



Alaska History News

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Quarterly of the Alaska Historical Society



M. Tikhonov, "Kolosh family from Sitka Island," 1818, Sitka, KPI-610-P-2113, Russian Academy of Arts Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Message from the President:

*W*ith the pandemic still forcing us to take extra precautions, this year's Alaska Historical Society meeting will be "virtual" and our participation will be via Zoom technology. Rachel Mason, program chair, and her committee are making every effort to make the delivery of a full program as seamless in delivery and as full in content as possible. I know we all feel a bit like the women in *Downton Abbey* who put the reality of change so clearly, "We really are living in a modern world". Please see the draft program in this newsletter. There you will find a full slate of papers and panels on key issues and there will be the Society's annual business meeting, awards presentations, and memorial session honoring our colleagues who died this last year. As the conference sessions were being finalized, news came that Dr. Beverly Beeton, invited to speak on women's suffrage in Alaska, unexpectedly died. We are saddened by the news and are working on an alternative.

In addition to the program information in this newsletter, I also direct your attention to the Advocacy Committee report and statement on monuments and statues. This committee has been extremely active promoting the advancement of history, preserving reasonable access to valuable records, and encouraging thoughtful recommendations on historical interpretation in public places.

Please join us for the annual meeting from the safety of your home.

—Will Schneider, President

AHS CONFERENCE GOES DIGITAL

Over the last few months, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on our lives. We have stopped gathering and traveling, and much of our usual interaction for work, school, worship or shopping is now done from home or with social distancing. Last month, the AHS Board of Directors made the difficult but necessary decision to cancel the planned face-to-face annual conference in Sitka this October. Instead, we will hold the meeting digitally by Zoom, over two weeks, Thursday through Saturday: October 8-10 and 15-17. To avoid Zoom fatigue, we will meet in morning and afternoon sessions separated by long breaks. There will be no concurrent sessions. The sessions will be recorded, so if you miss one or want to hear a paper again, you can access it later through the AHS website.

Participants can register for the whole conference for \$50, a fee significantly less than what we normally charge for the face-to-face conference. The fee is to offset the cost of hiring several people to set up the digital conference.

We want to make sure that everyone who registers can access the panels. Please let us know, by sending an email to rachel_mason@nps.gov or calling 907-240-4917, if you are interested in participating in a training session in how to use Zoom. We also plan to offer training especially for presenters on how to give a paper via Zoom, including how to use Power-Point slides. Training sessions will be held prior to the conference, likely in the first week of October. If you have impaired vision or hearing, or have other accessibility issues, please let us know in advance so that we can provide captioning or other support.

Registration is available through the AHS website. The draft schedule is below. A program with abstracts for each presentation, short biography of each speaker, and instructions for attending the sessions will be sent to registrants.

—Rachel Mason, Chair, 2020 Conference Committee

Computer motherboard µATX with Intel
Socket 1150 IMGP8583 smial wp.jpg

PLACE AND POWER

OCTOBER 8-10 AND 15-17, 2020

Thursday, October 8

10-11:30 am Conference Welcome and Keynote Speech

Thomas Thornton – Senses of Place and History in the "Toponymic Hotspot" of Sitka Sound

Harvey Kitka – Reflections on Place and History in Sitka Sound

2-3:30 pm Remembering Richard Nelson

Debbie Miller – Reflections on Nels

George Gmelch and Sharon Gmelch – *The Legacy of Richard King Nelson (1941-2019): An Anthropological Perspective*

Hank Lentfer – *Anthropologist to Artist: The Literary Legacy of Richard Nelson*

Friday, October 9

10-11:30 am Women's Suffrage

Sue Sherif – *Before and After the 19th Amendment: A Long Fight Led to Passage 100 Years Ago of Women's Right to Vote*

Anne Elise Pollnow – *The Sitka Woman's Club: Sitka's Connection to the Woman's Suffrage Movement*

Discussion: Honoring Beverly Beeton

2-3:30 pm Topics in Alaska History

Shana Loshbaugh – *The Brief, Awkward History of Fort Kenay*

Leanna Prax Williams – *Missing from the Northern Sky: An Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of the Merrill and Eielson Searches, 1929-1930*

Philip Wight – *Roadblock: The Origins of the Anti-Roads Movement in Alaska, 1960-1980*

Saturday, October 10

10-11:30 am 1918 Influenza Epidemic

Aaron Leggett – *A Dena'ina Perspective on the 1918 Flu Epidemic*

David Reamer – *Denial, Fear, Quarantine, and Death: Anchorage in the 1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic*

Tim Troll – *The Spanish Flu in Southwest Alaska's Bristol Bay and Unalaska*

2-3:30 pm Annual Business Meeting, Awards, Memorials, Local Historical Society Reports

