We’re Out! But Still Open for Business!

Alice Harrigan Centennial Hall officially closed its doors for major renovation after almost fifty years of non-stop community service. As a result, the Sitka Historical Society Museum had to move out of its home for the past 47 years—as it awaits the construction of a new museum space.

SHS staff and volunteers worked long hours to move not only offices, but also thousands of artifacts stored in the Museum, to Alice Island Industrial Center for intensive collections management work under Curator Kristy Griffin and Fellow Krystle Weddle.

While the new SHS Museum is under construction, staff will be busy designing all new exhibits which will open in 2017.

During the temporary closure, the Society will work hard to continue to offer exciting and educational programming to the community.

Can you say, “Sesquicentennial”? 

On March 30, 1867, Secretary of State William H. Seward agreed to purchase Alaska from Russia for $7.2 million with the signing the Alaska Treaty of Cessation, “The Transfer of Alaska officially occurred on October 18, 1867 in Sitka on what is now called Castle Hill.

In 2017 we will have been a U.S. possession for 150 years and the commemoration of this is called a “sesquicentennial.” It might be challenging to spell, or even remember, but it is certainly a landmark event on the local, state, national and international level.

Linda Williams of the Sitka Historical Society and Sitka’s 150th Commemoration Community Liaison, is focused on helping Sitka become the center of the commemoration. Linda is receiving guidance from a steering committee of Sitkans who look forward to a year-long schedule of commemorative events and programs which will attract visitors to Sitka, spur historic renovations, spark interest in our history, and offer all peoples a chance to educate the Public on their different perspectives of the Transfer.

Linda is working with historians, constituents, businesses and educators to identify options and resources Sitka currently has that will facilitate the promotion of the 150th Anniversary.

NSF Team Searches for Evidence of Ill-fated NEVA

An international team of archaeologists, funded through a National Science Foundation grant to the Sitka Historical Society, spent most of July conducting fieldwork in conjunction with the NEVA Bicentennial Project. Working closely with the U.S. Forest Service and Sitka Tribe of Alaska, the team searched for evidence of the Russian frigate NEVA, which sank in 1813, as well as the camp where survivors awaited rescue. The team arrived safely back in Sitka during the last week of July and are working with partner organizations on a press release that describes the results of their findings.
Volunteers Log Over 300 Hours to Help SHS Move Irreplaceable Collections!!!!!!

Not only did volunteers spend a lot of time on moving collections and offices, staff did too. Here’s a recap of how many documented man hours the move took:

Volunteers: 300 hours +
Curator: 317 hours
Fellow: 155 hours
Other SHS staff: 200 hours +
Total man hours for move: 972 hours

Many thanks to the following volunteers who helped us move: Anna Thompson, Rosemary Carlton, Amy Crews, David Lam, Kim Davis, Susan Brown, Barbara DeLong, John McCrehin, Bob Sam, Bob Peel, Sabra Jenkins, Ernestine Massey, Jamie Steinson, Ethan and Christopher Nance, Sheila Culhane.

SHS Welcomes Fellow to Assist with Collections Management

Krystle Weddle joins the SHS team as a fellow for the next nine (9) months. She is assisting with the SHS collections management project. Krystle says, “This fellowship seemed like a unique opportunity to get out of the city I’ve lived in for most of my life and to experience what it would be like to work in a small museum. Since arriving in the beautiful and welcoming town of Sitka I have been able to have a lot of educational experiences that I feel a lot of people don’t have in their first years at a museum. I look forward to helping organize the collection and help improve the museum’s holdings over the next nine months.”

Krystle cleaning Ted Kettleson’s hat

SHS Board Kicks in $ to Museum Expansion

The SHS Board of Directors voted unanimously to allocate $66,000 to the City & Borough of Sitka to fund an additive alternate to the Centennial Hall renovation that will add an additional 12’ x 38’ space to our new museum. SHS Board and staff anticipate using this space to continue its popular community rotating exhibits. Thanks to contractor McGraw-Dawson for its affordable bid to construct this wonderful space.

SHS President Ernestine Massey noted, “The money the Board used to pay for the addition came from years of fund raising, aided by generous donations from Sitkans and others who wish to keep our history alive. Many of those who contributed are no longer with us in body. However, they are with us in spirit for it was the dream of people like, Isabel Miller, Joe Ashby, Bob DeArmond, and countless others, that we would some day have a quality museum space worthy of the display of Sitka’s rich history”

The Sitka Historical Society Board and Staff thank all of you who have made this possible!

