

Palmer Historical Society

PRESERVING OUR PAST, SHARING OUR STORIES & MAKING HISTORY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS
Official Publication of the Palmer Historical Society—Volume XXIII No.7 – October 2008 Edition

President's View from Farm Loop

The frost is on the cabbage and the leaves are gently falling as another winter is contemplated. The Colony House Museum is buttoned up for the season and the PHS has already begun our Fall/Winter program schedule.

Our first program was a great success thanks in no small part to our guest speaker Allan Linn. He packed the house to hear an informative reminiscence about farm life around the town of Matanuska before and after the Colony.

As is often the case, our scheduling a program is a dynamic process. As I soon found out, October is a particularly busy time for many of the people we would like you to hear from. So, although our planned program for October 15th has changed a couple of times, I am pleased to announce that we will have a presentation from Mr. Dan Renshaw. Dan is the owner operator of the Gold Cord Mine just adjacent to the Independence Mine State Park. Dan has been living full time at the mine and has a wealth of knowledge about the area. This should

be a very interesting program for all folks interested in the history of the valley and efforts to preserve this important part of our mining history. Also, don't forget to mark your calendar for the presentation by Don Dinkel on November 19th. And finally if you have an idea for a program or would like to make a presentation please call me or any of the other board members.

Board members Chuck Logsdon and John Stuart along with board members of the Palmer Museum of History and Art, DeLena Johnson, Tom Healy, and Wayne Bouwens, recently looked over a collection of documents and "stuff" from the now defunct Matanuska Maid Dairy. These items are in the process of being evaluated for either disposal and or archival by the State of Alaska. We identified those items of possible interest to PHS and particularly with respect to the Colony House Museum. There is a good chance we will be able to either obtain these things or have access to them for display and research purposes.

With regard to our upcoming presen-

tation on the Gold Cord Mine, I would like to extend a special thank you to Pia Cottini for her carrot recipe and the photo of the Little Susitna Lodge on the road to Hatcher Pass published in our last newsletter issue as this gives me the opportunity to share with the membership a really nice picture of Pia and Jim taken by board member Sharon Benson. By the way, I tried the recipe and it tasted mighty good along with some pork chops and freshly made sauerkraut and potatoes.



A reminder that elections will also be taking place at our October meeting! Would you like to serve your fellow PHS members by being on our Board of Directors? Please feel free to call me with your questions should you be interested!

Chuck Logsdon, President

Chatter from the Colony House Museum by Gerry Keeling!



Summer Treasures Bloom as autumn leaves fall at the Colony House Museum. CHM mid-year visitors Jean Emery Hall and her family have added a poignant and important set of photographs to the Museum collection—photographs of a fire raging as it destroyed the Colony's "little jewel of a hospital" in mid-1946. Jean, a school girl and whose mother worked at the hospital, took the photographs with her Kodak Brownie camera. With the hospital gone, her family soon moved away.

In the CHM back porch, an old barn lantern sits by the door as if awaiting evening chores, thanks to a donation by Colonist child Bill Fox and sons.

Bill also shared a look at an old autograph book of 1935 with messages to Colonists

Waldo and Mabel Fox such as these...

"Dear Brother and sister, Once in a while think of me—I'll come to see you when I'm through with the CCC. You Kid Brother Glen"

"I surely wish you all the luck in the world—and don't fall for any Eskimos—"

"May 7, 1935. When sometimes you are thinking will you think of me and the kisses I have sent you long across the sea. Your sister Birdie"

"May 4, 1935. Dear Sis, Bro, and Nephew—When you arrive in Alaska, Don't forget us in the good old U.S.A. for we all will be thinking of you, and looking for a letter every other day. Sis Luella and Family"

"My Dear Mr. and Mrs. Fox—You deserve lots of credit for your courage in this attempt you are about to make for future success and happiness. All the best in the world—Bea Carlson"

I want to remind you that we'll be having our annual Colony House Museum Open House on Wednesday, December 17th, so be sure to mark your calendars!



visit our website at www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org

Alaska's 50th Anniversary

The PHS Board wants to hear from YOU! We have been receiving notices about activities around the state and plans are underway for celebrations around the State of Alaska.

Do you have something you would like to see the Palmer Historical Society involved in, take on themselves in celebration of our Statehood? Contact a PHS Board of Director and let them know!



AnchorageTimes headline "WE'RE IN" that appeared on the front page of the Anchorage paper on June 30, 1958 - the day the United States Congress gave their stamp of approval to Alaska's bid for statehood.

From the *PHS Newsletter Team*, 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.

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? I can make arrangements to pick them up from you, scan them, and get you back your originals!

And, just to clarify, I (and certainly the PHS Board) welcome submissions from all of you—from photos of yesterdays, to articles on memories of growing up in the Palmer area, and events that happened and made history!

Cheryl Babbe

PHS Newsletter Team



Matanuska Maid Dairy Memorabilia

Steve Hendrickson, Curator of Collections, for the Alaska State Museum, was in Palmer September 23 and 24 to review with local Museum (Colony House, Palmer, and Dorothy Page) a collection of documents and items from the now defunct Matanuska Maid Dairy for disposal and archiving. Mr. Hendrickson made it very clear that his mission was to ensure that this State property was appropriately archived and where appropriate made available to local



museums. PHS board members Chuck Logsdon and John Stuart looked over the items and identified those things that were either of historical importance for researchers, like documents, or for display at the Colony House museum.

