

Linda S. Thibodeau

Director

Division of Libraries, Archives,
& Museums

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STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Robert C. Banghart

Chief Curator

Alaska State Museums

395 Whittier St.

Juneau, Alaska 99801-1718

907.465.2901

Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: **March 30, 2010**

Biographer to discuss Captain “Hell Roaring” Mike Healy

Alaska has no shortage of colorful historical figures, and one of the most prominent is Captain Michael Healy of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, who had a profound impact on the lives of Alaskans in the late 19th century. Healy is the subject of a new book and a free public lecture by one of the authors on Thursday, April 8, at the Sheldon Jackson Museum beginning at 7 p.m.

Author Dennis L. Noble will discuss Healy’s life as described in his recent biography “Captain ‘Hell Roaring’ Mike Healy: From American Slave to Arctic Hero,” co-written with Truman R. Strobridge and published by the University Press of Florida.

As commander of the Revenue Cutters *Corwin* and *Bear* during the 1880s and 1890s, Healy was the primary representative of the U.S. government for much of Alaska. He arrested lawbreakers, put down mutinies on merchant ships, fought the smuggling of arms and alcohol, rescued shipwrecked sailors, brought medical aid to isolated villages, prevented the slaughter of wildlife and explored Alaska’s vast coastline.

He also provided transport and consultation to people such as John Muir and the Reverend Sheldon Jackson, enabling Jackson to visit Alaska’s widespread villages and to collect materials for his museum.

Capt. Healy’s dramatic feats in the far north were so widely reported that a New York newspaper once declared him “the most famous man in America.” He was also the first African-American to command a U.S. government ship, a fact not known by the U.S. Coast Guard until 1971. Healy’s mother had been a slave in Georgia, but Healy passed for white his whole life.

Author Dennis L. Noble served in the enlisted force of the U.S. Coast Guard from 1957 until his retirement as a Senior Chief Petty Officer in 1978. Sea duty took him to the Arctic six times and Antarctic twice, on International Ice Patrol. His sea duty in the Arctic took him to most of the locations that Captain Healy visited. After retiring from the U.S. Coast Guard he returned to school and earned a Ph.D. in U.S. history from Purdue University. He is the author of fourteen books and lives in Sequim, Washington, with his wife, Loren, and a strange cat.

This is the final lecture in the The Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum Winter Lecture Series.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Phone (907) 747-8981 Fax (907) 465-3004

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