

# THE ALASKA ASSOCIATION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

645 West Third Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2124

SEPTEMBER 1995

VOL. 14, ISSUE 3

## THE ASSOCIATION MOVES ITS OFFICE

by Bill Coghill

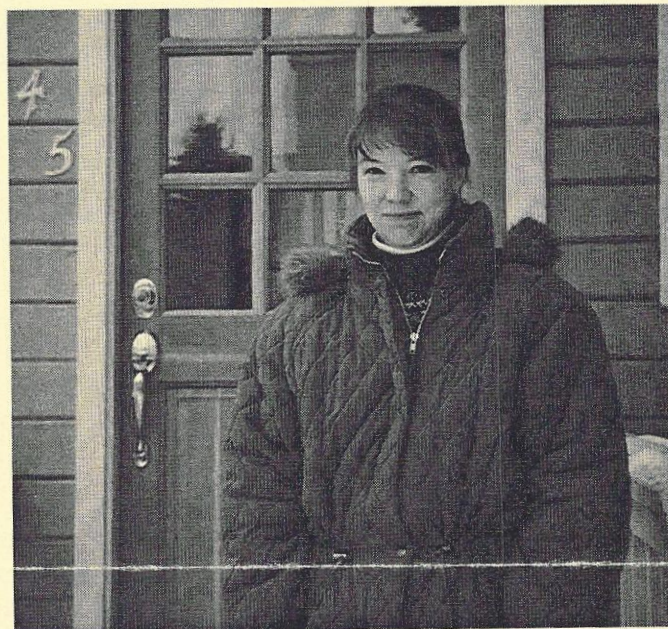
A major step for historic preservation--a minor inconvenience for AAHP.

Since we organized in 1981, AAHP's office has been in Room 203 of Old City Hall. Last month, with the help of Board members Russ Sackett, Frank Norris, and Bill Coghill, and assisted by Ann Kain (and her pickup truck), we relocated the files, supplies, and furniture that constituted our former office to 645 West Third Ave., next to the Elks Building. At our new location, we will be occupying a portion of the Anchorage Historic Properties, Inc. office.

AAHP thus moves from the 59-year-old city hall to one of the city's oldest buildings. Our new office, which is still known as Cottage No. 25, was constructed by the Alaska Engineering Commission (AEC) in 1917. It was one of 19 cottages built to serve railroad employees and their families. The first occupant was the local townsite manager, J. G. Watts, who lived in there until 1921. Later owners included the U.S. Signal Corps, the Army Air Corps, the Coast Guard, the General Services Administration, and the Municipality of Anchorage. AHPI has occupied the building since 1992.

Our new address is now the same as that of AHPI. Julie Johnson, AHPI's executive director, kindly offered the arrangement to us. We moved because Old City Hall, the home of 17 Anchorage mayors, has deteriorated in recent years and was slated for rehabilitation. We and the other users of the building were required to leave the building by September 15. Asbestos removal and roof repair are already under way. The Anchorage Assembly recently voted to accept a proposal put forth by AHPI, the municipality, and the Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB). As a result of that acceptance, the ACVB will be Old City Hall's sole occupant when the renovation project is completed in March 1996.

Jerry Strang reports that he has just concluded another successful summer out at Gakona Lodge. Strang, who also serves on AAHP's board of directors, notes that he has sold hundreds of pull-tabs this summer on our behalf. He and his wife Barbara have been selling pull-tabs for AAHP for more than five years, and during that time have been most generous providing us with pull-tab revenues. For all your help over the years, we salute you!



*AAHP board member Julie Johnson, who and also serves as the executive director of Anchorage Historic Properties, Inc., stands in front of our combined offices at 645 West Third Avenue.*

## STAFF CHANGES AT NTHP

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has undergone several staff changes in recent months. Lizbeth Henning, who for the past several years has been the able and energetic Assistant Director of the NTHP's Western Regional Office, recently left her San Francisco-based position and is now the Executive Director of the Utah Heritage Foundation in Salt Lake City. Her replacement at the NTHP is Anthony Veerkamp, who has been working at the Western Regional Office for the past several years. Veerkamp travelled to several Alaskan cities during an August tour. To welcome him to Anchorage, State Historic Preservation Officer Judy Bittner held a reception for him, where he met several local preservation leaders.

NTHP's regional office also has a new director. Elizabeth Gottstein, formerly affiliated with the New York City parks department, assumed her position after Kathy Burns' departure. Both Gottstein and Veerkamp can be reached at One Sutter Street #707, San Francisco, CA 94104.

## WELCOME NATIONAL TRUST MEMBERS!

by Bill Coghill

We extend a welcome to AAHP to all of those National Trust for Historic Preservation members in Alaska that have recently become members of our organization.

At the Heritage Development Conference in Ketchikan last May, I met with Richard Moe, the National Trust's president. The result of this meeting was a letter with Mr. Moe's signature encouraging members of the Trust to also join AAHP. On September 1, a copy of Moe's letter, another with my signature, an AAHP brochure and a membership application was mailed to the 310 Trust members in Alaska that were not members of AAHP. (Another 50 Trust members did not receive the packet because they are already part of our organization.)

