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## History in a Can

*by Steve Henrikson, ASM Curator of Collections*

Though famous for our isolation and uniqueness, the scattering of Alaskan material culture around the globe shows the extent of our engagement in the world economy. Years ago I was in Manhattan, on the “museum crawl,” and took a few minutes to browse an antique mall in the Garment District. The bottom floor was reserved for the glitziest of furnishings and decorative arts, and there, amidst the Deco and the Louis XIV, I glimpsed something so incongruous I thought I must be hallucinating. In the middle of a fashionably lit kiosk of fine porcelain and crystal was a century-old Alaskan salmon tin. I couldn’t have been happier.



Salmon can “Red Brand,” Arctic Packing Company, San Francisco. The Arctic Packing Company established the first cannery in western Alaska at Kanulik, 3 miles east of Nushagak. ASM 96-4-1

The label read “Red Brand Spring Salmon, Arctic Packing Company, Alaska,” and the can itself looked early. It was hand-soldered, with a small vent hole that was plugged with solder after the cooking process. The label appeared to be an 1890s chromolithograph, an expensive process by which master printers hand stippled designs on stone plates to produce complex designs with naturalistic shading in over a dozen colors—each color requiring its own stone plate. The Arctic Packing Company operated canneries at Larsen Bay, Olga Bay and Nushagak Bay in the 1880s and 90s. However, the latter site was in operation beginning in 1878. One of only three canneries that began operations that year, listed as Alaska’s first.

I later heard that when my procurement documents hit the street in Juneau, my recommendation to spend \$70 on an old can—empty no less—met with surprise and consternation. Such unusual requests from the museum have long ago entered state procurement lore, and today generate little controversy.

Though the can was (happily) empty of its original contents, it was full of potential for the interpretation of Alaska history in the museum. When we consider objects for acquisition by the museum, we always think about the end use—can it become a primary source for future research, or something useful in educational programming, or in exhibitions? And what interpretive subjects are suggested by the object? Sometimes the lowliest object turns out to be most useful in making a variety of interpretive points.

Salmon cans are incredibly versatile artifacts that support the telling of many Alaskan stories. Early industry, industrial revolution, labor history, and racial strife; Alaska as America’s colony, and as part of the global food chain; environmental degradation; the history of advertising, marketing and branding; and even printing technology are all themes supported by salmon tins. The subject matter printed on the labels, such as “Seward Brand” (Seward’s role in the Alaska Purchase Treaty), and “Wigwam Brand” (depiction of Alaska Natives in advertising), may be subjects worthy of exploration in our museums.



A group of Salmon tins in the collection of the Alaska State Museum. Photo by Sara Boesser.

The canning of salmon in Alaska was only possible due to advances in science and technology that allowed for processing on an industrial scale. Canning in crocks, glass, and tinned iron, was developed in Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, primarily for military consumption. In New York, salmon packed in glass jars were among the first vacuum packed foods available in the United States. After the Civil War, with improvements in the production of tinned iron, and the invention of new canning equipment, canned food became increasingly available to civilians in the United States. In Alaska, the invention of canning line machinery and processes conveniently coincided with efforts to develop its vast fishery resources, early in the American period.

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, much of the canning process became mechanized, but tin can construction in Alaska remained a hand operation due in part to the cost of shipping: it was cheaper to ship the tin sheets to Alaska flat. The tin itself was expensive, and a large quantity was required. In 1882, for example, the tin plate used by Alaska canneries in 1892 amounted to 49,239 boxes—each 108 pounds, with each box containing 112 14×20 inch sheets, which made 448 cans. To ship the packed cans south, crates were constructed from lumber supplied by Alaskan mills. These early cannery contracts came about at a critical time for Alaska's fledgling lumber industry.

Bay Cannery, Alaska” Photograph by Winter and Pond, after 1907. Alaska State Library Historical Collection P87-0190”]Bay Cannery, Alaska” Photograph by Winter and Pond, after 1907. Alaska State Library Historical Collection P87-0190”]



A rare image of an Alaskan Native woman pasting labels on cans. "The Labeler, Silkof [Sitkoh

Once the cut salmon pieces were inserted in the can, the top was soldered on, but a small vent hole was left open. The food was cooked in the cans, and the vent hole was soldered closed when the food was steaming, creating a vacuum. Between 1908 and 1910, the American can company invented the sanitary can, featuring pre-soldered can bodies that were flattened for shipping, and once in Alaska, they were reconstituted and fitted with crimped ends. This eventually brought an end to hand manufacturing of cans in Alaska.

Prior to crating, the full cans were varnished (to inhibit rust) and a colorful paper label glued around the circumference. Early on, salmon cans in northern California were painted red, and consumers became so accustomed to the color that they reportedly refused to purchase anything

painted another color. Habits die hard, and later paper labels in Alaska usually had bright red backgrounds—which also helped conceal spots of rust bleeding through the paper.

