

“We learn who we are when we preserve our history”Anonymous

Historic and cultural preservation is important to all of us. Our cultural identity is a direct asset from our past. Preservation of historic places give us a view into our past and reminds us of where we came from. These places reinforce the importance of community, cultures, and individuals. When children ask “why?” we can happily share historic treasures like the Oscar Anderson House Museum to show them—first hand, concrete examples of how the past answers questions of who we are in the present, and the importance of history to our future. We hope you will continue to support this historic jewel so future generations will understand **WHY** historic preservation is so important. **Thank you for visiting Oscar’s home!**

Your entrance fee supports the Oscar Anderson House Museum.



Latouche Collection; Anchorage Museum, B1980.029.274

Tax-deductible donations are appreciated: Alaska Association for Historic Preservation (AAHP) at: PO Box 102205, Anchorage, Alaska 99510-2205. Phone: (907) 929-9870. Email us at: akpreservation@gmail.com. Please visit our website for more information: <http://www.aahp-online.net>



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The Oscar Anderson House

*A National Trust for Historic Preservation
“Distinctive Destination”*

*Listed in the National Register of Historic Places
Managed by the Alaska Association for Historic Preservation*

Located at:

*420 M Street—in Downtown, Anchorage, Alaska
Open Summer Season and Swedish Christmas
Group Reservations at 907.929.9870*

**Step Back in Time
with Anchorage’s only
Historic House Museum!**



**Distinctive
Destinations**

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Early Anchorage

Alaska was purchased from Russia by the United States in 1867, desired for its many natural resources. Subsequent gold and copper discoveries were behind the push to access Alaska's Interior, and potential railroad routes were investigated by the Alaska Railroad Commission, which was created by the United States Congress in the Organic Act of 1912. "Tent City" was soon pitched at the mouth of Ship Creek by railroad survey crews and Alaska Tribal families anticipating railroad construction jobs. President Woodrow Wilson approved the rail route from Seward to the mineral rich Alaska Interior in 1915. Little did anyone know that Tent City would soon become Anchorage, named by the local postmaster who ensured mail delivery in this bustling boomtown.



4th Avenue in the 1930s-Oscar Anderson's 'Ship Creek Meat Co.' seen on the left. (Thomas Culhane papers and photographs, 1935-1939. University of Alaska Anchorage, UAA-HMC-0096-series2-1-63-2)

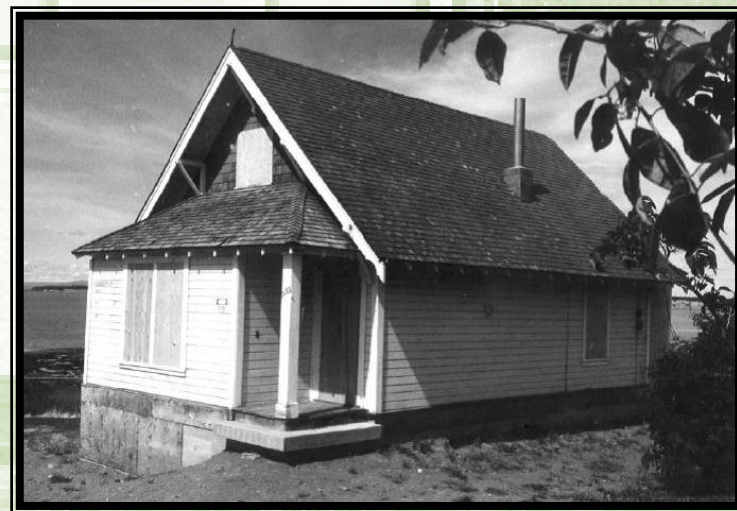
Tent City had many growing pains with inadequate water and sanitation facilities. By summer 1915, a town site was platted with 655 lots, which sold over a two-day period during the now famous 1915 Land Auction. The lots were meant to provide housing, business locations and government operations for the growing population. Development came quickly after the lots sold. Fourth Avenue alone boasted over 145 permanent buildings within six months. Hardy businessmen, like Oscar Anderson, came to Ship Creek for adventure and to stake their claim. With the railroad as the impetus for our town, Anchorage would become Alaska's largest city.

