

Greetings from the President

Another year of history has been set into memory and it's once again time for our annual Society Membership Meeting where we elect the members of our Board of Directors to serve for the next year. There are a number of challenges facing the organization in the months ahead. In addition to the review and update of our by-laws that we've just begun, growing our membership numbers and enhancing our website are but two important tasks needing attention. In my view, our greatest challenge addressing our need to catalog and properly store our growing collection of historic artifacts the Society has taken ownership of over the years. Addressing these challenges, and keeping the normal functions of the organization running smoothly, will require some additional folks to step up and get actively involved. Some of our Directors have served several years on the Board and are ready for a different role. We need new candidates to stand for election to the Board this year, and we need folks who will volunteer to work on some of the important projects. I'm looking for a good turn-out at the October meeting and enthusiastic volunteers to help keep the Society functioning well. ~ Richard Estelle

Summertime Picnic Fun

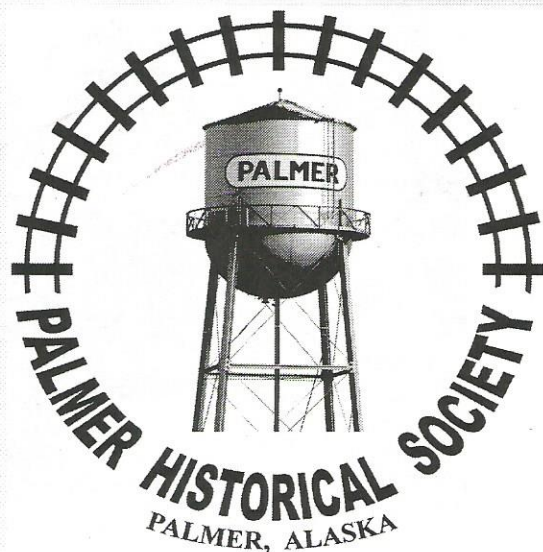
This summer's Historical Society picnic appeared as if it were going to be a soggy one with heavy rains going into the third week in July. We were prepared to enjoy it all under tarps and tents. But Sunday turned out sunny, warm and calm as folks gathered at Kepler Park south of Palmer, on the birch tree-covered ridge above the lakes. The



Kepler family donated the space in their campground for our use and we helped them celebrate their 60th year of making their land and lakes available to the public.. As friends gathered for the good food, many stories of the people and activities of the park area were shared as well. The atmosphere, the good conversations among friends, and plenty to eat, reminded many of lots of other picnics in the woods here in the Valley over the years. A sincere "thank you" goes out to all who helped prepare the site and clean up afterward; to those who brought the good food, and to all those who attended. ~Richard Estelle

Pat Lawton shares her lovely smile.

Photo Courtesy of JoAnn Utt



Please Join Us!

**Become an
Active Member of your
Palmer Historical Society!**

You may pay your dues at our
October 17 meeting, or mail to:

Palmer Historical Society c/o
Treasurer, Cheryl Babbe
PO Box 1935
Palmer, AK 99645

Individual—\$25/year
One person, One vote

Household—\$40/year
Two persons in one household,
Two votes; Children under 18
years of age included

Patron—\$100/year
Business or Organization,
One vote

Lifetime—\$500.00
One person, One vote,
Non-transferrable

Please include your address,
phone number and email address
with your check. Thank you!



Colony House Museum Gives Thanks

What many caring hands and hearts have created for our community since the CHM first opened its doors in the 1997 summer season! Many cheers from the CHM housetop to all who have made this happen!

The legacy of the Colony House Museum continues to grow. In Germany, a travel magazine wrote about us. Women from Palmer's "Sister City", Saroma, Japan, serenaded an enchanted docent with words describing their agricultural home town. Among CHM's last visitors of the season was a small group of French travelers.

Barbara Lentz Thomas led our band of docents through a busy season of hosting visitors, tours, and classroom groups.

Photo courtesy of Cheryl Babbe

"Looking ahead, a task badly needing attention is 2013 will be to replace the fence posts for the CHM backyard area. Kudos await.. Possibly an Eagle Scout candidate or some other generous soul will volunteer to take it on."

