

Palmer Historical Society

PRESERVING OUR PAST, SHARING OUR STORIES & MAKING HISTORY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS
Official Publication of the Palmer Historical Society—Volume XXIV No.1 – January 2009 Edition

President's View from Farm Loop

With 2008 in the books it's time to think back and look ahead to the New Year. 2008 was a good year for the Palmer Historical Society. We had a great program series, two successful open houses at the Colony House Museum, our annual Raffle Dinner Fundraiser, a wonderful picnic at Heaven's Hayfield, and a tour of the Knik Museum. We have a new expanded newsletter and we saw the public release of the movie Alaska Far Away, a project 14 years in the making. Don't forget, we have copies for sale. The Palmer Historical Society finished the year in good shape with over 100 paid members, money in the bank, and a great bunch of volunteers who make it all happen. Thank you everyone.

Although many Alaskans think of 1958 as the year we became a state with

the vote by the Congress in June of that year, the official date is January 3, 1959. That's when President Eisenhower signed the official declaration making Alaska the 49th state. So it seems appropriate that our January program be dedicated to sharing recollections of that historic occasion 50 years ago. So please join us at our Wednesday, January 21st, meeting and participate in the discussion and you can help us identify buildings and houses in a 1959 aerial photo of Palmer.

Oh yes and about the future and 2009—we have already scheduled a number of interesting programs for the rest of the winter and spring that I know you will enjoy. We are also continuing to work toward cataloging and digitizing our collection of objects, photos, and documents.

Chuck Logsdon, President

Monthly Newsletters Return

Thank you to Chuck Logsdon, who returns to serve as President of the PHS and members of the Palmer Historical Board of Directors for their photos and articles for this edition of the PHS Newsletter. Yet, in this new year, please consider contributing "at least one" item—send a Tribute Recipe, photos of life in the Palmer area "back in the day", or a story or anecdote about your family's life in Palmer. We welcome your submissions to newsletter@palmerhistoricalsociety.org or to our mailbox: Palmer Historical Society, Post Office Box 1935, Palmer, AK 99645!

Mark Your Calendars

January 21, 2009

Palmer Public Library Mtg Room

Gather at 7:00PM

Call to Order at 7:30PM

Program information on Page 4

As always, the public is cordially invited to attend, and refreshments, served by our Hospitality Committee, will be available during our

De'Lena Johnson wins State Historic Presentation Award

In November 2008, De'Lena Johnson won the Alaska Association for Historic Preservation Award as both owner and restorer of the Colony Recreation Center, now known as the Dahlia St. Market. The Palmer Historical Society sponsored De'Lena's application.

By 2005 when De'Lena bought the property, it had been vacant for a couple of decades. Deterioration was so advanced few believed it could be salvaged for any occupancy. The property also included another small colony building, originally used for the cobbler, barber shop, and beauty parlor.

Even if the buildings could be sal-

vaged, the value and economic outlook remained bleak, as the huge warehouse and site of the burned creamery across the street was a vacant eyesore in litigation with few prospects. Despite all financial and legal advice, De'Lena purchased the property, began researching options and put her family to work cleaning. There was a lot to do.

The Dahlia Street Market today houses the Garden Gate retail shop and Body's Wisdom Healing Arts in the west wing and northwest corner. The anchor tenant is the Red Beet restaurant and bakery, occupying the building center, east wing, and second floor.

We hope to have De'Lena give us a presentation in the near future on her restoration effort. What a great effort in preserving Palmer's history with an eye to a viable future.



De'Lena proudly, and with surprise, accepts her Historical Preservation Awards for Dahlia Street Market



The Matanuska Colony Recreation Center circa 1938. Photo from Anchorage Museum of History.



Photo of the Colony Buildings circa 1997.



The Palmer water tower serves as a wonderful backdrop to Dahlia Street Market 2008.

visit our website at www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org

Pioneer Recipe - Gerry Keeling



My Mama, Colonist Saima Kindgren Ising, was a wonderful baker. She and her sister Sally, the two oldest children in their family, had worked as maids for a rich family in Duluth Minnesota in the 1920's, where Mama was the first floor maid and Aunt Sally the second floor maid. The lady of the house taught Mama considerable skill as a baker, which benefitted my tummy considerably in the years to come! This is one of three family favorite recipes, the other two being lemon meringue pie and fudge "fit for a king".

