Alaska History News

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(1) David Ramseur presents the President's Award to Leanna Williams. (2) Chief Justice Susan Carney with Barbara Hood. (3) Doug Vandegraft leads the historic bars tour. (4) Tom Bundtzen and Rich and Peggy Mattson at the banquet. (5) John Whitehead asks a question during a session. (6) Brian Rogers shares lantern slides.

Conference examined vital lifelines in history

Insights into Alaska's historical experience with the pipeline, a new state constitution and the role of dogs in Alaska's economy and culture highlighted the 2025 Alaska Historical Society annual conference in Fairbanks in late September.

The conference set an attendance record of more than 130 registered participants and received so many presentation proposals that lunch breaks and evenings had to be booked with conference activities. The main venue at the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Wood Center was spacious, professionally managed and broadly praised by attendees.

At the annual banquet at Raven Landing Senior Community, 14 Alaskans who passed away over the past year and who significantly contributed to the state were honored. Nearly a dozen awards also were presented to Alaskans for outstanding historical accomplishment.

Under the theme "Vital Lifelines in Alaska's History," the conference focused on three significant milestones in Alaska's history: the 50th anniversary of starting construction of the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline, the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the Alaska constitutional convention and the 100th anniversary of the diphtheria serum run from Nenana to Nome.

Former Alaska Governor Bill Walker opened the conference in conversation with UAF history professor and AHS board member Phil Wight to recall the impact sudden oil wealth had on the state. As a carpenter in Valdez, Walker recounted listening to U.S. Senate approval of the pipeline by one vote in 1973. He recalled being joined around the radio by two fellow blue-collar workers who also became state leaders: Jim Sampson and Mano Frey. He then detailed how the pipeline

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Reflecting on 4 years as president: AHS needs courageous advocacy

After four years of scratching my head every three months for a timely column to fill this space, this is my last. I term out after six years on the board of directors, the last four as president. Under our bylaws, I'll continue as an ex-officio board member and have agreed to continue editing the quarterly newsletter.

By the time you read this, anthropologist and educator Patricia Partnow will be bringing her half-century as an Alaskan and savvy organizational skills to the board presidency. She'll be ably assisted by University of Alaska historian Jeff Meyers as vice-president, Sikta author and historian Rebecca Poulson as secretary and University of Alaska Anchorage archivist Gwen Higgins as treasurer.

My time on the board of Alaska's only statewide historical advocacy organization has been time-consuming, usually rewarding and sometimes frustrating. Unlike most of our 15 board members, my claim as an historian is pretty modest. After a nearly 40-year career in journalism, government and politics, I opted for a forced retirement after my U.S. Senator boss lost his re-election. My avocation since has focused on the history of Alaska-Russia relations, which culminated with my 2017 book, *Melting the Ice Curtain*.

During my AHS board tenure, I've been honored to help implement thoughtful ideas from board members and aggressively advocated for the promotion of Alaska history.

Some of the society's best recent work has been providing forums for Alaskans to hear how history shapes public policy. Longtime Fairbanks board member Will Schneider envisioned a Critical Issues Lecture Series which attracted hundreds of participants to debate issues from climate change and subsistence to resource development. Speakers included top-notch Alaska and national experts such as historian H.W. Brands, Ambassador Richard Haass, former Gov. Bill Walker, former Lt. Gov. Fran Ulmer and state Supreme Court Chief Justice Susan Carney.

The society has bravely called out local, state and federal public officials for their actions contrary to advancing historical preservation and advocacy. In his first term, for example, President Trump tried to close the federal archives facility in Seattle which contains thousands of invaluable Alaska records. We joined other Pacific Northwest historical organizations to kill that.

We have been less successful opposing Trump's name-change of North America's tallest mountain and his continuing efforts to interfere in the mission of state and national historical and cultural institutions.

When the Trump administration threatened assistance to the university, the Board of Regents quickly waived a white flag on mention of affirmative and diversity initiatives. The AHS opposed that position and Trump cut federal funding to UA anyway.

When they deserved it, we've praised the work of other officials, such as Senator Lisa Murkowski's efforts to fund the digitization of Alaska's federal archives and state Senator Gary Stevens' civics education legislation. We asked legislative and congressional candidates to respond to an historical issue questionnaire and circulated it publicly.

The less sexy but essential administrative work of the AHS also has produced results. Thanks to generous donors, recent fund-raising campaigns are keeping our budget healthy. The redesign of our quarterly newsletter and semi-annual journal garner regular praise. And we're especially proud of our new raven spiral logo which seeks to better acknowledge the broad diversity of Alaska history we strive to represent.

As misguided and politically motivated attacks on Alaskan and American history continue at the local, state and federal level, I'm confident the AHS will continue to fight the good fight.

—David Ramseur

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P.O. Box 100299
Anchorage, AK 99510-0299
Phone: 907-615-1255
members@alaskahistoricalsociety.org
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Society recognizes contributions to history

To recognize outstanding accomplishments to research, preserve and educate about Alaska history, the AHS announced its annual awards at the Fairbanks conference. This year's awards are:

EVANGELINE ATWOOD AWARD Awarded to **Elizabeth Cook**, a stalwart of the Tanana-Yukon Historical Society and longtime civic-minded, active Fairbanks resident. Cook is well-versed in Interior Alaska's archaeology, anthropology and local history. She has served as the TYHS treasurer and represented the society on the Pioneer Museum and Pioneer Park boards.

The award recognizes an individual for significant long-term contributions to Alaska history. It is named for an advocate and writer of Alaska history and founder of the AHS.

BARBARA SMITH PATHFINDER AWARD Given to **Patrick Saltonstall**, curator of archaeology at the Alutiiq Museum in Kodiak for 28 years. Saltonstall has studied sites through surveys and excavations, extensively researched historic records and listened to residents, especially Elders. His work significantly expanded knowledge of Kodiak's history, promoted historic preservation and public awareness of the history of the Alutiiq people.

The award is given for indexing or preparing guides to Alaska historical material. It is named after Barbara Smith, an historian, archivist and exhibit curator who prepared invaluable research tools for Alaska Native, Russian Orthodox and Russian America records.

ESTHER BILLMAN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE Awarded to the **Alaska Oil & Gas Historical Society** for its *Voices of the North: Chronicles of Alaska's Oil and Gas Pioneers* video oral history project. Society members produced 40 oral histories with geologists, engineers, local suppliers, businesspeople, women in the oil fields and union hands. The collection highlights technological and economic milestones and sheds light on resilience that have driven Alaska's oil and gas sector.

The award is named in honor of the longtime curator of Sitka's Sheldon Jackson Museum and given for a project contributing to the preservation and understanding of Alaska history the past year.

