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Today

**Juneau's
 lifeblood:
 the waterfront**



Above: July, 2019, posted Feb. 2020, on google.com (Juneau Cruise Terminal Area), Picasa.
Right: Wm. Partridge Coll., ASL-P88-060



1887

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From seasonal fish camp to commercial seafood processing; from wartime support to seaplane base; from steamship docks to berthing thousand-foot cruise ships delivering more than a million tourists annually, Juneau's waterfront has been its lifeblood for more than 140 years. For the first half-century of Juneau's development, the waterfront was the only portal for people and products. The subject of presidential decrees, parking disputes and lawsuits, the mile-long coastal strip, from bridge to library, has been a topic of close to 20 studies or plans over the last 40 years.

Virtually none of Juneau's current tidelands existed when original peoples fished the area or in 1880 when prospectors Joe Juneau and Richard Harris paddled ashore from Sitka in their Native-made canoe. Most of today's 25 acres of tidelands along Juneau's downtown are tailings from the Alaska-Juneau Gold Mining Co. mill, an icon which anchored the east end of the working waterfront.

From the beginning, federal agencies facilitated shore development: relocating indigenous residents, expediting transfer of traditional lands, invoking military authority to seize private property, and building a 12-acre barge terminal during WWII. Today, the waterfront remains a patchwork of public and private properties with no single thread tying it together -- except history.



1867



1907

Much of Juneau's shoreline made of mountain

Most of Juneau's current waterfront did not exist when indigenous peoples fished the area or when prospectors arrived in 1880. The rendering above imagines d'zanik'i heeni ("where flatfish gather"). Gold Creek delta is upper left and Miners' Cove at right. The delta is evident in the upper right of the 1907 photo. In 1914 a boardwalk on pilings (at right, looking east) was constructed along the shore to connect the Áak'w village to town along Willoughby Avenue.



1920

Photo credits, clockwise from top left: Southeast Discovery Poster, "150 Years of Change, 1867-2017," Richard Carstensen. **Juneau, 1907,** ASL-P39-1207, Case & Draper. **Willoughby boardwalk, 1920s:** ASL-JNU-views-areas-Willoughby-06. **1929:** ASL-P-240-093, George Parks Coll. **1935:** ASL-P-87-0765, Winter & Pond. **1955-1960:** University of Washington, Special Collections, Howard Clifford PH Coll, 1178.337. **2019:** Courtesy, Urban Land Institute Northwest



1929

The 1929 photo documents the difficulty of extending a wharf to deep water. By 1931 the Chamber of Commerce launched a \$100,000 effort to fill the area with waste rock from the AJ mine. Fill also was required to build the original bridge in 1935 (left).



1935



1955-1960



2019

Dave Femmer (whose dock appears far left in the 1935 photo) in 1940 added waste rock to the site. The military seized the property in 1942 and added 12 acres to create the "subport." By 1960 more of the delta had been filled and lower Gold Creek ran through a concrete channel. (Triangle in center of photo above is where federal building is today.) The terminus (Outer Drive) of "Glacier Expressway" was built in 1969 on fill from a quarry near the hospital. Today, left, about 25 acres of fill comprise downtown tidelands. (Gold Creek center; Miners' Cove bottom right.)

140 years of development by government and business - and a stack of studies

"To forestall disharmony between the Tlingit community and the newly arrived miners, the U.S. Navy engineered the move of the Tlingit people from downtown Juneau, to an area just outside the original townsite, in the area known today as the Áak'w Village District . . ."

"Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan," City & Borough of Juneau, 2020

1881 - Navy garrison in command; first dock built (1)

1890s - Wharf built to deep water

1900 - Juneau incorporated and becomes seat of Alaska government

1901 - Pacific Coast Steamship Co. constructs warehouse on wharf (current site of Merchant's Wharf)

1914 - Áak'w village connected to town by boardwalk on pilings (left)

1915 - David Femmer and Lloyd Ritter purchase tidelands extending from Willoughby boardwalk; construct 55' x 1,000' warehouse on dock for \$10,000. Federal Bureau of Education gives permission on behalf of Indians' rights to the land

1917 - Femmer dock expanded

May, 1923 - First flight lands in channel; soon, several air companies operating out of harbor

1924-5 - Feds negotiate to build dock; Bureau of Education provides clearance "on behalf of the right of the Natives of access to adjacent lands" (DAE, Mar. 5, 1925)

1927-28 - Government dock built

1930s - Femmer dock and warehouse expanded; feds build float off his dock to service military

1931 - Chamber of Commerce launches \$100,000 effort to fill tidelands with mining waste rock

1934 - Works Progress Administration starts concrete channel for lower Gold Creek



Above: Áak'w Village, ASL-P4-015, Yukon Mining, Trading & Transport Co.; below: first dock (center), built 1881; Edward De-Groff (first postmaster), ASL-P91-65