The labels' designs themselves chart the birth of modern marketing techniques and branding. Competition was fierce, and consumer impressions of quality and cleanliness were based in part on the outward appearance of the can. Companies spared no expense designing their labels with colorful brand names and interesting graphics to make them stand out when displayed on shelves behind the counter of old-fashioned general stores. Consumers were loyal to brands that experience showed met their expectations of quality and purity. Over time, some brands lasted decades and became valuable assets, surviving as the company changed ownership.



“Wigwam Brand” salmon tin, packed by the Baranoff Packing Company at “Redutsky Lake” Alaska. The company operated at Redoubt Lake, near Sitka, from 1889 until 1891, when it moved to Redfish Bay (on southern Baranoff Island). The company ceased operations in 1898, when it was dismantled by the Alaska Packers Association. This can was uncovered with construction debris under the floorboards of an 1892 house in Jamestown, New York. Photograph by Sara Boesser. ASM 2000-9-1

Salmon cans symbolize the development of Alaska and its participation in the world economy.

In 1883, Alaskan canneries shipped 36,000 cases of 48 one pound cans. Just eight years later, the annual pack had increased to 789,347 cases—a rate of growth that some at the time considered alarming. Special Agent Paul S. Luttrell, Special Agent for the Salmon Fisheries in Alaska in 1895, reported that

“the salmon-packing industry... has attained the limit beyond which it is dangerous to pass; and that, if we would perpetuate the salmon industry and keep it up to its present grand proportions, measures of protection must be taken.... it should never be forgotten that there is a limit beyond which it is not safe to go, and that if we would reap an annual golden harvest we must also guard the source of supply, and see that nothing is done to either fish or stream that will change the natural order under which the fish have grown to such numbers and by which they may be perpetuated without abatement forever. Paradoxical though it may appear, it is nevertheless true, that none are more anxious to save and perpetuate the salmon than the canners themselves, and yet their methods are such as, if continued, will very soon destroy them.”

In 1936, production in Alaska had increased astronomically to eight million cases to meet the global demand (one salmon tin recently acquired by the Alaska State Museum, a “Meteor Brand” can from the early 1900s, was recently excavated from an old garbage dump in Chile).

In terms of significance, canned salmon played a key role in Alaska’s development; between 1880 and 1937, the value of canned salmon produced in Alaska exceeded the value of minerals extracted from Alaska during the same period. Luttrell contined:

“Let it be borne in mind that all the canning factories in Alaska are owned by three or four corporations in San Francisco, who have millions invested in the salmon-canning industry, but who have no interest in the development of Alaska, and who, as a matter of fact, do not add one dollar to the wealth of the young Territory from which they take millions of dollars annually. These corporations are rivals in the salmon-canning business, and their rivalry is carried to such extremes betimes that bloodshed at any moment will not surprise those who know the real conditions existing there. Now, this bitter rivalry of great and rich corporations, if allowed to continue, will eventually destroy the salmon...”

The role of museums is not necessarily to celebrate history. Resource development remains a mainstay of life in Alaska and makes available to society many important and positive things. Yet we may not overlook the suffering and ruin that resulted. Such production levels were possible in Alaska, where civil government and resource regulation was virtually nonexistent. The harvest exploited a vast biomass that had evolved in place for thousands of years. That abundance, the lifeblood of the rainforest and of Alaska Native cultures, was the target of canning companies as they expanded up the Northwest Coast, moving northward as California, Oregon, and Washington were overfished. The vastness of Alaska’s runs, and its relatively high operating costs and isolation, spared it the decimation seen in areas south. The lessons of overharvest and colonization were learned late. Fish traps—the device that led to such rapid increase in productivity—were eventually outlawed, and Alaska’s constitution became unique with its mention of the sustained yield principal.

Too, we must not overlook the human cost of the industry—Alaskans overlooked poor and dangerous working conditions in order to have a chance to make a cash income, which enabled them to participate in the introduced economy where some cash was a necessity. Cultures clashed when cannery management played one group against the other to lower labor costs, or to circumvent strikes (a technique that one writer noted had been taught “by the more irresponsible European laborers”). In Klawock, Tlingit and Haida cannery workers fought each other for



access to employment. In Sitka, clans staged an organized protest when Chinese workers were imported. Violence was averted when officials explained that the Chinese were there only to make cans, and if the Natives would learn to make them, the Chinese would be sent away. That explanation, and a threat of calling the “man-of-war” for “a little gunnery practice,” helped quell the dispute. Canneries heavily reliant on Native labor worked in cahoots with the government to ensure that strikes and ceremonial activities would not interfere with production.

### ***Collecting Salmon Tins:***

Alaska cans may appear at any time for sale the internet auction sites, or through antique dealers, usually from outside Alaska, where the vast majority of the cans were originally sold. Many cans sell for under \$75, and dozens are offered annually. Currently, a rare and early “Zenith Brand” can, packed by the Yakutat and Southern Railway Company of Yakutat, is offered for \$1,500—the most I’ve even seen for an Alaskan can. It is from a small cannery, with an early type label, and in nearly perfect shape. Labels are more common still, and rare examples may sell for several hundred dollars. These are mostly leftovers that were never affixed to cans, found by the bundle in old canneries and printing plants.