ELVA SCOTT LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY AWARD Given to **Ketchikan Museums** for its overall excellence. The award also recognizes a physical and virtual exhibit entitled *History Afloat: Capturing Today because it's Tomorrow's History*. The exhibit, about historic wooden boats, is also about the people who work on the waterfront in Ketchikan, Metlakatla and Prince of Wales Island communities. The exhibit extended beyond the walls of the museum through public presentations and school tours.

Scott was a founder of Homer's Natural History Society and Pratt Museum, and after moving to Eagle was newsletter editor and tour guide. The award recognizes an historical society or museum for its programs, newsletter, publication or a significant recent accomplishment.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO ALASKA HISTORY AWARDS Four awards were made in this category which recognize individuals and groups for projects, publications and other efforts that have significantly promoted and added to understanding Alaska history.

- **Ronan Rooney** was recognized for the podcast and website *Wrangell History Unlocked* he created in 2020. Although he has moved from Wrangell, Ronan has a deep interest in the community's history. His first podcast was a three-part series on the 1908 shipwreck of the *Star of Bengal*, a salmon packer that wrecked shortly after leaving Wrangell where more than 110 of the 138 passengers and crew were tragically trapped on board.
- Author and longtime legislative aide **Lisa Weissler** was recognized for her book *Capital Crude: The Impact of Oil on Alaska Politics*. Published in 2024, the book is a ground-breaking political history of Alaska's important oil industry. Weissler was an active participant in many of the events with a 30-year career in oil and gas policy.
- The educational nonprofit **See Stories**, with special recognition of **Marie Acemah**, was recognized for its programs. The brainchild of Acemah, See Stories started in 2019 to train students and teachers to preserve local history through filmmaking and podcasting.
- The **Nome Kennel Club** and the **City of Nenana** were jointly recognized for their centennial commemorations of the 1925 diphtheria serum run from Nenana to Nome. Organizers provided their communities with a series of activities including lectures and demonstrations that engaged all ages with dog mushing past and present.

THE TERRENCE M. COLE STUDENT AND BEGINNING PROFESSIONAL AWARD Named for popular UAF professor of history Terrence Cole, this award provides scholarships to help a post-secondary student pursuing an Alaska history topic or a new professional at an Alaska museum, archive, cultural center or cultural resources agency attend the annual conference. This year's recipient is **Benjamin Seymour**, who lived in Little Diomede as a teacher and presented a paper entitled, "Breaking Storm over the Diomedes: 1938's Native Travel Program Across the Bering Strait."

THE MORGAN AND JEANIE SHERWOOD AWARD for the best article in the last volume of *Alaska History*, the peer-reviewed journal of the Alaska Historical Society, was awarded to **William Schneider**. Schneider was guest editor of the issue devoted to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. He determined topics and recruited authors to introduce 12 significant primary documents pertinent to the landmark act.

The late Professor Sherwood was a longtime Alaska historian and he and his wife Jeanie endowed this award with a $500 annual prize.

THE PRESIDENT'S AWARD, given by the AHS president, was awarded to Fairbanks AHS board member **Leanna Prax Williams**. Williams has been enormously helpful to the society, from orchestrating Fairbanks History Day to saving the statewide Alaska History Day contest.

Through Williams' work, Alaska student participation in National History Day has grown. In addition to coordinating the contest with students and teachers and recruiting judges, Williams raised funds to develop a website, hold teacher training workshops and prepare sample lesson plans on Alaska topics. She is completing a Ph.D. at UAF in the Arctic and Northern Studies program.

IN MEMORIAM: 14 Alaskans honored for enormous contributions to our state

Editor's note: *At its annual conference in Fairbanks, the Alaska Historical Society celebrated the lives of Alaskans who contributed to our state's history and betterment and passed away over the last year. A huge thanks again to Ron Inouye and Angela Schmidt, both of Fairbanks, for compiling these summaries of lives well lived.*

MARY EHRLANDER (1953-2025) Fairbanks born and raised, she met Lars Ehrlander and entered the world of his homebuilding business as the family grew with three sons. Her career beyond teaching, advising, research and writing included directing the Arctic and Northern Studies program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and co-founding the University of the Arctic Model Arctic Council to broaden students' understanding of northern polar regions. Mary's Swedish language skills assisted in the translation of Swedish explorer Albin Johnson's book, *Seventeen Years in Alaska*. She authored other books including the 2018 *Walter Harper, Alaska Native Son,* which garnered her the Alaska Historical Society's Historian of the Year award.

RICHARD A. FINEBERG (1941-2024) Teaching, research, public policy, advocacy, steely determination and banjo-plucking defined Richard. He marched with striking California grape workers in the 1970s and his initial public policy advocacy in Alaska was aboard the Canadian fishing boat *Greenpeace*, protesting the 1972 nuclear tests on Amchitka Island. Richard was a policy analyst for Governors Sheffield and Cowper in the 1980s and monitored the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline construction, operations and politics which received national attention.

CLARK S. GRUENING (1943-2025) As a member of the Alaska House of Representatives (1974-1978), he helped create the Alaska Permanent Fund and later served on its board, including as chair. His approachable demeanor, quick wit and ability to work across the political aisle were evident throughout his personal life and professional career. The grandson of territorial Governor and U.S. Senator Ernest Gruening, politics and public service were important to Clark in active participation in legal, civic, recreation, human services and philanthropic communities. He was a lobbyist for the AHS, Alaska Library Association and Museums Alaska, with whom he took pride in securing funding for the Father Kashevaroff State Library Archives and Museum Building.

STEVE HAYCOX (1940-2025) Alaska historian Steve Haycox's 40-plus years at the University of Alaska Anchorage guided the history department's development from its early years as the Senior College (1971-1977). He served in the U.S. Navy where he was a musician and earned his Ph.D. from the University of Oregon. Steve's major scholarship was Alaska's history and its relationship with the federal government with his books, *Alaska: An American Colony* (2002) and *Battleground Alaska: Fighting Federal Power in America's Last Wilderness* (2016). Awarded Historian of the Year in 2003, he was recipient of numerous university awards and state commendations, and served as AHS president and on the Cook Inlet Historical Society board.

NEVILLE JACOBS (1950-2024) Journalist, oral historian, painter and synthesist of Christian/Buddhist beliefs, Neville was a creator, documenter and preserver of Alaska history. As a student of the 14th Dalai Lama in Dharamshala, India, her personal journey and pilgrimage were chronicled in the 2019 book, *The Master on the Mountain*. Her family relocated to Anchorage in 1949 and then to Fairbanks in the 1960s, where she studied anthropology and journalism at the University of Alaska. An accomplished artist with paintings in major Alaska museum collections, she helped found the Fairbanks Watercolor Society and served in the Fairbanks Arts Association.

