

Travel Notes

Salem's Lizzie Borden museum shuts doors

SALEM, Mass. — A Lizzie Borden museum in Salem that sparked a lawsuit and questions over its location has closed after about 2 1/2 years in business.

Owner Leonard Pickel tells The Salem News that his 40 Whacks Museum faced steep rent and high utility costs at a time of year when tourist traffic slows. He says he was never able to attract key school groups.

His museum that opened in the summer of 2008 was originally called The True Story of Lizzie Borden. But he was sued by the Lizzie Borden Bed & Breakfast in Fall River, where Borden was accused of using an ax to murder her father and stepmother. The Salem museum changed its name.

Others questioned why a museum about something that happened in Fall River was located in Salem, famous for its witch trials.

Santa Monica amusement park sold for \$34M

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — The Ferris wheel and other amusements on the Santa Monica Pier have been sold.

The landmark Pacific Park amusement center has been sold for \$34 million to an Orlando-based real estate trust.

CNL Lifestyle Properties Inc. told the *Los Angeles Times* that it bought the park, along with a ground lease for the two-acre property.

Santa Monica Amusements, which opened the park in 1996, will continue to operate it.

CNL Managing Director Curt Caffey says the park is an emblem of Southern California that's seen frequently on TV shows.

Pacific Park draws more than 4 million visitors a year and grossed nearly \$20 million last year.

But General Manager Mary Ann Powell says it's expensive to maintain, with paint alone costing \$200,000 a year.

Billionaire unveils design of LA museum

LOS ANGELES — Billionaire Eli Broad's planned downtown Los Angeles contemporary art museum is a three-story, \$130 million honeycomb structure.

The developer-philanthropist unveiled the architectural design for the Grand Avenue museum recently at the nearby Walt Disney Concert Hall.

A committee of state and local officials voted earlier to let him lease county-owned land.

The museum will showcase Broad's 2,000-piece collection that includes works by John Baldessari and Jeff Koons.

Broad says he hopes the museum will help realize his vision of downtown Los Angeles as a bustling hive of culture and street life.

Disney's Fantasyland to get a revamp

ORLANDO, Fla. — Walt Disney World says a new indoor roller coaster and a new place to interact with Disney princesses will be part of the largest expansion in Magic Kingdom history.

Disney announced details of the plans Tuesday that will double the size of the theme park's Fantasyland section.

The coaster, dubbed the "The Seven Dwarfs Mine Train," will feature vehicles that swing back and forth along a twisting track. And in "Princess Fairytale Hall," Aurora, Cinderella and other Disney princesses will greet guests in a new royal court.

Another new indoor ride with a "Little Mermaid" theme will be like one opening at Disneyland in Anaheim, Calif., later this year.

HEADING NORTH

Tongass surprises



ABOVE: A typical canoe portage down to a prime salmon stream in the Tongass National Forest. The moss-draped rain forest rarely gets much below freezing and has an average winter temperature higher than in the mountains of Southwest Virginia. BELOW: A half-day's catch in the waters off the Tongass National Forest on Prince of Wales Island, Alaska.

Moss-draped rain forest in Alaska really does exist

ROBERT MCKINNEY
SPECIAL TO THE HERALD COURIER

What is your idea of Alaska? If you've never been there — or even if you have — the picture that comes to mind is probably one of glaciers, frozen tundra or majestic Mount McKinley, which is, at 20,320 feet, North America's tallest peak. But a dripping, moss-draped rain forest that seldom gets much below freezing; that has, in fact, average winter temperatures that are higher than what we get here in the mountains of Southwest Virginia — even in January? Who am I trying to kid?

Actually: nobody. The place does exist on the southward-reaching finger of Alaska from roughly Haines down to just past Ketchikan, and including Juneau, Wrangell, Craig and Sitka. And most of it belongs to us American taxpayers in the form of the 17-million-acre Tongass National Forest.

You want to hear something else that you may find hard to believe? On the Tongass National Forest there is an amazing coalition of federal and state government agencies, sportsmen's organizations, environmental groups, commercial fishermen and loggers and Native American tribes that is working hard to save and restore this marvelous isolated corner of our planet. And it is a corner well-worth the effort.

