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Old cannon poised for display in museum collection

By DAN RUDY
Sentinel writer

The Wrangell Museum added a new piece to its public gallery, an antique cannon.

Not that the piece itself is new, thought to be close to two centuries old. Nor is it newly acquired, donated in 2002 to the museum by nonagenarian Bruce Johnston, a former resident then living in Ketchikan. Handed over before the museum's transition over to the Nolan Center, during the shift the cannon wound up in one of the many scattered caches of items kept around town.

By now settled, museum staff have over the past few years started to catalogue its collection with the aid of some grants, whittling down superfluous, degraded or less interesting pieces and better preserving the rest for posterity. It was during this process that the cannon came up.

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Last spring she and archivist Cindy Kilpatrick began checking the different storage locations, finding what they were searching for in the line building next to Rayme's Bar. They were surprised to find it at some point had been painted bright red, and was somewhat worse for wear.

Both museum workers also discovered they couldn't lift the

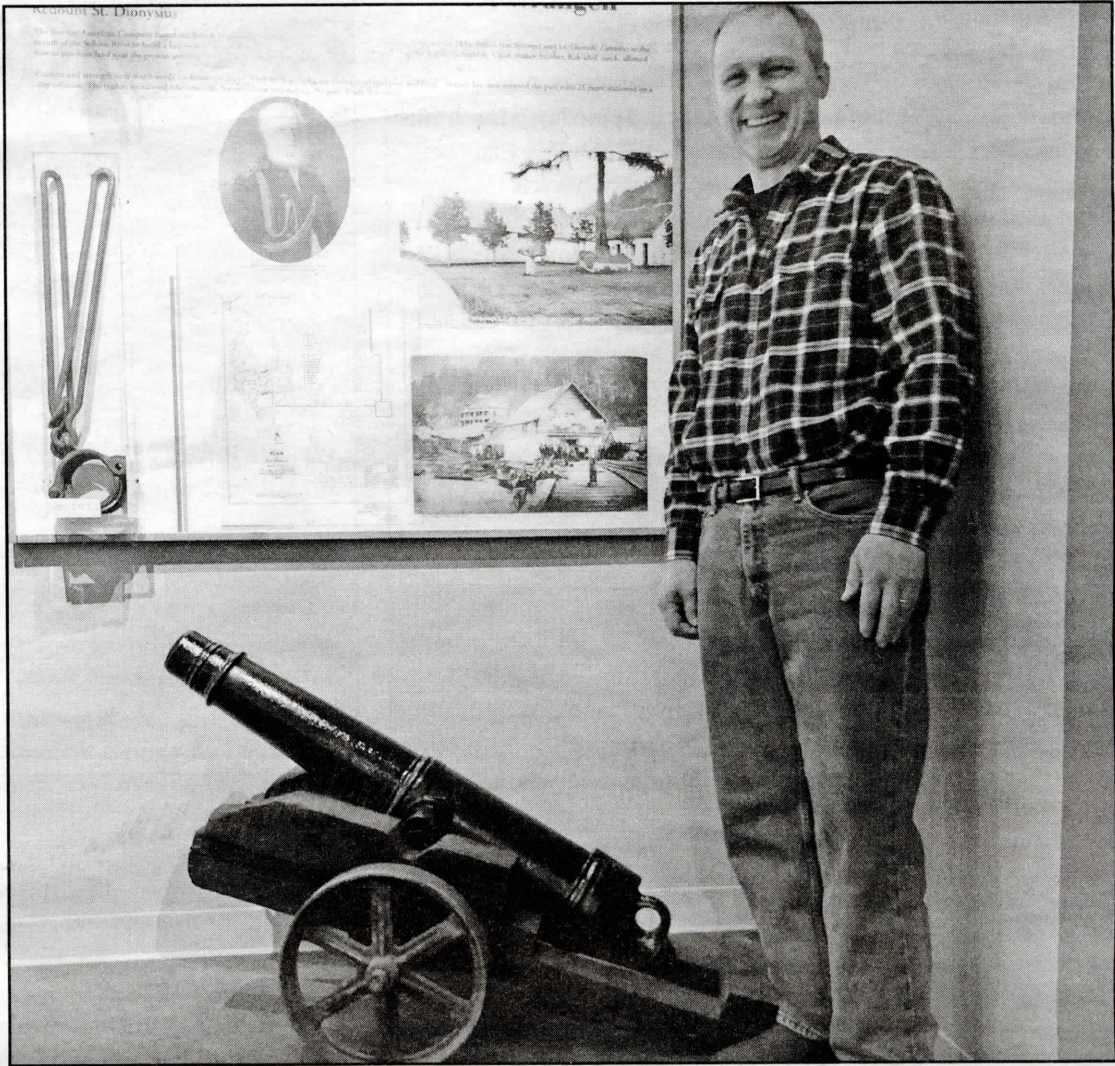


PHOTO COURTESY OF GREGG ACUNA

Clay Hammer poses with the refurbished cannon newly on display at Wrangell Museum, after helping get it set up on Monday. In storage for the past 16 years, an anonymous craftsman did restorative work on it for the museum, and Hammer helped arrange its transportation.

