



THE ALASKA ASSOCIATION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Old City Hall, 524 West Fourth Avenue, Suite 203, Anchorage, Alaska 99501

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AAHP'S TEN MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PROPERTIES LIST, 1993

by Bonnie S. Houston

Each year during Preservation Week, AAHP publishes a list of what it considers to be Alaska's ten most endangered historic properties. The purpose of this list is to make the public more aware of Alaska's heritage and to encourage a higher level of participation in the preservation of that heritage.

The "ten most endangered" list changes from year to year as properties are saved from imminent danger or newly threatened properties are identified. For example, due to ongoing preservation efforts, the Kennicott Mine complex in McCarthy is no longer considered to be in imminent danger. Although the future of the property is still in question, this summer marks the third year of roof repair work needed to stabilize the structures.

Preservation of three other properties on the 1992 list has not been as successful. The Fairbanks Exploration Company complex in Fairbanks was sold to a private company and most historic buildings have since been moved from the original site. Ownership of the Old Main School in Fairbanks is scheduled to be transferred to the City of Fairbanks in May of 1993. The City plans to gut the building and replace the original windows. Finally, the Episcopal Church in Arctic Village (Arctic Mission Village Church) is not listed this year. The building is still endangered, but the apparent lack of community interest in its preservation is not encouraging.

The following is the 1993 AAHP list of Alaska's ten most endangered historic properties. The properties, listed in alphabetical order, represent historic structures across the State that are threatened by neglect and/or development.

Anchorage City Hall, Anchorage

One of Anchorage's first concrete structures, the Old City Hall was designed by local architect E. Ellsworth Sedille. The building was constructed at a cost of \$75,000, nearly half of which was paid for by Public Works Administration funds. It illustrates a classical architectural style. Examples include the details of the cornices, the simulated rustication of the exterior wall and the circular arched entrance.

Old City Hall was leased to Alaska Pacific Bank Corporation in 1980. At that time, the interior was remodeled as a 1930's era bank and office space. The remodeling effort won a National Trust for Historic Preservation Honor Award.

Currently, Old City Hall is occupied by Municipal offices and by non-profit organizations. However, the building is in need of basic repairs and renovation. It is also threatened by a possible change in ownership.



Ascension of our Lord Chapel, Karluk

Photo by Jet Lowe

Ascension of our Lord Chapel, Karluk

Constructed in 1888, the Ascension of our Lord Chapel in Karluk is the oldest Russian Orthodox church in Alaska which is still in use. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 as part of a Russian Orthodox Church thematic nomination.

The Chapel was constructed with materials supplied by the Alaska Packers Company, with the design and construction generally being attributed to Charles Smith Hursh. It blends the traditional elements of Russian Orthodox design with a Greek Revival architectural style. The main body of the Chapel is a rectangle with a square altar extension and an entry vestibule which rises to a second tier cupola and a distinctive third tier bell tower.

Karluk has not had a resident priest for many years, but services are periodically held here by a visiting priest based in Kodiak. Today, the Chapel is deteriorating badly as a result of age and neglect. The roof leaks and the structure is beginning to twist off its pilings. Some water damage has been done to the interior, although the altar and the icons remain unharmed.

Local residents are interested in repairing and renovating the Chapel. They would like to replace the present steel roof with wooden shingles and return the structure to its original appearance. To date, the village has been unsuccessful in obtaining the \$150,000 estimated needed to undertake this work. A \$50,000 appropriation designed to fund a portion of the restoration project was vetoed by the Governor.

Building 29, Sitka

Sitka's Building 29 appears on AAHP's "ten most endangered" list for the third time. The three-story log building was constructed in the 1850's to house Russian-American

Company employees and is the only remaining Russian-American building in Sitka. Over the years, the historic appearance of the structure has been hidden under layers of siding and other "improvements."

The National Park Service is negotiating to purchase the building. However, it is threatened by structural deterioration.

