

# PALMER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESERVING OUR PAST, SHARING OUR STORIES & MAKING HISTORY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

**Official Publication of the Palmer Historical Society - Volume XXVI No.2-March 2011 Edition**

## PRESIDENT'S VIEW FROM FARM LOOP

Longer daylight hours signal that Spring is not that far off and turns one's thoughts to starting seeds and enjoying some outdoor activities. The pros tell me that March is the time to start tomatoes and leeks if you have indoor space and are so inclined. Agriculture was the topic of our January program and featured a presentation by local journalist *Victoria Naegele* on the Alaska Farm Bureau's Agriculture in the Classroom project. The video she produced and presented was a marvelous celebration of the State's agriculture history and its future.

At the February meeting, I was privileged to present a program on the visit of Presidential candidate John F. Kennedy to the State Fair in Palmer in 1960. For me it was a great opportunity to look back at a historical event in Palmer in the context of an Alaska full of excitement about its newly acquired Statehood at a time of political transition at the Nation's highest level. On a personal level,

I really enjoyed sharing the pictures my father *Charles E. Logsdon*, then Mayor of Palmer, had of JFK's visit.

Our program series continues in March with a presentation by *Katie Eberhart* on the local reaction to headlines Palmer made nationally about the radioactive contamination of local milk in the 1950's and 1960's as a result of the atmospheric testing of atomic weapons by the Russians. This should be a good follow-up to our recent program on the White Alice system, another Cold War program affecting our community. The meeting is March 16th at the Palmer Library and starts at 7:00 p.m.

Once again, we are looking for volunteers at the Colony House Museum this summer as we have already begun to schedule tours and have lost a number of our long-time docents over the winter. Please contact Gerry Keeling if you can lend a hand.

*Chuck Logsdon, PHS President*

## PALMER'S RADIOACTIVE MILK CONTROVERSY AT MARCH MEETING

Milk has long been an important part of Palmer's identity and economy. During the Cold War when the Russians and Americans were testing hundreds of nuclear bombs, Palmer area milk was sampled for radiation. Fallout data was collected and analyzed and the results were published in government documents and reported by newspapers.

The controversy grew when people Outside mailed newspaper clippings to their friends and relatives in Palmer, and officials including James Wilson (State Director of Agriculture), Dr. Alan Mick (Director of the Agriculture Experiment Station), and Stewart A. Durrant (General Manager of Matanuska Maid) argued that the milk was safe. But ten-

sions were high and during this same time (late 1950s through mid-1960s), Palmer was selected as the site of regional Civil Defense exercises (Al Hagen was Greater Palmer District Civil Defense Director), The *Frontiersman* ran articles with headlines like "Self Preservation in the Nuclear Age," Family Fallout Shelter booklets were distributed, and newspaper editorial discussions were of whether Russian fallout posed a danger to Palmer residents.

This presentation will focus on nuclear fallout and milk in Palmer between 1958 and 1963, primarily Iodine-131 with some comments about the occurrence of Strontium-90. Please bring your stories and memories of this nerve-racking time.

## PHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Your Palmer Historical Society Board of Directors:

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## PHS MEETING INFORMATION

The Palmer Historical Society meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday of the month (Sep-Nov and Jan-May) at the Palmer Public Library. We gather at 6:30PM; the program starts at 700PM.

Refreshments are served during the break. Come Join Us!

## 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 March 16th meeting at the Library.

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



## NEW CLUES FOR STROUP MYSTERY ALBUM CONTINUED...

The two photos labeled "First Cabin in Seward 1898" were confirmed by Lee Poleske of the Resurrection Bay Historical Society to be the Lowell cabins. The shot of "Serg't Yennet" looks just like a later shot in Alaska Digital Archives of Sgt. William Yanert, a member of the Glenn expedition who stayed in Alaska. Heather Resz of the

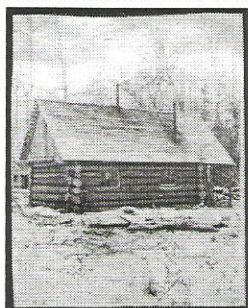
*Frontiersman* also read our newsletter, and featured the Stroup album in the 1/31/11 Valley Life section – still available online.