thing. It was small, only about four feet long, but quite solidly built. Henson called Clay Hammer, superintendent at Wrangell

Municipal Light and Power, for help.

"The line department has always been one of those depart-

ments we can call," Henson said. "They've always come and given us a hand."

"What it needed was a good sandblasting and a paint job," he thought after looking it over.

Hammer knew someone with the right skillset who might be able to refurbish the piece. The person agreed, but wanted his contribution to remain anonymous. When he could find time over the past year the paint was painstakingly removed, with a protective coat added in its stead.

Finished last weekend, on Monday Hammer conveyed it back to the museum. He said he was helped by a group of Stikine Sportsmen Association members, who were at the time breaking down displays from their annual dinner at the Nolan Center on Saturday.

Together they helped shift the artillery piece inside, placing it on a wheeled cart the museum

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Brian Gilbert fundraiser and golf tournament cancelled

By DAN RUDY
Sentinel writer

Wrangell Medical Center Foundation last month issued a letter to supporters informing them it would forgo its annual fundraiser weekend this year.

For the past ten years the Brian Gilbert Memorial Golf Tournament and fundraiser dinner is hosted in Wrangell each May in order to raise money for the Foundation. The Foundation is a nonprofit dedicated to support the community's medical needs. The funds it handles fills a few roles, primarily supporting WMC's bid for a new facility but also procuring new equipment, funding its cancer-related travel expenses program, and financing a two-year health careers scholarship for Wrangell High School graduates.

Arranging the organization's largest fundraiser - which includes a nine-hole golf tournament, a catered dinner at the Nolan Center, and a charity auction - is no easy feat. One of the reasons the Foundation has decided not to hold the event is the upcoming departure of WMC's outreach coordinator, Kris Reed, who in past years has led its planning.

"She was the one that carried most of the burden," explained Patty Gilbert, WMC Foundation president.

Some volunteers had gotten together to plan the fundraiser themselves, but Gilbert said with the time available it had proven too much to handle.

"We can't really do it justice," she said. "We're going to take a break for a year and regroup."

Reed will continue working with WMC through the middle of April on a half-time basis, transitioning into a new position with Southeast Alaska Rural Health Consortium. The hospital is this week in the middle of interviews for her replacement, though some of the job's duties will be covered by other staff, leaving the position a half-time one.

"We relied quite a bit on Kris Reed. We're going to miss her,"

Gilbert commented.

WMC CEO Robert Rang explained another reason for the fundraiser and tournament's cancellation this year relates to the changing scope of finding a new facility. Updated cost estimates for a facility put out last fall were several times higher than previously expected, and coupled with revenue issues the city-run hospital is looking at other options.

One of those potentialities being explored will be some degree of partnership with another health care provider, with SEARHC the likeliest candidate. At this juncture, Rang explained, it was a good opportunity for the Foundation to step back from its fundraiser and reevaluate how it allocates its resources.

The Foundation's tournament had once been a big draw for golfers from other communities around Southeast, though in recent years Gilbert thought less promotion has lessened turnout. Petersburg participants have still made the rounds for it, though Petersburg golfer Rocky Littleton explained the annual Ryder Cup and Alaska Airlines tournaments were the bigger draws.

Another big tournament for both communities is the Rally for Cancer Care Tournament, typically held in August. Also benefiting the WMC Foundation, proceeds from that go toward its cancer care travel fund, which helps defray costs for flights and accommodations for patients undergoing treatment. Gilbert said that tournament is still on for this year, which will be its 12th.

All the tournaments are held at Wrangell's Muskeg Meadows Golf Course, which may begin its 2018 season at the start of April.

"It's weather-dependent," explained club manager Bill Messer. "Right now it's not looking good for April 1."

But the course's tournament lineup this year looks similar to last year's, the Brian Gilbert notwithstanding. An increase in cruise ship dockings scheduled for Wrangell this summer is also expected to boost use at the course.

