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Press Release

ALASKA STATE MUSUEM

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"Built Alaska"

Artistic Views of Traditional and Vernacular Architecture

JUNEAU -- Extremes of climate and geography impose fundamental challenges to those who live, work and travel in Alaska. Physically and spiritually, shelter is essential, and over millennia a broad mix of cultures created their own structures by innovating with local materials, exchanging ideas with each other and by adapting imported designs to Alaskan conditions.

The exhibit, selected from the Alaska State Museum's century-old collection, features artistic renderings of Alaska's structures and spaces from the past 150 years. Through the art in this display, these "ghost buildings" and the people that lived their lives within them have a chance to live again in our minds.

"Preparing the exhibit afforded the chance to dig deeply into the art collection in storage, and select some pieces that have not seen the light of day for decades", according to the exhibit's curator, Steve Henrikson, also the Curator of Collections for the Alaska State Museum. The museum has over 2,500 works of art in the collection, but lacks space for a permanent art display.

Apart from Native structures, based on traditional designs developed out of the environment, much of Alaska's architecture originated somewhere else. The mix of cultures, each with its own building traditions, built their structures side by side, and for a time, borrowed ideas from each other.

Clan houses and bunk houses alike, Alaskan structures incubated and nurtured significant parts of our culture. While some of these cultures have outlived the buildings that originally housed them, other structures and their reasons for being are extinct. Between post-WWII modernization and "urban renewal," we've lost much of what is truly unique about Alaska's built environment.

The exhibit is now open and will run through October 13, 2007.

Summer hours at the Alaska State Museum are 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily. Fall, winter and spring hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. General admission is $5 during the summer season, $3 at other times, with annual passes that allow unlimited visits available for $15.

Photos and slides from both museums are available for media use.

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