Thursday, October 15

10-11:30 am Sitka – A Powerful Place

Angela Schmidt – *Historical Scenes of Sitka (films)*

Anne Elise Pollnow – *Tlingit Placenames on the Katlian Bay Road Project*

Rebecca Poulson – *Sitka in the 1880s: Small-Town Politics and Personalities that Shaped Alaska*

2-3:30 pm Sitka's History

Daniel Monteith – *Sheldon Jackson Boarding School and Its Impact on Language and Culture*

Fred Woods – *The Latter-Day Saints in Sitka*

Doug Vandegraft – *Historic Bars of Sitka*

Friday, October 16

10-11:30 am The History of ANCSA

Paul Ongtooguk – *ANCSA: The White water of Indigenous Land Claims*

Grand Chief Peter Johnston – *The Yukon Land Claims Process: Together Today for our Children Tomorrow*

Stephen Haycox – *Complex Circumstances, and Unforeseen Consequences: The End of Treaty-Making and ANCSA*

William Schneider – *ANCSA: Aboriginal Title to the Land and Aboriginal Hunting and Fishing Rights*

2-3:30 pm Monuments, Diversity and Inclusion Discussion – Ian Hartman

Saturday, October 17

10-11:30 am Russian America

Stephen Haycox – *"Longue durée": Russia's Half-Hearted Approach to North America*

Mary Cook – *An Excellent Adventure: St. Alexander Hotovitsky's Journey to Sitka*

Dawn Black – *The Interactions of the Russian American Trading / Hunting Companies and Priests with the Alaskan Artels on Marmot, Hinchinbrook and Sitka (Baranov) Islands*

2-3:30 pm Alaska Canneries

Bob King – *The Journals of Ole Mathison*

Anjuli Grantham – *New Analysis of the Alaska Packers Association China Contracts*

Katie Ringsmuth – *A Project for the Moment*

Over the last couple of months, the Alaska Historical Society's Advocacy Committee has remained active on several fronts. First, we're continuing a dialogue with our congressional delegation, the delegations of Washington, Idaho, and Oregon, as well as local and state political leaders in Washington to ensure that Alaskans retain access to federal records in the Pacific Northwest region. We understand that the National Archives in Seattle requires significant, costly upgrades, but we continue to support the physical presence of the National Archives in the Puget Sound area. This seems to be the best possible outcome at the moment.

We've also been in contact with University of Alaska leadership over the decision to halt awarding new book contracts with the University of Alaska Press. The press has been a leading publisher on research related to Alaska's history and culture for over fifty years, and we believe that the University should prioritize its operations. We'll keep you updated on the latest at the University of Alaska Press. We continue to advocate for Alaska's universities, libraries, archives, and historic preservation program.. Times are tough and much uncertainty exists, but we continue to believe that the state must do more to ensure support and access to these vital public institutions.

Finally, the Advocacy Committee has prepared a statement on the value of history and a recognition of Alaska's troubled past. While we have much to celebrate about our shared history, we also believe that this moment affords us an opportunity to engage in tough conversations about racism, colonialism, and injustice – topics that have profoundly shaped Alaska's past and present. We at the Alaska Historical Society are dedicated to moving forward with a greater eye towards equity and inclusion. The statement is included in this newsletter.

—Ian Hartman, Chair, Advocacy Committee

Prince of Wales Island petroglyphs
Tongass National Forest.

Alaska Historical Society's Statement on Monuments and the Need for More History

Alaskans driving the Seward Highway may have an inkling that the namesake for that road was a 19th century anti-slavery politician who structured the deal to buy Alaska from Russia in 1867. What Alaskans may not know is that William Seward, like most Americans of European descent of his time, considered America's Native peoples "inferior savages" and advocated aggressive expansion across America by "superior" white people.

Likewise, Alaskans may have a faint idea that the name "Baranov," which adorns Juneau's dominant downtown hotel and many streets in Alaska communities, comes from Alexander Baranov, the first manager of the Russian-American Company. What most Alaskans probably don't realize is that Baranov was a ruthless administrator, who led Russian colonizers as they commandeered Unangax and Alutiiq labor and forced women into sexual relationships, leading to the decimation of Native populations from disease, hardship, and starvation.

What these two historical figures, and others such as British explorer James Cook, have in common is that their contributions to Alaska are honored with prominent statues. Today, many Alaskans say those statues should be removed, or at a minimum, put in a fuller context. How, who and what to recognize about Alaska's history is part of a national debate about racial injustice and cuts to the very heart and ideals we as Alaskans hold dear. Is Alaska history one of "manifest destiny," colonialism, and the expropriation of Indigenous land? Is it the story of intrepid pioneers who settled in a faraway land to secure a better life? The answer to both of these questions is yes.

