Alaska History News

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September 2013



Message from the President

T STARTED TO RAIN LAST WEEK after weeks of only sunshine. Although I am preemptively mourning the summer, I am also a bit relieved. How is a historian to work when the outside is screaming to be enjoyed? This repast from the sun comes right in time to prepare for the upcoming conference at Haines.

Now it's time to hunker down, turn salmon berries into jelly, fillets into cans, and to write some Alaskan history to share with colleagues at the conference. I look forward to seeing you there!

—Anjuli Grantham

Yáa ch' áagu Lingít sh yáa awudanéiyi.

— Kaajaakwti

The people long ago respected themselves.

— Walter A. Soboleff (1908-2011), Tlingit of the L'eeneidí clan

Confluence and Collaborations

Alaska Historical Society & Museums Alaska Joint Annual Conference Haines, Alaska September 25-28



here is still time to make plans to attend the Alaska Historical Society annual meeting and conference held with Museums Alaska. This year our local host is the Sheldon Museum at Haines and they have done a terrific job planning entertainment, opportunities to see and know the community, and arrangements for all of the paper sessions and meetings. Many thanks, in advance, to Jerrie Clark, Christina Baskaya, and the Sheldon Museum and Cultural Center staff and board of trustees for working on our annual gathering.

The program starts Wednesday, September 25th with workshops, board meetings, and the opening reception at the American Bald Eagle Foundation. On Thursday, after the Fort Seward cannon is fired and official welcomes are made, the program kicks off with a keynote address by Michael Gates, Yukon historian. Alaska Historical Society sessions will elaborate on the conference theme "Confluence," and Museums Alaska sessions on "Collaborations: Coming Together for Museums." At noon on Thursday the groups will have the State of the State session to hear about the

state's library, archives, museums, history, archaeology, and historic preservation programs. That evening, the Hammer Museum, Sheldon Museum & Cultural Center, and Haines Library will be open.

Friday, the day starts for early birds with breakfast roundtables. A second keynote address will be presented by Jacqueline Johnson Pata, executive director for the National Congress of American Indians, board member of Sealaska, and Klukwan descendant. The Alaska Historical Society has its annual business meeting in the afternoon. The evening event is the awards banquet enhanced by musical entertainment. On Saturday, there are conference sessions in the morning. There are a variety of options for tours in the afternoon.

The annual conference is a great opportunity to visit with friends from around the state and meet new folks interested in Alaska's history. The detailed schedule and registration form can be accessed at www. sheldonmuseum.org. Over 125 people have already signed up to be there!

Notes from around the state

Bob Medinger, director of the **Sitka Historical Society and Museum** retired after six years, and the society is seeking a replacement. If interested, the e-mail is director@sitkahistory.org or check website www.sitkahistory.org for details.

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Sealed capsules with information of the day to celebrate the centennial of a town. Ho, hum. The **Resurrection Bay Historical Society** newsletter reports Seward had a nice twist on that. They did that in 2003; their capsule is a birchwood chest that is to be opened every decade and updated. It's a way residents can enjoy reviewing the last ten years,

along with other past decades along the way to one hundred years. When they opened the capsule this year, they discovered the old name of the high school newspaper was *Seward's Folly*, which has a certain sentimental ring to it.

The recent newsletter also included a story. Shortly after the terrible tragedy of the 1964 earthquake the town had a bit of relief when a local curmudgeon who loved to complain about everyone and everything in town he regarded as sinful was subjected to a mock trial and sentenced to join the Chamber of Commerce. It's silliness like this that helps heal. Questions of any sort related to Seward can be sent to rbhs1903@gmail.com

Notes from around the state



Nurse with patient.
Elva R. Scott Photographs, UAF-2003-29-8.
Together with two other nurses, Elva R.
Scott collected material and photographs that are now housed in the archives of the Rasmuson Library. Elva was one of the founders of the Pratt Museum, and was well known for her hard work and tireless efforts preserving the history of Eagle and editing its great newsletter the Eagle Wireless. The 2012 Elva R. Scott Local Historical Society Award, named in her honor, was given to the Port Alexander Historical Society.

