



Alaskans burn an effigy of President Jimmy Carter after he used the Antiquities Act to designate 56 million acres in Alaska as 17 National Monuments on Dec. 1, 1978. The action led to passage of the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. Photo courtesy University of Alaska Fairbanks Rasmuson Library.

Conference focus: Conflicting visions of history

The Alaska Historical Society's 2022 annual conference will focus on an inventive theme as we are honored to welcome as keynote speaker a nationally-known environmental historian whose recent book about the Bering Strait has received broad praise.

"Conflicting Visions in Alaska History" is the theme for this year's conference, scheduled for October 6-8 and 13-15. Bathsheba Demuth, a Brown University professor whose 2019 book *Floating Coast* received numerous awards, will kick off the conference.

Co-sponsored by the Cook Inlet Historical Society, this year's conference will take place largely on-line, but we are hope-

ful the public health situation will allow some in-person events in Anchorage.

From the time of the first European explorations and Russian colonization, Alaska history provides many examples of conflicting visions. The Russians coerced Native labor to pursue sea otters for a profitable commercial trade, disrupting the Native subsistence economy and decimating the populations.

Following the U.S. purchase of Alaska, conflicts arose as whalers, miners, fish processors and others raced to reap the profits from this resource-rich territory, often with disastrous consequences to the indigenous people living in Alaska.

The discovery of oil in Prudhoe Bay served as a catalyst to settle Native land claims, and the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act created its own conflicting visions of the future. As the oil pipeline became the primary driver of Alaska's economy, pro-development policies dominated Alaska's government, while conservation was often associated with "Outside" organizations.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act set the stage for conflicting visions of land and resource use, and Title VIII of that act set the state and the federal government on course for legal

Please turn to page 11

Conflicting visions in history a constant in Alaska public policy

The job interview question that stumped me was “what do you think of the feds stealing our land?” It was late 1978



and I was a junior newspaper reporter in South Carolina, restless for a change of scenery and meatier issues in which to sink my journalistic teeth.

So, I dreamed, why not try for America's furthest north (and widest) daily, the Fairbanks *Daily News-Miner*? I somehow managed to bluff my way past my ignorance of President Carter's withdrawal of 56 million acres, which triggered the divisive multi-year battle over Alaska lands. When I showed up for my new job in Fairbanks in spring 1979, the photo I still remember is of a local protester drenching a strawman likeness of Jimmy Carter with lighter fluid and igniting it before a cheering crowd.

Years later, Carter described the 1980 Alaska National Interest Conservation Lands Act resulting from his withdrawal as “the most important environmental legislation in the history of the entire world.” That conflicted with the view held by most of official Alaska, which perceived the action as a blatant infringement on their rights.

For me, that conflict set the tone for how Alaska public policy issues would be framed for the next four decades in which I have observed or participated in them. From the future of the Permanent Fund, to who should be entitled to subsistence fish and wildlife, to how health care is allocated, to where resource development is allowed, Alaskans pride themselves on wildly conflicting visions of our state's progression.

“Conflicting Visions of Alaska History” is this year's theme for the historical society's annual conference. They began early with the first European explorations of Alaska and continue today, so there is plenty of opportunity for the stimulating presentations and discussions for which our conference is

known. Thanks to board members William Schneider of Fairbanks and Rachel Mason for helping frame the theme.

Our entire board is ecstatic about *Floating Coast* author Bathsheba Demuth as our conference keynote speaker. Demuth has received international praise for her book, research and writings on the Bering Strait region. I just bought my copy and look forward to getting it signed in October.

We're also excited about our partnership with Cook Inlet Historical Society as co-host of this year's conference.

The board is working on numerous other projects. At the top of our list is framing Alaska's contributions to the national celebration of the 250th anniversary of the American Declaration of Independence. In 2016, Congress established the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission to undertake a planning process for national and local celebrations to culminate in 2026.

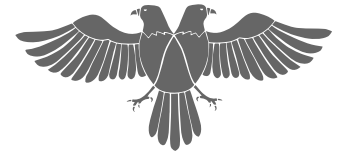
Thanks to thoughtful suggestions by board member Rebecca Poulson of Sitka, our inclination is an initiative to strengthen the teaching and understanding of history in Alaska schools. More discussion is underway and we invite suggestions from our members.

Administratively, we're working to improve how our organization serves its more than 400 members. One way is to update our bylaws which were last revised in 2009 before today's expansion in electronic communications. In coming months, we'll ask members to approve bylaw changes to permit electronic notification and voting, to permit compensation of select board members for limited tasks, and for more streamlined approval of bylaw changes.

Using the talents of several board members, we hope to raise our social media profile so we can communicate more quickly and effectively with both members and the public. Our goal is to more regularly engage in a public discussion about the importance of historical accuracy on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter and a more interactive AHS web page.

As always, we welcome your thoughts and suggestions.

—David Ramseur



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AHS asks Sen. Murkowski for update on Seattle historic records

Continuing its efforts to preserve Alaskans' access to historic records in the Seattle federal archives, the Alaska Historical Society has requested an update on latest developments from U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski.

