

# Palmer Historical Society

PRESERVING OUR PAST, SHARING OUR STORIES & MAKING HISTORY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS  
**Official Publication of the Palmer Historical Society—Volume XXIII No.4 – April 2008 Edition**

## President's View from Farm Loop

The early return to daylight savings time, along with the earliest Easter in memory, has sure made for a rapid transition to thinking about springtime. Hiking up the Knik River Valley the last Sunday of March we spotted two swans—a sure sign that summer is not that far off.

As those of you who attended the Palmer Historical Society (PHS) meeting March 19<sup>th</sup> know, the presentation by Kenny Hughes, Jr. on the Lazy Mountain Children's Home was entertaining, informative and a great look back at early Colony days. Kenny and his wife Jennetta told me that it was really nice visiting with people that they had not seen in a long time.

PHS continues to pursue a number of projects. At the top of the list is working with the Palmer Museum of History and Art and the Wasilla-Knik Historical Society to ensure that significant historical artifacts associated with the now defunct Matanuska Maid Dairy will remain in Palmer.

Preservation and cataloguing our existing collection of things and documents is also a top priority. We are

working on obtaining additional storage space as well as a computer and museum software to simplify this work.

We are also holding our annual Colony House Museum "Dinner for Four" fundraiser May 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at the Colony House. There will be two winners so be sure to purchase those raffle tickets.

Our April 16<sup>th</sup> program will take on an international flavor with a presentation by local historian, adventurer, and former State Fair manager Joe Lawton. Joe will be showing a slide show of his 2007 pilgrimage along the historic Camino de Santiago de Compostela in Northwestern Spain. Our May 21<sup>st</sup> program will feature a presentation by local historian Cliff Salisbury on the history of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and will be our last program until next Fall.

Finally, we are planning our annual PHS potluck picnic at the LeRoi and Margaret Heaven farm on July 27<sup>th</sup> starting at 1:00 p.m.

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

*Chuck Logsdon, President*

## 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!*
- *Details on our Annual PHS Picnic*
- *News on the New Deal 75th Anniversary*

## Next Society Meeting

April 16, 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!

## IT'S SPRINGTIME AND TICKET TIME for the 10th Colony House Museum Fundraiser!

YOU can have a chance to be one of two very lucky "dinner winners" if you choose to take advantage of the two dinner raffle tickets being enclosed with this PHS newsletter mailing!

This year's Colony House Museum dinner will be served in style on Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, at the Museum, with its menu being catered by the Inn Cafe's own Chef Pete Scott.

Tickets are \$5.00 each and offer a treat evening for the two drawing winners and the three guests of their individual choosing. What a deal! Your "table for four" will be *festively served* by familiar faces of the Palmer Historical Society, all of whom promise you an evening of pampering and personality. There are even whispers of special entertainment, reflective

of years past, being envisioned by one or two of our current Board members!

You may turn in your tickets at PHS's program meeting on April 16<sup>th</sup>—or at the Colony House Museum beginning May 1<sup>st</sup>, or you may turn in to any Board member. Additional tickets are available if you wish. The big drawing will be held at the Colony House Museum at noon on Tuesday, May 13, and the winners will be contacted immediately by telephone. All proceeds go toward the Colony House Museum.

This TENTH dinner night will offer the lucky attendees a great evening to "grab their coat, get their hat, and leave their worries on the doorstep" as they celebrate some of our "olden days"!

*Submitted by Gerry Keeling*



*Some of those "familiar faces" of the Palmer Historical Society who served dinners at the 9th Annual Colony House Museum Dinner – Carol Strouse, Ralph Hulbert, Sharon Benson, and Dave Mathews!*

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

## Colony House Museum News

### *PHS Hosts Commission*

The Mat-Su Borough Historical Preservation Commission held their April meeting at the Colony House Museum on Friday the fourth. Commission members were greeted by the PHS board. Chuck Logsdon gave a report on recent PHS activities and ongoing projects. Board member John Stuart was also in attendance in his capacity as a member of the Commission.

The Commission will travel to Wasilla, Sutton and Talkeetna during the coming months. Winter meetings are held at the Borough headquarters in Palmer. Time date and location is advertised in the paper.



### *Summer Docents Needed at Museum*

Find that you have some free time this summer and wish to serve the Palmer Historical Society? Please contact Gerry Keeling at 745-3703 to volunteer time to give tours at the Colony House Museum.

