

Tundra & Ice: History in Alaska's Arctic

2018 Alaska Historical Society Program Schedule

Thursday, September 13, 2018

THURSDAY, 8:30-10:00AM

AHS Keynote: Thinking Together about Public History, Dr. Lorraine McConaghy, Old St. Joe's Hall

THURSDAY, 10:30-12:00

Session A: *Gold Rush in Alaska's Northwest*, NWC Ptarmigan

Duped by a Convict: How Lawmen Perished in the Kotzebue Gold Rush

In 1897, George Stevens, prisoner at the Walla Walla Penitentiary, convinced the warden he could find gold in Kotzebue, Alaska. Prison warden James Addleman and his deputy, O. D. Butterfield, got Stevens released from prison. They bought the schooner *Loyal* and assembled a crew, including navigators, former policemen, Stevens and his 14-year-old son. When they arrived in Kotzebue, battered by weather and conflict, they discovered the promise of gold was a cruel hoax. The men patched the ship, abandoned Stevens and his son in Alaska and headed home. Days later they were capsized in a fierce storm. No one on board survived.

Sharon L. Morris is a retired faculty member of the University of Washington, School of Public Health. Her writing ranges from adventure travel essays—many set in Alaska—to family histories, including the story of her great-grandfather, James F. Addleman, who was lost at sea during the gold rush.

Gold Camp Followers Make History: The Marriage of Kate and Charles J. Kennedy, 1902-1914

In 1898, Spanish-American War veteran Charles J. Kennedy and 16-year-old Kate Kennedy hiked the Chilkoot Pass to the Klondike. Married in 1902, they traveled to Nome to be successful business partners. Their marriage was annulled in 1914. Kate moved to McCarthy, operating businesses for the lonely men seeking gold and copper. Charles mushed his dog team from Nome to Valdez, serving in the first Territorial Legislature. A controversial legislator, he was not re-elected, and there were allegations of election fraud. Charles died in the Nevada State Hospital for Mental Disease as an “indigent-insane” miner and was buried in a pauper's grave.

Patt Garrett is a grandmother, retired clinical social worker, arm-chair historian, and ten-year volunteer docent at the McCarthy-Kennicott Historical Museum. She is working on a publication about gold camp follower Kate Kennedy.

The Discovery Saloon Building: A Link to Nome's Gold Rush History

Built in 1899 by one of Nome's Lucky Swedes, the former Discovery Saloon is Nome's oldest structure. When the building was converted into a home in 1917, a local newspaper called it "about the finest residence in Nome." It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. Though "of the flimsiest construction," the building has survived storm, flood and fire to become one of the community's most tangible links to its Gold Rush past. Come learn about the history of this unique building and challenges of maintaining such a structure in a remote sub-arctic community.

Carol Gales moved to Nome from the Midwest in 1996 "for one year" and hasn't left. After purchasing the former Discovery Saloon in 2002, she did extensive research on the building to guide exterior restoration work supported by historic preservation grants.

Session B: *The Military in Alaska*, NWC Willow

"A Shot in the Arm for Alaska": Al Jolson's Report of his USO tour of the Alaskan Home Front and War Zone in 1942

On June 3, 1942, Japanese planes attacked Dutch Harbor, Alaska. On June 1, Al Jolson prepared for his flight from Seattle to Alaska as part of a USO sponsored tour. Several grounded flights later because of the attack, he finally arrived in Juneau on June 12. This paper examines an extensive report of his tour, written by Jolson, one of the most famous entertainers of the era, to consider Alaska as both home front and war zone during the early months of war in the Pacific. It reveals the conditions of soldiers and citizenry, the state of war preparations, and morale.

John W. Heaton is the Arthur T. Fathauer Chair in History and Chair of the University of Alaska Fairbanks History Department. His most recent publications have examined the Athabascans of the Alaska interior.