The response has been encouraging. Twenty recipients have already joined, many of them at the Family or Contributor level. They are:

*Karen Bretz, Naknek*  
*Emmette M. Corbin, Wasilla*  
*Robert Crowther, Anchorage*  
*Michael W. Dimmick, Kenai*  
*Mr. and Mrs. Rogan Faith, Anchorage*  
*Robert B. Flint, Anchorage*  
*Pat and Wendy Green, Cordova*  
*Mary Grisco, Anchorage*  
*Alma Harris, Juneau*  
*Terry Hyer, Anchorage*  
*Bonnie Kennedy, Soldotna*  
*Carol K. Korman, Anchorage*  
*Carolyn Croft Ludwig, Anchorage*  
*Valda J. McMahan, Fairbanks*  
*Anne Morrow, Anchorage*  
*Douglas R. Myers, Anchorage*  
*Fritz G. Nagel, Anchorage*  
*William B. Rozell, Juneau*  
*Helen R. Schmidt, Anchorage*  
*Thomas E. Thomasson, Anchorage*

All of those who are Trust members in Alaska will be added to the newsletter's mailing list, and it is hoped more will join. This will provide those that have demonstrated a commitment to our nation's heritage an opportunity to extend that commitment more specifically to Alaska's historic resources. Our total membership, as of September 14, is 230. The mailing label shows whether you are current in your dues.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Gold Rush Centennial Task Force, which has several active AAHP members, has been instrumental in advocating a statewide highway markers program. The state is now active designing an appropriate marker and surveying prospective locations. Stay tuned!

## Spotlight on Two Endangered Structures...

### RED MEN LODGE TO BE RESTORED

Eagle Historical Society President Elva Scott reports that the Society plans to restore the 1904 Improved Order of Red Men lodge building. Once completed, it intends to use the building as a community hall as well as housing the Society's office and work room. It has already cleaned it up and electrified it for immediate use, but the larger task is the installation of a new foundation.

Eagle had an active "tribe" of Red Men between 1904 and 1941. The group built a 30' x 60' log "wigwam" the year it was organized; the wigwam was deeded to the Society in 1993. Despite its advanced age and many years of neglect, the building is in remarkably good condition except for the foundation and floor structure, both of which demand immediate attention. The Society has contracted with a historical architect who has estimated that \$20,000 is needed to complete the restoration. It has already gathered almost half of the necessary funds, and is presently seeking sources of additional funding.

The Improved Order of Red Men lodge is a contributing element of the Eagle Historic District, which became a National Historic Landmark on October 27, 1970.

### PRESERVING "ALASKA NELLIE'S" LEGACY

In June 1915, a willowy young woman named Nellie Neal arrived in Seward. Born in Missouri, she had spent more than a decade of her adult life drifting about the West--from Wyoming to Colorado and on to Oregon. Still restless, she heard about the government railroad that was being constructed and decided to head north. She excelled in a variety of endeavors--big game hunting, trapping, dog mushing, guiding, and gold mining--for the next few years and became known to thousands of the laborers along the tracks. Eventually she married Billie Lawing and acquired a homestead along Kenai Lake. Soon afterward she built a roadhouse and museum at the Lawing railroad stop, and she became an Alaska legend to the thousands who visited her, admired her wildlife trophies, and listened to her stories.

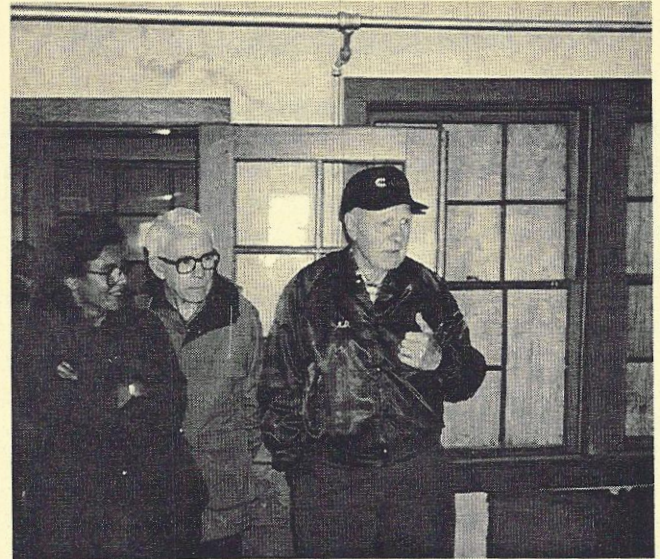
Lawing died in 1956, and before long her homestead fell into neglect. Her wildlife museum was eventually demolished, but her home still stands, though in deteriorated condition. In 1986 two sisters, Jackie Sewell and Jean Dann, purchased the property, and they later opened up a bed and breakfast on the property. The two established the Alaska Nellie's Historical Society; since then, they have been offering society memberships, selling reprints of Nellie Neal Lawing's autobiography, *Alaska Nellie*, and pursuing other fund raising activities in order to refurbish the Lawing home. The old residence, which is adjacent to the bed and breakfast, is located 23 miles north of Seward, just west of Seward Highway and just east of the Alaska Railroad tracks.