In a January letter, the Society praised Murkowski's work to help kill the Trump administration's effort to close the Seattle National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) facility and move the records to California or Oklahoma. The letter spe-

cifically asks Murkowski the status of possible federal funds to upgrade or replace the Seattle facility. The General Services Administration has estimated it would cost \$50 million to upgrade the facility and perhaps \$90 million to build a new one.

The Society also asked Murkowski about progress in digitizing existing records at the facility. In a report Murkowski obtained last spring, NARA reported only modest progress in making the records available electronically.

Murkowski included language in a 2021 budget bill which stated: "It is profoundly disappointing that NARA has failed to keep its commitment to digitize and post online using an easy-to-find, navigable and searchable platform the Territorial and Federal records generated in Alaska since they were moved from Anchorage to Seattle more than 5 years ago."

The Society continues to work with other historical groups in the Pacific Northwest to protect the Seattle-housed records.

Cannery workers focus of new exhibit

While most Alaska fishing histories herald the exploits of fishermen, few remember the cannery workers who processed their catch. A new exhibit at the Alaska State Museum in Juneau will honor them in "Mug Up: The Language of Work."

"Mug up" is cannery speak for the coffee break that occurred several times a day during salmon runs. The languages spoken included Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, Filipino and others among those who packed the fish, as well as the languages of Yup'ik, Suq'piaq Dena'ina and other indigenous Alaskans who worked the canning lines.

The work was tough: unloading, sorting and butchering the salmon, and running the "slime line," egg house and retorts. It required mechanics, carpenters and the beach gang who held the cannery together, as well as the cooks, laundry workers and others who took care of the crew.

"Mug Up" is centered at Bristol Bay's NN Cannery, which packed fish for over 100 years and where project leader Katie Ringsmuth grew up. She's now Alaska's state historian.



Project leader Katie Ringsmuth visits with Carvel Zimin, Jr., formerly assistant superintendent and winterman at the NN cannery in South Naknek.

The display at Juneau's APK Museum includes artifacts from the South Naknek Cannery and runs from April to October this year.

—Bob King

Claims Act research guide nears completion

The Alaska Historical Society's expansive guide to sources on the landmark Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act is moving toward final stages of completion. To help put the more than 1,000-page document in a user-friendly format, the society is pleased to have contracted with one of the state's most experienced designers, Krista West.

Most recently the production editor at the University of Alaska Press, West has designed scores of publications for which she has won numerous awards. She holds two master's degrees and has taught at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and New Mexico State University.

With a final product slated for mid-April, West is designing the research tool to be user-friendly, with color-coding and innovative organization. The six-section guide includes a comprehensive list of collections about the Claims Act, an annotated bibliography of sources, and a list of key players in the legislation with descriptions of their roles. The final section of the guide includes key discussion topics for educators.

Will Schneider led the Society's ANCSA committee that included Karen Brewster, Sue Sherif, Bruce Parham, Ron Inouye, Mike Hawfield, Jo Antonson and Steve Rollins. Researchers were Dan Monteith, Joan Dale, Becky Butler, Dave Krupa, Susan Means and Sean Smith. Many thanks to the Rasmuson Foundation, Atwood Foundation, Doyon, Sealaska, Bering Straits, Calista and Koniag corporations for funding the project.

The guide will be published on Scholarworks and available on the AHS website.

Endangered historic properties sought

Preservation Alaska is making its annual appeal for nominations for its 2022 Ten Most Endangered Historic Properties list. Now in its 13th year, the list calls attention to significant historic properties around Alaska in need of stabilization, rehabilitation or restoration.

The deadline for nominations is

March 31, and the list will be announced in May as part of Historic Preservation Month. Properties on the list are eligible to apply for grants that assist with preservation work or leverage funding from other sources. The nomination form is at www.AlaskaPreservation.org

Petersburg museum reaches into community

Petersburg’s Clausen Memorial Museum takes visitors into the past—while engaging very much in the community’s present.

Like museums everywhere, the Clausen is still reeling from impacts of the pandemic. Attendance had steadily risen from 3,000 visitors in 2015 to 4,900 in 2019. After a year of Covid-19 closure, attendance in 2021 reached just 1,400, with about 200 visitors being passengers from small cruise ships—far fewer than in the past.

“The (reduced) ferry schedule has also had a definite negative effect as it used to bring in more independent travelers, as well as folks from around the region,” said Cindi Lagoudakis, museum director.

Lagoudakis had been a museum volunteer and then a board member before stepping forward to fill the director position in September 2019. The job isn’t quite what she had expected.

“A fun but sometimes exhausting aspect of the position is learning new skills and techniques to be able to create and share content with virtual and in-person visitors,” Lagoudakis said.

Posting slideshows, videos and fresh updates on the museum website has given the public virtual access to holdings despite the pandemic.

Lagoudakis also posts frequently on the museum’s social media pages and regularly sends the *Petersburg Pilot* an “Artifact Archives” feature—an old photograph or a photo of an item from the collection with a 100-word write-up. Readers are often invited to share details they might know about the featured material. Local radio station KFSK airs two-minute “Hooked on History” spots written and recorded by museum staff and volunteers.

The museum has long kept community members coming back for more by hosting regular art exhibits, most in collaboration with local organizations. Those events have returned, with strategies such as spacing out visitor access to help prevent the spread of Covid.

“History is our main focus, but art brings people through the door,” Lagoudakis said.



