



Alaska History News

Volume 45, No. 3 Quarterly of the Alaska Historical Society Autumn 2017



Ranger Corey patted the collie on her aristocratic head, then crouched beside her. He quietly peeled off one of his fur-lined gloves and traced the track's outline with his forefinger. "Wolverine," he exclaimed.

Lassie whined in distaste, even though she had never met up with a wolverine.

"Nothing to worry about, old girl!" said Corey with a chuckle...

—Lassie: *Adventure in Alaska*, George Elrick, 1967

Message from the President:

Fifty years ago history-minded Alaskans formed the Alaska Historical Society to celebrate the state's rich past and to coordinate the efforts of professional historians and the general public. Much has changed since 1967, but AHS continues to pursue its mission with gusto. Each year, in partnership with Museums Alaska, we gather for our annual meeting, which offers seasoned historians and beginners alike the chance to share their most exciting discoveries. This year AHS is focusing on another anniversary—the sesquicentennial of Alaska Purchase—which has released a flood of new research on that dramatic moment, a century and a half ago, when Alaska became part of the United States. Please join us in Anchorage, September 27-30, to hear what Alaska's historians have uncovered and to support the ongoing efforts of the Alaska Historical Society and Museums Alaska!

—Chris Allan

EXPLORING THE LEGACY OF THE ALASKA PURCHASE CONFERENCE PROGRAM

—THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28—

10:30-12:00

RUSSIAN AMERICA

- *Russian American Colonies in 1867: A Baseline*, Katherine Arndt, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks
- *Seward and the Tsar: Alaska and Emancipation*. Michael Dunham, Author of *The Man Who Sold Alaska* and *The Man Who Bought Alaska*
- *The Historical and Cultural Heritage of Russia in the North Pacific*, Alexander Petrov, Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences

FRONTIER TRAILBLAZERS

- *Putting Pictures into Motion: "City of Gold" and the Creation of the Modern Historical Documentary*, Terrence Cole, University of Alaska Fairbanks
- *Kate Kennedy in the Klondike, Nome and McCarthy*, Pat Garrett, McCarthy-Kennicott Historical Museum
- *Escape to Freedom?: Sectional Conflict, Fugitive Slaves, and Black Whalers in Alaska*, Ian Hartman, University of Alaska Anchorage.

TERRITORIAL DAYS

- *Alaska Gold for Irish Dreams: The Irish during the Golden Era, 1867-1917*, Sean McGrane, Irish Club of Alaska
- *The Centrality of Publicity in the Discourse of Early Territorial Alaska: A Story Told Through Popular Alaskan Archetypes*, Ghert Abbott, Ketchikan
- *Right Beneath Your Nose: The Anchorage Mormon History You Didn't Know*, Fred Woods, Brigham Young University

1:30-3:00

RUSSIAN AMERICA

- *Nushagak—From Russian Fort to Fish Camp*, Tim Troll, Bristol Bay Heritage Land Trust
- *Fedor Kolmakov, Founder of Aleksandrovski and Kolmakov Redoubts in Southwestern Alaska and His Descendants in Alaska Today*, Beverly Simms, Fedor Kolmakov descendant
- *John W. Clark in Russian America (1866-1867) and Alaska (1868-1869)*, John Branson, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve

PERSONAL HISTORIES

- *Walter Harper at Mount Hermon School: An Athabascan in Early 20th Century New England*, Mary Ehrlander, University of Alaska Fairbanks
- *Conducting Oral Histories as a Powerful Way to Connect Secondary School Students to the Past*, Simon Gorbaty, Anchorage School District
- *Cannery Life on the Nushagak: The Story of Ella May Nielsen Nelson Adkison, 1910-1983*, Mary (Nelson) Dinon, Southeast Alaska Native Health Consortium

BUSINESS AND POLITICS

- *Alaska's Oldest Company: How the Alaska Commercial Company Shaped the Territory*, J. Pennelope Goforth, Author
- *One Man's Attack on the Company That Built a Territory, Ernest Gruening Against the Alaska Steamship Company: 1939-1971*, Pierce Bateman, Graduate Student, University of Alaska Fairbanks
- *The Alaska Railroad and Mount McKinley National Park*, Erik Johnson, Denali National Park and Preserve

3:30-5:00

RUSSIAN AMERICA & ALASKA PURCHASE

- *Destination—Sitka: 'Special Correspondents' and the Race to Report on the Transfer of Russian America to the United States*, Chris Allan, National Park Service
- *Lost in Place: Revisiting Alaska's Fabled Russian Fort*, Ken Pratt, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska Region
- *The Transformation of Sitka, 1867-1877*, Rebecca Poulson, Alaska Historical Commission