JIM MAGDANZ (1951-2024) Through a *Des Moines Register* photo story of Shungnak kids visiting an Iowa dairy farm, journalist Magdanz began his interest in Alaska. He subsequently documented people in Shungnak, a continuing passion evidenced in his 1982 exhibit at the Alaska State Museum. Originally from Nebraska, Jim obtained a University of Missouri journalism degree, then worked as a reporter and photographer. In 1981 he began working for the fledgling Subsistence Division of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Nome, researching, writing and photographing rural Alaska's Indigenous residents, hunter-gather economies and ways of life. A pilot and musician, he authored *Go Home, River*, a 1996 children's book.

JUDITH KLEINFELD (1944-2025) Initially venturing to Alaska with husband Andrew Kleinfeld in 1966, they returned to stay in 1969. At the UA's Institute for Social and Economic Research she heeded director Vic Fischer's advice to "do something for Alaska and keep yourself funded." Through 41 years at UAF, Judy taught, researched, published and in 1991 created the Northern Studies cross-disciplinary program. She received numerous university and community awards for her research and, above all, valued her husband and three children.

JERRY MCBEATH (1942-2024) Working in his family's Minneapolis grocery store, Jerry learned of charity for those without food. In 1976, he and his wife Jenifer Huang and family arrived in Fairbanks where he taught at UAF for 38 years. A stalwart professor of political science, he published widely in journals and authored *Alaska Government and Politics* (1988), *Political Economy of Oil in Alaska: Multi-Nationals versus the State* (2008), *Big Oil in the United States: Industry Influence on Institutions, Policy, and Politics* (2016), and *Energy Reserves: Examining the Facts* (2022). His public service included the local school board and singing in multiple choirs.

MARY A. NORDALE (1934-2024) Public service was core to Mary and her forebears: grandfather Anton "Tony" Nordale, who served on the first UA Board of Regents; her father, Territorial legislator Alton Gerald Nordale; and her mother, Katherine Driscoll Nordale, delegate to the Alaska Constitutional Convention. Mary worked for Senator Bob Bartlett, helping craft statehood legislation and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. She served as Assistant U.S. Attorney, state Assistant District Attorney, Department of Revenue commissioner and as the first female president of the Alaska Miners Association. She was inducted into the 2024 Alaska Women's Hall of Fame.

GLENN E. SHAW (1938-2025) Dubbed a "funny, brilliant scientist," Glenn loved to tinker and figure out how things worked. After serving as a Navy electronics technician, he earned several degrees including a 1971 University of Arizona Ph.D. on remote measurement of atmospheric aerosols. From 1971 to 2004, Glenn worked at the UAF Geophysical Institute and identified the "Arctic Haze" pollution originating from coal burning in northern Russia and Europe. A great prankster and music lover, he particularly enjoyed the camaraderie of other Geophysical Institute scientists.

MARY SHIELDS (1944-2025) Completing the 1974 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race along with Lolly Medley, Mary finished 23rd, breaking new trail for women and mushing into history. She participated in long-distance races, including the inaugural 1984 1,000-mile Fairbanks-to-Whitehorse Yukon Quest, then again in 1986 and 1988, and the 1,200-mile Hope Race from Nome across the Bering Sea to Anadyr, Russia, in 1991. She authored several books including *Sled Dog Trails* (1984), was featured in the documentary *Season of the Sled Dog* and hosted visitors at her residence and kennels with "Alaskan Tails of the Trail."

CLARE SWAN (1931-2025) Kenaitze Elder, leader and advocate for Alaska Native rights, Clare impacted Kenai and the broader Dena'ina Athabaskan cultural world. Her leadership within the Kenaitze Indian Tribe IRA, Cook Inlet Region Inc., and Cook Inlet Tribal Council championed health, wellness, substance rights and educational development of Alaska Native and American Indian children through the Anchorage Clare Swan Early Learning Center. She was inducted into the 2011 Alaska Women's Hall of Fame.

EARL WINECK (1927-2024) Earl was a member of the Michigan Finnish Winnikka family whose grandfather came to the Klondike and Nome in 1899, and changed the family name to Wineck. Earl grew up in the Matanuska Valley, joined the Alaska Territorial Guard at age 15 during World War II and later served in the Aleutians. He worked as an electrician on the White Alice and DEW Line sites and became an electrical inspector for the City of Anchorage. The Winecks donated the family's 1936 Colony barn to the Alaska State Fair in Palmer in 1976, and many Wineck homestead items are in the Palmer Visitors Center and the Colony House Museum.

TOMMYE JO CORR (1929-2025) The homesteader and long-time educator came to Fairbanks in 1956 and taught in Craig and Soldotna, where she was the last teacher hired by the Territory as part of the log schoolhouse program in which local homesteaders built the school. Outside the regular classroom, Tommye Jo was a volunteer teacher of English as a second language for new arrivals. The Corrs won many Ninilchik State Fair agricultural blue ribbons.

Rooney adds another award to historian resume

Editor's note: *Among the recipients of this year's annual Alaska Historical Society awards is Wrangell historian Ronan Rooney.* The Wrangell Sentinel *recently profiled Rooney and publisher Larry Persily allowed us to reprint the story, below.*

Former Wrangell resident Ronan Rooney was awarded a Contributions to Alaska History award this year for his work on the podcast and website *Wrangell History Unlocked*, which he created in 2020. Photo courtesy *Wrangell Sentinel*.

Ronan Rooney is marking the fifth anniversary of exploring local history through podcasts and essays on his website *Wrangell History Unlocked*—and now with recognition from the Alaska Historical Society.

Last month, he received a Contributions to Alaska History Award, given to individuals and groups for projects, publications and other efforts that have significantly promoted and added to understanding Alaska's history.

It started in March of 2020, at the beginning of the COVID shutdown, Rooney was searching for some connection to ground him.

"I thought back to an earlier version of myself, of growing up in Wrangell. Since I was a toddler, I was always looking under stones at the beach, to see what would come out. Looking into Wrangell's past is the same—it's endlessly fascinating," he explained.

"While I live in Oregon, these stories let me live in the past, connecting me now to where I've been."

Wrangell History Unlocked features a variety of stories, many rooted from the late 1800s to the early 1900s.

While the history of the 1908 sinking of the cannery ship *Star of Bengal* or President Warren G. Harding's 1923 visit to Wrangell as part of his "Voyage of Understanding" have become more well known, Rooney's first story, published in September 2020, concerned William King Lear, who owned Fort Wrangel (as it was spelled then) in the late 1800s.

He discovered that "King" was not a nickname, but a tribute to his father's commanding officer William King, and the family name was Lear. It made Rooney wonder how much the name influenced his character.

"Here's a guy in a little gold rush town, acting like a king, always wanting to be in charge. He really thought he ran the show and was angry when the Army returned and took over!"

Lear was a great start to unlocking stories about Wrangell. "He became one of the first settled old-timers in town, who had lived through so much of its history, who'd just seen everything. By following his story, I got to watch someone become a respected elder who had lived through all kinds of changes."

The story of the 1869 Christmas Day bombardment of the Tlingit village by the U.S. Army changed the way Rooney physically understood the geography of Wrangell.

