



INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Valdez Museum & Historical Archive's mission is to "preserve, present, and interpret, the heritage and culture of Valdez, the Copper River Basin, and Prince William Sound, Alaska."

Valdez's first museum was established in 1901 by prospector Joseph Bourke, who put together a small exhibit of curios that was displayed in various Valdez buildings until 1964. These objects are part of the Valdez Museum's core collection, now numbering approximately 75,000 objects, photographs, and historical documents related to Valdez's regional history.

In 1976, the Valdez Heritage Board formed, hired a curator, and opened the Valdez Museum. Initially, the Museum functioned as a City of Valdez department with an advisory board providing input on operations.

Formed in 1996, the Valdez Museum & Historical Archive (VMHA) is a private 501c(3) Non-Profit organization. Its purpose is to contract with the city to manage and operate the museum with the goals of decreasing dependence on city funding, increasing the museum's ability to care for and manage the community's heritage materials, and to continue to serve the community of Valdez. The VMHA Board of Directors governs the corporation and is accountable to the voting membership, made up of the members of the City Council. The membership, in turn, represents the residents of Valdez. The collection remains the property of the city. A non-voting associate membership program that was merged with the Friends of the Museum in 1999 consists of 110 individuals and businesses.

The VMHA is governed by an 11 member volunteer board of directors and staffed with 4 permanent full time professionals, 1 permanent part-time employee, 5 temporary part-time employees and numerous volunteers. Board & staff work closely to develop fund-raising efforts, museum activities, and community relationships that strengthen the museum's mission to share local and regional history. The museum mounts at least four temporary exhibitions each year. It balances preservation of collections with interpretation by rotating newly acquired artifacts and existing collections in and out of exhibits in a timely manner. This in turn provides access to the remaining collections by researchers and scholars.

Located in the heart of Valdez, AK, the VMHA exhibits are located in two buildings that are four blocks apart. The main building on Egan Drive offers an overview of the region's history with stories about the 1898 gold rush, Native culture, aviation, tourism,

transportation, the oil industry, and a selection of temporary exhibits. At its second location, the annex, the museum provides a broader interpretation of the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake.

Each year, the VMHA serves approximately 20,000 visitors. Of that more than 1000 are local and regional school children, 2,000 participate in multi-generation programs and presentations, and 200 are researchers who access the collections and archives.