Carlson Home and Fisherman's Co-op, Dillingham

Constructed in the early 1930's, the Carlson Home and the Fisherman's Co-op in Dillingham illustrate a microcosm of 1930's life in an Alaska fishing village. The wood frame buildings are associated with significant Dillingham personality, Dave Carlson, and the Bristol Bay fisheries. While the house and associated outbuildings retain many original furnishings, the house is in need of repair to prevent its destruction.

The Fisherman's Co-op is actually made up of two buildings that were joined together at some unknown time. The Trappers Inn portion was built in 1928, while the Floyd Smith Store portion was constructed in 1934. Together, they form one of only a few buildings in the core area of Dillingham which still maintains its historic integrity.

The Trappers Inn Roadhouse was owned and operated by Charlie Mulkeit. Originally, the beds were in the front and were moved on Saturday nights to make way for community dances. The Floyd Smith Store operated until 1944 when the Fisherman's Co-op obtained ownership of the two connected buildings and used them as a general merchandise store.

Over the years, the Fisherman's Co-op has housed several businesses, including a grocery store and a marina. Currently, it houses the Chamber of Commerce. Although the building maintains its original windows and some original doors, it is in drastic need of rehabilitation. Previous fires have weakened the building's structural system and both the roof and the foundation need repair.

Eagle Historic District, Eagle

Included on the "ten most endangered" list for the third year, erosion of the banks of the Yukon River still threatens the Eagle Historic District.

Originally founded as a trading post, the town of Eagle grew rapidly around the turn of the century due to the Klondike gold rush and the establishment of Fort Egbert here in 1900. In the same year, Judge Wickersham established the first federal court for the Interior, with the courthouse located at Eagle.

Today, the Eagle Historic District contains twenty-seven historic buildings, Fourteen of these structures were part of the original Fort Egbert.

According to the State Office of History and Archaeology, the U.S. Soil Conservation Service is looking for funds to stabilize the river bank. Hopefully, the Eagle Historic District will not be listed as endangered in 1994.

Holy Ascension Orthodox Church, Unalaska

The Holy Ascension Orthodox Church in Unalaska is a wood frame structure which dates from 1895. It is an excellent example of the cruciform architectural style commonly used in Russian Orthodox church construction and is the oldest standing church in Alaska of this style. The church is associated with Ivan Veniaminov (St. Innocent), the first bishop to Alaska, who was canonized as a saint in 1977.

This National Historical Landmark has been featured on AAHP's "ten most endangered" list for the past two years. Although funds have been acquired to repair the roof, the building remains endangered by age, deterioration and a lack of maintenance.



Jesse Lee Home, Seward

Jesse Lee Home, Seward

The construction of Seward's Jesse Lee Home in 1925 was sponsored by the Women's Home Missionary Society to replace the original Jesse Lee Home in Unalaska and a children's home in Nome. Seward was selected as a more central location to house orphans from all over Alaska.

Benny Benson, a 13-year old ward of the Jesse Lee Home, won an Alaska flag design competition which was sponsored by the American Legion during the 1926/27 school year. The winning design was officially adopted as the Alaska flag in 1927 by the Territorial Legislature.

The Jesse Lee Home sustained significant damage as a result of the 1964 earthquake. One building, Goode Hall, had to be demolished and only the basement of that structure now remains. Largely because of earthquake damage, the orphanage was relocated to Anchorage. In 1965, the City of Seward acquired the damaged buildings from the Methodist Church. However, after

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The Alaska Association for Historic Preservation (AAHP) was founded in 1981 as a private, statewide, non-profit corporation dedicated to the preservation of Alaska's prehistoric and historic resources through education, promotion and advocacy. Preservation of the built environment provides a vital link and visible reminder of the past, emphasizing the continuity and diversity of Alaska.

years of failed development and lawsuits, the property reverted to private ownership.

The owner has received a grant to have a National Register Nomination written and is interested in restoring the building. However, the Jesse Lee Home is endangered in its present condition. All of the windows have been removed, exposing the building to the elements.

