebration, an art walk, carving Russian wooden spoons, and much more, including a class in making pysanky, the famous decorated Russian Easter eggs. This June, they will have a course for ten students from the Kodiak archipelago in film and history, focused on the 1964 earthquake. Tempting to move there next winter, eh?

earthquake. Tempting to move there next winter, eh?

A mix of modern, diasporan, and traditional Ukrainian pysanky. Photograph courtesy Luba Petrusha, April 23, 2011.

The New England Fish Company was a major player in Southeast Alaska fisheries from the late 1890s until 1980; nearly a century. The **Ketchikan Museums** newsletter is featuring *New England Fish Co. - A 1930 Photo Album* as the title promises. The reader can see how the town earned its title of "Salmon Capital of the World." The **Totem Heritage Museum** is busy with its usual programs of carving, cedar basket weaving, regalia robes, and artist marketing, all taught by experts. 907-225-5900 for them; 907-225-5600 for the **Tongass Historical Museum**, or visit www. ketchikanmuseums.org

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Still rightfully savoring their new museum, the **Resurrection Bay Historical Society** is also gloating over the new library. If you have a chance, visit Seward and congratulate them. The newsletter has a piece by a local person about her thrill at being allowed to handle (after donning gloves, of course) the original Alaska Purchase Treaty during a visit to Washington D. C. and the National Archives.

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Women in the Fisheries was a highly successful discussion panel at the Sitka Maritime Heritage Society February annual meeting. Go to www. sitkamaritime.org for more information and photographs. The group reports continued success with the historic boathouse renovation and their other projects.

Short biographies of current and former citizens are a specialty of the Eagle Historical Society & Museums newsletter. The winter issue includes a memoir by a school teacher who arrived in 1927 at Chicken. Her quarters were in a room with only a heater. Different citizens supplied furniture. A problem arose; as they became angry with her, one by one they removed the table, chairs, bed, etc., leaving her only the heater. But she learned to cook on that. She never did learn why they were angry. Another piece tells of a long-time area resident who made only one trip from his claims into town in thirty years. He is credited with saving a woman who, in her attempt to save her husband after a failed suicide attempt, crawled over the bluff to his cabin. (There's a plot for a true adventure there. Editor.)

Notes from around the state

Right: Tenakee Springs waterfront, April 10, 2004. "At one point Tenakee was known as 'Robbers Roost' stemming from bank robbers and other outlaw types reportedly hiding out here. The most notorious of these were members of the Soapy Smith gang who were said to have settled here after Smith's death in 1899. Gambling and prostitution were part of the rowdy frontier town. There was no reliable law and order here in until 1917 when a Deputy U.S. Marshal and a U.S. Commissioner began making regular visits."

For more history and images of Tenakee Springs visiti: http://www.tenakeespringsak.com/

Money has become a real concern for the society, so they have closed the museum for the winter, but that does not mean they are not still working on donations to save their historic buildings. Visit www. eaglehistoricalsociety.com or, since the office is closed, call 907-547-2391. If you can donate, the mailing address is Post Office Box 23, Eagle, Alaska, 99738.

Tanana Yukon Historical Society recently was treated to a discussion by experts on the use of Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) in the Clay Street Cemetery and Chena Townsite. The GPR survey at the Chena Townsite has aided the mapping of historic features and contributes insights as to what might still be at the site. GPR data from the Clay Street Cemetery provides information about the history of the cemetery itself and the people buried within it, including location and spacing of graves within the cemetery. Contact the society at 907-488-3383 or tyhs@alaska.net for information on future programs.

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If you are at all familiar with Tenakee Springs, you know the town revolves around the famed hot springs. Therefore, you can understand how thrilled **The Store Door**, the museum's



newsletter, was to report the money needed has been raised for the bathhouse restoration, which is already underway. They also report on Chief Kadashan, the bay, and the aircraft carrier of the name, an article on the demise of a cabin, long named the Tiltin' Hilton, and a nice piece on telegrams, the precursor of texting, which will come as a shock to the Tweeters of today.

