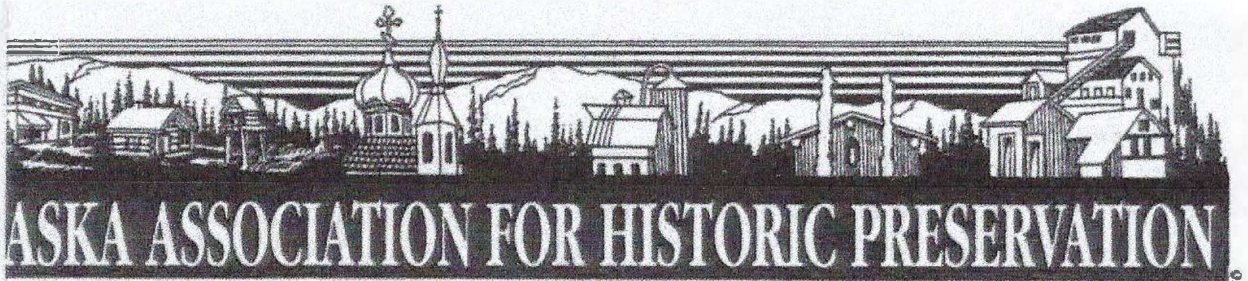


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MAY 1996

VOL. 15, ISSUE 2

Annual Preservation Grant Awarded

AAHP is pleased to announce the award of its second annual AAHP Ten Endangered Properties Preservation Grant. The recipient is the Hope and Sunrise Historical Society, which will use its award funds to construct a new foundation for the Bruhn-Ray Mine Bunkhouse. The amount awarded, half of a 50/50 matching grant, is \$4,000. This is \$1,000 more than our 1995 grant amount, thanks to the donations made by our members to our grant fund. The generosity of AAHP members is appreciated!

The Bruhn-Ray Mine was listed on AAHP's Ten Most Endangered list in 1995. The bunkhouse is part of a larger mining complex constructed in the 1920s as the headquarters for N.O. Anderson's placer mining operations located southeast of Hope and Sunrise. This summer, the bunkhouse—currently located at the junction of Seward Highway and the Hope turnoff—is scheduled to be moved to Hope by the Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT) to make way for a new bridge over Canyon Creek. DOT is providing the money to move the building, but no funds were established to cover the cost of preparing a new foundation or for restoring the building in its new location. This grant and its match will provide the funds for the new foundation this summer. Once placed at its new location, the Bruhn-Ray Mine Bunkhouse will become part of the historical society's museum complex.

AAHP Picnic To Be Held on June 29!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR. On Saturday, June 29, AAHP will hold its annual picnic at the Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry, near Wasilla. The picnic will begin at noon and will last for three or four hours.

The museum, which was moved several years ago from its previous location in Palmer, is the home of many valuable and picturesque reminders of Alaska's transportation past. It contains diesel and steam locomotives, passenger and freight cars, and other pieces of equipment related to railroad operations, aviation, and highway transportation. There is a covered area on the grounds where lunch will be served. Admission to the grounds is free, but there is a donation box. A \$3 contribution is suggested.

The Museum is located approximately three miles north of Wasilla, near the Parks Highway. Those of you travelling to the picnic from the Anchorage area or other southern points should drive approximately three miles north from central Wasilla (from the railroad depot) until you reach a newly-constructed railroad bypass. At the far (northern) end of the bypass, turn left onto Neuser Drive and follow Neuser until you reach the museum. A sign at the junction of Parks Highway and Neuser Drive should point your way to the museum.

How Did YOU Celebrate Preservation Week?

Many groups marked preservation week, which was held May 12 to 18. Governor Knowles signed a proclamation; several schools held preservation events; the Kenai-Soldotna area

hosted speakers and walking tours; and a diorama of the Kennecott Mine complex was unveiled in the National Bank of Alaska's Heritage Library in its Anchorage headquarters.

AAHP Unveils Ten Endangered Properties List

Each year, during Preservation Week, AAHP publishes a list of what we consider to be the ten most endangered properties in Alaska. The list's purpose is to bring more public awareness to Alaska's heritage and to encourage a higher level of participation in the preservation of our historic properties.