1940 - Air mail planes use channel. Femmer moves tailings around his dock

May 23, 1942: President transfers shore authority from Interior to Navy

Summer, 1942 - Military designates Juneau and Excursion Inlet as "subports" of the Port Authority of Seattle; Army begins construction of subport

August, 1942 - Feds take over Femmer's dock and adjacent property; fill added

1946 - Army conducts official "final close out" of subport and turns it over to Corps of Engineers which installs dry dock

1950s - Military docks transferred to new Coast Guard Station; Corps of Engineers completes Gold Creek concrete channel

November, 1961 - Storm badly damages subport; ordered vacated in April '62

February, 1963 - Alaska Marine Highway docks ferries downtown for first time

1968-75 - Four-lane waterfront "outer drive" and "Glacier Expressway" built

1980 - New bridge built, same location

1981 - Gold Creek Study proposes land swap with feds for public use of subport

1983 - Gold Creek plan includes aquarium, mall, 300-room hotel, parking for 500



1984 - Report suggests filling mouth of Gold Creek, building industrial port elsewhere to focus waterfront on tourism; Thanksgiving Day storm destroys part of newly-built Marine Park

1986 - State plan for waterfront Pioneer Home scrapped

1996 - State waterfront holdings transferred to Mental Health Trust

1998 - Docks and Harbors Plan references relocating industrial port to W. Douglas "as has been discussed many years;" notes all tidelands now owned by city, except oil dock (now owned by AELP subsidiary)

2004 - Waterfront Plan recommends demolishing Merchant's Wharf, expanding Marine Park (Wharf for sale; never sells)

2016 - Skip Wallen whale sculpture installed at Mayor Bill Overstreet Park

2017 - Two offshore berths installed for ships greater than 1,000 feet

2019 - Norwegian Cruise Lines purchases 2.9-acre parcel from Mental Health Trust for \$20 million, six times the minimum bid

Sources: (1) Chris Allan and Mark Kirchoff, *Rough and Tumble Country: Juneau's Origins as Alaska's First Gold Mining Boomtown as Described by Eyewitnesses, 1880-1881*, 2020, p. 2; "Gastineau Channel Memories, 1880-1959," Pioneer Book Committee, 2001, pp. 152-153; "New Wharf Open for Inspection," *Daily Alaska Empire*, Sept. 18, 1915; "Initial Work on Gov't Dock Now Launched," *Daily Alaska Empire*, July 19, 1927; Jonathan M. Neilson, "Armed Forces on a Northern Frontier: the Military in Alaska's History, 1867-1987." Praeger Publishers, Westport, 1988; The American Presidency Project, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/us?pld=60954; "Alaska Report," Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, U.S. Dept. of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Juneau, April 1962; "Gold Creek Port Development," CBJ, 1981-1983; "Area Meriting Special Attention," CBJ, 1984; "Docks & Harbors Master Plan," CBJ, 1998; "Subport Vicinity Redevelopment Project," Sheinberg & Assoc., 2000; "Long Range Waterfront Plan," CBJ, 2004; "Historic Property Evaluation of the Alaska Coastal Airlines Hangar," CBJ, 2006; "Willoughby District Land Use Plan," CBJ, 2012; "Cruise Line Buys Downtown Waterfront Property for \$20 million," *Juneau Empire*, Sept. 10, 2019; "2019 Gold Creek Overview," Corps of Engineers, retrieved from poa.usace.army.mil/Portals/34/docs/operations/EFC/2019GoldCreekOverview.pdf?ver=2020-04-30-171418-837; "Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan," CBJ, 2020; dot.alaska.gov/sereg/asbuilts/jnu

Support not built for subs War project fought by governor

March 23, 1941, the *Daily Alaska Empire* editorialized: "For the first time we do not speak resoundingly of Alaska's greatest industry, fish, and second greatest, mining. In 1940, the first place has been taken over by a development we could not foresee even a year ago. National defense is today -- perhaps only briefly, but nevertheless undeniably -- Alaska's greatest industry."

Alaska's strategic proximity to Russia and Japan instantly was amplified with the June 3-4, 1942, bombing of Dutch Harbor and subsequent occupation of the western Aleutians.

Southeast Alaska's Inside Passage was considered the safest sea route to move materiel north. To alleviate the shortage of ocean-going vessels, the Army established the Alaska Barge Line. To that end, General Order 109 was issued designating Juneau and Excursion Inlet, 70 nautical miles northwest of Juneau, as "subports" of the Port Authority of Seattle. That fall, Prince Rupert and Skagway also were designated as such (and the White Pass and Yukon railroad was leased by the Army for access to the road route in the Yukon).

Excursion Inlet, a deep fjord with a cannery, was considered the best departure point for westward ocean-going vessels to deliver war supplies to mainland Alaska. Stated the Army's 1944 *Narrative Report of Alaska Construction, 1941-1944*: "In order to provide an immediate, temporary barging terminal, pending construction of the Alaska Barge Terminal at Excursion Inlet, it was necessary to expand port facilities at Juneau."