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The **Palmer Historical Society** not only has a website at www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org (surprise!) but also a Facebook page to post memories, discuss local history, and find a question for the month. Docent volunteers are needed for this summer.

News & Information

ALL RIGHT! THE PLACE IS HAINES, THE THEME IS *CONFLUENCE*, AND THE DATES ARE SEPTEMBER 25-28, 2013.

I had hoped to surprise you, but expect you already have guessed. Yes, it's the annual meeting of the Society along with Museums Alaska. The meetings are not only an occasion to hear some good papers, but a family reunion. Oh, don't assume it will be longtime members who resent or ignore first-time attendees; first-timers are treated like cousins you have heard of but are just now meeting. Do come! Want to give a paper? Proposals for papers, panels, and posters should be sent by May 15, 2013 to Jim Simard, Conference Planning Committee. E-mail is james.simard@alaska.gov, or mail to: Alaska Historical Collections, Alaska State Library, P. O. Box 110571, Juneau, Alaska, 99811-0571, Attention: Jim Simard.

The usual rules apply. Proposals should include names of presenters, title, abstract of no more than 200 words, and contact information. Twenty minutes is allowed per presenter. Posters will be displayed throughout the meeting.

The annual conference of the Alaska Anthropological Association will be in Anchorage March 13-16 at the Hotel Captain Cook. Everyone is gearing up for the usual excellent papers at this 40th anniversary of the group, and, of course, receptions, reunions, and all the trimmings. Hosts are the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center. For more information, memberships, and publications visit www. alaskaanthropology.org



Holy Assumption Church, Kenai, 2012. Photograph courtesy National Park Service.

ROSSIA is the acronym for the group **Russian Orthodox Sacred Sites in Alaska**, which celebrated its first decade in 2012. After five years of fundraising, the bell tower of St. Nicholas Church in Juneau has been restored and Holy Assumption Church in Kenai has seen major repairs. There is still much work to be done on Alaska's historic Orthodox churches, as these were mostly built in the late 19th-early 20th centuries, but ROSSIA continues to be inspired. These buildings are an important part of Alaska's heritage. They do point out donations are tax deductible. Post Office Box 212315, Anchorage, Alaska, 99521-2315, or visit www. rossialaska.org for information and photographs.

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The centennial of the first Territorial Legislature in Alaska is happening in early March. Tim Lamkin has asked for anyone with a connection or stories about the event to contact the **Alaska Legislative Centennial Commission**. Even if the ceremony is over by the time your receive this, I would imagine the group will still welcome information. http://100years.akleg.gov/ or phone 907-465-4925 or fax 907-465-3517. The more stories the better.

Visit the **Alaska Railroad Corporation**'s website at www. alaskarailroad.com for travel news and bargains. If you want to know more, such as the financial crunch they're

facing, ask your legislator for a copy of the 2013 Special Report to the Legislature and Administration if you don't want to try online.

And, of course and always, if you want to keep informed as to historic preservation discussions and events in Alaska and around the U. S., the monthly news from *Heritage* is the way to go. This is produced by the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, that reminds you to send in news and information as well as read about it. Contact jo.antonson@alaska.gov or mail to 550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1310, Anchorage, Alaska 99501 or telephone 907/269-8721. An e-mail to oha@ alaska.net starts your free subscription.

A small but important grant was awarded to the **Juneau-Douglas City Museum** to explore the long term objectives of the museum. The building

was built as a library, not a museum, and in addition to public outreach, changing the building to add storage, and generally adapt the building is necessary. The *Friends of the Juneau-Douglas Museum* is a rather new organization, but rapidly becoming an important part of the museum and the community.