Náxw, or Tlingit halibut hooks, displayed with watercolor painting “Halibut,” by Alaska artist Lu Grauel (purchased with Rasmuson Art Acquisition funds). Photo: Cindi Lagoudakis

Coming up this spring is a sexual assault survivors art show; a community photography show on the theme “Transported”; the Little Norway Festival art show in May; the PRIDE art show in June; and collaborations with the Five Finger Lighthouse Society and the Petersburg Rainforest Festival.

Before Covid, the museum often hosted student groups for presentations.

“I’d like to get back to doing this again,” Lagoudakis said. “I feel strongly that to keep the museum alive, we need to keep a younger audience engaged.”

The museum houses two galleries and a small media room. All spaces can accommodate temporary exhibits, thanks to the use of easily-moved glass display cases from historic Petersburg businesses.

The most popular item among museum visitors is the skin mount of a monster king salmon, said to be the world’s largest at 126.5 pounds.

One of the Clausen’s most prized items is a 15-foot traditional Tlingit canoe that was found in the woods on nearby Kupreanof Island in 1962. Another is the 1920s-era Fresnel lens that once beamed from the now decommissioned Cape Decision Lighthouse 72 miles away. The museum’s floor had to be reinforced to support the one-ton lens.

Also on view is a collection of Tlingit bentwood boxes, fishing artifacts, jewelry, baskets, and carved items (with their Tlingit names recently added); a piano from the old Engé’s Variety Theater; a traditional Norwegian bunad, or folk costume, designed just for Petersburg; a display about Sing Lee, a popular local merchant mysteriously murdered in 1932; displays about fishing, canneries, logging and fox farming; natural history items; and much more.

Named after Carroll and Elsie Clausen, who settled in Petersburg in 1918, the museum opened in 1968. It was built by the Petersburg Borough with state funds distributed in 1967 as part of Alaska Purchase Centennial observations. The museum is a private, non-profit entity with several hundred members.

The borough provides more than half the museum’s annual budget of about \$62,000. The museum store generates annual income of about \$24,000, selling local art along with items and books related to local and Alaska history. Sales of *Tin Can Country*, donated by Petersburg author Karen Hofstad, raise significant income. Covid-related grants have helped with expenses in recent years.

Not traveling to Petersburg anytime soon? Visit www.clausenmuseum.com.

—Carol Gales

AHS BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

Newest AHS board member cherishes Cordova for “perfect storm” of natural beauty and history

Seeking a post-college internship where she could apply her fresh degrees in forestry and environmental education from Penn State University in 1992, Wendy Ranney laid out a map, closed her eyes and her finger landed on Cordova.

The newest board member of the Alaska Historical Society has been there off and on ever since and is so committed to the fishing community that she’s now running for mayor.

“Cordova has mountains, the ocean and a rich history—the perfect storm for me,” said Ranney, a community activist who at last count has volunteered for 19 boards, commissions and committees in her many years in Cordova.

Moving to Alaska wasn’t entirely a fluke, said Ranney, whose passions include outdoor adventures such as hiking, fishing and photography.

Following that early U.S. Forest Service internship, Ranney worked as a dispatcher for a local air taxi service. Those skills helped her land a six-month seasonal job in Antarctica in 1996,

“I hope to teach those who come after us about the importance of history and help preserve what I can. And if a cool salmon label or old steam engine part turns up, all the better!”

where she worked as a meteorologist and EMT directing airplane traffic at a scientific field camp.

The loss of her first husband resulted in her leaving Cordova for a few years, only to return in 2009 to marry her best friend, Steve Ranney. In 1995, Steve had purchased the former Pacific Steam Whaling Company Cannery, Orca Station, established in 1889.

After extensive renovations, the renamed Orca Adventure Lodge features 40 guest rooms, café and coffee shop. In the summer, it hosts visitors for fishing, guided hikes, kayaking and glacier tours. In the winter, it is leased by a heli-ski company which offers adventure skiing in the spectacular coastal Chugach Mountains.

When Ranney is not tending to business, she serves her community volunteering for organizations including the school district, multiple city boards and commissions, the local historical society, the telephone co-op and in the past, a music camp for children. She is also a novice photographer whose photo of a breaching orca won a top *Alaska Magazine* prize in 2020.

Winters provide her time to pursue a major passion—history. While slowly working toward a master’s degree with a focus on archival studies, Ranney researches her family’s properties at the cannery and at the ghost town of Katalla, site of the first discovery of commercial quantities of oil in Alaska in 1902. The famous “ship of gold,” the *SS Portland*, ran aground and sank at Katalla in 1910 during a severe autumn storm.

Another advocacy is an “irrational love” of old canned salmon



Cordovan Wendy Ranney recently added board service with the Alaska Historical Society to her list of 19 organizations for which she has volunteered.

labels for the artwork and fascinating stories they tell.

Concerned about the loss of historic buildings in the region and state cuts to the ferry system, Ranney recently tossed her hat in the ring for mayor. Cordova’s mayor is considered the head of local government for ceremonial purposes, presides over council meetings, and certifies the passage of ordinances but is not a council member. The election is scheduled for March 1 (as this newsletter goes to print).

Ranney sought a position on the Alaska Historical Society board to advance work she’s done with her local society to encourage teaching and a broader understanding of history.