The ten properties identified are chosen by AAHP's Board of Directors from a list of properties nominated by members of the Association. This year, more than 30 properties (a record!) were nominated. Two of these properties--

the Masonic Temple in Fairbanks and the Victor Holm Cabin near Soldotna--appear for the second consecutive year. The other eight are new to the endangered listing.

The ten properties include:

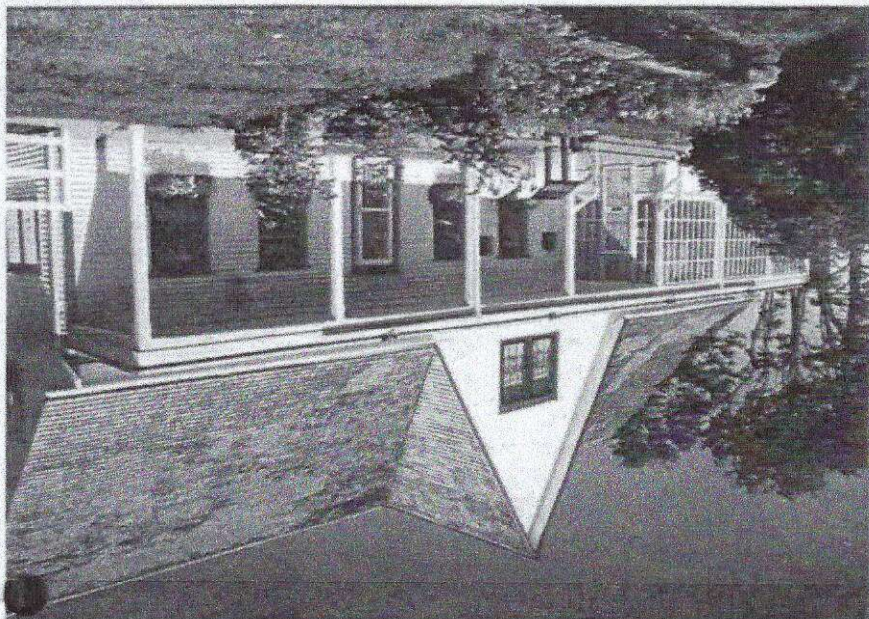
* Alaska Nellie's Cabin, Lawing: "Alaska Nellie" (Nellie Neal Lawing) was a well-known pioneer woman who, from 1916 to 1923, set up construction camps and housed the crews who built the Alaska Railroad. After the railroad was completed, Nellie retired to Roosevelt, a flag stop located at Mile 23.3 of the railroad, near Seward. There she opened a roadhouse and museum. She also served as postmaster and was able to change the locality's name to Lawing in memory of her husband. Nellie's cabin is suffering from dry rot in the foundation logs, walls, and roof. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

* Masonic Temple, Fairbanks: The Masonic Temple was erected in 1906 in the Eclectic Renaissance style. It has served as a meeting hall for the Tanana "Blue Lodge" #162 since its acquisition in 1908. It badly needs to be restored; otherwise, the organization may choose to demolish it. It is listed on the National Register.

* Erskine House/Russian American Magazin, Kodiak: This magazin, or warehouse, dates from 1805-1808 and is the oldest of only four Russian buildings standing in the U.S. It is associated with the first administrative center of the Russian Empire in North America, the Russian American Company, and the Alaska Commercial Company. It is listed as a National Historic Landmark and now serves as a museum.

* Independence Mine Camp, Hatcher Pass: These buildings were constructed by Alaska Pacific Consolidated, Inc. (APC), on what was then an old mine camp location, from the mid-1930s to the early 1940s. During the mine's heyday, more than 200 people worked here year round, and the mill ran around the clock. The mine remained open during World War II but did not stay open long during the postwar period. In 1950, APC sold off all the valuable machinery and largely abandoned the site. The complex was listed on the National Register in 1971, and in 1980 it became a State Historical Park.

The Erskine House, Alaska's (and America's) oldest building dating from the Russian period, is located at 101 Marine Way, Kodiak.



