



# Palmer Historical Society

Preserving Our Past \* Sharing Our Stories \* Making History for Future Generations  
Volume XXX No.4 April 2014 Newsletter

P0 Box 1935 Palmer, AK 99645 \* 316 E. Elmwood Ave. (facing Colony Inn)  
ptownhistory@gmail.com \* 907-745-1935

## Greetings from your PHS President:

Wonderfully warm spring sunshine calls all Alaskans to get out and enjoy! Beautiful Bluebird skies! Can't stay inside the house! The dust will be there tomorrow. "No complaining allowed", I remind myself as I tend to spring yard duty after a winter with three dogs. I imagine my summer lawn - lush and green, the roses and lilacs in bloom and dogs picking up after themselves. A girl can dream ☺

I gravitate toward my small greenhouse just to stand inside and absorb the heat. I look around at the remnants of last year's tomatoes, peppers and hanging baskets. I'm anxious to get my hands in the dirt, in the gardens outside the windows, to uncover new growth of perennials pushing against the blanket of mulchy leaves. My mind snaps back to the task at hand, first things first. Dogs don't pick up after themselves after all. The unglamorous work of cleaning must be done, with no other volunteers. I pick up the scoop and push the wheelbarrow to the next spot. At least I'm outside. The sun is shining, so no complaining.

Spring cleaning at our colony house, my mind is consumed with thoughts of Onabel Campbell and Lulubelle Bouwens, two colonist women who proceeded me in cleaning this cozy dwelling. I sweep and mop the beautifully restored wood floors - did they wish for carpet? I vacuum the Matanuska glacial silt - did they tire of the cracks in the siding (now filled with insulation) letting in streams of dust? Did they sit on the front porch gazing at Pioneer Peak as I do, waiting for the linens to dry on the clothesline? Did clotheslines even work in the dusty yards of the 1930's? Did they shake their rugs out the front door and look at the same cottonwood tree? As I make the beds in the two upstairs bedrooms, I imagine the Bouwens family with their large brood. Who slept where and with whom? How many little boys in each bed, how many girls in a bed? I wonder if the lazy flies buzzing through the open front door make the same path they did years ago. I see in my mind's eye the unending children's footprints on wood floors, stacks of shoes, galoshes, and work boots gracing the back door...

I talked with Wayne Bouwens this morning and shared my thoughts with him. I wondered out loud if some of the scars on the wood floors were from his family. He told me about his dad butchering moose on the kitchen table. He told me that Norman Campbell called him this morning and he'd shared the story of the Campbell home with him. Norman just moved back to the area. He probably can't imagine his childhood home is now a vacation rental known as the Campbell House, and that people from around the world come to Palmer to stay there and learn the history of Palmer and the Colonists. Now Campbell House guests sit on the front porch in awe of Pioneer Peak, looking past the old cottonwood tree, and make their own memories.

Onabel and Lulubelle, two historic colonist women, you consume my mind every time I clean your house. If only these walls could talk...

~ Sheri Hamming

## Your PHS Board and Support Team

<b>Sheri Hamming</b> President/Secretary	746-1295
<b>Barb Lentz Thomas</b> V.P. / CHM Docents	376-5802
<b>Joan Campbell</b> Treasurer/Membership	745-4157
<b>Gerry Keeling</b> Trustee/CHM	745-3703
<b>Carol Strouse</b> Trustee	745-3532
<b>John Stuart</b> Trustee/Go-To Dude	745-3462
<b>Carol Lombardo</b> Trustee/Archivist	745-3118
<b>Jean Krupa</b> Program Chairperson	746-5770
<b>JoAnn Utt</b> Door Prizes	376-4938
<b>Sharon Benson</b> Publicist	745-4913
<b>Clyde &amp; June Oberg</b> Hospitality	745-3567
<b>Barbara Hecker</b> Newsletter	746-0545



## SPRING CLEANING?



### Notes & Reminders

#### Barb Lentz Thomas, V.P. Docent Wrangler:

As part of Spring Cleaning, the Colony House Museum sent an all-call for a volunteer to wash the CHM windows. Dawn Campbell volunteered and, oh-my!, do the windows look shiny and bright! Thank you, Dawn!