“I have always felt a need to advocate for historical things—buildings, stories, photos,” Ranney said. “I hope to teach those who come after us about the importance of history and help preserve what I can. And if a cool salmon label or old steam engine part turns up, all the better!”

—David Ramseur

CORDOVA

Wooden token pioneer shaped retail industry

The *Alaskan Token Collector & Polar Numismatist*, newsletter of Alaska Rare Coins in Fairbanks, carried an article in the October 2021 issue by J.D. Williams about Harry O'Neill, a wealthy Alaskan whose many businesses promoted the circulation of wooden tokens. O'Neill moved to Cordova in 1908 and became a prominent merchant.

By 1919 he co-owned and managed the largest store in Cordova. He was one of the founders of the Ohm Fish and Packing Company, which in 1917 produced an early wooden token, a precursor to the drink tokens that were later seen in many places around Alaska.

O'Neill moved his family to Anchorage in 1937 and bought the DD Club, which used wooden 12½ cent tokens for beer and wine sales. With some of his seven sons and four daughters, his in-laws, his brother and other relatives, he acquired and operated many other bars, including the Alpine Inn at Sutton and the Richmond Bar in Anchorage.

All these establishments used wooden or metal drink tokens. The bars were sold off over the years, and by the 21st century the remaining primary asset of O'Neill and Sons was Brown Jug Liquors in Anchorage, which now belongs to the Afognak Native Corporation.

HOPE

Musings about Hope a century ago

The Hope and Sunrise Historical Society reports that 100 years ago, in the spring of 1922, there was no school in Hope because one of the families had moved in the fall. Carl Clark, a teenage Hope resident, attended high school in Anchorage that winter.

The post office was in the Mathison Mining Company store, and Al Ferrin had the mail contract. Ferrin mused his dog team from Hope to the train depot in Moose Pass, where he exchanged a sack of outcoming mail for the incoming mail.

KETCHIKAN

New exhibit on “gathering” solicits objects

An exhibit entitled “Sustaining Community: How We Gather and Why It Matters” opens at the Tongass Historical Museum March 4. To support the exhibit’s key themes—sense of place, creative expression and entertainment, responsibility and resiliency—the museum asked community members to provide objects, photos and stories representing gatherings of people and harvesting from the land and sea.

In other news, the Totem Heritage Center is hosting a six-part speaker series on the history of Northwest Coast Art. February speakers were David Robert Boxley, a Tsimshian artist from Metlakatla; Kathryn Bunn-Marcuso, curator at the Burke Museum and assistant professor of art history at the University of Washington; Steve Brown, long-time and well-known artist and carver, teacher and author; and Stephen Jackson, Tlingit visual artist, carver, and filmmaker. The presentations can be viewed on the Ketchikan Museums YouTube channel.

Ketchikan a popular movie set location

A lobby card for the 1954 movie *Cry Vengeance* was the Artifact of the Month featured in the January Ketchikan Museums newsletter. Ketchikan has served as a film location for an impressive list of movies, television shows and documentaries since the 1930s.

Perhaps the island community’s biggest claim to fame is the filming of *Cry Vengeance* primarily in Ketchikan. The movie follows former police detective Vic Barron from California to Ketchikan as he seeks revenge against a mob boss who killed his family and left him disfigured.



A lobby card for the 1954 movie *Cry Vengeance*. Photo courtesy Ketchikan Museums.

In the 1950s lobby cards were placed in the cinema lobby to highlight key plot points and showcase stars of movies. Through a series of freeze-frames, they provided an enticing preview of a movie, much as a movie trailer does today. The scene depicted in this one shows Vic Barron talking with his former flame, Lily Arnold, who was telling him the mob boss was now in Ketchikan.

The city’s totem poles are apparently intended to provide a connection to the movie’s setting in Southeast Alaska.

KODIAK

Museum receives “Asphalt Art” grant

The Kodiak History Museum, with its partners the City of Kodiak and the Kodiak Arts Council, has received an Asphalt Art Initiative grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies. This program funds creative art projects that improve street safety, revitalize public spaces, and engage community residents. The project is an opportunity to showcase the work of a talented local artist and to welcome visitors in a way that shows Kodiak’s unique cultural heritage.

The museum’s new exhibit, “Making History, Day by Day: Kodiak, Our Stories, and the COVID-19 Pandemic,” is at the Gerald C. Wilson Auditorium. Through photos and stories community members reflect on the town’s Covid-19 experience.

PALMER

Giant cabbages add to Alaska's mystique

The giant vegetables from the Matanuska Valley shown at the Alaska State Fair have been a huge part of the mystique of Alaska. The State Fair competition dates to 1936, and the cabbages, pumpkins, and other produce have been getting bigger ever since.

The Palmer Historical Society's History Night in January featured Steve Brown, district agricultural agent, who shared tips about how to grow giant veggies.

MAT-SU

Book details treatment of scarlet fever battle in the Matanuska Colony tent city

In 1935, the Matanuska Colony was a tent city. There was no formal medical facility, so the community hall was used as a field hospital. In July, a child from the colony diagnosed with scarlet fever became the first patient of the Matanuska Valley Hospital.

