

PALMER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESERVING OUR PAST, SHARING OUR STORIES & MAKING HISTORY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS
Official Publication of the Palmer Historical Society - Volume XXV No.8 - September 2010 Edition

PRESIDENT'S VIEW FROM FARM LOOP

Ah, fall in the valley, the State Fair in progress and moose dining on my cabbage and Brussels sprouts. I guess it would only be fair if I harvested some moose meat to go along with what vegetables I have left.

Fall is also the start of our program series and we have a couple of good ones lined up. This month George Carte, former mayor of Palmer, and Wayne Jorgensen will give a presentation about earthquakes and the West Coast & Alaska Tsunami Warning Center. They also have photographs taken in the 1960s of some of Palmer's luminaries so mark your calendars for September 15, at 7:30 p.m. at the Palmer Library

Looking back to August, we had a nice picnic right in the heart of Palmer's downtown historic district. The rain let up and by mid-afternoon there was sun for a quick tour of the old Co-op property with stops at the water tower and the

old warehouse. Perhaps a redevelopment will take place that preserves the historic flavor of the Matanuska Colony. Thanks to all the folks who helped with the setup and cleanup for the picnic as well as all who showed up for a pleasant Sunday afternoon in Palmer.

Our October meeting will be our annual meeting, as called for in the Bylaws, where the membership will elect the Board of Directors. If you are interested in being on the Board please contact me or any of the other current Board members. Carol Christiansen will be our speaker and he will discuss the telecommunications industry in the area including the White Alice radar sites. I know many who lived in the area during the Cold War wondered about the site near Bogard Road.

*Chuck Logsdon,
PHS President*

Your Historical Society Needs YOU to consider serving on the Board of Directors – Secretary, President, Vice President, Programs!
Annual Meeting & Elections at our October Meeting...

CARTE AND JORGENSEN TO SPEAK AT SEPTEMBER MEETING

Did Anything Good Come Out of the '64 Earthquake? How did Leo Lucas hoodwink a couple of slickers from Washington, D. C.? Why is a center responsible for warnings to both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the United States and Canada, not to mention Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, located in Palmer, Alaska? Who connected Neklason Lake to Palmer and why? Why did the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) in New Mexico design and build a building in Palmer? Who blasted the side out of the only mountain located in the City of Palmer? Where is the driest place in the city of Palmer? Where in Alaska is the first building that is recognized by

the U. S. Green Building Council for its Leadership in Energy and Environment Design (LEED)?

Answers to these and maybe even a few more questions can be heard at the next Palmer Historical Society meeting, September 15th. The first two employees at the Palmer Observatory, George Carte and Wayne Jorgensen will be presenting some "history" from the 1960's in Palmer. They might even be willing to tell you when the next great earthquake will occur in South Central Alaska. If pressed, some of you might even be coaxed into sharing your own recollections of the Big One.

PHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Your Palmer historical Society Board of Directors:

President - 745-2327

Chuck Logsdon

Vice-President - 745-3462

John Stuart

Treasurer - 745-7687

David Mathews

Secretary - 376-4938/745-4913

JoAnn Utt

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Program Committee

Jean Krupa - 746-5770

Ralph Hulbert - 745-4586

Colony House Museum - 745-3703

Gerry Keeling

Webmistress - 745-3462

Karen Stuart

PHS MEETING INFORMATION

The Palmer Historical Society meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday of the month (Sep-Nov and Jan-May) at the Palmer Public Library. We gather at 7P, and the program starts at 730P.

Refreshments are served during the break. Come Join Us!

YOUR PHS SOCIETY

This would be a great time to join or to renew your membership in the Palmer Historical Society.

Your membership is important in supporting us in our mission of researching and preserving Palmer's history, as well as educating and informing the public about those who have gone before us.

Do you enjoy our programs and speakers? Our newsletter? Like to support the Colony House Museum? Wish to help preserve Palmer's History? Then please consider joining or renewing today!

You may mail in your annual dues or pay them at our September 15th meeting at the Library.

visit our website at www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org

PHS 2010 ANNUAL PICNIC WRAP-UP

The forecast called for rain and sure enough the day began with a steady sprinkle. We had decided to try having a picnic in the City pavilion just across from the Palmer Museum/Tourist Center to be close to the historic district as well as to take advantage of the covered

picnic area. By the time the hot dogs and burgers were ready and the potluck dishes set out, a good crowd was on hand to enjoy the afternoon, with the sun also putting in an appearance.

