Alaska History News

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Confluence and Collaborations

AWARDS 2013

In September at Haines the Alaska Historical Society made its annual awards to individuals and organizations for outstanding Alaska history work this past year. At the same time, other groups recognized colleagues with their awards. Congratulations to all!



Dirk Tordoff of Fairbanks received the *Evangeline Atwood Award* for his years of work preserving films about Alaska. Dirk retired last spring after 20 years as director of the Alaska Film Archives at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Dirk built, cared for, and made available "a truly world class collection of films about Alaska and the circumpolar north. If you have ever watched a documentary film about Alaska history you have benefited from Dirk's work because it's 99.9% likely he had a hand in making some of that footage available."

The **Gastineau Channel Historical Society** of Juneau earned the *Elva R. Scott Local Historical Society Award* for its always-outstanding newsletter, as well as operating the Last Chance Mining Museum and preserving the Sentinel Island Lighthouse. The society's newsletter regularly has a feature story about an event, person, or place in the Juneau and Douglas area, using primary sources and including historic photographs. The society is a very hardworking, productive volunteer group.

Tom Walker, author of *The Seventymile Kid: The Lost Legacy of Harry Karstens and the First Ascent of Mount McKinley* and resident at Denali Park, received the *Historian of the Year Award*, given to an Alaska resident for publication of notable new material about Alaska history the past year. In his book, Walker details why Harry Karstens should be recognized as the leader of the 1913 "first ascent" expedition, and not, as many have been led to believe, Hudson Stuck. He uses Karstens's journal along with those of three others on the expedition to craft a comprehensive story and reach his conclusion. His book includes photos not published before.

James Mackovjak of Gustavus received the *Pathfinder Award* for his compilations of information on timber, freighting, and most recently, salmon traps in Alaska. These subjects are important to understanding Alaska history, but perhaps are not the most glamorous subjects. Jim's books on each of these subjects serve as reference works with bibliographies, footnotes, and glossaries.

At its annual business meeting the Alaska Historical Society members voted to rename the *Pathfinder Award* to recognize **Barbara Sweetland Smith**, a long-time, steadfast hard working Society member. Barbara was a historian, archivist, exhibit curator, writer, dedicated

colleague, friend, and more. Her special interest was in the history of Russian America. Barbara conceived and worked to create the Alaska Historical Society's journal, *Alaska History*, now in its 28th year of publication. She served the Society in countless ways, serving on the Board of Directors, as executive director, chairing the advocacy committee, and serving on many program committees. The *Barbara S. Smith Pathfinder Award* is appropriate in recognition of the invaluable indexes she prepared for early Alaska Native corporation records, for the Russian Orthodox Church records at Kodiak, and for Alaska articles in the *Russian Orthodox American Messenger* magazine.

The Alaska Historical Society presented four *Contributions to Alaska History Awards*:

Karen Brewster of Fairbanks received recognition for demonstrating how oral history can be a significant research tool through her editing of *Boots, Bikes, and Bombers: Adventures of Alaska Conservationist Ginny Hill Wood.* The book, published last year, presents a life history through personal narrative with supporting documentation that adds context and references. Ginny in her stories, and Karen in her notes and references, help people understand the events and players that shaped the management of Alaska lands after World War II.

Another collaborating duo, **Victor Fischer** and **Charles Wohlforth**, author and biographer respectively of *To Russia with Love: An Alaskan's Journey*, received a *Contributions to Alaska History Award*. Vic and Charles were keynote speakers at last year's conference, at which time the book was "hot off the press." Those who subsequently read the book said Vic's life warrants a biography, and has excellent information and sound interpretations regarding Alaska from the early 1950s almost to today. The nominators noted that Charles maintained his integrity and ethics as a scholar, writing the text yet maintaining that the book is Vic's.

Rex A. Wilhelm, President and Chief Operating Officer, Alaska Commercial Company, received his Contributions award for saving extant early Alaska Commercial Company records found when stores in western Alaska were closed or replaced. Last fall he donated the records to the University of Alaska Fairbanks archives at the Rasmuson Library. Since, Rex has located more materials. He is encouraging the people who have the materials to add them to the archives.

