MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS BEGIN FOR FALL SEASON

Guest speakers Lorie Kirker and Lynette Lehn, owners of the Alaskan Book Store in Palmer, kick off our Society’s fall Membership meetings.

Lorie is involved with the Alaska Historical Societies Cannery project, and she will share pictures taken of canneries from several different locations throughout Alaska. Some canneries were in service for several decades, others lasted less than two years. We’ll also learn how we can help with this statewide project.

Both Lorie and Lynette will share some of the Alaskan Book Store history with us, beginning with Jean Short who previously owned the business for 26 years before selling to Lorie and Lynette 14 years ago.

Don’t miss out on the stories these two fascinating ladies have to share! Our Palmer Historical Society meetings start at 7:00PM sharp at the Palmer Public Library. The general public is always welcome to attend, stay, visit and enjoy refreshments. Please join us!

I have enjoyed serving the Society as the Program Coordinator, and I welcome you to contact me should you have speaker suggestions. This winter we’ll be having another season of wonderful guests and in upcoming mailings I’ll provide confirmation of who is next!

I’m pleased to share that our October speaker will be Laurel Downing Bill. She is a third generation Alaskan who is fascinated with stories of Alaska’s rugged pioneers. For over forty years Laurel’s Aunt, Phyllis Downing Carlson, wrote award-winning pieces from research she compiled on Alaskan history. When Phyllis passed in 1993, her treasured tales were bequested to Laurel, who just published her 4th volume of Aunt Phyl’s Trunk. Each book is full of treasured tales from the Alaskan historian’s collection of treasured tales.

We have Dan Renshaw, from Gold Cord Mine, for January 2014. Stay tuned for more details!

Jean Krupa, Program Coordinator

PHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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- Door Prizes – Joann Ut
  - Archivist – Carol Lombardo
- Acquisition Committee
  - Keeling, John Stuart, Lombardo

Hospitality at Monthly Meetings
- Clyde and June Oberg

Your Society is made up of volunteers serving on the Board of Directors, securing speakers, hospitality at meetings, website and social media, overseeing the Colony House Museum operations – from maintenance, docents serving as guides to our visitors, those working on archiving our treasures and more! It is not too early to think about stepping forward to serve on the Board of Directors — elections are held at the October meeting — how wonderful it would be to have a dozen members willing to serve on the ballot!!

NEW DUES SEASON BEGINS SECOND YEAR

Many of you have commented that you truly appreciated the PHS Board’s move of our dues running on the calendar year of January–December!

We have had many visitors at the Colony House Museum choose to join our Society after their visit, we’ve created a Community eList for those who wish only occasional email-messages from us, and we have the ability to accept credit card payments at meetings too! And for those of you who have often inquired — with our upcoming website enhancements, later this fall, we will also be adding the ability to make your dues payments online for even more convenience to our members and our Board!

Our Treasurer will be at the the fall meetings to review your contact information and accept your dues payments.

Many of you have provided your email address, which allows us to send you a color newsletter vs black-n-white; you have the option of still receiving the printed mailer, yet you will receive news faster by email! As a reminder, you may mail your dues to: Palmer Historical Society Arm: Cheryl, PO Box 1935, Palmer, AK 99645 or make payment at our monthly meetings:
- Individual - $25
- Household - $40
- Patron - $100
- Lifetime - $500

visit our website at www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org
Wow! What a Summer! — A Message to Our Membership

Not long ago we were all talking of snowfall — only 3 months have passed since we were wondering where summer was! Now, here we are with the Alaska State Fair and snow-like white, seeded out, fireweed marking the end of summer — and what a full and fun one it has been!

Finally, our summer arrived in June, with unusually hot days full of sunshine, and beautiful, warm, long, summer nights.

In June, we had the perfect opportunity to join in on the Colony Days festivities with our first Palmer Historical Society Tent City Market, held on the lawn of the Colony House Museum. A wonderful assortment of treasures, including old and new, home baked and home grown, were donated for the Tent City Market with proceeds benefiting our Colony House Museum Archival project.

A hunting tent was donated for the occasion, set up and furnished as it might have been in the mid 1900’s. Folks sure did enjoy looking in the tent at the many treasures — and even got a taste of how hot those tents could get! Next year we plan to have photo opportunities in front of the tent, creating a memorable snapshot of times past. We are looking for 1930’s-1940’s adult and children’s clothing for this — if you happen to come across any please let us know!

