

Palmer Historical Society

PRESERVING OUR PAST, SHARING OUR STORIES & MAKING HISTORY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS
Official Publication of the Palmer Historical Society—Volume XXIV No.5 – May 2009 Edition

President's View from Farm Loop

Holy cow, we've suddenly gone from spring to summer in a heartbeat. Long daylight hours and green leaves on the trees can only mean one thing...GET BUSY!!!! In this case the onset of summer activities means our last program of the season is coming up. We are pleased to have Pat Durand as our speaker. He will make a presentation on the history of the Matanuska rail spur and shed some light on the history of the little locomotive #5 gracing the town center in Palmer at our May 20th meeting.

Chatter from the Colony House Museum

Summer hours arrived at the CHM on May 1, accompanied especially this month by the footsteps of many school children on the trail of their Valley's history! (It seems only yesterday that we docents were bounding through our own school days activities.) It's a reminding experience to highlight "then" for our visitors and an important mission while we at CHM impart that special spirit of community that has enveloped our town through the years until "now". *The CHM will be open for regular summer hours 10 a.m. through 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday until the end of August.*

By the time you receive this newsletter, the lucky winners of our Museum dinner raffle will have been drawn for a bit of "night out" pampering, with their dinner being served on Sunday, May 17 at the CHM. The PHS board sends much appreciation for the support given this event and for the interest and participation in PHS's other projects and programs. THANK YOU!

Our CHM intern will be arriving on June 3 for a most important summer for the Colony House Museum. Her work will establish a records foundation and documentation of our Museum

The Colony House Museum is now open, so stop by and say hello and by all means encourage your summer visitors to do so as well.

As usual we will be celebrating Colony Days with an open house at the Colony House Museum this year occurring June 13th. Also we are planning on a picnic in July and an historic site visit in August.

I hope to see you at the meeting, and thanks to everyone for supporting the Palmer Historical Society.

Chuck Logsdon, President

collection and is a most important step for our growth. You likely will be impressed by observing the meticulous detail in which a collection is documented. With this process going on, the CM will continue to function in near basic but extra busy summer mode.

It's not too early to think ahead to our Colony Days "OPEN HOUSE" celebration, when our Museum will offer hospitality to visitors both local and from out of town on Saturday, June 13. There's nothing more inviting than a homemade cookie or treat...so if any of you could bring a goodie plate for the occasion...and perhaps a historical tidbit or tale...you will be worthy of a hometown star in your crown! (Check with Gerry if you have questions 745-3703).

We close this column today with special remembrance of our longtime friend and fellow member Kay Love, whose bright spirit and common sense, her dedication to community and country, and her generosity of time and talent to several organizations, exemplifies good citizenship in the finest sense. Kay was a charter member of PHS and a continuous supporter of the Colony House Museum. Bless her indomitable energy and spirit...

Gerry Keeling



Kay Love and her beloved cat "Muffy"

Your PHS Newsletter

All members are again encouraged, in this new year, to contribute "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!

Pat Durand May Speaker

Patrick J. Durand, descendant of early arrivals in the Valley, actually they were too late to be called colonist and too early to be boomers. Archie Moffitt arrived in 1937 and Carl Durand in 1939. Pat, a student of Alaskan History will provide a virtual train ride from Anchorage to Matanuska and the mines on the Sourdough Express Circa 1918. Yes there was life here BC, that is before Colonist. He will discuss some of the artifacts still around from those days including Locomotive #5 in downtown Palmer.



Mark Your Calendars

May 20th, 2009

Palmer Public Library Mtg Room

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

As always, the public is cordially invited to attend, and refreshments, served by our Hospitality Committee, will be available during our evening. Come Join Us!

visit our website at www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org

The Oldest Road in Palmer... the research continues!

Last newsletter we asked “what is the oldest road in Palmer”, allowing liberal interpretations. At the April meeting, I truthfully pleaded ignorance – but some clues were revealed. In the photo show & tell, we saw a 1917 photo of the railroad section house and depot just south of the Blueberry St. crossing. The Palmer Post Office was located in G. White’s adjacent homestead log house, which looked quite old, as did the outbuildings fields, and fence.