The biggest find is a chapter titled "From Knik Station to Eagle City" by cartographer C. E. Griffiths published in "Compilation of Narratives of Explorations in Alaska, 1900". He wrote, "On June 9, 1899, I left Knik Station, Alaska, accompanied by 1 hospital steward, 1 private soldier, 3 packers, and 1 Indian guide and 17 pack animals for Eagle City."

Many of the album photos appear associated with this expedition, but the provenance is still unknown and the mystery only deepens. Perhaps we'll know more by our May program, when Dwaine Schuldt presents on the Glenn expedition.



*Clockwise: Serg't Yennet with sled, N.C. Griffiths—Chief Engineer & a guide, First Cabin in Seward 1898.*



## NEWS ON THE ALCAN HIGHWAY PHOTO ALBUM

Our newsletter goes international! In the January newsletter, we showed three photos of building the Alcan Highway from the album Vivian and Louis Miller found. These photos had been included in a 2001 American Truck Historical Society article posted on the web. They were taken by Douglas Storing and provided by his daughter, Donna Clayson, but we couldn't locate her and hoped she could contact us.

Well, she emailed us last month from Whitehorse, having read our newsletter. Millers' album apparently has only part of the Storing collection but has several photos taken by others, including sections north of Whitehorse. Doug Storing worked on the Canol fuel line, one of two supplying the airfields along the highway. The Millers' album may include photos from the Haines pipeline. They are driving the highway now and will try to visit Ms. Clayson and accept her offer to share photos and stories.

— *Ralph Hulbert*



*#115: The vast swamp between White River and Beaver was the final section to be built.*



*#99: Hauling pipe north*



*#121: Where is this? The road is finished and the fuel pipeline to the airfields lies on the ground under the open-wire telephone lines.*

## Come Join Us & Become an Active Member

*Mail in your payment, with the following information today:*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*Membership levels of the Palmer Historical Society:*

☐ Regular

\$10 per year

☐ Contributing

\$25 per year

☐ Sustaining

\$100 per year

☐ Lifetime - \$500

## REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

*We recently received the following email which Coleen Mielke asked us to pass on to you.*

Hello Friends,

As some of you know, I've been working on creating an alphabetized directory of early valley pioneers. To-date, I have concentrated on the Wasilla side of the valley, however, that plan has changed and I am now hoping to include the pre-1950 pioneers of Wasilla, Willow, Talk-eetna, Matanuska Junction, Palmer and Chickaloon. Would you like to help me? Please?

You don't have to remember a lot about the names of people you think should be added (I will work on that); just their name...maybe their spouses name or where they lived, would be a big help. I have posted what I have done already (so you can see what I have in mind) at:

[http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~coleen/wasilla\\_pioneer\\_directory.html](http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~coleen/wasilla_pioneer_directory.html)

If you would like to contribute, let me know, or you can forward the above link to anyone who you think might be interested in helping.

Thanks so much for your cooperation,

**Coleen Mielke**

Wasilla



# CHATTER FROM THE COLONY HOUSE MUSEUM

March sunshine promises that springtime cannot be far away and that the Colony House Museum is awakening from hibernation. Before we know it, wonderful visitors again will be walking up the pathway to the CHM front door, anticipating a glimpse of "early Palmer" and of life in the Valley during the first decade of the Matanuska Colony.

Through the years since the CHM Restoration Project in 1994, scores of volunteers have given of their time, talent, energy, expertise, friendliness, and welcoming hospitality, thereby together creating this very special glimpse of historical Palmer and of rural America.

The passage of time now limits our current volunteer ranks, and so the call goes out to YOU, our readers, to consider becoming a part of this worthwhile PHS effort this year. Help is needed from tour-giving docent (or back-up docent) to furniture duster, garden planter to green thumb weeder, window washer to historic walking tour leader...the list goes on and on, and every bit of "I will help" is a blue ribbon treasure. If you are tempted to climb aboard the CHM bandwagon, please call Gerry at 745-

3703 for more information. The Colony House Museum will officially open on May 1, and we try to be totally willing and enthusiastically able to work with possible changing schedules that may come your way! THANK YOU for giving the Colony House Museum some thought.

On the EVENTS CALENDAR, the PHS Board has tentatively-scheduled the CHM raffle dinner for mid-to-late September this year, thus making operational scheduling more manageable considering the many school class tours that are given in May.

