

Palmer Historical Society

*Preserving our Past * Sharing Our Stories * Making History for Future Generations*

Sunday, October 27, on a dark, blustery and rainy day perfect for entering Palmer's 'netherworld', the Palmer Historical Society, in tandem with the Palmer Arts Council, produced the third *Palmer Underground Tour*.

Approximately 85 history enthusiasts gathered at Palmer City Hall. Mayor DeLena Johnson showed jail cells from the 1970s and where once the police station, DMV, library and fire station were housed. One particularly slender prisoner, now known for his ease at slipping through jail cell bars, would predictably be later found at the Palmer Bar.

Across Evergreen St. to Silva Insurance, Dusty Silva gave a fun overview of the 1935 Colony project including some history of the house (longtime residence of Mrs. Margaret Cope, whom many fondly remembered from her decades' teaching at Palmer High.) We delighted in seeing the main floor and root cellar with an original colony door and hardware. Dusty upped the hospitality with delicious treats for all!

A short amble took us to today's Eagle Hotel. An elevator ride into the basement was a first such ride within the city. We explored Palmer's earliest jail cells and remnants of staircases which now seem to lead nowhere. For many, the sloping ceiling jogged memories of bygone days when many an evening 'upstairs' was spent in rapturous attention to stars of the silver screen (and other quests) at Palmer's Valley Center Theater.

At the Colony Inn (original teachers' and nurses' dormitory), Janet Kincaid showed us charming rooms and the communal living space, decorated seasonally, complete with fireplace and beautiful bay window, overlooking the 'green.' The Café Inn dining area is so cozy with antique tables, chairs, and wood floors. Presently under renovations with plans to reopen this fall, the Café Inn promises to continue its tradition of dining among rich historical ambiance. We can't wait!

The Colony Inn has not one, but two, intriguing 'undergrounds'. The highlight of the lowest level is the foreboding furnace around which the building was constructed! Another fascination is the utilidors – (**utility corridors** built underground) – certainly part of mysterious Palmer legends!

At the old Power House, we were greeted by Howard Bess of the Palmer Arts Council (current owners of the building.) The tour was dark—dimly lit by cell phones. It was intriguing to see the hub of Palmer's original power system; interesting (if a bit creepy) was the old bathroom with its



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metal shower and toilet stalls, with the sink ripped off the wall. It felt like a scene straight from a war zone.

The tour concluded in the Estelle Building basement with refreshments courtesy of Denise Statz of Non Essentials. Palmer Arts Council stores a grand piano there – we would love to have someone play it by candlelight for the next tour – are you interested? Consider the acoustics!

Applause to Mayor DeLena Johnson at City Hall, Dusty Silva at Silva Insurance, Janet Kincaid at Colony Inn, Howard Bess and the Palmer Arts Council, the Eagle Hotel, and Denise Statz at Non-Essentials for their time, efforts and hospitality!

- **Sheri Hamming**

Your PHS Board and Helpers

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A Togetherness Christmas at the Colony House Museum



Winter quietly approaches as we enjoy the balmy days of lingering autumn...yet in a mere six weeks our home town will again be decked out in Colony Christmas holiday festivities!

The Colony House Museum's OPEN HOUSE will join in 'celebrating the season' on **Saturday, December 14, with doors open from 10:00 a.m. and throughout the day until 6:00 p.m.** (allowing time to bundle up for the colors and sparkle of the Palmer Chamber of Commerce's winter fireworks display on the quad! Always magical!).

The Colony House Museum OPEN HOUSE will offer both traditional and unexpected surprises, all wrapped in the holiday spirit!

Look for Sheri Hamming's creativity as you enjoy Colony House Museum's seasonal decorations! Hospitality, sweet treats, and a 'hot cuppa' will await visitors in the kitchen. Museum collection archivist Carol Lombardo, and docents led by Barb Thomas, will be there to share historical tidbits of the Matanuska Colony as well as the Museum restorations and functions.

Thanks to our Palmer Historical Society and Colony House Museum baking elves, a tempting array of holiday goodies traditionally await Bake Sale shoppers. The elves are the heart and soul of CHM hospitality and provide 'home for the holidays' ambiance to all.'

