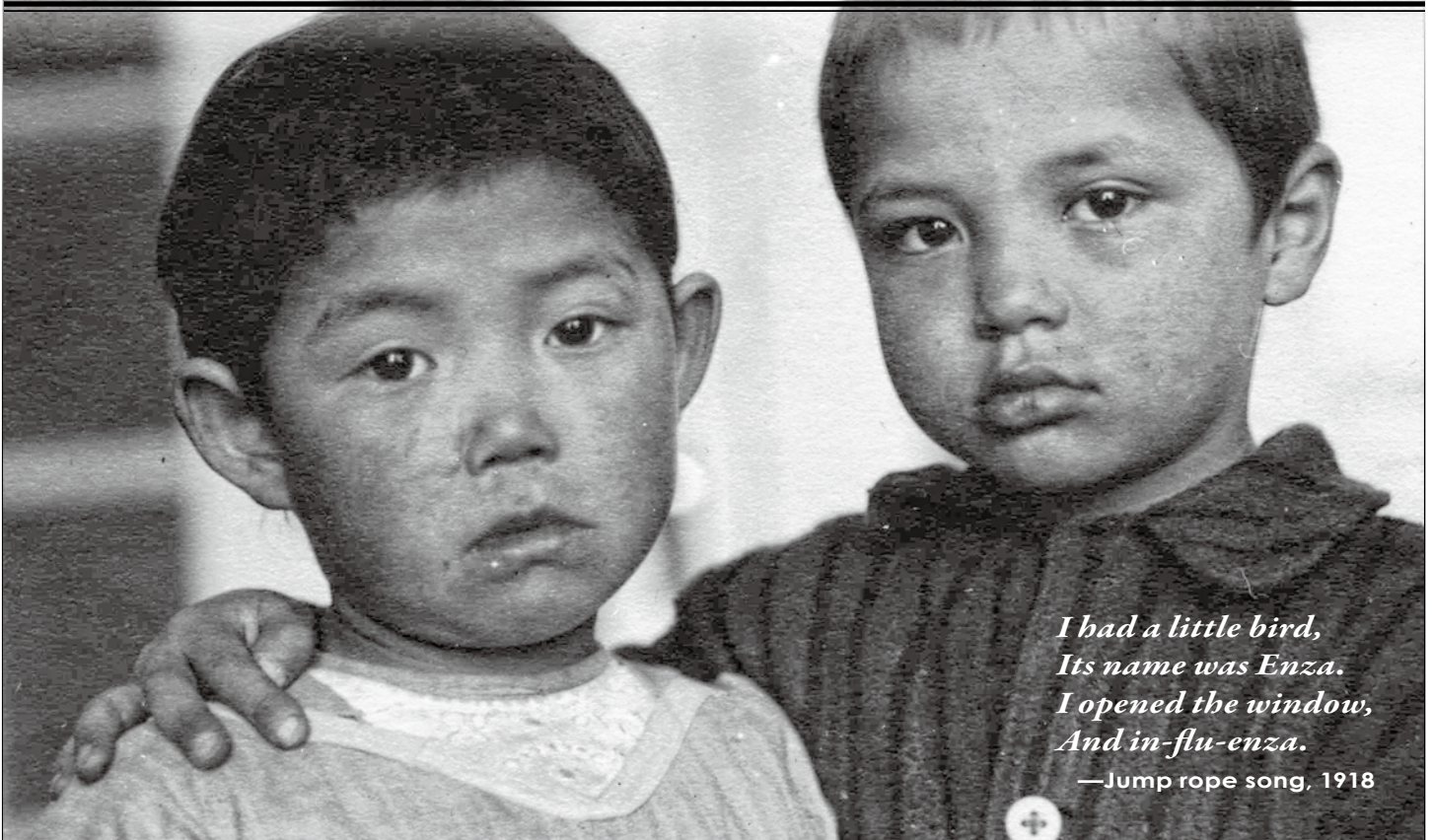




Alaska History News

Volume 46, No. 4 Quarterly of the Alaska Historical Society

Winter 2019



*I had a little bird,
Its name was Enza.
I opened the window,
And in-flu-enza.*

—Jump rope song, 1918

Message from the President

Children orphaned by the Spanish Flu, Bristol Bay, 1919.
Photo courtesy Katie Ringsmuth.