Audrey and Bruce Kelly of Anchorage received a Contributions award for "Stories at Anchorage Memorial Park Cemetery" and for continuing the very popular annual solstice cemetery tours for the Cook Inlet Historical Society. The Kellys have "brought history alive" so to speak. [Sorry!] Their summer programs have attracted more than 100 people, even when it's raining.

Annually, the Alaska Historical Society gives two *Student and Beginning Professional Travel Scholarship Awards* to help individuals attend the Alaska Historical Society/Museums Alaska annual meetings and conference. This year **Emily Kathryn Main** and **Russell W. Vanderlugt** received scholarships. Emily is a graduate student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and Russ is a beginning professional, a history teacher at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Emily presented a paper about Alaska's rural education policies from the Russian era through today. Russ compared the Russian Tarkhanov's account of the geography of the lower Copper River with Henry Allen's account from the 1880s.

Alaska Historical Society President Anjuli Grantham presented the *President's Award*—better known as the Beaver Log—to **Michael Hawfield**. Mike has served the Alaska Historical Society in numerous ways, the past few years as treasurer and awards chair, and has been a supporter and administrator managing programs such as the Art Acquisition Fund. A worker, a friend, a teacher, and indispensable!

At the awards banquet, Jane Lindsey announced that the **Sitka Historical Society** had received an *Award of Merit* from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) for its special project to conceive, write, design and produce panels that tell the important history of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood. The award cited the collaboration of Sitka organizations to produce the handsome panels for permanent display at the ANB Camp No. 1 in Sitka, a National Historic Landmark. A duplicate set of panels was produced and has been available as a traveling exhibit. Bob Medinger was the project director. The panels were prepared for the organization's centennial celebrated in Sitka last October. Incidentally, **Jane Lindsey**, the director of the Juneau-Douglas City Museum, has been elected to the AASLH Council.

Carol Sturgulewski, Alaska Center for the Book, announced that **Ron Inouye** of Fairbanks is a recipient of a *Contributions to Literacy in Alaska Award*. Ron, as we all know and appreciate, has long been an advocate for history and libraries in Alaska. He has been a behind-the-scenes facilitator for many literary and literacy-related projects,

including the Reel History film series and Alaska Book Festival in Fairbanks. He led the Alaska Historical Society campaign for funding the State Library Archives and Museum building in Juneau.

The Alaska State Historical Records Advisory Board announced its *Certificates of Excellence* for archives and records projects. The **Archives and Special Collections at the University of Alaska Anchorage**, Arlene Schmuland and Michael Catoggio, Project Directors, received an award for the Great Alaska Earthquake of 1964 Project (http://www.64akquake.org/). This is a statewide collaborative project to bring together images, information, and first-person accounts of the earthquake and make them accessible digitally ahead of the 50th anniversary of the event. The site is a great website for students as well as of interest to the general public, journalists, librarians and historians.

The Michael E. Krauss Alaska Native Language Archive at the Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks, also received a *Certificate of Excellence*. For this project, staff digitized documents related to Native languages of Alaska, making the information available internationally (http://www.uaf.edu/anla/.) The website is well designed and user friendly!

Museums Alaska made its annual awards as well. **Dave Pahl**, who started the Hammer Museum in Haines, received the *Volunteer of the Year*



Award. In addition to his museum, Dave is a great friend of the Sheldon Museum and many other organizations in Haines. He has enthusiasm and is an energetic worker! The Award for Excellence in the Museum Profession went to Homer's Pratt Museum for its gray whale project. Check out prattmuseumgrawwhaleskeleton.blogspot.com.

Tsunamis caused by the Good Friday Earthquake drove a 2x6 plank through this 10-ply truck tire at Whittier, Alaska. Courtesy NOAA

Message from the President

or commemorations and celebrations, 2013 was hard to beat. Events across the state marked a century of Arctic flight and the first ascent of Denali. The Anchorage Museum launched a first-of-its-kind, world class exhibition, "Dena'inaq' Huch'ulyeshi: The Dena'ina Way of Living." The year fittingly came to a close at the AHS annual meeting in Haines, where the theme "Confluence and Collaborations," joined together a broad spectrum of sessions, ranging from salmon canneries to cultural change.