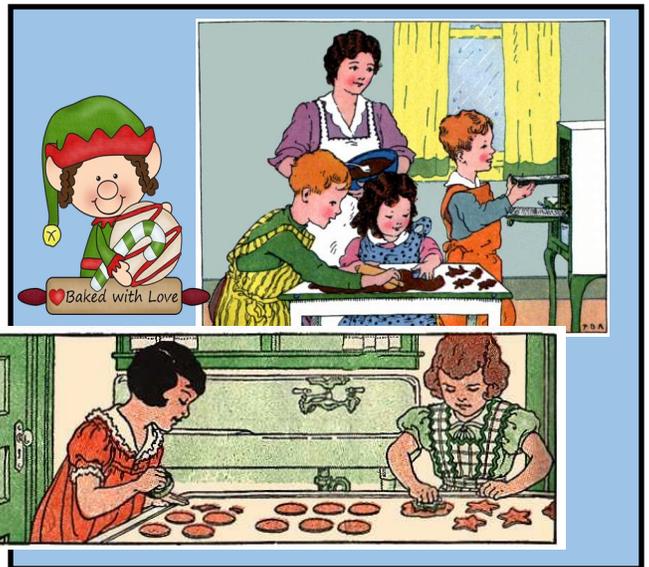
In the afternoon (2:00-4:00ish), carolers will gather around the vintage Colony piano. Don't miss this if you love to sing! Old and newer carols and songs will be harmonized, likely more than once, as we celebrate the season in this traditional way.

The Colony House Museum Christmas tree will be laden with old and older ornaments ~ perhaps you may wish to add another vintage piece to the collection. Visitors may find craft treasures or stocking stuffers throughout the Museum.

As always, the Colony House Museum has a nice assortment of local history-related books, booklets, DVD's, etc. which may provide help to your holiday shopping list.

We'll be readying the Colony House Museum for OPEN HOUSE the week of December 9-13. Treats, treasures, and the like may be dropped off early (call 745-1935 to make certain someone is there).

There may be weather challenges by then, adding to the list of errands and chores. Please call Sheri at 232-6621, Barb T. at 376-5802, or Gerry at 745-3703 to check in with any questions or input.



Brown Sugar Kisses

2 C. brown sugar 1 C. walnuts 2 egg whites 1 t. vanilla

Beat egg whites stiff, add sugar, walnuts, and vanilla. Drop teaspoonfuls about three inches apart on greased sheet. Bake 20 minutes at 250 degrees. Remove at once.



This recipe comes from "Out of Alaska's Kitchens", a cookbook benefiting the Alaska Crippled Children's Association. Printed in 1947, it belonged to Lillian Eckert, subsequently borrowed from Gayle Rowland. The image comes from the internet where, indeed, similar recipes still exist. However, the sugar requirement is down to 1/2 C., the egg whites are up to 3, and the vanilla is halved. Today's cooks must be told to use a mixer to beat the eggs and when to turn off the oven! The good news about today's recipe? Each cookie has only eleven calories!

November 20 Gathering to Feature Clayton Family Connections

The Palmer Historical Society will host brother and sister speakers, Al Clayton, Jr. and Maraley Clayton McMichael at the next membership meeting on November 20, 2013. Al and Maraley will share their Clayton Family Connections to Alaska.

Their father, Al Clayton, Sr., first arrived in Seward on the steamship *SS Alaska* in June 1935. Their mother arrived in Seward in June 1951 to serve at the Seward Sanatorium, a facility for the treatment of tuberculosis. In the late 50s and 60s, the young family bounced among the towns of Anchorage, Seward and Cooper Landing, eventually settling in Glennallen. The family grew to include two more daughters.

Al was born in Seward and graduated from Glennallen High School. He is a dairy farm owner and is Past Grand President of the Pioneers of Alaska. He is also an avid outdoorsman and private pilot. Al works as a trial lawyer spending much of his time representing clients in complex civil litigation.

Maraley, born also in Seward and graduate of Glennallen High School, has written many articles about growing up in Alaska for the Copper River Record and, more recently, a column for the local *Frontiersman* newspaper.



