

PALMER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESERVING OUR PAST, SHARING OUR STORIES & MAKING HISTORY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Official Publication of the Palmer Historical Society - Volume XXV No.3 - March 2010 Edition

PRESIDENT'S VIEW FROM FARM LOOP

The sound of dripping water coming off the roof and longer daylight hours tells me that the Matanuska Valley version of spring is in the air. As a child I remember that by mid-to-late March in Palmer, about the time of the teacher's conference in Anchorage, the snow and ice in the roadside ditches began to thaw creating rivulets that were perfect for racing tiny boats or even bits of wood. The "Cadillac" of boats was the PT Boat found as a prize in boxes of Kellogg cereal. But spring is some weeks away off and I am sure there will be more good outdoor winter recreation left to enjoy and a few more great PHS programs for you as we head into the summer months.

This month our speaker will be Jean Krupa. Jean is the granddaughter of the Barry family that purchased the Bogart homestead at Finger Lake and she has graciously offered to share some photos

and recollections of her family. I am sure many of you probably ate dinner at Barry's Resort (now the Palmer Elks Club) sometime over the years.

Kudos for our presentation last month. I believe we may have broken all attendance records. First of all a big thank you to Ralph Hulbert for his program on the history of water and sewer and heat in Palmer, and second to Clyde Oberg for his assistance, both setting the record straight about the Co-op steam tunnels and sharing some anecdotes. Also thanks to June Oberg for providing the goodies following the meeting. Our program series goes through May. In June, Palmer celebrates the 75th anniversary of the Matanuska Colony and we will have our traditional Colony Days Open House at the Colony House Museum.

Chuck Logsdon,
PHS President

MARCH BRINGS BARRY STORY TO LIFE

"A mutual love for the country would cause them to stay and carve their niche in the frontier state. ..."

Our March Program is scheduled for Wednesday March 17, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. in the meeting room of the Palmer Library. We are pleased to have Jean Krupa as our speaker at the March program. Jean is the granddaughter of Matanuska Colonists Earl and Elizabeth Barry and will talk about her family's experience settling in the Valley.

Jean writes, "Earl Barry ran a grocery business in Oconto, Wisconsin. It was common for Earl to extend credit to his customers, but with the great depression his credit vouchers grew faster than payments. Hard times set in for this family of seven and the New Deal looked like an opportunity to turn what was wrong

right again."

"With only a few weeks' notice the Earl Barry family of seven disposed of excess belongings and pared down to the established 2,000 pound freight limit. They signed the required "settlement agreement" with the ARRC, which in return would give them the opportunity to settle on workable land and obtain subsistence."

"A mutual love for the country would cause them to stay and carve their niche in the frontier state. Learn more and see pictures about one of our true treasures the Earl Barry colonist family who worked the land and never gave up."

YOUR PHS SOCIETY

I want to thank those of you who have supported the Palmer Historical Society with your newsletter writings and tribute recipes. I am looking for 16 volunteers to take a survey about our newsletter - will you be one who steps forward? Call me at 745-2013 to volunteer!

Our season of service is year around, yet our summer season will be needing gardeners at the Museum, docents for our summer visitors, and members to bring goodies for our June 12th "open museum" during the Colony Days! There is a need for our continuing archiving and logging of our treasures for those of you who enjoy computers too.

PHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Your Palmer historical Society Board of Directors:

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Jean Krupa - 746-5770

Program Chairman - 745-4586

Ralph Hulbert

Colony Museum - 745-3703

Gerry Keeling

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Karen Stuart

PHS MEETING INFORMATION

The Palmer Historical Society meetings on the 3rd Wednesday of "most" months at the Palmer Public Library. We gather at 7P and the program starts at 730P. Refreshments are served during the break. Come Join Us!