Before working on that story, "I had no sense of the village and the Tlingit people, where things were, who lived there."

That story led to another pivotal understanding. He was invited to participate in the ceremonies surrounding the Army's formal apology in January of this year in Wrangell.

In the program, he is listed as "historian."

"I was so moved, it wasn't how I described myself, it was given to me. I don't have a Ph.D., my job isn't in a museum or an archive. It was an honor."

He also was honored in 2023 with the American Association for State and Local History Award of Excellence.

Rooney looks for the overlooked. People gather, rummage and play bingo at the Merlin Elmer Palmer American Legion Hall. Who, he wondered, was Mervin Elmer Palmer?

Unraveling the story of a Nebraska farm boy who had lived in Wrangell, a Marine who served bravely and died in World War I, was like "finding a friend," he said.

"It was thrilling—he's not a stranger anymore, he belongs to me forever." Finding the person behind the name was like "welcoming him back into the family."

A favorite tale is just a beat in a larger story—the way Tlingit Elder Shak-Ish-Tin would keep a supply of bone labrets (inserts in a lip piercing) on hand, which she would take out and sell to curious tourists.

"The joke is on the tourists. We love tourists, but they do come wanting something," Rooney said. The story also reflects humor and laughter, elements that are sometimes overlooked in history.

"The pictures of the times required people to sit very still for some time, so everyone looks sober and solemn. But that's not the whole picture."

When writing about Native people or topics, he works to be sensitive.

"As a non-Native person, I had to find a way of talking about history. These are Wrangell stories for a Wrangell audience, so we're talking about our own family history," he said.

"It's inescapable that the stories will be

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AHS BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

UAA archivist advocates for value of history

Librarian and archivist Gwen Higgins is one of the newest members of the Alaska Historical Society Board of Directors, elected in 2024.

After earning a graduate degree in library and information studies from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Higgins answered the call of Alaska, responding to a job opening for new archivists at the University of Alaska Anchorage library. Although the position was for three years, she was able to transition into a tenure track position as an archivist and has been there 11 years.

Growing up in Ohio, Higgins had a typical Midwest upbringing centered around family, high school band and other activities. She loved the outdoors and after graduating from Case Western University in Cleveland with degrees in political science and international studies Higgins moved to Wisconsin. There she fell in love with cross-country skiing and the outdoor culture.

But Wisconsin wasn't enough and Alaska's great outdoors and job drew her further north.

Higgins' current position is with the library's archives and collections, which holds and curates Alaska historical items with some university records and rare books too. The AHS papers are archived there, as are those of the Anchorage Chamber, Rotary, Opera Association and the League of Women Voters.

With only three full-time archivists, UAA doesn't have a lot of bandwidth to solicit donations, she says. Staff mainly respond to donors who seek them out, and help with research questions that come in by email and phone.

"It's a really fun job," Higgins says. "We start from the beginning of the life cycle of a collection, working with a donor's historical materials that they collect as part of their lives, including photos, diaries and letters."

Once the material comes in, Higgins examines everything carefully, only keeping items that aren't stored elsewhere, placing them in archival boxes and preparing descriptions.

Gwen Higgins caught the outdoor sports bug in Wisconsin and moved to Alaska, in part, for an enhanced version of winter exploration. Here she is cross-country skiing at Denali View Chalet in 2023. Photo courtesy Gwen Higgins.

Some items go on *Alaska's Digital Archives*, a website that showcases mostly photos from libraries, museums and historical societies across Alaska. "It's a good resource if you want to see what Alaska looked like at various time periods," Higgins says.

She also adds that it can be tough choosing what to archive now, given limited resources and fewer physical materials, and with so many records in digital form. But documenting Alaskans' activism is a priority, she says, such as the 2017 and 2018 Women's Marches and the 2017 March for Science. The archives also recently began an oral history project with current UAA students documenting the student experience.

Higgins is drawn to the Alaska Historical Society's mission to promote history, encourage the preservation and interpretation of resources and educate Alaskans about their heritage.

She notes that "history doesn't get enough recognition these days, especially with the focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields and money-making careers.

"But the study of history is important," she said. "People are people and we can look to the past and see how people responded to events. This doesn't necessarily predict what our future holds, but we can use that knowledge as a tool to navigate what is going on in the present."

Higgins lives in Anchorage with her husband, a dog and cat. She enjoys hiking and cross-country skiing, and crafting, especially needle felting, which she describes as "just stabbing a ball of wool with a needle until it turns into something" and a great way to release any anger.

Higgins attended this year's AHS conference and appreciated hearing from people who are passionate about their research. For her future work with AHS, Higgins wants to get more involved in Alaska History Day and highlight some of the UAA archival collections in the society's newsletter.

—Molly McCammon

Cultural and educational lifelines

Stories of two Alaska Native students at Carlisle and beyond

Editor's note: Captivated by her presentation at this year's AHS conference in Fairbanks on the Carlisle Indian School, we asked University of Alaska Fairbanks history professor Mary Ludwig to summarize it in a shorter piece for the newsletter, which appears here.

Annie Coodlalook and Fay Koborivak were both seven years old when they arrived at Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. Both were from Inupiaq communities and wanted to contribute to their people.

Annie had moved from Utqiagvik, what Americans called Point Barrow, in 1897. Fay came from Kobuk, a small village in Northwest Alaska along the Kobuk River. In 1907, D.W. Cram and his wife, who had run a small school at Bettles, Alaska, brought Fay to Carlisle.

In both communities, the Inupiat relied on subsistence living and traded with surrounding peoples. Each community experienced changes due to colonization. Whaling attracted outsiders to Utqiagvik, and prospectors made their way up the Kobuk River. Soon, missionaries and schoolteachers followed. As non-Natives entered their lands, Alaska Natives dealt with changes, such as the spread of diseases, reductions in game, and the removal of children from Indigenous homes.

These changes affected Annie and Fay, who each understood loss at a young age. Annie's parents died before Sheldon Jackson became her guardian and sent her to Carlisle. Fay lost two brothers to starvation, and her parents made the gut-wrenching decision to send their daughter thousands of miles away to the boarding school.

The girls' experiences differed once they arrived at Carlisle. Annie attended from November 14, 1897, to April 17, 1907. After leaving, she remembered Carlisle fondly, writing Superintendent Moses Friedman, "Carlisle has done for me so much, and I always want to keep in touch with the school." Annie left school to a successful, rich life. She returned to Utqiagvik, where she served as a teacher and assisted the Arctic explorer, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, in recording Inupiaq stories. After three years, Annie decided to leave Utqiagvik and study nursing in California. While there, she married a Norwegian, Arthur Eide. She and Arthur moved north and served as teachers on Little Diomede Island, where they began a family, and then returned to Utqiagvik to assist in building the first hospital there.