Therein lies the complexity and urgency of history. Perspective and a diversity of viewpoints matter. And any historical debate must be informed by evidence, a close engagement with primary sources, and an acknowledgement that history does not always present clear cut answers and easily identifiable heroes and villains. It does, however, present a singular opportunity to think critically about the past, celebrate moments of triumphs, and reckon with injustice. In doing so, history promotes understanding and empathy; it expands our vision for change and enriches our public dialogue.



Cover image from *Fighter in Velvet Gloves, Alaska Civil Rights Hero Elizabeth Peratrovich* by Annie Boochever in collaboration with Roy Peratrovich Jr.

The Alaska Historical Society, a volunteer-based non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of Alaska history and education of Alaskans about their heritage, encourages this debate. We believe Alaska's history should be broadly discussed and much better understood. We encourage our fellow Alaskans to enter discussions of history based on these principles:

Alaska's history should be understood in full context and always based on the best available evidence. For example, instead of dismantling or moving a statue from public view, consider adding information to more completely explain the subject's life, positive and negative, from both today's perspective and from the time the person lived.

Because most of Alaska's written history has been told from the point of view of white men, our understanding of history is profoundly incomplete. A better understanding of the past requires seeing it through a much wider perspective, including the understanding of Alaska Natives, and of African-American, Asian, Filipino, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and every other population of people who have been part of Alaska's story. History is also incomplete without the contributions of women, as well as men.

We should preserve structures and settings which played a key role in Alaska's history. If a community decides to move a statue, we encourage it be preserved with proper context rather than be leveled. Also, aging buildings with invaluable historical context are being destroyed rather than preserved, mostly for lack of funding. We encourage local and state decision-makers to dedicate resources to preserve these structures.

The Alaska Historical Society believes today's debates over racial injustice offer an invaluable opportunity to elevate the study of the past. To advance understanding, we advocate the following:

Update the history curriculum in Alaska's public schools to provide a more accurate and inclusive history. History must receive the same emphasis in our schools and universities as mathematics and science. A robust democracy is one that values its history. For too long, instruction dedicated to the study of history has decreased. So too has the public's knowledge of our collective past. This must change.

The University of Alaska must offer more Alaska studies and history courses for our state's teachers.

Alaskans must have access to historical records. This is why the Society strongly opposes the proposed closure of the federal archives in Seattle, which holds thousands of invaluable records pertaining to Alaska, Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

New monuments and historical sites should reflect the diversity of Alaska and provide a full portrait of our state's people.

Adopt Alaska Native place names at key locations across Alaska. Using Anchorage's Dena'ina Civic Convention Center as a model which uses Dena'ina names for its meeting rooms, Alaskan communities should adopt Native place names for key locations such as airports and at prominent gathering spaces to advance the understanding of Alaska Native cultures and languages.

We recognize there are more ways to facilitate the teaching and learning of Alaska history, but these are impactful actions we could take today. We hope you will join the Alaska Historical Society in its call to action. Alaskans deserve the opportunity to learn our history. In fact, it's our duty.



The 2020 Native American \$1 Coin reverse (tails side) design features a portrait of Elizabeth Peratrovich, whose advocacy was considered a deciding factor in the passage of the 1945 Anti-Discrimination Law by the Alaskan territorial government. The foreground features a symbol of the Tlingit Raven moiety, of which she was a member.

—United States Mint

Ketchikan Museums recently commissioned a beautiful Southeast Alaskan bowie knife made by Bifrost Blacksmithing using local materials including Sitka black-tailed deer antler, flint-knapped beach glass from Mountain Point, and copper from Ketchikan Pulp Company pipe. The blade of the knife was forged from the outer ring of a roller bearing assembly from the M/V *Columbia*, the flagship vessel of Alaska's state ferry system for over 40 years. It is now on exhibit with a video of the knife's creation process.



Detail: ornate cross-guard, bowie knife. Photo courtesy Bifrost Blacksmithing (from YouTube video).

In other news, Ketchikan Museums are providing free time capsule kits for 2020 so kids and adults can document and save what's been going on during this historic year. Kits are available at the Tongass Historical Museum, Totem Heritage Center and the Ketchikan Public Library.

The Ketchikan Museums oral history program is seeking volunteers to collect and preserve the unique voices of Ketchikan. Free training will be provided on how to record and archive oral histories. To learn more, contact Erika Jayne Christian at 907-225-5900.

The Ketchikan Museums' online collections database, PastPerfect, is now available! It is a work in progress, but already includes thousands of objects, photos, archives, and library records. Check it out at <https://ketchikan.pastperfectonline.com/>.



The **Holy Assumption of the Virgin Mary Russian Orthodox Church** in Kenai, originally built in 1896, is undergoing a major renovation this year, in time for its 125th birthday. The project will improve the exterior appearance of the church and will resolve the persistent leaking that has plagued the building the last few years. The church is a National Historic Landmark and is important both to local residents and visitors.



