

PALMER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

Official Publication of the Palmer Historical Society - Volume XXVI No.3 - May 2011 Edition

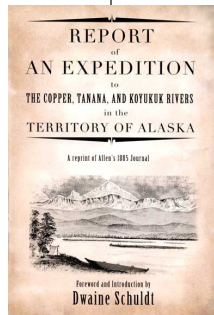
PRESIDENT'S VIEW FROM FARM LOOP

Oh yes May, with green leaves and a beautiful April in the books. This month wraps up our winter/spring program series *May 18th* at the Palmer Library at 7:00 p.m. with a presentation by Dwaine Schuldt on the Lt. Henry T. Allen 1885 expedition into the Copper River Basin country and on to the Yukon River to St. Michaels, with a side expedition up the Koyukuk River. May also means the opening of the Colony House Museum. Stop by and say hello, and remember our Open House for Colony Days *June 11th*. I spoke with Carol Strouse recently and she and Hugh have agreed to host our summer picnic at their place *July 17th*. Put this date on your calendar and we will also send you a reminder and details later this summer.

Chuck Logsdon, PHS President

MAY MEETING IS ALLEN EXPEDITION BY DWAIN SCHULTZ

Dwaine Schuldt's presentation about Lt. Allen's expedition should be fascinating. Allen's expedition successfully travelled up the Copper River to the Yukon River as well as exploring the Koyukuk River before going down the Yukon to St. Michael and returning to the States. Lt. Allen's tale is one of survival with limited resources and with the invaluable assistance of local Natives so that his expedition accomplished



what much larger and better equipped military expeditions had failed to do. Dwaine has taught outdoor education and has lead expeditions in Antarctica and Greenland. When I caught up with him the other day he was on his way to Cordova for the Shorebird Festival. Mark your calendar for *May 18th*, 7:00 p.m. at the Palmer Library. He will have copies of Lt. Allen's journal for sale at the meeting.

COLONY HOUSE MUSEUM CHATTER BY GERRY KEELING

Signs of Spring have definitely been seen at the Colony House Museum since mid-April with the arrival of many Valley youngsters on a touring expedition of the CHM. Their energy and curiosity bring great questions and perspective of local history, both to themselves and to their accompanying adults...as well as to CHM docents! School tours are scheduled most days until summer vacation begins. By then it will be time for garden prep and planting and all those other springtime tasks, so there is always lots to think about. Just around the corner on *Saturday, June 11th*, we will celebrate OPEN HOUSE at the CHM as part of Palmer's "Colony Days" celebration, and PHS is looking to have a "yard sale" that same weekend. Stay tuned!

At the Colony House Museum, wonderful new pieces continue to be added to our collection of memorabilia. Late last summer, Louise Loberg Bidondo donated an unusually shaped galvanized steel 54 gallon gas barrel used on the Loberg farm to fuel their tractor that according to the stamp on the top was manufactured in 1919 for Standard Oil of California. And thanks to the Loyer family, the Museum now holds a fine old domed, metal embellished steamer trunk, brought to Alaska in 1935 by Colonists Joseph and Naomi Loyer. (One of our visiting students speculated that it looked like a pirate's chest!) The trunk treasure comes to us from the Loyer family as a lovely memorial to their sister and longtime CHM docent supporter Norma Loyer Benson.

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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 6:30PM; the program starts at 700PM.

Refreshments are served during the break. Come Join Us!



Embellished Steamer Trunk brought to the Matanuska Colony by the Loyer Family

1919 Gas Barrel used on the Loberg Farm

These are two of our latest treasures at the Museum. We are hoping to add a Matanuska Maid milk bottle! Do you have a couple of spares?



1939 GLACIER VIEW HOME MAKERS-PALMER ALASKA



Irene Beylund is at the far left of the picture above. Other Glacier View Homemakers in the photo starting to the right of Irene Beylund are Irene Benson, Alice Sjodin, Marge Hoskins, Helen Hess, Marie Sjodin, Lulubelle Bouwens, Lillian Eckert, Unidentified (can you help us out?), and Grace Anderson. The little girl is Arlene Benson Fox. Photo Courtesy of JoAnn Utt

Colonist Irene Beylund's Banana Cake Recipe

1½ cups sugar 2 eggs
 2 cups flour ½ cup shortening
 1 tsp baking powder ½ tsp soda
 ½ tsp salt
 ¼ cup sour milk 1 cup mashed bananas

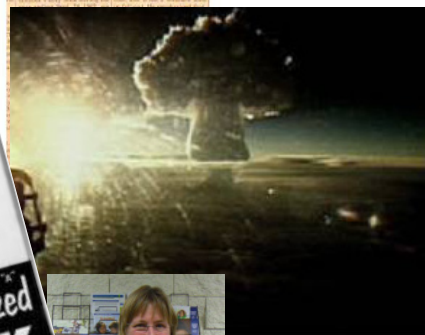
Cream shortening, add sugar, add well beaten eggs. Sift flour, baking powder, soda, and salt together. Add alternately with sour milk and mashed bananas, add vanilla. Bake in layers 30 min. at 350.