~ Gerry Keeling

Annual Raffle and Winners' Dinner

Our year's events began on April 29 with CHM's 13th Annual Raffle Dinner served to winners, **June Oberg** and **Vivian Miller**, their spouses and guests. All eight diners dressed for the occasion in their finest 1930s-era attire!

A tasty repast was prepared courtesy of the **Colony Inn Café's Chef Pete Scott**. Floral centerpieces were generously contributed by **Carla Davis of Flowers By Louise**. A particularly joyous musical interlude of historically timely melodies was performed by **Palmer High School's Stan Harris**, and his group of talented vocalists.

A sumptuous dinner, great entertainment, and terrific company made for a most enjoyable evening for all.

More Heartfelt Thanks to...

Our Docents:

Dorothy Hubbard and Rita Loyer

Arlene Fox and Willie Peterson

Mary Ann Anderson and grandson Alex

Evie Mielke

Helen Riley

LeAnn Stephenson

Gayle Rowland

Wayne Bouwens

Louise Bidondo and Barbara Thomas

Beth Cline and Leanne Dodge



Fill-in Docents:

Gerry Keeling

Sharon Benson

Carol Strouse

Jean Krupa

Barbara Hecker

Additional Essential Helpers:

JohnStuart Maintenance, Lawn Care

Karen Stuart PHS Webmistress

Terry and Jean Bradley Mowing and weeding team

Helen Finch Treasure finder and cheerleader

June and Clyde Oberg Flower and Vegetable plants

Richard Harbuck Storm window replacement and general helpfulness

Roy Hoskins Cookie Baker extraordinaire

ALL our wonderful **"Baking Elves"** who make our Open House events a most hospitable place to be.

Photo: Barbara Hecker



Photos courtesy of Cheryl Babbe

Jessie DeVries Enthralls October Gathering

Montanan John DeVries was a college student of mechanical arts who yearned to be a carpenter. In some innate foresight, he wrote his senior thesis on, "The Colonization of the Matanuska Valley." It may have been an academic exercise in research and writing, nonetheless, the seed was planted, his interest was piqued.

Meanwhile, his young wife, a nurse named Jessie, was caring for a man horribly burned in the coal mines. He distracted himself from pain by sharing his tales of Alaska. Her curiosity, too, was aroused. Jessie decided, with John, to tackle their 'grand adventure' which would find them, with their first baby, David, leaving for Alaska in 1945.

John wrote to Juneau seeking a job, initially requesting a teaching position in Homer. That seaside town proved too expensive as it was only accessible by boat or by air. Thus, Palmer became the lucky recipient of John and Jessie's future of expertise and community involvement.

John worked the first summer for the Fire Guard Service based in Glenallen, "During a summer so wet you couldn't even start a fire," shares Jessie. Housing in Palmer proved so hard to find that they purchased a Quonset Hut, a semi-circular steel prefabricated structure, for \$50.00 from the Mat Valley Farmers' Cooperative. It remained on the shoulders of the young family to move the hut to their land, 40 acres for which they'd paid \$3.50 per acre, on Lazy Mountain.

The Quonset Hut measured wider than the only bridge available to cross the Matanuska River. In the bitterest cold of the winter, minus 40 degree temperatures actually served as a blessing in their two-week odyssey of moving the hut to the property. A D-8 Cat was hired to enable the Quonset hut to roll across the frozen river and up the mountain.

Once in place, cold continued to challenge their spirits. Cook stoves were put into service (feebly) for warmth. An old truck with its 'come-along', required the oil pan and battery be removed and taken inside at the end of the day. The next morning, a fire was built under the oil pan to warm it, thus urging the old rig to start up another day.

Jessie tells of the night the old Valley Hospital burned to the ground. "Fortunately, the patients and furniture were saved—moved to neighboring Central School." During this time, her son Johnny was born in the Central School Library—a fact, of which, he would take pride in recounting.

John taught agriculture and shop classes for thirty years at Palmer High School. Jessie nursed actively in the hospital and privately. Together they served actively at the United Presbyterian Church (the Church of A Thousand Trees.) After ten years in the Quonset hut, they eventually built a 'real' house, and then another, smaller one, after they retired. Although, Jessie shared, they were "never quite finished..."

Jessie's favorite memory? Neighbors—wonderful friends all around." Jessie continues her life of service and neighborliness while living at the Palmer Veterans' and Pioneers' Home.