Barb also reminds all Docents (and interested parties) of the Docent gathering on Monday, April 14, 1:30 p.m. at the Colony House Museum. They will be organizing for the 2014 season and forming the docent schedule. "If we don't eat, we don't meet," says Barb, so munchies and sippies are in for you.

#### Joan Campbell, Treasurer and Membership:

I've received a gratifying number of new and renewing memberships in the past few weeks. Hoorah! (A little reminding goes a l-o-n-g way!) Dues-paying members not only have the satisfaction of sustaining the goals of PHS's mission, but also the choice of a print copy, and/or an electronic copy of the newsletter. (Our e-newsletter is sent free for the asking without charge or obligation of membership – just contact me at [pls@mtaonline.net](mailto:pls@mtaonline.net) or Barbara at [blhecker@mtaonline.net](mailto:blhecker@mtaonline.net) with your email address.)

Dues cover the calendar year, Jan – Dec. You may pay by check through the mail at PHS, PO Box 1935, Palmer, AK 99645, Attn: Joan Campbell, Treasurer. You may pay by check, credit card, or cash at our monthly programs.

Individual Dues: \$25.00

Household Dues: \$40.00

Patron (business): \$100.00

Lifetime: \$500.00

#### Barbara Hecker, Newsletter:

In the March newsletter, in clumsy honor of Margaret Lucas's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration, I mistyped her surname. I apologize for my oversight, as well as my errant left pinkie...

## April 16<sup>th</sup> - Talis Colberg:

### "Abraham Lincoln, Martians, and the Alaska State Fair"



Which statement is correct?

- The Experiment Station; nearing its 100th birthday, was a legacy of Abraham Lincoln.
- The farming community preceding the Experimental Station benefitted from the Experimental Station and founded the local chapter of the Grange.
- The Grange became the energy source for the creation of the Matanuska Valley Agricultural and Industrial Fair Association which in turn became the Alaska State Fair.
- All the above.
- None of the above.

The Palmer Historical Society on April 16<sup>th</sup> will feature speaker Talis Colberg, who serves as Director of the Matanuska-Susitna College. He graduated Palmer High School in 1976, Pacific Lutheran University in 1979, and Pepperdine University School of Law in 1983. His Ph.D. was earned in Northern Political History and Culture from the UAF in 2008. Colberg's dissertation title is "M.D. Snodgrass: The Founder of the Alaska State Fair". The core of his research came from the substantial files of Snodgrass's personal correspondence that are archived at the Rasmussen Library at UAF.

The topic for his PHS presentation will be, "**Abraham Lincoln, Martians and the Alaska State Fair.**" Colberg will speak to the origins and growth of three enduring Valley institutions: the Matanuska Valley Federal Experiment Station, the Grange and the Alaska State Fair. Colberg was appointed Attorney General for Alaska in 2006, twice elected to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly and twice elected as borough mayor. He's presided over the Alaska State Fair Board and the Palmer Rotary Club. He chairs the Alaska State Humanities Forum and serves on the Board of Directors of the Alaska Sea Life Center.

A striking resume such as Colberg's indicates an upbringing rich in story, achievement and community service. Indeed, his grandfather, Dr. Arthur J. Colberg, served as a medical missionary for the Augusta Lutheran church in China. His grandmother, Ethel, met Arthur in Minnesota and followed him to China where they were married in 1922. Dr. Colberg practiced medicine, first as an intern at the Rockefeller Peking Union Medical Institute, and then for thirty years in central China before coming to Palmer in 1949. Already at an age when retirement seemed plausible, Dr. Colberg left Palmer in the mid-1960s for further service in the Pribilof Islands. From there the couple worked at a mission hospital in Cameroon, Africa for another three years.