Two views of the 12-foot-long replica of the seiner F/V Ketchikan Queen on view at the Tongass Historical Museum and Totem Heritage Center. Visit: http://www.city.ketchikan.ak.us/departments/museums/OurTown2013.html



Winning the Elva R. Scott Local Historical Society Award at the 2012 AHS conference made the Port Alexander Historical Society extremely proud, reports their newsletter, Ebb & Flood. The little fishing town at the tip of Baranof Island is celebrating its centennial this year with its renovated museum and general merriment in July. Port Alexander: A Centennial Celebration, 1913-2013 by Mike Stempe, Mark Kirchoff and Tom Paul will soon be published. Some fine photographs in the current newsletter; get your own by sending \$12.00 for a year's subscription to the Society, 224 Katlian, Sitka, Alaska 99835.

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Palmer Historical Society has a great time celebrating memories of the Matanuska Colony that brought settlers to the Mat-Su Valley in the 1930s. This summer they had *Tent City Market* where one could find all sorts of items; they would especially love a canvas wall tent to add color. The society itself took the summer off, although tours of the Colony House Museum were conducted as usual. Questions? Ideas? www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org

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Children from one of Alaska's rich Native cultures have a wonderful time learning about other Alaska groups. Fourth graders in Sitka's Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary School have that time annually at the **Sheldon Jackson Museum** via artifacts from Aleut, Yup'ik, Inupiat, and Athabaskan people at the museum. Something to explore in other Alaska museums?



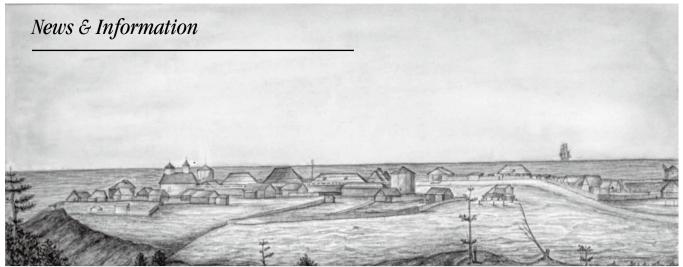
MATI stands for Wasilla's pride; the **Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry**. They are also proud of the State Fair in nearby Palmer. Information about the museum and schedule are at www.museumofalaska.org

The building of the new, combined Alaska State Libraries, Archives, and Museum continues on target. If you enjoy watching large machinery at work, you are invited to come to Juneau and watch the 160-foot crane, with a 230-foot vertical boom and load-bearing reach of 230 feet, at work. The operator has to feel king or queen of Juneau after scaling the 138 feet to the cab and picking up the 10,200 pound test block that makes sure all is operational. There is a fine photograph of a rainbow over town that fittingly ends over the new site. Not every building project has divine approval! The recent newsletter reports on a spring visit to Bethel's Cama-i dance festival and general celebration which includes a grand crafts fair. All are invited; check it out next year.

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The Hope and Sunrise Historical Society museum may be small, but it is an incredibly busy place all summer. It is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day and it seems everyone in town must volunteer there. The town hosts a number of events. The library began July with book signings and an art walk, then there was a fun run, lectures, poetry reading, and in early October folks go to the Kenai Peninsula Historical Association meeting in Seward. Check out www. hopeandsunrisehistoricalsociety.org. Want to receive their newsletter via email? Simple - after you've paid your \$10.00 for the year, send your email address to hopehistoricalsociety@gmail.com

The Ketchikan museum has some new exhibit space which, the **Tongass Historical Museum and Totem Heritage Center** newsletter reports, was gleefully and promptly filled with a 12-foot model seiner (the *Ketchikan Queen*, what else?), historic photographs, and various other artifacts to make up their summer displays. The heritage center hires seasonal guides to conduct tours and answer questions; locals with the answers. Both museums have a thank-you board for all the notes and drawings from students in town who have toured the facilities during the past year.



Settlement (Fort) Ross, watercolor, I.G. Voznesenskii,1841.