“Klawack Brand” salmon tin, from the one of the first salmon canneries in Alaska, opened at Klawock in 1878 by the North Pacific Trading and Packing Company. The cannery was built on the site of Hamilton's Fishery, an early Alaskan salmon saltery. Photo by Sara Boesser. ASM 2000-39-1

Condition can be an issue, given that most of them spent at least part of their existence in the garbage. Luckily, some cans survive a half century or more in the trash in a remarkably good state of preservation. One can we collected had been found in the wall of a house in upstate New York, having been deposited there by lurching carpenters—it was in great shape, and was opened from the bottom, which is nice for display purposes. Early cans were generally opened with a knife, which often chewed up the metal and sometimes even part of the label.

## ***Online Resources:***

Canneries, Canning Technology, History of Canned Salmon Industry:

Cobb, John N.

1917 Pacific Salmon Fisheries. Appendix II to the report of U.S. Commissioner of Fisheries for 1916. Bureau of Fisheries Document No. 839. Washington DC: Government Printing Office.

[http://books.google.com/books?id=Ri4wAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA7&dq=John+n.+cobb&hl=en&ei=b1H-TZ2dNsnUiAKczqDoBA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Ri4wAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA7&dq=John+n.+cobb&hl=en&ei=b1H-TZ2dNsnUiAKczqDoBA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Friday, Chris

1999 “Competing Communities at Work: Asian Americans, European Americans, and Native Alaskans in the Pacific Northwest, 1938-1947. *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West*. Edited by Valerie J. Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft8g5008gq;brand=ucpress>

Jordan, David Starr

1898 Reports on Seal and Salmon Fisheries by Officers of the Treasury Department, and Correspondence Between the State and Treasury Departments on the Bering Sea Question From January 1, 1895, to June 20, 1986, with Comments on that Portion Thereof Which Relates to Pelagic Sealing (four volumes). Washington DC: Government Printing Office.

[http://books.google.com/books?id=R9cqAQAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=seal+and+salmon+fisheries&hl=en&ei=K9P7TfWzD6XOiAKIspyEBQ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=R9cqAQAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=seal+and+salmon+fisheries&hl=en&ei=K9P7TfWzD6XOiAKIspyEBQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Moser, Jefferson F.



1902 “Salmon Investigations of the Steamer Albatross in the Summer of 1901.” *Bulletin of the United States Fish Commission*, Vol. XXI, 1901, 57th Cong. 1st sess., Ho. Doc. No. 706. Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 374-376.

[http://books.google.com/books?id=bvA\\_AAAAyAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=jefferson+moser&hl=en&ei=qqr9TaurA4bViAKus6T-Bg&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=bvA_AAAAyAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=jefferson+moser&hl=en&ei=qqr9TaurA4bViAKus6T-Bg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Label History:

The History of Fruit Crate Labels and Can Labels

[http://www.thelabelman.com/history\\_label.php?osCsid=d6b39e31d618220d4e071d000d91d5b1](http://www.thelabelman.com/history_label.php?osCsid=d6b39e31d618220d4e071d000d91d5b1)

[http://www.antiquetrader.com/article/can\\_labels\\_brought\\_art\\_to\\_the\\_aisles/](http://www.antiquetrader.com/article/can_labels_brought_art_to_the_aisles/)

Label Collecting Tips (including identification of printing techniques and dating)

[http://www.thelabelman.com/collect\\_label\\_tip.php?osCsid=b394b0fa66206fdc658adb876d43c0fb](http://www.thelabelman.com/collect_label_tip.php?osCsid=b394b0fa66206fdc658adb876d43c0fb)

Label Collecting:

<http://acn.liveauctioneers.com/index.php/component/content/article/60-style-century-magazine/1121-salmon-labels-are-a-prize-catch-from-the-great-northwest->

Schmidt Label and Lithography Company (the printer of many salmon can labels):

<http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist1/schmidt.html>

Finding Aid, Schmidt Lithography Company Papers, Bancroft Library:

<http://cdn.calisphere.org/data/13030/j1/tf9t1nb4j1/files/tf9t1nb4j1.pdf>

The Schmidt Lithography Company: Oral History Transcripts, 1967-69

[http://www.archive.org/stream/schmidtlithographco01teisrich/schmidtlithographco01teisrich\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/schmidtlithographco01teisrich/schmidtlithographco01teisrich_djvu.txt)

## ***Finding Aids:***

Alaska Packers Association

Alaska State Library:

[http://www.eed.state.ak.us/temp\\_lam\\_pages/library/historical/collections01.cfm](http://www.eed.state.ak.us/temp_lam_pages/library/historical/collections01.cfm)

Western Washington University:

<http://nwda-db.wsulibs.wsu.edu/findaid/ark:/80444/xv77299>

Pacific American Fisheries

<http://nwda-db.wsulibs.wsu.edu/findaid/ark:/80444/xv45835>

Southwestern Alaska Cannery Logbooks:

<http://nwda-db.wsulibs.wsu.edu/findaid/ark:/80444/xv99198>

Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers Union Local 7 Records 1915-1985

<http://www.lib.washington.edu/specialcoll/findaids/docs/papersrecords/CanneryWorkersandFarmLaborersUnionLocal7SeattleWash3927.xml>

North Pacific Cannery National Historical Site Finding Aids

<http://memorybc.ca/north-pacific-cannery-village-and-museum;isdiah>

## ***Books:***

Boettcher, Graham C.