A Minute with the Executive Director

Wow! When I look at what is happening in Sitka from a historical perspective, I continue to be amazed. It was 148 years ago that Sitka gained fame as the site of the Transfer of Alaska, yet the land had already been settled by Tlingit people 10,000 years before. As well, we have historic sites that heralded major events of local, state, national, international and cultural importance. Plus, we boast a citizenry who appreciate the historical significance our small town with a big history has played.

We still have a big job before us. We’ve got a new museum slated for completion as early as October 2016 which will allow the Society to showcase the fascinating stories of our ancestors. However, a new museum raises all of our expectations. I am convinced our community wants a museum that stands out. Making this happen will cost money, for exhibit design and construction is expensive. The Society is committed to bringing you the best. We hope that each of you will be there to support us as we gain the momentum necessary to raise funds. What a nice gift for our ancestors, ourselves, and future generations.

Curator Kristy Griffin dissects the diorama, crafted in the 1960’s by Teacher, Artist, Historian Jim Davis in the basement of Etolin St. School. Thanks to the Sitka Sportsman’s Assoc. for storing the diorama.
President's Corner by Ernestine Massey, SHS Board President

The business of the Board of Directors of the Sitka Historical Society seems to take up a lot of our time, and while all of our work is meaningful to further our progress in accomplishing our mission, the most significant has been the planning of a space for the new Museum and moving out of Centennial Hall during its construction period. The Society has operated the Sitka Historical Museum in Centennial Hall for 47 years.

During construction, our Curator will undertake an audit of our collections designed to improve and refine the composition of the collection according to the institution’s collections mission, a gargantuan job but what a wonderful opportunity.

I had the opportunity to serve with City staff, architects and representatives of major users of the building during the several years of planning to upgrade the 50 year old Centennial Hall. The new Sitka Historical Museum in Centennial Hall will open by early 2017.

The effort to upgrade the nucleus of our downtown district with this total campus which includes another 50 years of life for our visitor and convention building, the updated and enlarged Library and a quality Museum which showcases Sitka’s rich history will have a tremendous impact on growing the economy of Sitka by creating new businesses, more jobs and ensuring the success of current businesses.

The Sitka Historical Society has spent 57 years serving the community by preserving and sharing its history. We look forward to an exciting new beginning.

Ernestine Massey,
President of the
SHS Board of Directors

Harrigan Centennial Hall Renewal Project
Looking at the “new” Centennial Hall from where Baranof’s statue stands.

Harrigan Centennial Hall Renewal Project Site Plan.
Notice the new museum wing. Plus, the Sitka Historical Society Board of Directors voted to give the City & Borough of Sitka $66,000 from reserves it had accumulated over years of fund raising and generous donations to secure an additional alternate which adds 456 sq. feet to the museum. This extra space will house rotating exhibits that have recently become a popular trademark of the Museum.
Another Man’s Treasure:  
Sitka Historical Society Museum 
Undertakes Largest Collections Audit in SHS History

The Sitka Historical Society (SHS) and Museum will undertake an audit of its collections over the next eighteen months designed to improve and refine the composition of the collection according to the institution’s collections mission. This audit will include the consideration of certain items for deaccession.

Deaccessioning is a complex procedure and is not taken lightly. The SHS Museum begins the process by giving public notice of its intent to deaccession. Curatorial staff then identifies possible objects for deaccession throughout the course of the collections audit. Initial criteria used to ascertain whether or not an object should be reviewed for deaccession includes considerations of an object’s connection with seminal people, institutions, places or events in Sitka’s past, the object’s potential contribution to future research efforts, and the physical condition of the object. The SHS Collections Committee, comprised of museum staff and members of the public, review and vote on the objects considered for deaccession. Finally, the SHS Board of Directors meets to approve or reject the Committee’s recommendation. Only then may an object be removed from the collection.

If the Collections Committee and the SHS Board of Directors agree that the SHS Museum can no longer reasonably provide perpetual care for an item or items, a variety of disposal methods are considered. In many circumstances, museum staff will try to transfer the item(s) to another museum or not-for-profit institution with a mission that more closely fits the significance of the object. Deaccessioned objects may also be considered for exchange or sale. In both instances, the exchange or the proceeds from the sale are designated for the sole purpose of strengthening the collection by either acquiring new items that help to fill gaps in the collection or by providing for the conservation treatment of important items in the collection. Objects undesirable for transfer, exchange, or sale, as well as seriously damaged, deteriorated and/or hazardous objects may be destroyed or discarded according to local laws.