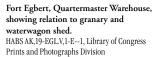
But don't think the party's over after New Year's Eve. The year 2014 brings the 25-year anniversary of the Freedom Flight, representing the opening of borders between Alaska and Russia and the end of the Cold War. Alaskans also will remember when fifty years ago one of the most powerful earthquakes in history rocked the earth for nearly four minutes on March 27, 1964. These historical commemorations, along with much anticipated new research, will be front and center at the 2014 AHS annual meeting, scheduled to take place in Seward next October.

So no excuses . . . Get out there and celebrate history!

Katie Ringsmuth

Notes from around the state

In 1991 the Eagle Historical Society and Museums, the City of Eagle, and the BLM signed a Cooperative Agreement to continue protecting significant cultural resources and historic properties within the Eagle Historic District National Historic Landmark. Over the years they have worked together to complete dozens of projects, large and small, to protect or restore historic resources at Fort Egbert.





Eagle Wireless is the name of the Eagle Historical Society & Museums newsletter. That cleverly continues the tradition of a reason for nearby Fort Egbert's existence; the Telegraph Line. The current issue contains information on the last raffle of a quilt. It also contains excerpts from a book written by the first Presbyterian missionaries who came circa 1900. Kirk, Rev. and Mrs. James, Pioneer Life in the Yukon Valley, published in 1935.

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Just nothing like a good Family Day at a museum. The **Baranov Museum** in Kodiak had an exhibit for the day featuring all five species of salmon. The added charm was the opportunity to make your own salmon can label. Best of all, the museum is holding Family Days once a month. They also have a new radio program, "Way Back in Kodiak", on Wednesdays at 8:00 p.m. on KDOK 90.7. Busy group! In addition they celebrated the return of their church

tion they celebrated the return of their church bell that has been residing in California for 200 years. Also, like most Alaska historical societies, fall marks the annual board elections and meeting. Your reviewer has a small question about the meeting; door prizes, raffles, understood; but what are "Java Flats" cookies? The **Sheldon Museum** in Haines is looking for a new director. The previous director gives heartfelt praise to her six years there. If you'd like to read more about the museum's activities and view a totem and the carving of another one, go to SheldonMuseum.org

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We all know how good it is to interest children in local history; the **Chugiak-Eagle River Historical Society** has turned this into something of a science. Not only did a Cub Scout Pack enjoy a tour of their building that been a territorial school at one time, a middle school student was the guitarist at the annual meeting. Getting any ideas, other societies? And we all depend on the recipes from their newsletter. This issue contains a recipe for cranberry cobbler that is made Old Alaska style; i.e. common basic ingredients. You can get the recipe by sending an email to info@cerhs.org

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The theme for the annual meeting of the **Sitka Historical Society and Museum** stressed the 50th anniversary of the Alaska Marine Highway, and was also the theme for Alaska Day in Sitka this year. Some old photographs were shown, as well as a movie about its history and covering its 3,500-mile route.



Baranov House Museum is located within the Russian American Magazin or the Erskine House, designated a National Historic Landmark in 1962, http://www.baranovem.com/prodes/

http://www.baranovmuseum.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1

Notes from around the state



Julie Decker.
Image courtesy Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson
Center

"In all honesty, they couldn't have found anyone who loves this [museum] more than I do."

Julie Decker, Director,
 Anchorage Museum
 at Rasmuson Cemter



Japanese WWII fire balloon of mulberry paper reinflated at Moffett Field, California after being shot down by a Navy aircraft, January 10, 1945. US Army photo A 37180C

Julie Decker has been selected as the new director of the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center. She has been active in the Anchorage art and museum scene for a number of years, and since 2011 chief curator at the Anchorage Museum. Julie has curated a number of exhibits, including last summer's Arctic Flight: A Century of Alaska Aviation. As an artist, her work has been featured in solo exhibits around Alaska. She has authored numerous exhibition catalogues. Julie has a Ph.D. in contemporary art history, criticism and management from Union Institute and University and a M.A. in museum administration from Golden Gate University. Welcome Julie!

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The legendary James Wickersham is the main subject of the Gastineau Channel Historical Society newsletter. They also cover a famous feud between two prominent Juneauites, (Junovians?) around a 1922 wedding in spite of being from Montenegro and Austria. (The priest of the Orthodox Church refused to marry them, so they went to the Methodists.) Along those lines, Soviet Russia wanted to sell the Orthodox Church in Juneau as they claimed to own all church property. A short biography of the famous Tlingit carver Amos Wallace is in the newsletter, as is an article about the famed artist Rie Munoz's cartoonist days at the local newspaper. Join the society via ghnews1880@gmail.com or send \$3.00 to P.O. Box 21264, Juneau, Alaska, 99802 for the complete issue.