Another CHM summer event being discussed is to hold a "Yard Sale" in tandem with the Palmer Museum of History and Art (PMHA...they are located at the Tourist Center). Possibly during Colony Days OPEN HOUSE which will be on Saturday, June 11. More info on that in a later newsletter.

Food for thought..."History is a mighty drama, with suns for lamps and eternity for a backdrop". We hope to see you down the Spring and Summer trail, and may every day be good to you.

*Contributed by Gerry Keeling*

## JANUARY SPEAKER WRAP-UP

At our January meeting, Victoria Naegele presented her video documentary "Hopeful Harvest, Alaska's Agricultural History in Images," a video that she produced as part of "Alaska Agriculture in the Classroom," a 501c3 educational program of the Alaska Farm Bureau.

The documentary included both stills and movie clips of early and contemporary agriculture endeavors here in the Matanuska Valley and other areas of the State. Sources for the early photographic images included activities documented by agricultural experiment stations that were opened in Alaska around the turn of the 20th century as well as from films prepared by the Alaska railroad to promote the availability of agricultural land accessed by the railroad spur through the Matanuska Valley.

Those in attendance were treated to vintage movie footage of well known valley farmers like Barney Anderson and Wayne and Margery Bouwens

We look forward to seeing you at our  
March Meeting –  
Do remember that our meetings  
now BEGIN at 7:00PM!

## JFK IN FEBRUARY PRESENTATION

Chuck Logsdon took many of us down memory lane as he shared photos from his father's collection of the visit by presidential candidate John F. Kennedy to the Alaska State Fair in Palmer in 1960.

Palmer was a very different place at that time. The Fairgrounds were located where the Pioneers Home is today and there were hardly any paved streets, street lights, or sidewalks in the city. The T-Bird convertible (courtesy of Hartley Motors) carrying JFK actually got stuck in a mud hole on the State Fair Midway and had to be pushed out by his entourage and volunteers in the crowd

The speech as reported in the *Frontiersman*, was "well received and [Kennedy] seemed to have the crowd with him." Kennedy's campaign theme, "the New Frontier," matched up well with Alaska's new-found status as the 49th state and its



*Photo from the Collection of Charles E. Logsdon*

motto, "The Last Frontier"!

Chuck Logsdon read Kennedy's speech that heavily weighted Alaska's potential and lack of key infrastructure but stressed the threat from the Soviet Union. In the speech Kennedy promised to build the Rampart Dam, a very popular plan with the audience.

Can you help us with the mystery of

those in the photo? Anyone know who the tall guy might be between Jim Hurlley and Jalmar Kerttula (far right)? Please call our President Chuck Logsdon and help solve that mystery! Can anyone name all of the gentlemen in the photo?



## PIONEER RECIPE — JUNE OBERG'S CINNAMON ROLLS



June delights as members go after her Cinnamon Rolls at the Palmer Historical Society 2010 Picnic!

### Ingredients:

6 C. warm water

1 C. sugar or honey

Mix together with 4 Tbl. Yeast

3 Tsp. salt

4 eggs

Add 12 cups flour more or less. If sticky, add more flour. Bosch mixer works the best. Mix for at least 8 minutes.

Knead by hand as *Sara Moffitt* told her until "the sweat runs off your nose" or by machine and let rise until doubled.

Roll out dough in a Rectangle.

Add: 2 tsp. vanilla and sprinkle on 1/4 lb. butter.

Add: Brown Sugar, Granulated Sugar, lots of Cinnamon and nuts, raisins, craisins, etc.

Roll up and cut into Cinnamon Rolls and put in pan.

### For Syrup

2 cups Brown Sugar

1/2 C. Water

Boil until soft ball stage or like heavy pancake syrup.

Put in bottom of greased pan and add nuts etc. if you like. Add cinnamon rolls. Bake at 350 degrees for 23-25 minutes.

Remember — We Begin our PHS Programs at 7:00PM in 2011 !!

June 11th - Mark you calendars today!  
Colony House Museum Open House for *Colony Days*

May 18th — *The Allen Expedition*  
Program Speakers Dwaine Schuidt

April 20th — *The Independence Ski Resort*  
Program Speakers Ben Wattum

March 16 — *Radioactive Milk in Palmer, a Cold War Issue?*  
Program Speakers Katie Eberhart

Presenting your Spring Palmer Historical Society Speakers —  
3rd Wednesday each Month — Palmer Library — 7:00PM

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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