April showers may bring May flowers, yet the May Palmer Historical Society Meeting will be "Memories of Mom" - so start thinking about what you might bring as your "Memory of your Mother, your Mum, your Mom" to share!

visit our website at www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org

GINGER SNAPS, COFFEE 'N SPICE, AND DOODLES

Anne Duane "Doodles" Lee Mohan was born in Forest Lake, Minnesota, on July 21, 1923 to Dewy and Eugene Spickler. Her mother remarried in 1934 to Francis Lee, who had come to Alaska in 1932 to homestead. Upon learning his first wife had become very ill, he worked his way back to Minnesota, yet she died before he got home.

He started truck farming and built a small hotel and gas station. Eugene didn't live that far away and he began a friendship with her and her two small children—Anne Duane and John, who was known as Jack. After marrying, Francis' thoughts turned once again to Alaska.

He wrote many letters to the Roosevelt Administration, after learning of the Colony Project, begging to be a participant. By the time the telegram had arrived, he had missed the group heading north and paying his own way, he took Eugene, her two children and their new baby Mary Ada and set out. They arrived on July 16, 1935, and were given 40 acres on the first Springer system.

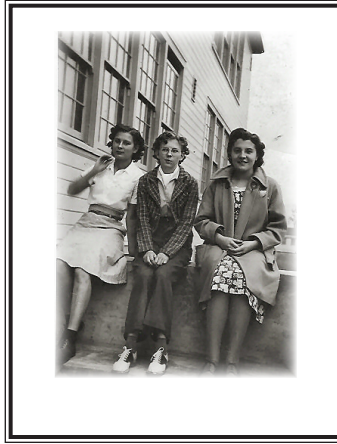
Doodles graduated from Colony Central School in 1941 and went back to Minnesota. There she met Richard "Dick" Mohan and after marrying they took over the homestead. Dick worked for the Railroad and Doodles started the Palmer Public Library.

Even after being diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis and later cancer, she continued to work from her home cataloging books for the Library! She was also a very active member of Saint Michael's Catholic Church.

Dick and Doodles had five children: Carmel Lee, Kathleen who died in 1970 at 24-years of age, Michael, Margaret "Peggy" and Jon Marie.

Doodles passed away in 1979 and Dick followed in 1986. The remaining five acres were appropriated by the City of Palmer after their deaths, as the FAA ruled the house passed as an obstruction to the airport's southern approach. Yet the house survived and sits on the Loomis property just down the road!

Peggy Mohan Wilson



Anne Duane "Doodles" Lee Mohan, center, is in the photo above. Carmel Lee, Peggy's sister writes, "Here is a picture of Mom that was given to me by Rosemary Kepler which she found when she was going through her sisters things. Her sister, Eloise, is the person on Mom's left." Okay, fellow members of the Palmer Historical Society — can you help us identify the young lady on the right of Doodles?

Coffee 'n Spice Cookies

1 cup shortening
(margarine or butter)

2 cup brown sugar

2 eggs

1/2 cup cold coffee

3 1/2 cup flour

1 tsp baking soda

1 tsp salt

1 tsp nutmeg

1 tsp cinnamon

Bake at 400° for 8-10 minutes.

Doodles always served these with her homemade Rhubarb Sauce!

Ginger Nuggets

1 1/2 cup sugar

1 cup margarine

2 eggs

1 cup sour milk*

1/2 cup cocoa

1 tsp ginger

1 tsp cinnamon

1 tsp baking soda

4 cup flour

Drop by teaspoon into granulated sugar and roll. Bake 350° for 8-10 minutes.

Let stand for 5 minutes.

* 1 tablespoon vinegar or lemon juice to 1 cup milk, minus 1 tablespoon!

Come Join Us and Become an Active Member of your Palmer Historical Society!

Mail in your payment, with the following information today:

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-Mail: _____

Phone: _____

Membership levels of the Palmer Historical Society:

Regular

\$10 per year

Contributing

\$25 per year

Sustaining

\$100 per year

Lifetime - \$500

YOU'RE INVITED TO THE COOK INLET HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTATION!

The Matanuska Colony Kids

Where Are They Now?

The Cook Inlet Historical Society, as a part of their 2009-10 Lecture Series on the Life in Territorial Alaska, will be hosting Jim Fox and a panel of second-generation Matanuska Valley Colonists on Thursday, March 18th. This presentation will be held at the Anchorage Museum and begins at 7:30PM.