1997 Canned Culture: Pacific Salmon Fisheries and the Image of the American Indian. Unpublished Manuscript in the Alaska State Museum files.

Clark, Hyla M.

1977 The Tin Can: The Can as Collectible Art, Advertising Art & High Art. New York: New American Library

Dunbar, Kurt, and Chris Friday

1994 "Salmon, Seals, and Science: The *Albatross* and Conservation in Alaska, 1888-1914." *Journal of the West* 33 (October 1994): 6-13.

Edwards, Jack

2006 How Old Is That Label: A Celebration of Pacific Northwest Salmon Labels & Dating Guide. Long Beach, Washington: Chinook Observer Publications.

Friday, Chris

1994 Organizing Asian American Labor: The Pacific Coast Canned-Salmon Industry, 1870-1942.

Freeburn, Laurence

1976 “The Silver Years of the Alaska Canned Salmon Industry.” *Alaska Geographic* 3(4). Anchorage: Alaska Geographic Society.

Lorenz, Claudia, Kathryn McKay, et al

2002 Trademarks and Salmon Art: A Brand New Perspective. Vancouver BC: Gulf Of Georgia Cannery Society.

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## Ask ASM

**Question:** We have started to catalog our collection for the first time ever. Unfortunately, we don't have written records for everything. Some stuff has just been here forever. If it was a loan, the people are long gone now. Can we still claim ownership and accession these items?

**ASM:** Items that are “Found in Collections” can be a tricky issue for museums. You can designate them as such (or FIC for short) for the catalog record now and then claim ownership as provided by the Alaska Statutes. There are two statutes that apply here. AS 14.57.200 deals with acquiring title to loaned material and AS 14.57.210 deals with acquiring title to undocumented property. There are very specific steps to follow so it is best to consult the specific statute itself. You can find both online at this link.

[http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/folioproxy.asp?url=http://www.jnu01.legis.state.ak.us/cgi-bin/folioisa.dll/stattx06/query=\\*/doc/{@6739}](http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/folioproxy.asp?url=http://www.jnu01.legis.state.ak.us/cgi-bin/folioisa.dll/stattx06/query=*/doc/{@6739})

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## Shaking the Money Tree

### *Grant in Aid:*

For FY2012, the Alaska State Museum has announced the awarding of 30 grants totaling \$105,600 to Alaska museums and cultural centers for museum projects around the state. The annual Grant-in-Aid awards are funded by an appropriation from the Alaska Legislature.

Applicant	Project	Amount
<b>Internship grants</b>		\$

Tenakee Historical Collections, Tenakee	Internship program	3,600
Whitney Museum, Valdez	Internship program	3,600
Bald Eagle Foundation, Haines	Internship program	3,600
Anchorage Museum Association, Anchorage	Internship program	3,600
Seldovia Museum, Seldovia	Internship program	3,600
Valdez Museum & Historical Archives, Valdez	Internship program	3,600
<b>Regular grants:</b>		
Sheldon Museum, Haines	Redesign of permanent exhibits	9,570
Pratt Museum, Homer	Fume hood purchase	2,271
AK Museum of Natural History, Anchorage	Geology collection upgrade	9,400
Museums Alaska for Conference in Valdez	2 workshops and 1 guest speaker	6,627
Juneau-Douglas City Museum	Collection storage expansion	9,242
Alutiiq Museum & Archaeological Repository, Kodiak	Climate control restoration	10,000
Resurrection Bay Historical Society, Seward	Relocation to new facility	7,026
Kenai Visitor and Cultural Center, Kenai	Education and technology plan	2,226
<b>Mini-grants:</b>		
Sitka Historical Society, Sitka	Storage expansion/improvement	2,000
The Hammer Museum, Haines	Business plan	2,000
Eagle Historical Society & Museum, Eagle City	New computer purchase	2,000
Pioneer Memorial Park, Fairbanks	Equipment purchase	2,000
Ahtna, Glennallen	Equipment purchase/transport	448
Baranov Museum, Kodiak	Environmental monitoring equip.	2,000
Soldotna Historical Society & Museum, Soldotna	Media and program equipment	1,541
Fairbanks Community Museum, Fairbanks	Windows/doors upgrade	1,250
Copper Valley Historical Society, Copper Center	Toyostove maintenance	800
Alpine Historical Society, Sutton	Boiler exhibit improvements	2,000
Friends of the Tanana Valley Railroad, Fairbanks	Update photographic archives	2,000
Kodiak Maritime Museum, Kodiak	Funding for intern	2,000
Port Alexander Historical Society, Sitka	PastPerfect database training	2,000
Cordova Historical Society, Cordova	Fire-proof file cabinet	1,599
Alaska Native Heritage Center, Anchorage	Indigenous language kiosk audio	2,000
Carrie McLain Memorial Museum, Nome	Computer purchase	2,000