We met lots of new friends, and visited with old, as we shared about Palmer Historical Society and the Colony House Museum — many rave reviews of the Museum tour and the delicious treats inside too! The Tent City Market total proceeds, including donations for the 2-day event netted $1,600.69!

We are starting to collect items to sell for next year’s Tent City Market. Items can be dropped off at the Colony House Museum pump house or contact me at 907.232.6621 if you would like to have your donation picked up.

We had tons of fun and hope to make this an annual outreach and fun(d)raising event. Stay tuned for more fun ideas for next year’s Tent City Market!

Speaking of tents — Palmer Historical Society has a missing canopy tent. The canopy tent was loaned out a few years ago. We would love to be able to have it by next year’s Tent City Market so if anyone is savvy to the location let us know.

From the Archives ... by Carol Lombardo

This season produced over 350 items added to the Colony House Museum permanent collections. We laughed, we wept, we discussed, we cleaned, we organized, and we cataloged. Sometimes we received something and we just didn’t know what it was, or even how it was used. Do you know what this is?

The collection of 44 photos from the George and Onabel Campbell family was remarkable, documenting their life as Colonists including clearing land, building house, raising their family. Tragedy struck when 14-month old Donald took sick and died, just a few weeks after arriving in 1935. The family was still living in their tent. The archivist spent more than 50 hours working with these pictures, and even after 78 years the pain became very personal.

On the brighter side, another unidentifiable object was delegated to John Stuart for research, and he did come up with the answer. But when the archivist was entering information into the computer she couldn’t think of the proper word so came up with “anti-suck device” which put John into whoops of laughter.

Then John pulled off the Matanuska Maid $1.39 sticker to reveal the manufacturer’s title Kant-Suk, and we were all laughing. Of course, if you are a dairyman this isn’t funny at all.

Totally unexpected was the photo of Graham’s Service, received as a result of an email query to our website from Bob Graham. In the photo Bruce Graham stands in front of his business described as First Private Auto Repair Service in Palmer with gas pump, 1940-1942.
We were happy to reserve a pavilion as odds we would need to keep the rain off our picnic— but the pavilion ended up bringing much needed relief from the seemingly large ball of fire in the sky! Catching up with friends was the order of the day. June Oberg shared an adventurous story about Clyde— if you weren't there you missed out! Dave and Betty Matthews, and Clyde and June Oberg were awarded the 'If we don't eat, we don't meet' Hospitality Award for their delicious contributions to our monthly Palmer Historical Society Gatherings. Many home grown treats, along with delicious dishes and desserts, were paired up with the grilled burgers and 'dogs' to make for fine eatin's that Sunday sunny Summer afternoon!

Bob King checks over the dessert table!

August was enjoyed with a trip or two to the Alaska State Fair! So much to see and do, and eat! Alaska Fair Away was shown in the Winek barn, along with presentations by Professor Arnold Almen speaking on "Why do those barns look like that— The Buildings of the Matanuska Colony", and Helen Hegen sharing about her Matanuska Colony Barns book— which by the way has been a huge hit at the Colony House Museum gift shop!

When we weren't marketing, picnicking or Fair-going, we were having fun at the Colony House Museum and promoting Palmer Historical Society! Lots going on, from playing in the attic, organizing and cleaning the pump house, keeping the brochures stocked (guests have sure loved our new assortment of Palmer history brochures!), connecting with our Palmer and Mat Su visitor centers and Chamber of Commerce — and did you catch us weekly on our local Big Cabbage radio?

The Colony House Museum has had a wonderful summer and is now closed — ushering in the Palmer Historical Society's monthly Gatherings to start in September.

For everything there is a Season— hoping your Summer was memorable and wishing each of you a fantastic Fall!

Sheri Hamming
President and Secretary

With our winter meeting series beginning, now would be a great time to join or to renew your membership in the Palmer Historical Society. Your membership is important in supporting us in our mission of researching and preserving Palmer's history, as well as educating and informing the public about those who have gone before us!

The archiving procedure is detailed, comprehensive, and often tedious. An item donated to CHM first goes to the Acquisition Committee who decides if it will be accepted into the permanent collection. If so, the item is cleaned, repaired, thoroughly examined, measured, photographed, and all known information about it entered into a computer catalog where it receives its own identification number, and finally packed and put away into its own home place in our developing systemized storage. There it nestles securely until it's brought out for exhibit or display. Meantime the computer generates a paper record, including the photo of the item, and all these records are kept in albums which are available to those interested in having a look or perhaps searching for something in particular for, say, an exhibit.