Talis's father was born in China. When Jim was 15, the family made an unplanned departure due to civil war. Jim taught at various locations in Alaska and served as a principal for State Operated Schools. He became principal of Palmer Junior High when it was still located in Central School (now the Borough Building.) He is an avid pilot and continues to fly regularly. Jim and his wife, Dzintra, have three children. Dzintra and her family sought refuge from the Soviet Occupation of Latvia. After a time in a German refugee camp, the family was relocated by the American Lutheran Church to the U.S. Arriving at age 13, Dzintra learned English as a teenager. She completed her teacher training at UAA, though she spent most of her life raising her three children.

Talis met and married his wife Krystyna in London where they were graduate students. Married since 1982, they have two grown daughters.

Besides his Directorial duties at the Mat-Su College, Colberg enjoys teaching a class on campus each semester. He is the only Director to have ever done so.

Please join us at Wednesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, at 7 p.m. in the Palmer Library. Refreshments will be served and Door Prizes awarded.



**Mark Austin, Director of Palmer's Musk Ox Farm, spoke to PHS members on Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014. He recounted the fascinating history not only of the Musk Oxen, a living artifact of the Ice Age, but of their finding their way to the Matanuska Valley. Mark poses with Barb Lentz Thomas whose colonist family drew Tract #133 and who built the barns and home which today shelter the Musk Oxen and welcome thousands of visitors from around the world each year.**