The 2018 Alaska Historical Society conference took place in Nome. It was immensely instructive on issues of importance to Alaska history. Several presentations focused on the fact that we are now marking a monumental tragedy in the history of Alaska. It is the 100th anniversary of one of the deadliest disasters in human history—the 1918 influenza pandemic, which killed more than 50 million people worldwide, and struck Alaska with a heavy hand.

Even though Alaska was remote from the rest of the world, the H1N1 viral infection reached the territory by steamship and barge in October 1918, when steamers made their end-of-season journeys through Alaska's coastal waters, moving mail, cargo, and passengers. Even incidental contact brought sickness and death. Whole communities rapidly grew sick. So many people died so quickly that the usual means of recording their passing were inadequate, and the numbers of the dead could only be estimated.

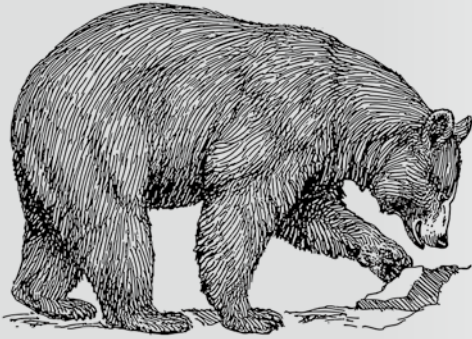
More than 1,500 people died in Alaska, although the entire population of the Territory only numbered about 60,000. Native communities were particularly hard hit—more than 80% of the Alaskans who died from influenza were Native. Some Native villages were essentially wiped out by the disease, leaving only orphaned children and a few adults. The impact on Alaska Native cultural transmission, social history, and demographics was immeasurable.

At the conference, there were significant conversations about the interpretation of Alaska history, sometimes heated. Those conversations indicate the extent to which historical accounts matter to people. They highlighted the fact that the different peoples have different points of view on what happened in the past. History is not science. Many voices make for better history.

There was something unforgettable about coming together with people from all over Alaska to talk about history on the very edge of the Bering Sea. Next year, Kodiak!

—Averil Lerman, President

ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2018 AWARDS



Bear of Alaska History Award: Terrence M. Cole. A one-time special award to a great historian, author, thinker, entertainer, conversationalist, caring individual, mentor to many and friend to more. Terrence twice received the Alaska Historian of the Year Award. On the occasion of retirement from teaching at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, the members of the Alaska Historical Society wanted to congratulate and express their sincere thanks.

Evangeline Atwood Award for Excellence: Jim Simard of Juneau. Jim joined the Alaska State Library to build the Alaska Digital Archives then headed the Historical Collections until he retired last April. As a member of the AHS Board of Directors Jim served as vice-president and was program chair for the 2013 meeting in Haines.

James H. Ducker Alaska Historian of the Year Award: Mary Ehrlander, historian and director of the Arctic & Northern Studies Program, University of Alaska Fairbanks for *Walter Harper: Alaska Native Son*. More than a biography, Mary's most recent book has context on early 20th century Interior Alaska and the nexus between the Native and white people who lived there.

Elva R. Scott Local Historical Society Award: Tenakee Historical Collection with special recognition of **Vicki Wisenbaugh**. In 2017 the dedicated residents of the small Southeast Alaska community opened a museum, started a newsletter, held programs, added to their collections, and completed a special project to organize Bob Pegues' papers and digitize his Superior Cannery photographs.

