

# Palmer Historical Society

PRESERVING OUR PAST, SHARING OUR STORIES & MAKING HISTORY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS  
**Official Publication of the Palmer Historical Society—Volume XXIII No.3 – March 2008 Edition**

## President's View from Farm Loop

In case you have forgotten, Groundhog's day (February 2) was cold (temperatures below zero) and partly cloudy so the forecast for winter's icy grip could be either short or long. I'm betting the parky squirrels stayed holed up in their burrows and didn't see their shadows. Regardless, the Iron Dog the Fur Rendezvous and the Iditarod are over and Spring equinox is nearly upon us. If you are a gardener you need think about starting some tomatoes and leeks soon not to mention annual flowers.

The PHS continues to pursue a number of exciting projects. We expect to have a final version of the Alaska Far Away movie available by Colony days. As this is the 75th anniversary of the New Deal we are also working on identifying and formally recognizing the workers who built the Colony. Expect to see more future presentations and recollections based around the 1939 aerial photos of the Valley. Ralph Hulbert has also been instrumental in assembling a lot of very interesting notes from the 1911–1915 cadastral survey information recently put online by the Government Land Office (now BLM). This stuff provides us a fascinating look at what was happening in the area as white settlers began moving in to the "farthest north point of the Pacific Ocean" more commonly known as where Wasilla Creek flows into the Palmer Slough.

This month, we continue our program series with a presentation March 19th by lifelong resident Kenny Hughes Sr. on the Lazy Mountain Children's Home. I went to school with many of

the kids who lived there and am looking forward to learning more about it.

Kenny writes, "I was born during the Colonist days and lived in a wall tent like everyone else. The hospital where I was born was a Quonset hut across the drive from the Protestant Church and Max Sherrod was the nurse. My Dad was employed by the Corporation as a finish carpenter. I graduated in 1954 from Palmer High School, married Jennetta Lindsey in 1955, then spent four years of college in Canada and two years of tech school in Tacoma Washington. I flew and maintained airplanes for Arctic Missions Inc. and InterAct Ministries until retirement in 2007".

We also have an exciting lineup of programs for the rest of the 2008 winter/spring period that I know you will enjoy (see calendar of events). Please let us know any suggestions you might have for our July historical tour.

If you haven't already checked out our web site <http://www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org>, you should as there are some very cool links and information there. Once again, we give kudos to Karen Stuart for her efforts in managing the website.

Thanks also to Cheryl Babbe our newsletter guru for our new look. Let us know how you like the changes the Board is making. Also, if you have given us your email address we would be happy to email your copy rather than mail a hard copy, just let us know.

As always, if you have an idea or an item you think would be of interest to the membership please contact me.

Chuck Logsdon



## Alaska Far Away Plays in Fargo!

News from Jester Hill – The Fargo Film Festival was great fun. AFA was very well-received, and they've basically invited us back for next year. Now we have to get ready for the Wisconsin Film Festival, where our show SOLD OUT on the first day of ticket sales.

The Rasmuson grant for mastering of the Alaska Far Away film was received and passed to Juster Hill Productions. Paul and Joanie are hoping to be here for Colony Days this June.

## In the Next Edition

- *Presidents' View from Farm Loop*
- *Tribute Recipe of the Month*
- *2008 Calendar of Events*
- *News on the Colony House Dinner Raffle*
- *Your Article – start writing today!*

## Next Society Meeting

March 19, 2008

Palmer Public Library Mtg Room

Gather at 7:00PM

Call to Order at 7:30PM

Program information on Page 2

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!

## Website Links from PHS Members

From Ralph Hulbert: This one is on our very own [www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org)! A 1927 report on local fisheries has been posted on our web site. One man spent most of a summer on the salmon streams from Nancy Lake to

Wasilla Cr. and around to Elmendorf. A must read for historians and fishermen.