- 1. The Musk Ox, an Ice Age Survivor, how did it come to Palmer?** In 1964, John J. Teal Jr. was allowed to collect musk oxen calves from Nunavak Island to begin a domestication project in Fairbanks. The project went through several iterations in Fairbanks, Unalakleet, and Montana Creek before finding our way to Palmer in 1986. In the bigger picture, musk oxen came across the Bering Land Bridge 90,000 years ago. They lived in central Alaska and at the leading edge of the advancing ice sheet as far south as the contiguous states during the last ice age. In 1864 the last musk oxen seen in Alaska were driven to extinction through a challenging moment at a low point in their cyclical population swings and increased pressure from hunting by whalers. In 1935 the federal government reintroduced musk oxen to Nunavak Island where they thrived. Musk oxen now range throughout arctic Alaska to varying levels of success.
- 2. Mark, how did you come be the director of the Musk Ox Farm?** In the mid 1990's I became friends with then director, and son of our founder, Lansing Teal. Lans (Lance) and I palled around the farm working on fences, combing, calving, you name it. I became very close to the project during these years. In 1999 my wife and I were married on the property here. We sold Vagabond Blues in 2003 and my wife and I sailed around the Pacific for several years before selling the boat in Australia. We moved to New Mexico and during my several years there, I returned 'home' to Palmer at least 18 times. In 2009 I found the farm had fallen of some very hard times. Three years of paying for expenses with new debt had pushed the board to decide whether or not to close the doors after nearly 60 years. I offered to move back to Alaska to help. I have been the director at the farm since June of 2010.
- 3. What are the primary purposes of the Musk Ox Farm?** The primary purpose of the farm is, and has always been, to work towards domesticating musk oxen in order for them to serve a role as a geographically appropriate fiber producing farm animal in the far north. This process is challenging and expensive. I have worked very hard to diversify the income streams into the non-profit in order for us to be a sustainable business, not just a charity. Our work in domestication carries on every day while we strive to raise awareness of qiviut and its potential, educate the public to this unique agricultural opportunity, and create new income opportunities for people throughout Alaska.
- 4. How many musk oxen currently live on the farm?** Currently there are 77 musk oxen on the farm. Of these 77 animals, 49 are female and 28 are male. There are 9 calves from last season, including one that we acquired through a trade from LARS (Large Animal Research Station at UAF.) We are hoping to add 7 or 8 calves to the herd this spring. Calf crops vary depending on our present and anticipated needs.
- 5. What are the musk oxen fed and how does that compare with what they'd eat naturally on the tundra?** The musk oxen graze on the grasses and sedges on the property. In the winter we supplement their feed with locally grown hay. Throughout the year we also give them a specially formulated pelletized feed that delivers minerals, vitamins, and key elements that they would be getting on the tundra. On the tundra musk oxen eat a varied diet that can consist of dwarf birch and willow as well as grasses and lichen. Musk oxen have eat kelp from the tidelines on islands where they live.
- 6. What draws visitors to the farm each summer?** For 28 years, Mother's Day has been our opening day at the farm. We will typically see over 2,000 visitors come through the gates that day. We have a band, food, demonstrations, and lots of musk oxen babies for all the people to enjoy. We also host a "Running with the Bulls" race every summer. This 1k kid's fun-run along with a 5k run/walk, and a 10k run keep the day entertaining and challenging for everyone. This has grown into the preeminent trail race in Southcentral Alaska each first Sunday in August. We also look forward to a summer concert series this summer celebrating three very exciting anniversaries. (see question #8)
- 7. Fiber and yarn sales of qiviut - why has this market expanded for the farm?** For decades we have wholesaled all of our fiber to Oomingmak Musk Ox Producer's Cooperative. Oomingmak and the Musk Ox Farm were created by the same person. Due to fluctuating production, Oomingmak has sourced fiber from many different places over the years. This constant supply has allowed Oomingmak to do very well and keep its knitters working. In 2012 the Musk Ox Farm began selling a portion of our fiber outside of the cooperative. By marketing our fiber outside of a 40-year old wholesale rate, the Musk Ox Farm has been able to achieve a much needed boost to funding that allows us to become more self-reliant. Due to many changes within the project we have been able to boost production over three times over the past three years. This occurred due to greater tractability of the animals on the farm from changes in handling and socialization. This greatly enhanced the part of our mission that calls for "gentle and sustainable agriculture." Through these activities we are now able to provide 60% more fiber to Oomingmak while retaining nearly 50% of our own fiber to help fund the non-profit.
- 8. What are the three upcoming anniversaries that you're celebrating?** In 1954, 60 years ago, John J. Teal Jr. undertook the first explorations to see if a musk oxen could be kept, breed, and thrive in captivity. In 1964, 50 years ago, fortified with his learnings of the previous 10 years John Teal collected the great grandparents of today's herd beginning this journey at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. In 1984, 30 years ago, the Musk Ox Development Corporation d.b.a. the Musk Ox Farm incorporated as a 501(c)(3) not for profit corporation in Alaska.
- 9. How can folks help support the Musk Ox Farm? Where can we find out more?** Become involved in this amazing project located in your own backyard! Become a member, adopt a musk ox for yourself or a loved one, visit the farm, and bring your family and friends when they visit. Palmer, Alaska boasts the largest captive herd of musk oxen anywhere in the world while undertaking one of the most ambitious agricultural projects of all time. Get to know it! Visit us at: [www.muskoxfarm.org](http://www.muskoxfarm.org) or on our Facebook page, **The Musk Ox Farm**, for current events, great photos, and other goings-on.



Photo Courtesy of Mark Austin

My fondest memories of cleaning (probably my ONLY fond memories of having to do cleaning of any kind) were in my childhood days when I got to help my grandmother, Harriet Kepler, at her house. "Nana" was very regimented in her weekly chores

Each day of the week she had a different task to do and she had a name assigned to each day, related to which task. Those I remember were "Wash Day Wednesday" and "Tidy Friday". "Wash Day" was my favorite because that was her day to do laundry

At that time, she still used an electric wringer-washer in her basement. It had a motorized agitating wash tub with the wringer element mounted on top. A garden hose was connected to the main water source and then attached to the washer. Another shorter length of hose was attached to the bottom of the washer to drain it. That hose lead to a floor drain.