Esther Billman Award: Alaska Historical Society's 150th anniversary of the Alaska Treaty of Cession special committee: **Rebecca Poulson**, chair; **Chris Allan**, content; **Mike Hawfield**, financial management; **Karen Brewster**, website; and **Anna Lee Hirschi**, coordinator.

Barbara S. Smith Pathfinder Award: Alaska State Library, Archives and Museums for the Alaska newspaper digitization project. With funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the library has worked with the Library of Congress to add Alaska newspapers to the Chronicling America website for researchers worldwide to access.

Student and Beginning Professional Travel Scholarship Awards: Yuko Kugo, Ph.D. student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in the Arctic and Northern Studies Program, and **David Reamer**, Ph.D. student at Southern New Hampshire University.

Alaska History Award, 2017: Chris Allan for his article "Ho! For Sitka: Special Correspondents and the Race to Report on the 1867 Transfer of Russian America to the United States."

Beaver Log: President's Award: Jo Antonson for unwavering dedication to advancing the Alaska Historical Society.

*Congratulations to this year's Alaska Historical Society
award recipients for excellent work.*

CONTRIBUTIONS TO ALASKA HISTORY AWARDS

S.F. “Shana” Loshbaugh, initiator and organizer of a Kenai Peninsula history conference in 2017, the first since 1974. Shana arranged for a series of articles in the local newspaper, two days of presentations, a book fair, tours, great food and entertainment. She edited and just published conference proceedings.

David Ramseur for *Melting the Ice Curtain*, a book about the 1988 Friendship Flight-- when Alaskans traveled from Nome to Provideniya in the Russian Far East as the Cold War was ending. David, a journalist, was an organizer of the project. He has made over 40 presentations to introduce and reflect on the significance of the project around Alaska, in Washington, D.C., and in Russia.

Lee Poleske of Seward, a dedicated local historian who has worked for more than 40 years to make the history of the Resurrection Bay area known. A stalwart of the local historical society, Lee was newsletter editor for years and annually leads a Summer Solstice tour of the Seward cemetery.

Caroline “Cussy” Kauer of Nome, who researched gold rushers, spearheaded cleaning the Nome cemetery, organized the town’s Gold Rush Centennial commemoration, worked to get Old St. Joe’s restored, and led efforts to get Nome’s new museum, library, and cultural center building.

William “Bill” Schneider, creator of the Oral History Program and popular Project Jukebox at the Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks; and author of books and articles about dog-team mail carriers, the Tanana Chiefs conference, and life histories of Waldo Bodfish and Moses Cruikshank.



Three University of Alaska Fairbanks professors received well-deserved awards: Terrence Cole, at left, received a unique, only-to-be-given once special award recognizing him as “The Bear of Alaska History.” Mary Ehrlander received the Alaska Historian of the Year Award for her book *Walter Harper, Alaska Native Son*. William Schneider was recognized for his many years recording and writing about Alaska and its people.

Notes from Local Historical Societies

Alutiiq masks and beaded regalia collected by French anthropologist Alphonse Pinart in the 19th century are on display in an exhibit at Kodiak’s **Alutiiq Museum** entitled “Ag’inarluni – Worthy of Respect.” The objects are on loan from the Musée Boulogne-sur-Mer in northern France. For more than twenty years Alutiiq culture bearers and museum staff have been visiting the Boulogne-sur-Mer museum to study the collection and to share cultural traditions. In return, the French museum has allowed items from the collection to visit their home.

The **Anchorage Museum** looked at the life and work of Rockwell Kent, the American painter who spent time on

Fox Island in Resurrection Bay 100 years ago. There was a dinner cruise to the island in August, and an evening of talks about Kent’s art and his 1918 journal, published as *Wilderness: A Journal of Quiet Adventure in Alaska* in 1996, in November. Seward historian and editor of the journal, Doug Capra, was joined by Jake Milgram Wien who talked about wilderness modernism in paintings by Kent and Canadian Lawren Harris; Alice A. Carter who addressed Kent as an illustrator; and Scott Ferris who was director of the Rockwell Kent Legacies at the Kent estate and at the Rockwell Kent Collection at the State University of New York-Plattsburgh.