Although 60% of the original families left the Colony and the Valley, some remained in Alaska. How did that affect those who became known as "the kids" of the Colony? On the 18th, come see how a parent's decision to travel to Alaska in 1935, affected the panel's lives during the panel discussion!

WRAP-UP OF FEBRUARY MEETING – THE PALMER UNDERGROUND

Our February program was standing room only, leading one wag to suggest many probably hoped the Underground referred to the early liquor stills, the gambling den operating over the old Koslosky's store, or the miners and trappers weekend relief society. Now that's an idea for a program – any takers? Instead, speaker Ralph Hulbert lead us on a historical photo tour of our buried utilities, the water, steam, fuel, and sewer systems we rarely think about until they fail. Starting with the first homesteaders, we saw the trials of finding and disposing of water and the colony's efforts to make the

town work. Clyde Oberg enlivened the show with long forgotten tales of maintaining the early systems, such as finding muskrat and fish in the water lines, operating the old power plant, and rebuilding the steam tunnels. After 75 years, we learned the old water mains are still being replaced and the wastewater treatment system supports a surprisingly large salmon run. The utilities will remain in good shape if we don't forget them.



Ralph Hulbert

MAPS AND PHOTOS MAKE THEIR WAY TO PALMER

A Neat Old Map

Last meeting, Carol Christiansen asked us if we'd be interested in an old plat of Palmer. Well... What a find – a 1949 plat of the entire town before city incorporation. Street names we've never heard of or forgotten. Buildings shown that no longer exist, and some we are surprised to find are that old. Expect a show and tell soon, and extend a big thanks to Carol for this nifty donation.

Historical Photos on EBay

Last month, PHS member Cheryl Homme noticed several photos of early Palmer individually offered on the EBay web auction with bid closings starting the next day. These were high quality 8x10 photos originally from the Chicago Sun-Times archives, dating mostly from 1935 to as late as 1965.

She called Jim Fox, who confirmed many of these had never been seen or were only shown in newspapers – many were “must haves”. Jim immediately called a couple of Palmer friends to get financial backing, and then proceeded to buy each photo as bids closed over the next few days. It started quietly, with most going for minimum bid of \$10 but bidding soon escalated to as high as \$50, totaling \$1100 for the 58 won. Photos and high resolution scans should be here later this month, available to PHS at cost.

Ralph Hulbert

AT THE COLONY HOUSE MUSEUM - NEWS FROM GERRY KEELING

Annual Colony House Museum Raffle

Sunday, May 23 has been set aside as this year's annual raffle dinner calendar date, an important yearly event for our Museum. Chef Pete Scott of the Inn Café stands “at the ready” with his good humor and culinary capability to create special dining for the lucky winning dinner guests. Complete information will be included in your PHS April newsletter. Please call Gerry (745-3703) if you have any early questions!

Colony House Museum Hosts HPC

We welcomed Mat-Su Borough Historical Preservation Commission members on March 4 during their annual visit to the CHM. The Commission visits a Borough museum during each of its monthly “warmer” meetings and is represented for the Palmer Historical Society by dedicated PHS Board member John Stuart.

Colonists 75th Anniversary

As you possibly are aware, May 2010

marks the SEVENTY-FIFTH! Anniversary of the arrival of the Matanuska Valley Colonization Project families in Palmer, a New Deal concept with considerable ramification as to the personality and appearance of our community today, to the development of infrastructure and agriculture in the Valley...and thus, to our State of Alaska as a whole.

Plans are underway for a variety of special events during the months ahead, with “Colony Kids” Tiny DePriest and Wayne Bouwens leading the Matanuska Colony, Inc. group for the actual planned reunion.

The Colony House Museum will spotlight this big-time historical event with various photo displays, story lines, artifact displays, and of course our OPEN HOUSE at the CHM during June's Colony Days celebration. If YOU have a special idea to add to CHM planning, do contact any of your PHS Board members to give suggestions!