From the PHS Board: Send us links that you visit on historical sites that *might* be of interest to fellow members at [phs@thefastfrontier.com](mailto:phs@thefastfrontier.com) – thank you!

visit our website at [www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org)

## New Deal Anniversary

*Archives on PHS Website*

Our Colony expert, Jim Fox, sent us several lists of New Deal workers that helped build the Matanuska Colony. Jim dug these lists of names out of the national archives years ago.

There are more, but we'll have to send Jim to research those distant archives. These include ship passenger lists from the San Mihiel and North Star, plus other lists organized by trade or where the workers were sent once they arrived.

Unfortunately, the originals were poor quality, the copies are very faint and tiny, and retyping them into a searchable list is taking longer than we hoped.

Look for all to be posted on our very own website: [www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org) later this month.  
Ralph Hulbert

*Matanuska Maid*



## Matanuska Maid Mooved

The Matanuska Maid creamery has folded. The Palmer Historical Society and the Palmer Museum of History and Art are jointly requesting that the historical artifacts be made available to us for assessment and preservation. Stay tuned for details!

## Palmer Historical Society 2008 Calendar

- January 16th.....An Aerial Tour of the Matanuska Valley Fall 1939 – Part 2”,  
Presentation by Ralph Hulbert
- February 20th....Presentation of Historic Film Footage by Kevin Tripp of the  
Alaska Moving Image Preservation Association
- March 19th.....Presentation by Kenny Hughes Sr. about the Lazy  
Mountain Children’s Home
- April 16th.....Slide Show (PowerPoint) Presentation by Joe Lawton of his  
pilgrimage on the Camino to Santiago de Compostela, a  
walking journey across northwestern Spain
- May 21st.....A History of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police presented  
by local historian Cliff Salisbury
- June 14th.....Colony Days Open House at the Colony House Museum
- July..... An onsite tour of a local historical site – always an  
interesting and educational visit.
- August.....Annual Palmer Historical Society Picnic
- Fall/Winter.....Monthly programs a work in progress

## PHS Newsletter Finds New Volunteer to Serve

For some time now, I saw the “blank” beside Newsletter Editor in the PHS newsletters and gave consideration to getting involved. Last fall I spoke to many of the Board Members and pondered my involvement.

I am not able to serve the PHS without the support of the Board of Directors. They have been involved in the changes you will see coming, and we look forward to getting the membership involved as well.

Please, *send me your e-mail address* to add to our membership records, and I will send you a pdf-file of this edition. No, we're not abandoning a print-version, yet many members would like to get the newsletter faster and e-mail can accomplish this easily!

I look forward to being of service to the PHS in the upcoming year. Send your e-mail address to me at: [phs@thefastfrontier.com](mailto:phs@thefastfrontier.com).

Please consider submitting an article to our newsletter, a recipe for

our *Tribute Recipe*—a family favorite recipe and a story to go along with it is all we need. Should you have a photo to go along with it, we can add that too!

Are you one who enjoys surfing-the-web? Send in a URL-link that you found interesting and tell your fellow members what they can find there too! In my research for a photo of the Post/Rogers visit, I came across this interesting site about disasters: <http://www3.gendisasters.com> and checkout the Alaska section.

Stories of growing up in Palmer? Recollections of your life in Palmer? Share your history with fellow PHS members.

We welcome your submissions to this newsletter via e-mail at [phs@thefastfrontier](mailto:phs@thefastfrontier) or call me at 745-2013 and we'll make other arrangements!

Safe travels,  
Cheryl Babbe

### **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 |

## Tribute Recipe of the Month

### Homestead Cake from Carol Strouse

*Please note, there are no eggs in this recipe since eggs were hard to come by for the Colonists.*

2 cups Sugar

3 cups Flour

2 cups water

1/2 tsp. soda

1 tsp. salt

2/3 cups oil

2 tsp. vanilla

2 tbl. vinegar

Put in pan and mix (or you can use a bowl if you wish)

Bake at 350 degrees for 1/2 hour or so.