Lacey Street Theater, Fairbanks

A National Register property featured on AAHP's "ten most endangered" list for the first time in 1992, this "Art Deco" theater was designed by well-known theater architect B. Marcus Priteca for Austin E. "Cap" Lathrop. Constructed in 1939, it is one of three buildings of this style that remain in Fairbanks. Although the original Filipino mahogany interior was destroyed in 1966, the historic art deco exterior remains intact.

The building has stood empty since 1979. It suffers from neglect and needs rehabilitation. Since last listed, the building has been transferred to private ownership. The owners have done some much needed maintenance on the building, but its future remains in question.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Nome

Included on the "ten most endangered" list for the past three years, St. Joseph's Catholic Church was constructed in 1901. The building is important for its association with significant local figure Bellarmine Lafortune and for its architecture. The Gothic style church, copied after a design by Seattle architect J. B. Randell, is the only church in Nome of this style and era which has survived.

St. Joseph's remained in use as a church until a new building was constructed in 1945. It was then sold to the U.S. Smelting, Refining and Mining Company and moved to its current location in 1946. The steeple was removed and the building was used a warehouse.

The structure was recently sold to the City of Nome, but its future is in question. It rests on a temporary foundation and has developed structural problems. This, coupled with basic neglect, places the building in great jeopardy.

Chief Kashakes House, Saxman

First featured on AAHP'S "ten most endangered" list in 1992, Chief Kashakes House in Saxman was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in January 1993.

This clan house was constructed in 1895 and illustrates a Tlingit adaptation of balloon framing. The property also includes two totem poles and a cannon.

Part of the building's interior and roof were damaged by a small fire. The building has remained empty for a number of years and is in urgent need of restoration. Although the owners are interested in preservation of the building, they lack the necessary funds.

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Please check your mailing label. If there is not a "93" after your name, you have not yet paid your 1993 dues. Prompt payment would be appreciated as AAHP relies heavily on membership dues to carry out its functions. Thank you.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership runs from January 1 through December 31. Dues are payable by December 31 of preceeding year.

Benefits include subscription to the quarterly AAHP newsletter * workshops & seminars * annual meeting * historic preservation advocacy.

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Old City Hall, 524 West fourth Ave., Suite 203
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Attention: Treasurer

PRESERVATION WEEK, 1993

May 9-15 is Preservation Week. The 1993 Preservation Week theme is "Preservation and Livable Communities: Make the Connection." This is the opportunity for communities and historic preservation groups to highlight the benefits of preservation activities. Examples of Preservation Week activities include the following:

Anchorage Historic Properties, Inc. will be holding its annual meeting on Monday, May 10 at the Museum of History and Fine Art. The 1922 Austin E. "Cap" Lathrop film melodrama, "The Chechahcos" will be shown. Anchorage Historic Properties, Inc. also plans tours of the Oscar Anderson house during the weekends of May 15/16 and 22/23. During the intervening week, the Oscar Anderson house will be open for school tours. An early Anchorage pioneer tent and a maypole will be displayed on the Oscar Anderson house grounds.

In the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, third and fourth grade students from several Valley schools are participating in a Preservation Week contest involving the construction of models of historic buildings and the compilation of oral histories and Indian legends. Entries will be displayed in the Cottonwood Creek Mall. Other displays at the Mall will be contributed by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the Alaska Historical and Transportation Museum, the Alpine Historical Society and Colony Village. In addition, the second annual Bowl-a-Thon for the rehabilitation of Palmer's Mat-Maid complex will be held during Preservation Week at the Valley Lanes. Prizes have been donated by the Alaska Railroad and Glacier Tours and gift certificates will also be awarded.

PRESERVATION CHAMPIONS, 1993

Membership dues play a vital role in enabling AAHP to carry out its functions and activities. We would especially like to thank the following individuals and organizations who joined AAHP or renewed their membership in 1993 above the individual and family levels.

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