

## Seward Historic Walking Tour

Welcome to the Seward Historical Walking Tour.

Visit [www.cityofseward.us/walkingtour](http://www.cityofseward.us/walkingtour) for additional information, sources, and our partners and contributors.

We encourage you to visit these buildings to see them and read their interpretive panels (if they have one), but only go into those buildings that are active businesses or public facilities.



Some locations do not have signs, so the information in this pamphlet will inform your visit.

### First Avenue

#### 300 First Avenue

Jan van Empel's house, 1925

Jan van Empel, the famous Dutch/American painter stayed here while painting the "The Resurrection" at Saint Peter's Episcopal church in 1925, using Seward residents and himself as models.

#### 335 First Avenue

Brownell House, 1904

(Sign: Imagine and Inspire)

Don Carlos "Carl" Brownell, Sr. was part of the 1903 landing party and purchased the first commercial lot and built the D.C. Brownell Hardware. Artist Rockwell Kent who often stayed here.

### Second Avenue

#### 235 and 239 Second Avenue

St. Peter's Episcopal Church and Rectory, 1906

(Sign: Peace To Those Who Are Far Away)

Seward's oldest church, on the National Register of Historic Places. Known for its unique 1925 painting of the Ascension of Christ behind the altar by Dutch artist Jan van Empel.

#### 315 Second Avenue

Captains Oldow House, 1918

Notable residents include Captain Don Oldow, captain of the Alaskan ferry Tustemena, and his wife, Captain Pam. The two of them pioneered excursions to the Kenai Fjords National Park starting in 1980.

#### 318 Second Avenue

Manthey House, 1920

(Sign: House Resurrected)

Gustave and Clara Manthey bought the property in 1924. Many interesting things were found in the wall during remodeling.

#### 1111 Second Avenue

Stucco Johnson Historic Home Site, 1916

(Sign: Clues To Seward's Past)

Site of master craftsman Stucco Johnson's unique Spanish Mission Style cottage before it was moved by horses to 327 Fifth Avenue around 1920. The house slipped through the ropes guiding it down the cliff on moving day and slid down the hill on its side without developing a crack, cementing Stucco's reputation as a master craftsman.

### Third Avenue

#### 125 Third Avenue

The Mary Lowell Homestead, The Line, and Alaska Transfer Company

Originally the site of the Mary Lowell homestead, Frank Ballaine built a house for her here. Later known as the Peel House, where Al Peel, manager of the Alaska Transfer Company (located where the parking lot is now), lived. His wife was associated with Seward's notorious red-light district (The Line), where a line of cottonwoods now stands. Behind them were once 21 small houses operated by local businesswomen.

#### 235 Third Avenue

The Tides Inn, 1941

(Sign: Perfect Timing)

These apartments were built when Seward was going through hard times during World War II. A fire destroyed many buildings on the east side of Fourth Ave. leaving housing in short supply.

#### 319 Third Avenue

Wayne Blue House, 1920

Wayne Blue purchased this lot in 1916. He was a manager at the Alaska Transfer Company, an agent for the Seward Water and Power Company, and a business manager for the Seward Gateway paper.

#### 417 Third Avenue

Holland House, 1905

(Sign: Millionaire's Row)

Millionaire's Row, built between 1904 and 1906, represented a modern life and progress to a frontier town that still had stump-strewn, muddy streets and board sidewalks. These homes represented a genteel society when Seward started to find its identity.

#### 420 Third Avenue

Norway Maple, 1943

Beautiful old Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*). Mrs. Amend bought this beautiful tree through the Sears catalog in the late 1930s and planted it as a sapling. It may be the largest Norway Maple tree in Alaska.

#### 429 Third Avenue

The Hale House, 1905

(Sign: Millionaire's Row)

The Hale family was a prominent feature of Seward's business, art scene, and social life.

#### Third Avenue & Dairy Hill Lane

Benny Benson Memorial Park

Memorial to 13-year-old Benny Benson, whose design won the American Legion's Alaska State Flag contest.

### Fourth Avenue

#### 209 Fourth Avenue

Brown & Hawkins, 1904

(Sign: A 100 Year Family Affair)

The oldest continuously operated business in Seward which provided provisions to pioneers and became the first bank and telegraph office in Seward. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

#### 218 Fourth Avenue

Urbach's Clothiers, 1942

Urbach's has been in business since 1915. While a fire destroyed the original building in 1941, Leon wasted no time and rebuilt it in 1942. Leon was one of Alaska's unofficial leaders. He passed the business on to son, Larry, and his wife Dorothy. Dorothy continues the family tradition of leadership and in 2020 received an award from the mayor for her 30 years of leading the Friends of the Library and her many years of service to the Seward community.

