Number 28
Winter 2007

Alaska State Museums
BULLETIN

An Information Source for Alaska's Museum Community

Sorrel Goodwin is new Registrar at State Museum

Sorrel Goodwin has been named Museum Registrar for the Alaska State Museums. He replaces Donna Baron, who retired in September after 14 years at the museum. Goodwin, who earned his bachelor's degree in anthropology at Northeastern Illinois University in 1998, began his journey as a museum professional with a NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) research internship at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. He subsequently worked at the Field Museum as well as at the Chicago Historical Society and the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian in Evanston, Illinois. Most recently, he has been employed in Juneau as Sealaska Heritage Institute's Archivist/Collections Manager.

Sorrel Goodwin and his two children. Photo: Mariana Moreno-Goodwin.

Reflecting on his career path, Goodwin said "The effect that visiting museums all over North America had on me as a child was profound and it inspired me to seek out more information about the things I had seen, and ultimately led me to a career as a museum professional, instilling in me a life-long love of learning about the world and its peoples."

Scott Carrlee, Curator of Museum Services, spoke to Goodwin for the Bulletin:

SC: What brought you back to Juneau?

SG: After living in the great city of Chicago for seven years, I wanted my children to see and experience Aak'w Aanì (Aak'w Kwáan Tlingit Territory), as this is our ancestral homeland. We are the grandchildren of Sheep Creek Mary James, a well-known matriarch of the Aak'w L'eeneidí Yaxte Hít (Dog Salmon-Big Dipper House). We are the people of this land.

SC: What made you decide to take the registrar's job at the State Museum?

SG: After being in the library-archives world for five years as Sealaska Heritage Institute's Archivist, I was ready to come back to the museum world; I missed it. I came out of the museum profession having worked at the Field Museum, Chicago Historical Society Museum, and the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian in Chicago and Evanston. I have worked as a collections manager, exhibits staff, curatorial assistant, museum educator, and researcher in all of those institutions. Museum work is something that I love.

SC: How are you settling in?

SG: Things are fantastic. There is a lot to do and learning the institu-

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THANKS!

Thanks, Donna, for all your years of service to the ASM and to the Alaskan Museum Community.

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tion-specific policies and procedures always takes time. I was fortunate to be able to train with my predecessor, Donna Baron, for two weeks before she left, which has made the transition easier. The museum staff has been really kind and helpful and has made me feel welcome. It is a good bunch of humanity here. Gunnul'cheesh!

SC: What challenges do you see for the expansion of collections storage at the Alaska State Museum (ASM)?

SG: Storage space is always a challenge and ASM is being as proactive as possible with the resources and time that are available. The new collections storage space here in the building and the new off-site facility are going to be very helpful in solving the storage challenges. There is a lot of work to do to get both areas fully operational, but that is one of my top priorities as I begin to tackle this new job.

SC: You have some interesting specialties. Tell us about them.

SG: I came into the museum world in 1995 as a NAGPRA researcher at the Field Museum of Natural History and over the years I've developed myself as a NAGPRA specialist. I have represented and done research for tribes in Southeast Alaska as well as several tribes in the lower 48. My work with NAGPRA in a museum setting dovetailed nicely with what became a series of jobs at several museums specializing in collections management and with my degree in anthropology at Northeastern Illinois University (which I was working on at the time). My greatest strength is in collections management, which will work out nicely with my new position here. In Chicago I was fortunate to have Janice Klein as my mentor. She is a widely respected professional amongst museum registrars nationwide, and wrote the foreword to The New Museum Registration Methods book by the American Association of Museums. I worked with her when she was the registrar at the Field Museum and again when she was (and still is) the director of the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian.

SC: What is your favorite thing about museums?

SG: I would have to say a museum's ability to tell stories about humanity, in all of our complexity. Museums are a major conduit, in my opinion, for preserving and sharing the mosaic of human cultures and experiences with the world.

SC: Tell us something about you we don't already know.

SG: I am a serious student of Byzantine history and culture and I love jazz (only serious jazz; Hard Bop, no elevator jazz please!). La familia es primero! Family First!

Alaska's SLAM Collections

SLAM Project Update

The State Library, Archives and Museums (SLAM) project to consolidate the collections of the Division of Libraries, Archives and Museum into one building is moving forward! The governor has put $4.5 million into the FY2009 budget for the project, which is a significant portion of the 7.5 million needed for design services.

This is great progress towards our goal of providing a modern facility designed to properly showcase Alaska's past and protect its heritage for the future. The new State Library, Archives and Museum building will be located adjacent to the existing State Museum in Juneau and will provide a cornerstone campus in the heart of the capital city.

The facility is envisioned as a dynamic public cultural center and major research institution for the state.