Taking advantage of the nice afternoon, a tour was hastily put together of

the old Mat Maid property with *Ralph Hulbert, DeLena Johnson, and Clyde and June Oberg* acting as our expert guides. Although in disrepair, the property is a great reminder of the agricultural roots of our development here in Palmer.



Can you name your fellow PHS members in these photos? Next month we'll have Helen Hulbert's Zesty Zucchini Gazpacho Salad.

ANNUAL ELECTION SET FOR OCTOBER 20TH MEETING

According to our bylaws, "the October general membership meeting shall be considered the Annual Meeting, at which time the membership shall conduct such business as may be proper and elect the Board of Directors."

Please contact one of the Board Members, located on the front page, if you

are interested serving on the Board and help make the important decisions that further the study and preservation of Palmer's history!

We always welcome volunteers, and we have a wide range of opportunities including assisting with several research projects, museum cataloging, photo

MATANUSKA MAID PROPERTY IS IN THE NEWS



As many folks probably know, the Palmer city is considering issuing general obligation bonds in the amount of \$3 million to acquire the City Block known as the Mat-Maid Block.

This is the industrial heart of the Matanuska Colony and has a number of well known landmark buildings including the original warehouse and the water tower.

In fact the preservation and revitalization of this area was one of the principle reasons for the establishment of the Palmer Historical Society in 1986. Interestingly, the property today has seven different owners.

About half of the acreage is owned by

scanning, video taping our programs, and helping out at the Colony House Museum. Remember *we are an all-volunteer organization*, and any help you can offer will be greatly appreciated.

the Alaska Department of Natural Resources including the granary and several other outbuildings on the north side of the block. The Palmer Arts Council owns the Power House. Both the warehouse and the Water Tower are owned by a private party. As noted in earlier newsletters, the Co-op warehouse is on the Alaska Association for Historical Preservation's list of 10 most endangered buildings in the State.

Come Join Us & Become an Active Member

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

COLONY HOUSE MUSEUM SHINES IN SUMMER OF 2010

Looking quite fine for a 75-year old, the Colony House Museum rests under autumn sunshine wearing a fresh coat of paint and basking in the glow of our busiest season yet. Since May 1st, hundreds of visitors have come by for a first-hand glimpse of 1935-1945 history and its cause and effect regarding our own home town of Palmer. It is not at all unusual for a school child to return with a mom or dad to share what they saw and learned during a school class field trip! Or to hear, in person or via correspondence, "It is/was the highlight of our trip!" Such praise requires recognition that there are many sung and unsung heroes who have played various roles since 1994 to envision, create, restore, and establish this important Colony House Museum site.

Kudos to them all, "then" to "now"!

Museum docents are 100 percent volunteer, usually one or two on duty at a time, but four or five per school field trip in order to provide better one-on-one connection with the students. This year's terrific docent group was comprised of *Bonita Strong, Arlene Fox, Willie Pedersen, Evie Mielke, Gayle Rowland, Norma Benson, Carol Strouse, Helen Riley, Barbara Thomas, and Mary Ann Anderson*. Stepping forward to help with class tours were *Dorothy Hubbard, Helen Hulbert, Ruth Hulbert, Amber Henry, and Rob Pippel*. These are the folks who bring life to the Museum's story!

Splendid CHM support comes in many ways...including a contribution

from *Helga Larson*, thoughtfully directed toward maintenance expense, the wonderful "chef-dom" of *Pete Scott* during raffle dinner planning, PHS Board member *John Stuart* for giving a month of his year toward the permanent upgrade of the Pump House Building, and steadfast and generous lawn service provided by *Ken Fennell* and son *Evan* this summer (*Terry Richardson*, too). Community service exemplified by some of our Valley's first class folks.

The Colony House Museum is now on winter hiatus but on standby until occasions arise. Our next big event...Colony Christmas OPEN HOUSE on Saturday, December 11!