October Speaker: Janet Kincaid



Janet and Larry Kincaid, with their first child, came to Alaska in 1954. Five more children would follow. To-day, forty-five immediate family members fill the Kincaid quiver, including spouses, grandchildren and in-laws. They built their home along the Palmer-Fishhook Road. Larry worked at the Nicholson Lake White Alice Site as an electronic technician.



In 1996, Janet and two of her children invested their earnings into the purchase and restoration of the Valley Hotel and Restaurant, a three-story landmark building. Later, she purchased the old Teachers' Barracks (now the Colony Inn and Café), and most recently she bought the Colony-era home dedicated to the use of the Matanuska Cooperative manager. Her establishments have been revamped to show 'old fashioned charm' with modern amenities.

Photos
courtesy of
Janet
Kincaid





November Speaker: Helen Hegener

Helen was blessed early with a family of adventurers—they loved to travel and explore the wonders of wherever they landed. Her childhood was amply filled with camping, picnics, parks, expeditions, oceans, museums, castles, zoos, aquariums and love.

She now enjoys five kids of her own, four boys and a girl, plus many grandchildren to bring her delight and joy.

Alaska has been Helen's home for the past forty years. During this time she's authored and published award-winning works in the fields of alternative education (homeschooling) and dog sled racing.

Helen will show slides of her current project, a full-color book about the Matanuska Colony Barns. It's due for release in time for your holiday shopping!



Photos courtesy of Helen Hegener

Holiday Elves, Pixies, Fairies and Imps Needed!

All hail! - Wassail! The festive season is approaching faster than a flying reindeer! Would you like to champion the Colony Christmas Open House at our charming Colony House Museum? Would you like to meet and greet your friends and neighbors as they sip punch, munch treats, tickle the ivories at our vintage piano, and join with you in rollicking yuletide song?

This year's Open House will be held Saturday, December 8, from 10 am until 6 pm. Foremost, we need a Head Elf, (or co-Head Elves, if you please) to be planner, organizer, and delegator (so important!)

The Lion's share of yeoman's work is already set—a cadre of volunteers who have—in years past—cleaned, shoveled snow, harvested a tree, decorated the house with twinkly, colorful baubles, baked and brought platters of goodies, and (wo)manned the table of punch, sweets and delicacies, as well as the Elves' Bake Sale, played the piano and inspired the singing of

carols. They simply need 'stirring to action' from their new Head Elf!

The Board will provide you with all you might need for the job. Blessings, kudos and feathers in your cap abundantly await!



*"I will honor Christmas in my heart,
and try to keep it all the year. ~
Charles Dickens*

Recipes 'n Memories submitted by Barbara Hecker

Mama was a fairly utilitarian cook. Our farm meals were largely "meat" (culled dairy cows) and potatoes (boiled, mashed or baked.) Mama insisted on our eating a green salad before we could have anything else. Plates were emptied before desert was dished. Didn't like what was served? Go hungry.

We ate fresh veggies from the garden, or preserved—canned, frozen, dried. Deep into winter we bought and ate canned store-bought veggies, but mostly we ate root vegetables from the root cellar. My school day finishing before Mama's, I'd arrive home to find her directive: wash potatoes, pierce and put them in the oven at 375 degrees. Tenderize the steaks (thwack mightily with a small, spikey mallet that broke up the fibers. Fix salads."

Once, I even 'invented' a very, very simple recipe: 1) Place a slice of bologna—the kind encased in thin plastic—on a (rimmed) cookie sheet, 2) center a slice of pineapple (canned, of course) on the bologna, 3) sprinkle grated cheddar cheese on top, and 4) slide under the broiler. The bologna will curl up, cupping the pineapple, its juices and the melted cheese. Yuhmm...

My recommended recipe is even simpler—I



hope you already know and eat it regularly. It brings out the most amazing sweetness in root veggies!

Roasted Root Vegetables

(potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, parsnips, beets, turnips, rutabagas, etc.)