Later that summer, Dr. C. Earl Albrecht from the Alaska Railroad Hospital in Anchorage and three nurses were assigned to the Matanuska Colony. Before Dr. Albrecht arrived, a husband-and-wife team of nurses, Max and Dorothy Sherrod, attended the medical needs of the colonists. Together, the doctor and nurses battled the outbreak of scarlet fever in the tent city.

Plans for a permanent hospital were soon underway, but for the next few months the medical staff worked under primitive conditions. They were able to move patients to the new facility at the end of November 1935.

Nancy Jordan's *Frontier Physician: The Life and Legacy of Dr. C. Earl Albrecht* tells this and other stories about the young man who became the sole physician to a remote colony of farm families during the Great Depression.



Dr. Earl Albrecht writes a prescription for a Matanuska colonist, 1935. Photo courtesy Palmer Museum.

SEWARD

Fort McGilvray nominated to National Register

The Resurrection Bay Historical Society reported last December that the Alaska Historical Commission determined the Fort McGilvray Historic District at Caines Head, near Seward, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The decision follows recent work done by the State Historic Preservation Office. State Historian Katie Ringsmuth said the 40-acre



Jack Turnbull during World War II, taking a break from work on a project to lay the underwater cable stretching west from Thumb Cove to Ft. McGilvray at Caines Head. Photo courtesy Resurrection Bay Historical Society, 1000.43.1.

coastal installation was built to protect the Port of Seward during World War II.

The nomination includes four distinct areas—North Beach, Fort McGilvray/Battery 293, South Beach, and Rocky Point—situated on small beaches and sheer cliffs. The buildings, now in ruins, were built into the hillsides and valleys to camouflage them.

The same issue of the RBHS newsletter reprinted a story from the July 9, 1992, *Seward Phoenix Log* about a World War II veteran, Jack Turnbull, who served at Fort McGilvray during the war. When the soldiers in the 267th Coast Artillery Battalion arrived in Seward in 1942 their first jobs were to build roads, barracks and bunkers in the remote harbor.

Turnbull visited the fort in 1985 and subsequently worked to preserve its history by collecting stories and memorabilia from other veterans. When Turnbull died, his son donated his collection of photos and objects to the Resurrection Bay Historical Society.

Bar offered classy touch of the tropics

The “ultra-modern” new bar, the Flamingo, opened in Seward in 1953, owned and managed by George and Richie Giardina. The classy cocktail bar was decorated with a mural of tropical scenes and featured a grand piano and huge upholstered chairs in flamin-go red.

To welcome female patrons, the hostess pinned on a baby orchid as each lady entered the lounge. In the 1950s the Flamingo was in the Liberty Theater Building on Adams Street, but the bar moved to 236 Fourth Avenue in the 1960s, then to 216 Fourth Avenue in the late 1960s when Bob Chappell was the owner.

The last telephone book listing of the bar was in 1984. This information is from the RBHS newsletter feature “Pages from the Past,” that quotes the *Seaport Record* of February 13, 1953, for the description information.

JUNEAU

Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian recordings sought

The Sealaska Heritage Institute is embarking on a long-term project to collect all known Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian recordings, both in Native languages and English, to produce a publication about Southeast Alaska culture and history based on the voices of the ancestors.

SHI asks individuals who have original recordings in any format, including VHS, reels and cassettes, to allow them to duplicate the recordings using the latest technology. SHI will send digital versions of the recordings to the owners.

With the diminishing number of Native language speakers, SHI will make it a priority to transcribe and translate those recordings in Native languages. Those interested in participating should contact Emily Pastore at emily.pastore@sealaska.com.

Cultural memorial photos needed

SHI also is looking for photographs of the cultural ceremony held at Tlingit funerals and *ku.eéx'*. The first cultural ceremony held following the passing of a clan member is called the *Ganeix ka Kaa Toowú Latseen: Healing and Strengthening of Spirit Ceremony*.

This cultural memorial ceremony is held separately from a religious funeral service or the Alaska Native Brotherhood or Sisterhood ceremony. The *ku.eéx'* is often referred to as a "Pay-Off Party." However, SHI's Council of Traditional Scholars is recommending this term not be used and that the traditional name be used instead.

The Council of Traditional Scholars is developing outlines for both the *Ganeix ka Kaa Toowú Latseen: Healing and Strengthening of Spirit Ceremony* and the *Ku.eéx'*. These outlines will be published together in the Box of Knowledge series.

Those interested in submitting photos of either event for possible inclusion in the publication are asked to contact Chuck Smythe at chuck.smythe@sealaska.com

SITKA

Local carver creates ancient spruce canoe

Sitka carver Tommy Joseph and his apprentice Tim Flanery are carving a 25-foot boat of an ancient type, a Sitka canoe, in a project sponsored by Sitka National Historical Park. This traditional boat was once common throughout the region, reports Rebecca Poulson in the Sitka Maritime Heritage Society newsletter.

This type of spruce canoe, or *seet yaakw*, probably became known as the Sitka canoe at least partly because of the similarity of its Tlingit name to the word "Sitka."

The design for this canoe is based on Tommy Joseph's study of Northern Style canoes in museums and historical photographs of the canoes being used for hunting, fishing and transportation. Only a few Sitka canoes have been built over the last 100 years. This canoe will ultimately live in Sitka's Totem Hall.

