

## Kenai Peninsula Cemetery Book

Kenai Totem Tracers Genealogical Society

What do the Hope and Sunrise Historical Society and the Peninsula Memorial Chapel have in common? They both use the Kenai Totem Tracers Genealogical Society's book Cemetery Inscriptions and Area Memorials in Alaska's Kenai Peninsula Borough on a regular basis. Diane Olthuis, of the Hope and Sunrise Historical Society, reports that during the summer, visitors often ask about a relative who came to Alaska to mine and was never heard from again. Diane uses the Totem Tracers' book and often locates the name among the over a 1000 people buried in one of the ten Seward cemeteries. Grant Wisniewski, funeral director in Kenai, says when folks phone the Kenai Memorial Chapel hoping to find information on a long ago loved one, "I reach for the Totem Tracers' book."

The book to which they refer was four years in the making and was published in 2004. The basis of the book was a 1983 book, also published by the Totem Tracers, entitled Alaska's Kenai Peninsula Death Records and Cemetery Inscriptions. The 1983 work was comprised of 28 cemeteries and included mortality lists from the Homer, Kenai and Seward districts. The 2004 work omits the mortality lists and adds cemeteries in Sterling, Port Graham, Nanwalek, Nikolaevsk, Tyonek and Halibut Cove. Area memorials such as Leif Hansen Memorial Park in Kenai, the Funny River Memorial Garden and Seafarers Memorial in Homer are included in the newer volume. Other area memorials listed can include homestead burials, the scattering of ashes or a single marker.

In order to obtain permission to record the markers, City Clerks, cemetery associations, church officials and tribal entities were contacted. Kerry Martin, Seward cemetery historian, generously shared his databank. Kerry began gathering data on Seward burials while working for the city of Seward. The information was so sketchy that he starting pouring over old records late into the evenings volunteering time to compile an extensive record. He gave permission to the Totem Tracers to use his work. It is due to Kerry that former interments at Fort Raymond in Seward during World War II are included in the 2004 Totem Tracers work. This cemetery no longer exists.

Nancy Radtke, took Society member, Kari Mohn, from grave to grave in the three sections of the Saints Sergius and Herman of Valaam Russian Orthodox Cemetery in Nanwalek and by memory named the persons buried there. Betty Idleman, Society member, spent hours with Marjorie Jordan, Edna Linderman, Maggie Dolchok and other elders to record the relationships of the people buried in the Holy Assumption of the Virgin Mary Russian Orthodox Church Cemetery in Kenai. Betty also talked with many Nikiski residents so that burials on homesteads could be recorded.

These works are now out of print but are available in area libraries. The 1983 book Alaska's Kenai Peninsula Death Records and Cemetery Inscriptions is available at the Kenai Community Library and the Seward Community Library. The 2004 book, Cemetery Inscriptions and Area Memorials in Alaska's Kenai Peninsula Borough, is available at the Kenai Community Library, the Seward Community Library and the Soldotna Public Library. The information is also online at <http://www.usgwtombstones.org/alaska/kenai.htm> Select a cemetery of interest and use a computer's "find" feature to find a name.