



Alaska Jewish Museum Summer 2021 Newsletter

Greetings Members!

I am glad to announce that the Alaska Jewish Museum has opened its doors once again after a most challenging year! We are embracing new possibilities 2021, for example a new exhibit called: ***Through a Jewish Lens: The Founding Fathers of the Alaska Commercial Company*** that explores the little-known background stories of the founders of the Alaska Commercial Company, and how the ethics of Judaism played a major role in the running of ACC outposts in the Alaska Territory. The ACC was founded as a California corporation in October of 1868 in San Francisco by a group of prosperous, mostly German Jewish, merchants who collectively possessed all the talents and know-how needed to create a flourishing enterprise. In 1870, they won a 20-year exclusive lease to harvest seals in the Pribilof Islands after lobbying for the July 1, 1870 "Act to Prevent the Extermination of Fur-bearing Animals in Alaska", thereby assuring the success of their own company. A little-known fact is that their lobby in Washington towards this end was hampered by antisemitism. Interestingly, the ACC ran its operations according to the three principles of Judaism: charity, education, and social justice throughout its more than fifty locations in the Territory.

We are also planning a presentation on Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat kidnapped by the Soviets from Budapest in 1945 during the final months of World War II, when he was carrying on a one-man crusade to save as many Jews as possible. In the years following World War II, many inmates of the Soviet Gulag had either heard that Raoul Wallenberg was still alive and in one of the camps or claimed to have seen him. The Soviets, for their part finally admitted in 1958 that he was captured by the NKVD and that he died in prison in 1947. In spite of this official account, many inmates of the Soviet Gulag had either heard that Wallenberg was still alive and in one of the camps or claimed to have seen him themselves. Other witnesses said that he was imprisoned on Wrangell Island above the Arctic Circle for at least three or four years in the early sixties. This story has captured the imagination of many people over the years and our speaker, Mark Seidenberg, has been involved in learning the truth about Wallenberg since 1956.

Our annual Gala will once again take place this coming November. Please check out Alaska Jewish Campus website for more information.