Contributed by Gerry Keeling

RESTORATION PROJECT COMPLETED ON THE COLONY HOUSE MUSEUM

In addition to a new coat of paint, a big project was completed this spring as a major step toward adding to the display area at our Colony House Museum. Renovation of the pump house will give us the ability to show our visitors the area where not only the hand pump for the well was kept out of the weather as well as other items from the colony era. The pump house had multiple uses including storage, a work area, and of course the source of water. We are fortunate to have a good collection of tools, implements and miscellaneous barrels, buckets and crates to create a realistic display of past use of the pump house.

The work completed on the building so far has included foundation and floor repair. For several years the pump house sat on blocks and although the exterior was in fairly good shape, the inside was not and an accumulation of artifacts hid many holes in the floor as well as an uneven settling of the building. The first step involved moving everything to an enclosed trailer for the eventual move to more permanent storage. Once emptied, we could see the building's museum potential but also the need for repairs.

Initial work involved jacking the build-



ing up and putting three treated wood beams under the floor. The beams are supported by concrete pier blocks with adjustable saddles in the event future settling requires adjustment. With a level stable building we were ready to repair the floor. After removing old patches to assure a flat surface, a layer of 3/4-inch plywood was screwed down. The plywood provided a solid base for application of the 1x6 boards to simulate the look of the original floor. The final touch

was to apply a solution of vinegar with steel wool dissolved in it to give the new boards an "aged" look. On the exterior, skirting was attached to the base of the building, hiding the beams and blocks and giving it a finished appearance.

There's still more work to be done, but we're closer to the goal of getting more of our collection on display to be enjoyed by all.

Contributed by John Stuart

MEMORIAL, MYSTERY, AND MEMORIES

IN MEMORY OF DAVE SOULAK

Besides serving 12 years as Palmer's city manager, a record tenure for that volatile position, Dave Soulak was instrumental in PHS's 1988 restoration of the water tower. The tower was a dilapidated eyesore. Kids and drunks would climb to the top and the constabulary had fits bringing them down safely. The city clamored for its removal but the state, then the owner, played deaf. PHS began the drive to restore it, raising money and foundering along for a year until Dave secured matching funds and the city's clout in solving legal and contracting hassles. While removing the ladder solved the safety issues, the restoration begot Palmer Pride – more than just a slogan – and an enduring town image. It's fitting to remember the tower needs a little maintenance after two decades.

MYSTERY PHOTO ALBUM

Last fall, Pat Durand gave us a peek at an album with 55 Alaskan photos dating from 1898, including several in Cook Inlet, Talkeetnas, and coastal communities. The photographs appear to be associated with a military expedition, maybe one of Glenn's parties, but do not match any published photos. The album came from Robert Stroup's estate, but where he got it is unknown. Pat asked PHS to help identify the photos and who took them – difficult after a century, but doable. Many of the photos are landscapes, some have cryptic annotations, and all the military expeditions were mapped. We will show a few photos at the meeting and have DVDs with the photos, background of the military expeditions, and summary investigation so far. We encourage members to help solve this mystery.

75TH COLONY REUNION PHOTOS

During Colony Days in June, Palmer put on quite a show, attended by friends near and far – many from out of state. The Colony Days parade was bigger than ever to celebrate the 75th anniversary, and events continued for three days including a mug-up, reunion dinner, and finishing with a family picnic. We thank the Colony Kids (aka Matanuska Valley Colony, Inc.) for organizing events. No event is complete without Ted Bell taking photos – and this year he assembled the best from all the events and put them on a DVD for TV or computer viewing. Call Ted at (907) 745-2227 and see your friends, neighbors, and yourself having a good time.

Contributed by Ralph Hulbert

This Edition Full of Upcoming PHS Dates — Mark YOUR Calendars Today!!

- December 11 – *Annual Colony Christmas Open House*
Colony House Museum
- November 17 – *Author of Ghosts of Alaska*
Program Speaker Jody Ellis-Knapp
- October 20 – *White Alice and Alaska Telecommunications*
Program Speaker Carol Christiansen
- September 15th – *Earthquakes and the Tsunami Warning Center*
Program Speakers George Carte and Wayne Jorgensen
- Presenting your Fall Palmer Historical Society Speakers –
3rd Wednesday each Month – Palmer Library – 7:30PM*

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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