

**Alaska State Library
Historical Collections**

Guide to Collection

McClain, Sam

Russian Orthodox Churches in Alaska, Watercolors

PCA 548

108 watercolors, 9" x 12"
1 box copy prints

Processed by: Historical Staff
November 2012

ACQUISITION: Father Simeon B. Johnson of Saint Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church in Juneau loaned the watercolors to the Alaska State Library to be scanned and digitized. The watercolors were originally commissioned by Bruce Kendall of Anchorage and donated to the Diocese of Alaska. St. Nicholas Church was selected to house and preserve the watercolors, which were painted by Sam McClain in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

ACCESS: Seven boxes of original watercolors are housed at St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, Juneau, Alaska.

COPYRIGHT: Request for permission to publish or reproduce material from the collection should be discussed with the rector of St. Nicholas.

PROCESSING: The watercolors were removed from their frames; loose tape, attaching the watercolors to mattes, was replaced with Mylar photograph corners; the watercolors were housed, flat, in custom-made archival boxes. The original watercolors were scanned and paper copies made. The paper copies were placed in Mylar, pH-neutral folders, and an archival box. Collection is described at an item level.

Each of the 107 watercolors may be viewed at Alaska's Digital Archives:
<http://vilda.alaska.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/cdmg21/id/14503/rec/1>

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Sam McClain came to Alaska in the late 1940s. He worked as an architect for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Anchorage from 1949 until his retirement in 1979. In 1950, he married Christine Ferrari Reeder, who worked for the Army Signal Corps until 1971. Both McClains had many interests outside of their Army jobs. Christine was a prolific freelance writer and the features editor for the *Anchorage Times*; and Sam was an accomplished artist, specializing in pen and ink drawings and watercolors. At some point, Bruce Kendall, an Anchorage hotel owner, purchased two of McClain's watercolors, which were of Russian churches. Realizing how rapidly the old churches were disappearing from the landscape, Kendall commissioned McClain to embark upon a project to paint all of Alaska's Russian churches and chapels for which photographs, drawings, or other likenesses could be found. Sam McClain became best known for his drawings and watercolors of these churches and other historical Alaska buildings. When Fern Wallace published *The Flame of the Candle: a pictorial history of Russian Orthodox churches in Alaska*, Sam McClain contributed many drawings and also designed the cover. McClain also taught art classes and performed volunteer work for the Anchorage School District and other local organizations. He died in Anchorage in 1994, five years after the death of his wife Christine.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

It is estimated there have been at least 150 Russian Orthodox Churches in Alaska's history, with churches built in nearly every village under Russian influence, from Sitka to Attu, to St. Michael, and along the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. 106 of these churches, many of which are no longer in existence, are represented in this collection. Two additional watercolors, of a nautical theme, complete the collection.

SUBJECTS

Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America. Diocese of Alaska; Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' ; Watercolors

INVENTORY

Folder 1

Article: "Sam McClain's Russian Churches". In *Alaska Journal* 1972, v. 2, no. 3 (Summer 1972) pp. 25-30.

Folder 2

- 001 St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, Hoonah.
- 002 St. Sava Russian Orthodox Church, Douglas; church destroyed by fire in 1937

- 003 St. Michael the Archangel, Kolignak [Koliganek]
- 004 Russian Orthodox Church, Wood Island [Woody Island]
- 005 Holy Resurrection Russian Orthodox Church, Belkovsky [Belkofski]
- 006 Holy Transfiguration Russian Orthodox Church, Kashega Village
- 007 Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Pitkas Point
- 008 Church of the Ascension of Our Lord, Karluk
- 009 Original St. Nicholas Church, Kwethluk
- 010 St. George Church, St. George
- 011 Ss. Sergius and Herman of Valaam, English Bay
- 012 Nativity of Our Lord Chapel, Ouzinki [Ouzinkie]
- 013 St. Michael Chapel, Cordova
- 014 Church of the Holy Trinity, Kasigluk
- 015 St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, Kwethluk
- 016 St. Michael the Archangel Cathedral, Sitka
- 017 Nativity of Our Lord, Makushin
- 018 Holy Transfiguration Church, Newhalen
- 019 St. Michael's Church, Kaguyak
- 020 St. Seraphim of Sarov Church, Dillingham
- 021 Russian Orthodox Church, New Savonski [Savonoski]
- 022 St. Nicholas Church, Pilot Point
- 022a On verso of original: landscape scene; village in distance
- 023 St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Chapel, Sand Point
- 024 Early Russian Orthodox Church, Attu Island