Like Annie, Fay wanted to be a teacher and return to her people. However, when she arrived at Carlisle in January of 1906, the school rejected her due to a suspected case of tuberculosis. After only one week at Carlisle, she left. She never made it back to Alaska. Fay died in Seattle in May 1906, and was buried in the Lake View Cemetery, where she remains to this day.

Annie and Fay represent two of 125 Alaska Native students who traveled over 3,000 miles to attend Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Colonel Richard Henry Pratt established the school in 1879 with the intention to "kill the Indian in him, and save the man," a phrase

Carlisle students Annie Coodlalook, Cooki Glook, Anna Buck, Esenetuck, Tomiclock, and Laublock are identified in this set of two images. The image appears in John N. Choate's *Souvenir of the Carlisle Indian School* (Carlisle, PA: J. N. Choate, 1902). Photo courtesy Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center.

that reflects the assimilative agenda of American reformers of the late nineteenth century. Pratt was one of many reformers who evinced the idea that the only salvation for Indigenous peoples was to completely integrate them into American society.

Carlisle became the model for boarding schools across America, including in Alaska, where Reverend Dr. Sheldon Jackson initiated an assimilative educational program. Many Alaska Natives attended boarding schools in the Lower 48 as well as Alaska. From 1887 to 1918, 70 boys and 55 girls, ranging in ages from six to 22, attended Carlisle. There, they learned English, wore uniforms, followed a rigid schedule and learned basic academic skills while also focusing on sex-segregated trades, such as carpentry, farming and printing for boys, and sewing, laundry and teaching for girls.

At least 80 percent of them worked in outing programs, which provided student laborers to locals. Reformers intended to sever

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Mrs. Arthur Hansin Eide (Coodlalook) ice fishing with child in back-carry, 1916. Annie Coodlalook taught at Little Diomede and Utqiagvik. Arthur Eide Collection, Anchorage Museum, B1970.028.190.

Cultural lifelines

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schoolchildren's connections to their Indigenous nations. For some, this proved true. Some remained in the Lower 48. At least 16 Alaska Native children died at Carlisle, and others died shortly after leaving.

Even in light of these tragic circumstances, the story of Alaska Natives attending Carlisle is not a story of total declension. Rather, most of the children who attended returned to Alaska. Some, such as William and Louis Paul, threw themselves into community activism and became leaders in the Alaska Native Brotherhood. Many served as teachers in Alaska, such as Samuel Anaruk, Anna Buck, Flora Campbell, and Kathryn Dyakanoff Seller. Others, such as Henry Phillips, wrote for newspapers which featured the concerns of Alaska Natives. Most returned to marry and have families with descendants that continue to contribute to the state today.

The experiences of Annie Coodlalook and Fay Koborivak illustrate that Alaska Native students had dreams that subverted the intentions of American reformers. Many hoped to return to their people, improve conditions in their homelands and contribute to their communities. If anything, the story of Alaska Natives at boarding schools is a complex mixture of tragedy and loss, but also of strength and resilience.

—Mary Ludwig

Because of space considerations, we do not use footnotes in the newsletter. Ludwig can provide those. Key sources for her research include:

- "Annie Coodlalook Student File," Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/student_files/annie-coodlalook-student-file
- David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, 2nd ed. (University Press of Kansas, 2020)
- Arnold Krupat, *Boarding School Voices: Carlisle Indian Students Speak* (University of Nebraska Press, 2021)
- Jacqueline Fear-Segal and Susan D. Rose, eds. *Carlisle Indian Industrial School: Indigenous Histories, Memories, and Reclamations* (University of Nebraska Press, 2016)

Fairbanks conference

Continued from page 1

dramatically changed Alaska.

Governor from 2014 to 2018, Walker said that while the pipeline made Alaska enormously wealthy, the state continues to wrestle with challenges of environmental regulation and ensuring Alaska gets its fair share from resource development.

The conference's other keynote speaker was State Supreme Court Chief Justice Susan Carney. She spoke about her early days clerking for Supreme Court Justice Jay Rabinowitz, who capitalized on her basketball skills for an Anaktuvuk Pass tournament. In conversation with Anchorage attorney and businesswoman Barbara Hood, Carney praised the authors of Alaska's constitution for designing a unified state court system in which all Alaskans are entitled to the same justice system.

A conference highlight was the showing of early 20th century hand-painted glass slides projected through what used to be a kerosene-fueled light source now converted to electricity. Former UAF Chancellor Brian Rogers, retired and vice president of the Magic Lantern Society of the U.S. and Canada, donned a top hat of the era to show Klondike Gold Rush and Alaska scenes once viewed with awe by audiences around the world.

The AHS 2026 conference is tentatively slated for Homer, October 7-10. Board member and conference planning chair Jeff Meyers, a UAA history professor in Homer, is working to finalize the venue and dates at the Kachemak Bay Campus of UAA's Kenai Peninsula College.

Many thanks for the 2025 conference to the Tanana-Yukon Historical Society, UAF Department of History, AHS's Conference Program Committee and many sponsors, including the Atwood Foundation and Alyeska Pipeline.

—David Ramseur

Rooney award

Continued from page 6

personally relevant to the audience. I know these will be deeply personal to people, so I do my best to elevate the voices in the historical record, to put them in conversation. It's not about taking sides, but helping people understand the stakes in the past and to help people understand the circumstances they were thrust in to."

Rooney makes no money on his work, although he is considering some possible merchandising, just to get more things out into the world.

His biggest hope is that others tap into his histories to broaden their own expressions.

"I want people to find a way to incorporate these histories into their own livelihoods. History is so malleable, it can become a song, a painting, a destination. I hope a painter reading the website will be inspired to make art, or a tour guide finds interesting stories to share."

While he usually is working on several stories at a time, his new podcast is based on a 1953 short story, "The Strangest Story Ever Told." What exactly did some gold miners see in Thomas Bay? Catch that story, and many more, on Rooney's website *Wrangell History Unlocked*.

—Sue Bahleda for the Wrangell Sentinel

ANCHORAGE

Boarding school exhibit explores history

In May, the Alaska Native Heritage Center hosted a daylong event, "Beyond Boarding Schools Summit: Towards Truth and Healing," featuring panels and speakers about the past impacts of boarding schools on Alaska Native individuals and communities, and about moving beyond the traumatic legacy in the present and future. ANHC has display items throughout the center representing the boarding school experience for many Alaska Natives and telling of the lasting impacts on Alaska Native language and culture. There is an interactive map showing all the boarding schools in Alaska with a brief history of each. The history of boarding schools is personal to Benjamin Jacuk, ANHC director of Indigenous research and exhibit curator, since his grandfather was a student at several of them.