The 1996 Ten Endangered Properties List, continued

* Improved Order of Redmen Lodge, Eagle City: The building, located near Fort Egbert, was constructed by lodge members in 1904. It was used for lodge meetings and community social functions. The organization disbanded in 1945, and Wyman Frisch purchased the building and property. For the next thirty years, a few community functions were held there. Afterwards, it was held for storage until the Eagle Historical Society acquired it. The building, which is a contributing element to the Eagle Historic District National Historic Landmark, desperately needs a new foundation and floor system.

* St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Seward: The undercroft (subterranean chamber) of the church was built in 1904; the remainder of the church was completed by 1917. It has been active ever since. The church is endangered by an inadequate heating plant and the need for sprinklers. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

* Seward Railroad Depot: Built in 1917, the depot is a virtually unaltered prototype of the hip-roofed, Craftsman style railroad depot used along the Alaska Railroad. Listed on the National Register, it is one of only three depots that remain in their original siting. Development of the Sealfie Center on adjacent land and associated parking facilities threatens the building's setting. The City is trying to identify an appropriate use for the depot.

* Sheldon Jackson College, Sitka: The college was founded by Presbyterian missionary as a boarding school for Native Alaskan students. The quadrangle is one of the few designed landscapes in Alaska; the quad, and the buildings contained within it, were designed by the famous New York architectural firm of Ledyard and Peabody in 1910. Conceptually, it is modelled after a similar design at the University of Virginia; in fact, original plans



Improved Order of Redmen Lodge, in Eagle City

called for the construction of a U-V-style colonnade connecting the buildings. The college, which is eligible for listing on the National Register, is threatened by lack of maintenance.

Army Fire Hall, Skagway: The station was built by the U.S. Army in 1943, when Skagway was a center of construction activity for the Alcan Highway, the telecommunications system which paralleled the highway, and the Canal Project. The City of Skagway purchased the fire hall from the War Assets Administration in 1946 and used it until 1970, when a new and larger station was constructed. The building and land were subsequently sold to private interests.

Victor Holm Cabin, near Soldotna: Holm, the cabin's builder and longtime occupant, is reported to have arrived at the site about 1890. He homesteaded and lived there until his death in the late 1940s. His cabin, the oldest remaining structure on the west side of the Kaslof River, demonstrates the method of log construction in this area during the period prior to the Alaska gold rushes. The building, which is listed on the National Register, is deteriorating and requires restoration.

Palmer's Matanuska Maid Complex: Can It Be Saved?

The familiar Mat-Maid milk products have a humble past in two now-abandoned warehouse buildings in the heart of Palmer. As part of a New Deal resettlement program during the F.D. Roosevelt administration, the Matanuska Valley Farmers' Cooperating Association (MVFCA) was founded in 1936 to aid Palmer colonists in marketing their farm produce. The Co-op was housed in the two warehouses, built later that year, near the Palmer railroad depot.

The 1940s witnessed an increase in

specialization among Matanuska Valley dairy farmers. During the late 1940s and early

1950s, therefore, one of the Co-op buildings was retrofitted to house the Mat-Maid Dairy

industry and creamery. By the mid-1950s, Mat-

Maid had become famous for its ice cream as well as its milk, so to cater to the increased

demand, the west wing of the dairy building opened to the public as a retail outlet. Local

produce and farm supply equipment continued to be housed and sold in the second warehouse

at the rear. In later years, the buildings sustained many additions. In the 1960s and

1970s, for example, several small offices were added to the front facade of the dairy and

creamery.

In the mid-1980s, the co-op doors closed for

the last time. Due to previous foreclosures, the complex was taken over by the state's Division

of Agriculture. Following abandonment, many became alarmed that the buildings might be

demolished. So the Palmer Historical Society (PHS), in cooperation with the town's

Chamber of Commerce, brought attention to the buildings' plight by painting the nearby

water tower.

Following that activity, Mat-Su Borough

assisted by placing the buildings on the National Register of Historic Places. An

architectural report and drawings have been prepared, a cost estimate made to bring the

buildings to code, and the buildings have been sealed from vandals. The Palmer Economic

Development Authority (PEDA) has also been active.

Before local groups began their 1995 renovations (top), the dairy and creamery had several non-contributing additions that had been built during the 1960s and 1970s. After the summer's work, however (above), those additions had been removed and the building had been sealed from entry.