TENAKEE

Rie Munoz exhibit opens this summer

The Tenakee Historical Collection and Museum is honored to offer a special exhibit for the next two summers featuring Rie Munoz's time and work in Tenakee. In the summer of 2022, the paintings, sketches and personal memorabilia will cover the time from the beginning of the artist's career until 1989.

During the summer of 2023, the materials in the exhibit will change and will cover the period from 1990

through the end of her career. The exhibit is a collaboration between Jane Lindsey, a museum professional, and Juan Munoz, Rie's son and conservator of her artwork and personal items.



Shamrock, Tenakee
by Rie Munoz, 1989.

SOLDOTNA

Busy museum gears up for June opening

The Soldotna Historical Society and Museum hopes to open the museum in early June. Last year, it opened late and closed early, yet still hosted almost 1,400 visitors. The society reports completing and installing descriptive signs for each of the museum's buildings that allow visitors to self-tour, and opening the Ciechanski Cabin to the public. Currently, members are working with the local Safeway store to display historic Soldotna photographs from the museum collection there.

Alaska Mining Hall of Fame adds members

Three pioneers of mining in Alaska were added to the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame in 2021:

- **John Schaeffer Jr.**, a two-star general in the Alaska National Guard, first president of the NANA Regional Corporation, first mayor of the Northwest Arctic Borough, president of the Alaska Federation of Natives, and a leader who played a key role in development of the Red Dog Mine.
- **Charles G "Riz" Bigelow**, a mineral explorer who represented WGM, Inc., in Alaska. Riz and his colleagues played important roles in many mineral discoveries, including the Greens Creek deposit near Juneau and the Pogo Gold Mine east of Fairbanks. They championed the use of scientific mineral deposit model concepts in the search for new mines.
- **Charles C. Hawley**, a geologist, mine developer, mine historian, and Alaska Mining Hall of Family founding board member.

ALEUTIANS

New fence bars cows from historic church

ROSSIA, an organization devoted to historic preservation of Russian Orthodox sacred sites in Alaska, had a busy year in 2021. In addition to facilitating the move of Karluk's Ascension of Our Lord Church from its precarious position above an eroding cliffside, the organization and its partners did restoration projects for the Holy Ascension Cathedral in Unalaska and the St. Nicholas Chapel in Kenai and installed a chain link fence to protect the St. Nicholas Church in Nikolski on Unimak Island in the Aleutians.



St. Nicholas Church with new chain link fence. <https://rossialaska.org/project-st-nicholas-church-nikolski/#> NPS photo.

The historic Nikolski church had a unique need because of the feral cattle around the site. In the 1920s, the Aleutian Livestock Company introduced cattle to Unimak Island. Today, thousands of wild cattle roam the island. Over the years they trampled the wooden fence around the church and cemetery, exposing the gravesites to damage.



FROM THE YUKON

New coin represents indigenous participation in 1896 Klondike gold rush

The Alaska Token Collector newsletter reported that in 2021 Canada issued a new \$1 coin honoring First Nations participation in the 1896 Klondike gold rush.

The coin is available with and without a red applique which represents Moosehide Gathering Place. The Moosehide Gathering is an annual event bringing together indigenous people in Dawson, Yukon Territory.

Yukon seeks fall conference presentations

Yukon by Yukoners: Pleistocene to Present is the theme for the Yukon History and Museum Association fall 2022 conference which will be live-streamed and in person at Tagish, Haines Junction, Dawson and Whitehorse (dates not yet determined).

The theme is to encourage the cultural community to explore what "heritage" means in the Yukon and how Yukoners approach and share that heritage. Presentation proposals are due April 30 and should be sent by email to info@heritageyukon.ca

Topics might be about travels on the land, interconnected communities, family connections and history in artistic practice. A longer list of ideas and more information is available at www.heritageyukon.ca

FROM NEW YORK

Artists respond to Sheldon Jackson Archives

The Mandeville Gallery at Union College in Schenectady, New York, invited three contemporary artists to create artwork in response to materials held in the college's Special Collections and Archives pertaining to Sheldon Jackson. The missionary and educator graduated from Union College in 1855 and served as the first General Agent of Education in the territory of Alaska beginning in 1885.

The exhibit, entitled "Addenda," features works by Gina Adams, Merritt Johnson and Sonya Kelliher-Combs. The artists drew on history and cultural traditions as well as alternative narratives to create artworks that reflect often unconsidered perspectives.

Adams focused on early archival materials that chronicle Jackson's travels and interactions with indigenous groups in the American West. Some of her cross-media pieces include the reuse of antique quilts and broken treaties between the U.S. and Native American tribes.

Johnson, who lives in Sitka, reflects in her art on the generational impact of Jackson's work not found in the inked script and pages that make up the Jackson archive.

Kelliher-Combs, who was raised in Nome, chronicles the ongoing struggle for self-definition and identity in the Alaskan context through mixed media paintings, sculptures and installations. The exhibit will be on view at the Mandeville Gallery until June 12.



Gina Adams, Honoring Modern Manifest Destiny 1, 2021. Photo by Aaron Paden, used courtesy of Gina Adams.

Looking back: First Iditarod was a dreamer's race

BY DIANA HAECKER

The following article, from an interview with Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race co-founder Howard Farley of Nome, first appeared in the Nome Nugget in 2006. It is used here with permission. The Iditarod's 50th running takes place this March.