Laurel Downing Bill Brings "Aunt Phil's Trunk" to PHS

Many years ago, I came upon the "Mary Russell" series (by Laurie R. King) of historical mystery novels built around the premise that a locked trunk, fortuitously found abandoned in an attic, held volumes of diaries telling of Mary's meeting, becoming an adept partner-sleuth, and eventual wife to, the famous detective, Sherlock Holmes. "Found manuscripts" have long been a literary device for fictional accounts of history.

With Laurel Downing Bill's October presentation at the Palmer Historical Society, we learned that an old family trunk's treasure need be neither fictional, mysterious, nor abandoned...

Bill's award-winning historian aunt, Phyllis Downing Carlson, wrote many articles about Alaskan history for national newspapers and magazines. Laurel inherited a trunk of her aunt's newspaper clippings, research and rare Alaska history books in 1993.

Once she saw the quality of her aunt's work, she knew her calling would be to build upon that foundation a lasting, viable Alaskan history available to a wider, more modern audience. To sharpen her 'tools', she earned a degree (with Honors) from UAA in Journalism with a minor in history.

What began as a weekly newspaper column in *The Anchorage Chronicle* in 2002 developed into a popular feature of Alaskan history in short, authentic, tantalizing stories. Her research, developing the state's history from the era of the first Native peoples' arrival to the present, took her to museums, libraries and universities nationwide to find authentic photographs, stories, and documents to supplement her tales.



Her desire to share Alaska's history turned into not just a passion, but Volumes 1, 2, 3, and 4 ...with #5 coming soon!

Her books may be purchased wherever good books are found, while many of her stories may be read on her website: <http://auntphilstrunk.com/>

Here's a little tease: look on her website's "Alaska History Blog" for "Prisoner No. 594's (otherwise known to us cinefiles as the "Birdman of Alcatraz" starring a devilishly young Clint Eastwood) connection to Alaska!

Among Laurel's newest writing assignments? She's been asked to write a regular historical column for the **Alaska Magazine**! Look for it on a newsstand (or mail box!) near you!

- **Barbara Hecker**

Veterans' Day Reflection 2013

By Contributing Correspondent Bob Graham

Just before November of 1958 I returned to visit my father, R. B. Graham, known to all locally then as Bruce, the past owner of Grahams Service in Palmer. High on my agenda was showing off my new Army aviator wings and silver lieutenant bars.

While visiting, I dropped by to chat with Roy Knapp at his auto body repair shop at the south end of Palmer's business street. In a moment of friendly generosity, Roy offered to let me use his beautiful yellow Piper J-3.

I quickly accepted with visions of getting a moose before I returned to Fort Benning, Georgia. After a brief check out at Palmer's air strip. I marveled at how that little bird hummed along. What a nice sound for the neophyte aviator.

Six years later I returned, assigned to the Army Alaska Command at Fort Richardson to fly the Cessna L-19 Bird Dog, De Havilland Beaver and Otter. I remember each had its identifying sound patterns.

By that time my good friend, Don Irwin, son of the General Manager of the Matanuska Colony, and a fellow graduate of the Palmer Territorial School class of 1948, was flying ever increasingly large Air Force craft, eventually as aircraft commander of the B-36, Peacemaker, the U. S. Air Force's largest piston engine driven bomber of the cold war. Don related to me the stimulating sound when he had the throttles set at takeoff: the exhilarating experience of 40,000 horse power at his fingertips, propelling him down the runway

Then a life changing experience for citizens both civilian and military: the U. S entered the Vietnamese War in behalf of South Vietnam.

The Vietnamese War gifted me the experience of flying what I consider an aviation marvel of that age, the Army's new Bell utility helicopter named the Iroquois.

It was the Army's new UH-1. Affectionately called the "Huey," It was an amazing machine that seemed to create an orchestra of sounds. Each maneuver brought a new rumble, pitch or whine.

