THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES IN THE REGIONS...

February 2008

A MONTHLY CALENDAR OF EVENTS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Dogsled Mail in Alaska, 1890s-1963

Delivering the mail to Alaska has always presented a formidable challenge to the U.S. Postal Service. Letters, parcels, and supplies from the "Lower 48 states" often took weeks or months to reach their destinations. Steamships transported Alaskabound mail north from Puget Sound in Washington to southeastern coastal towns. After reaching these towns, mail was carried to some sections of interior Alaska by river steamers and, later, by Alaska Railroad trains for delivery to smaller, outlying villages. The harsh Arctic weather and limited trail and road system also made mail delivery extremely difficult. In the more isolated sections, carrying the mail required methods far different than those traditionally used elsewhere in the United States.

Dogs proved superior for the winter transport of mail. Dogs were capable of covering long distances, day or night, and could travel over frozen lakes and rivers and pass through dense forests. The Native malamute, the Eskimo dog, or Husky were of all the same breed and was the most valued dog for teams. Malamutes were strong, with thick coats and furry paws, and thrived on dried

salmon and needed no special housing. Newfoundlands, St. Bernards, setters, spaniels, and collies were also used. As in earlier frontiers, horses were also used in Alaska, but they posed special problems. Feed was costly and hard to supply and horses required special care in extreme cold.

By 1901, a network of mail trails throughout Alaska was in use, including a system that followed almost the entire length of the Yukon River. The historic 2,300-mile Iditarod Trail was the main dog trail that carried mail

Color post card no. P987, "Alaska Dog Team" (attributed to Eric A. Hegg), ca. 1905-1914 ARC Identifier #297824

Sir Henry S. Wellcome Collection NARA Pacific Alaska Region, Anchorage from Seward to Nome. Over-night roadhouses served mail carriers, freighters, and other travelers who used dog sleds or horses.

Mail dog teams varied in size, with eight to ten dogs the most common number for pulling a sled. Typical of the dog teams that have carried Alaska's mail is the string of Malamutes shown on the postal card, "Alaska Dog Team." The dogs are working with a light racing sled. On a mail run, they would haul a heavier, longer sled. On average, dog teams pulled sleds containing between 500 - 700 pounds of mail, which meant that each dog had a load of up to 100 pounds (although they hauled less on the more challenging trails). Mail sacks usually weighed 50 pounds each. Rubber-lined waterproof bags were used to protect precious mail from snow, rain, and mud. The dogs wore moosehide moccasins to protect their feet as much as possible from jagged pieces of ice.

In 1963, the U.S. Post Office Department honored Chester Noongwook of Savoonga, on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea. He was the last mail driver and with his retirement, regular sled dog mail delivery ended in Alaska.



U.S. Mail Crew at Mail Tent No. 2. Moose Pass, Kenai Winter Trail, 1923 ARC ID# 605254 RG 30, NARA Pacific Alaska Region, Anchorage





SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
						Seattle, WA Nearby History— Overview of the NARA Website Lecture/General Public 206-336-5115
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			Seattle, WA Pacific Northwest Indian Records at NARA Workshop/Genealogists 206-336-5115			Seattle, WA Becoming a National Archives Volunteer Lecture/General Public 206-336-5115
10	11	Anchorage, AK Introduction to Genealogical Research at NARA's Pacific Alaska Region Workshop General Public 6-7:30 P.M. 907-261-7820	13	Seattle, WA Brick Wall Discussion Workshop/Genealogists 206-336-5115	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	Denver, CO
						Using NARA Primary Resource Materials Workshop K-12 Teachers 303-407-5749
24	25	26	27	28	Seattle, WA Blue and Grey: Civil War in the Pacific Northwest Conference General Public 206-336-5115 2/29/08-3/1/08	

Region

NARA's Pacific Laguna Niguel 949-360-2641 laguna.archives@nara.gov

San Bruno 650-238-3501 sanbruno.archives@nara.gov **NARA's Rocky Mountain Region**

Denver 303-407-5740 denver.archives@nara.gov **NARA's Pacific** Alaska Region

Seattle 206-336-5115 seattle.archives@nara.gov **Anchorage** 907-261-7800 alaska.archives@nara.gov

Exhibit: New York, NY

February 2008

Mickey Mouse Goes To Court 10/9/07-3/30/08

10/1/05-6/1/08

Camp Kilmer: Entertaining the Troops! 11/14/07 - 6/1/08

From NARA's Holdings: New York Photographs

Waltham, MA

New York, NY

Opening Exhibit: Massachusetts 54th **Infantry Regiment Records of NARA** 1/22/08-4/1/08