Notes from Local Historical Societies

The **Cook Inlet Historical Society's** 2018-2019 speaker series in Anchorage is entitled "North to the Future: Alaskans Encounter their Environment." This fall Fran Ulmer spoke on "The Rapidly Changing Arctic: Why Does It Matter to the World?"; Kate Troll spoke on "The Ebb and Flow of Alaska's Environmental Policy and Moving Beyond Oil"; and Dan O'Neill spoke on "The Firecracker Boys: The Story of Project Chariot and the Roots of Environmentalism." John Branson will give the final talk on January 17, "An Insider's View of Richard Proenneke."



Bone articulation expert Lee Post was the guest speaker at the **Cooper Landing Historical Society and Museum's** membership meeting in September. Lee wrote a how-to book on articulating a brown bear, and his drawing is featured on the tee shirts sold at the Cooper Landing Museum. Back in 2002-2003, Lee worked on a project called Dead Bear Walking with the Cooper Landing school kids.

The museum had visitors this summer from Europe to China, including two of Frank Towle's great-grandchildren from California. A big game guide, Towle patented the first private property in Cooper Landing, a 108-acre homestead. Janet and Karine saw where their great-grandfather lived and learned more about him.



The **Hope and Sunrise Historical Society** hosted a Quonset Hut program in September with a presentation "Sourdoughs in World War I" by George Darrow. According to the society's president, Diane Olthius, "Hope had three veterans of the Great War. Calvin Dreier enlisted with the American Army when he was only 12. He served in the trenches of France. George Abney, an American, fought with the Australian Army. And 'Crazy' Albert Boutler, a German, served on a German submarine."



A joint art show entitled "Favorites," by Alice Tersteeg, retired art professor at the University of Alaska, and her former student and teaching assistant Dianne Anderson, opened on October 5 at the **Juneau-Douglas City Museum**. The theme of the exhibit plays on the teacher-student friendship between the two women and is expressed through painting, printmaking, and paper collage. Anderson found artistic motivation and inspiration through many years of classes with Tersteeg, and her art shows tribute to her former professor. Tersteeg's pieces in the exhibit were painted in more than twenty of her favorite places around Juneau.

The State of Alaska recognizes November 14th as Dr. Walter Soboleff Day for the influential and inspirational Alaskan of Tlingit, Russian and German descent. Soboleff served in all of the offices of the Grand Camp of the Alaska Native Brotherhood, was in the Alaska National Guard, taught Native cultural studies at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and was the pastor for the Juneau Memorial Presbyterian

Church. He spent his life promoting higher education, self-respect, spiritual values, tolerance and equality. Soboleff is remembered for his frequent handwritten notes. The **Juneau-Douglas City Museum** offered a free notecard, U.S. postage, and an insert honoring Dr. Soboleff to those who visited the museum in November and wished to write an inspirational or supportive letter to someone.

The museum had other events in November to recognize Native American Heritage Month. *Jinkaata Yoo X'atánk Lingit X'éinax Ten Tlingit Words to Know and Use* will be on display through April. The words are displayed alongside items from the museum's collection. The exhibit is enhanced with a scavenger hunt where visitors get a list of Tlingit words to locate in other museum exhibits. Also, the museum hosted a screening of *Sayéik*, a short film produced by Luke Holton about Native place name revitalization projects across the state, followed by a panel discussion at the Goldtown Theater.



It's fall and the **Palmer Historical Society** resumed their monthly History Night programs. Advertising "Tis the Season!," they heard in November from Denise Hardy about the history of the Williams Reindeer Farm. Their annual open house was December 8 with Matanuska Maid Christmas punch and caroling around the Colony piano.