## GOOD TIMES AT THE AAHP SUMMER PICNIC

Were YOU one of the lucky ones to attend our June 24 picnic? If not, you missed a wonderful event. Thanks to the hospitality of President Pat Murphy, who is a Palmer-based Alaska State Parks ranger, the event was held at Independence Mine State Historical Park, in the Willow Creek Mining District north of Palmer. The weather--cold, cloudy, breezy, and a day after a two-inch snowfall--was definitely NOT conducive to volleyball and relaxing in the chaise longue. Nevertheless, some 30 AAHP members and friends spent a rewarding afternoon enjoying the day and exploring the remarkable array of historic structures surrounding them.



*Tour leader Pat Murphy (center) describes the Independence Mine Complex to the assembled tour members.*



*While touring one of the mine buildings, a former employee (right) describes life as a laborer during the 1940s.*

Activities began with a picnic lunch, served *al fresco* on the porch outside one of the mine buildings. The group then headed out on a special tour of the bunkhouses, kitchen facilities, shops, and other mine buildings. Murphy conducted the tour, and to provide an insider's viewpoint, several former mine employees accompanied the group and offered their observations.

## THE LATEST NEWS ON AAHP'S TEN ENDANGERED BUILDINGS LIST

AAHP's fifth annual Ten Most Endangered Property List was unveiled on May 4 (see May newsletter). The ten properties included Ascension of Our Lord Chapel, Karluk; Bruhn-Ray Mine Bunkhouse, Hope; Chief Kashakes House, Saxman; Chitina Cash Store, Chitina; Ketchikan Ranger House, Ketchikan; Masonic Temple, Fairbanks; Mt. McKinley Masonic Lodge #183, Cordova; St. George Sealing Plant, St. George; Smith Stamp Mill, Valdez; and Victor Holm Cabin, Kasilof. Seven of the ten properties have not appeared on previous years' lists.

Since the announcement of the annual list, several measures have been taken to publicize and protect the properties on the list. For example,

1) The Chief Kashakes House received AAHP's first-ever grant award last spring for stabilization assistance. Since that time, the owners of the house have formed a nonprofit organization to handle the money; they have placed the grant's matching money in a special bank account. They are waiting for a second bid before awarding a contract to have the foundation work completed. It is anticipated that the foundation work will be completed this year.

2) The Bruhn-Ray Mine Bunkhouse, which is located near the junction of Seward Highway and the Hope Turnoff, is presently being architecturally documented prior to its relocation to Hope. As part of a memorandum of agreement between the Alaska Department of Transportation, the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation and the State Historic Preservation Office, the standing buildings at the complex will be given to the Hope-Sunrise Historical Society and relocated at DOT cost to Hope for use as an interpretive center. A history of the mine, and the local activities that have brought about the upcoming move, will be the subject of a future newsletter article.

3) The SHPO is in the process of negotiating an MOA with the General Services Administration regarding the Ketchikan Ranger House. The Federal Government is planning to sell the house at a public auction; because of its historical value, however, the MOA calls for an architectural recording prior to the auction.

4) Masonic Temple (Fairbanks), Smith Stamp Mill, and Victor Holm Cabin have been the subject of articles in local newspapers.

## STAMP MILL PUT ON ENDANGERED LIST

by Tony Bickert, *Valdez Vanguard* (June 7, 1995)

The Smith stamp mill, a rapidly deteriorating piece of Valdez history, has been listed among the "Ten Most Endangered Buildings in Alaska." The annual list, released May 4 by the Alaska Association for Historic Places [sic], is meant to increase the level of awareness and preservation efforts for historic structures.

Valdez Museum Director Joe Leahy said the mill is in desperate need of preservation.

In October 1993, the state awarded Leahy funds to report on the mill's condition and make restoration recommendations. Valdez historian Donna Lane did so. Then, two weeks after she submitted it, the Department of Natural Resources, which owns the site, wrote Leahy a letter stating it would not permit any preservation efforts until more studies were conducted to determine the "appropriate" method of stabilization. No further action has been taken.

Leahy said it is now too late to preserve the mill at its original remote site and he wants to at least remove the stamps and jaw crusher to the Valdez Museum to prevent further deterioration. However, the state prohibits unauthorized removal of historic objects from their original location. Leahy said the fact that the mill is now on the endangered list might convince the state to re-examine its "don't move it" philosophy.

### JOIN US AND PRESERVE ALASKA'S HISTORY!

Membership runs from January 1 thru December 31. Benefits include: \* the quarterly AAHP newsletter, \* workshops and seminars, \* annual meeting, \* historic preservation advocacy.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student . . . . \$10    | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor . . \$ 50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual . . . . \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend . . . . \$100  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family . . . . . \$25   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor . . . . \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit . . . \$25   | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor . . \$500  |

Donations to AAHP are tax deductible, as allowable under IRS regulations.

I would be glad to participate in AAHP activities in the following areas:

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Raising | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education    | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislation       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership   | <input type="checkbox"/> Projects & Issues |

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: AAHP, 645 W. 3rd Ave., Anchorage, Alaska 99501, attn: Treasurer

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