Grannie's Spudnuts

2 c. milk – heat until lukewarm

Add in order given:

1 c. sugar

½ c. fat

2tsp. salt

1 c. lukewarm mashed potatoes

3 eggs, beaten lightly

1 tsp. vanilla

2 c. flour

2 pkg. yeast

(dissolved in ½ c. warm water)

About 8 c. flour

Beat ingredients in order given using as much flour as needed. Cover dough, let raise until double bulk (about 2 hrs.) Punch down, let raise again. After 2nd rising, cut out spudnuts, & again let rise (about 30 min.)

Fry at 375 degrees, until golden brown on both sides.

Glaze

½ c. hot water

1 ½ c. powdered sugar

1 tsp vanilla

Dip warm spudnuts into warm glaze.

What better treat could there be for the Matanuska Valley, where potatoes are such a mainstay crop.

Wondering what Spudnuts are? Popular in the Valley back in the '50's, spudnuts are a raised-style of doughnut.

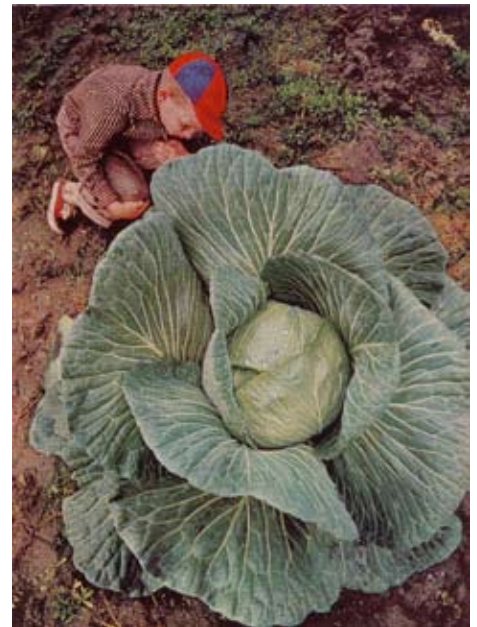
Alaska's 50th Statehood Anniversary

Okay, so if you didn't know, the answer to the identity of the Valley farmer in the National Geographic photo from 1959 contained in our November Newsletter is Bob Klem. Thanks to Evelyn Mielke, Jim Fox, Wayne Bouwens, and others



who helped make the call, and Louise Redondo who called in her guess too!

Now we're trying to identify the young Valley boy in this picture to the right, from the same issue. Please call or e-mail in your "guess"!



Can You Help Us Answering Questions We Receive?

We often receive questions about Palmer history via letter or email. The questions typically ask about the Matanuska Colony and often about relatives who are believed to have lived in the area. If you are interested in helping out, please contact John Stuart (745-3462) or Chuck Logsdon (745-2327).

Come Join Us and Become a Member of the Palmer Historical Society!

Mail in your payment with the following information today:

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Membership Levels of the Palmer Historical Society:

Regular – \$10yr Contributing – \$25yr

Sustaining – \$100/yr Lifetime \$500

Board of Directors Serving PHS in 2008

President – Chuck Logsdon.....745-2327

Vice President – John Stuart.....745-3462

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Program Chairman – Ralph Hulbert.....745-4586

Colony Museum – Gerry Keeling.....745-3703

Board Member Emeritus – Kay Love.....745-3697

Colony Christmas Open House

Mix Merriment, Munches, Music, and PHS Members for a Festive Time

The historic venue of the Colony House Museum's December 13th "OPEN HOUSE" added festive celebration to the Valley's Christmas season again in 2008.

The frosty temperature outdoors offered noticeable contrast to the warmth enjoyed by museum visitors arriving to choose a treat at our old-fashioned bake sale, to enjoy a bit of holiday refreshment, or to join in singing their favorite carols. Altogether, it made for an enjoyable day of community camaraderie and holiday spirit.

A number of wonderful PHS'ers and friends made it all happen! First of all, our set-up assistants including Mary Ann Anderson and Kay Love! Our bakers and treat makers including...Vi Norbo, Kay Love, Helen Hulbert, June Oberg, Hazel Koppenberg, Vivian Smith, Arlene Fox, Tony Pippel, Terry

and Jean Bradley, Roy Hoskins, Sharon Benson, Barb Thomas, David Mathews, JoAnn Utt, Jack and Gena Straayer, Jack Boss, and June Tull! Joining your PHS Board members to offer welcome and hospitality...Heather Lampard! Our loyal pianists...Vi Norbo and Alice Branton! Most certainly all treat shoppers who supported the Bake Sale! And all those who love to carol, including the Bailey family from Healy, Alaska who made their annual "caroling commute" to the Colony House Museum "Open House"!