Territorial governor Ernest Gruening, an active booster of the war effort, visited the Excursion site and

"quickly concluded the entire concept was ill-conceived." He was "adamant that the project be scrapped" and flew to San Francisco to seek revocation of the order from Army Western Defense Command General John DeWitt -- to no avail. (The Army's own military history of its transportation corps concluded, "These [Aleutian] enemy bases lacked the strength to threaten seriously Alaska's security or to disrupt the sea lanes.")

Construction of a Juneau subport was completed in April 1943. The *Narrative* details directives to extend the existing government dock, widen and replank the existing wharf from 40' to 100' and lengthen it from 600' to 800', construct a barge grid, an apron for unloading, fill for open storage, an adjoining dock and warehouse, a two-lane street to Willoughby Avenue, and pilings and dolphins for barge tie-up a mile south at the rock dump. Final facilities included a 105,800 sf warehouse, 352,900 sf of open storage, 80,000 sf of dock space, requiring total fill of about 12 acres and costing nearly \$1.6 million.

In August 1946 the Army conducted a "final close out" of the subport" and turned it over to the new Alaska District Office of the Corps of Engineers which was to oversee federal construction in the territory and to manage a fleet of 27 barges and six tugs based in Juneau.



The "subport," (flat area, center), looking west, circa 2000. Stock photo, alamy.com



Photos - Above: Femmer's dock, middle right, first built 1915, was extended (from the angle) by the military and seized in 1942 for subport development. U.S. Navy aerial survey, 1929, ASL-P-240-155, George A. Parks Coll. **Below:** Norwegian Cruise Lines proposal (looking east) for 2.9 acres of subport property purchased by NCL for \$20 million, September, 2019; courtesy MRV Architects



Sources: James D. Bush, Jr., Lt. Col. CE, Chief of Operations, Construction Division, Engineer, Alaska Department, U.S. Army, "Narrative Report of Alaska Construction, 1941-1944," retrieved from www.apiai.org; Joseph Bykovsky and Harold Larson, "United States Army in World War II, The Technical Services, The Transportation Corps: Operations Overseas," Center of Military History, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., 1957, pp. 32-33; Jonathan M. Nielson, "Armed Forces on a Northern Frontier: The Military in Alaska's History, 1867-1987," Praeger Publishers, Westport, 1988, pp. 126-127; *Daily Alaska Empire*, Aug. 3 and 17, 1946

Subs and chasers sent here to intercept pirates, reds, and rum (not enemy vessels)

While rumors swirled of submarines -- friendly and enemy -- in the Gastineau Channel during both world wars, newspapers report that when military craft came to Juneau in a public way, it was to stop fish trap piracy, pursue radicals, chase rum runners, or to show the flag, rather than for targeted military defense.

The Sept. 1, 1915, *Daily Alaska Empire* reported a flotilla of five torpedo boat destroyers had arrived the night before.



Above, July, 1934 - The tender S.S. Holland docked near the Alaska-Juneau milling site on S. Franklin. Identified to the right, low in the water, are five subs: Bass, Bonita, Barracuda, Nautilus, and Narwhal. ASL-P-87-2823, Winter & Pond Coll. **Photos below:** Ensign W.S. Morse commanded subchaser 310 which spent three summers in Juneau. The (live) eagle was the ship's mascot. Both photos retrieved from subchase.org/set-alaska-07, Woofenden Coll.



"The destroyers steamed into the harbor in single formation and nestled at the city dock. Within an hour three hundred blue jackets were given shore liberty and the capital city's streets were alive with seamen," reported the DAE. The boats left the next day. (The U.S. did not enter the Great War until April 1917.)

The summer of 1918, shortly before the Nov. 11 armistice, subchaser 309 was assigned to Juneau until October "in order to protect the salmon pack," said federal Food Administrator

P.R. Bradley. (Salmon were considered an important food product among the Allies.) The papers reported several soirees hosted for and by the crews, while warning the public not to give any liquor to the Navy men as it was against their rules and prohibition had gone into effect in Alaska January 1. (The DAE did report September 20 that \$1,173 had been collected for the troops' Tobacco Fund.)

The next April 1919 the gunboat Vicksburg and subchasers 309 and 310 made Juneau their headquarters (bringing nearly 240 men) per the request of Gov. Thomas Riggs for a "permanent patrol" in the area. Said the *Douglas Island News*, April 11, 1919: "... Juneau people can now sleep well at night, secure in the thought that their fair city is safely guarded by the frowning guns of a gunboat and two sub chasers."

However, Gov. Riggs made clear in a June letter to all canneries that the subchasers were intended to address "pirating among the fish traps."

Subchasers, now under the auspices of the U.S. Treasury's Coast Guard, were sent to Juneau a third summer, in 1920, "to aid in the patrol of Alaskan waters for the enforcement of the customs laws and the protection of commerce." (The Coast Guard was under the peacetime supervision of the Treasury until 1967.)