		1/22/00-4/1/00					
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
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Halltifull	1 Paintings	5	6	7	8	9	
	l Robert E. Lee's Pers	onal		,		,	
Property at Arlingto	n House, 29 August 1 21, U.S. District Courts	863		Waltham, MA Afro-American Historical Resources in Federal Records Exhibit/General Public 781-663-0121	Pittsfield, MA Beginning Your Genealogy at NARA 2/8/2008–2/8/2008 Workshop/Genealogists 413-236-3600	Philadelphia, PA PA Live and Learn Weekend—Quest for Freedom Tour/General Public 215-386-9224	
10	11	Waltham, MA Afro-American Historical Resources in the Classroom Exhibit/General Public 781-663-0121	13	14	Pittsfield, MA Using Federal Census Records Workshop/Genealogists 413-236-3600 Federal Hall, NY Celebrate President's Day General Public 866-840-1752	Philadelphia, PA Black History Showcase Information Booth General Public 2/16/08–2/17/08	
Philadelphia, PA Philadelphia Abolitionists Symposium General Public 215-685-4830	18	19	20	21	Pittsfield, MA Using Military Records in Genealogy Workshop/Genealogists 413-236-3600 Federal Hall, NY Honoring the birth of George Washington Commander-in-chief of the Continental Army General Public 866-840-1752	Philadelphia, PA Judge Richard Peters Lecture 1 p.m. Lecture/General Public 215-878-8844 Morrow, GA Black History Month Workshop 10 a.m. Workshop/General Public 770-968-2555	
24	25	Philadelphia, PA Two Perspectives on the Emanicipation Proclamation Symposium General Public 215-409-6600	27	Philadelphia, PA Building Bridges— 1794 to 1808 to 2008 Tour/General Public 215-878-8844	Pittsfield, MA Finding Your Immigrant Ancestor at NARA Workshop/Genealogists 413-236-3600	New York, NY New York: An American Capital 12/14/06– 6/1/08	

NARA's Northeast Region

Pittsfield 413-236-3600 pittsfield.archives@nara.gov

Boston 866-406-2379 waltham.archives@nara.gov

New York 866-840-1752 newyork.archives@nara.gov

NARA's Mid Atlantic Region

Philadelphia 215-606-0100 philadelphia.archives@nara.gov **NARA's Southeast Region**

Morrow 770-968-2100 atlanta.archives@nara.gov

TUESDAY **SUNDAY** MONDAY

Two Toboggans at the Silver Valley Winter Sports Area, **Huron Manistee National** Forest, Michigan, 1940 RG 95, Records of the U.S. **Forest Service NARA Great Lakes Region**



WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

Chicago, IL **Exhibit: Exhibit: Exhibit: Excelsior Springs, MO Maps in the Great** Raytown, MO Lee's Summit, MO Civil Rights, Lakes Region George Washington George Washington **Civil Liberties** 2/1/08-6/30/08 Carver Carver 2/11/08-2/29/08 2/19/08-3/2/08 2/4/08-2/18/08 Kansas City, MO Film Nite at WWI Museum Film Screening of "Wings"/General Public 816-268-8017 6 Kansas City, MO Excelsior Springs, MO Parkville, MO Film Nite at WWI Introduction to Introduction to Museum Genealogical Genealogical Film Screening of Research Research "Hell's Angels Lecture/Genealogists Lecture/Genealogists General Public 816-268-8072 816-268-8072 816-268-8017 Kansas City, MO 13 10 11 12 Trail of Tears Lecture/General Public 816-268-8071 Liberty, MO **Teacher Professional** Development Conference Information Booth K-12 Teachers 816-268-8016 Raytown, MO 18 19 Introduction to the National **Archives** Lecture/General Public 816-268-8071 Kansas City, MO Film Nite at WWI Museum Film Screening of "Dawn Patrol" General Public Chicago, IL. 816-268-8017 Illinois African **Exhibit:** American State Lawmakers Oak Grove, MO Lecture/General Public Kansas City, MO 773-948-9004 **Fashion Court** Film Nite at WWI Chicago, IL. Museum 2/8/08-Film Screening of The Life and Times of "Blue Max" 2/26/08 John W.E. Thomas General Public Lecture/General Public 816-268-8017 773-948-9001

NARA's Great Lakes Region Chicago 773-948-9001 chicago.archives@nara.gov

NARA's **Central Plains Region** Kansas City 816-268-8000

kansascity.archives@nara.gov

NARA's National Personnel Records Center (NPRC)

Archival Programs Division St. Louis 314-801-0850

NARA's Southwest Region Fort Worth 817-831-5620

ftworth.archives@nara.gov