## ***AASLH:***

Small Museum Scholarship Application

2011 AASLH Annual Meeting

Richmond, Virginia, September 14-17, 2011

DEADLINE: June 30, 2011

The AASLH Small Museums Committee is pleased to offer scholarships to the AASLH Annual Meeting. AASLH's Annual Meetings have become a potent force for change, renewal and sustainability in the field of local history. Dynamic speakers, such as historians Adam Goodheart and Ed Ayers and Civil Rights Movement veteran Dorothy Cotton, rejuvenate our spirits at these meetings by re-affirming the importance of our work and vision.

Now in its sixth year, AASLH's Small Museums Committee is offering scholarships to any AASLH members who are full-time, part-time, paid, or volunteer employees of small museums. The \$500 scholarship will cover the cost of registration. Any remaining funds can be used to offset travel and/or lodging expenses.

To qualify, the applicant must work for a museum with a budget of \$250,000 or less and either be an individual member of AASLH or work for an institutional member. The application form is available at [www.aaslh.org/SmallMuseums](http://www.aaslh.org/SmallMuseums).

Deadline for Applications is June 30, 2011. Award notification will be made by July 15. For questions, please contact Bruce Teeple, Small Museum Scholarship Subcommittee Chair at [mongopawn44@hotmail.com](mailto:mongopawn44@hotmail.com)

## ***CAP:***

Heritage Preservation Announces 2011 Conservation Assessment Program Participants  
The Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) staff is pleased to announce that 101 museums in 36 states and Puerto Rico will participate in the 2011 CAP program. The participants include history museums, art museums, botanic gardens, and an aquarium. Each museum will undergo a general assessment by trained conservation professionals, which will result in a report with prioritized recommendations to improve collections care. Click [here](#) for more information about the 2011 CAP museums

<http://www.heritagepreservation.org/CAP/11recipients.html>

## ***IMLS:***

It is not too early to start thinking about applying to the Institute for Museums and Library Services for Conservation Project Support. The deadline is October 3, 2011. These grants are good follow ups on conservation assessments where you can show that the project is your highest priority. These grants can be for up to \$150,000 but do require a 1:1 match. If you want to see the projects that were funded this year follow this link.

[http://www.ims.gov/news/2011/052011\\_list.shtm](http://www.ims.gov/news/2011/052011_list.shtm)

If you are thinking about applying please feel free to contact Scott Carrlee, Curator of Museum Services at 1-888-913-6873 to discuss your project.

<http://www.ims.gov/applicants/grants/conservProject.shtm>

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## Spotlight on Grant in Aid:

### *Eagle Historical Society Museum*

*By Bianca Carpenetti, ASM Volunteer*

The devastating Yukon floods of May 2009 severely damaged the Custom House in Eagle, AK, which housed a local museum collection. Luckily, the museum staff, historical society members, and community were able to recover all the historical material. Three water-logged volumes—damaged beyond the scope of repair expertise in Eagle—were sent to Juneau for treatment. Seth Irwin, a visiting paper conservator at the Alaska State Museum, took on the project which was paid for using Grant in Aid funds. All three volumes are irreplaceable pieces of history from along the river and border.



Text block submerged during treatment. Photo by Seth Irwin.

The highest priority volume, a handwritten ledger from the historical “Office-Custom House” in Eagle, went through extensive work to be stabilized and preserved. First, the ledger was digitally documented. Then, mud residue was removed both manually and using a dry cleaning agent. Next, the spine and cover were removed, and the water-sensitive ink was sealed with a compound to protect it during treatment. The entire text block had to be submerged in purified water and other compounds to clean, stabilize, and buffer the damaged material. Next, the composite parts were dried through blotting, hot air treatments, and pressing. After reattaching



the spine, the text block could be reinstalled in its case. Newly repaired, all three volumes returned to their home in Eagle.



*Ledger before and after treatment. Photos by*

*Seth Irwin.*

# ASM on the Road

## *Seldovia:*



Seldovia Museum Displays

Scott Carrlee, ASM Curator of Museum Services went to Seldovia during the week of May 11<sup>th</sup> to assess the progress of the Seldovia Museum. Seldovia is a lovely community situated on Kachemak Bay across from Homer. The museum has some very interesting exhibits on the history of the area and the artifact collection is growing.

## ***Tenakee Springs:***



Future home of the Tenakee Springs Museum

Scott spent May 23-25 in Tenakee Springs helping plan for a new museum to open there with artifacts from the Tenakee Historical Collection. Tenakee is known for its thermal bath and as a place for summer cabins but it has been thriving as a community for well over 100 years. That their history told through their artifacts will finally have a permanent display is very exciting.