The railroad was built in 1916, but the homesteaders – White, Bugge, Loken, Egtvedt, Dunklee, Smith, and the several dozen others in the area had already been farming here for years. How did they move their supplies before the railroad? Winter and summer routes were probably different. You might carry 100 lbs. on your back from Knik, 25 air miles, but not that plow and hay wagon.

Research so far has included the Alaska Digital Library photos (primarily the railroad collection), the original 1913-15 survey and notes, and this USDA 1939 aerial photo.

The Watson trail was upgraded ~1907 from the native trails surveyed by Glenn in 1898 and was the main east-west road in the valley. Watson used it to haul coal from his mines at Chickaloon to Knik. Sometime after 1916, a trail started at White’s and followed Blueberry St. northwest 3 miles to Carnegie’s ranch (Snow Goose Pond Sub.), then continued to Independence Mine along the older Fishhook Rd. (which shows up on the 1915 survey). This suggests both Fishhook segments were coal trails.

The Palmer-Wasilla Hwy and road



to the Butte (Old Glenn) were built ~1918, although the first Matanuska Bridge only lasted a couple years, and was replaced in 1934. The online photos reveal many established farms by 1917.

The 1915 survey shows a cleared railroad right of way, which by 1917 also had a parallel road (Valley Way) which became the main road to Matanuska and thence to Wasilla. I’d like someone to read and report on the Walter Todd diary of surveying the railroad, 5 volumes, at the UAA library.

The land survey and notes also show a wagon road from White’s through the Loken farm to the Matanuska. This trail

is clear on the 1939 photo, and the part not on the Snodgrass farm has become East Blueberry St. On the notes but not on the plat is another wagon road which “leads from Buggy’s well to the Matanuska” and has no current remnant. So, my bet is the homesteaders freighted up the river some of the time and the oldest road remnant in Palmer is East Blueberry St.

Next... freighting on the Matanuska? Gotta be kidding – the surveyors all said it is non-navigable with rapids and quicksands, and they were tough.

*The Research Continues...
Ralph Hulbert*

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 – \$10/yr Contributing – \$25/yr
 Sustaining – \$100/yr Lifetime \$500

Historic Eagle Experiences 100-year Ice Jam and Flood

The huge Yukon ice jam and flooding significantly damaged the historic town of Eagle, including the customs house museum and other 110 year old sites managed by the Eagle Historical Society. Phones have not yet been restored and status is unknown. We do expect them to repair and rebuild, but they might need help. Their website is <http://www.eagleak.org/> and we’ll keep a link and status on our website.

Help Plan to Celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Matanuska Valley Colony

Get ready to party! The Matanuska Valley Colony will turn 75 next year, a singular cause for celebrations and reunion during Colony Days, June 11-12-13, 2010. Whatever your connection, settler, colonist, or the rest of us, this is a town party. We even expect participation from New Deal historians and the several Midwest counties that sent their kith and kin to a new beginning in Palmer. To lend a hand, call Marcella Hartley 376-5552.

DeLena Johnson Shows What It Takes



DeLena Johnson gave a fast paced and informative presentation on the restoration of the Colony Community Center now known as the Dahlia Street Market. DeLena presented a dramatic series of slides and discussed the intricacies of remodeling this original Colony building. What a monster project! DeLena kept using the words luck and hard work by herself, family and others to get the job done. The Palmer Historical Society presented her with our annual Preservation Award and hearty thanks for a job well done. *DeLena and Steve Johnson with their Preservation Award at our April Meeting!*

Tribute to Emeritus Board Member Kay Love

Kay's Advice for a Long and Healthy Life

Stay happy and have a positive outlook every day. "When I grow old, I'm not going to sit by the fire and spin!" Keep busy, don't get despondent and keep the Faith whatever the faith is for you! Keep your sense of humor and be happy in your work cause a lot of people aren't happy in their work but if they have a sense of humor you can be happy in your work. And after you retire, I suggest that you volunteer for every good thing you can think of because that keeps you busy and keeps you out of trouble. Just keep volunteering!