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Alert member Katie Ringsmuth reminds us the Alaska Volcano Observatory took a lead role in the remarkably successful collaboration with the National Park Service and the Alaska Historical Society to commemorate the centennial of the Katmai (Novarupta) eruption and the creation of the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes. This year, AVO is marking a big anniversary of its own. For the last 25 years, AVO has been monitoring Alaska's numerous active volcanoes, keeping us all informed as to the hazards. AVO has responded to at least 18 episodes of volcanic eruption or unrest since its inception. As the 50 year anniversary of the 1964 earthquake quickly approaches, it's safe to say that geology has the power to shape Alaska history, and we are thankful that AVO is on the job. Perhaps we can all send AVO a volcanic-sized, Happy Birthday shout-out on our respective web sites and other social media pages and sites.

News & Information

As noted in our last two issues, records of the **Alaska Commercial Company** from 1869 to the 1950s have been located and cataloged. Now we are told the records have been donated to the Rasmuson Library at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The 70th Anniversary Aleutian Campaign Tour is set for June 20-July 2, 2013. Valor Tours is assisted by the National Park Service and the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. Contact Vicky Reynolds-Middagh at 415-332-7850 or valortours@yahoo. com, or be old-fashioned and set your pen to paper and write them at 10 Liberty Ship Way, Suite 110, Sausalito, California, 94965 for details.

With a new and much-needed building under way, the Friends of the Alaska State Museum newsletter has now fittingly become the Friends of the Alaska State Libraries, Archives, and Museum newsletter. Besides the Peratrovich Day and Nunavut's cloth exhibits, artist Drew Michael will display his blend of traditional and contemporary masks. Photographer Ben Huff will show scenes from his long-term project, *The Last Road North*. The State Library Talking Book Center provides books to people with physical or visual problems. Three books at a time; mail them back and three more will be sent. Apply 907-269-6575 or, only in Alaska, 800-776-6566 or http://library.state.ak.us/pdf/tbc_app.pdf

Why should you visit www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon_jackson? Why, to see what the **Sheldon Jackson Museum** in Sitka is up to, of course. A busy place; last November children participated in *Native American Heritage Month* by making button blankets, a birch bark canoe basket, a paper gut parka, etc. And, of course they continue their annual *Native Artist Demonstration Programs*, now in its 25th year, when the museum brings artists to town to demonstrate their talents.

Elizabeth Peratrovich Day is February 16th. She, of course, was the Tlingit woman whose impassioned speech to the Alaska legislature in 1945 led to the first anti-discrimination law in the United States. A good occasion to feel proud of Alaska. The event was celebrated by an exhibit at the State Museum.

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If you're a long-time Alaskan, you like to think you have at least heard of most environmental and

scientific projects in Alaska. How about the **Wrangell Mountains Center?** Wrangell Mountains? Sure. They are almost in the center of the state largely within the nation's largest national park; pretty wild country. The center's college program is beginning its 31st year?? The glacier program is international? www. wrangells.org tells about the programs, or you can get on the mailing list by writing them at Post Office Box 142972, Anchorage, Alaska 99514-2972. The *Hardware Store Herald* newsletter's latest issue covers monitoring watersheds, glaciers, gardening, bird watching, drawing plants, an artist residency program, and a proposed archive; all of this based in McCarthy, in an old hardware store and a renovated old cabin. Totally astonishing to this long-time Alaskan.

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And if you've lived in Alaska for a long time and would like to hear about your old friends and neighbors both in the state and Outside, you cannot have a better investment than the \$20.00 that buys a year's subscription to the **Alaska Yukon Pioneers**. They publish a monthly newsletter, meet in Seattle for lunches, etc. and generally keep people in touch with one another. Checks to AYP, please, and mail to AYP, Joyce Penman, Recorder, 27833 85th Drive NW, Stanwood, WA 98292, telephone 253-709-0158 or 360-629-3554. e-mail olwomn@wavecable.com.