ALASKA'S FISHERIES

- *Changing Tides: Alaska Natives in the Bristol Bay Salmon Fishery*, Bridget Groat, Doctoral Candidate, Arizona State University

LOCAL HISTORIES

- *Walking on the Wild Side: Juneau's Downtown and South Franklin Street in the 1940s*, Averil Lerman, Attorney
- *Hearts of Courage: The Survivors of the 1943 Gillam Crash*, John Tippetts, Retired, American Airlines and American Airlines Federal Credit Union.
- *A Winter at the Russian House*, Jackie Pels, Hardscratch Press

—FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29—

8:30-10:00

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: *An Indigenous Perspective on the Alaska Purchase*, Willie Iggiagruk Hensley, Inupiaq Scholar, Politician, and Lecturer

10:30-12:00

RUSSIAN AMERICA & ALASKA PURCHASE

- *The Law of Unintended Consequences: The Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act as a Legacy of the Alaska Purchase*, Stephen Haycox, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Alaska Anchorage
- *Melting the Ice Curtain: Contemporary Alaska-Russia Relations Since the Alaska Purchase*, David Ramseur, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage
- *Envisioning Alaska: The Artistic Legacy of Russian America*, Evguenia Anichtchenko. Sitka Maritime Heritage Society

FACING CONTROVERSY

- *"They Burned It Down": Housing Discrimination in Mid-Twentieth Century Anchorage*, David Reamer, Graduate Student, Southern New Hampshire University
- *The Mount McKinley-Denali Controversy and the U.S. Board on Geographic Names*, Douglas Vandegraft, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and U.S. Board on Geographic Names
- *Alaska's Oil: A Taxing History*, Lisa Weissler

GENERAL INTEREST

- *Reflecting on the Kenai Peninsula History Conference—Lessons from a Sesquicentennial Gathering*, Shana Loshbaugh, Conference Coordinator 150 Years: Kenai Peninsula History Conference.
- *New Deals, Old Murals, and Artists from Outside: Arthur Kerrick's Alaskan Landscapes*, Anne Rittgers, Graduate Student, University of Alaska Fairbanks
- *Perspectives on Sexual and Domestic Violence in Rural Alaska*, Katie Hayden, Department of Fish & Game

1:30-3:00

ALASKA NATIVES & ALASKA PURCHASE

- *Exploring the Legacy of Tlingit Kooteeya: The Stories of Two Iconic Taanta Kwaan Poles*, Daniel Monteith, University of Alaska Southeast
- *An Interpretation of What the Chiefs Said on Living Free: A Koyukon Perspective on the Alaska Purchase and the Legacy of the Tanana Chiefs*, Guy Peters, Descendant of Paul Williams, and Chiefs Charlie and William; and Hild Peters, University of Alaska Fairbanks
- *Russian Influence on the Language and World-View of the Yup'ik People*, Irina Sheina, Institute of Foreign Languages, Ryazan State University

FAR NORTH PERSPECTIVES

- *The Significance of the Arctic in American History*, Russ Vander Lugt, U.S. Army and Doctoral Candidate, University of Alaska Fairbanks
- *God Proposes, Man Disposes—Climate Change and the Arctic Sublime*, Carolyn Kozak, Graduate Student, University of Alaska Fairbanks

FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR NON-PROFITS

- *Creating Your Own History in Alaska: Help Historical Societies and Museums Grow in Tax-Smart Ways*, Beth Rose and Katie St. John, Alaska Community Foundation

—SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30—

9:30-11:00

- *The Russian American Expeditions*, Mikhail Malakhov, Explorer, Ryazan
- *Inside the Rare Book & Map Shop: A Tribute to Observatory Books*, Patti Moss David

POSTERS

- *The Future of Historical Newspapers: Access & Preservation through Digitization*, Leah Geibel and Anastasia Tarmann, Alaska State Library, Archives and Museums
- *Alaska's History Through Philately*, Chet Walukiewicz, Alaska Philatelic Collectors' Club

FILMS

- *Highlights of the 1974 Kenai History Conference*, Shana Loshbaugh
- *Alaska's Reel History: Films Celebrating the Purchase Centennial*, Damon Stuebner and Angela Schmidt
- *Pierre Berton's "City of Gold" and Precursor*, Terrence Cole
- *Melting the Ice: Launching Mormonism in Alaska*, Fred Woods