In a long, hawkish editorial May 18, 1920, the *Daily Alaska Empire* reacted to rumors that subchasers were sent to Southeast Alaska to fight the "red menace" (meaning union organizers). "... the radical is never idle ... whenever the people permit themselves to be lulled into a sense of security he is out again distributing his poisonous propaganda. Alaskans should do nothing that would prevent the government from sending naval vessels to Alaska and they should be here all year round. There should be more of them rather than fewer ..."

By spring 1923 the *Empire* was reporting the conversion of subchasers into vessels used to enforce prohibition by intercepting liquor runners along the coast.

More than a decade later (post-Prohibition and pre-World War II), the *Daily Alaska Empire* reported in late July 1934 the towns' welcome of "the largest number of Uncle Sam's fighting craft moored in Juneau at one time." The Submarine Division Twelve, comprised of six subs and two ships, brought 1,300 men and more than 80 officers to Juneau for three days. It would be another 12 years before the *Empire* reported on the visit of three subs for 48 hours. By then, WWII had been over for a year.

Sources: *Daily Alaska Empire*, Aug. 17, Sept. 20, Oct. 12, 1918; June 26 and Dec. 10, 1919; May 4 and May 9, 1923; July 28, 1934; Aug. 13, 1946



Fleet drove some onshore processing, but most Juneau canneries failed

Clean water, vast fish populations, use of highly efficient fish traps, glacier ice, and Sitka spruce all made seafood processing a seemingly natural fit for Juneau. But challenges, such as Juneau's inadequate harbor, impeded development.

Salting was the first method of preserving seafood for sale (and there was plenty of spruce to make barrels). In 1905 Juneau Packing advertised smoked halibut and salmon and produced tons of fertilizer and fish oil. But there was no canning on the Juneau waterfront, perhaps because halibut was the mainstay (a million pounds were shipped out of Juneau in 1909) and it did not can well.

Juneau Cold Storage, built on land leased from the city, opened in 1913. It produced ice cheaper and faster than chipping bergs and could freeze 2,000 fish each day.

Although canning operations existed at Snettisham and Taku Inlets, Thane Road, Auk Bay and Tee Harbor, Juneau's waterfront did not host canneries until 1918 when two were established. Northern Packing Co. bought land on Willoughby and built a dock and plant. Hardware store owner C.W. Young started a small cannery on the Union Oil dock. Two canneries also opened at Douglas in 1918. In 1920 Juneau Packing built a third cannery on the mainland waterfront. All but one Douglas plant quickly went idle and the cold storage became the prime processor.

A new, larger cold storage was built in 1927 and later expanded to include a cannery and retail market. A "mainstay" of Juneau's economy between closure of the Alaska Juneau mine in 1944 and the growth of government jobs following statehood, the cold storage operated for 74 years until it burned in 1987.



Halibut schooner "Sitka", May, 1959, in front of Juneau Cold Storage, ASL-MS10-04-06-007-542



Early canneries in downtown Juneau (in background) were brief; this brand was packed at Taku Inlet. B.C. Archives, I/BA/C67.1; 193501-001

Fishing facility ignited civic battle

A problem for fishermen in early years was that the Juneau waterfront had no protection whatever, especially from southeast gales. It was not until the Alaska Juneau mine began dumping waste rock into the channel that the situation improved. Supporting the fleet (beyond a hoist, ice chipper, and float the city had installed) led to a major fight.

Early in 1917 the city built a float for fishermen next to the Standard Oil plant on Thane Road. It was partly protected by the existing dock, but was a long way from the Juneau business district. The Juneau Merchants Protective Association decided in May 1917 that the halibut fleet needed facilities for making ice and a warehouse for gear storage and fish packing. The group voted to ask the city for such a facility, igniting a political brouhaha.

Mayor Emery Valentine was unalterably against buying shoreside property (city land had been leased in 1913 for a cold storage). In July the city council unanimously approved a resolution to lease property next to the existing city float with an option to buy. In August Valentine vetoed the resolution. In September the six-member council unanimously overrode the veto and directed the mayor to proceed with the lease. Valentine did nothing. The council then considered a resolution declaring the mayor had failed his duty and making a council member acting mayor. Threats of bodily harm between Valentine and another council member are in the record. Valentine filed suit and secured a temporary restraining order to stop the project. No decision was recorded by the newspapers, but the development never occurred.

Sources: Above - DeArmond, R.N., "Days of Yore," *Info Juno*, August 30, 1986.

Left - "Days of Yore," *Info Juno*, Jan. 17, Feb. 7, Mar. 31 and June 13, 1987; May 20 and May 27, 1989; Dec. 15, 1990; Mar. 16 and April 6, 1991; all retrieved from juneau.org/library/museum/digital-bob. Mattson, Richard. "Juneau Area Salmon Processors Timeline. unpublished.

Fish agency dominates government dock

One of the most valuable waterfront properties actually has no value at all -- at least not to city tax rolls. And, despite recommendations over many years to repurpose the site for greater public use, it's unlikely that nearly a century of federal control is going to change any time soon.