## 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!



## PHS Board Takes Action

While meetings will be taking place as our Newsletter is going to print, be assured that your Board of Directors, working with the Palmer Museum of History and Art to bring home the archives, history, and relics of our Matanuska Maid history to Palmer!

## 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 27th.....Annual Palmer Historical Society Picnic

Fall/Winter.....Monthly programs—a work in progress. We're always looking for input on our monthly speakers. Have a suggestion? Would you like to speak on a topic? Contact us today!

## Letters to the PHS Newsletter Team

*From Cirino (and Greta) Scavone—*

I was an active member of the Palmer Historical Society for about 9 years until my wife and I left Alaska in 1994. My heart is still in Palmer and I have enjoyed receiving the newsletter ever since we left. I am always thrilled to see the names of the friends that I knew while we were there -- Gerry Keeling, Joe Lawton, Kay Love, Jim Fox, the Strouses, the Mathews and many more. Please extend my greetings to all who remember me.

My compliments on the web site. I really enjoyed seeing the 1939 air photos of the Colony. I sure wish I could have seen them when I was living in Palmer. However, looking at them brought back so many good memories of my study of the history of the Colony when I was there.

Good luck to you as you take on the new responsibility of Editor of the PHS Newsletter. I really like the changes so far.

Best wishes,

Cirino G. Scavone

Las Cruces, New Mexico,

*A Note from the Newsletter Team—*

As we've said before—we are not abandoning a print-version of this newsletter, yet many members would like to get the newsletter faster and e-mail can accomplish this easily and economically!

Thank you to those who have sent us your e-mail addresses. Not only will you receive the newsletter before it "goes to the printer"—you'll see it in color as well!

Webmaster Karen Stuart has given me an e-mail address: newsletter@palmerhistoricalsociety.org. So please consider submitting an article to *your* newsletter: a recipe for our *Tribute Recipe*—a family favorite recipe and a story to go along with it, stories of growing up in Palmer, or some photos! Share *your history* with fellow PHS members.

Call me at 745-2013 and we'll make other arrangements should you not have the internet in your home!

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

## Dad's Barbecue Quick Potatoes

Perfect with grilled meat and other veggies



6 good sized Matanuska Valley potatoes  
1.5 Tablespoons of cooking oil or butter  
Salt and pepper to taste

Peel and thin slice potatoes. Place in microwavable bowl with oil or butter, lightly salt and pepper. Cover and microwave on high for 5 minutes, stir and cook for an additional 5 minutes. Wrap in foil that has been sprayed with Pam and throw on the grill turning occasionally while grilling meat.

The result, tasty crispy potatoes, a perfect complement to your next grilled meal.

Charles E. "Chuck" Logsdon was a plant pathologist who worked for many years at the Alaska Agricultural Experimentation in Palmer studying potato diseases. He grew a lot of potatoes both for research purposes and to eat. He always grew more than enough potatoes to feed a large family every year. "You never know" he would say. He enjoyed cooking for family and friends. My Dad was always "hamming" it up – the photo is from the 2002 Colony House Museum Raffle Dinner. — Submitted by Chuck Logsdon

## Hughes at "Home with PHS Members"

March Meeting Wrap-Up by John Stuart

*"It was an enjoyable and informative evening. Longtime friends and new acquaintances enjoyed visiting with Kenny and Jennetta after the presentation."*

A large audience gathered for the PHS March program to hear Kenny Hughes Sr. tell the story of his parents, Kenneth and Vivian Hughes, and the founding of the Lazy Mountain Children's Home.

Sailing up the inside passage in a vessel they had resurrected from the depths and repaired, the newly married couple spent time in Wrangell, then came to Palmer where our speaker Kenny was born. The family moved to Valdez where they ran the Children's Home there until it was destroyed by fire in 1946.

An offer of land from Max Sherrod brought the family

back to Palmer to build what became a fixture in the community, the Lazy Mountain Children's Home.

With help of a donation of Quonset huts by the military and lots of hard work by the Hughes family and a group of the older boys brought from Valdez, the idea became a reality. A permanent building followed and the home eventually expanded to house up to eighty children.

Changing regulations led to the end of the facility's use as a children's home in the early seventies, but it still serves as conference and office space for Interact Ministries.

## Knik Token Sold on Ebay!

This coin was found for sale on eBay late last month, and reported to us by Coleen Mielke.

Nobody we knew had heard of such coins. The reserve was \$495, and several local historians pledged to make that opening bid. The bidding ended at



\$960 and the coin went to a collector.