News and Notes from Around the State

Circle District Historical Society's Project Poppy--photographs of over 250 species in 58 families (including some non-flowering plants)--is an expanded computerized version of a photo display done in 1984 for their museum in Central. Patricia Oakes (1932-1993), Laurel B. Tyrrell, Betsy Gelvin, and Alfred Cook took the original photographs. The computer version, "Wildflowers of Alaska's Circle Mining District" has some of the thirty-six photographs from the original display and many additional ones. In the summers of 1998-2006 Tyrrell and Cook photographed flowers along the Circle Hot Springs Road and Steese Highway, and Cook photographed flowers along the Portage Creek-Harrison Creek loop from Circle Hot Springs to Squaw Creek, along the Pinnell Mountain Trail from Twelvemile Summit to Eagle Summit, and on many area mountain tops.



The **Tanana-Yukon Historical Society** has an active speakers program, held monthly at the Pioneer Hall or the Noel Wien Library. Their program on October 18th will be a panel discussion with staff from the Alaska and Polar Regions Department, University of Alaska Fairbanks. Details and dates can be found on their Facebook page.



The **Pioneer Air Museum** in Fairbanks opened for the summer on May 15th. Over the summer two interns worked cataloging the collections, and the museum board hopes to keep one through the winter to finish most of the cataloging work. The group plans to work on displays over the winter. If interested in helping out, please send an email to curator@pioneerairmuseum.org.



The **Cooper Landing Historical Museum** tells the community's history in two historic buildings: Jack Lean's cabin built in the late 1920s which served as the Cooper Landing Post Office for almost 40 years and the School House built in 1955 and used until 2001. Volunteers staff the museum during the summer, and it is funded through donations, sales in museum store, and garage sales. Send donations to P.O. Box 542, Cooper Landing, AK 99572



The **Hope and Sunrise Historical Society** just received a donation of Charles A. Davis's tool collection from his granddaughter, Nancy Davis Hollenbeck. Davis built the Hope Methodist Church.



The **Resurrection Bay Historical Society** celebrated Seward's Founders' Day on August 28th. The event honored the people who landed at today's downtown waterfront to establish the town. As part of the celebration, Dennis McLain presented a program on the scale model of the *SS Dora* he made for the museum. The *Dora* was an Alaska Steamship Company ship that routinely docked at Seward after trips to Dutch Harbor in the early 1900s. The project was made possible by a grant from the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area. This month, they have an exhibit of photographs and news stories about the 1917 Lowell Creek flood.

On Saturday, October 7th the historical societies and museums on the Kenai Peninsula will hold their fall meeting. The **Soldotna Historical Society** is hosting the gathering.



The **Kodiak Historical Society** incorporated in 1954 and opened the town's first museum in 1957. The vision of the society was to preserve and share the history of the Kodiak and Aleutian Islands. The first museum was in a World War II Quonset hut. Following the 1964 earthquake, Purchase Centennial funds enabled the society to renovate the Erskine House / Russian log warehouse for a museum.



The **Alutiiq Museum** and City of Kodiak are sponsoring lectures on Thursdays this fall. The schedule includes presentations on the Alutiiq language, cultural resources on Afognak lands, tanning a salmon skin, and sticklebacks. As part of the Alutiiq Culture Fest held earlier this month the museum had an Alutiiq headdress pageant.



The **Palmer Historical Society** is hosting its last History Night for the year on September 20th at the Palmer Moose Lodge. Dr. Alex Hills, author of "Finding Alaska's Villages: and connecting them" is going to speak.



The **Talkeetna Historical Society and Museum** is completing its rehabilitation of the 1916 Ole Dahl cabin. They received grants from the Alaska Association of Historical Preservation, the Talkeetna Community Council, Jessica Stevens Foundation, and the Evenor Fund to do the work. They have added more information to their "Historic Talkeetna downtown walking tour" app that was launched last summer. There's more information about the museum and its projects at www.talkeetnahistoricalsociety.org



The **Wasilla Museum and Visitor Center** hosted a Night @ the Museum series this summer. The August program included an invitation to people to donate items and write memories to put in the Wasilla Time Vault to celebrate the town's centennial year. More about their activities is at www.cityofwasilla.com/museum.



Just to the north of Wasilla is the **Willow Historical and Wildlife Foundation** that is working to create a museum in the Old Willow Community Building that was built by homesteaders in 1961. The museum is in the midst of a lawsuit the Matanuska-Susitna Borough that wants the group to move the building off borough land. Nevertheless, the group opened the museum on the 4th of July and had more than 150 guests. They hold monthly meetings and recently had Bernadette (White) Frost, one of the original students in the 1959 one-room Willow School (a Quonset hut) as guest speaker.