SHS Annual Meeting Oct.14
Intriguing Programming
Annual Fund Drive

The Sitka Historical Society’s Annual Meeting will be held October 14 at 6:30 p.m. at the ANB/ANS Hall. The meeting will begin with some necessary organizational business, which includes election of Board members and should only take a few minutes, then moves to an exciting program which includes a presentation on “Clothing Throughout the Years in Sitka.” As well, you will learn how you can get involved in the 150th Sesquicentennial Commemoration and learn about the new SHS museum.

Don’t miss it! Bring your family, bring your friends, so we can all learn about Sitka: The Little Town with the Big History!
Alaska residents know that in order to live and thrive in this state, one has to wear many hats. The long-time Alaska resident who once owned this hat did just that...he exemplified the notion of a modern Renaissance man.

Born in 1874 in Wisconsin, Theodore C. Kettleson first ventured to Alaska in 1905 during the gold rush. He prospected in Valdez and Goldstream and in Rossland, British Columbia. Kettleson went on to serve as Postmaster at Chisana and Shushana, and worked as a steamer pilot on the Tenana River.

In 1919, Kettleson was elected to the House of Representatives of the Territorial Legislature. After his term ended in 1921, he accepted a position as the Superintendent of the Pioneers’ Home in Sitka. Twelve years later, Kettleson went to work at the Sitka Wharf & Power Company as a plant operator. By 1939, Kettleson, along with a group of notable Sitkan gentleman, founded the First Bank of Sitka. Around the same time, he began a fifteen year stint as the Chairman of the American Red Cross in Sitka. He also owned stock in the Sitka Cold Storage Company.

Eventually, Kettleson retired and moved to San Diego with his wife, but continued to take an active interest in Sitka and the community. After the town’s library suffered the second of two devastating fires, Kettleson decided that the institution needed a new concrete-built home and he contributed his stock in the National Bank of Alaska and the Sitka Cold Storage Co. to the effort. In October of 1967, Kettleson and his wife traveled back to Sitka for the dedication of the new library, named in his honor.

During his time in Sitka, Kettleson made another rather furry contribution. As the Secretary of the Sitka Fish & Game Club, Kettleson advocated for the introduction of red squirrels to Baranof Island in 1922. He hoped that the squirrels would provide prey for marten and thus would increase trapping opportunities around Sitka. Unfortunately, the plan did not succeed and the squirrels came to inhabit the entire island and disturb bird populations by eating their eggs.

Less than a year after the dedication of the Kettleson Memorial Library, Ted passed away at the age of 94. From mining prospector to House Representative and beyond, Ted Kettleson wore numerous hats as an Alaska resident. His many skills and interests left a lasting legacy in Alaska, yet the noisy chatter of the vivacious red squirrel serves as a constant reminder that even the most notable and noble figures in Sitka’s history were merely human.

**SUMMER INTERN AT WORK**

Anna Thompson, SHS Summer Intern, gently prepares a valuable doll for transport to Alice Island for safekeeping. Anna’s great grandfather, Tommy Thompson, once owned and managed Sitka Sound Seafoods.

**Did you know that...**

. . .the Sitka Common Council named Lincoln St. in Dec. 1867 because the Russians had no known name for it. In 1870, another council changed it to Davis St., or part of it, in honor of Gen. Jefferson C. Davis who had been in command of all the troops in Alaska and was about to leave.— **Bob DeArmond**
SHS opened its latest exhibit, The Sitka Photo Shop Studio: Picturing Our Past exploring the photographic legacy left by the Sitka Photo Shop Studio. Much more than a place for tourists and locals alike to get their film developed, the Studio, which operated from 1924 to 1972, boasted the largest collection of postcards and photos for sale in Alaska. The exhibit delved into the history of the Studio and displayed many of the striking images that chronicled the people, buildings, history, and ever-changing landscape of Sitka.

A truly collaborative effort, the exhibit included the contributions of Ruth Culp, Jim Dangel, and Walter Dangel – all family members of Photo Shop Studio owner, Luella Smith.