2 lbs root veggies—peeled (optional), cut into 1" pieces

1 onion—peeled and cut into quarters

1 head garlic—cloves separated and peeled

1 T. olive oil

S/P to taste, Fresh herbs (I like rosemary)

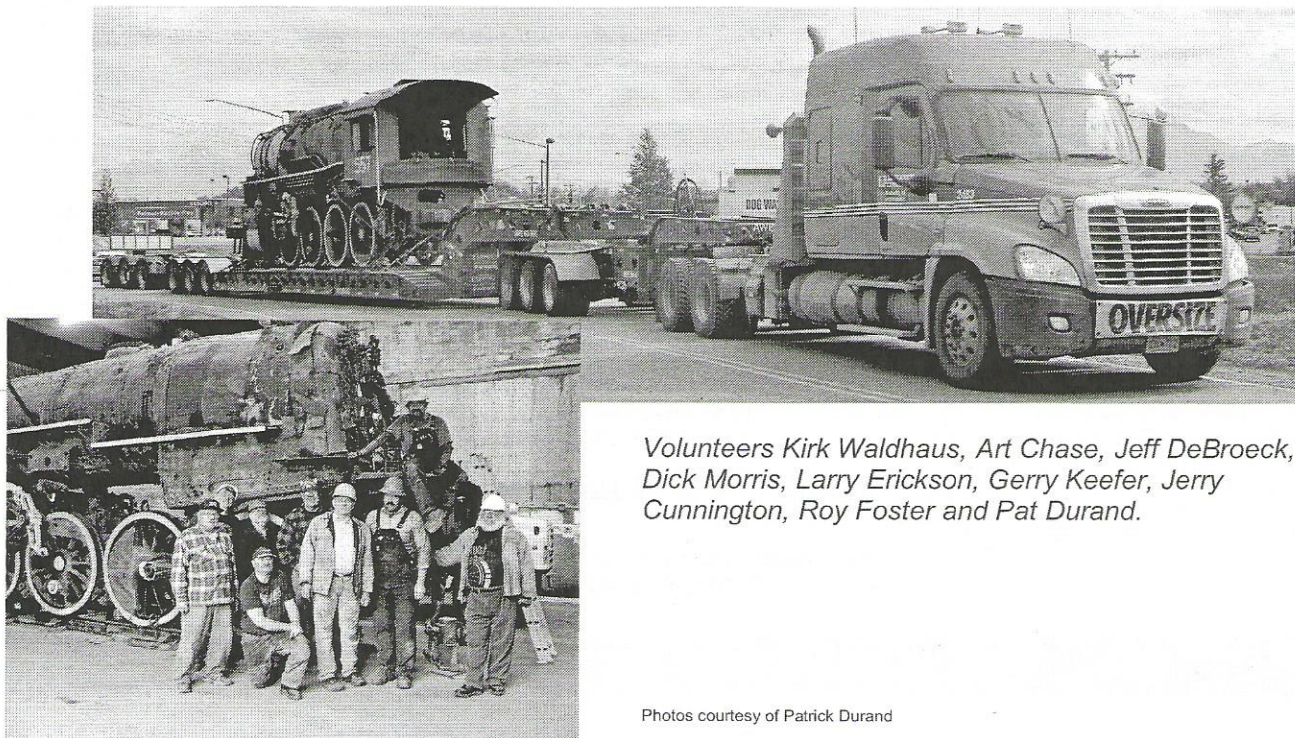
* Heat oven to 400 degrees

* Toss the veggies with the oil, herbs, and S/P

* Place the veggies, uncrowded, in a single layer, in a roasting pan

* Roast the veggies for a total of 45-60 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes, until veggie chunks are tender and evenly browned

Historic Engine 557 Strips for Future Glory



Volunteers Kirk Waldhaus, Art Chase, Jeff DeBroeck, Dick Morris, Larry Erickson, Gerry Keefer, Jerry Cunningham, Roy Foster and Pat Durand.

Photos courtesy of Patrick Durand

"Gypsy Rose Lee" Returns To Alaska

Just two months ago, we were intrigued by the sight of 162,500-lb, WWII-era Engine 557 being slowly hauled up the Parks Highway to its new temporary home in a Wasilla warehouse.