As a result of the combined efforts of these

community organizations, initial steps were made in 1995 to rehabilitate the complex.

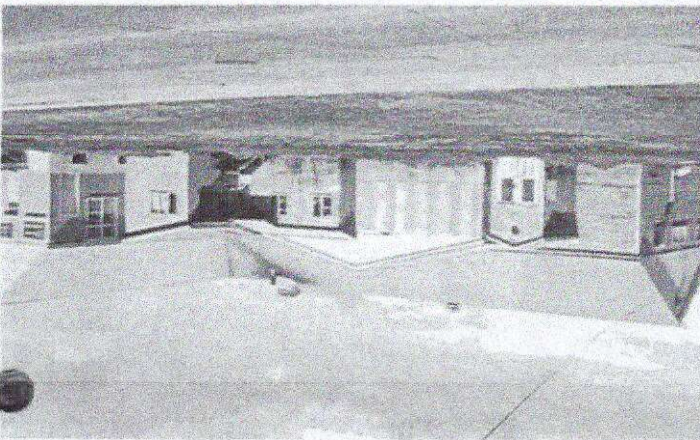
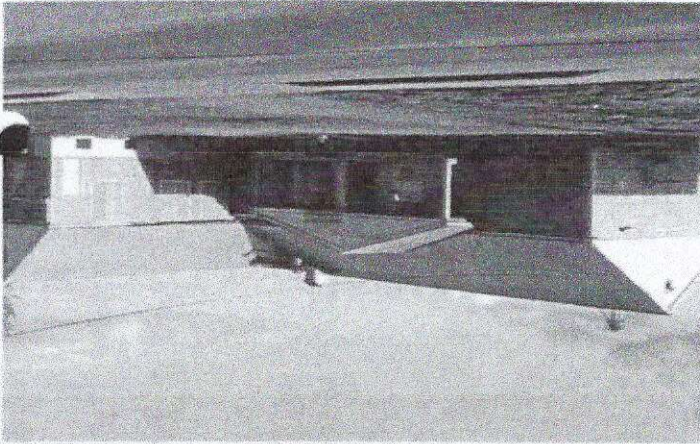
Recent additions have been demolished, collapsed portions have been carried away, and

hazardous wastes have been identified and removed. These efforts were supported by

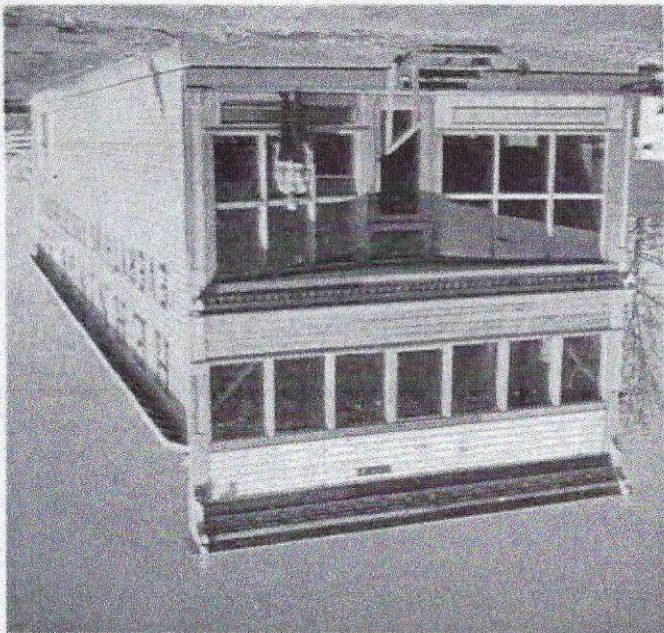
grants or donations from the state, by the Mat-Su Borough, and by Alaska Pollution Control,

Inc.

(continued on bottom of next page)



Tealand's, in Wasilla, is Being Re-Stored



The renovated Tealand's Store, as it stands today. The sign on the right-hand wall, which dates back to the first store owner, reads "Herning's Place - Everything for Everybody".

After years of work, the Wasilla-Knik-Willow Creek Historical Society has nearly completed the rehabilitation of the Herning/Tealand Store, located at the corner of Knik Road and Main St. in Wasilla.