Preservationists consider fate of house

Oscar Anderson arrived in Anchorage in 1915. By his own account, he was the 18th person to arrive in the tent city. His house, one of the first in Anchorage, was built a few months later. Oscar became an important businessman in the new city, with interests in coal mining, meat packing, publishing and air transportation. His widow, Elizabeth Anderson, donated the house to the Municipality of Anchorage in 1976. Preservation Alaska has managed the Oscar Anderson house since 1982, when it opened to the public as a historic house museum. In recent years, annual maintenance costs have far exceeded funds taken in from admissions. The house has not been open to the public the past two years—the first season because of mold found in the house and the second because it was not financially feasible to keep it open. Preservation Alaska is in conversations with the municipality to determine the best course of action for the future.

50th anniversary of Alaska's largest city marked

This September marked the 50th anniversary of the Municipality of Anchorage, when the City of Anchorage and the Greater Anchorage Area Borough merged. The municipality collected histories from Anchorage individuals and organizations, and sponsored events to celebrate the anniversary and anticipate the next 50 years. On November 7, the Anchorage Museum hosted a Civic Fair, with government agencies and community organizations sharing their history and vision for the future. The next day individuals shared their stories about Anchorage in a Day of Storytelling at the Anchorage Senior Center, presented by the Alaska Humanities Forum.

HOMER

Pratt Museum develops outdoor attractions

Homer has been getting more summer visitors from cruise ships and tour buses, and the Pratt Museum is joining others in finding ways to handle large groups of visitors. The museum is developing a botanical garden and plans summer tours on museum grounds. It is particularly interested in growing orchids and has partnered with the Smithsonian Institution to cultivate them. The museum also plans to rebuild parts of its Harrington Cabin, which features what is thought to be the area's oldest surviving outhouse.

The Harrington Cabin and garden. Photo courtesy Pratt Museum.

HOPE

Bull gets an unwelcome paint job

A 2023 visitor to the Hope Museum, Pat Culver, brought a picture of her great-grandfather, Samuel Charles Collins, who was a gold miner on the Kenai Peninsula. He and his wife Martha arrived in Alaska in 1896 and were counted in the 1900 census, living in a cabin in Hope. Collins was originally from Indiana but had been mining for gold in California before he decided to try Alaska. Mary Barry's *A History of Mining on the Kenai Peninsula* says that Collins had "the unhappy reputation of being the crossest man in Sunrise" (p. 82). While Collins was living in Sunrise, local pranksters painted his prize bull in brilliant colors. Soon afterward, Collins moved from Sunrise to Hope. Later in 1904, an article in *The Alaska Prospector* attributed both the bull-painting incident and a bridge explosion in Hope to the work of a gang of vandals. In response, an anonymous letter from the "citizens of Hope" claimed that Collins had raised the bull as an attack animal and that it was still a danger.

Samuel Collins. Photo donated by Pat Culver, courtesy of Hope and Sunrise Historical Society.

PALMER

Matanuska Colony New Dealers profiled

In 1933, when Franklin Roosevelt became President, one out of every four American workers was out of a job. The New Deal, 1933-43, created work in infrastructure projects and moved families to likely farming areas to form new homesteader communities. Alaska's Matanuska Colony, centered in Palmer, was one such undertaking, relocating more than 200 families from the Midwest to Alaska. Writers Paul Hill and Joan Juster, who have also produced a documentary film about the colony, assembled the Mug Book, a photo album of the colony families, including names and birthplaces. The album is on view at the Colony House Museum and visitors are invited to make corrections and additions and contribute family photos. The Palmer Historical Society has also compiled a preliminary list of transient workers who arrived in 1935 to help build the Matanuska Colony: Names_of_Transient_Workers.pdf. If you have other names or information about these workers, please contact the society.

Workers constructing tents for Matanuska colonists, 1935. Press photo Arville Schaleben, Estelle collection. Photo courtesy Palmer Museum of History and Art.

SITKA

Historic boathouse gets hands-on use

The Sitka Maritime Heritage Society has plans for the next year to shift from emphasizing restoration and construction of its historic World War II boathouse to using it as a maritime heritage center with activities, events and a functioning boat haul out. This year the group completed projects essential for occupancy—a fire suppression system and functional bathroom—while doing oral history interviews, creating a film, leading walking tours, and hosting a history cruise and programs. To keep their momentum the society has launched a "2026 Strong" campaign to raise $12,000 by the end of the year. Funds raised will be for the executive director and as matching funds to get the boat haul out (railway, cradle and winch) into operation.

KODIAK

Alaska's oldest standing building gets repairs

The Kodiak History Museum is housed in the Russian-American Magazin, a National Historic Landmark built in 1808 by the Russian-American Company as a warehouse for sea otter pelts. After the U.S. purchase of Alaska in 1867, the building became home to agents of the Alaska Commercial Company. A letter, playing cards and newspaper fragments dating from this period have been found in the building during various remodels and restoration projects. One newspaper fragment bears a date of 1883, when ACC General Agent Benjamin McIntyre lived in the building. Originally from Vermont, McIntyre was murdered in 1886 while eating dinner with the notorious Ivan Petrov and the ACC agent from Kaguyak in the house.

In recent years the building has had drainage issues with water pooling at the foundation, threatening to degrade the structure. In May, the City of Kodiak began construction for a new drainage system, including a new paved walkway, and completed the job in July. Alutiiq Museum staff performed archaeological monitoring during ground disturbing activities and the Kodiak Historic Preservation Commission reviewed drainage designs to ensure the historic integrity of the building and landscape were maintained.

Filipino contributions celebrated with exhibit

The Kodiak History Museum and Filipino-American Association of Kodiak collaborated to create an exhibit, *Anchored in Kodiak: Stories of Filipino Immigration and Community*, that opened at the museum in October, Filipino History Month. Enhancing the exhibit, there have been several potlucks, performances by the local Filipino dance group and visits by school groups. The Alaska Community Foundation's Social Justice Fund provided a grant for the exhibit that will be up until December.

Museums partner to explore community history

In another collaboration this fall, the Kodiak History Museum joined with the Alutiiq Museum on four lectures about recent research of the community's history. Hana Maruyaa talked about the internment of Japanese from Alaska, highlighting three brothers with the surname Yoshida from Kodiak. One had to leave his son in a boarding school for Alaska Native children and the two never saw each other again. April Counceller and Dehrich Chya spoke about 11 students sent from Woody Island to Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. Two died there, and Alutiiq museum staff have worked with families, tribes, and the army to repatriate them to Alaska—one successful and one stalled. Matthew Van Daele and Patrick Saltonstall explored the cultural, historical and current importance of whales to Kodiak Island communities, and Molly Odell and Margaret Greutert introduced the City of Kodiak's first ever historic preservation plan and sought input on priorities for historic preservation in the city.

COOPER LANDING

Lodge with a point of view examined

The Cooper Landing Historical Society and Museum met September 27 for a membership meeting and potluck. Ken Lancaster presented a program on the Our Point of View Lodge on Kenai Lake, which operated in the 1950s and '60s. Board member Kate Stevenson is heading a book project that will include both local history and recipes.