Fort Ross Conservancy in northern California reports a perhaps happy resolution to the financial problem all the state parks and recreation offices have faced. In the meantime, a full summer of celebrations and events took place. Among them was an event when the Kashaya Pomo people, the first settlers, joined in various dances with resident-for-dancing Russians. Poets and artists contributed. Want to know more about the monthly Windmill Turning? www.fortross.org/events.htm is for you. The newsletter also has excerpts from Captain-Lieutenant Mikhail Vasilyev on shipbuilding at the fort, one of the reasons the Russians established it in 1812.

Fascinated with wooden boats? Wonder if any are being built today? Want to know more about the Alaska and Northwest Coast classic ships? The **Sitka Maritime Heritage Society** is for you. www.sitkamaritime.org is the place to look. Great photographs! You are encouraged to join or, if you are in the area, help out.

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The years of work of Alaska historian and librarian **Ron Inouye** of Fairbanks has been recognized with a 2013 **CLIA** (**Contribution to Literacy in Alaska**) award; one of only three this year. Congratulations for the well-earned recognition, Ron!

The Alaska Railroad has a rather unusual problem. Moose like open trails in winter, and rail tracks have to be cleared for trains. So crews shovel nice wide trails on either side of the tracks. They also cut tempting brush and trees. In spite of these "moose walks" and horn blasts, some critters are struck. The Food Banks and State Troopers salvage the meat and make sure it goes to hungry people. If unsalvageable,

the Portage area Wildlife Conservation Center, which offers a refuge for orphaned, ill, or injured animals takes over. Moose aside, the railroad is updating its public involvement plan. If you' would like to comment, go to www.dot.alaska.gov/railplan and follow the easy instructions.

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If you are in Anchorage any time soon, be sure to stop by 1221 East 35th Avenue, the home of the new **Alaska Jewish Museum and Cultural Center**. They had a grand opening this summer, with an excellent exhibit on the airlift of Armenian Jews to Israel that Alaska Airlines actively and generously assisted. If you want to call the museum for hours it is open dial 907-770-7021, or visit the website www. alaskajewishmuseum.com

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And Fairbanks has a new museum. The **Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation** opened a museum on July 18th in the Rebekah/Odd Fellows Hall/First Avenue Bathhouse at 825 1st Avenue, a building listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The foundation honors mining pioneers and through their lives tell the story of mining in the state. More than 95 men and women have been inducted and their biographies are enhanced with photos, maps, posters, rock samples, and equipment. The museum was open daily this summer and there will be programs held through the winter.

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Sealaska Heritage Institute broke ground for its Walter Soboleff Heritage Center in July. When finished, the center will have exhibits as well as an archives and house its staff of researchers and curators. (See cover of this newsletter for a Soboleff quotation.)

News & Information

A workshop on exhibits will have hands-on displays for building gallery/exhibit space in 3-D. This will precede the annual **Museums Alaska/ Alaska Historical Society** meeting in Haines September 25-28. Want to find out more? norm_lagasse@nortech-app.com or call 907-632-0888.

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Alisha Drabek, a Kodiak resident, community educator, and one of the first Alutiiq second language speakers of her generation, has been selected to lead the Alutiiq Museum. Drabek assumes the position formerly held by Sven Haakanson, Jr. Drabek brings a host of skills to the museum. In 2012, she earned her doctorate in Indigenous Studies from the University of Alaska, with a focus on education and indigenous knowledge systems. She is well known for her work with the Alutiiq language, which she learned as an apprentice to elder Phyllis Peterson and many other Kodiak elders. She is a college professor, graphic designer, and award-winning writer. A children's book, The Red Cedar of Afognak: A Driftwood Journey, which she co-authored, won an American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation.