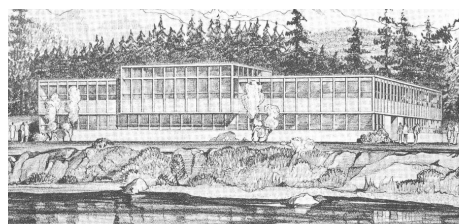
The U.S. Department of Commerce possesses more than 2.4 acres on the subport including three buildings, a float, and a dock (contiguous to the one-acre Coast Guard station). The federal government, which is exempt from city property tax, has exercised a claim to the area since the 1927 when it negotiated with the city to extend Dave Femmer's private wharf. For the past 65 years, a federal fisheries agency (under various names) has dominated "the government dock."

The Interior Department controlled the site a dozen years (per a 1930 Executive Order creating an Alaska Commission to oversee federal operations in the territory). In May 1942 a presidential decree gave the Navy jurisdiction; a month later the Japanese bombed the Aleutians and the Army took over the site and built a 12-acre "subport." In August 1946 it became the new Alaska Office of the Corps of Engineers to manage federal construction in Alaska and coordinate 27 barges and six tugs. The Corps built a dry dock 68' wide and 200' long, presumably to service this fleet.

For much of the next decade, territorial officials lobbied Congress to cede federal tidelands in Juneau. A bill transferring ten acres of federal property (again apparently under the auspices of Interior) slowly moved through



In 1871 President Ulysses S. Grant created the U.S. Commission of Fish & Fisheries, the first federal entity focused on natural resource conservation. In 1903 the commission was renamed the Bureau of Fisheries. In 1940 Juneau was named one of five federal fisheries offices in the nation. In 1956 the Bureau was split into commercial and sport fish in U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. In 1970 the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries was renamed the National Marine Fisheries Service and placed within the new National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).



Top: TSMRI; bottom: Auke Bay Lab; courtesy NOAA.

Congress in 1956. The transfer included the National Guard Armory (now the Juneau Arts & Humanities Council), but exempted property occupied by the Forest Service, Coast Guard or U.S. Fish & Wildlife (including its Bureau of Commercial Fisheries [BCF]), i.e., today's subport.

It seems the BCF was already settled in. After all, in 1940 Juneau had been designated one of five national fisheries offices. The BCF's first mention of the subport, in its December 1957 report, implies customary use: "December *as usual* was fairly quiet in the subport shops as a number of mechanics and crews were on leave."

The *Congressional Record* of March 1957 includes references to the transfer. Uplands and a portion of the subport were eventually ceded to the territory, but the feds never gave up the east side, even as facilities for both BCF and Coast Guard were built at Auke Bay (which is rockier and less accessible).

In November 1961 a severe storm destroyed subport bulkheads. BCF offices were condemned and relocated -- but not to the new Auke Bay lab (nor to the federal building, which didn't exist until 1963). The dock and flat buildable space had become an essential boat repair and maintenance site upon which fisheries researchers and other federal entities depended. So, the subport was rehabilitated in 1963. In 1970 the new NOAA (see left) built a warehouse and shop and later a second warehouse. By 1981 city studies suggested tourism was a better use of the site and federal operations could be served elsewhere, such as West Douglas. Forty years later, that has yet to occur. A 2000 assessment of the subport quoted NOAA officials: "They like the town location." That year NOAA built a \$450,000 float there.

In 2007 NMFS (and other fish research entities) moved into the Ted Stevens Marine Research Institute on Lena Point. There is no dock at the new facility and NOAA retains its hold -- initially gained by executive decree -- on it's coveted swatch of downtown waterfront.



Photos: Coast Guard vessels two abreast at subport dock shared with NOAA whose buildings are middle right. alaska.coastguard.dodlive.mil Below: the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dry dock, ASL-MS10-4-04-63-354, Kinky Byers Coll.



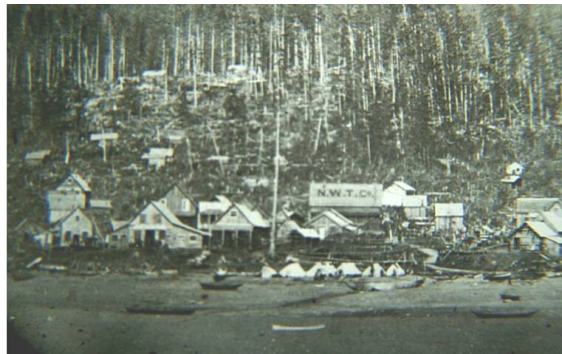
Sources: Daily Alaska Empire (DAE), Jan. 19, 1924 and Aug. 15, 1942. Fisheries Service Bulletin #178; March 1, 1930; DAE, Aug. 17, 1946. CBJ GPO-CRECB-1957-pt3-16 .pdf; *Congressional Record*, March 22, 1957; BCF Alaska Region Activities Report, Dec. 1, 1957-Feb. 28, 1958; Nov. 1961; April, 1962; May, 1963. DAE, June 11, 1956. CBJ GIS Property Map; property.juneau.org; www.presidency.ucsb.edu; "Subport Vicinity Redevelopment Project," Sheinberg & Assoc., 2000; Fisheries.NOAA.gov;

Waterfront's oldest development has supported air travel nearly a century



Photo: First airplane to fly over Juneau (enroute to Whitehorse), 1920. ASL-P87-1089. One of four U.S. Army Black Wolf Squadron bi-planes to fly from New York to Nome. As it passed, the pilot dropped a message to Gov. Thomas J Riggs.