#### 219 Fourth Avenue

Orlander Building, 1916

(Sign: The Classiest Structure On The Street)

It began as Ellsworths, a millinery shop that sold women's clothing and accessories, providing a necessary service in a pioneer country. Later it was Orlander's jewelry store for women and men..

#### 222 Fourth Avenue

McMullen Building, 1930

(Sign: Built To Last)

Built by locally renowned craftsman Gerhard "Stucco" Johnson, his building has survived time, fire, and earthquake. The 1941 fire that destroyed many other businesses stopped here.

#### 225 Fourth Avenue

Seward Commercial Company, 1908

(Sign: Get Well-Fed and Well-Read)

William M. Sauers built the new Seward Commercial Company which operated as a general merchandising store and lending library, with a meeting hall and dance hall upstairs.

#### 227 Fourth Avenue

Generations-The Sexton House, 1911

(Sign: An Adventurous, Creative Photographer)

"Generations" pays tribute to how the Sextons and the Sexton House, have withstood the test of time and reflects the spirit of Seward's adventurous photographer, Sylvia Sexton, and her family.

237 Fourth Avenue - Kawabe Park

#### Fourth Avenue Business District

(Sign: The Beating Heart Of Seward)

From Seward's founding in 1903, Fourth Avenue has been the beating heart of Seward's commerce and celebrations, as it is today. Early risk-takers and entrepreneurs invested their energy, creativity, and finances to make Seward the center of commerce in southcentral Alaska.

#### 1200 Fourth Avenue

Seward Mariners' Memorial

A lighthouse that houses the names of mariners lost at sea or who have passed on after a lifetime of love for the ocean.

### Fifth Avenue

#### 212 Fifth Avenue

Heritage Sitka Spruce

Note the huge, beautiful open-grown Sitka Spruce tree. Likely over 70 years old, it is the most outstanding tree in Seward for its history, exemplary shape, beauty, and size.

#### 217 and 221 Fifth Avenue

Hotel Seward, originally 1905

William McNeiley built the Hotel Seward around 1905. The hotel burned down in 1941 and then was rebuilt in 1944. Come in and walk through our history.

#### 232 Fifth Avenue

Mt. Marathon Apartments, circa 1906

(Sign: Warm and Welcoming)

We think this building has been offering a warm and welcoming place to live for over 100 years. It likely was a boarding house for early railway workers.

#### 327 Fifth Avenue

Swetmann House, 1916

(Sign: Slid Down A Hill and Survived In One Piece)

Considered a jewel of Seward architecture, it was built in 1916 by locally renowned craftsman Gerhard "Stucco" Johnson as his residence and moved here after being purchased by Elwyn Swetmann around 1921. During the move it slid down a steep hill and tipped over, then was set upright and moved on skids by horses.

## 338 Fifth Avenue

1930

This 405 square-foot cottage was a typical size for many homes in the 1930s.

## Sixth Avenue

### 219 Sixth Avenue

The Government Cable House, 1905

(Sign: Connecting Alaska To The World)

The Government Cable Office is a historic building that once served as the telegraph office for the entire Kenai Peninsula, connecting Seward to the rest of the world.

### 239 Sixth Avenue.

Seward Community Library & Museum, 2011

(Sign: Connecting Our Community, Sharing Our Stories)

The combined Seward Community Library & Museum opened in January 2013, collecting our stories and connecting our community. Pick up a map here at the honorary start of the Seward Historic Walking Tour.

### 308 Sixth Avenue

Dryden House, 1920

(Sign: Mobile Home Living)

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, moving whole houses to new locations with horses was a common practice. This house was moved from Mile 7 in 1930 and may have been a barn once.

### 313 Sixth Avenue

Malloy House, 1928

(Sign: If Walls Could Talk)

This house was built before 1928 on a hill above Second Avenue and moved here around 1928. Learn how the Anderson family had to run for their lives as the Standard Oil tanks a block away exploded and the earth shook during the 1964 earthquake.

### 400 and 408 Sixth Avenue

Circa 1941

(Sign: What's A Quonset?)

Quonset huts were lightweight, portable, barracks used by the military during World War II. The 420th Coast Artillery Corps, an anti-aircraft unit, was located in this area. These Quonset huts may have housed visiting entertainers for the military including Lauren Bacall.

## Adams Street

### 308 Adams Street

Van Gilder Hotel, 1916

(Sign: Games, Ghosts, and History)

This beautiful historic hotel has played host to a legendary pinocle game, ghosts, and famous pilots. It is said to be haunted and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### 410 Adams Street (City Hall)

1867 Alaska Purchase Centennial Year Sitka Spruce

In 1867 the US purchased the Russian Empire's Alaska colony. This tree was planted to celebrate the purchase.