The **Clausen Memorial Museum** in Petersburg has been hosting virtual exhibits to stay in touch with the public during the pandemic. The museum has created a YouTube channel to upload video content, which is also highlighted on social media. They hosted a student photography show titled "On Film," put together a virtual Little Norway Festival art show, and displayed submissions of useful items made of repurposed fabric for a local recycling group show. The museum will soon unveil a video about steamships in Southeast Alaska which will give a history of the vessels, their passengers, and the freight they carried, and will discuss factors impacting their use and eventual decline.

Recently, the museum received a donated Nantucket from Carl Johnson of Washington State. The Nantucket is the tool that was used to tighten bands on the casks that were used to ship salted fish from Petersburg's fisheries. Carl explained that it was common practice for Seattle fish buyers to pour off the accumulated salt and water on arrival, weigh the fish for payment, and then add back the salt and weigh the fish in order to charge buyers a higher price.

The Clausen Museum also reports it has received letters, photographs, and artwork of Sister Eva LeDoux, a Sister of the Holy Cross, from Karen Hofstad. Sister Eva spent several years in Alaska and Canada before returning to the East Coast. She was an accomplished artist. Born in 1899 into a family of 15, she died at the age of 104 in 2003. Her early life was difficult, as she was bedridden for

six years after suffering from typhoid during an epidemic in Montreal. Sister Eva loved travel and especially traveling in Alaska, as her letters to Karen often stated. She cultivated enthusiasm for science, art, and philosophy, and was always ready for adventure. One story mentions Sister Eva preparing to board a ship in Alaska armed with “paint supplies, four canvases and a suitcase.” A young man asked the 80-year-old how she expected to be able to manage all that cargo. Sister Eva responded, “Sir, did you know that the Lord had your name on his list of helpers?” One of Sister Eva’s efforts while in Ketchikan was to establish a School of Art at the Community College, where she taught. The Sisters of the Holy Cross continue to maintain an art committee and hold art shows in Sister Eva’s name.



Sister Eva LeDoux at an exhibit of her artwork in Manchester, New Hampshire. Photo courtesy New Hampshire Union Leader, August 7, 2019.

The **Cook Inlet Historical Society** presented a virtual program in June entitled “We’re Saving it for You: The Value and Importance of Archives and Museums in Alaska.” A panel of archivists and museum curators gave an overview of their respective institutions’ archival, manuscript and

museum holdings related to Alaska and the Circumpolar North. They discussed how best to use the rich resources in the state’s archives for personal and historical research. The speakers were Will Schneider; Professor Emeritus at UAF and president of the Alaska Historical Society; Arlene Schmuland, head of Archives and Special Collections at the UAA/APU Consortium Library; Arabeth Balasko, Archivist at the Atwood Resource Center, Anchorage Museum; and Bruce Parham, retired Director of the National Archives at Anchorage.

One of the summer projects of the **Cooper Landing Historical Society and Museum** was to build a map gazebo to protect Katie Feichtinger’s painted map of Cooper Landing and the Kenai River. After just one year of exposure the sun had lightened the sign. Mitch Dickinson and several helpers built the 12 by 12 gazebo.

The **Resurrection Bay Historical Society** reprinted a story from the October 4, 1920 issue of the *Seward Gateway* with the headline “Home Brewer Arrested.” Fred Tibbs, the proprietor of the Commerce Pool Hall, had been arrested for selling home brew at the hall, a violation of the National Prohibition Act. The Deputy Marshal had noticed an unusually large number of drunken men hanging around Tibbs’ establishment and investigated. This led to the discovery of bottles and jugs of home brew, in addition to a complete outfit for manufacturing it. When questioned, Tibbs stated he made the brew with full knowledge that he was violating Prohibition. He was fined \$500.

Choss Lore is a recently launched project to research the stories behind geographic place names in Southcentral Alaska and publish them in an online digital atlas. The project uses historical sources to find the stories. In a recent RBHS newsletter, Gerrit Verbeek draws attention to “two rich but seemingly underutilized digital repositories of Alaskan historical documents,” the Alaska Department of

Natural Resources Historical Books Archive, and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's General Land Office's archive of land claims. To date there are over 2,400 mining claims and hundreds of other records relating to Alaska places indexed for the website. Mining claim records are a focus for the project in part because prospectors had financial motivation to keep comprehensive records. Mining claims are the origin of many geographic names in Alaska; two examples are Purinton Creek in the Matanuska Valley and Peterson Creek near Girdwood, both named for women miners who had claims along the streams.