The **Resurrection Bay Historical Society** celebrated Founders' Day at the Seward Community Library and Museum with a big cake and a slide show of historic photos from Seward's early days. The annual event commemorates the establishment of a railroad town at the head of Resurrection Bay on August 28, 1903, when a landing party arrived there on the *Santa Ana* steamship. John Ballaine and his partners in the Alaska Central Railway were undertaking an ambitious project to build a railroad from Seward to Fairbanks.

The society received a number of donations over the summer: Murl Trevethan's boxing gloves, a century-old swimming suit worn at First Lake, two Seward High School letter sweaters, and 100 slides of the Jesse Lee Home in 1952. Charles Krefting, the grandson of pioneer Seward businessman and noted carpenter of the same name, visited Seward in September on a 50th wedding anniversary tour of Alaska with his wife Carol. They spent time in the society's archives, thrilled to see a photo of the Brosius & Krefting Building, precursor to the Brosius & Noon lumber business. The skeleton of the original building is encased in the present-day SeaView Plaza.



The **Sitka History Museum** re-opened in July after a closure for renovations. The museum originally opened in 1967. It is home to five permanent exhibits and one rotating special exhibit dedicated to showcasing local Alaska history. The museum's first temporary exhibit is of seldom-seen artifacts on the history of Alaska in World War II.

Notes from Local Historical Societies

The **Sitka Maritime Heritage Society** marked the end of the summer season with an open house at the Japonski Island Boathouse. The event featured tours of the work done over the summer, presentations of oral history videos, and a chance to decorate boat-shaped cookies. The group notes some of the videos are on line on the society's YouTube channel—and there is a link from their website to make it easy to access them. In October, as part of Sitka WhaleFest, the society presented an evening of sea songs and chanteys sung by Don Sineti. The event took place the evening before Halloween and was billed to feature “spine-tingling songs of whales, ghost ships, and ill-fated sailors.”

The **Tenakee Historical Collection** has some new equipment at the museum. Rather mundane is the purchase of a DVD player and screen. The other is the purchase of a record player. The museum collection has dozens and dozens of 75 rpm vinyl records, one song on each side about three minutes long. The record player multitasks, and has a recorder, radio and CD player as well so they can record the songs to more modern technology. The museum's winter project is to clean, categorize, record and catalog the record collection. They are looking for volunteers to help!

The **Totem Heritage Center, Ketchikan Museums**, has offered its popular classes on traditional Native arts this fall and has more lined up for next spring. The instructors include expert Haida and Tlingit weavers and carvers, along with expert artists from other Northwest Coast groups. This fall Fred Trout and Wayne Hewson taught a class in cedar bending, Wayne Hewson taught Introduction to Northwest Coast carving, Holly Churchill taught Introduction to Cedar Bark Weaving, and Debbie McLavey led a cedar bark weaving workshop for families. In the spring, Holly Churchill will teach Intermediate and Advanced Cedar Bark Weaving and Nathan Jackson will teach Advanced Northwest Coast Carving. The center will offer weeklong classes for youth in cedar park weaving and Northwest Coast design during the school district's spring break.

The **Ketchikan Museums** welcomed 35,245 visitors to the Totem Heritage Center and 22,870 visitors to the Tongass Historical Museum last summer! They have switched to their winter season with programs and classes for the local community, including school field trips. They museum recently received a donation of seven “Higgins Diggins” newsletters from a Florida museum that had received a donation from Louis Furen, Jr. Furen was at the U.S. Coast Guard's Point Higgins Radio Station at Ketchikan from 1942 to 1946.

The **Kodiak Historical Society** held three community conversations in October to discuss the growth and change at the Baranov Museum. Staff wanted to hear from members of the community as installation of new exhibits begins and the staff starts to plan programs around them.

At the **Pioneer Air Museum** in Fairbanks Willie Vinton from the Fountainhead Auto Museum spoke on the Fordson Snow Tractor, vintage 1926, in November. They also had a work party at the museum, luring folks with the promise that the coffee pot would be on when they arrived.