The documents, like the notes for corporation meetings, will be sent to Juneau for archiving. PHS will be able to get

either the originals or copies (potentially in digital format) at some point. Most of the other physical things were leftovers from various marketing and promotional campaigns like banners, posters, prints, tapes of radio and television advertising spots, giveaways such as golf balls, hats, shirts and the like, and miscellany of all sorts. John and I filled a couple of boxes with a few things including vintage ice cream cartons and requested

that we be put on a list to receive some of the promotional materials to use for future fund raising opportunities.

According to Mr. Hendrickson, it will take awhile for our requests to work their way through the bureaucracy for disposal as surplus State property, but that there is a good chance that we will get what we asked for!

Submitted by Chuck Logsdon

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

Mayonnaise Cake

This recipe from Joann Utt's Grandmother – Elsie Waldal Brown

2 cups water
1 cup walnuts
1 cup raisins
2 tablespoons baking soda
Boil water and pour over fruit. Add soda and set aside to cool.

Cream together:

2 cups sugar
2 cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons chocolate (Hershey's)
1 tablespoon cinnamon

Add 3 cups flour alternately with first ingredients and add to second ingredients. Bake in a large loaf pan at 350° for 50 minutes. Can bake in a 9x13 pan; adjust time accordingly.

My grandmother made this cake alot. She originally got it from a fellow bingo player at the Sutton Community Center in the 1960's. I remember her tracking down the cook when our family tasted it the first time! — Joanne Utt

A History of my Grandmother Elsie

My Grandmother, Elsie Waldal came to Alaska in 1925 with her husband Hjalmar Waldal, when my mom was three months old. Her father, Augustus DeRoux, was a gold-miner in Skagway and Dawson (1897-1899). That eventually led the family to Alaska.

Elsie first lived in Juneau and moved to Anchorage in 1939.

She opened a fur shop at 234 4th Avenue. One of her clients was Jeanne Laurence, Sydney's wife. She moved her family to Palmer in 1946 with her second husband, Frank Brown. Frank was on Palmer's first City Council. She loved Alaska!! Elsie passed away in 1970, and many people remember what a great cook she was.



Circa 1925 – Elsie Waldal (R), my Grandmother, with her sister-in-law Kate in Seattle.

September Speaker Allan Linn

September Meeting Wrap-Up by Chuck Logsdon



“...thoughtful talk that provided those who attended an appreciation for agricultural development and everyday life in the Valley...”

Long time Palmer resident Allan Linn gave a fascinating and thoughtful talk that provided those who attended an appreciation for agricultural development and everyday life in the Valley both before and after the Matanuska Colony was established. The junction of the railroad to either to Fairbanks or the coal mines near

the town of Matanuska was clearly a nexus for early development in the area and Allan's tales of the trials and tribulation of a Kansas farmer starting a dairy business in this area really brought alive how different and tough those times were. Allan suggested that this was only a small part of what he could have talked about so it is possible that we can talk him into making a future presentation.



Serve on the PHS Board of Directors

I encourage each of you to consider serving your fellow membership of the Palmer Historical Society! At our October meeting, elections will be held for the seven members on the "official" Board: President, VP, Secretary, Treasurer, and the three Trustees. At the first meeting following the general election, those elected will choose the positions each will serve.

I know, I know we're all busy! And, I know that *many* of you have stepped forward to serve throughout this last year: gardeners, carpenters, and docents at the Museum, hosts

for our our picnic, speakers at meetings, writing articles for our PHS newsletter, baking cookies (and lemon bars!) for our monthly meetings, serving and serenading at our Holiday House and the annual dinner, and more!

Your newly-elected Board will be putting together a list of volunteer opportunities for you to be of service in the upcoming months. We'll be publishing the list in future PHS newsletters, and I do hope that you'll find something that interests you—there are many opportunities to serve!

*Cheryl Babbe
PHS Member*

Mine Owner Renshaw to Speak at October 15th Meeting

We are very fortunate to have as our speaker Dan Renshaw. Dan owns and seasonally operates the Gold Cord Mine. All of you, who are familiar with the Independence Mine, will recognize this mine as the one you can see just up the hill from the Independence Mine State Park. Dan is currently living at the mine and has had a long association with gold mining in the area.

In 1940 Dan's father took over responsibility for operating the Gold Cord mine, so Dan is quite familiar with life at the mine. He remembers walking down to Independence to watch movies at the theater there. Dan was educated in the area and graduated from the University of Alaska, School of Mines with a degree in Mining Engineering. He is currently a business consultant.

Mark Your Calendars

October 15th - PHS Meeting

Annual Meeting & Dan Renshaw - Guest Speaker

November 19th - PHS Meeting

Doctor Don Dinkel - Guest Speaker

December 17th - Open House

Colony House Museum

January 21st - PHS Meeting

Sue Merritt - Guest Speaker

February 18th - PHS Meeting

March 18th - PHS Meeting

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!



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

Address Service Requested

Palmer, AK 99645-1935

PO Box 1935

Palmer Historical Society