Below: Miners' Cove, Northwest Trading Company store visible in center; circa 1882, courtesy Jim Geraghty



April 15, 1929, Enscel Eckmann flew to Juneau, the first non-stop flight from Seattle to Alaska. Shortly thereafter, Eckmann formed Alaska-Washington Airways and operated out of a hangar built atop a large log raft anchored in front of the car dealership. It wasn't long before at least five companies were providing floatplane service out of the Juneau harbor. In 1936 Alaska Air Transport (AAT), owned by Sheldon "Shell" Simmons, took it over, demolished the dock and built a five-plane hangar funded by local investors. By 1940 AAT had become Alaska Coastal Airlines and purchased the leased hangar which had been rebuilt following a fire. In 1946 the hangar was tripled to 15,000 square feet; offices and a baggage handling area were added later.

The waterfront remained a hub for Southeast air travel even after general aviation wheeled aircraft could land at the airport on the Mendenhall flats in 1948 as most towns in the region did not have air strips.

In 1962, with the merger of Alaska Coastal and Ellis Air Transport of Ketchikan, the wharf became the operations center of the "greatest exclusively amphibian airline in the world, with the largest (private) fleet of the legendary Grumman Goose." (Today five of the original planes are in museums around the world.)

In 1974 the property was purchased and reconfigured into shops, restaurants, and offices.

The CBJ's 2004 "Long Range Waterfront Plan" recommended Merchants' Wharf be demolished to expand Marine Park to the east and a seawalk to the west. That never happened, although the site was on the market at least two years. In fact, it's one of the few pieces of waterfront never taken over by government. Today, the two-parcel property is valued by the city at \$6.3 million. For nearly a century the floats out front have served seaplane passengers -- now comprised of tens of thousands of tourists.

Sources: (1) Redman, Earl. *The Juneau Goldbelt: A History of the Mines and Miners*, 3rd Ed., 2011, Green Igloo Press, Cavan, Ireland, pp. 20-21. "Long Range Waterfront Plan," CBJ, 2004. "Historic Property Evaluation of the Alaska Coastal Airlines Hangar," CBJ, 2006. Wahto, Patty, "Juneau Airport History," Nov. 3, 2016 (Power Point). Assessor's Database at property.juneau.org, retrieved Aug. 31, 2021.

Photo: Alaska Coastal Airlines, Circa 1957-1960. ASL-P356-0146, Shell Simmons Coll.

For at least 120 years, one particular piece of the Juneau waterfront has played a continuous role in its development. Today, Merchants Wharf is a mix of retail and office space, but the location continues to serve -- as it has for most of the last century -- as a seaplane hub.

The spot originally was called "Miners' Cove." It's where, by December 1880, about 40 miners camped anticipating a spring gold rush along Gold Creek. Just a few weeks earlier, on October 18, Richard Harris, Joe Juneau and Nathan Fuller had recorded a 160-acre townsite named Harrisburg after filing mining claims along the creek valley. (1)

A deep-water wharf was built at the site at the foot of Main Street sometime in the late 1890s. In 1901 Pacific Coastal Steamship Company took it over. Its competitor, Admiral Line, purchased PCSC in 1923 and moved elsewhere on the waterfront.

According to CBJ's 2006 "Historic Property Evaluation" of the site, it was purchased in 1924 by Juneau Motor Co. and was the first Ford dealership, just as autos were becoming popular.

Five years later, the location's use as an aviation hub took off.



Outsized impact of Treadwell on Alaska development topic of annual meeting

Tourism, the transportation industry, high-tech mining, and factory work were jump started in Alaska by Treadwell. The four-mine, five-mill complex on Douglas Island and its modern management engendered an appealing, successful company town for 40 years (1882-1922) and ignited twentieth-century development of the territory.

Wrote longtime, nationally-syndicated columnist Frederic J. Haskin March 2, 1910: It takes 6,000 pancakes, 3,800 biscuits, 2,300 eggs, 60 pounds of coffee, and three beeves a day to feed 1,500 men.