Anchorage's **Cook Inlet Historical Society** has announced its 2017-18 James Barnett Lecture Series: 150 Years: Defining Moments in the Great Land. The first programs commemorate the sesquicentennial of the Alaska Treaty

News and Notes from Around the State

of Cession. Mike Dunham, author of *The Man Who Bought Alaska: William H. Seward* and *The Man Who Sold Alaska: Tsar Alexander II of Russia* will be the September speaker. In October the society's annual Alaska Day program will be a panel discussion about the causes and consequences of the Treaty of Cession. Steve Haycox, UAA Distinguished Professor Emeritus will moderate the discussion with Russian historians Sergei Grinev of St. Petersburg, Ilya Vinkovestsky of Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Andrei Znamenski of the University of Tennessee; Joaquin Estus, Tlingit archivist and historian, and Andrey Khalkachan, an eastern Siberia Native. The November program speaker is Katherine Arndt, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks and Russian America scholar, who will talk about Russia's North American colonies in 1867.



The March 27, 1964 Alaska earthquake washed away the Valdez waterfront and 32 people died. The town had to be relocated to its present, safer location four miles away. On October 1, 1967, all services to the "Old Town" were severed and the building of the new town site complete. The success in the relocation came from strong and forward thinking leadership. The **Valdez Museum's** annual Roadhouse Dinner and Auction on October 14th will honor the City Councils from 1964–1967. Through November the museum will host a weekly series of programs focusing on the Paul Finfer Collection that shows the challenges faced to rebuild Valdez. The collection includes concept pencil drawings of the new town site, letters to city planners from Owen Meals and John Kelsey, architectural drawings, citizen's questionnaires, and documents that reflect the role of local, state and federal agencies in building the new town. The museum invites the sharing of memories using hashtag #50YearsValdezAK or commenting on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/valdezmuseum/> or Twitter @ValdezMuseum. Find out more at info@valdezmuseum.org.



The **Sitka Historical Society** has for sixty years operated the Sitka History Museum. The society has a collection of over 8,000 artifacts, several hundred paintings, prints and examples of fine art, a spectacular collection of nearly 235,000 historic photographs, and more than 100,000 archival documents. They are completing their move into their new space in Centennial Hall with new exhibits of many of these treasures—just in time for this year's Alaska Day Festival on October 18th.



Sitka Maritime Heritage Society hosted an "All Treasures Wet and Salty" treasure hunt around the Japonski Island Boathouse in August. Young pirates grabbed a treasure map, engaged in a quest, and were rewarded with a prize from a treasure chest.



The **Clausen Memorial Museum** in Petersburg is in a building that turned 50 this year. The town celebrated the anniversary with a party where stories were told and food was enjoyed. The museum's story starts in 1965 when the

State of Alaska provided matching funds to communities for permanent city projects that would be completed for the centennial of the 1867 purchase of Alaska from the Russians. Petersburg chose to build a museum and a memorial to those lost at sea. The *Petersburg Press* reported on February 17, 1967: "The grand opening of the Centennial project in Petersburg will take place May 27, 1967. A new museum building and bronze sculpture on the museum grounds will grace the town. The museum is 16 feet by 30 feet, two blocks from downtown, and will house collections of local artifacts and other items of historical interest. The grounds are to be landscaped utilizing native plantings and walks surfaced with pebbles from local beaches. "Fisk" Norwegian for fishes, is the name given the large 11 foot by 17 foot by 7 foot bronze sculpture by artist Carson Boysen. The swirling mass of varied fish forms will be mounted on a pedestal in an oval pool. Vertical jets of water will rise from the center of the sculpture. Exterior lights will be installed to illuminate the sculpture by night. A walk will circle the pool so that the sculpture may be viewed from all sides."



The **Tongass Historical Society** has been bringing people in Ketchikan together since 1961. Its members work closely with the Tongass Historical Museum and Totem Heritage Center on exhibits and programs about the area. This month they too had a 50th anniversary celebration of their Purchase Centennial Building.



The **Gastineau Channel Historical Society** opened the Last Chance Mining Museum for the season with a Mother's Day event that had live music, artists from the Juneau Plein Rein group, and included the unveiling of newly restored 3-D mine maps produced by Alea Oien. And this year it celebrated its 20th year of receiving a lease to preserve the historic Sentinel Island lighthouse and make it available for the public to see. In 2006 they received a quitclaim deed to the island and buildings. The group has held numerous fund raising trips to the island, written grants, and solicited contributions to help preserve the buildings. They thank, among many, the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, the Rasmuson Foundation, the U.S. Lighthouse Society, and the Leighty Foundation. Many volunteers have spent hours helping, and while there will always more to be done, they have been able to perform the most important tasks to assure the lighthouse is stable.