The first step of the whole process was to put detergent in the washer and then filled it with water. When the wash cycle was complete you then drained the dirty, soapy water out of the washer. (I don't recall how you determined when the wash cycle was complete.) You then refilled the tub with clean water to run the clothes through a rinse cycle. Once that was done, the water was drained out a second time. Then came the fun part...pulling the wet clothes out of the washer, one at a time, then feeding them through the wringer to watch all the water get squееееeed out! The two rollers of the wringer were even adjustable for varying thicknesses of clothing and to allow for buttons or zippers to be run between them. The clothes were sent through the wringer and then dropped down into a standing galvanized tub. At this point the clothes were now washed, rinsed, and ready to dry, but Nana did not own a machine for drying them. So the next fun part of the whole process was to hang the damp clothes out to dry on clothes lines suspended from the ceiling of the basement. Of course if the weather was nice we would hang the freshly washed clothes on a clothesline outdoors. Which prompts another fond memory of cleaning; the smell of clothes dried in the sunshine and a fresh gentle breeze!

Thank you for the opportunity to share.

Patti Kepler Goossen



It's that time of year when the light returns to Alaska. You who live here know what I mean, that bright, re-energizing light that seems to bring endless clear days, bright blue skies—you know the light, the one that burns out the film in your windows causing you to spring for yet another replacement lest you miss one tiny spec of the tremendous beauty that Alaska summers bring.

It would be nice if all that window-fogging filtered the sun enough to block out the dirt that seems to have piled up all winter long. Unfortunately for me, and for most everyone I know, the long winter has left its mark inside our homes, and any amount of light, no matter how filtered or unfiltered it might be, shines like a beacon on all the accumulated winter dirt throughout the house. Well, perhaps dirt is a bit too crude. Maybe using the words clutter, or dust would be more palatable, but you know it's dirt and I know it's dirt, so let's call a spade a spade.

We can blame this situation on a lot of things: wood smoke, forced air heat generated dust, the sanding of the roads, the dog tracking in and out and in and out, etc., but the fact remains that the February/March sun shows up the dirt enough to lull even the lazy me from the comfortable place where I have been enjoying a sunbath generated by the solar energy that turns our room into a solarium for two months every year. Then, once in the upright position necessary for—you know—work, I can begin to think about thinking about tackling it.

It's probably wise to have your cleaning equipment at the ready when those critical days emerge—you know, your duster, your Windex, and several well-placed rolls of paper towels for starters. And I hope to not insult you by reminding you that this is necessary because once your eyes notice the first speck of dirt in your house, it will be like spotting moose in the flats—you never see them until one day you see one, and then you just can't not see them ever again.

The cleanup feels endless. The mirrors, the shelves, the inevitable having to move stuff to



clean the shelves, and then re-arranging, discarding or retiring what doesn't need to be there anymore. And there's the baseboards. Ours are white. Who did this horrible thing to us, painting the baseboards white so you clean them only to see that maybe they need new paint? Some people anyway!

How about the floors? Once you're all the way down close to the baseboards, you can hardly avoid looking at the floors even when you want to. And don't try wet mopping your floors. We all know that is a joke. End-of-winter floors require one to get down on their poor arthritic knees (and for the younger crowd, your future arthritic knees) to clean properly.

By now you are probably exhausted just reading about spring cleaning, which is why I will leave the subject of bedding (including moving the bed to clean under it) mattress turning, pillow washing/airing, and comforter refreshing for a whole other discussion. Not to mention deep cleaning the washer, dryer, oven, freezer, replacing screens that must be cleaned first, and even straightening out the boiler room/garden utility room so you can think about moving your cleaning operation out to the garden.

And you know as well as I do that even if you prepped your garden last fall so you didn't have to "go there" in the spring, that Mother Nature has likely thrown you enough curves to make it all feel like you must be as dumb as a post for even considering that you could outthink her.