Museum Success Stories

Juneau~Douglas City Museum totem pole care

by Stephani Marnon

The Juneau-Douglas City Museum's sustained effort to maintain their totem poles has made them this Bulletin issue's success story. The museum has been involved in the maintenance of a number of totems in recent years. Utilizing 2004 State Grant-in-Aid money, Amos Wallace's pole "Harnessing the Atom," which stands outside the museum, was cleaned and treated to retard biological growth, extending the life of the pole. The severely leaning pole was stabilized and remounted to prevent further rot to the base.

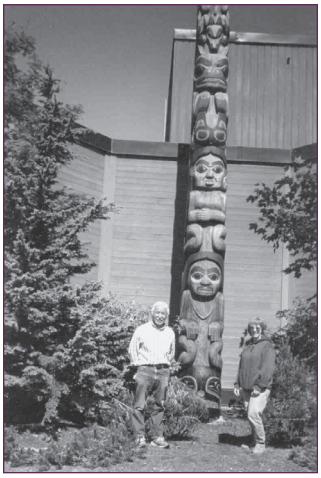
The museum is presently treating the most visible pole in Juneau, which is also on museum grounds. In 1940 the Civilian Conservation Corps hired Haida carver John Wallace to carve "Story Master" pole, or as it is now known, "Four Story" totem pole. From 1940-1962 the pole stood in front of a cannery near Hydaburg. The Juneau Rotary Club purchased it in 1962 and moved it to the grounds of the Capital Elementary School in Juneau. The pole was given to the City of Juneau in 1963.

During "Celebration 1994," a biennial gathering of Native groups, it was moved to the property of the Juneau-Douglas City Museum where it currently stands. Lee Wallace, carver and grandson of John Wallace, made restorative as well as finishing touches to the pole.

Thirteen years is too long for an outdoor pole to weather without maintenance, so, thanks to a Grant-in-Aid from the ASM as well as additional support from Juneau Rotary, Addison Field, the City Museum's Curator of Collections and Exhibits, was able to get Lee Wallace to once again work on the "Four Story" pole. The pole suffers from weathering, paint loss, biological growth, losses, and detached elements.

"Four Story" totem pole will be taken off its mount and given a fungicide treatment, says Field. It will be repaired and refastened. Some surfaces appropriate for repainting will be repainted and minor details re-carved as needed, ensuring the preservation of the pole into the future.

The Juneau-Douglas City Museum has been involved in the maintenance of another totem. In 2003, after a maintenance report where carver Nathan Jackson recommended that his pole be indoors, the "Auk Pole," located outside the Centennial Hall convention center, was moved into the newly remodeled Juneau Douglas High School. This project was funded by private donations.



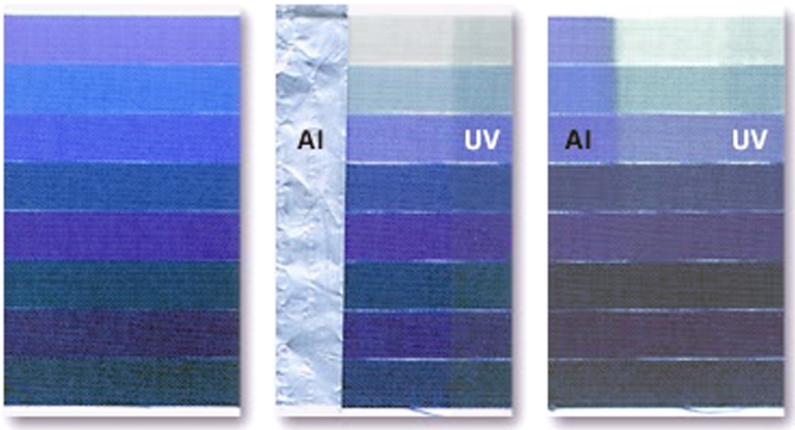
Nathan Jackson and wife in front of the Auke Pole. Photo: Juneau-Douglas City Museum.

Bob Banghart helps move the Auke Pole into the Juneau-Douglas High School. Photo: Ellen Carrlee.

Ask ASM: I have put ultraviolet (UV) filters on the windows of my museum. Do I still have to reduce the light levels?

ASM: This is a common question with regard to light levels in museums. UV is only part of the light damage equation. You do have to consider the overall light levels coming in through the window. If the light levels are too high (above 5 foot candles for light sensitive objects) then there will be damage even with all of the UV filtered out. You can see this quite clearly in the graphic below. Even though a portion of the card had a filter to block the UV it still underwent a significant amount of fading.

These three cards started out covered with identical horizontal stripes of different colours of blue wool. Called Blue Wool Standards, they are used to gauge the extent of fading caused by exposure to light and ultraviolet light. The left-hand card is unfaded. On the middle one, a lengthwise section is protected from light by aluminum foil (Al). The next darkest length on this card was protected with an ultraviolet filter (UV), while the most faded length was not protected at all. This card is shown uncovered at right. Placed in a south window for eight months, this Blue Wool Standard shows fading equivalent to several decades of exposure under controlled exhibition lighting conditions.



Reproduced courtesy of the Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa, Canada. Photo: Kathleen Quinn.

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