

THE ALASKA ASSOCIATION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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

MARCH 1994

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STATE OF PRESERVATION IN ALASKA

by Russ Sackett

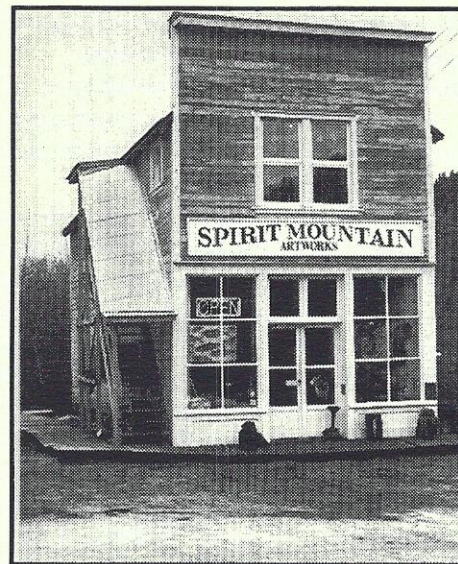
Alaska currently has 306 properties on the National Register of Historic Places. Most were listed during the 1974-1983 period when the State Office of History and Archaeology's Historic Preservation Fund Development Grants program was funded. This program provided small matching grants for the stabilization or restoration of 93 National Register projects throughout Alaska. About one-third of the projects were commercial buildings and 44 percent were structures directly associated with the tourism and recreation industry. Except for one building destroyed by fire, these structures continue to contribute to the local economy.

Aside from their contributions to community identity and sense of place, historic preservation projects may have other positive benefits. These include:

- **Job Creation.** Historic preservation projects are more labor intensive than new construction.
- **Provision of Affordable Housing.** Affordable housing may be provided through the recycling and adaptation of historic buildings. To date, over \$2 million in federal tax incentives have been used to adapt historic buildings for use as low income housing in Alaska.
- **Main Street Revitalization.** Preservation-based strategies are the most visible and successful efforts in renewing retail economies in small towns across the nation. In Alaska, revitalization of downtown Juneau has increased the attraction of the community's historic retail district for tourists.
- **Long-Term Investment.** Historic preservation promotes neighborhood revitalization, returning under-utilized buildings to local tax rolls. It can also be used to recycle existing buildings and to promote the retention of scenic open spaces.
- **Quality of Life.** Historic preservation enhances the State's tourist industry, helps retain the human scale of our built environment, and provides a direct link to our past.

The loss of funding for the Historic Preservation Fund Development Grants program removed a significant incentive for owners to list eligible properties on the National Register. It has also had serious implications for the ability of the State Office of History and Archaeology to adequately monitor the condition and needs of National Register properties. Almost 60 percent (180 properties) of these properties were listed when the State grant program was active. Since that time through the end of 1993, only 81 properties have been added to the Register.

The National Register process has also become more complicated and expensive. Property owners must now hire a consultant to help prepare a successful nomination. This, together



Chitina Tin Shop, Chitina

with loss of the State grant program, has discouraged greater participation in the National Register process.

In 1976, the U.S. Congress passed legislation to award tax credits for the rehabilitation of certified historic commercial properties. Under this program, owners may receive a credit for a percentage (up to 25 percent before 1986, 20 percent after 1986) of funds

invested in rehabilitation. The first eligible Alaska project was the restoration of Anchorage's Old City Hall in 1980. Today, the program provides the only financial assistance available for the rehabilitation of commercial properties.

Between 1980 and 1983, seven projects with a combined construction cost of about \$855,000 (averaging \$12,214 per project) applied for historic building tax credits. Between 1984 and 1993, another sixteen projects with a combined construction cost of \$13,882,046 (averaging \$867,627 per project) applied for these tax credits. To date, the program in Alaska has accounted for over \$3,250,000 in potential tax credits, although it is not known how many of these credits have actually been used.

Each year, Alaska's historic properties become more threatened. Some commercial properties are preserved under the Tax Investment program but many other deserving projects remain unfunded.