"It was a dreamer's race, the first race to Nome," said Howard Farley as he sat down with the *Nome Nugget* to remember the first Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, which started an Alaska tradition with international appeal, a race bigger than life.

"In history, it's hard to say what happened when and how it came about, but as far as I'm concerned, it began when I heard of Joe Redington, a crazy guy promoting races around Knik and he was also famous for hooking up 200 dogs to a schoolbus and pulling it around Knik," Farley remembered. "And I was the crazy guy running a tourist dog team on wheels in Nome, so we kind of knew of each other, but had never met."

This changed when the two dog men got connected by chance and started talking about a 1,000-mile dog race. "His idea was to take racing from Knik to Iditarod and back," said Farley. "I listened to that for a while and then things started clicking in my head."

BRING THE RACE UP TO NOME

What clicked was that Farley felt the race needed to go somewhere and he told Redington, "Why not run the race from Knik, or better yet, Anchorage to Nome?"

In endless talks on the phone, mostly in the midnight hour, Farley and Redington



Howard Farley with loaded sled, ready to start the first Iditarod in 1973. Photo: Anchorage Museum of History and Art, B1995.027.

Redington that said: The race is on.

"The deal was that I was in charge of raising money at this end and I did raise the money for the big trophy that still sits in Wasilla," Farley said.

Redington meanwhile convinced a banker to finance a mortgage on his property at Flat Horn Lake to pay for logistics and other things. "So we had enough money for the race to get off, but no support otherwise because people didn't believe that we would make it," Farley said.

"Remember, things were different, things weren't good in 1973. The finances in Alaska weren't that great. And when Joe came out and said, We're gonna have a \$50,000 race—by golly, that was a lot of

ered at Tudor Track in Anchorage.

Without the modern-day fanfare, the mushers set off with no media presence to take note. "Only the mushers' sweethearts and wives were there to see them off," remembered Farley. "We didn't have permission, no permits, no media—we just left."

Of 34 mushers that left that morning, the last two out of the track were Farley and an unknown musher named Dick Wilmarth. Wilmarth went on to win the race. Farley came in third to last.

TRAIL? WHAT TRAIL?

"So we parted company there at the track because I got lost." Having never been in Anchorage before, Farley made a few rounds at the track before finding his way out on the trail.

"There was no trail there," laughed Farley as he remembered running across the flats between Anchorage and Wasilla and following the road, crossing bridges and dodging the incoming tide. "If the tide would've come in it would've drowned half of us," he said. The Iditarod Trail hadn't been traveled for years and years, Farley said. While it was the major route through Alaska from the gold rush days, modern means of travel and the advent of mail delivery by airplane left the trail less traveled.

Redington somehow convinced the lieutenant general of the Army in Alaska to go

Continued on next page

"Sometimes there was a trail, sometimes there wasn't.
And sometimes there was a checkpoint—and sometimes
there was food there and sometimes there wasn't."

hashed their idea over and over until finally the 1,000-mile race to Nome was born and the first start was set for March 3, 1973. "Remember, there were no fundraisers at that time for that or anything of the sort. We ran up \$6,000 or \$7,000 phone bills and the only time you got a hold of Joe was at midnight, when he was done feeding his 500 dogs," laughed Farley.

One day Farley received a letter from

money! Twelve thousand dollars for first place, that was a lot of money. Even if it took you 30 days, 30 days for \$12,000 seemed like a good deal to us," Farley said.

On March 3, 1973, at 10 a.m., mushers—including Farley and other well-known names such as Isaac Okleasik from Teller, George Attla of North Pole, Herbert Nayokpuk of Shishmaref, John Komak of Teller and Dan Seavey of Seward—gath-

Remembers first Iditarod

Continued from page 10

to Nome via snowmobile and helicopter as an Army exercise to blaze the trail. “Sometimes there was a trail, sometimes there wasn’t. And sometimes there was a checkpoint—and sometimes there was food there and sometimes there wasn’t,” Farley said.

So the brave first mushers set out on the 1,000-mile race, before there were any manuals about how to train, feed or maintain a dog team over such a distance. Mushers took their working dogs, their trap line team, and ran into the unknown.

“The press didn’t believe we could make it. As we were planning this, sprint mushers in Anchorage and Fairbanks told the press that Joe was stabbing at windmills and compared him to Don Quixote. There were cartoons and we were basically a laughingstock and dog mushers in general said that we would go out there for a couple hundred miles and crash and burn. And that would be the end of this thing.”

But by the time mushers made it half-

way to Nome, Farley said, suddenly reporters sporting jeans and tennis shoes were climbing out of small airplanes and writing the story down on their little notepads. The world had started noticing the Last Great Race.

Just as Farley pulled into Ruby, the first musher, Dick Wilmarth, drove his dog team down Front Street in Nome after 20 days and 49 minutes on the trail from Anchorage.

Farley remembered talking to his wife Julie on the phone from Ruby. She told him to wrap this thing up and come home. And that’s just what Farley intended to do.

THE DREAM BECOMES REALITY

“The end was in sight,” he said. “There was no point for me to turn back to Anchorage, since I couldn’t afford to fly back home. It was cheaper for me to go on to Nome by dog team.”