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It was a good Memorial Day to Labor Day season for the **Hope and Sunrise Historical and**

Mining Museum. Members led walking tours and worked on sprucing up the area. Their junior volunteers, ages 6, 9, and 10 were excellent. They do hope for help to organize the Blacksmith Shop. Programs included a lecture on Japanese firebombs and Gold Rush poetry. A second printing of Albert Weldon Morgan's Memories of Old Sunrise is scheduled for next spring. They are open during the winter by appointment. Amazing what a few volunteers can accomplish.

"The little red schoolhouse" museum of the Talkeetna Historical Society is filling up with all sorts of local history. A display on historic salmon storage sites, a video showing "The History of the Alaska Railroad", an art gallery for local artists, and plans for a resource library and archive room among other ideas are moving along. The Mountain Mother contest delighted the audience, Belle's Barn at the old horse farm is being renovated, and various auctions to benefit local non-profits were successful. Whew! A busy group. Want to read more? www.talkeetnahistoricalsociety.org will provide it.

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A very busy summer, as usual, at the Pratt Museum in Homer. The Tamamta Katurlluta celebrated the local Kenaitze Dena'ina Native cultures via food, artists, music, and dance, beginning with a reception and traditional landing ceremony of the Qayaks. A wonderful twist is added to all events. Instead of one group watching the other, all unite in exchanging food and the ceremonies. A culture camp held in town honored all Alaska Native traditions; Alutiiq, Inupiat, and non-Native as well. The museum helped out, and the campers had a wonderful time exploring local beaches and woods, coming to visit the museum on their last day. Earlier the first Kachemak Bay Master Naturalist Workshop taught about birds, volcanoes, glaciers, plants, and sea creatures over four fun-filled days. And, of course, the museum has a schedule of lectures and displays for the winter. Perhaps all this activity was inspired by the new larger museum building under construction? (See Exterior Perspective, August, 2012, below.)



NEW PRATT MUSEUM

LIVINGSTON SLONE INC

Memory Keepers: Three Alaska Photo Albums is the fall exhibit of the Tongass Historical Museum. The time period is late 1930s to the 1950s. The albums feature a logging couple, a teen-age girl having summer fun on a trip with an aunt and uncle, and a young Coast Guardsman who had not been to sea before he joined up. He traveled extensively to light stations and bases, but also found time for hiking, fishing, and silly poses for his friends.

The museum is very sad their sixteen-year director **Michael Naab** is retiring, but pleased to announce that **Lacey Gilbo Simpson** has been hired as the new director and **Andrew Washburn** as Curator of Collections. Classes for serious Tlingit weavers, bentwood box constructors, and carvers, from the beginner to the advanced artist have begun at the **Totem Heritage Center**. Check out all the activities at www.Ketchikan-Museums.org

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Never heard of *Aunt Phil's Trunk*? Written about Alaska history over the years, four volumes have been printed up so far, the **Palmer Historical Society** reports. They are also very busy on

the internet; 1939 aerial photographs made while surveying the Matanuska Valley, 1927 fisheries report, a 1910 map, and the New Deal. Did you guess you need to go to www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org? You're right.

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Seward's Resurrection Bay Historical Society likes to run snippets from the old local newspaper in their newsletter. On July 11, 1906, there was a story about out-of-work laborers brought to town by a local philanthropist. There were already plenty of leftover Gold Rush men to work on building the railroad. The "adventurers who rushed into it as a land flowing with milk and honey. It flows principally with swamp water." Not that the group lacks other material for their newsletter. The society hosted the semi-annual meeting of the Kenai Peninsula Historical Association in October, giving the members practice for 2014, when the society will host the meetings of Museums Alaska and the Alaska Historical Society for the first time ever. They anticipate around 200 people will take advantage of the road system to come.

News & Information

The annual Alaska Day Dinner and Famous Dessert Auction were held in October by the **Wasilla-Knik Historical-Society** with a lecture on 100 years of aviation in Alaska.