## ***Homer:***



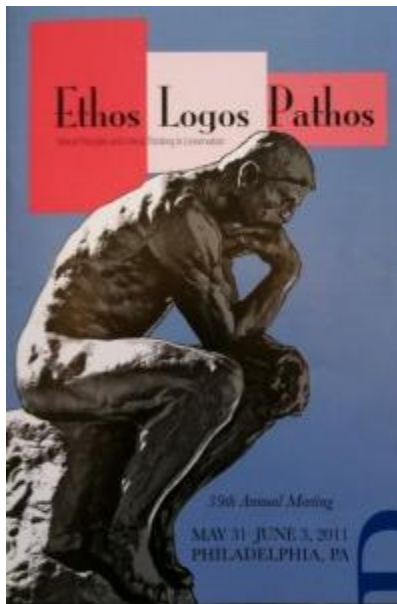
Bob working with the staff at the Pratt

Bob Banghart, ASM Chief Curator was in Homer working with the Pratt museum on strategic planning for a new museum building. He met both with the board and the staff of the museum

giving insight into the process new construction. What the staff found most instructive was a breakdown of the various stages of the building process and what would be expected at each stage.

## Conference Review

*Ellen Carrlee, ASM Conservator*



Reporting back to you regarding the 2011 American Institute for Conservation conference in Philadelphia...the annual national conference for conservators. Many thanks to the Rasmuson Foundation for helping fund my travel. Lauren Horelick (my 2009 intern) and I presented the fruits of the labor we began two years ago. The Alaska Fur ID Project <http://alaskafurid.wordpress.com/> is a free online reference set of images and data we gathered to help identify the fur of nearly 50 Alaskan mammals. Given the quality of Alaskan furbearers and the position of Alaska in the fur trade, the info will be helpful for museums with many kinds of fur artifacts in addition to Alaska Native ones. The talk was well-received, and a nice complement to Oregon State University's Fiber Research Identification Library (FRIL) <https://fril.osu.edu/> which concentrates more heavily on plant and synthetic fibers used in the textile and fashion industries. In various informal gatherings, conservators are now discussing gutskin <http://gutskin.wordpress.com/> and feather identification projects. I'll keep you posted.

Early in the week I attended a half-day workshop, "Saving Energy in HVAC for Conservation Environments" by Bill Lull from Garrison/Lull consultants, who specialize in Museum, Library and Archive environments. A good review of this workshop can be found in the AIC blog <http://www.conservators-converse.org/2011/06/aic-annual-meeting-2011-saving-energy-in-hvac-for-conservation-environments-workshop-presenter-%e2%80%93-william-p-lull-garrisonlull-inc/>

and a recent publication about what works and what does not work in museum HVAC. <http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/kilgarlin/gaga/proceedings2008/GAGA07-lull.pdf>

One focus of the meeting was archaeology <http://ellencarrlee.wordpress.com/2011/06/14/2011-aic-in-philadelphia-archaeology/> , which has been also a focus of mine this spring. I was excited to hear the discussion of reburial as a preservation tool, and a little surprised to hear that it doesn't seem to have been used much in the U.S. so far. This reminded me of the curation crisis discussed at the 2011 Alaska Anthropological Association meeting. ...36 CFR 79 establishes standards for archaeological repositories, but there is not enough space for everything that gets excavated. Archaeologists in Alaska are already talking about the reburial possibility. AIC conservators were also emphasizing the importance of building relationships with State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) and curation facilities that provide the guidelines for how materials need to be delivered. There has been relatively little of that going on nationwide, but Alaska should be proud that Judy Bittner and Dave McMahan in our Historic Preservation Office have been very proactive over the last few years about creating opportunities to connect archaeologists in Alaska with conservation and preservation resources. Not only that, but archaeologists and curators of storage facilities have been proactive about conservation lately too: let's hear it for UAF's Jim Whitney, NPS's Kathryn Myers, Molly Proue and Andy Higgs of Northern Land Use Inc, and archaeologist Monty Rogers (he's got his fingers in multiple pies like Stephen Braund and Associates and on the Alaska Anthropological Association board, too).