The Fishermen's Eye Gallery, Holland America Line and House of Liquor sponsored themed galleries designed to tell stories of Sitka’s past through images of the Photo Shop.

Sitka Historical Society Starts Historic Costuming Project

The Sitka Historical Society has undertaken a project to create a historical reproduction of Princess Maria Maksutov’s gown by commissioning Carol Hughey to research and construct the garment (seen in the photo below).

Prince Maksutov’s first wife, Adelaide Ivanovna, died in 1862 and is buried in Sitka. Soon after his wife’s death, Prince Maksutov was recalled to St. Petersburg, arriving there September 1863. He travelled overland with two young daughters, leaving his infant son with the Russian American governor’s wife. Maksutov argued in Court that Russia should retain its North American colonies. He was able to convince the Emperor and secured an appointment as Maksutov, Governor of the Russian American Company on December 2, 1863.

Having secured a position, the Prince moved on to domestic matters. He proposed to Maria on December 26, and they were married January 22, 1864. They left for Sitka in February, travelling via England, New York, Panama and San Francisco, arriving in Sitka in May.

At this point in our research we believe the gown itself was likely a part of her bridal wardrobe known as a trousseau. Considering her class, the gown probably came from France, or was custom-made by a French dressmaker. Carol is conducting further research to confirm the history of the gown. The Society is hopeful that Carol’s final gown will be prominently displayed in our new museum.

Teal West hosted the opening event for the exhibit at Homeport Eatery, location of the former Photo Shop Studio, while local photographer, William Greer, took old time photos of guests.

The event also premiered a new documentary, “Stories of a Strong Family”, directed by Owen Kindig, produced by Kristy Griffin and edited by Arthur Parker.

The exhibit was designed and conceived by Curator of Collections and Exhibits, Kristy Griffin, with the help of Rosemary Carlton, and an exhibitions team comprised of SHS Board members, museum staff, volunteers, and interns.

This is the final exhibit the Sitka Historical Society & Museum will produce before closing in preparation for renovations to Harrigan Centennial Hall.

As well, we are hopeful we can offer a historic costuming sewing program for those community members who are interested in participating in this exciting initiative.

Kailee Cunningham models the beginnings of historic costume being made by Carol Hughey of Princess Maksutov's gown. What you see is called a “crinoline.”
Sitka Historical Society

Membership Challenge

The SHS member who recruits the most new members, wins two (2) free dinners at the Channel Club!

MEMBERSHIPS!
FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

SHS needs you. Help us share Sitka’s history by recruiting new members to SHS. It’s easy. Go to www.sitkahistory.org or call 907-747-6455 for more membership forms.

Sitka Historical Society

Membership Form  Sitka Historical Society & Museum

Date: __________

Please Circle your choice of Membership Level:

- Senior over 62 $20
- Under 25 $20
- Individual $40
- Family $50
- Patron $100
- Business * $175

*Business Membership includes link to SHS website
- Sustaining $1000
- Benefactor $5000

*Circle Choice 1. New Membership 2. Renewal

Enclose Check payable to Sitka Historical Society or Charge to Credit Card (specify card type below)

Card Type ___________ Expiration Date _______________  

Card# ___________________ CVV2 code: ___________ (security code)

Signature

- Name (s)
- Other Family Members (Family Membership only)

- *Business Contact Name

- Mailing Address

- City State Zip

- Phone

- Email Address (fastest way to get news of upcoming events)

Mail to: Sitka Historical Society 210 Seward St Sitka, AK 99835 907-747-6455

Fax to: 907-747-6588

Online Membership Form:  www.sitkahistory.org

Or email to: halspackman@sitkahistory.org

SITKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Board of Directors

Ernestine Massey - Pres.
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Sheila Finkenbinder - Treas.
Pat Alexander
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Look at our new webpage
www.sitkahistory.org

Look for us on Facebook!
https://www.facebook.com/SitkaHistoricalSocietyMuseum
“Shhh. . . a Sitka History Minute is coming on the radio. . . “Let’s listen. That’s interesting. I didn’t know that!”

Have you listened to a “Sitka History Minute on KCAW lately? Hear them Thursdays @ 8:30 a.m. and Sundays at 12:11 p.m. or look them up online at www.kcaw.org/sitka-history-minute/

If you have an idea for a Sitka History Minute, please let Hal know by emailing him at halspackman@sitkahistory.org