Other news and information

The Alaska State Museums would like to hear from you if you are interested in serving on its Museum Collections Advisory Committee. The committee meets twice a year by teleconference, and is responsible for approving donations, acquisitions, and deaccessions for the Alaska State Museum and Sheldon Jackson Museum. Terms are for three years. If interested, please send or email a letter of interest and a resume by September 22, 2017 to Addison Field, Alaska State Museums, 395 Whittier St., Juneau, AK 99801, addison.field@alaska.gov.

Other News and Information

The first Alaska newspapers have been posted on the Chronicling America website of the Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>. The newspapers can be digitized and searched—for free! The ones available are *The Alaska Daily Empire* (1912-1918), *Douglas Island News* (1898-1907) and *The Thlinget* (1908-1912), and the second batch has been submitted. The Alaska State Library received a National Digital Newspaper grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to select and prepare 100,000 pages from Alaska newspapers to be uploaded into the database. Leah Geibel and Anastasia Tarmann are leading the project and have created a project blog at <http://akdnp.wordpress.com> with updates and links to articles with tips for searching.

In 1962, Alaska's Governor Bill Egan created the Alaska Centennial Commission with the goal of making a permanent investment in Alaska. Communities were invited to propose projects, including museums, community centers, performing arts facilities, libraries, campgrounds, and historical parks to be ready for the Alaska Purchase Centennial in 1967. Local residents had to back the projects and pay their share. The Alaska State Museum has a new traveling exhibit with 28 wall hung panels, each 16" x 20", profiling 27 of the projects. More information on the exhibit and how to arrange to have it in your community can be found at http://museums.alaska.gov/traveling_exhibits/view_from_the_future.html.

Tundra Vision Public History Consultants, Katie Ringsmuth, has a full slate of programs scheduled for this fall. On September 28th Sandy Harper, Cyrano's Theatre, will moderate a panel, All Alaska's a Stage: The Power of Female Players in Alaska Theatre. In October, Diane Rodill will talk about a Filipino (Alaskero) from Kodiak; in November journalist Brittany Retherford will talk about Alaska's deadliest unsolved murder; and in December Pamela Cravez will talk about her new book, *The Biggest Damned Hat: Tales from Alaska's Territorial Lawyers and Judges*. The programs are held at the Mountain View Public Library. Also, Katie has planned a fall lecture series to commemorate the 75th anniversary of World War II in Alaska for the University of Alaska Anchorage. The September event is a panel with history professor Paul Dunscomb, retired history professor Steve Haycox, and National Park Service anthropologist Rachel Mason. The October event includes BRAVO 369 Flight Foundation director Craig Lang, Friends of Nike Site Summit representative Ivan Hodes, and Katie. The programs will be at Chugiak High School. More details about these programs can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/TundraVision/>

Visit our website:

www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org



We welcome your letters, news and pictures. Please send them to us at one of the addresses above.

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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."

Membership lapsed? Renew today to celebrate yesterday!

ODDMENT:

Chris Allan found this note in the *British Colonist* (Victoria, BC), June 1, 1867, newspaper. A correspondent writes to a California paper:

"The New York *Post* is bothering its head about a new name for the new American possessions. It won't wait until we get a title (here is a chance for a pun) to the land, but insists upon baptism being performed at once. It hovers around Alexandroffsky—thinks that won't do—goes to the top of Mount Elias in its search—descries Sitka, thinks that or New Archangel might answer, and finally suggests that between Aliaska or Yukon there might be only the toss of a copper. You see we are a little afraid to leave the christening of the child to you outlandish Californians, for fear you may give it a name akin to some of your mountain towns or gulches—such as Horsetown, Jackass Gulch or Shirt Tail Bend. I have no doubt Seward would like to stand godfather. But this is a matter to be taken under grave advisement."

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 (\$50.00 for organizations; \$45.00 for family; \$100.00 for a patron; \$600.00 for a life membership.)

It's quick, it's easy, and you receive the semiannual journal *Alaska History*, the quarterly newsletter *Alaska History News*, and discounts on publications. 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 membership to Alaska Historical Society, P.O. Box 100299, Anchorage, Alaska 99510-0299; or join through the website: www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org.

This October 18th is the 150th anniversary of the ceremony at Sitka when Russia transferred its claims in North America to the United States. The AHS website has a calendar of events to help you commemorate one of Alaska's most significant historic events: www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org.