HIGHLIGHTS FROM HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION

A big thank you to Gerry for all her efforts setting up and providing refreshments. She also gave a warm welcoming comment to those in attendance, as well as information on the upcoming 75th anniversary of the Colonist's arrival. All eight current commissioners attended along with Borough staff Fran and Vickie.

Bethany Buckingham (Dorothy Page Museum) gave a recap of activities at the museum: www.cityofwasilla.com/museum.

Review of Heritage Bulletin by State Office of History & Archaeology; online at www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/. Motion to write letters to our Congressional delegation to restore monies to the federal budget for funding historical and national heritage programs. *Chair Eric Hirschmann*: Reported on U of A search for new president. Tribal Cultural Report: *Comm. Rosetta Alcantra* spoke on ongoing work between KABATA (The Bridge) and Knik Tribal Council and The Village of Eklutna regarding impacts of the bridge and expected development to follow. *Quentin Simeon*, Knik Tribal Council Education Specialist, reported on a partnership between KTC and Birchtree Charter Elementary School, which will offer classes on

local Dena'ina history and culture. *Comm. LeRoi Heaven*, Wasilla/Knik Historical Society on May Yard Sale fundraiser, Wednesday markets starting mid-June, 100th anniversary of the Knik Museum bldg and their Annual Alaska Day dinner in the fall. No reports from Willow/Talkeetne, Sutton/Alpine or Museum of Transportation and Industry. Historic Preservation Plan review and goals for 2010: Produce brochure to inform visitors of the Historic and Cultural attractions available in the Borough. • Discussed lack of positive response from Fair re: concern about the Rebarchek property. • Letters sent out supporting recognition of the Carle Wagon Road historical importance are playing a role in the motorized vs non-motorized recreational dispute. • Vote to send a letter to the City of Palmer requesting that the public process be followed regarding the rail removal. Gerry provided some background and Fran added that the State had also weighed in favoring public hearings before action is taken.

Submitted by John Stuart, PHS Representative

YOUR SOCIETY SEEN AS "SOURCE" FOR PALMER AND MATANUSKA HISTORY

In our mailbox and inbox this month—

From Peter Ann Stenberg—

Haven't made it to a Historical Society meeting in a very long time and wish I could make it sometime. You have had some pretty interesting sounding programs I wish I had not missed.

Reason for my email...we have had an ongoing project at the cemetery to put headstones on all the unmarked graves and I have been trying to collect obituaries for those who are buried there or are named on the memorial wall.

We, the cemetery board, did not start a concerted effort to collect obituaries for a book, info files etc. until the late 90's. I was wondering if at your next meeting you would make a public ser-

vice announcement about our need for obituaries for anyone deceased prior to lets say 1990 to be safe. Especially the older graves from '35 when the cemetery got it's start to say the 60's. Any kind of information on those older graves be it even just a funeral/memorial program from the services would be a great help. Copies are great, I don't expect the originals. If anyone has anything to share, they could send it to PeterAnn Stenberg POBox 2525 Palmer, 99645. My phone number is 746-7383 if there are any questions. I have an answering machine that will pick up. Thank you Chuck!

Regards, Peter

From Cathy Sexton—

Subject: Palmer city info..

Hello,

As someone who spent a lot of time living there in Wasilla and now Anchorage, I have a special interest in finding, if possible, any info and maybe photos of the old Center Theater that was there in Palmer. As a kid and teen, my parents leased the theater and later, built the theater in Wasilla, the Airport 1.

I have been trying to find any info and again photos of the old theater..any chance you could help me?

Thanks very much, Cathy Sexton

E-mail: icecat_95@hotmail.com

“Memories of Mother”

Wednesday, 19th – Our Membership Presents

PHS May Meeting

“A Walk Through our Photo Collection with Friends”

Wednesday, 21st – LeROI and Margaret Heaven

PHS April Meeting

“Transformation of the Earl Barry Family”

Wednesday, 17th – Jean Krupa

PHS March Meeting

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PALMER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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