The **Eagle Historical Society and Museums** reported on summer visitors in its recent newsletter. A Lifetime Learners class from the University of Alaska Fairbanks stopped before heading to Coal Creek Camp in Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve. And Alaska Pioneers visited--and generously donated to help efforts to restore the Customs House. A less welcome visitor was a grizzly bear that roamed around town and ate hanging, aging caribou. Although respectful of all wildlife, town folks were “on edge.” Finally the grizzly was killed, but by a local resident who will use the meat and hide.

The recent **Gastineau Channel Historical Society's** newsletter opens with an article about the tragic sinking of the *Princess Sophia*. It then turns to local places the group is helping to save, the Treadwell Mine and the Evergreen Cemetery. It concludes with tributes to three of their members who worked hard to preserve local history—Marie Darlin, Bill DeArmond, and Herb Bonnet.

On Indigenous People's Day, October 8, the **Sheldon Jackson Museum** in Sitka hosted a special reception and talk by Chuck Miller (Tlingit), Haa Khusteyi – “Our Way of Life.” Miller shared a selection of artifacts from the museum's collections storage that are personally significant to him and talked about how the objects reflect Tlingit traditional cultural practices and ways of life.

The **Tanana-Yukon Historical Society** hosted a lecture on September 19 and a highway sign dedication ceremony on September 23

honoring engineer and arctic logistics specialist James W. Dalton. Thirty-seven years after the Dalton Highway was named, his widow Kathleen “Mike” Dalton, family and friends created a biographic sign about the highway's namesake.

Dalton's father, Jack, earlier developed the Dalton Trail in the Porcupine mining district north of Haines.



From left, son George, Kathleen “Mike” and daughter Libby Dalton. Clark Milne and Patty Peirsol, spearheaded the sign project; the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities provided engineering and logistical support, and the Tanana-Yukon Historical Society raised funds for the \$7,500 sign and agreed to maintain it for 10 years. Photo by Joan Skillbred.

Other Notes

The Ketchikan School District's Alaska Digital Academy is now hosting the **Alaska History and Cultural Studies website** created by the Alaska Humanities Forum. The site has six units and links to historical accounts, stories of people, photographs, maps, oral histories, and primary resources. The website address now is <https://www.alaskadigitalacademy.org/akh/Default>

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This fall **Tundra Vision Public History Consultants** had a monthly series of programs at the Mountain View Library in Anchorage, entitled "History Beyond the Classroom." September's event featured David Reamer presenting on "The Greater Friendship Baptist Church: Race, Place, and Endurance in Anchorage, Alaska." In October, Katherine Ringsmuth, Director of the NN Cannery History Project, spoke on "The Mug-Up Project: Documenting Cannery Work, People and History." The November program featured Morgan Blanchard talking on "The Fort Richardson Internment Camp and the History of Japanese Internment in Alaska During WWII."

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The **Friends of Alaska State Libraries, Archives and Museums** hosted the popular holiday shopping event, APK Marketplace, in Juneau at the Fr. Andrew P. Kashevaroff Building, during Thanksgiving weekend. Vendors are Alaskan authors and artists. The Friends, who are celebrating their 50th anniversary this year, see this popular community event as a way to connect people to Alaska's diverse history, art and cultures.

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On October 5, Brad Stevens made a presentation at the **Alaska State Museum** on his new book *The Ship, the Saint, and the Sailor*. In 1861, the Russian barque *Kad'yak* set sail from Kodiak, Alaska with a shipload of ice, but a few miles from shore it struck a rock and foundered. It drifted for four days before sinking near the grave of Alaska's revered Father Herman on Spruce Island. Over 140 years later, after years of research, Stevens and a team of volunteer divers found the ship. The book is the story of the ship (*Kad'yak*), the saint (Herman) and the sailor (Captain Archimandritov) and their intertwined history within the larger context of Alaskan history.