Paulette Simpson, Wayne Jensen and Jim Geraghty of Treadwell Historical and Restoration Society and Rich Mattson and Laury Scandling of GCHS prepared the 100+ slide program for the Alaska Historical Society virtual conference in October. It will be the topic of GCHS's annual meeting Sunday, Nov. 14, 1-3 pm. For a Zoom link, email: juneauhistory@gmail.com



Left: The Mexican Mine basketball team, S.E. Alaska Champions, 1914. ASL-P164-25, William Barquist Coll. **Above:** Treadwell boarding house main dining room which could seat 480, 1908. Men are dressed up for 4th of July, one of two days -- Christmas was the other -- when the mines and mills stopped. ASL-P226-327, William R Norton Coll. **Below:** Treadwell Club Band, 1908, August Waltersdorff, second from left. **Bottom left:** Kristine Waltersdorff (on left), member of the Treadwell (as indicated by the "T" on their uniforms) women's basketball team, 1908. Both photos courtesy of Waltersdorff's great-granddaughter Kyria Boundy-Mills. **Bottom center:** Joe Kendler delivering milk by dog team, 1911. (There were no roads in Treadwell, but rather boardwalks and rail cars.) University of Washington Libraries, John M. Cobb Coll., COB207.





Fateful step led to gold medals and advocacy for disabled

A tragic teenage adventure at an old mining site in Juneau led a hapless young man to two gold medals in the 1980 Winter Paralympics.

The Paralympics began in 1960, but it wasn't until the first winter games in 1976, that the worldwide athletic competition for individuals with disabilities wasn't just for those in wheelchairs. **(The next Winter Paralympics are March 4-13, 2022, in Beijing.)**

Doug Keil's road to gold – and to trailblazing advocacy for Alaska's disability community – began on a August day in Juneau, 1968. The 14-year-old from Anchorage was visiting a pal who had moved to Juneau. They and another buddy decided to retrieve a couple Pyrex glass insulators attached to a board on a shed on former mining property in Last Chance Basin that at the time was owned by Alaska Electric Light & Power. The shed was next to a transformer tower, so they decided to climb the tower to reach the insulators. As Keil stepped along a cross bar, he slipped and came in contact with a 23,000-volt line. His life would never be the same.



Photos: Courtesy Doug Keil. Top: 1977; middle: 1968, with his mom at UW hospital; bottom: today

One of his companions ran nearly two miles to the fire station at City Hall. According to the police report, August 28, 1968, Chief James Wellington and two officers responded, as did two state troopers. In the meantime, Keil's dangling foot came in contact with the power line and he was again electrocuted. One of his friends put his own life in danger when he climbed the tower to disentangle Keil from the crossbar. Two Juneau officers climbed the tower to immobilize Keil so that he would not be struck again. "Upon reaching the victim's position, which was approximately 20 feet from the ground, it was noticed that he was still alive." Keil remained caught in the tower's structure for probably 45 minutes until an AEL&P representative arrived and shut off the power. Keil's

left limbs and right abdomen were severely burned. A Coast Guard C-130 was diverted to Juneau to fly Doug to University Medical Center in Seattle where his parents met him. "The doctors told them to expect a corpse," says Keil. But he was conscious throughout the ordeal.

"When I was in the ER, they let my dad poke his head through the curtain. I told him, 'This is gonna cost a lot of money.' I said I'd sell my motorcycle, which I'd just bought with the money from my paper route. But I told him that I could sell only one of my skis, because I was going to ski again." And, he did. But not before a great deal of pain, loss, and finding his way.

Keil's left arm and left leg were amputated. He endured multiple surgeries and skin grafts to his permanently ruined abdomen. He wouldn't leave the hospital until Christmas and then spent more than another year undergoing medical treatment. Doctors told him the damage would likely kill him before 30.

The former multi-sport athlete finished high school in Virginia and then returned to Anchorage to start college. That didn't last long. "I was kind of lost," says Keil who today is a 67-year-old retired GCI cable TV control room operations manager. "Back then you just 'manned up'. You didn't have counseling. I ended up partying like everyone else at that time."

In 1975 his parents gave him a plane ticket to Winter Park, Colorado, to check out the Handicapped Ski Program. "My dad said, 'If you're going to sit around and do nothing, do it there'." He was 21.

He happened to arrive on the opening day of the National Handicapped Ski Championships – and lots of people, not just him, were on crutches. The program director had him try an "outrigger," a crutch with a ski that could attach to his artificial arm. It was clear that he had plenty of athleticism left. He returned to Alaska, went to work to support himself and to race on a single ski with outriggers on his arms.

He competed in the nationals in 1977 and came in second in his class. He stuck with it and raced again in '79, but blew a gate in the giant slalom and was disqualified. But he was not done. He was invited to try out for what would be just the second Winter Paralympics, set for Norway in 1980. "At the time I think I was the only skier in the country on one leg." He was chosen for the American Alpine team and won a gold in the slalom and another in the giant slalom.

His success awakened in him a commitment to support other disabled individuals to find the freedom he felt on skis. "I've always liked to go fast," said Keil when he was interviewed by the *Anchorage Daily News* at age 26. "Skiing gave me the feeling of motion. It's like running again."

