Lewis, Margaret A.

Margaret Lewis Collection:
Images from a Cruise to Alaska, 1950

PCA 546

53 b&w photographs on CD
10 images of travel brochures
DVD of an 8mm film plus film clips

Processed by: Gayle Goedde
December 2011

ACQUISITION: Margaret A. Lewis donated the collection October 17, 2011. Accession # 2011-023.

ACCESS: The collection is unrestricted.

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PROCESSING: The original photographs, taken by F. Garland Swain in 1950, are not available. Margaret Lewis, F. Garland Swain’s daughter, scanned the original 4x5 photographs in BMP file format, restoring them to minimize scratches and blemishes. The original 8mm film and film clips were also restored by Margaret Lewis and transferred to digital Windows media.
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

F. Garland Swain was born in California in 1908 and died of cancer in 1965 at the age of 57 years. His main occupation was as a real estate appraiser, but he was also an amateur photographer for most of his life, setting up his own darkroom for developing his film and photographs, all in black and white medium. He had a natural eye for composition, and his subjects included his four children, his grandchildren, relatives, vacations, homes, and landscapes. Margaret Lewis’s mother died in 2001 at the age of 89, and the extended family continues to live in California. Margaret has returned to Alaska with her husband on three cruises and five fishing vacations, all “wonderful experiences.” Her brother, who was able to spend so much time in the wheelhouse of the S. S. Alaska on the family’s 1950 cruise, continued to be involved with all kinds of boats, both sailing and power. Their family adventure in Alaska was “a memorable trip for all.”

SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

All of the photographs and film clips in this collection were taken during a 12-day cruise aboard the S.S. ALASKA, August 3-15, 1950. The following notes are from material provided by Margaret Lewis.

The F. Garland Swain family boarded the S.S. ALASKA at the recently opened Pier 42 of the Alaska Steamship Line in Seattle, Washington. “There were eight family members in our group, including my parents, my grandparents, my sister (age 16) brother (13), younger sister (7), and myself (age 9 but celebrating my 10th birthday on board the ship.

We stayed in four rooms, each having bunk beds and a sink, with toilets and showers down the hall. Our four rooms were across from one another, sharing a common corridor. The ship could accommodate about 220 passengers in all, and the main dining room could seat about 140 people, including the ship’s officers. Our family shared a table for eight. One night we hit rough seas, and my brother and I were about the only passengers to make it down for dinner that night.

Activities on the ship included shuffleboard, quoits, bingo, jigsaw puzzles, and other games played in the social hall on the upper deck near the front of the ship. Besides looking at the beautiful scenery and taking tours in some of the towns, my favorite pastime was watching the crew unload and load freight in each port.

My brother, who was befriended by the entire ship’s crew, got to pilot the ship and talk with the various officers and staff. He was even allowed to scrub the deck with an electric power scrubber (no labor or liability concern back then). He also watched the crew drop crab pots off the stern of the ship when we were in port.

We got off the ship in most ports and walked into the small towns or took more extended tours, usually escorted by ship officers. The ship stopped at Ketchikan, Petersburg, Juneau, Seward (where we took a train to Anchorage, returning by bus), Valdez, and Cordova. My brother remembers that ‘the train to Anchorage had a coal burning engine, and when you stuck your head out the window, lots of soot would get in your face and eyes.’

http://www.library.alaska.gov/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/PCA546.pdf
We went close to the Columbia Glacier and watched the glacier calving when the ship’s captain blew the horn (not legal now). We also saw the Mendenhall Glacier in Juneau, and my brother and I remember being able to climb onto the edge of the glacier. We also visited the Saxman Village totem park in Ketchikan, toured a salmon cannery in Petersburg, and viewed an aurora borealis one night.

My souvenirs from the trip consisted of a drum, which I won playing quoits, a pair of fur moccasins, a small diary, and a small beaded pin of miniature moccasins. We also brought back two small ivory totem figures, and we kept some of the ship’s menus. I still have all but the larger moccasins.

SUBJECTS

Alaska—Description and travel; Inside Passage—Description and travel; Cruise ships—Alaska; Alaska Steamship Company; Ships; Steamboats; Ship equipment & rigging; Ocean travel; Passengers; Piers & wharves; Waterfronts; Glaciers

INVENTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Seattle Pier No. 42 [View of passengers on upper deck at stern of ship S. S. ALASKA]
2. Seattle Pier No. 42 [Passengers look on as automobile is hoisted onto S. S. ALASKA in a sling]
3. F. Garland Swain family on steamship S. S. ALASKA
4. Swain family on board ship
5. Cargo hold on the S. S. ALASKA steamship; two automobiles in background
6-8. Shuffleboard on deck of the S. S. ALASKA
9. Quoits [game] on deck of S. S. ALASKA
10-12. On board ship
13. Swain boy and crew, scrubbing deck
14. Swain family in Seward, accompanying ship’s radio man to see salmon
15. Children at train stop en route to Anchorage; glacier in background
16. Train to Anchorage, stopping at Alaska Nellie’s Roadhouse
Valdez waterfront; sign on building reads, “Valdez, Coastal Terminus of Alaska’s Highway System, Distribution Center to Interior Alaska”

Columbia Glacier [View from deck of the S. S. ALASKA]

Juneau waterfront, showing sawmill

Juneau waterfront, showing Alaska Coastal Airlines building and seaplane docks

Juneau waterfront, showing Juneau Cold Storage facility and fishing boats

Juneau waterfront, showing close-up view of Alaska-Juneau Gold Mining mill

Mendenhall Glacier

Mendenhall Glacier from Chapel by the Lake

Mendenhall Glacier from deck of the ALASKA

Wrangell Narrows

Petersburg waterfront

Kayler –Dahl Cold Storage and fishing boats, Petersburg

Interior view of women working line at Petersburg salmon cannery

Ketchikan waterfront

Passengers on Ketchikan dock and boarding the S. S. ALASKA

Swain family members at the Saxman Village Totem Park, Ketchikan

Captain Henry Burns, officer of S. S. ALASKA

Pilot, Swain boy, and 2nd officer

Pilot, Swain boy, and quartermaster

Swain boy and radar specialist

Ship’s radio man

Ship’s pilot, Scotty, at the wheel

Ship’s pilot, Scotty, and Swain boy at the wheel
53 Wheelhouse of S. S. ALASKA

INVENTORY OF BROCHURES AND OTHER MATERIALS

1 Itinerary for August 3-15 trip on S. S. ALASKA through Inside Passage; also, list of officers on S. S. ALASKA Northbound Voyage 27, 1950

2 Alaska trip summary, written by Margaret Lewis on October 14, 2011.

3 Cruise brochure (front) for Alaska Steamship cruises and tours in 1950.

4 Brochure describing 1950 summer season cruise schedule, accommodations, and rates

5 Guide to Alaskan cities and sightseeing

6 Brochure, Your Alaska Steamship Company Ship, with chart showing routes and connections

7 S. S. ALASKA ship layout

8 Alaskan drum, winning prize for winning game of Quoits

9 S. S. ALASKA breakfast menu

10 S. S. ALASKA dinner menu

FILM FOOTAGE

DVD of 8mm movie taken by F. Garland Swain on the Swain family’s 1950 trip through the Inside Passage on board the ALASKA.