Governor's
Outstanding
Volunteers of the Year Award
Kay Love with Governor Sarah Palin

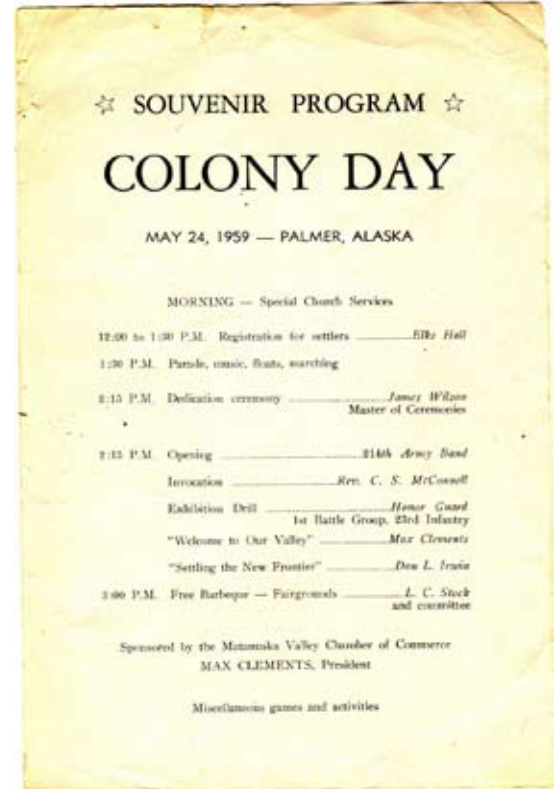
Kay Love's Recipe for a "Peppy Drink" taken from Kay's Aunt Eila's cookbook in Vermont

For 1/4 recipe try:

9 pints yellow corn meal	4 1/2 cups cornmeal
8 pints brown sugar	4 cups brown sugar
Juice of 3 lemons	1 lemon
2 yeast cakes	1/2 yeast cake
3 gallons warm water	4 quarts warm water
Stir twice a day for 21 days	Stir twice a day for 21 days
Then drink and smile!	Then drink and smile!

50 Years Ago in Palmer History

Many thanks to Ida and Ector Dillard for sending us a 1959 Souvenir Program for Colony Day May 24, 1959. Chuck remembers standing in line at the old Fairgrounds in a dusty Knik wind waiting for one of those free barbecued beef sandwich that day.



Hibernation is Over at the Museum!

• **Maintenance** - this would be for the building as well as maintaining yard and flower beds this summer.

• **Research and Documentation** - we need help in recording Palmer's history from stories, tales, and little "unknown facts" to photos and follow-up on materials we have received.

• **Membership** - from planning annual activities to activities to increase awareness of the Palmer Historical Society offerings to our membership and those not yet members. This very newsletter needs your support with articles, a recipe 'n memory, a photo, a story or recollections of people and days past.

• **Colony House Museum** has seasonal and year-round volunteer needs: docents to bakers!

Contact one of your Board Members to volunteer a few hours of your time to help make "around the Museum" - many hands make light work!



Palmer "History" Question of the Month

No questions was submitted to the Palmer Historical Society Board of Directors this month! Please send an e-mail to info@palmerhistoricalsociety.org or write up your thoughts and mail them to Palmer Historical Society, PO Box 1935, Palmer, AK 99645!

Website of the Month

Checkout our fellow Historical Society, the Eagle Historical Society in Eagle, Alaska: <http://www.eagleak.org/>

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 - Open Mike Night - Memories of Alaska Statehood

February 18th - Fran Seager-Boss - National Heritage Area

March 18th - Sue Merritt - Colony School Teacher

April 15th - Delena Johnson - Colony Recreation Center Restoration

**May 20th - PHS Meeting • Pat Durand
History of Palmer's Locomotive #5 & the
Chickaloon Branch - Matanuska North**

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!

Palmer Historic District - Matanuska Colony - 1939



Courtesy Aero-Metric Aerial Photos 1939

Board of Directors Serving PHS in 2009
President - Chuck Logsdon.....745-2327
Vice President - John Stuart.....745-3462
Co-Secretary - Sharon Benson.....745-4913
Co-Secretary - JoAnn Utt.....376-4938
Treasurer - David Mathews.....745-7687
Program Chairman - Ralph Hulbert.....745-4586
Colony Museum - Gerry Keeling.....745-3703

Address Service Requested

Palmer, AK 99645-1935

PO Box 1935

Palmer Historical Society

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 232
PALMER, AK 99645