"House Top" shouts of appreciation to each and every one of you who joined your PHS Board members in



bringing this event to Palmer's Colony Christmas celebration!

Post Script: Perhaps your December visit to the Museum did not give you opportunity to closely view the varied holiday ornaments on display. Included in the 1930's—1950's décor were decorations from the old Mat Maid Trading Post (saved prior to the 2003 fire) and numerous old tree ornaments (some dating back to 1929). Check them out next year!



"Don brightened up his talk with numerous anecdotes about the various characters he worked with..."



November Speaker Dr. Don Dinkel

November Meeting Wrap-Up by Chuck Logsdon

PHS members were treated to an informative and interesting presentation by Dr. Don Dinkel at our November meeting. As most of you know he and his family are most famous for the large cabbages they grow. In a wide ranging talk, Don talked about his experience in continuing the horticultural research within the Alaska Experiment Station system pioneered by Professor C.C. Georgeson back in the 1890's and early 1900's. He pointed out that the Experiment Farm still has an example of the original Sitka Rose bred by Georgeson. Don explained that he was mentored by Dr. M.F. Babb at the Matanuska station while still in high school and went on to college, ultimately graduating with a PhD in Horticulture and Agricultural Botany from the University of



You've let me down. In November, I wrote for the *PHS Newsletter Team*, that we would like to hear from *each of you* as to your memories of that memorable 1958 vote and the events that followed in 1959 when Alaska "officially" became the 49th State.

The plan was to include them in future newsletters and a potential calendar. How many replies did I get? Zip. Nada. Zilch!

Please, call me at 745-2013 or send an e-mail to my address of: newsletter@palmerhistoricalsociety.org that you are willing to be a part of a special-section of an upcoming newsletter. Do you have photos? We'll make arrangements to pick them up from you, scan them, and get you back your originals!

I, and certainly the entire PHS Board, welcome submissions from all of you – not just from 1959. Photos of yesterdays, to writings on memories of growing up in the Palmer area, and events that happened and made history!

Cheryl Babbe
PHS Newsletter Team

Website Links from PHS Members

From the PHS Board: Send us links that you visit on historical sites that *might* be of interest to fellow members at newsletter@palmerhistoricalsociety.org – thank you!

This month, Secretary and Board Member Sharon Benson sent this one over for you to "check out": <http://www.pioneersofalaska.org>

Minnesota. Ultimately returning to Alaska, Don worked at the Experiment Farm on Trunk Road where among other accomplishments, he pioneered the use of clear plastic mulch as a technique for increasing soil temperature to produce hard to grow crops like corn. He also spent time in Fairbanks working with waste heat to increase yields for various crops. Don brightened up his talk with numerous anecdotes about the various characters he worked with over the years at the Station.

Based on the questions posed after Don's presentation it seems clear that members were eager to ask him about growing issues in the area. Perhaps we can coax him back for a question and answer session with members who want to know more about gardening in Alaska.

What Do You Know About This Engine?

Here is a taste of what we've found so far after talking with a dozen who seem to know. The narrow gage engine with cars and track came from the Tanana Valley RR, and were used to haul coal in the 1930s from Buffalo Mine down Moose Cr. to Premier Mine where the standard gage track connected with the Palmer spur. Hard Working Smitty was one of the engineers.

Earl Payne brought it to behind Drigger's shop in 1956, Kopperud Transportation moved it a couple times, Explorer Scouts have restored it, and kids have climbed over and in it for half a century. Sometime we'll tell you more of the story, with help from our friends.

Ralph Hulbert
PHS Board Member

Mark Your Calendars

October 15th - PHS Meeting • Annual Meeting & Dan Renshaw

November 19th - PHS Meeting • Dr. Don Vinkel

December 13th - PHS Open House • Colony House Museum

January 21st - PHS Meeting

Open Mike Night - Memories of Alaska Statehood

February 18th - PHS Meeting • Fran Seager-Boss

"The Matanuska-Susitna Nation Heritage Area Study"

March 18th - PHS Meeting • Sue Merritt

April 15th - PHS Meeting

All PHS Meetings are at the Palmer Library

Gather at 7:00PM - Call to Order at 7:30PM

As always, the public is cordially invited to attend!



The 2008 Colony Museum Tree



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Palmer Historical Society

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