The majority of AIC conservators on archaeological sites work abroad, mainly in the Mediterranean and ancient Near East. Why? Two main reasons, I think. One, because nationally-controlled archaeological permits in many of those places require a conservator to be on the team. And secondly, because archaeologists often have only a brief window of opportunity to research the artifacts before they are secured in a museum and access is more limited. With a conservator present, artifacts can be efficiently processed, reassembled, and technically examined to help answer research questions. There was a survey about conservators who do archaeological fieldwork. Most of them get paid beyond just travel and lodging, and the average was around \$1000 per week. Here in the United States, the Archaeological Discussion Group (ADG) has been working hard on outreach. They have a new ADG page <http://www.conservation-us.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewpage&pageid=1519>

on the AIC website. They already did a great FAQ about archaeological conservation on the Society for Historical Archaeology website [http://www.sha.org/research\\_resources/conservation\\_faqs/default.cfm](http://www.sha.org/research_resources/conservation_faqs/default.cfm) and they will soon post their Fieldwork Checklist for conservation materials to use on site. It's really good! I would imagine some of the supplies listed might spark some dialogue with non-conservators about the materials we use (anyone heard of RP/Escal storage bags? EDTA? TritonXL-80?) One more cool tidbit: Day of Archaeology is July 29, an opportunity for anyone involved in archaeology to post to a weblog <http://www.dayofarchaeology.com/> . I'll be posting a snapshot of the archaeological conservation work I've been doing recently. If you're involved in Alaskan archaeology somehow, maybe you could do a posting too?

I've done two more postings from the AIC conference...one on the general sessions <http://ellencarrlee.wordpress.com/2011/06/14/2011-aic-in-philadelphia-general-sessions/>

including concepts around the conference theme, "Ethos, Logos, pathos: Ethical Principles and Critical Thinking in Conservation." Discussions ranged from a philosophy professor's ideas



about the Bamiyan Buddhas destroyed by the Taliban to whether digitizing archives preserves or destroys the originals. My other posting involves talks at specialty groups for objects, textiles and wood <http://ellencarrlee.wordpress.com/2011/06/14/2011-aic-in-philadelphia-objects-textiles-and-wood/> . Alaska's own Chuna McIntyre, (Yup'ik artist, dancer, and scholar) presented a paper in collaboration with Smithsonian conservators about restoration and access to artifacts and the enhanced understandings all around. Both the Australian Museum and the Museum of Anthropology at UBC gave papers about providing a high level of artifact access to source communities. And some good information was given about deterioration of outdoor wood in harsh environments. Susanne Grieve of Eastern Carolina University has seen the extremes: Shackleton's wooden huts in Antarctica and beached diamond trade shipwrecks along Namibia's desert Skeleton Coast.

For four days, I spent every waking moment with conservation colleagues, from 7am till midnight. As you can imagine, being at that conference involved a certain amount of glory in being one of the few conservators in ALASKA. I did my best to build ties and reinforce relationships that will give us folks to call when we have preservation needs beyond the expertise of the three conservators working in the state. Plus, I met my summer intern, Delaware University graduate conservation student Crista Pack. She's beyond excited to be coming, and at the end of the summer, Scott and I will be taking her along on our summer vacation: a camping road trip (dog and four-year-old too) through the "Golden Circle Tour" of Skagway, Atlin, Whitehorse, Haines Junction, and Haines. Did you know there are a dozen museums and cultural centers on that route? Stay tuned, we'll report on that adventure, too!

## **Alaska Museums in the News**

### ***Alaska State Museums:***

Sheldon Jackson Museum gets new Curator

June 27, 2011

[http://www.thetundradrums.com/article/1126curator\\_named\\_for\\_sheldon\\_jackson\\_museum](http://www.thetundradrums.com/article/1126curator_named_for_sheldon_jackson_museum)

### ***Colony House Museum:***

Police sergeant puts together historical art exhibit

May 26, 2011

[http://www.frontiersman.com/articles/2011/05/27/valley\\_life/doc4ddf3fbf32f38056839167.txt](http://www.frontiersman.com/articles/2011/05/27/valley_life/doc4ddf3fbf32f38056839167.txt)

*Museums don't just put on exhibits inside their walls, they encourage and support members of the community develop exhibits outside the institution. Here, the Colony House Museum contributed supplies to a local man's efforts.*

### ***Talkeetna Historical Society:***

Eleanor Trepte Visits Talkeetna

**June 3rd, 2011**

<http://ktna.org/2011/06/03/eleanor-trepte-visits-talkeetna/>

**“[...] a dozen people gathered at the Talkeetna Historical Society Museum, the little red schoolhouse, to listen to a woman who grew up in the 1930s in the Talkeetna area”**

*A great audio piece featuring stories from a woman who grew up in Talkeetna in the 1930s.*

### ***Museum of the North:***

Powering the future: Alaska museum exhibit offers new perspective

May 27, 2011

<http://newsminer.com/bookmark/13471054-Powering-the-future-Alaska-museum-exhibit-offers-new-perspective>

*The Museum of the North opens its new summer exhibit “Power Play,” which explores alternative methods of “energy collection and power production.” The interactive exhibit employs games and information to get visitors thinking about the use of alternative energies in cities.*

### ***Pratt Museum:***

Maritime archeology helps recreate unique history

May 18, 2011

<http://homertribune.com/2011/05/tales-help-recreate-history/>

“Pratt Museum launches a year-long project to collect historical information, form collaborations between artists-scientists.”