Michael Krefting has requested the assistance of the Resurrection Bay Historical Society and the Hope and Sunrise Historical Society to complete a book about his father, Emmett Krefting, who moved to Seward in 1905. Five chapters of the book concern 1907 and 1908 when Emmett and his father Charles were at the Wible Mining Camp on Canyon Creek. Michael remembers stories of his grandfather living on an island fox farming that was named Krefting Island after him. He thought someone from the government mail boat had asked Charles' name, and through the wind and waves misheard it as "Grafton" or "Craftern." While there is indeed a Grafton Island off the east coast of the Kenai Peninsula, Michael thinks the "correct mishearing" is Craftern.

This year's Founder's Day program, sponsored by the RBHS and Seward Historic Preservation Commission, recognized the 100th anniversary of Rockwell Kent's publication *Wilderness: A Journal of Quiet Adventure in Alaska* about his winter on Fox Island in Resurrection Bay in 1918-19. Seward historian Doug Capra, who has been researching and publishing articles about Kent for more than forty years, gave a talk at the Branson Pavilion. He has

written a play about Kent in Alaska and is completing a book--check out <https://rockwellkentjournal.blogspot.com/> for more information. Happy Birthday Seward



The **Hope and Sunrise Historical Society** will host a talk the afternoon of September 19th by George Darrow on the 1918 Influenza Epidemic in the Territory of Alaska. The newsletter reports the recent Covid-19 pandemic gave Diane Olthuis time to work on the society's archives. She cataloged five photo collections, including the Ann Miller collection of over 300 photos with images of the 1964 earthquake, White Alice installations, the 1981 Hope Social Hall restoration, and her pet moose calf. The society's fall projects include stabilizing Smokey's porch roof and creating an interpretive sign for the Forest Service Guard Stations on the museum grounds.



Moose Pass Public Library has posted a gallery of historical local photos on its website. This community project and school history assignment was a project of the Moose Pass Sportsmen's Club with a grant from The Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area. Residents of Moose Pass rummaged through drawers and reconnected with family members and old-timers to learn more about their community's history. The results were five interpretive panels and several enlarged photos for display at the new library, and a DVD slide presentation with hundreds of digitized photos.



The Alaska State Library is currently exhibiting Women of Alaska online as a Storymap. This exhibit, curated from the state archives and historical collections, contains a sampling of the many Alaskan women who have survived and thrived despite hardship and discrimination, paving the way for future generations. See the Storymap at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/5d018fa163684612ab4bd1a7c41814fe>

Notes from around the State

Right: Alaska suffragists. Image credits, from left to right: (1) ASL-Core Portrait File Photographs, ASL-Paul-Tillie-William_1; (2) Cabinet card portrait, taken 1892, Monmouth College (Illinois) Archives; (3) ASL-Core Portrait File Photographs, ASL-Cashman-Nellie-1



MATILDA "TILLIE" PAUL TAMAREE
Tlingit educator and civil rights activist Tillie Paul Tamaree (Khaalyát) was arrested for "inducing an Indian to vote" in 1923 after encouraging a Tlingit man, Charlie Jones, who was already naturalized in 1916, to vote. Her son, lawyer and Alaska Native Brotherhood activist, William Paul defended Jones while she was defended by James Wickersham (territorial delegate and judge). They were both acquitted. Tillie and a fellow Sheldon Jackson colleague founded what became the New Covenant Legion, the forerunner of the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Alaska Native Sisterhood, two of the most important civil rights organizations in



LENA MORROW LEWIS
Political activist and suffragist Lena Morrow Lewis was the first woman to run for national office in Alaska in 1916 when she ran for the position of Territorial Delegate on the Socialist Party ticket. She began her political work in Alaska in 1912 as a member of the Socialist Party of America and advocated strongly for women's rights, preparing Alaskan women for the vote as a political organizer. While in Alaska she also organized the Alaska Territorial Socialist Party and served as vice-president of the Alaska Labor Union.



ELLEN "NELLIE" CASHMAN
Miner, entrepreneur, and suffragist Nellie Cashman was one of the first women to vote in Alaska. She, along with May Myers, cast her vote in the Koyukuk district in 1912 during the first territorial election and one year before the passage of H.B. 2. With a return of 17 ballots cast for Wickersham and 19 for Krauczunas, the women's votes caused a debate as to whether all votes within the district would have to be thrown out and another election held because the results were so close. Nellie went on to pave the path for women miners and business owners, fields dominated by men in the territory.

Below: Colony House grounds with gnome visitor. Photo courtesy Palmer Historical Society.



The **Palmer Historical Society** made the difficult decision to close the Colony House Museum to the public during the pandemic, out of concern for the safety of docents and visitors. The flowers on the Colony House grounds, however, have been beautiful.



The **Sitka Maritime Heritage Society** continues its boathouse renovation with a federal Historic Preservation Fund grant, despite restrictions related to the pandemic. A few expert volunteers have held several social distanced work parties this summer.