We are always interested in items which help document the history of the Colony, so when you're cleaning out that old shed or attic keep us in mind. "Not sure if we'd want it?" Bring it on down, let us decide! At this time we are specifically looking for an upper cupboard from a Colony house kitchen, about 44in wide, 45in tall, 12in deep. Can you help on this quest?

Please contact Sherri Hamming should you would like to have a tour of our archives, and we'll schedule a session at the Colony House Museum at the end of the year! Stay tuned for updates on additional volunteer needs — some detectives are needed, volunteers for our Tent City, and members who wish to learn more about the archives!

Staircase of Campbell children, L to R: Norman, Sidney, George Jr., all born in the Colony, and Jerry who at age 3 arrived with his parents. Missing is little Donald.

Photo Courtesy of June Campbell
September brings to an end a very busy, fun and successful season at the Colony House Museum. Although final numbers are still being crunched, we know the number of visitors, tours, and sales of Palmer and the Matanuska Colony history books, DVDs, and memorabilia are up. Our sales and admissions benefited from the Alaska Far Away Documentary being aired on PBS locally and across the country and from the release of the wonderful Matanuska Colony Barns book by Helen Hegener.

The season started in May with three weeks of Elementary School field trips which included over 500 students! As always, the little ones favorite part of the tour is hearing about and touring the root house. Their delightful thank you notes almost always mention the root house. In July and August we had 10 tour groups with over 300 enthusiastic visitors from all parts of the Lower 48. Their favorite is always the kitchen, as they share memories of Grandma’s kitchen or their kitchen when they were a kid.

We also enjoyed having visitors from around the world, including England, Ireland, Germany, Japan, Italy, Australia, Qatar, and the Czech Republic. It is always interesting to find out why they chose to visit Alaska and especially Palmer.

We had other visitors of note, a writer, photographer from Wisconsin, Stuart Engler from American Profile Magazine, who was writing an article on Palmer and the Fair, and Channel 2 News when they were featuring Palmer as part of their 60th anniversary week.

We have also enjoyed having Carol Lombardo, our Archivist, working upstairs at the Museum. She helped with visitors and tours, not only explaining the work she was doing, but answering questions and sharing stories about the pictures and treasures upstairs.

And finally, we want to give a “pat on the back” and a big thank you to all our docents including our tour helpers and relief docents who volunteer their time during the very busy Alaskan summer.

With Appreciation from the Palmer Historical Society for their Service to Colony House Museum

Gerry Keeling
Barb Thomas
Carol Lombardo
John Stuart

Docents
Mary Ann Anderson
Alex Anderson
Louise Bidondo
Joan Campbell
Beth Cline

Lecann & Don Dodds
Arlene Fox
Dorothy Hubbard
Rita Loyer
Evie Mielke
Wilhelmina “Willie” Pederson
Helen Riley
Gayle Rowland
Le Ann Stephenson
Ruth Bailey

Tour Helpers & Relief Docents
Sharon Benson
Jean Krupa
Carol Strouse
Gloria Okeson

Social Media and Press
Sharon Benson, our Media ‘n Press guru, has been successful in get our meeting announcements and Colony House Museum activities promoted through Make-A-Scene, Frontiersman, and the Anchorage Daily News. We often hear about our meetings on local radio stations as well. Do you have suggestions to share with your Board on local businesses and media outlets to promote the Palmer Historical Society? Contact Sharon at 745-4913 and share your ideas!

Do check us out at Facebook too. Search for Palmer Historical Society Alaska and “LIKE” us!
MEMORIES AND RECOLLECTIONS BY GERRY KEELING

"Winter" is coming and "construction season" is approaching another year's close. Thus describes Alaska's two seasons each year, according to savvy humorists in wise observation.

Looking back to the mid-1930's, road development had not yet provided a vehicle corridor for two-way travel between Anchorage and the developing Matanuska Valley. Back then, the two travel options were either to ride the Alaska Railroad into the Valley or to cross Knik Arm by schooner or boat.

Strong backs carried many loads to intended destinations as early settlers staked their Valley homestead sites. Later, on May 23, 1935, Matanuska Valley Colonist families learned by lottery of the location of their 40 or 80 acre farm tracts.