The museum's special exhibit *Titanic of the North: The 1918 Wreck of the S. S. Princess Sophia* ended in October. Later in the month, the Pioneers of Alaska Juneau Igloo No. 6 and the Juneau community and guests, including descendants of victims, commemorated the centennial anniversary of the tragic sinking of the *Sophia*, in which everyone on board lost their lives.

Right: Archives around the state had activities during October, nationally recognized as Archives Month. The Alaska State Archives produced posters, held a special collections care and research day, and made awards to individuals for using historical records. October 4th was #AskAnArchivist Day on Twitter. To see what Alaskan archivists have been asked check hashtag #AkArchivists.

DOCUMENTING THE HISTORY OF PLACE, TIME, AND CLIMATE: Selected Archival Photos of Mendenhall Glacier, 1889 to 2018



Connect with an archive, library, or museum to learn more about your community. Reflect on the past, document the present, and plan for the future.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES
NATIONAL HISTORICAL
PUBLICATIONS
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ARCHIVES MONTH

2018

Photographs courtesy the Alaska State Library Historical Collections and Alaska State Archives.
Sponsored by the Alaska State Archives, Alaska State Historical Records Advisory Board, and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Other Notes

ROSSIA—Russian Orthodox Sacred Sites in Alaska—has two projects underway. The group is working with the Parish and Restoration Committee of Holy Ascension Cathedral in Unalaska to restore the historic Bishop's House and to raise funds for a fire suppression system in the cathedral and construction of a visitor center. The other project is getting a new roof on St. Nicholas Memorial Chapel in Kenai, near the Holy Assumption Church. If you wish to help these efforts, donations can be made through www.rossialaska.org.

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The **Alaska Association for Historic Preservation** is seeking a manager for the historic Oscar Anderson House in Anchorage. If interested call 907.929.9870 or email akpreservation@gmail.com.

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The **Yukon Historical & Museums Association** in Whitehorse held the 2018 Yukon Heritage Symposium on October 24. It was a day of idea-sharing, learning, and connecting around the theme "heritage and lifelong learning." The events started with a fast-paced PechaKucha session, i.e., a series of presentations accompanied by 20 slides for 20 seconds. Following that, participants broke into small groups for discussion of heritage and museum issues. In the afternoon session, facilitator Rhoda Merkel shared four decades of insights about ways to develop and deliver fun, educational, interactive programs with a focus on First Nation ways of doing and knowing. Rhoda is a Wolf Clan member of the Tahltan Nation, born and raised in Whitehorse.

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The **Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums** is developing a national database of directors and lead staff members of Native cultural institutions and programs. There is an "other" option for non-indigenous cultural institutions holding Native materials or providing programming related to Native communities. To add your information, go to www.atalm.org

Pick.Click.Give.

THE ALASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY is on the list for those applying for their Permanent Fund Dividend. Consider using the "Pick, Click, Give" to donate.

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



Photo courtesy of Bancroft Library, Samuel W. Fansher Collection (2015.79).



INTRODUCING—THE FLYING DUTCHMAN!

In 1898, when hundreds of gold-seekers were camped along the Kobuk River, who did they see approaching their camps over the ice? His name was Carl von Knobelsdorff and he was an ice-skating postman. Armed with a pole with a sharp metal tip (for balance and propulsion), a pistol, and a knife, he whizzed up and down the river where some thirty mining camps had emerged just before freeze-up. For \$1 per letter he would deliver your mail to the Quaker mission in Kotzebue Sound and from there, months later, the letters made their way to San Francisco or Seattle. Knobelsdorff also brought newspapers and rumors of gold. The stampedeers dubbed him The Flying Dutchman, referencing the legend of the Dutch ghost ship doomed to wander the world's oceans and the fact that Kobelsdorff never seemed to stop moving.

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.alaskahistoricalociety.org and then click on "membership and giving."

Membership lapsed? Renew today to celebrate yesterday!