We've discussed **Project Jukebox** recently. That's an Oral History Program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks consisting of audio and video recordings of all sorts of Alaska history. Now the Alaska Mental Health Trust has partnered with the University to produce http://jukebox. uaf.edu/mentalhealth that tells the story of the long battles in Alaska to take care of residents' mental health problems. Twenty-nine individuals speak of the history, beginning with the old Morningside Hospital in Oregon where Alaska patients were sent. It continues with all the services offered and the attention given until Alaska finally brought the patients home. (The old Alaska saying was "If you stay Inside too long and don't go Outside, you go Morningside. Editor)

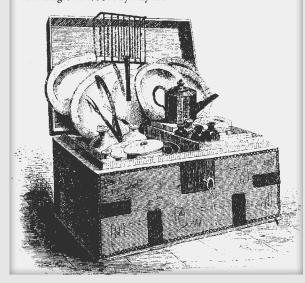
Were there some museum sessions you really wanted to attend at the annual AHS/MA joint conference in Sitka last year. but were too busy with AHS sessions? The recent newsletter of the **Museums Alaska** gives nice reviews of the presentations. Also, of course, there is news from the board and various museums around the state. If interested, check for a copy at your local museum.

News & Information

You would think the Fort Ross Conservancy in California would be recuperating from their smashingly successful bicentennial celebrations during 2012, but they are busy as ever. www.fortross.org for info. Their big project this year is to get the fort and surrounding parks open to the public. (As a result of the budget crunch, most of the state parks are closed or only partially open.) The big Russian windmill, marine mammal monitoring, the history of the Gravenstein apple and local orchards are just some of the projects of the group.

SEEKING TREASURES

The Alaska Historical Society's big fundraiser is its silent auction held as part of its annual fall meeting. The auction committee is soliciting items for this year's auction. Please send a description of what you would like to donate to akhist@gci.net or Box 100299 / Anchorage / AK 99510 by May 1st.



A great gift for a friend, relative, local school or library is a year's membership in the Alaska Historical Society. Your gift includes the newsletter and journal Alaska History, and supports important activities and programs. It's easy...go to the AHS website, www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org and then click on "membership and giving."

Visit our website:

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.

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

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.*



Women's March on Versailles. Upwards of 7000 women descended on Versailles to confront King Louis XVI on October 5-6, 1789. Demanding bread, they brought with them cannon and other weapons.
Bibliotèque nationale de France

Editor's Comments

t's the time of year when all Alaskans are tired of winter. Skiing and sledding are all right, but shoveling snow is not much fun.

I often walk over to one of my daughter's house, about three blocks from mine. It's a nice neighborhood with residents who take pride in their homes. Lawns are mowed during the summer, gardens weeded, houses and fences painted--personal and community concerns are notable.

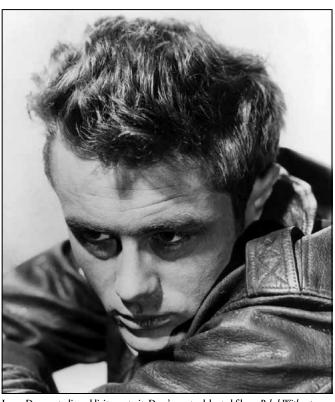
Last year March, in fact most of the winter, produced a great deal of snow. Walking over one weekend I found not one, but all the sidewalks had not been shoveled. An unspoken community decision, I decided. This is not a chatty neighborhood. The owners are professionals and very busy with their lives.

This must have been noticing the other owners were tired. Shoveling and shoveling and disposing of the snow had become not only a chore, but an intolerable one. Clear the sidewalk and by the next day it needed shoveling again. So they had gone on strike. A quiet rebellion. I could sympathize, and didn't really mind walking in the street.

So hang on, everyone. April will surely bring real spring, and if it doesn't, it should have.

D.L.

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James Dean—studio publicity portrait. Dean's most celebrated film—Rebel Without a Cause (1955).