The establishing of the Colony initiated a number of development projects in the Valley.

During the autumn of 1935, the Alaska Road Commission was allotted $100,000.00 by the Public Works Administration, the money to be used to complete the Anchorage-to-Matanuska (Valley) highway.

Of the $225,000.00 set aside for the Road Commission to use in the vicinity of Anchorage, the administration reserved $125,000.00 for surfacing ten miles of road then under construction in and around the Colonization Project.

In the fall of 1935, the Assistant Chief Engineer of the Road Commission visited Palmer and reported that conditions were nearly right for driving of piling for the Knik River bridge (at the foot of Pioneer Peak).

Supplies were already arriving at the site, and 30 men were expected to be employed on the construction task within a month. By March 1936 the bridge itself was under construction.

On September 4, 1936...during the first Matanuska Valley Fair...an official ribbon-cutting dedication ceremony was held, thus opening the Knik River Bridge to traffic on the Anchorage-Palmer Highway. Even then, according to Don Irwin, there were 20 miles of highway along the mountains and between the Matanuska and Knik bridges without a gravel surface.

This initial road connect between Anchorage and the Valley is known as the Glenn Highway Alternate.

Until next time, Gerry

OCTOBER IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER.......

And with it, another year of Palmer history is behind us!

Wow, time marches on! Summer is behind, Autumn is upon, and Winter is sneaking in.

Here we are, once again looking forward to another year of adventures, with the Palmer Historical Society! With each new year comes a new election for the Palmer Historical Society Board. Won't each of you consider how you will contribute to the Society this year – either through participation on the Board, on one of our many committees, volunteering at the Colony House Museum, being a monthly speaker, donating time or talents or singing a solo? Don't be shy – step up and join in on the fun, there are a many good ways to share your talents and skills – we would love to have your experiences in life benefit others in the Society!

On behalf of the membership, the Board extends a heartfelt thank you to Cheryl Babbe and Sharon Benson for their contribution to Palmer Historical Society and the Board over the years. Each of these busy and talented members will be stepping down from the Board, though will remain in service to the Historical Society through their contributions to a variety of committees. Thank you Cheryl (since 2008) and Sharon (since 1999) for your time on the Board – we're sure your service to the Society has been a worthy adventure!

We also want to thank Barbara Hecker and Jean Krupa for their time on the Board this year – both of these ladies stepped down last fall. Jean is our amazing Program Coordinator and continues to bring us such a great variety of interesting Speakers each month – we are in for a treat again with our lineup this year!

After the last elections, I heard murmured 'who is that new girl?...' I'm still the new girl, still learning, and still having a ton of fun on the Board and representing Palmer Historical Society. What a great bunch of folks we boast in the Society! I thank you for the opportunity to serve you and look forward with anticipation to the next year.

Please contact any Board member with questions and comments, or to put your name in the hat for our October Board Member elections.

We are so fortunate to live in the best little town in the world! Palmer is so unique isn't it? Our usual history, our spectacular views and our warm and welcoming people make our town so special. We are the little town with a big heart! Alaska at it's Best!

With gratitude, your Society President,

-Sheri Hamming

NOTES FROM DOCENTS

From Joan Campbell —

This is my first year as a regular docent, although my husband and I have volunteered for school tours before. I thoroughly enjoyed my two hours a week, and am sorry I am unable to do more. I am still learning, and will never know as much as the veteran docents. Visitors were very interesting and had their own stories to tell. I hope to do it again next year.

From Gayle Rowland —

Friday afternoons have been busier than previous years. Visitors are still interested in the Story and our parents would be pleased to know their struggles and triumphs are now legendary. The Colony House Museum was/is a great opening for the "1935 Story".
THE LADIES OF THE ALASKANA BOOK STORE!

Remember – We Begin our PHS Programs at 7:00PM in 2013!!

YOUR PHS SOCIETY

This would be a great time to join or to renew your membership in the Palmer Historical Society.

Your membership is important in supporting us in our mission of researching and preserving Palmer’s history, as well as educating and informing the public about those who have gone before us.

Do you enjoy our programs and speakers? Our newsletter? Like to support the Colony House Museum? Wish to help preserve Palmer’s History? Then please consider joining or renewing today!

You may mail in your annual dues or pay them at our September 18th meeting at the Library.