From the Alaska Highway to the Aleutians: Black Troops in Alaska and the Beginning of the Civil Rights Movement

This paper highlights the World War II years and illustrates ways this global conflict shaped Alaska's black population and ushered in an era of civil rights. Black soldiers helped build the Alaska-Canadian Highway, served in the Aleutian campaign, and were stationed across the territory. They also faced discrimination—but in the face of mistreatment they served valiantly and with distinction. Consequently, the U.S. military would never be the same and neither would Alaska. This paper recasts Alaska as not only a critical staging ground for war but also an early battleground in the movement for civil rights.

Ian C. Hartman is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Copper River Landscapes and Indigenous Encounters: The Army Returns after 133 Years

This presentation is a report on fieldwork along the lower Copper River in April 2018 involving a collaborative effort between Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, BLM-Glennallen, the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, Ahtna Incorporated, Chitina Native Corporation, Gulkana Village Council, and aviation assets from U.S. Army Alaska. The research was accomplished during the exact time of year when the 1885 expedition of Henry T. Allen ascended the lower Copper River on ice, mapping the landscape and recording indigenous encounters and sites along the route from Cordova to McCarthy and from Chitina to Glennallen.

Russ Vander Lugt is an active duty Army officer and doctoral student in the University of Alaska Fairbanks's Arctic and Northern Studies Program. His studies focus on indigenous-military relationships from the 19th century to the present.

Session C: *General Session*, NWC Fireweed

Iliamna Lake Place Name Project from Local Perspectives

This paper is a progress report on the Iliamna Lake Place Name Project in Southwest Alaska. While recording place name narratives involving locals from five Iliamna Lake communities, Elders recognized that some places possess multiple names because of the individuals' observations of the landscape and the cultural practices that occurred there. Before publishing the place names map and data for future generations, the project team organized a workshop for local Elders to review the place names and their locations in May 2018. This place name map will demonstrate the history of Iliamna Lake from local perspectives.

Yoko Kuko is a doctoral student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in the Arctic & Northern Studies Program. Her focus is the study of Central Yup'ik geographic knowledge including place names and oral histories in the Iliamna Lake area.

The Spenard Divorce: Humor and Normalization of Domestic Violence

An unexplored aspect of Anchorage folklore is the *Spenard divorce*, the purported manner for a disgruntled spouse to quickly and violently exit a marriage. The historical usage is light in tone, a jocular way of describing an imagined community of frontier justice and self-efficacy. In truth, the usage of *Spenard divorce* acknowledges the frequency of domestic violence in Alaska but downplays its significance. As such, the term is a local manifestation of a broader trend—humor as a means of normalizing crimes against women. This presentation tracks the origin, evolution, and context of the *Spenard divorce* within Alaska.

David Reamer is a public history graduate student at Southern New Hampshire University. His primary research interests are African-American history, homelessness, community histories, and baseball.

‘Scoundrels’ in Regional History

Do we Northerners have more than our share of reprobates in our history? The question inspired a seminar for members of Alaska’s chapter of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Nobody in 2014 foresaw how entertaining and enlightening the pursuit of this question would prove to be. Over seven semesters, the seminar has discussed some 50 candidates for the designation of “scoundrel” with more suggested for future consideration. OLLI’s scoundrel candidates from several periods of Northern history illustrate how widely they differ from one another and how multi-dimensional their characters can be.

Dave Norton holds degrees in biology, but his career tracks have been more those of a generalist than a specialist. He may be unique in having served as a Research Associate at each of the three senior research institutes at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (IAS, GI, IMS) and at the Museum of the North.

THURSDAY, 1:30-3:00PM

Session A: *Missions and Legacies*, NWC Fireweed

Grafton (Happy) and Clara Burke—Medical Missionaries at Fort Yukon

For three decades in the early twentieth century, Episcopal missionaries Grafton and Clara Burke served the medical and spiritual needs of Athabascans from their base at Fort Yukon. In 1916, Burke and Episcopal Archdeacon Hudson Stuck opened St. Stephen’s hospital to serve Alaska Natives. Each summer Dr. Burke traveled on the mission boat, the *Pelican*, along the Yukon and its tributaries to tend people’s medical needs. The Burkes also raised many orphaned Native children at the mission. This paper will analyze Happy and Clara Burke’s service, considering their motivations, as well as Athabascans’ perspectives on their efforts and impact.