The Oscar Anderson House Collection

Can modern-day things be called artifacts? Yes! They can! You will find historical artifacts on display in the Oscar Anderson House that came from the Anderson family along with community-donated items. Picture the family of five standing around their 1909-Hallet and Davis player piano—built in Boston and moved from Seattle—playing and singing their favorite songs. Favorite family photos also grace the walls. A 1914-Victrola record player, Sellers Hoosier-style cabinet, and Monarch wood cook stove were donated, and comprise an intriguing part of the collection. The dining room retains the original Swedish-crafted woodwork, and custom cabinets with a built-in buffet displaying Anderson family china. A much-used butcher block rescued from Oscar's meat market is on display in the kitchen. Period clothing and toys grace upper floor bedrooms. Family heirlooms, period antiques, Ship Creek and early Anchorage-area photos, and the guided museum tour all contribute to the historic ambiance of the Oscar Anderson House, presenting the Anderson family story of settlement and daily life in Alaska.

Are there still Anderson Family members in Anchorage? Yes!

Oscar has a grandson who maintains a home here in Anchorage. One of his granddaughters visits yearly. They actively support the house and share in the care and attention that it receives from the Alaska Association for Historic Preservation and you—our welcome visitor!



View of the Oscar Anderson House. Anchorage, after relocation in 1977. (Municipality of Anchorage, Planning Dept. 1977)



View facing west towards Cook Inlet. (L.J. 'Oskey' and Henrietta 'Hank' Weeda Family Albums Collection; Anchorage Museum, B2005.019.299)

Why is the Oscar Anderson House so special?

The Oscar Anderson House is a one and one half story bungalow with four rooms downstairs and three rooms upstairs. Quality of construction, materials, and the number of rooms made this house stand out among the one-room log cabins and tents located throughout the early Ship Creek Townsite. It is said to be the first wood-framed home in Anchorage.

Miraculously this original 1915 building remains relatively unaltered. The house was owned by the Oscar Anderson family, and deeded to the Municipality of Anchorage in 1976. The house was moved downhill about 60 feet and stands today, an endearing example of our past.

How did this little house become a museum?

The Oscar Anderson House has provided locals and visitors a glimpse into the everyday life of an early Anchorage family for over thirty years. The Oscar Anderson House was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, for its architectural significance and for Oscar Anderson's role in the development of early Anchorage.

Restoration of the house took place from 1978 through 1982, with financial support from Oscar's widow, and daughter Ruth. Historic Anchorage, Inc. commissioned the restoration, painstakingly completed by volunteers. The interior décor includes period wallpaper, paint and antiques. Anchorage's only house museum was opened to the public in 1982.

Who was Oscar Anderson?

By his own account, Oscar Anderson was the 18th person to arrive in Ship Creek's Tent City. Oscar was born in Fakerskog, Sweden on June 2, 1883. He immigrated to the United States in 1900, and eventually moved to Seattle, Washington. Oscar met and married another Swedish immigrant, Miss Elizabeth Jonsson, in 1905. Three children were born to Oscar and Elizabeth: Maurice, Ruth, and Vincent.

Oscar was an entrepreneur and an astute businessman determined to try his luck in Alaska when he arrived at Ship Creek, in early 1915. He wanted to capitalize on the many opportunities the Last Frontier held and purchased several lots at the 1915 auction. The lot located on the Cook Inlet was seen as an ideal home site and the place to build the family home. Two Swedish carpenters were hired to build Oscar's house. Oscar sent for the family, but despite his good intentions, Oscar, Elizabeth and the children found themselves living in a tent overlooking the construction site from October into the cold month of December. Christmas 1915 found them celebrating in their new little house with the million dollar view!