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Brielle Law at the Alaska Aviation Museum is looking for any information on Alaska Native bush pilots for a permanent exhibition. The ones she knows of: Chuck Fagerstrom, George Thiele, Bill English, Al Wright, Rhineholt Thiele, Bob and Joe Vanderpool, Fred Notti, Bill Hately, Elmer and Herb Nicholson, Fred and Frank Ahlstrom, Bert and John Belyz, Reggie Joule, Frank and Ray and Don Ferguson, Tom Richards, Harold Esmailka, Eddie Hansen, Ben Ulen, Don Johnson, Trig Jorgenson, Charlie Lareaux, Ron Winkelman, Wilfred Ryan, Donny and Emmo and Martin Olson, Tony Bernhart, Joe Felter, Philip and Freddy and Joey Huhndorf, Jimmy Hoffman, Jorgy Jorgenson. If you know any of these, or any not mentioned, she would be grateful if you would contact her at collections@alaskaairmuseum.org

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Moving 32,000 precious artifacts is a daunting thought, made worse by knowing these are the contents of the **Alaska State**Museum relocating to its new home. Other museums around the state expressed interest in the packing and moving process, so were invited to send professionals; 27 people from 12 different museums are helping. A generous grant is making this all possible. The objects will be transported through a 90-foot long. 8-foot by 8-foot tunnel, a parking garage, and an

elevator into the new storage vault. Everyone is so cheerful about this coming event an outsider joked they are actually playing a war game. Amazingly, in the museum art exhibits are going up and the youth activities such as weaving, basket making, and other workshops are proceeding.

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The State Library is on its sixth year of offering Live Homework Help. The name is self-explanatory. Go to http://library. alaska.gov/forStudents/forStudents.html. Under the General Resources label you'll find the homework helper. Little Free Libraries are also offered for small towns with no libraries of their own and computers for preschoolers. The recent library update has a feature on the great Alaska earthquake of 1964. And check out the Early Literacy Kits; http://jlc-web.ua.alaska.edu/client/default and play around.

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Want to see a photo of President Warren Harding driving a golden spike? Ninety years of the **Alaska Railroad** was celebrated this year. They emphasized a safety campaign with the stark but excellent advice; Stay Off! Stay Away! Stay Alive! Check out all the news, Alaskan fares, and railroad history at www.AlaskaRailroad.com or call 907-265-2300.

Always been interested in Alaska anthropology and archaeology, but don't know anybody to ask? No problem. Join the **Alaska Anthropological Association**, Post Office Box 241686, Anchorage, Alaska, 99524-1686. \$75.00 (\$40.00 student) will sign you up for a year newsletters giving you lots of information. The e-mail is alaskaanthro@gmail.com.

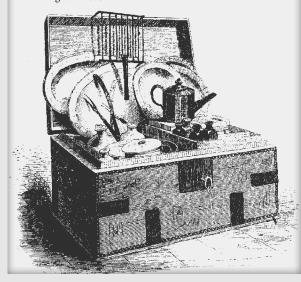
News & Information

And no AHS newsletter would be complete without mentioning the **Alaska Yukon Pioneers** newsletter. Wonder where your longtime friends are today? Are they wondering about you? \$20.00 gets you a monthly issue for a year. Check is made out to AYP and mailed to Joyce Penman, Recorder, 27833 85th Drive, NW, Stanwood, Washington, 98292. You can also email

olwomn@wavecable.com or, gasp!, pick up the telephone and call her at 253-709-0158 or 360-629-3554.

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 the 2014 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



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: deelone@alaska.com

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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.alaskahistoricalsociety.org*.



Anchorage Daily Times newsgirl, circa early 1900s.

Editor's Comments

here were said to be a million tourists to Alaska on the cruise ships alone this past tour season. Some days it felt like at least 100,000 were crammed into my tiny shop.

However, that's all over and the pleasant, quiet time is back. Very refreshing. If you are planning holiday events at a museum or simply for the members, it is busier, but you can always just enjoy the locals without worrying about pleasing the visitors. Quite nice.

It is also a great chance to add to the Season's feelings by doing something for a person or group that is usually ignored. Some children? Not necessarily the adorable, tiny ones, but how about some from the scruffy ages of 8-12? Not necessarily the seniors in the official homes, but an elderly person or two living alone? Someone or a family new to town? Enough. I expect you've thought of all of this and acted well before. After all, you're longtime Alaskans.

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