Mary F. Ehrlander directs the Arctic & Northern Studies Program and is Professor of History at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Hild Peters is the executive officer of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The Sitka Mission’s Early Days

Presbyterian missionaries arrived in Sitka in 1878, and their school was initially welcomed by some Tlingit leaders. However, controversy and lawsuits soon roiled this small community, and resonated in Washington, D.C. This was a time of great change in Tlingit life, as leaders protested appropriation of their property and negotiated a place in the rapidly changing economy. I examine the words of missionaries, ethnologists, and officials, as well as the speeches of Tlingit leaders and writing by students to tease out the story of the Sitka mission and the ways it shaped the Alaska of today.

Rebecca Poulson is an artist in Sitka who has been exploring the history of the Sheldon Jackson School and College. She is the director of the Sitka Maritime Heritage Society, is on the board of directors of the Alaska Historical Society, and is a member of the Alaska Historical Commission.

The Latter-day Saints Bush Branch in Alaska

This presentation will provide an overview of the history and development of the Latter-day Saints “Bush Branch.” This unusual church organization takes in over one-half-million square miles and is used to meet the needs of LDS members who are scattered throughout Alaska who are not connected to regular ecclesiastical units and do not have church buildings for meetings. It will describe ways of meeting individual needs via newsletters, phone communications and periodic visits from the 1960s to the present.

Fred E. Woods is a professor at Brigham Young University in the College of Religious Education. This year he completed a book and produced a documentary on Mormons in Alaska, both titled *Melting the Ice: A History of Latter-day Saints in Alaska*.

Session B: Panel: *Around the Campfire: Stories of Nome from Local Historians*, NWC Willow

Join us for an intimate look into Nome’s history and culture through the lens of local historians and knowledge bearers. Listen to stories of sled dogs and gold mining, hear how buildings and businesses have endured, and learn about the preservation and revitalization of cultural traditions. This panel takes the form of a campfire session with seven-minute stories shared from personal experiences followed by interactive audience discussion.

Storytellers:

Charlie Lean, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Lew Tobin, Nome City Council

Richard Beneville, Mayor, City of Nome

Kirsten Bey, President, Nome Kennel Club

Annie Conger, Cultural Studies Teacher, Nome Public Schools

John Handeland, Manager, Nome Joint Utilities System

Bernadette Yaayuk Alvanna-Stimpfle, Director, Kawerak Eskimo Heritage Program

Howard Farley, Co-Founder of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race

THURSDAY, 3:30-5:00PM

Session A: *Personal Experiences in the Cold War Era*, NWC Ptarmigan

Hippies, Whales, and Bolsheviks across the Strait

In the early 1980s, activists from the radical environmental organizations Sea Shepherd and Greenpeace launched their boats from Nome and sailed to the Siberian coast at Lorino where the Soviet Union operated a whaling station. As the activists had expected, the whales were not being used as food for the indigenous Chukchi people—despite Soviet declarations to the International Whaling Commission—but rather were being fed to foxes. The history of this campaign, with new information from the Russian archives, sheds interesting light on the final days of commercial whaling as well as the relationship between Siberia and Alaska.

Ryan T. Jones is the Ann Swindells Professor in Global Environmental History at the University of Oregon. He is also the author of *Empire of Extinction: Russians and the North Pacific's Strange Beasts of the Sea, 1742–1867*.

Thomas Merton's Alaska Journey: A Monk's Ceaseless Exploring

America in 1968 was shattered by political chaos, but it was just the opposite for the young state of Alaska. Prudhoe Bay was announced, and the “backwards” outpost was suddenly celebrating its fortunes. This same year, the spiritual thinker and bestselling writer Thomas Merton visited the land of tundra and ice. After 27 years living as a Trappist monk, he ventured north for spiritual respite. Alaska had always drawn artists, writers, homesteaders, and hermits to its spacious wildlands and sublime mountains. Merton said the place “had more square miles to last any hermit until judgement day.” But as it turned out, Alaska was one of the last places on earth he saw.