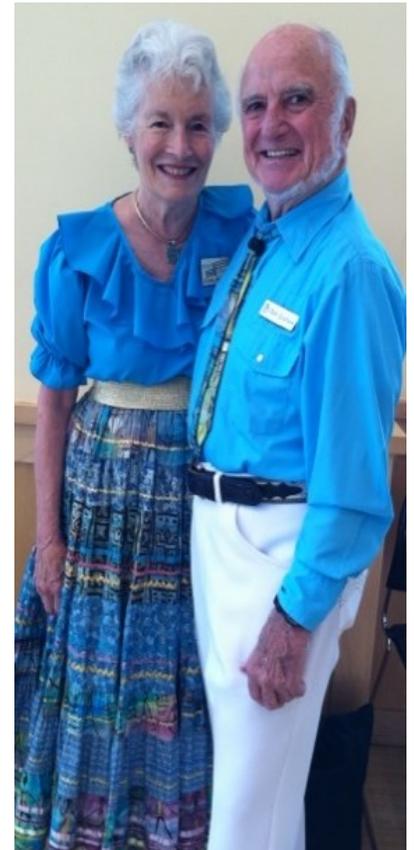
The signature sound is an incessant *wop, wop, wop*, at a wide range of low tones. To the experienced warrior, on the ground or in the air, friendly or enemy, one could discern the presence of a Huey and pretty well know what it was doing.

They are the sounds that bind and remain with me and so many of us today.

The Sounds That Bind

Unique to all who served in Vietnam is the UH-1 Huey
It was both devil and angel
It served as both extremely well
It generated sounds and a sense of awareness that live within so many
Whether United States or Republic of Vietnam soldier
Whether of the North Vietnamese Army or Viet Cong
The sounds that immediately clear the haze of time
Freshen the forgotten images
Of that war within our mind
It performed tasks engineers and designers never imagined
It was a simple machine, a single engine
Two blades and four crewmen
For soldiers, it was the worst and best of friends
It was with us in a war of many pieces
One binding material in a large tapestry
Like the Model T, it transformed all who served
It will be on our sound track until our last moment
The sounds that bind

Copyright November 2013 Robert L Graham



Robert Graham, attended grades 1-12 at the Palmer Territorial School, graduating in 1948. He then entered active military service.

Known then as "Bobby" (especially to the "young ladies", says he), it appears he hasn't lost the twinkle in his eyes, nor the his dimples in cheeks. He and his wife, Diana, square dance two nights per week. "At age 82 and 72, it is a great together activity for the mind and body." They have four adult children and proudly claim 10 grandchildren.



Robert loves to write. He belongs to a local support group of writers and poets who often meet to vet their crafted drafts, receive good constructive feedback and proceed to rewrite. Bob promises to share more of his stories and memoirs of his early life in the Matanuska Valley.

Engine 557 Restoration Fundraiser

The Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry is conducting a Raffle for the benefit of **Engine 557 Restoration Company**.

Thanks go to Sherry Jackson for putting this together for us and printing the tickets. The Alaska Railroad Corporation and Chena Hot Springs Resort have donated the prizes so all proceeds from ticket sales come to the bottom line for **Engine 557 Restoration Company**.

Only 150 tickets are available at \$100.00 each. If you ever dreamed of riding the rails in Lucius Beebe style with your own private car, this is for you.

1st prize: Ride in luxury aboard the Alaska Railroad private car Denali on a day trip from Anchorage to Seward and return. There is seating for up to 16 people (yes, you'll have the entire car for your party) for the day excursion departing Anchorage at 6:45 a.m. and arriving in Seward about 11:00 a.m. Enjoy an afternoon of fishing or cruising in Seward, and 6:00 p.m. return to Anchorage arriving about 10:00 p.m. This is a great retreat trip for employees, a wedding party, valued customers or a family gathering. Ride the rails in style during the summer season. Catering is available, or you are welcome to bring your own gourmet delights and refreshments.

2nd Prize: Tickets for 6 guests round trip on the Alaska Railroad between Anchorage and Fairbanks and two complementary rooms at Chena Hot Springs Resort. This is a great mid winter retreat.

3rd Prize: 2014 Alaska Railroad Print by artist Ray Gamradt.

Odds are 1 in 50 of scoring a win! Engine 557 Restoration Company will also receive a match from the generous **Rasmussen Foundation** grant matching the net proceeds of the Raffle. The raffle is conducted under permit #707 held by the Museum of Alaska Transportation & Industry.

Tickets are now available from Pat Durand 350-4340, Ken Elmore 345-7070, Ron Dudley 696-0895 and Gary Feaster at Great Land Welding 745-2383.