EAGLE

Society plans ambitious revival of fort

The Eagle Historical Society & Museums is already planning its 2026 activities, marking the organization's 65th anniversary, and is getting the word out early so people can plan to join them. A group of Eagle residents organized in 1961 to preserve the remaining buildings of Fort Egbert, and now has exhibits in them and regular summer tours. This past year they received donations of items with significance to the area, including a gold scale and binoculars owned by Sandy Johnson, a miner and trapper on Sam Creek about 70 miles downriver from Eagle. Johnson came to Alaska in the 1890s and stayed until the mid-1950s. His cabin still stands. Next year's activities will include hosting the Memorial Day service at the Fort Egbert Cemetery, and on the 4th of July, a potluck and dessert auction. Folks are invited to visit and help spruce up and clean the historic buildings. The website www.eagleak.org has been restored and a Facebook page created which will have more information about next year's activities.

PORT ALEXANDER

Historic Karl Hansen House remembered

Karl Hansen, an immigrant from Norway, arrived in Port Alexander in 1920. He operated a fish-buying company there as well as a general store and a telegraph service until he left in the 1940s after a downturn in the fisheries. The house he lived in with his family, which is now the Port Alexander museum, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2023. Many years ago, Port Alexander Historical Society's president, Karen Lucas, interviewed Hansen's daughter Dorothy Ozanne in Bremerton, Washington. Ozanne donated a portrait of Karl Hansen to PAHS, and it now hangs proudly in the museum.

Framed portrait of Karl Hansen, donated by his daughter Dorothy Ozanne. Courtesy PAHS.

Postcards illustrate early Alaska development

Karl Grohmann, an immigrant from Austria, worked as a watchman for the Alaska Gastineau Mining Company at Thane (near Juneau) in 1914, when he applied for naturalization. He was also a photographer. In the 1910s and '20s he traveled around Alaska taking photographs to be made into postcards, signing them "C. Grohman," an Americanization of his name. He visited Port Alexander in 1912 and took a photo of the community from Scott's Ridge. Another of his postcards, made in 1916, shows a self-portrait of Grohman playing the accordion in Thane.

Karl Grohmann self-portrait postcard. Michael Nore Collection, courtesy PAHS.

SEWARD

Fort McGilvray's World War II service recognized

In September, the Seward Community Library and Museum hosted a special program to honor Seward's role in World War II, with a focus on Fort McGilvray at Caines Head. Participants were encouraged to dress in the style of the 1940s and bring a photograph of a relative who served in the war. The Resurrection Bay Historical Society newsletter for August published a letter written in 2000 by a former soldier at Fort McGilvray, Elliott Allen, to Kenai Fjords National Park ranger Stan McKnight about his wartime service at Caines Head. Allen arrived at the end of June 1941 as part of Battery A of the 250th Coast Artillery, a California National Guard unit. He and fellow members of the battery, along with civilian construction crews, began to build facilities. They cleared forests, built roads and constructed barracks, mess halls and other buildings, along with an underground concrete bunker. Once construction was complete the soldiers were to protect the shoreline, with gun crews and spotters constantly vigilant. The battery operated a launch to stop and board all ships entering the harbor. Throughout 1942 and until November 1943, the battery remained at Caines Head, although its name changed to Battery C, 267th Coast Artillery. The Fort McGilvray event included a talk by Alaska State Parks volunteer Kendra Warlow about the 267th Coast Artillery Battalion.

Mt. Marathon runner honored 62 years later

Eighteen-year-old Dennis Hitt was training for the 1963 Mt. Marathon race when he fell to his death on Mt. Alice, a mountain near Mt. Marathon. His parents had a bronze plaque made to honor their son's life, and both of them are now deceased. The plaque was delivered to the Seward Museum by a cousin 10 years ago. Since then, there has been discussion of what should be done with the plaque. While some thought it should be placed on Mt. Alice at the site of the accident, a member of the 1963 training party was adamant that it would not be safe to do so. This summer three local climbers—Harold Faust, Dano Michaud and Matt Faust—made a commitment to find a suitable location. On August 23, they climbed Mt. Alice and found a spot at the height of the Godwin Glacier Overlook with a view of the accident site. They drilled holes into the bedrock to install the plaque. Dennis Hitt's parents, Vance and Amy, would be very happy.

JUNEAU

Native surrealist artist celebrated

The Sealaska Heritage Center began its 2025 fall lecture series on November 3 with an interesting presentation about the artist Xenia Kashevaroff Cage by Dave Hunsaker and Jim Simard. Xenia was born in Juneau in 1913, the youngest daughter of Russian and Alutiiq Orthodox priest Father Andrew P. Kashevaroff and his Tlingit wife Martha. Xenia went to live with two of her sisters in Carmel, California, as a teenager and became a friend of writer John Steinbeck, photographer Edward Weston and Ed Ricketts, the model for Doc in Steinbeck's *Cannery Row*. She studied art at Reed College in Oregon. In 1935 she married avant-garde musician John Cage and played percussion in his musical performances. The couple divorced in 1945. Xenia's art included painting, sculpture and costume design. Internationally known, she faded from the public spotlight in the 1950s, and little of her art has survived. She died in 1995 and is buried in Juneau.

Xenia with one of her wood-frame and rice-paper mobiles, circa 1943. Photographer unknown; from *Reed Magazine*, March 1, 2016.

FAIRBANKS

Society remembers pioneering judge

Judge James Wickersham was appointed as a district judge for Alaska in 1900. In 1908 he was elected to serve as non-voting delegate to Congress for Alaska. He was instrumental in enacting the Organic Act of 1912 and the Alaska Railroad Bill and introducing the first Alaska statehood bill in 1916. He helped establish the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines, now the University of Alaska Fairbanks. While he was still a judge, in 1904, he moved into the first lumber-built house in Fairbanks. The house is now a museum in Pioneer Park. Early members of the Tanana-Yukon Historical Society were responsible for getting the house saved from demolition and rehabilitated. On August 24, TYHS members gathered at the Wickersham House Museum to celebrate Judge Wickersham's 168th birthday and reflect on his life and accomplishments.

Museum shares saga of a wretched miner

Nick Nugent gave a lecture at the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Museum in August entitled "John Bremner: A Pre-Klondike Prospector's Struggles and Ultimate Demise in Late 19th Century Alaska." Instead of living a rags-to-riches story, Bremner went from rags to rags. He came to Alaska in 1884, starting up the Copper River from the coast, accompanied by Indigenous people from the Interior. He was not heard from again until the next year, when Lieutenant Henry Allen's Copper River expedition found Bremner starving. Allen described Bremner as the "most wretched example of a human as I have ever seen." A few years later, in 1888, Bremner was murdered on the Koyukuk River. He left a journal describing his dealings with the Indigenous people of the Copper River. The John River in northern Alaska and the Bremner River in the Wrangell Mountains were named after him.

