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

Folder 2
001 St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, Hoonah.
002 St. Sava Russian Orthodox Church, Douglas; church destroyed by fire in 1937

http://www.library.alaska.gov/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/PCA548.pdf
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>003</td>
<td>St. Michael the Archangel, Kolignak [Koliganek]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>004</td>
<td>Russian Orthodox Church, Wood Island [Woody Island]</td>
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<tr>
<td>005</td>
<td>Holy Resurrection Russian Orthodox Church, Belkovsky [Belkofski]</td>
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<tr>
<td>006</td>
<td>Holy Transfiguration Russian Orthodox Church, Kashega Village</td>
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<tr>
<td>007</td>
<td>Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Pitkas Point</td>
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<tr>
<td>008</td>
<td>Church of the Ascension of Our Lord, Karluk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>009</td>
<td>Original St. Nicholas Church, Kwethluk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>010</td>
<td>St. George Church, St. George</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>011</td>
<td>Ss. Sergius and Herman of Valaam, English Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>012</td>
<td>Nativity of Our Lord Chapel, Ouzinki [Ouzinkie]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>013</td>
<td>St. Michael Chapel, Cordova</td>
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<tr>
<td>014</td>
<td>Church of the Holy Trinity, Kasigluk</td>
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<tr>
<td>015</td>
<td>St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, Kwethluk</td>
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<tr>
<td>016</td>
<td>St. Michael the Archangel Cathedral, Sitka</td>
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<tr>
<td>017</td>
<td>Nativity of Our Lord, Makushin</td>
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<td>018</td>
<td>Holy Transfiguration Church, Newhalen</td>
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<td>019</td>
<td>St. Michael’s Church, Kaguyak</td>
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<td>020</td>
<td>St. Seraphim of Sarov Church, Dillingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>021</td>
<td>Russian Orthodox Church, New Savonski [Savonoski]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>022</td>
<td>St. Nicholas Church, Pilot Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>022a</td>
<td>On verso of original: landscape scene; village in distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>023</td>
<td>St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Chapel, Sand Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>024</td>
<td>Early Russian Orthodox Church, Attu Island</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
PCA 548: Sam McClain, Russian Orthodox Churches in Alaska, Watercolors  Alaska State Library

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

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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

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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

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