Engine 557 was one of twelve U.S. Army Transportation Corp s-160 class steam locomotives transferred to Alaska in 1943-44. She had a total of 2120 'sisters' built to the same plan and sent off to support the war effort around the world. They were built as bare-bones machines, stripped down for action with no frills. Gypsy Rose Lee, a well known burlesque queen featured at such venues as the Gayety Theater in Baltimore, inspired her many admirers to tag the G.I. Consolidations as the "Gypsy Rose Lee locomotives."

By the time No. 557 was sold for scrap in 1964, it had retired as the last steam locomotive in regular service in Alaska. Engine 557 is getting right down to the bare boiler during the current examination.

Scrap dealer, history buff and train aficionado, Monte Holm of Moses Lake, WA, purchased Engine 557 in 1964. Instead of selling her off piece-by-piece, he placed it at his museum, Holm's House of Poverty Museum. Holm kept 557 in order, firing her up once in a while, teaching school children about the large steam engine. After Holm's death in 2006, plans formed to bring 557 back to the 49th State where she would be restored and returned to active, if special, public service.

Her sister twin, Engine 556 has served in Anchorage's Delaney Park Strip since 1959 as an educational display and object of play. However, you can look forward to Engine 557 strutting her stuff under steam, pulling excursions and charter trains on the Alaska Railroad.

Wouldn't it be **great** if she were able to huff'n puff into Palmer? Do you realize why she can't?

ENGINE 557 RESTORATION COMPANY



(907) 341-9232 • PO Box 875360, Wasilla, AK 99654

Society Member, Patrick Durand is President, Engine 557 Restoration Company, and requests your support of the privately funded project. Your tax deductible donation of \$25.00 (or more!) will be matched, dollar for dollar, by a generous \$350,000.00 grant from the Rasmuson Foundation. Mail to: The Alaska Community Foundation 557 Fund, 400 L Street, Suite 100, Anchorage, AK 99501. Or donate online at www.alaskarails.org/pix/former-loco/557/support/donate.html

PHS Board of Directors

President—Richard Estelle

Vice-President— *JoAnn Utt*

Treasurer/Membership—Cheryl Babbe

Secretary/Program Chair—Jean Krupa

Trustee/Publicist— *Sharon Benson*

Trustee/Newsletter—Barbara Hecker

Trustee/CHM — Gerry Keeling

* JoAnn and Sharon are stepping away from their PHS Board positions as of our October 17 meeting. ALL officer positions are open for re-election as of October 17.

PHS Fall Events

October 17, 2012 — PHS Annual Meeting — Palmer Library. Gathering from 6:30 p.m. Meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. **Elections—please come vote!** We need volunteers to serve on the Board and several committees!

Speaker: Janet Kincaid, Owner and Restorer of the historic Valley Hotel and Café, the Colony Inn, and the Manager's House.

November 14, 2012 ** Note Location Change ** MTA Meeting Room 1740 S. Chugach St. Gathering from 6:30 p.m. Meeting begins at 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Helen Hegener, Author and Photographer whose book, "The Matanuska Colony Barns" will be published in late fall 2012. She will be sharing slides and stories of her research. Visit her website at <http://matanskabarns.wordpress.com/>

Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for socializing. Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m.
Refreshments will be served and door prizes awarded after the body of the program.
The Public is cordially invited to attend.

December 8, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Colony Christmas Open House
316 E. Elmwood Ave, Palmer

Elves' Holiday Bake Sale * Vintage Decorations * Old-Fashioned Merry-Making Caroling Around the Antique Piano * Sweets and Treats

Palmer Historical Society

PO Box 1935

Palmer, AK 99645

Phone: 907-745-1935

Find us on the web!

<http://www.palmerhistoricalsociety.org>

Google "Palmer Historical Society Alaska Facebook" for our Facebook link!

Individuals with interest in obtaining "Letters to Clema", a collection of letters written by Sarah ('Sadie' Hecker) Moffitt to her daughter, Clema, from 1952-1970, may obtain their copy in one of these easy ways:

* Order online at **lulu.com** Books are printed on demand. The cost per book is \$27.19 + \$3.99 for regular shipping, or \$7.99 for Priority Shipping.

* Special Order from **Fireside Books** in downtown Palmer. David will charge \$40.00 per book, adding the same shipping charges.

The **Palmer Public Library** has one copy in open circulation.

Alaskana Books (745-8695) may still have a copy for sale.

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