The State Office of History and Archaeology has been attempting to estimate preservation needs Statewide for the past four years. In 1994, 107 historic properties around Alaska have been identified as needing a combined total of over \$36 million in construction improvements. This is a significant increase over the 37 projects and slightly more than \$6 million in construction improvements estimated to be needed in 1991. In 1994, the single largest historic property type in need of preservation funds was public buildings, estimated to need \$17.8 million in construction funds, followed by industrial buildings (\$8.3 million), churches (\$4.1 million), archaeological sites (\$1.4 million) and residential structures (\$1 million).

OLD TOWN KENAI IS WORTH PRESERVING

by Dorothy Gray McCord

Kenai's St. Nicholas chapel represents people and the very beginnings of Kenai. Two men are buried under the chapel, two men who became great because of a commitment to helping others during one of the darkest periods of Alaska's history. One of them, Father Igumen Nikolai, was the first resident priest at the Russian fort of Nikolaevsk, near the mouth of the Kenai River. But, by the time he arrived in 1845, smallpox and influenza epidemics brought by his own Russian people had already raged throughout the area. Native people had never before been exposed to smallpox and the disease decimated the local population.

Records indicate that the Kenai Peninsula was inhabited by nearly 3,000 people in 1805. By 1840, that figure was reduced to half. Survivors managed to find their way to Kenai which then became the central region for the Dena'ina people.

Recognizing the severity of the situation, Father Nikolai ordered smallpox vaccine from Russia. He designated his helper, Makary Ivanov, who was half Native and half Russian, to traverse the entire parish which included the Kenai Peninsula as far north as Knik, and east as far as what is now Valdez. It took Makary Ivanov two years to cover this immense area, traveling on foot or by bidarka and vaccinating people in twenty scattered villages.

The first census conducted by the United States, eighteen years later in 1880, counted only 44 people in the village of Kenai. Including five surrounding villages, the same census counted only 124 survivors. The catastrophic smallpox epidemic nearly destroyed the whole population, and many of those who were left had permanent, deep-pitted scars.

After Father Nikolai and Makary Ivanov died in 1867 and 1878 respectively, local parishioners felt that a proper memorial should be constructed to honor these two men. In 1906, the chapel was built on the site of the original 1849 church as a tribute to their strength and determination.

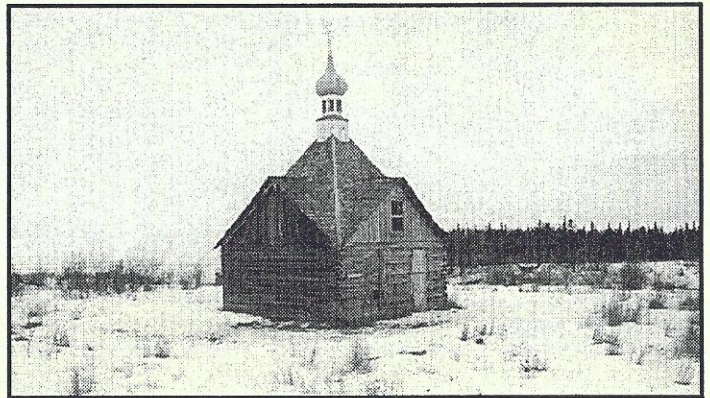
Today, the chapel continues to memorialize Father Nikolai and Makary Ivanov, but it also represents those 44 survivors. The cross on the dome symbolizes the suffering they endured during this sad period of Alaska's history.

Therefore, the chapel of St. Nicholas is a very important historical sign of cultural significance. It reminds us not to forget those who dedicated their lives to helping others, despite the odds. It is a sign of respect and dignity for those who preceded us in this land, the hundreds who died, and the small number who survived. This is why it was designated as one of the few National Historic Landmarks in the entire state of Alaska. This is why it maintains a place of honor on the stationery for the City of Kenai and is the major historic tourist attraction on the Kenai Peninsula.