He returned to Alaska and that year founded Challenge Alaska to promote sports and recreation for those with disabilities. He would be a board member 30 years. Along the way, he collected a slew of awards and recognition, including being selected as an Olympic torch runner in 1996 and being nominated for the Alaska Sports Hall of Fame. When he could no longer risk skiing, he got into competitive sailing for several years.

Two years ago, he returned to Geilo, Norway where 299 disabled Olympians competed in 1980. He sat on the porch of the hotel where he'd stayed forty years before and "experienced a lot of reflection about the entire accident and the process by which I ended up being in Norway."

A process that began in Juneau on what started out as just a teenaged boy's adventurous August day.



GHS Board of Directors and Project Contacts

Directors elected by members at November annual meeting

Gary Gillette	President	Sentinel Island Lighthouse	907.780.4355
Gladi Kulp	Vice President		907.723.0460
Paula Johnson	Secretary		907.789.3302
Malin Babcock	Treasurer	Membership	907.789.9423
Kristie Swanson	Director	Annual Meeting Coordinator	907.723.1723
Rich Mattson	Director	Website Coordinator	907.789.5490
Laury Scandling	Director	Newsletter Editor	907.321.7060
Renee Hughes	Coordinator	Last Chance Mining Museum	907.586.5338

Your support strengthens local history

GCHS recognizes those whose extra level of commitment enables the Society to better serve our membership and to respond to opportunities including participating in the purchase of two oil paintings by Sydney Laurence, "Early Morning, Juneau, Alaska" and "Bend in the River," for Friends of the Juneau-Douglas City Museum. The Society also supported The Empty Chair Project to recognize the internment of Southeast Alaskan Japanese-Americans during WWII and contributed to the William Seward statute. GCHS has supported the Treadwell Historical Preservation and Restoration Society's projects, including restoration of the Treadwell Salt Water Pump House and stabilization of the New Treadwell Office building. Your contributions also supported the "1860s Alaska" traveling exhibit panels recognizing Alaska's Sesquicentennial and printing "Tales of a Territorial Childhood." Thanks to your patronage, GCHS last year was able to develop our new website: juneauhistory.org

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Shaw, Gerald & Janet
Smith, Paula
Triplette, Jim & Jackie
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Whittaker, Jetta & Rob Steedle

Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan in place after three-year process

An updated municipal guide to historic and cultural preservation in the borough for the next 20 years is now in place. "The Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan" was adopted by the Assembly last year following a public process from 2016-2019. The last such plan, developed in 1997, was never formally adopted. The new plan is to be updated in ten years and progress evaluated every two years.

The report notes, "Over the past thirty years the City and Borough of Juneau has been one of the most active communities in Alaska in its preservation efforts. As the state capital, it is appropriate for the CBJ to be model for the rest of the state in responsible planning, urban design and the preservation of historic and cultural resources."

The process was begun by the city's Community Development Department and the local Historic Resources Advisory Committee in late 2016 using a federal grant. It makes recommendations in five areas: Administration & Management Tools, Education & Interpretation, Resource Inventory & Identification, Preservation Incentives and Benefits, Advocacy & Partnerships.

The Comprehensive Plan, updated in 2013, calls for identification, protection, and preservation of historical and cultural resources.

Juneau's preservation program officially began in 1983 when the Assembly adopted the original boundaries of the Downtown Historic District and developed the first set of design standards for that area.

To read the full report:

<https://juneau.org/index.php?gf-download=2020/08/Historic-Preservation-and-Cultural-Plan-FINAL-VERSION-with-ordinance.pdf&form-id=22&field-id=11&hash=82c55b4e635147a307b5cb8171c187dc071461545380f160cb3228da1b1807aa>

GCHS Annual Meeting

Sunday, Nov. 14

1-3 pm

email: juneauhistory@gmail.com
for Zoom link

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\$30-Individual \$50-Family or Business \$100-Supporting

\$200 - Historian - Four benefits listed above PLUS:
4 passes to the Last Chance Mining Museum

\$500 - Gold Miner - Four benefits listed at top, PLUS:
One night for 2 at Sentinel Island Lighthouse*

\$1,000 - Lighthouse Keeper - Four benefits listed at top, PLUS:
Two nights for 2 at Sentinel Island Lighthouse*

*Monday-Thursday only. Lodgers bring food, bedding. Transportation not included.
For information or reservations: 907.780.4355 or glrrlg@alaska.net

\$ _____ Additional contribution to Last Chance Mining Museum
 \$ _____ Additional contribution to Sentinel Island Lighthouse
 \$ _____ Additional contribution for special purpose or general operations
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Questions? Contact the Society through: juneauhistory@gmail.com

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Gastineau Heritage News is published twice annually by the Gastineau Channel Historical Society. Written and edited by Laury Scandling; researched by Paula Johnson, Rich Mattson and Gary Gillette with contributions by Paulette Simpson and Jim Geraghty. Current and past editions can be purchased at juneauhistory.org. Contact juneauhistory@gmail.com