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Cannon

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already had that had been built to support it. Henson did not think it had been the artillery piece's original cart, but seemed to fit for display purposes. The cannon now resides in the Fort Wrangell and Redoubt St. Dionysus section of the collection, viewable by the public.

Not a lot is otherwise known about the cannon's origins, though some theories and conjectures surround it. The casting marks identifying the foundry it came from have since been weathered away, but Kilpatrick said the donor Johnston had suspected it was a Russian piece.

Hammer said the anonymous restorer had an interest in cannonry, and had noted its design to be unique from typical American or British models. At around 3.5 inches, he thought that the caliber of the weapon was distinctive.

He also had suspected it to be a Russian artifact, dating from that country's time in the region. Colonial Wrangell had its start as a Russian strategic outpost in 1834, commanded by Dionysius Zarembo. The Russian presence was not long-lived, leasing the fort to the British Hudson Bay Company in 1840. The place finally transferred to American control with the purchase of Alaska from the Russians in 1867.

"It's a really cool little piece of Wrangell history," Hammer concluded.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JARED GROSS

Pristine powder

Fresh snowfall graces Paradise the afternoon of February 28, on Wrangell's Middle Ridge. Recent accumulations over the previous couple of weeks had deepened coverage to five or six feet in parts, drawing a number of recreants on their snow machines.

Henson suggested a cannonball found by a resident on their Panhandle Avenue property some years ago could be similarly sized to the cannon. However, further examination of the relic by an expert would be needed before jumping to any conclusions.

In the meantime, she was

very grateful for the assistance given the museum.

"They did a wonderful job," she said.

The cannon, along with a piece of Tlingit totem, will be a new addition to museum visitors this year. Still on its winter

weekend schedule, Wrangell Museum will shift to its extended summertime hours starting April 2.

EPA and Trident reach settlement on Wrangell waste violations

The Environmental Protection Agency announced last Friday that it has reached an agreement with Trident Seafoods Corporation and the U.S. Department of Justice to resolve violations of the Clean Water Act for discharges of fish waste at two seafood processing facilities in Wrangell and in Sand Point, in the Aleutians.

Under the agreement, Trident will remove nearly three-and-a-half acres of waste from the seafloor near its Sand Point plant, and limit the amount of seafood waste discharged from its Wrangell plant.

"We are pleased that Trident has committed to removing the waste pile at Sand Point and to continue reducing the amount of seafood waste discharges from its operations," stated Edward Kowalski, director of the EPA Region 10 Office of Compliance and Enforcement. "This settlement is the result of a productive and successful collaboration with Trident, and will help protect the seafloor, surrounding water quality, and important habitat for a variety of marine life."

Trident has operated a fish meal plant at Sand Point since 1996 to help limit the amount of fish waste discharged to marine waters. Yet after decades of processing, the historic waste pile exceeds the allowable one-acre limit, and continues to impair the health of the seafloor. Unauthorized discharges of seafood processing waste lead to large seafood waste piles, which contain bones, shells and other organic materials that accumulate on the seafloor. Seafood waste piles create anoxic, or oxygen-depleted conditions that result in unsuitable habitats for fish and other living organisms.

In addition to removing the Sand Point waste pile, Trident has committed to installing state-of-the-art filter technology to prevent most solids, including fish tissue, from being released to marine waters when fish are transferred from supply boats to the plant. At the Wrangell plant, Trident has agreed to screen out most solid seafood wastes, which will reduce or eliminate waste discharges to the near-shore marine environment. Annual dive surveys at both processing plants will monitor the size of any accumulated seafood waste to ensure continued compliance with permit requirements. The EPA expects the combination of these measures to improve water quality and help ensure Trident's long-term compliance with the Clean Water Act.

Trident also agreed to pay a \$297,000 civil penalty and to conduct a comprehensive audit of the company's system for monitoring environmental compliance.

The proposed settlement, lodged in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington, is subject to a 30-day comment period and final court approval. Information on submitting comments is available at <https://www.justice.gov/enrd/consent-decrees>.

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Beef, chuck steak	\$2.29	\$5.49
Bath tissue - 12 roll	\$3.75	\$9.99
Paper towel - 6 rolls	\$3.98	\$10.99
Pepsi - 12pk	\$4.49	\$6.49
Motor Oil	\$0.99	\$2.99
Batteries AA/AAA - 4pk	\$2.39	\$6.99
Outdoor Ext. Cord - 50'	\$9.99	\$15.99

Airfares: WRG to JNU	\$74	\$207
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