In 1917, the Carle Trail was the main supply route to the Willow Creek Mining District. To serve the miners using the trail, O.G. Herning built a store near the newly-constructed Alaska Railroad tracks. Herning had previously operated a trading company in Knik.

In 1947, Herning sold the store to Walter and Vivian Tealand, who ran a general store there until 1973. Today, the store is best remembered as "Tealand's" due to fond memories of their operation. Jules Mead, the store's last commercial operator, donated it to the historical society in 1985. At that time, the store was crowded against the new Parks Highway, and in order to preserve it, the society had to move the building to an adjacent lot.

Many groups, including Mat-Su Borough, the City of Wasilla, civic groups and local individuals, have since worked toward the store's preservation and rehabilitation. In 1995, the substantial restoration and interior reinforcement progress was made. As noted in the photo, the entrance has been recreated to

Many local organizations are hopeful that both buildings will be renovated in the near future. The Division of Agriculture, however, will not relinquish control of the buildings until they have been paid \$400,000 owed to the agency in back taxes, and in improvement liens owed to the City of Palmer.

Anxious to have the property developed, both the Palmer Historical Society and the Palmer Economic Development Authority have

Saving the Mat-Maid Complex (continued from previous page)

its 1917 appearance; soon-to-come improvements include a new roof, walkway, awning, electrical work, insulation, and fireproofing. The society plans to complete its rehabilitation in 1997. Plans call for the building to be used as an art gallery, coffee shop, historical society offices and a gift shop.

promised to develop the property if they acquire it, and PEDDA has located a developer who is willing to pay the improvement liens. The Division of Agriculture, however, remains the sticking point. In early May, the agency announced its intention, despite local protests, to put the complex on the market. If, after 30 days, a buyer cannot be found, the agency has promised that it will renegotiate a deal with the City of Palmer that will allow local groups to preserve the building.

Renovation Work at the Old Wasilla Depot

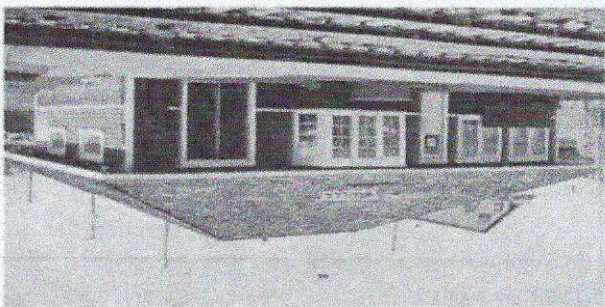
Located at the junction of the Parks Highway and Knik Road (Main Street), the 1917-vintage Alaska Railroad Depot is under long-term public lease to the City of Wasilla. The building is undergoing a staged restoration that is being administered by the City of Wasilla's Department of Museum and Recreation Services. Although it is remarkably good condition and configuration for its age, the building does have some serious problems.

A major problem is the foundation. The depot was originally built on piling that held it several feet above the ground. Over the years,

however, the building went through several foundation changes and it suffered from fill that was pushed up around the skirt of the exterior to an 18-inch depth. Over time, this situation created a rot problem. Not as visible from inside the crawl space and partial basement, an excavation around the interior has revealed substantive dry rot in the skirt and beam ends. The excavation has also shown that the projecting, cantilevered kitchen area has been seriously undercut with dry rot.

These and other problems, however, are being solved as part of the restoration effort. Currently, the electrical system has been redone to code (there was still some knob and tube wiring in the building), missing storm windows have been rebuilt, basic weatherization has been completed, and restoration of the interior is well underway. Plumbing and heating systems will be replaced later this summer. When complete, the bathroom will be handicapped-accessible. However, replacement of the former bathroom floor, two interior wall base restorations, some adjacent flooring, and plumbing, in addition to the heating system work, cannot be completed until the badly needed foundation, bond beam, and floor joist repairs are completed.

Plans call for the building to be slightly raised so that comprehensive foundation repairs can be made and at the same time to get the building back towards its original height relationship regarding the ground surface.



The photo above shows the Wasilla railroad depot; below is a detail showing the extent of dry rot on the exterior walls.