By not providing protection around the chapel and the other historic properties in Old Town Kenai, the symbol loses that respect and dignity. It means that people have forgotten their ancestors and in the name of commercialism can develop this historic area in whatever fashion they choose. It will be a loss that can never be retrieved.

Are we willing to take the short sighted risk of endangering the city's economic future by accepting ascaled down historic zone that will eventually obliterate the little that is left in Old Town?

History connects us all, regardless of our political, economic



St. Nicholas Chapel, Kenai

or religious affiliations because it enriches the quality of our community today. Historic preservation can ensure our vision for the future because the present is in our hands. We have an opportunity to make a commitment to do what is right for Kenai. We must accept the challenge to be the people who stand behind the "Village With a Past" motto and see the vision of the "City With a Future" without compromising the integrity of the historical area any further.

Let us remember those 44 survivors and make a pledge to leave the city not lesser, but greater and more beautiful than before, by supporting no further size reductions to the historic zone.

AAHP 1994 PICNIC

AAHP's 1994 picnic will be held on Sunday, June 12 at Hope. This is an early reminder for AAHP members and other interested persons to mark your calendars now. More information on this enjoyable event will be included in our next newsletter.

AAHP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 1994

Officers:

Executive Director:.....Bill Coghill
President:Frank Norris
Vice PresidentJack Sinclair
Secretary:Fran Seager-Boss
Treasurer:Clyde Courtnege

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS:

Education:.....Fran Seager-Boss/Russ Sackett
Fund Raising:.....Jerry Strang
Legislation:.....Janet McCabe
Membership:Bill Coghill
Nominating:Jack Sinclair
Projects & Issues:Bonnie Houston
Public Relations:.....Julie Johnson
Newsletter:Jill Smythe

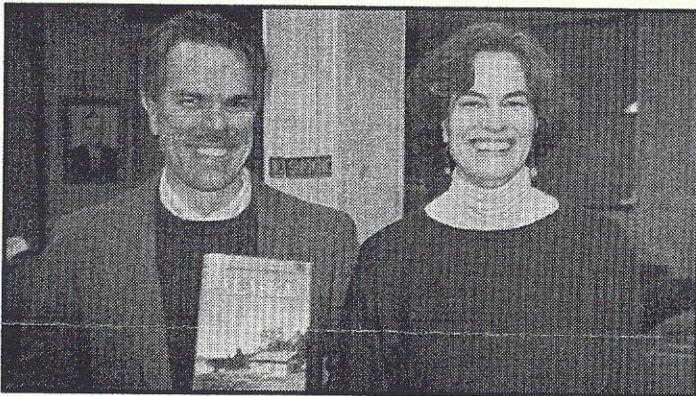
The Alaska Association for Historic Preservation (AAHP) was founded in 1981 as a private, statewide, non-profit corporation dedicated to the preservation of Alaska's prehistoric and historic resources through education, promotion and advocacy. Preservation of the built environment provides a vital link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

AAHP ANNUAL MEETING

AAHP's 1993 annual meeting was held on January 9, 1994 at the Pioneer Schoolhouse in Anchorage. The event was very successful and was attended by about 50 persons. The program included three featured speakers. Alison "Kim" Hoagland, author of "Buildings of Alaska," gave a talk and slide presentation on three distinct Alaska buildings: Saints Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church (St. Paul); Chief Shakes House (Wrangell); and the BP Base Operations Center (Prudhoe Bay). Kay Linton, president of the Anchorage Women's Club, gave a history of the Pioneer Schoolhouse. Bonnie Houston, Chairman of AAHP's Projects and Issues Committee, gave a slide presentation on AAHP's 1993 "Ten Most Endangered" properties list.

New Board members are Julie Johnson, Pat Murphy and Russ Sackett. Russ returns to the Board after a one-year absence. Bill Coghill was re-elected to another term. Gary Gillette and Sylvia Elliott agreed to serve on AAHP's Advisory Board.

An election of AAHP officers for 1994 was held immediately



Frank Norris and Kim Hoagland - AAHP Annual Meeting

after the annual meeting. Bill Coghill (Executive Director), Frank Norris (President), Jack Sinclair (Vice President) and Clyde Courtnege (Treasurer) were re-elected to their 1993 positions. Fran Seager-Boss was elected as Secretary.

NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION WEEK, 1994

May 8-14 marks National Historic Preservation week. This year's theme is "It's Your Memory. It's Your History. It's Worth Saving." It's also never too early to start planning events designed to highlight preservation programs in your community. AAHP is interested in learning about activities planned in communities around the State and will report on them in our next newsletter. Drop us a line!

One of the highlights of Preservation Week will be a workshop in Anchorage from May 13 and May 14, 1994 entitled "Economic Perspectives: Making the Preservation Connection." (See separate item in this newsletter).

MEMBERSHIP APPEAL

AAHP finished 1993 with just over 220 paid members, a 10 percent increase over 1992. As of March 14, 1994, we have 170 members paid up for 1994. An excellent start.

PLEASE CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL. IF IT DOES NOT SHOW '94 AFTER YOUR NAME, YOU HAVE NOT YET PAID YOUR 1994 DUES. PROMPT PAYMENT WOULD BE APPRECIATED AS AAHP RELIES HEAVILY ON 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.

- | | | | |
|---|----------|--|-------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student | \$ 10.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor | \$ 50.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$ 15.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend | \$ 100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$ 25.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor | \$ 250.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit | \$ 25.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor | \$ 500.00 & above |
- (federal, state, and municipal agencies included)*

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

\$_____ is enclosed. Also, I would be glad to participate in AAHP activities in the following areas:

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

NAME _____ PHONE w. _____ h. _____

ADDRESS _____

Please Return To: The Alaska Association for Historic Preservation
Old City Hall, 524 West fourth Ave., Suite 203
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Attention: Treasurer

AAHP'S ENDANGERED HISTORIC PROPERTIES LIST

by Bonnie S. Houston

Each year, the AAHP publishes a list of ten historic properties in the State which are threatened by neglect and/or development. The goal is to help expand public awareness of Alaska's historic properties and to foster a greater understanding of the need to preserve these non-renewable resources.

AAHP's 1993 Endangered Historic Properties list included:

1. Anchorage City Hall, Anchorage
2. Ascension of Our Lord Chapel, Karluk
3. Building 29, Sitka
4. Carlson Home and Fisherman's Co-op, Dillingham
5. Chief Kashakes House, Saxman
6. Eagle Historic District, Eagle
7. Holy Ascension Orthodox Church, Unalaska
8. Jesse Lee Home, Seward
9. Lacey Street Theater, Fairbanks
10. St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Nome

To help foster public interest and involvement, AAHP again invites all readers to participate in identifying endangered historic properties across the State. To be considered, a property must be at least 50 years old and it must be significant on the local, state or national level for its architecture or its association with an important person or event. Finally, the property must be in some imminent danger of being altered or destroyed.

To take part in the nomination process, simply fill out the enclosed form and mail it to AAHP by April 15, 1994. We hope you will participate in this important process.

PRESERVATION WORKSHOP, MAY 13 AND 14, 1994

A two-day workshop entitled "Economic Perspectives: Making the Preservation Connection," will be held in Anchorage during Preservation Week on May 13 and 14, 1994. It is co-sponsored by the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology, the U.S. National Park Service, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Alaska Design Forum and AAHP.

On Friday, May 13, the workshop will open with presentations and discussions centered on the Certified Local Government Program and design guideline review. Afternoon topics include preservation projects throughout Alaska and ISTEPA. On Saturday, May 14, the workshop program will continue with presentations on heritage tourism, marketing preservation, foundation/corporate fund sources, and innovative grant writing.

The registration fee for the workshop is a very reasonable \$20. Also, travel grants up to half of round-trip air fare costs are offered. Workshop packets will be mailed to Certified Local Governments, Alaska Native organizations, historical commissions, National Register property owners and other interested parties before the end of March. For further details, contact Linda Cook at (907) 257-2658 or Russ Sackett at (907) 762-2633.

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