It took him and 13 fellow mushers 20 days to get to Ruby—more than halfway to Nome—but only 10 more to finish. With no pre-race training for the long trek, teams were training on the run. Farley’s 13-foot

sled, loaded to the brim, arrived with 10 of the 15 Siberian huskies he’d started with in Anchorage. Farley felt privileged to have been part of the first Iditarod, the dreamer’s race.

Against all predicted odds, more mushers finished than scratched. Of the original 34 starters, 22 crossed a finish line made of Kool-Aid spritzed into the snow. That ratio of starters to finishers persists to this day.

No burlled arch, no ABC camera crane, no media frenzy. But the *Nome Nugget* of March 27, 1973, reported, “The largest and most enthusiastic crowd in Nome’s recent history greeted the winner of the Iditarod trail 1,000-mile sled dog race last Friday (March 23, 1973). The winner of what may be an annual event was Dick Wilmarth, a trapper and gold miner from the village of Red Devil on the Kuskokwim river. He is 29 years old.”

Just as going to the moon had been a human dream for the longest time, the Iditarod still has the power to invoke dreams of dog people all over the world. And just like astronauts, a very small number of people actually finish the journey.

Conference news

Continued from page 1

battles over management of fish and game.

Other conflicting visions in our history revolved around education and what was deemed best for children. The boarding school program is an example. The practice of removing Alaska Native children from their communities, intended to educate and “civilize” them, harshly curtailed the transmission of Native language and culture. Conference plans include a panel on Alaska boarding schools featuring former students at Mount Edgecumbe and other schools.

A secondary theme for the conference is the importance of recent history. We are organizing panels on the rollout of ANCSA and preparations for the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline, both of which occurred within the last 50 years. We also plan to offer mini-workshops on methods of studying, archiving, interpreting and teaching recent history.

Demuth’s interest in the Far North began when she moved to the Yukon village of Old Crow at age 18. There she mushed huskies, hunted caribou, fished for salmon, tracked bears, and learned to survive in the taiga and tundra.



Bathsheba Demuth, keynote speaker for the 2022 AHS conference. Photo by Jesse Burke, courtesy Brown Alumni Magazine.

Now she specializes in the lands and seas of the Russian and North American Arctic. Her writings on how the histories of people, ideas, places and non-human species intersect has appeared in publications such as *The American Historical Review*, *The New Yorker* and *The Best American Science and Nature Writing*.

—Rachel Mason

Present a paper at our fall conference!

“Conflicting Visions in Alaska History” is the theme for this year’s Alaska Historical Society conference, scheduled for October 6-8 and 13-15.

The conference will take place largely on-line, but we are hopeful the public health situation will allow some in-person events in Anchorage.

Papers related to our theme or on any topic related to Alaska history are welcome. Presentations are limited to 20 minutes. All presenters must register for the conference.

To submit a proposal, please email your presentation title, an abstract of no more than 100 words, and two sentences about yourself to Rachel Mason, program chair, at rachel_mason@nps.gov.

Proposals are due May 31, 2022.

AN ODDMENT

The cold facts about strategy of “burning down”

In the 1880s, when prospectors reached the Yukon River basin searching for gold, they discovered, to their chagrin, that the earth was frozen. Picks didn't work. Dynamite didn't work. And hydraulic pumps, when running water was available, were equally futile. In summer, they could process loose gravel near the surface, but when winter came, work stopped. Gradually miners began experimenting with using bonfires to reach a paystreak deep underground. At Birch Creek near the town of Circle City along the Yukon River, two miners deployed this novel strategy and called it “burning down.” As one observer explained:

They got their claim opened up ready for work in the summer and when the winter came instead of going into Circle City to spend their time loafing around the dance-houses they stuck by their claim. They found that a big fire burning all night would thaw out a couple of inches of gravel. In the morning they would scrape away the remnants of the fire, lug their gravel into their cabin, and at night build another fire. They kept this up all winter, and when the ice went out in the spring they had a big pile of dirt ready to pan. They washed \$16,000 of dust out of that pile of dirt for their winter's work.

This fiery approach spread to the Klondike a few years later but was soon replaced by steam boilers and steel-tipped thawing points that were faster and more cost-effective when melting permafrost.

—Chris Allan

From: “Swarming After Gold,” Sun and New York Press, April 25, 1897

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Gold miners splitting wood to feed the fire in their prospecting shaft, ca. 1898. From glass lantern slide, courtesy of Chris Allan.

Robust Alaska Historical Society memberships fund activities

Thank you for your membership in the Alaska Historical Society!

2022 is off to a very good start for the financial health of the Society. We're elated with the robust response to our January membership renewal letter. As of mid-February, 34 renewing members did so at the \$100 patron level, and 64 people included a financial donation with their renewal.

Four members opted to become life members: Melissa Chapin, Fairbanks; Holly Guise, Albuquerque, NM; Patricia Holloway, Fairbanks; and Pauline Wilson, Fairbanks. Thank you all!

Memberships are the largest part of AHS's income and fund programs and operations, scholarships and awards, newsletter, journal and special projects.

If you have not renewed your membership for 2022, it is easy to do through our website, www.alaskahistoricalscociety.org under Membership & Giving. We also accept checks mailed to P.O. Box 100299, Anchorage, AK 99510. We hope you will renew to continue to be part of Alaska's historical community.