### 500 Adams Street

The L.V. Ray Building, 1916

Built by the Harriman Bank of New York, it served as a bank until 1922, then as the local high school from 1925-28. L.V. Ray, a prominent pioneer attorney, bought the building for his home and office and lived there until his death in 1946. His wife, Hazel, converted it into apartments.

### 504 Adams Street

International Order of Odd Fellows Hall, 1918

The IOOF hall was completed and opened to the public with a dance and basket social in 1918. It was one of the favorite dancing and grand ball locations in Seward through the 1940s, and served as a community center for many years.

### 611 Adams Street

Standard Oil Manager's House, 1928

(Sign: Beach Front Property)

In the 1920s, the Standard Oil Company of California came to Seward and built this home for the company's manager. The earthquake destroyed the oil tanks and structures, giving it beachfront property today.

## Church Street

### 302 Church Street

Resurrect Art Coffee House, 1917

(Sign: Dreaming and Connecting)

From the time this building was constructed as the Methodist Church, this building has connected our community. This old church demonstrates that historic buildings are often best preserved when occupied by a thriving business with owners who love them. Note the Heritage 12' tall Lilac tree.

## Brownell Street

### 208 Brownell Street

Home Brew Alley, 1932

(Sign: Moonshiners and Hangers-On)

This house is one of the only remaining houses of "Home Brew Alley". Also called Alley A, it contained a "whole bunch of moonshiners and hangers-on," including famous bootleggers and the marshals who guarded their booze.

## Jefferson Street

### Corner of Jefferson & Ballaine Streets

Lowell Creek Diversion Dam and Flume, 1940

(Sign: Taming Mother Nature For Now)

Lowell Creek used to rage down through Seward, wreaking havoc, destroying bridges, and blocking access to the north side of town. It was such a problem that in 1927 the Alaska Railroad constructed a small diversion dam and flume. That didn't work and a diversion tunnel was driven through the adjacent mountain to carry the stream. This feat of engineering is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

## Railway Avenue

### 401 Railway Avenue

Hoben Park, 1923

Built in time for the visit by President Warren G. Harding on July 13, 1923, when completion of the Alaska Railroad was celebrated. The park is named for Hedley V. "Harry" Hoben, who created it. The park has been generally restored to its 1920s appearance by the Seward Historic Preservation Commission. Note the Heritage Balsam Cottonwood in the center of the park that has been here at least since the 1950s. Hoben Park is on the National Register of Historic Places.

### 501 Railway Avenue.

Seward Railroad Depot, 1917

(Sign: Saved From The Flood)

The Seward Railroad Depot was moved to its current location following the devastating flooding of Lowell Creek in 1928. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### 613 Railway Avenue

Founders Site and The Fourth Avenue Wharf, 1903

(Sign: A Bustling Terminal)

In 1903, the founders landed here, and it was not long before the Fourth Avenue wharf was built and buzzing with activity. The Great Alaska Earthquake of 1964 destroyed it, but you can see remnants of what used to be.

## Washington Street

### 411 Washington Street

Old Solly's, 1916

(Sign: A Seward Original)

Built by Alaska pioneer Cal. M. Brosius, Old Solly's was named after owner Sol Urie. The building was a community hub and Sol was named Mr. Seward by the City Council for his wide involvement in civic activities.

## Lowell Canyon Road

### Mount Marathon Race

1915

(Sign: Call Of The Mountain)

There are many tales of races on Mount Marathon before the first official race in 1915. What is truth and what is conjecture remains a mystery and is what Alaskan stories are made of.

## Interesting Sites If You Drive A Little

### Woodlawn Cemetery

Salmon Creek Road and Moat Way, 1916

In the early days, the dead were buried in numerous places around Seward as there was no official cemetery. In 1916, the city purchased this land for the Woodlawn Cemetery. For \$30 each, remains were dug up, transported, and reburied here. When Salmon Creek changed course in the 1920s, the water table rose too high to continue using the land as a cemetery. It was abandoned around 1926. Many of the remains were exhumed and relocated to the current cemetery. Some of Seward's earliest residents, including Mary Lowell, are buried here.

### Seward Cemeteries

Aspen Lane and Coolidge Drive, 1927

In 1933 the City acquired a 40-acre Cemetery Reserve and deeded land to the organizations that had initiated the idea of creating this cemetery. Many graves were relocated from Woodlawn Cemetery. To this day, the American Legion, Masons, and Pioneers of Alaska maintain their cemeteries. The City maintains the Oddfellow and Jesse Lee Home Cemeteries. View the Memorial Garden created by the Seward Rotary Club near the Aspen Lane entrance, and the Jesse Lee Home Cemetery interpretive sign nearby.