There are 10 books of 10 tickets left for distribution. If you would sell tickets for Engine 557 Restoration Company please call Pat.

The drawing will be at 5:57 p.m. on December 31st at the 557 Engine House. You need not be present to win.



www.alaskadispatch.com/slideshow/photos-restoring-alaska-railroads-last-operating-steam-engine
"Restoring Alaska Railroad's Last Operating Steam Engine" Alaska Digest April 9, 2013

For more info and photos: <http://alaskarails.org>

www.facebook.com/pages/557-Restoration-Company/416150931790

Here is 557 as of June 1, 2013. All of the exterior ultrasound markings are on the boiler. All brake rigging has been removed. A track panel was dropped in place so we could move the locomotive back to the tender and check alignment for the draw bar, buffer and firing deck. This mating of the proper tender and locomotive has been waiting for 49 years.

Facebook June 2, 2013



ENGINE 557 RESTORATION COMPANY

an Alaska Nonprofit Corporation

Bringing Alaska History to Life

Help return Alaska Railroad Steam Locomotive #557 to operating condition

Your donations of \$25.00 or more will be matched dollar for dollar by the Rasmussen Foundation up to a total matching grant of \$350,000. All tax deductible donations should be made out to the **Alaska Community Foundation, Engine 557 Fund** and mailed to:

**Alaska Community Foundation,
Engine 557 Fund
3201 C Street, Suite 110
Anchorage, AK 99503**

ENGINE 557 RESTORATION COMPANY



Your in-kind donations of tools and materials may be tax-deductible and could also be available for a match based on dollar value. To find out more about what materials and services are needed, or to volunteer your time contact the restoration company directly at: 907-350-4340 or by mail at:

**P.O. Box 875369
Wasilla, Alaska 99501
or email: Pat Durand, President
at sewtrain@mtaonline.net**

To make donations online and to keep track of 557's progress, follow this link:
<http://www.alaskarails.org>


 The Alaska Community Foundation
 Connecting People Who Care With Causes That Matter

Please mark your calendars for upcoming PHS events:

- ⇒ 2013 November 20—Membership Mtg, Library, 7 p.m.
- ⇒ 2013 December 14—Colony Museum Christmas, 10—6 pm
- ⇒ 2014 January 15—Membership Mtg, Library, 7 p.m.
- ⇒ 2014 February 19—Membership Mtg, Library 7 p.m.
- ⇒ 2014 March 19—Membership Mtg, Library 7 p.m.
- ⇒ 2014 April 16—Membership Mtg, Library, 7 p.m.
- ⇒ 2014 May 21—Membership Mtg, Library, 7 p.m.
- ⇒ 2014 June 6, 7—Colony Days, Tent City Market, CHM 10 - 6
- ⇒ 2014 July—PHS Picnic! (TBA)
- ⇒ 2014 August— (Watch for us at the Alaska State Fair!)
- ⇒ 2014 September 17—Membership Mtg, Library, 7 p.m.
- ⇒ 2014 October 15—Membership Mtg, Library, 7 p.m.
- ⇒ 2014 November 19—Membership Mtg, Library, 7 p.m.
- ⇒ 2014 December 14—Colony Museum Christmas, 10—6



Please visit us on the web at <http://www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org/> or look for us on Facebook "Palmer Historical Society Alaska"

Are you a Christmas Baking Elf? Would you like to be a Christmas Baking Elf? It's not too early to plan your extra baking of Christmas



treats for the annual Colony Museum Open House on December 14th! Please give Gerry Keeling, Elf in Chief, a call at 745-3703 for information on best delivery times and places.

'Tis the Season...

for paying your membership fees! Dues cover the calendar year from January through December.

- Individual—\$25.00
- Household—\$40.00
- Patron—\$100.00
- Lifetime—\$500.00

You may pay by:

- ◆ Cash, check or credit card at membership meetings
- ◆ Check by Mail, Att'n Joan Campbell, Treasurer, PHS, PO Box 1935, Palmer, AK 99645
- ◆ Coming soon: Online at the PHS Website!

You may still opt for a print newsletter (b/w), AND/OR a color e-newsletter.

*Palmer Historical Society
PO Box 1935
Palmer, AK 99645
907-745-1935 (CHM)*