The 30mm white metal (although it looks like brass in the picture) token was good for 12 1/2c in trade at Palmers Bar, Knik, Alaska.

The seller wrote: We understand that the bar



operated from the time it was built in 1906 until 1917. This token came from the collection of Howard Thew, well-known Alaska collector. Howard attributed the token to Knik, and his attribution is probably correct, as George Palmer had a liquor establishment in Knik, as verified by an article by Coleen Mielke in Alaska History, Fall 2007 edition (a publication of the Alaska Historical Society). George Palmer is the person Palmer, Alaska was named for. Submitted by Ralph Hulbert

## New Deal 75th Anniversary in 2008

Just after his inaugural in 1933 President Roosevelt announced the New Deal, a bold initiative to put Americans back to work in the depth of the great depression. Major programs included the Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps.

We know a lot about Alaska's biggest New Deal project, the Matanuska Colony, including names of the colonists and administrators, but we know less of the hundreds of New Deal workers who built the colony. Most of these initial ~400 "transient" workers were hired in California, and their contracts made it very difficult to stay in Alaska – but some did. Later workers came from other places, including Alaska – and more of them stayed.

So, now is the year to share their stories. But we have many questions. Who were these New Deal workers? Who stayed in Alaska or Palmer? Any relatives still here? What did they do? Tales! Photos!

Call a PHS Board Member if you have details to share, or email to [info@palmerhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@palmerhistoricalsociety.org).

The names of 654 of these workers—far more than previous estimates have recently been compiled from lists submitted by Jim Fox. We'll post them soon to the web page, with a suitable introduction.

## Walking the Camino: Spain's Modern Pilgrimage - April 16th Presentation

To visit a place sacred to one's religion, significant to one's history, or crucial to one's development is an ancient tradition. Nowadays various peoples flock to Mecca, the Ganges, or Nara to fulfill religious obligations or to reflect on national origins. In our country, the Alamo, Graceland, and the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City are powerful draws.

Christianity has from the beginning included those eager to savor the places where Jesus lived and visited, and where the apostles worked and were martyred. The early returnees from the holy land carried a palm to signify their journey, and were known as "palmers". This is undoubtedly the source of the family name which lends itself to the naming of our town and historical society.

Graffiti in Rome proves that curious travelers marked their visit there in the third century.

With the fall of the Roman Empire, however, the Moors took control of the Levant. Coupled with unrest in other areas of southern Europe, access to Jerusalem and Rome proved difficult and dangerous. About 800 A.D. a pilgrimage developed to the burial site of St. James the Apostle at Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain. This proved a safer route for pilgrims, and for the last 1000 years it has been the most popular Christian pilgrimage in Europe--attracting half a million persons per year in the Middle Ages, and over 100,000 per year now. Although it is not well-known in the United States, and few Americans are found on the Camino, pilgrims come from all European and many Asian and South American countries. Canadians and Australians comprise

a significant portion of native English speakers.

Last April 17 Joe Lawton went to Spain to join two friends of 35 years to walk the Camino de Santiago--literally: "the road to [the Cathedral of] Saint James". During the next five weeks they walked more than 1000 kilometers (625 miles) from the French border to Cape Finisterre (named from the belief that it was Europe's "land's end") which is a three-day walk beyond Santiago. The Atlantic Ocean was a strong attraction to the medieval pilgrim, and many continued beyond Santiago to see it, and to get a scallop shell. As with the palm leaf for Jerusalem, the scallop shell became the symbol of a pilgrimage to Santiago.

For the April program Lawton's power point slide show reveals the daily routine of the "peregrinos" (pilgrims) who make this journey. The ever-present Camino and rural Spanish scenery form the backdrop for meals, accommodations, and the friendships that develop along the way.

Lawton grew up in Palmer, and retired after 27 years with the State Fair last April 16. While teaching at the University of Guam in the early 70s he met the two men who were his companions on the Camino. They left the States thinking it would be pretty tough stuff to walk 100 miles a week, week after week, and to stay in cold-water dorms with up to 100 or more pilgrims per room. They returned with a deep appreciation of the power of pilgrimage, and the realization that a little discipline and deprivation is not only healthy, but, in Europe, not even unique for relative youngsters in their mid-60s.

### **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:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular – \$10/yr     | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing – \$25/yr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining – \$100/yr | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime \$500         |