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SEAL OF THE STATE OF ALASKA  
**STATE OF ALASKA**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT**

**Bruce Kato**

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**Press Release**

ALASKA STATE MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Tourism history exhibit at museum to close

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*The Lure of Alaska: A History of Tourism in the Great Land*, an exhibition at the Alaska State Museum illustrating the development of tourism in Alaska from the 1880s to the present, will close March 10. The exhibit has been on view since May.

*The Lure of Alaska* explores the influences of tourism on Alaska culture and art through the advertising ephemera produced to market Alaska and the souvenirs provided for tourists to take home. The show looks at how Alaska has always been a perfect place for tourism because it has the exotic, the picturesque, and the sublime all within easy reach of the tourist.

Early tourism promoters exploited Alaska's mythic status, especially following the turn-of-the-century gold rushes. Colorful travel brochures enticed tourists to sail the Inside Passage, scramble across glaciers, or drive the rugged Alaska Highway as imagined pioneers.

Guest curator June Hall gathered about 400 souvenir items from museums and private collections across the state for the exhibit, some of them never previously displayed. A recreated late nineteenth-century curio store interior is crowded floor to ceiling with types of items popular during that era – bird quill belts, billikens, baskets, ivory carvings, souvenir china, gold jewelry, dolls and beaded wall pockets.

“A lot of the themes that have lured people to Alaska are still the ones that lure them to Alaska today; they want to know there's a vast wilderness that is not trampled by other people,” Hall said. “Certainly the first tourists were motivated by the desire to experience something out of the ordinary and they wanted to bring back a memento symbolic of their experience just as they do today.” Tourist observations and opinions about their Alaska adventure can be seen in a postcard display, featuring the very first Alaska postcard issued in 1897 to more recent examples.

Souvenirs like totem poles shaped into bookends, bottle openers and candles will show the appropriation of traditional Native images for popular use. Savvy Tlingit and Haida people quickly responded to the demand of tourists by creating new art forms, usually miniature versions of totem poles, canoes and household items, specifically for the tourist trade. Native artists also turned silver dollars into spoons and bracelets to meet tourist demand.

The Alaska State Museum is located at 395 Whittier Street in downtown Juneau. Winter hours are 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Admission is \$3. Visitors 18 and under are admitted free of charge. An annual pass that allows unlimited visits to the Alaska State Museum and the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka is available for \$15.

Assistance is available for visitors with special needs. Please contact Visitor Services at 465-2901 before the visit.