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The Harper Arts Touring Fund from the

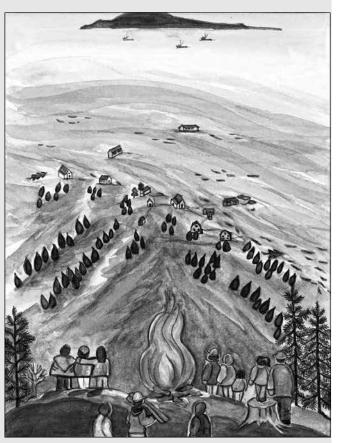
Rasmuson Foundation supports touring exhibits and presentations on performing arts, visual arts, and material culture exhibits throughout Alaska. Details at http://education.alaska.gov/aksca/grants2. htm#harper or phone 888-278-7424 or email laura. forbes@alaska.gov

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A collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and the National Museum of Natural History results in the **Arctic Studies Center** newsletter. This is a truly pan-Arctic publication, covering Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and the Arctic Ocean. Go to www.mnh. si.edu/arctic for a full briefing. Yakutat seal camps to Vikings; it's all there in their current issue.

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And, as always, are you missing old friends who also spent years in Alaska or the Yukon? Want to know how they are doing and let others know what you are up to? We have to mention the **Alaska Yukon Pioneers** newsletter. To obtain, send your \$20.00 dues to recorder Joyce Penman, 27833 85th Drive



Flooded village of Afognak, Good Friday 1964 Tsunami. Image by Alutiiq artist Gloria N. Selby from T*he Red Cedar of Afognak (A Driftwood Journey)* by Dr. Alisha Drabek. The book may be purchased from the:

Native Village of Afognak

115 Mill Bay Rd., Suite 201

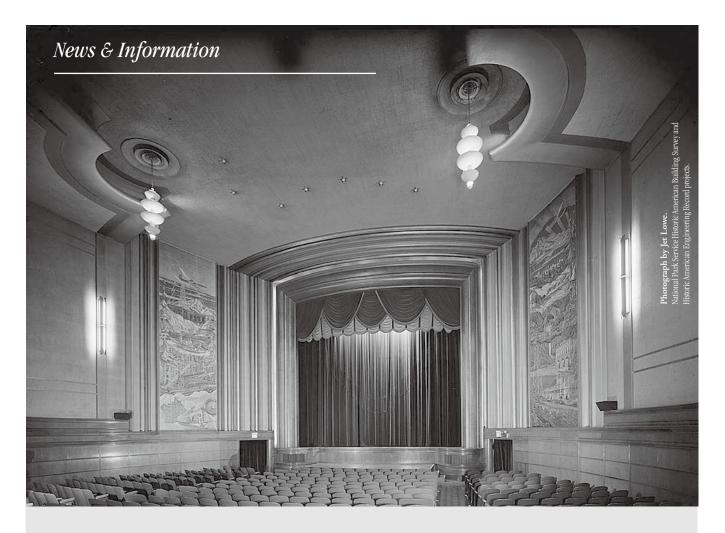
Kodiak, AK 99615

For more information on pricing and associated curriculum, please visit: http://www.afognak.org/education/dw_lesson7.phpGood Friday

NW, Stanwood, Washington 98292. Ethel La Rose is the newsletter editor; email ethellarose@gmail. com or take your pen in hand and write her at 13000 Linden Avenue N., Seattle, Washington 98133-7585. Her telephone is 206-523-6574. The 2013 International Sourdough Reunion will take place September 26th through September 30th in Seattle. The above contacts can provide details.

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Here's a request from a Wanda Hughes: "I am hoping to connect with this nurse (Tonia Smith RNC) to talk about another nurse who I am researching who was here for BIA in 40s, Daisy Keene. Please call me at 907-750-2551 or email nursern@hughes.net. She was in Hydaburg and Sitka I think, and Nome. Any help is appreciated."



Here's a request that sounds great fun: "My name is Jana Ariane Nelson. I run a website entitled GrowingUpAnchorage.com. We post true stories about growing up in Anchorage during the 40's - 60's. In the past year and one half, I have posted nearly 100 stories from myself and eleven other writers who lived in Anchorage during those years. These are authentic stories from authentic Alaskan writers. I am looking for more writers who lived in Anchorage during those years. Some of our writers have been published before, others have not. I provide some editing assistance for beginning writers. We are regularly featured on AlaskaPublic.org/TownSquare 49 and have been featured in the Anchorage Daily News web edition. Recently I did a short radio interview with AlaskaPublic.org radio. Please check out my website at http://growingupanchorage.com."