The **Juneau-Douglas City Museum** started their annual Dr. Walter Soboleff Day letter writing event September 1st. Dr. Soboleff (1908-2011) of

Tlingit and Russian-German descent, educator and Presbyterian pastor, was known throughout the state of Alaska. The 28th Alaska State Legislature established November 14 each year as Dr. Walter Soboleff Day. He is remembered for his frequent handwritten notes and cards, and the museum invites people to stop by and get a free postage-paid notecard with an insert honoring Dr. Soboleff to send someone a note of encouragement in his honor.



The **Smithsonian Institution's Arctic Studies Center** and the **Anchorage Museum** have signed a new memorandum of understanding that extends through 2024. The center will continue its research and education programs at the Anchorage Museum that started in 1994. The new agreement has the National Museum of the American Indian as a co-signer. One cooperative project underway is to produce learning resources highlighting Alaska Native cultures, arts, and lifeways that will put videos, photographs, object records, and essays of the collaborative work on the Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access website, <https://learninglab.si.edu/org/sas>



Notes from around the State

The **Alaska Association for Historic Preservation** is sponsoring Adam Christiansen, Adventure Photo, who has been documenting graffiti left by miners inside the tunnels in the Independence Mine area in the Matanuska Valley. Christiansen was raised in Palmer and recently graduated from Concordia University in Nebraska with majors in journalism and history. He has received support for his project from the Usibelli Foundation and the Matanuska Electric Association Charitable Foundation as well as AAHP. Christiansen hopes to create a mini-documentary, but in the meantime has prepared a display that can be viewed at the Palmer Visitors Center and Museum through September and the Wasilla visitors Center and Museum in October.



We hear from the **Yukon Historical Association & Museums** that a new book, *ECHO: Ethnographic, Cultural and Historical Overview of Yukon's First Peoples*, has been published online. It is a handbook for anyone wanting to learn more about the territory's Indigenous history. It covers a lot of ground, from Yukon's landscape and geography through origin stories and settlement, European contacts, land claims and current governance. The volume has interviews with research collaborators who discuss the importance of community-based research. It took seven years for authors and editors Victoria Elena Castillo, Christine Schreyer, and Tosh Southwick to gather and compile the material for the publication. Check out ECHO at <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/echoyukonsfirstpeople/>.

Documenting and responding to COVID-19 in Alaska communities:

KETCHIKAN MUSEUMS is building a collection of physical objects and digital content to reflect how the community experienced the pandemic. They have asked community members to share their stories, along with materials such as face masks, signage about business closures and social distancing, lesson plans related to remote schooling, and unemployment paperwork. Items may be displayed in the museums' permanent exhibits, shared in the online collections database, or shown via social media. Please contact Hayley Chambers at 907-225-5600.

The **CLAUSEN MUSEUM** in Petersburg is also collecting COVID-related objects such as health notices and business closure signs. They have photographs of alternative events around town, such as the high school graduate car parade and graduate banners posted in downtown Petersburg.

While its exhibits have been closed to the public during the pandemic, the **KODIAK HISTORY MUSEUM** has recently completed a project to make its archives collection more searchable and accessible. Museum staff inventoried each collection and gave it a number, then entered the information into a searchable database. In April the museum launched its Day by Day project and has received over 300 digital files from residents about how COVID-19 has impacted them and how they have adapted. Submissions have included photographs, audio recordings, personal thoughts, letters, social media posts, notices and signs. Highlights are on the museum's website, and the materials will be added to the archives. And because the museum has been closed, graphics from the museum's exhibits are being prepared to be displayed on the museum's fence.

With partners See Stories and Bitanga Productions, the museum has been awarded two grants to support a virtual film internship for Kodiak teens ages 13-18. The project, Culture and COVID-19: Kodiak Youth Document their Pandemic Journey, will provide youth an opportunity to create short documentary films and preserve Kodiak history. The films will be featured in an exhibit at the museum. The Alaska Community Foundation's Social Justice Fund and the Charlotte Martin Foundation which is dedicated to creating opportunities for youth, particularly youth of color, to reach their full potential are providing the funds. One of the partners, Rafael Bitanga, participated in a See Stories workshop as an eighth grader. Now a student at Cornell University, he also is working on a COVID-19 "Porchrait" project in which he is photographing Kodiak residents on their front porches during the pandemic.

Other news:

Seven Alaska museums and historical societies received CARES Act grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities as part of a program for pandemic emergency relief funding to cultural institutions nationwide. The funds will enable the Anchorage Museum, the University of Alaska Museum of the North in Fairbanks, the Museum of the Aleutians in Unalaska, the Pratt Museum in Homer, and the Alaska State Library in Juneau to complete digitization projects to give the public remote access to collections. Funds also were awarded to the Sheldon Museum in Haines for a traveling and virtual exhibit and design and installation of a climate control system, and to the Kodiak Historical Society for reading and discussion programs about a 100-year-old memoir.



