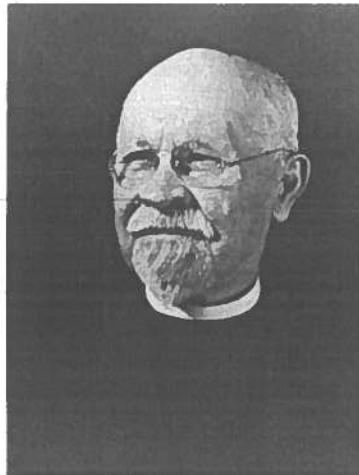


Proposal to name the new Alaska State Library, Archives & Museum facility in Juneau
Father Andrew P. Kashevaroff Library, Archives & Museum

The Division of Libraries, Archives & Museums is building a modern new facility to safely protect, preserve and share its collection of objects, books, documents, photos and records of state culture and history. The building, nicknamed SLAM, is scheduled to open in the spring of 2016. It is time to choose a more formal name for the facility.

The Division of Libraries, Archives & Museums believes it is fitting to name the building after Father Andrew P. Kashevaroff. Kashevaroff was an Alaskan scholar, the museum's first curator and the library's first librarian, a descendant of Russian explorers and Alaskan Natives, and a forerunner of the division's efforts to share Alaska's history and culture collaboratively across disciplines. Father Kashevaroff's biography, below, demonstrates the scope of his commitment and contribution to Alaska's history and culture.



Celia Studio
Sitka

The Very Reverend A.P. Kashevaroff, Curator and Librarian
of the Alaska Territorial Museum and Library at Juneau.



Andrew P. Kashevaroff

The Alaska Historical Museum and Library was established by an Act of Congress in 1900. For the first twenty years of its existence, the Museum and Library was a collection in Sitka, housed in a closet in the office of the Territorial Governor.

Thomas Riggs Jr, who became Alaska's governor in 1918, faced many challenges associated with managing an increasingly complex territory with a growing economy and population. In spite of numerous pressing distractions, Riggs completed moving the library and museum from Sitka to Juneau, opened the collections to the public for the first time, and became the founding president of the Alaska Historical Association, a support group for the institution.

Certainly, Riggs' greatest contribution was in recognizing that building the library and museum was a full-time job. Though personally interested in the library and museum, Riggs delegated responsibility to a full-time Librarian and Curator. In November 1919, a man renowned for his knowledge of Russian history and Alaska Natives—Russian Orthodox priest Andrew P. Kashevaroff - began his twenty-year tenure, which ended with his death in 1940.

Kashevaroff was a vocal and energetic advocate for the Museum and Library, and today, he is fondly remembered as its true “founding Father.” He was uniquely suited for the position of Librarian and Curator. His Russian ancestors were navigators and colonists who came to Alaska in the 1700s and married Alutiiq or Creole women in and around Kodiak. Born there in 1863 during the Russian administration of Alaska, he dedicated his life to serving the Russian Orthodox Church, while maintaining his interest in Alaska history and culture. He was considered a leading authority on Alaska, and became a popular lecturer and author. His Russian and Alaska Native heritage, and his ability to live and work as an American, helped him develop and lead a distinctly Alaskan institution.

Kashevaroff began his working life in the late 1800s as an educator and priest in the service of the Russian Orthodox Church, and for several decades was posted to churches throughout southern Alaska: Kodiak, Nuchek, Angoon, Sitka, and Juneau. He was used to rigors of “bush” living, and at times relied on travel by kayak and dog sled. He had a lifelong interest in music and was a gifted violinist and choir leader. In 1893, he married Martha Bolshanin, a Kiks.adi Tlingit from Sitka, with whom he would have six children. His Tlingit friends affectionately called him Aandanéi.

Kashevaroff became priest of Juneau's St. Nicholas Cathedral in 1913. When the Russian Revolution disrupted the Church in 1917, his salary was suspended, but he was duty bound to continue his priestly work gratis. To support his family, he took on additional work as a music teacher, clerk of the weather bureau, and customs officer. Even after he was hired as a full-time Librarian and Curator, he continued his service to the church, and was eventually offered the prestigious rank of Bishop of Alaska, which he declined perhaps in part due to his interest in continuing his library and museum work (Pierce 1990:215-216).

Kashevaroff's family connections, skill in languages, and experience working within Russian and Alaska Native cultures afforded him special access to both cultures, a benefit to the library and museum. Long after Alaska had been pronounced “picked clean” by collectors for the large museums, he acquired hundreds of Russian objects and publications, and thousands of Alaska Native artifacts for the library and museum. In time, thousands of objects were accumulated, and Kashevaroff wrote: “...now the territory has a museum depicting the life, art, [and] craft of the native tribes in Alaska, through the specimens exhibited in the Museum. Mere words cannot portray the scope of the interesting specimens which have been gathered from all over Alaska. One has to see the varied collection to appreciate the value of the whole.”

While Governor Riggs embraced the institution politically, Kashevaroff drummed up grass roots support in the form of funds as well as donated books and artifacts—and did so with the zeal of a missionary. He wrote dozens of letters to friends and acquaintances asking them to join the Alaska Historical Association and to send in their artifacts for the museum. Even after the museum first opened to the public in 1920, Kashevaroff continued his efforts: “We get the impression that Father Kashevaroff buttonholed everyone who attended the opening” said museum docent Bea Shepard (1996).

Alaskans overwhelmingly accepted Kashevaroff as the territory's leading historian. As a columnist for the Fairbanks News Miner put it in 1923:

Father Andrew P. Kashevaroff, Russian arch-priest, at present librarian for Alaska and

curator of the Historical Museum at Juneau, in which all Alaskans are or should be deeply interested.... He is the only man the *News-Miner* knows the name of who is competent to speak of "Alaska," for he knows it from start to finish, personally.

Taking a serious approach to the study of history and ethnology, Kashevaroff held himself and others to a high standard of professionalism and accuracy. His assistance was sought by both amateur and professional scholars who needed information on Alaska. Indeed, much of his time was spent helping others, leaving little time for his own work. His own research, focused on Tlingit culture, church history and on specific objects in the museum and library collections, remains largely unpublished, though he did edit a short *Descriptive Booklet* of the museum collection, and published a few articles.

Museum visitors found Kashevaroff a memorable character. Many elderly Alaskans fondly remember how he encouraged them as children to "hang out" in the old museum after school, to wander among the picturesque displays and listen to his adventurous stories. In the summers, he was on call to open the museum at any hour of the day for visiting steamship passengers, some of whom were prominent personalities themselves.

Humorist Will Rogers wrote:

Well, all I know is just what I run onto awhile back when I was messing around up in Alaska. That's a most interesting country. I was mentioning to you one time about being in the fine museum in Juneau, the capital of Alaska. There is a little Russian man in there, he was born in Alaska before it was sold to us, Father [Kashevaroff]. Well he has made a great study of Alaskan customs, relics, languages, its history and everything, and if ever a fellow fit in a museum it's him in this one.

Another visitor, a columnist for the *Milwaukie Sentinel* (5/21/60) recounted a 1930s visit:

Our favorite refuge from the rains was the Territorial Museum, whose most interesting 'exhibit' was its curator, Father A.P. Kashevaroff. There was an old-world charm about him that seemed incongruous in that lusty mining town. His dark, clerical garb accentuated his snow-white Van Dyke. He was small and retiring, but to talk with him for a minute was to feel the force of an extraordinary personality....

"Small he was, but in my memories of him....he was anything but retiring," remembers historian Robert DeArmond. Judging from his letters and numerous accounts of his activities published in Alaskan newspapers, he was a passionate and energetic force for both the church and the library and museum.