Kathleen W. Tarr is a Thomas Merton scholar, a member of the Alaska Humanities Forum board, and the author of *We Are All Poets Here* (2018).

Lend-Lease: Alaska's Air Route to Support Russia in WWII

The Lend-Lease program was a United States effort to defeat the Axis powers by delivering food, fuel, and, most importantly, war materiel to Russia and the rest of the rest of America's allies between 1941 and 1945. This presentation will detail how the program began, which nations were involved, the cost to the United States, and the ways in which Joseph Stalin opened Siberian air routes and offered pilots to ferry planes and their cargos through Alaska to the Eastern Front.

Peter Hagglund, as a boy in Fairbanks, watched Lend-Lease planes coming and going. He began flying for Pan American Airways in 1957 and has been director of the Fairbanks Pioneer Air Museum since 2009.

Session B: Panel: *Alaska Grown: Alaska History through the Eyes of Youth*, NWC Willow

As Alaska's economy slows, many of our young people decide to leave Alaska for what they see as better prospects “Outside.” How can we expect our best and brightest to stay and help build Alaska's future if they do not understand how they contribute to its past? This panel will explore ways Alaska history connects our youth and cultivates the next generation of Alaska leaders. Speakers will look at Alaska's young people as historic actors—keen adventurers and skilled athletes whose unique narratives help us to better understand work, play and subsistence activities in Alaska.

Katherine Ringsmuth teaches at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Erin Kirkland is the author of *Alaska on the Go: Exploring the 49th State with Children* (2014).

Vanessa Tahbone is a coach with the Native Youth Olympics and lives in Nome.

Session C: Film, *A Rose in Candle*, NWC Fireweed

A Rose in Candle is a recently-completed documentary produced by Russ Reno and Beverly Churchill. It tells the story of a Jewish family in Candle, Alaska, in the Nome area during the early 1900s. It is a story of Rose Robinson, a young Jewish-Romanian immigrant who left a career as a world-touring violinist, and married and moved to Candle. The story uses Rose's own words, personal photos, and materials from the Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum.

Beverly Churchill is the granddaughter of Rose Robinson.

POSTERS (every day):

Alaska and Polar Regions Collections & Archives New Online Portal

Thanks to a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Elmer E. Rasmuson Library at University of Alaska Fairbanks is now able to provide detailed online access to unique collections from the Alaska and Polar Regions Collections & Archives (APRCA). This poster presentation will offer information about accessing the portal, items contained on it, plans for the portal, and will introduce the development team and cover technical development aspects. APRCA houses the world's most extensive collection of materials about Alaska and one of the leading collections on Polar Regions.

Angela Schmidt is film archivist with the Alaska Film Archives, Alaska and Polar Regions Collections & Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Arctic Arts Summit, Harstad Norway, June 21-22, 2017

Eight countries—the United States, Canada, Iceland, Greenland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia—inhabit the Arctic Circle and share similar concerns about global warming and retaining distinct Native cultures. As the only freelance journalist from Alaska, I had the privilege to report on this momentous event. One of the results of my experience was this poster, which was juried and displayed at College Art Association Conference, February 2018, in Los Angeles.

Jean Bundy is a writer/painter living in Anchorage, presently with *The Anchorage Press*. She serves on the Board of Directors of the International Art Critics (AICA-International) and shows paintings at Pleiades Gallery, New York City.

Celebrating the Success of Alaska's Digital Newspaper Project

Since 2016, the Alaska State Library has been participating in the National Digital Newspaper Program. The program is a collaboration between the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress designed to digitize and provide free access to historical newspapers from across the United States in *Chronicling America*, the text-

searchable online database. By August 2018, the Alaska State Library will have digitized 100,000 pages of Alaskan historical newspapers from across the state ranging in date from 1898-1922. This poster will describe the hard work and dedication of Alaskans who recognize the power of newspapers as a history research tool.

Anastasia Tarmann is a librarian with the Alaska State Library's Alaska Historical Collections and has been instrumental in selecting and digitizing Alaska's historical newspapers.