If you haven't heard, there is a **Walter Harper Project** underway. Plans include a bronze statue to honor Walter Harper supplemented by material that will recognize all the members of the 1913 team who made the pioneer ascent of Denali. Doyon, Ltd. has agreed to host the installation on its Fairbanks property along the Chena River. The installation will elaborate on Harper's subsistence and language skills and his ability to navigate his Athabascan birth culture and mainstream society that allowed him to serve as a bridge between Natives and non-Natives. Three of the 1913 team members—Harper, John Fredson, and Esaias George--would have been Doyon shareholders had they lived to see the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act become law. More information about the project is available at <http://www.walterharper.org>



#AskAnArchivist Day, an annual Archives Month event, will be Wednesday, October 7th.

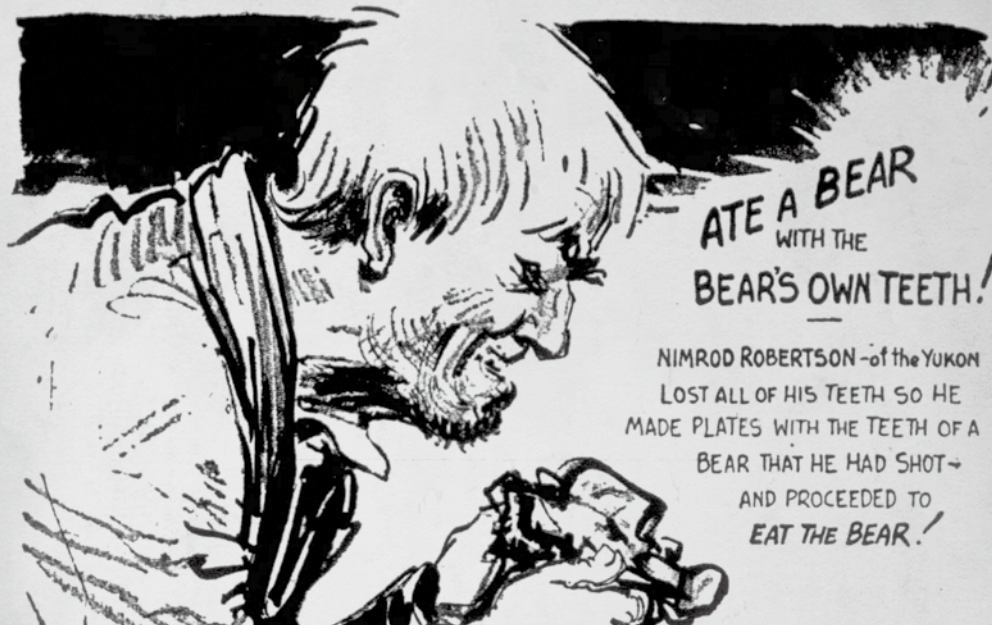


THE possibility of holding our annual silent auction electronically as part of the annual conference is being explored. Be watching for an announcement later this month so you can view the items and bid to own them. The auction is the Society's principal fundraiser and the money supports our many programs. Here's hoping you find books, art prints, or Alaska ephemera you think are cool!



Walter Harper (1893 – 1918) was a Koyukon Alaska Native mountain climber and guide. On 7 June 1913, he was the first person to reach the summit of Mount McKinley (now Denali), the highest peak in North America. After furthering his education, Harper married in 1918 and planned to attend medical school in Philadelphia. He and his wife took the steamer *SS Princess Sophia* from Skagway to Seattle for their honeymoon before setting off cross-country. The ship ran aground on a reef in a snowstorm, and was broken up in a gale, sinking on October 25. All 268 passengers and 75 crew were lost.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT! Reg. U. S. Pat. Office By Ripley



AN ODDMENT BY CHRIS ALLAN:

THE LEGEND OF NIMROD ROBERTSON

Erwin "Nimrod" Robertson—miner, trapper, and jack-of-all-trades—led a colorful life. In his home state of Maine he was a hunter, guide, and self-taught jeweler. He joined the race for the Klondike in 1898, crossing the Chilkoot Pass and ending up mining on Flume Creek, a tributary of the Seventymile River about forty miles from Eagle. Before the Wright brothers took to the sky, Nimrod wanted to build a "bird machine"—he fabricated the motor (today part of Museum of the North collections) and patented his plane designs, but the dream never took flight. He opened a jewelry shop in Eagle and crafted knives that were popular with locals; when he mined at Flume Creek, he had two dogs, pet mice, and a pet wolverine for company.