### Frosting for Homestead Cake

1 1/2 cup Powered Sugar

1/4 cup margarine or butter

2 tbl. peanut butter

1/3 cup Cocoa

1 tsp. vanilla

1/4 cup cold coffee (more if needed to make the right consistency)

Spread on cake before cake cools.

*Carol Strouse got this recipe from Irene Lepak, an original Colonist from Minnesota. Irene is the mother of Gloria Deland. Above photo is Carol playing the Colony House Museum piano during Colony Christmas.*



## 11th Annual Colony House Museum Raffle Dinner

**Win a chance for dinner at the Colony House Museum for you and your friends!**

**Details on purchasing your raffle tickets will be in next months' newsletter - Stay tuned for details!**

## Rogers and Post's Alaska Visit

(continued from back page)

This was an event of high excitement for the locals...a photograph at the Colony House Museum (courtesy of Lynn Sandvik) shows Colonists I.M. Sandvik, Agnes Sandvik, Max and Dorothy Sherrod, and Otto Peterson among the group gathered to visit with the celebrities. "There is a lot of difference in pioneering for gold and pioneering for spinach," Will Rogers commented in retrospect, but he believed that the Colony project was going to succeed.

Having returned to Fairbanks the night before, Wiley Post and Will Rogers prepared to depart for Point Barrow, Alaska, the next morning despite a questionable weather forecast. Rogers was looking forward to seeing Charles Brower in Barrow. Enroute north from Fairbanks, weather obscured visibility, and eventually they landed on a lagoon in order to ask a nearby Eskimo hunting party for distance and directions. As their airplane again rose 50-feet into the air, the engine suddenly sputtered and died, causing the nose-heavy hybrid to plummet nose down into the shallow lagoon. There was no sound or sign of survivors. Both men were gone.

Crash witness Claire Okpeaha (Oakpeha?) set out running the 12-15 mile distance to report the disaster to authorities in Barrow. The community was not looking for their visitors to arrive that day because of the weather. Exhausted, he described, "Bird men dead, red bird blow up!" He described the two men who had been on the plane... "One man big, have tall boots. Other man short, have sore eye, rag over eye." Suddenly the disaster was fully understood.

It is said that the outpouring of grief and sadness throughout the nation and world was unmatched since the death of President Abraham Lincoln. People of all walks of life grieved, each knowing that someone was gone who had truly touched their heart. So, too, was it for the people of Alaska who had shared moments of time with these two beloved and admired figures in August 1935.

Gerry Keeling



*Top Left/Clockwise: Believed to be last photo before fatal flight; Mae Post, widowed at age 26 at the Point Barrow memorial she never remarried; and the plane as recovery efforts are made.*

## Alaska Moving Image Preservation Association Stirs Memories of Post and Rogers

Our February speakers were from AMIPA, led by Kevin Tripp, with movie clips of Wiley Post and Will Rogers, with images of their ill-fated visit to Alaska in 1935. Our Gerry Keeling wrote the following Newsletter "Extra" about the 1935 landing in Palmer to their demise in Barrow.

### Rogers and Post's Alaska Visit

Wings of our nation's history flew over Alaska and the Valley during August 1935 with the visit of reknowned Americans Will Rogers and Wiley Post. Post, a highly respected pilot, had flown solo around-the-world. Rogers, a beloved American humorists, columnist, and actor, was enthusiastic about the world of flight. Together, the two friends were enroute on an around-the-world adventure when their journey took them to the Territory of Alaska that fateful autumn.

Will Rogers had been particularly interested in visiting the Matanuska Colony, to see first hand how that project was progressing and how those transplanted Midwest farmers were doing. After stopovers in Juneau, Dawson City, Fairbanks and via Anchorage, the pair flew to the Matanuska Valley on August 14, 1935, landing south of Palmer in a field.

(continued on page 3)

### **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

**Palmer Historical Society**  
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**March Program: Kenny Hughes on the Lazy Mountain Children's Home - March 19th**