- 025 Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Nushagak
- 026 Old Russian Church, dedicated to St. Nicholas, Eklutna Village
- 027 Russian Orthodox Church, Andreasky [Andreafsy]
- 028 Protection of the Theotokos, Levelock
- 029 St. Nicholas Church, Pedro Bay
- 030 Russian Orthodox Church, Attu
- 031 Russian Orthodox Church, Unga
- 032 Old Holy Ascension Church, Unalaska; church built by Fr. Ivan Veniaminov, St. Innocent [Innokentii]
- 033 Church of St. Nicholas, Juneau
- 034 St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Cathedral, Sitka
- 035 St. John the Baptist, Angoon
- 036 St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Chapel, Ekuk
- 037 St. Sergius Chapel, Stuyahok
- 038 Russian Orthodox Church, Chenega; church was destroyed by tidal wave following 1964 earthquake
- 039 Original Church, St. Michael
- 040 Ss. Peter and Paul Church (second church), St. Paul Island
- 040a On verso of original: unidentified church
- 041 Assumption of the Theotokos (old church), Kenai
- 042 St. Nicholas, Eklutna
- 043 Russian Orthodox Church, Killisnoo; church destroyed by fire that consumed entire village of Killisnoo in 1928.
- 044 Elevation of the Cross, Russian Mission, Yukon River
- 044a On verso of original: landscape of sunset

045 Elevation of the Cross, Russian Mission, Yukon River

046 St. Nicholas, Ekuk

047 St. Michael, Cordova

048 Old St. Nicholas, Tatitlek

049 St. Basil's, Portage Creek

050 St. Nicholas, Ekuk

051 Russian Orthodox Church, Sanak Island

052 Russian Orthodox Church, Woody Island

Folder 3

053 New St. Nicholas, Tatitlek

054 Presentation of Christ, Nikolai

055 Russian Orthodox Church, Idenasky [?]

056 Russian Orthodox Church (Nativity of the Theotokos?), Little Afognak; Note: possibly the Nativity of the All Holy Theotokos Church, dedicated in 1905

057 St. John, Ekwok

058 Original St. Michael's, Sitka

059 St. Michael's Orthodox Church; location unspecified

060 Russian Orthodox Church, Nushagak; Note: possibly St. Seraphim of Sarov

061 New St. Gabriel, Kogignak [Kongiganak]

062 Russian Orthodox Church, Nuchek

063 Original Dormition Church, Kenai

064 Holy Transfiguration, Ninilchik

065 St. Nicholas, Nikolski

066 St. Nicholas, Chignik

- 067 Russian Orthodox Church, Kvlihak {[Kvichak]}
- 067a On verso of original: unidentified church
- 068 St. Alexander Nevsky Chapel, Akutan
- 069 Protection of the Theotokos, Aniak
- 070 St. John the Baptist, Naknek
- 071 St. Michael Church, Marshall
- 072 Protection of the Theotokos, Akhiok
- 073 St. Gabriel, Kongignak [Kongiganak]
- 074 Russian Orthodox Church, Branch River
- 075 Three Saints, Old Harbor; church was one of four buildings to survive the 1964 earthquake and tidal wave
- 076 St. Sophia Church, Bethel
- 077 Holy Resurrection Church, Kodiak
- 078 Protection of the Theotokos, Nunapitchuck [Nunapitchuk]
- 079 Original St. Alexander Nevsky Chapel, Akutan
- 080 Russian Orthodox Church, Katmai Village; church abandoned after volcanic eruption in 1912
- 081 Original Holy Ascension, Unalaska
- 082 St. John the Theologian, Perryville
- 083 St. Nicholas, Unga
- 084 St. Nicholas, Nondalton (*see #94 for copy image*)
- 085 Russian Orthodox Church, Kanatak
- 086 Slavonic Russian Orthodox Church, Douglas; St. Sava Orthodox Church was destroyed by fire in 1937
- 087 St. Nicholas, Atka Island

- 088 Nativity of the Theotokos, Afognak
- 089 Russian Orthodox Church, St. Michael
- 090 Protection of the Theotokos, Aniak
- 091 St. Nicholas Chapel, Morzhovoi; church destroyed by wind in 1969
- 092 Dormition of the Theotokos, Kenai
- 093 Ss. Peter and Paul, St. Paul Island
- 094 St. Nicholas, Nondalton (*Same as number 84*)
- 095 Title plate: Paintings by Sam McClain. Project commissioned by Bruce Kendall, Sr. (*Copy of image is not available*)
- 096 St. Nicholas, Killisnoo. Note: artist's identification is incorrect; this church was dedicated to St. Andrew the First Called, and it was destroyed by the fire that consumed the village of Killisnoo in 1928
- 097 Old Russian Orthodox Church, Kodiak
- 098 St. Nicholas Chapel, Seldovia
- 099 Russian Orthodox Church, Eyak
- 100 Old St. Gabriel, Kongignak [Kongiganak]
- 101 Russian Orthodox Church, Douglas Village
- 102 St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, Tyonek
- 103 St. Seraphim Orthodox Chapel, Lower Kalskag
- 104 Russian Orthodox Chapel, Aiaktalik Island
- 105 St. Innocent Chapel, Bench River
- 106 Ss. Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Chapel, Sleetmute
- 107 Nautical theme - U.S. Army Transport NORTH COAST, used during WWII
- 108 Nautical theme - S.S. DENALI, made the last passenger run for the Alaska Steamship Company in later September, 1954

Folder 4

DVD - Russian Orthodox Churches in Alaska, Watercolors; Sam McClain paintings #1-52

DVD - Russian Orthodox Churches in Alaska, Watercolors; Sam McClain paintings #53-108