### ***Museum of the Aleutians:***

Aleutian Museum unveiling exhibit on education on the islands

June 2, 2011

<http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/kial/news.newsmain/article/1/0/1811014/Local.News/Aleutian.Museum.unveiling.exhibit.on.education.on.the.islands>

*Three years of collaboration between the museum and community in Unalaska resulted in the new exhibit exploring the rich—and sometimes dark—history of education in the Aleutians.*

### ***Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry:***

“Blast from the Past” Highlights Valley’s History

June 4, 2011

[http://www.frontiersman.com/articles/2011/06/05/local\\_news/doc4deb10419874b722526623.txt](http://www.frontiersman.com/articles/2011/06/05/local_news/doc4deb10419874b722526623.txt)

*Museum teams up with residents and local organizations—like the Antique Power Club—to host an all-day Saturday event featuring tractors, planes, and other historical, large-scale industrial machinery.*

## **Professional Development/Training Opportunities**

### **Community Narratives: Citizens Recording History**

The availability of low-cost recording equipment—from computers and digital cameras to mobile devices—has made it possible to gather the stories and personal points of view from a wider range of people than ever before. We invite the Shout community to seek out people who “value the land” and record their stories. Today’s three presenters will share their expertise and perspectives on the protocols and strategies for conducting an oral history project. They’ll show you how to identify a great interview subject, how to prepare for the interview, and what to do during the interview to make sure you capture great material. Join this session to experience the importance of looking for narratives and cultural histories close to home.

This session will take place online on **July 13, 2011** at 10 am AK standard time and last one hour.

<http://www.smithsonianconference.org/shout/conference-value/>

## **Volunteer Viewpoint**

*By Loeke Molenaar*

(Loeke came to the Alaska State Museum from the Netherlands. She was interested in seeing what working in a museum in the US would be like)



Arriving in a snowstorm in Juneau after having traveled for 22 hours without any hour of sleep, the first nerves slowly started to appear. 3 months in Alaska seems to be a pretty outstanding way to spend your gap-year for Dutch standards; “Alaska? Isn’t that the place where all the Eskimo’s in igloos live?” But being an 18 year old girl who just finished high school, I felt like being ready for anything. I had no idea what the family I was staying with would be like, nor what volunteering at an Alaskan museum would mean. But as I’m looking back at the 3 months in Juneau and volunteering in The Alaska State Museum, I’m sure about one thing: it was a greater experience than I could have ever imagined!

While spending my gap year in Holland, doing a pre-training on an art academy, working with a designer and helping a photographer, I figured a good way to make my year complete would be by spending some time in a foreign country. My aunt, Malou Peabody, brought me in contact with Mark Kelley (who I am staying with) and Scott Carrlee, and soon enough 3 months in Juneau were all set; I would be volunteering at The Alaska State Museum and their exhibit department. We started off with an introduction on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, I met Paul Gardinier and Jackie Manning who I would be working with and got a short training on how to handle objects. My internship was all set up, ready for work!

I have been working at the museum for 2,5 months in total. We mostly worked on the hat show, making the posters, graphics, but I also helped with making the mounts for the hats, making the showcases or any other job that had to be done. Every day there was something else to do, to see or to experience. I got to know an amazing group of people, whom I am going to miss incredibly. Everybody was open and interested in my culture and art. They showed me their art, but also taught me a lot about their techniques (on for example making mounts) and the Alaskan art history.

If I will ever be able to combine another internship at The Alaska State Museum with my university in Holland, I would do that without a doubt. And if I am honest, if I would’ve been able to get a job at The Alaska State Museum, I am pretty sure I can miss my parents for a little longer than 3 months. But all in all, just these 3 months have been great and very instructive!

# SLAM Dunk

The latest updates from the State Library Archives and Museums building project.

[Statewide Library Archives Museum DOTPF Project No](#)

More can be found on the blog site. <http://www.alaskalamp.blogspot.com/>

## Professional Time Wasting on the Web

Talk about a museum lending program!

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/06/27/leeds-artgallery-art-gall\\_n\\_884432.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/06/27/leeds-artgallery-art-gall_n_884432.html)

Amazing exhibit! The History of the World in 100 Objects

[http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/a\\_history\\_of\\_the\\_world.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/a_history_of_the_world.aspx)

Space Station Technology Benefits Fine Art

[http://www.redorbit.com/news/space/2057624/space\\_station\\_technology\\_benefits\\_fine\\_art/index.html?source=r\\_space](http://www.redorbit.com/news/space/2057624/space_station_technology_benefits_fine_art/index.html?source=r_space)

Got culture? Museums, theaters and concert halls may be the ticket to a happy, healthy life

<http://www.latimes.com/health/boostershots/la-heb-culture-health-20110524,0,1973111.story>

World's longest burning light bulb

[http://old.news.yahoo.com/s/time/20110617/hl\\_time/httpnewsfeedtimecom20110616theworldsoldestlightbulbhasbeenonfor110yearsxidrssfullhealthsciyahoo](http://old.news.yahoo.com/s/time/20110617/hl_time/httpnewsfeedtimecom20110616theworldsoldestlightbulbhasbeenonfor110yearsxidrssfullhealthsciyahoo)