

Kodiak History Detectives Tackle Under Researched Era

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

There's a new group in town, and it's looking to learn more about Kodiak's history. Anjuli Grantham is the curator of collections at the Baranov Museum and brainchild behind Kodiak History Detectives. She said the idea for the group came to her after hearing about something similar in Washington State. She said various organizations are working together in Washington to train individuals on how to collect, research and better document information about the state's relatively unknown role in the Civil War. Grantham said the state's method of crowd sourcing research isn't just effective in gathering information, but also educating and engaging a community in local history.

While born from the mission in Washington, Kodiak History Detectives aren't researching the Civil War. Instead, Grantham organized the group to look at various under researched eras in Alaska's history.

-- (Hist Detec 1 :33 "We just had our first meeting on Monday … period in Kodiak.”)

She said the early American period is typically referred to as the years following Alaska's purchase in 1867, until the Katmai eruption.

-- (Hist Detec 2 :23 "And so it's this 50 year chunk of time that ... in Fairbanks.”)

Grantham visited the records last year to copy and photograph thousands of documents. She said even then she was only scratching the surface of the amount of information the Alaska Commercial Company kept. Those documents are now the material that the "detectives" are reading and organizing to better understand the history of this era. Grantham said people often assume commercial records are dull because they consist of purchase orders or money exchanges, but even those provide a unique glimpse into Kodiak's past as far as what people needed to

buy more than 120 years ago.

-- (Hist Detec 3 :31 “But then we also have this really … stuff comes up.”)

Grantham
read from one of those letters, a particularly intriguing one that was found while sifting through documents on Monday.

-- (Hist Detec 4 :31 “So this is a letter that was written from … be apprehended.”)

Each
member of Kodiak History Detectives was given 50 pages of letters, ledgers and other documents ranging in age from 120 to 130-years-old. Grantham said the documents are primarily handwritten, which makes reading the cursive style somewhat difficult. She said the detectives will meet again in April to review the documents they were tasked with reading and work toward cataloging the information they contain.

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