In 1905, a bout of scurvy caused Nimrod's teeth to fall out, so he set about making false teeth from an aluminum pot lid, melted to create the bridge, and set with carved sheep, caribou, and bear teeth. His dental innovation was well known to Eagleites because when he was a guest in their homes, and they served hot tea or coffee, Nimrod removed the dentures and set them on the table rather than risk scalding his mouth. Over several decades, a story emerged that his false teeth were taken from one particularly ornery grizzly bear that ransacked his cabin and was shot by the miner. As the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* on November 20, 1929 explained,

After skinning his kill, Nimrod's mouth watered for a juicy bear steak but he had no teeth strong enough to eat it with—only a few short, wobbly ones. Why not make himself a set. He had an aluminum pot and the bear's own teeth. ENUF SED. Nimrod thoroughly enjoyed not only one steak, but many others!

Over the next few years, this story spread until it was picked up by *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* and the hermit of Flume Creek became, for a moment, a national celebrity.

*Robertson's nickname is a Biblical moniker meaning "the Hunter," and his homemade dentures can be seen on the ground floor of Eagle's Wickersham Courthouse.



M. Tikhanov, "Kolosh Chief from Baranov Island in war outfit, 1818, Sitka, KII-610-P-2114, Russian Academy of Arts Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

THINGS THAT GO BUMP...



Russian Orthodox church, Fort Ross. Watercolor by Xenia Kashevaroff, ASL-MS149-4-41.

The **Fort Ross Conservancy** that operates the state historic park in California where the Russian-American Company had a settlement from 1812 to 1842 reports:

Most of you know that fire season started early this year when Northern California experienced an unusual and very dramatic August lightning storm. The Meyers Fire ignited on August 17th north of Jenner between Highway 1 and Meyers Grade, very close to Fort Ross. Soon thereafter California State Parks teams from Sacramento and Mendocino, assisted by our very own Charon Vilnai (the only staffer who could access the park because she lived north of the fires) arrived to carefully evacuate Fort Ross artifacts in case the fire reached the fort and visitor center. Many tremendously dedicated volunteer fire departments worked around-the-clock to keep the fire from spreading, and while it burned the southern border of Fort Ross park (south of Reef Campground) and threatened to damage water tanks and more, all Fort Ross structures came through unscathed.

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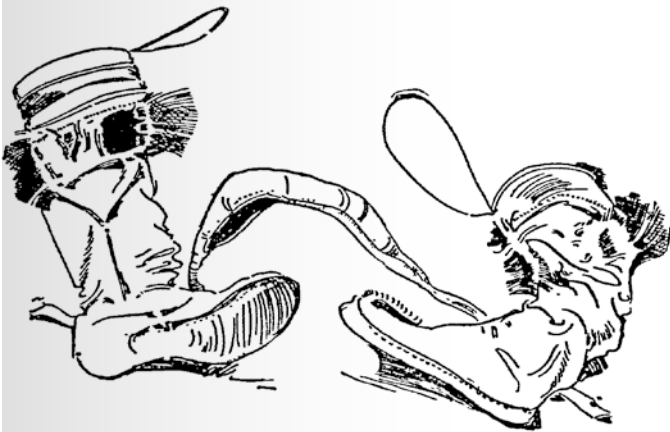
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KLONDIKE BOOTS AND GOLD DUST BELT

AN ODDMENT BY CHRIS ALLAN:

GOLD IN QUEER PLACES

After staking some of the earliest Nome gold claims in 1899, William J. Quinn of Boston, spoke about the unusual ways his fellow miners stockpiled their loot:

One of the notable things about the new placer gold fields at Cape Nome, was the careless way the gold was stored and cared for last summer. It was common to find five-gallon kerosene oil cans half or fully filled with gold, standing on the floor of an unguarded tent or in a corner of a cabin. . . Any hollow thing was used—soup tureens, tin cans, glass bottles, boots, gas pipe, paint buckets, fur garments and even stockings and galoshes.

In some instances the makeshifts were amusing. One man made a great pouch for his gold out of an enormous chest and back protector—a sort of waistcoat made of sealskin, which he had cured, dressed and made himself. Another miner utilized a joint of stove pipe. He did not have even a tent when he went to Nome, [so he] cut a round piece of board and fitted it in one end of the pipe. Then he stood the pipe upon one end of his claim and dumped into it each day the gold dust as fast as he washed and dried it. . . .

A lot of gold washers on the beach used worn out rubber boots as receptacles for gold dust. A Swede on Snow Creek had three rubber boots nearly full of gold last September. . . . A loaded rifle hung on nails over the boots as a sort of warning that any thief of the treasure would be shot with that particular weapon. Beer bottles full of gold dust were common about the Nomers' habitations, and some used coffee-pots. A man on Anvil Creek, near my claim, made his walrus skin cap into a gold bag. Tin tomato-cans and fruit jars standing under miners' bunks and full of gold were common all over Cape Nome last year.

—From Courier-Post [Camden, NJ], May 18, 1900