So, my Alaska women friends, and several of you men who believe in cleanliness, too, here we are in the immediate post vernal equinox zone once again. I assume you all understand—just as you know we are all in this together—that this, too, shall pass, but until it does, may the force or whatever higher power you believe in, be with you.

~Marianne Schlegelmilch

*Marianne now lives in Homer. She is the author of eight books of fiction and is a frequent visitor to Fireside Books downtown. She often features scenes from her hometown in the Mat-Su Valley in her books, especially Palmer and Knik River Road.*

## *The Restless Times of Early Spring by Bob Graham*

March 2, 2014, I celebrated my 84th birthday. On the same day, the tripod for the 97th Annual Nenana Ice Classic was positioned on the ice of the Tanana River. By April 5, all bets must be placed. Each \$2.50 ticket represents one guess at the exact time when the breaking river ice will move the tripod enough to stop the clock.

The Graham family (dad Bruce, mother Margaret, younger sister Virginia, and I) were still in our first tent home in Palmer in the spring of 1937. We were a depression influenced family getting established in the new Matanuska Colony. On our own, we had moved north from a floating logging camp south of Ketchikan so that I would be able to attend the first grade. We were on our slow climb to a better life. My father had built his first garage, Graham's Service, from gleaned colony sawmill slabs. The coming summer a real house was our goal.

During March, it's not yet comfortable outside as the warmth of spring still does not dominate the cold nights. Still, my folks are deep into making a big guess: when will the ice break on the Tanana River? As far as I was concerned, there were just two rivers, the Matanuska and the Knik. We were all awaiting the ice to just be gone for good. But this was the Tanana, further north near Fairbanks, and neither Dad nor Mom had ever been there.

There was a card game that evening with friends. The deadline for submitting a ticket was fast approaching. The talk was about about winning enough to build a new Graham's Service building, to purchase a real wrecker to haul in disabled vehicles, or maybe even a newer family car. The chatter was always cherry, but the serious talk was about the ice conditions weather way up north on the Tanana, and the exact time the ice would move enough to stop the clock.

We never won a penny that spring long ago. Nor did any of our card-playing friends. It was surely a captivating discussion, though, during those restless, hopeful times of early spring.

*Copyright April, 2014 Robert L. Graham*



### **Nenana Ice Classic**

*Nenana, Alaska, 55 road miles southwest of Fairbanks on the Parks Highway, is famous for the yearly 'Nenana Ice Classic', 'Alaska's biggest guessing game'. The goal is to guess the date and exact time when the ice on the Tanana River will move downstream, starting the spring breakup. Whoever guesses right, wins a lot of money. People from all over Alaska -and from other states and other countries compete each year. And the town makes a nice profit on this lottery.*

*Each winter a large black and white 'tripod' is raised on the frozen river. This tripod is connected to a wooden tower on the dock, and to a clock inside the tower. When the ice breaks and the tripod starts to move, the clock is stopped instantly. Nenana is in the western most portion of Tanana Athabascan Indian territory. The Athabascan word Nenana means 'a good place to camp between the rivers'. The town boomed in the early 1920s as a construction base with thousands of workers for the Alaska Railroad. It was in this period when the Ice Classic was born. Photo by Henk Binnendijk and text: [http://www.pbase.com/henkbinndijk/nenana\\_ice\\_classic](http://www.pbase.com/henkbinndijk/nenana_ice_classic)*

(An excerpt...)