KETCHIKAN

Kodak camera exposes early Prince of Wales

The Ketchikan Museum's October Artifact of the Month is unusual, a photo essay entitled "An Alaska Adventure: Rollin Bissette's Story." The photographs were taken in 1906 by Bissette, an experienced quarryman from Vermont, hired by the Alaska Marble Company to help get its quarry on Prince of Wales Island in operation. Bissette brought a Kodak No. 3A folding pocket camera with him. Bissette was an amateur photographer, and some of the 82 photos the family digitized and sent to the museum are out of focus, blurred by rain and have exposure issues. Nevertheless, images show operations at the mine and people who worked there and views of Ketchikan, Wrangell and Shakan, a Tlingit village that was a three-mile boat ride from the quarry. In 2020, Dr. Philip Bell, married to a granddaughter, used the journal Bissette kept during his eight-month Alaska adventure and wrote the photo essay that he sent to the museum, along with digital images.

—Rachel Mason and Jo Antonson

Thirteen members of the 2025-26 Alaska Historical Society Board of Directors gathered outside the Wood Center for a group photo as the 2025 conference drew to a close. Front, from left: Rich Mattson, Jo Antonson (executive director), Gwen Higgins, Mary Ludwig, Will Schneider. Second row: Kaila Pfister, Carol Gales, Phil Wight, Mark Rice, David Ramseur, Jeff Meyers. Back: Leanna Prax Wiliams, Pat Partnow, Rebecca Poulson.

Clarification

A sentence in an article in the Fall 2025 newsletter, "Behind the scenes 70 years ago: Recalling Alaska's constitutional convention," noted that delegate Muktuk Marston agreed that addressing Alaska Native land rights was a matter of federal legislation, not state law and not appropriate in a state constitution. At the convention, Marston moved to address Alaska Native land claims and his motion was defeated. In his book on the convention, Vic Fischer said Marston did not believe the disclaimer in the constitution that Native land claims were to be addressed by the federal government was sufficient.

New officers elected for 2025-26

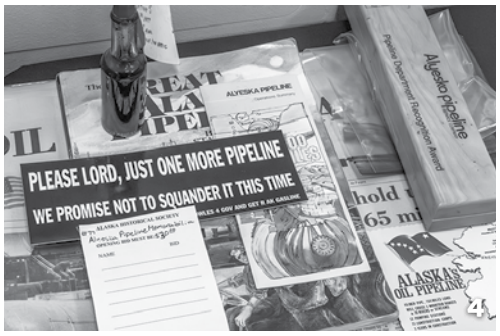
At their first meeting, the 2025-26 Alaska Historical Society Board of Directors elected new officers: Patricia Partnow president; Jeff Meyers vice-president; Rebecca Poulson secretary; and Gwen Higgins treasurer.

Newly elected to the board is Mary Ludwig of Fairbanks, and re-elected are Rachel Mason, Molly McCammon, Jeff Meyers, Kaila Pfister, Will Schneider and Phil Wight.

Individually and collectively, board members thanked David Ramseur, who has served as president the past four years. He will remain on the board this year as past president and has agreed to continue as newsletter editor.

Most expressed the hope David will agree to serve on the board again—even before reading his column in this newsletter that speaks to some of his many contributions and accomplishments to the AHS.

CONFERENCE PHOTOS OPPOSITE PAGE: (1) Keynote speaker Gov. Bill Walker in conversation with Phil Wight attracted a large audience. (2) Panelists (from left) Brandon Boylan, Paul Dauphinais and Marcia Bederman with moderator Mark Rice. (3) Conference chair Jeff Meyers. (4) The silent auction raised $3,409. (5) Opening reception at the Museum of the North. (6) Angela Linn, Karen Brewster, Lynn Horvath, Chris Allan and Angie Schmidt at the banquet. (7) Barbara Hood and Karen Perdue at the banquet. (8) David Ramseur presents the Evangeline Atwood Award to Elizabeth Cook for significant long-term contributions to Alaska history. (9) Session attendance remained strong through the final morning of the conference. (10) Ron Inouye was among about 20 conference-goers who enjoyed the historic bars tour. Photos by Kaila Pfister and George Stransky.



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Fundraising and membership goals well exceeded

Thank you to the more than 60 Alaska Historical Society supporters who responded to our 2025 fundraising campaign! We raised $15,651 to date, more than achieving our goal for the year.

Donations ranged from $25 to more than $1,500, every dollar giving a remarkable boost to our efforts to bring Alaska history alive. In addition, we have exceeded our membership goals for the year, with 352 members. Members hail from 45 Alaska communities, 35 other states and the countries of Canada, France and Germany.

—Pat Partnow

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AN ODDMENT

Amphicars brave travel on the Yukon River

It was a weird-looking vehicle—part car, part boat—that Ivan and Oro Stewart decided to use on the river between Eagle and Circle back in 1966.

The Stewarts had purchased the German-made amphibious cabriolet, called the Amphicar, only a month before, and their first move was to paint "Stewarts Photo, Anchorage, Alaska" on the side to advertise their business. They were accompanied by car dealer Nick Rauch and his 11-year-old son Phillip, who had their own Amphicar, for the 158-mile river trip through what is today Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve.

Designed by engineer Hans Trippel, the Amphicar Model 770 had a 4-cylinder, 46-horsepower engine. Through the 1960s, just over 3,800 were manufactured. The vehicle weighed 1,738 pounds and could travel 10-12 miles an hour in the water and up to 75 miles per hour on land.

Aside from looking like a lifted (and chic) convertible, it came with twin nylon propellers, a bilge pump, rubber door gaskets, and optional life jackets. Fairbanks car dealer Jim Thompson called it a "queer duck" and declared in ads, "Now you can own a car and a boat for the price of a car alone!!!" That price was around $2,600.

Ivan and Oro Stewart launching their Amphicar at Eagle, Alaska. University of Alaska Anchorage, Archives & Special Collections, uaa-hmc-1181-531.

While motoring for three days on the Yukon, the Stewarts camped on riverbanks and stopped for a night in Slaven's Roadhouse at the mouth of Coal Creek.

"It was one of the most pleasant trips I've ever taken," said Oro Stewart, who had been traveling in Alaska for 24 years. She explained that in strong currents and rough water "sometimes waves were going right over the top of us" and that she had never learned to swim. Ivan found it handled well and that having wheels in the middle of the river was handy—whenever they grounded on a sandbar he simply drove over the obstacle.

After landing in Circle, the couple traveled the Steese Highway to Fairbanks and showed the locals what the Amphicar could do in the Chena River.

—Chris Allan

Sources: "Not a German Beetle, It's More Like a Water Bug," *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, June 22, 1966, 1; "Amphicar Has Unusual Extra: Life Preserver," *San Bernadino County Sun*, January 22, 1965, 30.