In addition to being our largest national forest, the Tongass is home to nearly 7,000 grizzly bears, 10,000 bald eagles, five species of Pacific salmon, 30 percent of the world's remaining old-growth temperate rainforest and 18 federally recognized tribes of native peoples.

Although I have traveled in and fished much of Alaska including the extremely far-flung islands of the Aleutians,



» **Alaska Wilderness League** (122 C St. NW, Suite 240, Washington, DC 20001; (202) 544-5205; www.AlaskaWild.org)
 » **Sportsman's Alliance for Alaska** (a branch of the Alaska Conservation Foundation): 441 West Fifth Avenue, Suite 402, Anchorage, AK 99501-2340; (907) 276-1917; www.akcf.org.
 » **Boardwalk Lodge on Prince of Wales Island** (www.boardwalklodge.com) offers lodging, fishing, guides and gourmet meals.

frozen Iditarod sled-dog checkpoints, Kodiak Island, the entire Alaska Highway astride a Harley, and even the intriguing little gold-mining town of Chicken, I was really unprepared for the sights and sensations of the Tongass, especially Prince of Wales Island.

To begin with, even the little trees are huge and not just a few isolated specimens — all of them. The moss, which seems to cover everything, is usually about five inches deep and frequently even deeper and the ferns are the size of beach umbrellas. The week I was there we had two blue-sky and sunny days (my host said that these were two of the annual four...), but everything seems to drip constantly. The Tongass officially gets as much as 200 inches of precipitation a year. That's more than four times the average in the Blue Ridge Mountains and we think we're wet.

The extreme greenness of the place often disguises the fact that this wet and wild wonderland has been ruthlessly logged in the past, often with little or no regard for the environment, a disregard that not only stripped away much of the timber and other vegetation, but that also clogged and made useless dozens of

miles of vital salmon spawning water. In addition, salmon stocks were being tragically overfished.

While logging still remains a viable industry, logging companies as well as government agencies have realized that unchecked clear-cutting is no longer the answer and they are beginning to act accordingly. Commercial fishing is also being done far more responsibly because a sustainable salmon fishery contributes more than \$125 million a year to local economies. Hand-in-hand with judicial salmon fishing policies, both sport and commercial, go efforts to preserve and restore the rivers in which the salmon spawn.

In the interest of full disclosure, I once worked for the U.S. Forest Service and it is an agency that, in my experience, is a top-heavy bureaucracy. But the present-day Tongass doesn't fit this description at all. With cutting-edge projects to restore and improve salmon spawning streams and a lively spirit of cooperation, the sense of actively participating in meaningful work seems to percolate throughout the ranks from the lowest-paid worker through administration and management — management, by the

way, that can often be found out on the project, hip-deep in water.

Although there is plenty of credit to go around, two civilian agencies that merit high marks for their work are the Sportsman's Alliance for Alaska and the Alaska Wilderness League. Either is a really good place to begin learning about this fascinating and — without a doubt — unique corner of Alaska.

Although few visitors to this wonderland ever get more than a few blocks from the quays where their cruise ships dock, more than 1.2 million tourists a year visit the area. And, even though towns such as Ketchikan and Juneau are fascinating in their own rights, more adventurous opportunities are to be had in and around the Tongass. Fishing,

of course, for salmon and giant halibut is a major draw with numerous camps and luxury lodges offering packages ranging from sourdough austere to four-star luxury, but don't overlook photography, bird watching, whale watching, sea kayaking or combinations of all these. Helicopter and floatplane fishing are also available. And did I mention the 7,000 grizzlies who, along with at least that many black bears, heartily welcome having their pictures taken by tasty tourists?

Sure, this part of Seward's Icebox is foggy and wet most of the time, but, like the locals here, you quickly get used to wearing raingear and rubber boots. Especially when you are casting to feisty 12-pound salmon while watching up to a dozen eagles perched majestically in a single spruce.

In a world where political warfare, bureaucratic gout, corporate greed and environmental intransience gets all the headlines it is refreshing indeed to be reminded that all these groups can find common ground and work toward mutually beneficial dreams and goals. Here's hoping that the Tongass NF and its partners can serve as an example that others will emulate.