Current City of Wasilla plans are to make the restored depot available for small community group meetings throughout the year. A permanent historical exhibit will also be installed. The city plans to work with the Wasilla-Knik-Willow Creek Historical Society and other groups in order to keep the former waiting room and exhibit area open during the summer season.

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Alaska Preservation's Early Days: A Conversation with Janet McCabe

In March 1996, Janet McCabe resigned from her position on the AAHP Board of Directors. Her resignation spelled the end of an era for our organization, because she had been on the Board ever since it was founded in early 1981, and no other board members have served nearly as long as she. (Janet hastens to add that she will remain a voice for Alaska preservation; she now serves on the Board of Advisors.) At the last meeting before she stepped down, President Pat Murphy presented her with a laser-carved plaque (see photo at right), and the editor took the opportunity to converse with her about AAHP's early days. Below, in paraphrased form, are the results of that conversation.

AAHP: Why was our organization created?

JM: Shortly after the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, in December 1980, Anchorage preservation advocates began to recognize that an new organization was needed. At the time, historical groups in the area included the Cook Inlet Historical Society, the Alaska Historical Society, the Anchorage Historic Landmarks Commission, and Historic Anchorage, Inc. But none of these groups focused on structural preservation needs statewide. Advocates wanted a new organization in order to educate the public in preservation matters; we also recognized the need for a group that would support and complement the activities of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

We attempted to model our organization along the lines of the California State Parks nonprofit group, and to that end, we received valuable advice from William Penn Mott, who headed the California nonprofit at that time.

AAHP: Who were AAHP's founders?

JM: One of the strongest early advocates was Wilda Marston. She, Kit Crittenden, Peg Tlesion, and I worked with others to arrange a meeting in the museum of people interested in statewide nonprofit. Bill Mott was the keynote speaker. Early meetings of the new organization were typically held in members' homes, and I recall many early meetings in



Wilda's dining room. Local attorneys Thomas Beck and Elise Rose were key early Board members; other organizers included Judy Bitner, Bill Liston, Cynthia Toohey, Joaquin Estus, and myself. Thomas Beck and I were the first two executive directors, Charlie Hawkes served as an early president, and Bill Liston edited the newsletter in the early days. Other important members in the early to mid-1980s included historian Rolfe Buzell, architect Steve Peterson, and attorney Robert Goldberg.

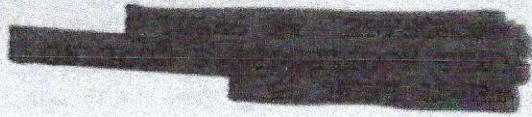
AAHP: What were some of the early issues and activities?

JM: Some of our first activities spotlighted (continued on next page)

well-known Anchorage historic structures such as the 4th Avenue Theatre and the Alaska Railroad depot. We held annual fundraising events, and both locations were used at least once; one year, I recall, we had a reception at the 4th Avenue Theatre and showed classic movies such as "Singing in the Rain" and "McCabe and Mrs. Miller."

Also, in conjunction with the SHPO, we held annual preservation workshops. Early workshops were held in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Palmer, and Soldotna. We sponsored a conference, "Economic Advantages of Historic Preservation." With Historic Anchorage, Inc., we fought for a bill in the state legislature that enabled lasting historic and scenic preservation easements, and every year, it seems, we lobbied for a strong SHPO budget. We had fun, too: Cynthia Toohy had often invited historical groups to have a picnic at the Crow Creek Mine, in Girdwood, and for several years, AAHP had its annual picnic there.

**THE ALASKA ASSOCIATION
FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
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AAHP: How many members did the early organization have?
JM: It was not as large as it is today. In the early 1980s, AAHP usually had about 40 to 50 members, and most of us lived in Anchorage. After an initial surge of interest, there were times when enthusiasm for the organization ebbed; for a year or two, Joaquin Estus and I (both of us worked at the National Park Service) seemed to be the main people keeping it alive. But in 1986 or so, we encouraged Bill Coghill to become active. Bill's enthusiasm, and his emphasis on building memberships, gave AAHP new life and ongoing stability.

Please check the number on your membership label. If it says "96", your dues are up-to-date; if it has a previous year, it's time to renew. Thank you for your cooperation!