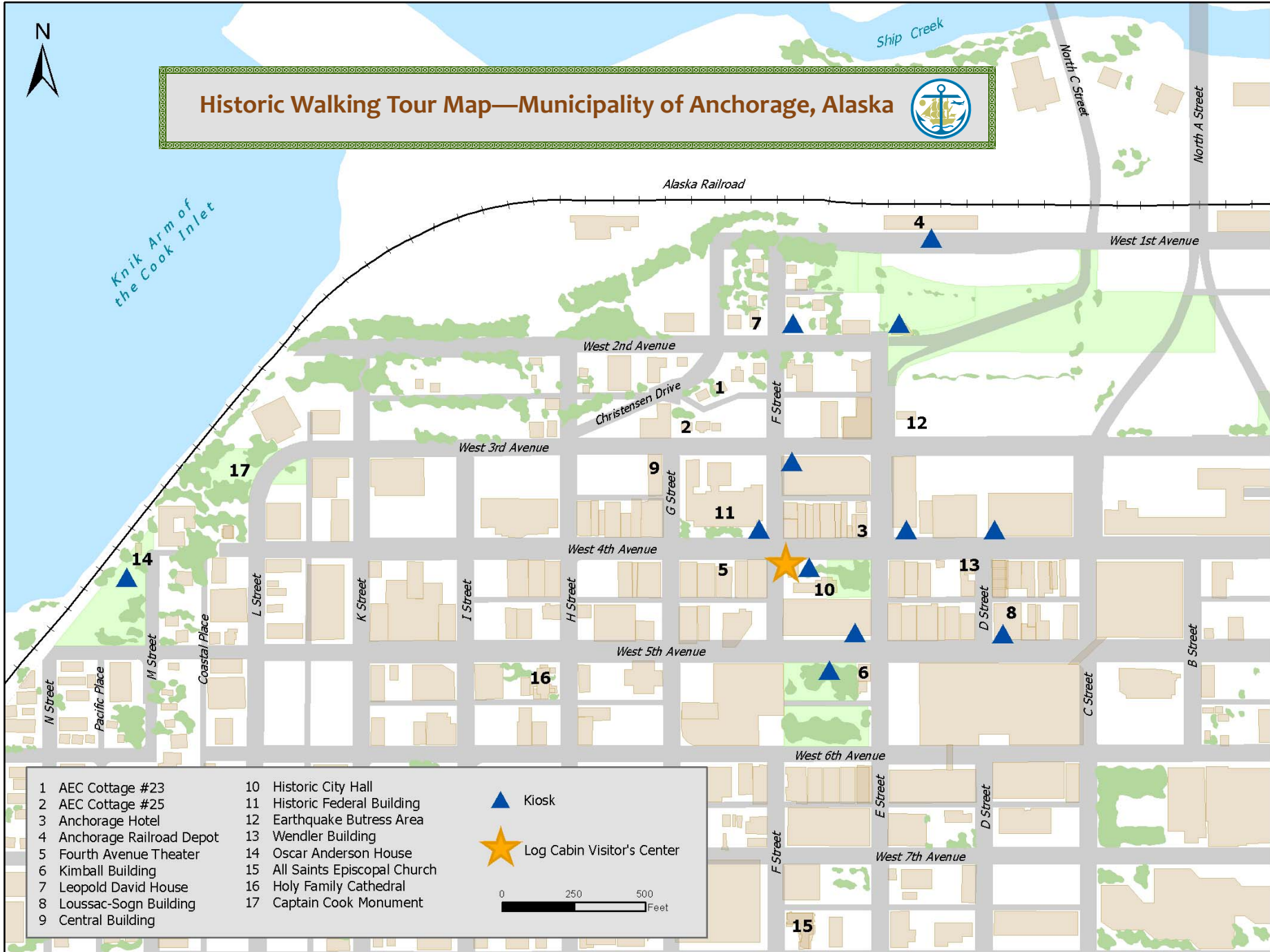


The Anderson Family. (Oscar Anderson House Collection; Anchorage Museum, B1991.021.3)

Oscar made many contributions to the development of early Anchorage. He partnered in several efforts including a cold storage plant and the Ship Creek Meat Corporation. The meat market located to 4th Avenue and sold wholesale and retail meats in town and the surrounding areas. Descendants of Oscar's employees recalled that Oscar was a "very good boss." Oscar also financially benefitted from involvement in the Evans Jones coal mine, and contributed to Alaska aviation with support to Anchorage Air Transport, Inc. During Oscar's life the railroad boom town transitioned from a place that one could not only prosper, but more importantly raise a family.



Historic Walking Tour Map—Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska



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|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 AEC Cottage #23 | 10 Historic City Hall |  Kiosk |
| 2 AEC Cottage #25 | 11 Historic Federal Building |  Log Cabin Visitor's Center |
| 3 Anchorage Hotel | 12 Earthquake Buttress Area | |
| 4 Anchorage Railroad Depot | 13 Wendler Building | |
| 5 Fourth Avenue Theater | 14 Oscar Anderson House | |
| 6 Kimball Building | 15 All Saints Episcopal Church | |
| 7 Leopold David House | 16 Holy Family Cathedral | |
| 8 Loussac-Sogn Building | 17 Captain Cook Monument | |
| 9 Central Building | | |