### **Pioneer Peak**

*A major peak in the Chugach mountain range, Pioneer Peak is the most prominent landmark in the Matanuska Valley, rising 6,398 feet over the sea-level Knik River. Named in 1939 to honor the hardworking settlers who called the Matanuska Valley their home, Pioneer Peak's iconic profile can be found on business logos around the Valley.*

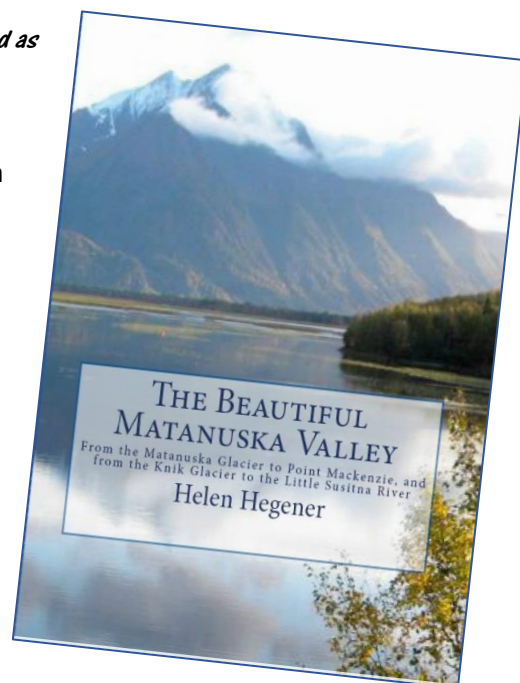
*A popular hiking destination, the Pioneer Ridge-Austin Helmers Trail climbs the eastern shoulder of the mountain, starting barely 200 feet off the river and ascending steeply to the southern summit by traversing the northeast slope of the mountain. Access to the trailhead is 3.5 miles up Knik River Road. Although very steep and rated as difficult, the nine mile hike to the ridge and back can be completed in one day, and offers spectacular views of the Valley and Knik Glacier.*

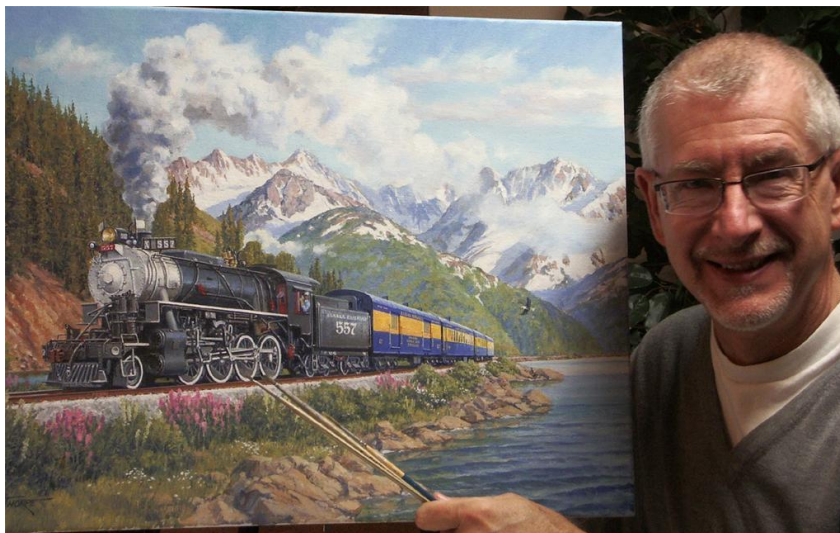
### **The Beautiful Matanuska Valley: From the Matanuska Glacier to Point Mackenzie, and from the Knik Glacier to the Little Susitna River**

On the heels of her successful "Matanuska Valley Barns" book last summer, our prolific friend Helen Hegener has published yet another photographic journey through the wonders of our beautiful Matanuska Valley. She's broadened her scope to the founding, settling, development, geography, geology, transportation, agriculture, mining, recreation, and economy of the Valley. There are 140 pages in full color, maps, resources, index and a photo index in this 8.5: x 10" paperback. \$29.95 plus \$5.00 postage and handling.