"We checked out what was playing at the Fourth Avenue Theater, a beautiful art deco building that would later play in many an Anchorage teenager's memories. A trip to the movies was rare for us in those days, but I eagerly watched for glimpses of the ushers or usherettes. I loved their green uniforms with the gold stripes down the side and the gold epaulettes. To be an usherette in that glorious uniform was my career aspiration at 13! We followed the narrow walkway alongside the theater to the small cafe behind it. I don't remember if it was the actual name but we referred to it as "Hernando's Hideaway" and it contained a major desired item for two thirteen year olds, a juke box! Dark and dusky inside, it was the perfect place to play "Twilight Time" by the Platters (even "ShBoom" by the Chords) as we shared a burger and French fries."

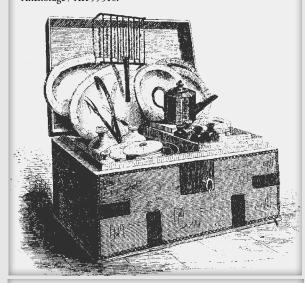
Excerpt from: "Avez-vous Une Cigarette" by Kathleen Wilson, July 7, 2012. For more of Kathleen's writings visit: http://growingupanchorage.com/category/bars/

News & Information

And, if you want to keep up with the state and national historic preservation news: *Heritage* is produced by the Office of History and Archaeology, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Alaska Department of Natural Resources. News items should be sent to jo.antonson@alaska.gov, mail to 550 West 7th Ave., Suite 1310, Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3565, or telephone 907.269.8721. All issues are posted at www. dnr.state.ak.us/parks/ and distributed to subscribers by e-mail. A paper copy can be sent to individuals and organizations that specifically request it. To subscribe, email oha@alaska.net with "Heritage, subscribe" in the subject line.

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 next year's auction. Please send a description of what you would like to donate to akhist@gci.net or Box 100299 / Anchorage / AK 99510.



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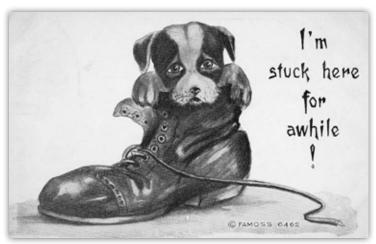
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It's quick, it's easy, and you receive the semiannual *Alaska History*, the quarterly newsletter *Alaska History News*, and discounts on publications.

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*.



Postcard, 1905 - 1917. Albert Johnson Photograph Collection, UAF-1989-166-1098.

Editor's Comments

t's cruise ship time here in Southeast Alaska. (It's also visits to Seward and other places, but your editor is concentrating on this area.) The passengers seem to have become more sophisticated over the years; no one has mentioned being asked if we take American money in quite awhile, but will have to ask the kayak guides if they're still being asked about the elevation here. (The answer, of course, is to ask them to put their hand over the side – about ten inches is the norm.)

Of course, last year a local reported being asked about the eagles in the trees around town – were they real? So many golden opportunities for answers. A whale-watching guide had been asked the same question.

Must admit hearing eagles squabbling in the trees beside the sidewalk on my way to work last week. A couple was watching intently. When I approached, the woman said excitedly, "Do you see it there? It's huge – an eagle!" The foliage was very thick and I had to tell her eagles don't make raucous raven remarks, and rather embarrassed, did my high-pitched "ki ki ki" eagle imitation. She said I did seem to know what I was talking about and they moved on. I felt rather sorry for her; perhaps she was later able to convince herself that I either didn't know or wanted to keep the eagle to myself.

Why do I collect these things? Because when I travel to other countries I likely leave the locals gasping with laughter over my gaffes. Fair is fair.

See you in Haines September 25-28 for the annual meeting of our Alaska Historical Society and Museums Alaska joint meeting. D. L.