PALMER, ALASKA: RADIOACTIVE MILK CONTROVERSY

At our March meeting, Katie Eberhart gave a fascinating presentation on the "fallout" from the nuclear bomb testing by both Russia and China in the 50's and 60's that showed up in not only Alaska produced milk but milk all across the United States.

The ongoing release of radioactive isotopes from the tsunami-impacted Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan provided a current day touchstone for Katie's presentation. Iodine, Cesium, and Strontium contamination of milk found in the press at that time are suddenly back in the news today. Radioactive fallout from the Russian bomb testing in the early 1960's landed on Matanuska Valley fields. Dairy cows that ate the contaminated forage produced milk with high levels of radioactive isotopes.

Katie did a good job of reviewing the controversy about the extent to which local milk consumers were affected by the radioactive contamination. The local news coverage illustrated the concern that officials had not only about public health, but also about preventing a panic that would lead to a negative economic



impact on what was at the time a large local dairy industry in the Matanuska valley.

Many in the audience recalled the growing threat of the use of nuclear

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weapons as the Cold War intensified and the resultant boom in fallout shelter construction. One person recalled that there was even talk of a fallout shelter gap and the subtle social pressure to have one. Others recalled the emergency drills in the schools preparing the students for evacuation to shelters in the event of a nuclear

attack. The good news today is that atmospheric testing of nuclear devices was banned by international agreement in 1963, and there has been no atmospheric testing since then. The only underground nuclear test in the last 13 years was by North Korea in 2009.

THE INDEPENDENCE SKI RESORT IN THE 1960's AND 1970's



Ben Wattum presented an entertaining and informative program on his experience operating the Independence Mine as a Ski resort in the 1960's and 1970's. Downhill skiing was part of the life of many in the Valley during this period.

You can view a photo in the Alaska Digital Archives website http://vilda.alaska.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/cdmg2&CISOPTR=619&REC=2 that shows skiers headed for Independence on a Greyhound bus in

Ben's stories were entertaining and demonstrated what it took to put together an off the grid grass roots ski area that had heat, lights, and a rope tow and T-bar ski lifts. It seemed clear that the critical components included acquiring a D-8 cat, an accommodating banker, and the help of the ski patrol. Ben's stories about the trials and tribulations of keeping the road open included the time



*Snow Buried House at Independence Ski Resort
Photo Courtesy of Ben Wattum*

they couldn't clear the road one day after a snow storm because the cat was buried and first they had to find it.

Ben's credited his good business relationship with the mine owners, Sea-Land transportation, and local banker Kyle Turner with keeping the resort open as long as he did. From Ben's talk we learned how fragile and easily forgotten local

history can be. He stressed that many people don't realize that there even was an operating ski resort at Independence, and that the area has fantastic accessible snow for skiing from early October into May. After Ben's presentation many in the audience could be heard sharing stories about the great skiing in the Independence Bowl as well as the sauna and après ski parties that occurred when the ski resort was open.



*Independence Mine Lift Line—1970's
Photo Courtesy of Carol Christiansen*

1942. Old timers talk about skiing up there even earlier than that.

In the 1960's, the ski bus ran up to Independence from Central School on Saturdays with Matanuska Colonist Johan Johnson at the wheel. Ben and his partner Leon Kuhn bought the existing lodge from Julius Moor in 1965, and negotiated a lease of the property with the mine owners to continue operating the ski facility from 1966 through 1974.



*Independence Mine T-Bar
Photo Courtesy of Al Setera*

We look forward to seeing you at our
May Meeting –
Do remember that our meetings
now BEGIN at 7:00PM!

LOCAL HISTORY BEGINS AT THE COLONY HOUSE MUSEUM

From Lori Kirker at the Alaskana Bookstore we garner insight via architect David Williams as to the creation of the Matanuska Colony of 1935. The project inception (January 1935) to reality (May 1935) helps to explain numerous problems which quickly arose. Lines of authority were unclear. "Horses came without wagons but with five tons of paper towels. There were grindstones but not axes; horses but no harness."

Continuing on...each family was comfortably housed within six months, twenty-four babies were born the first year, fifty families had returned to the

states but thousands of replacement applications had been received.

And so it goes. History continues ... each year bringing new chapters and newer stories. If you would like to join in our CHM effort for our Valley community, do call or drop by. We're open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday until the end of August!

We gladly welcome your help on the grounds to tend gardens, docent training so you can be a host to our many visitors this summer, providing goods for our bake sale June 11th, and more!

Come Join Us this Summer...

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 May 18th meeting at the Library.

Remember – We Begin our PHS Programs at 7:00PM in 2011 !!

Palmer Historical Society Annual Picnic
July 17th - Mark you calendars today!

Colony House Museum Open House for *Colony Days*
June 11th - Mark you calendars today!

May 18th – *The Allen Expedition*
Program Speakers Dwaine Schult

*Presenting your Spring Palmer Historical Society Speakers –
3rd Wednesday each Month – Palmer Library – 7:00PM*

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