You may obtain your book(s),

- via checks or money order, directly from the author at Northern Light Media, PO Box 298023, Wasilla, AK 99629. She'll be happy to sign your book!
- Her E-Store at <https://www.createspace.com/4378936> (This option gives the fastest shipping as books are mailed directly from the printer to you.)
- To order via Paypal, send payment to [helenhegener@gmail.com](mailto:helenhegener@gmail.com)
- Via cash or check at the Colony House Museum, Fireside Books, or wherever fine books are sold (including online.)





Artist J. Craig Thorpe "Extra 557 Returning"

18" x 24" oil on canvas commissioned by Locomotive 557 Restoration Company © 2014

Pat Durand made a brief announcement - and donated the generous door prize of the above art print of the 557 - at our March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. President of the Engine 557 Restoration Company, Patrick is not only up to his eyebrows in engine dirt and grease, but still seeking tax-deductible donations to further the restoration work. Remember, your donation of \$25.00, \$100, \$1000, or more, will be matched dollar-for-dollar by a generous matching grant from the Rasmuson Foundation and will help bring the 557 dream to reality.

Engine 557 Restoration Company is pleased to announce the release of "Extra 557 Returning." The original oil painting will be revealed at 5:57 p.m. (sharp!) on May 2, 2014, at the historic Alaska Railroad Depot in Anchorage, Alaska. Artist J. Craig Thorpe will make a brief presentation followed by recognition of major in-kind contributors to the restoration of Engine 557. Numbered prints and Giclee prints on canvas will be available for purchase at the event. The all-volunteer 557 Mechanical Department Crew will be on hand to meet and greet patrons.

These are excerpts from the artist's statement regarding the 557 project:

*"When I first heard that the 557 was headed back to Alaska, I had 2 initial thoughts. First was, "How cool is that?" The second was, "I'd really like to do a painting of that engine!" ...Soon Patrick Durand (President of the organization) and I began to discuss options. I then knew that I was dealing with folks who not only appreciated history but who could combine it with a vision for the future. More than have the 557 "tell" stories of the past, she would help spin new tales of today's railroading in one of America's greatest landscapes. It is a theme that percolates through all my work.*

*"The decision was made to showcase the 557 in typical 1950's service. ...The coaches of the period were former Army hospital cars rebuilt for passenger service and we wanted the art to reflect that detail as well.*

*But much of our discussion focused on the setting. When I saw a contemporary photo of the line at MP 68 and was told that the restored 557 would operate regularly on that part of the railroad, I knew I had the answer. The tumble of sunlit mountains - with just enough snow! - became the perfect background. Together with the waters of Turnagain Arm and the ubiquitous eagle, the spirit of Alaska's natural glory and wildness was set. Further, it is essentially undisturbed by the railway whose footprint blends with the land. The train runs through it, a rolling grandstand from which to see and appreciate this land in the company of others.*

*The title - "Extra 557 Returning" - has a double meaning. In the pictured scene the locomotive and train are returning to Anchorage from a special (extra) run to Seward. The title also anticipates the actual return of the 557 to these rails.*

*I am most appreciative of this opportunity to contribute to such a significant event in the history of railroading in the North. It is my hope that "Extra 557 Returning" will not only stir great memories but will also help us ask, "Why not more of these grand conveyances in more of our national landscapes?"*

Arrangements may be made to purchase the 557 print by calling Pat at 907-341-9232, emailing [sewtrain557@gmail.com](mailto:sewtrain557@gmail.com), or sending the Order Form found on the e-PLUS email.



*While you're Spring Cleaning keep PHS in mind - we ♥ donations!*

**April 16, 2014:** Talis Colberg PHS Monthly Program @ Palmer Library

**May 21, 2014:** Last PHS Monthly Program of the season @ Palmer Library

**June 6-8, 2014:** Colony Days in Palmer, Tent City Market @ GHM

**June 7, 2014:** Annual Open House @ Colony House Museum

**July 2014:** PHS Picnic **August 2014:** AK State Fair - PHS will be in the Wineck Barn!