

Agency: Department of Natural Resources**Project Title:****Project Type:** Remodel, Reconstruction and Upgrades

State Parks Deferred Maintenance - House of Wickersham R & R

State Funding Requested: \$250,000
One-Time Need**House District: 3 / B****Brief Project Description:**

Repair and Restoration of the House of Wickersham, a historic landmark in Juneau, managed by the Division of Parks & Outdoor recreation. Work includes rehabilitation of floors, walls, windows, as well as plumbing and electrical upgrades.

Funding Plan:**Total Cost of Project: \$250,000***There is no other funding needed***Detailed Project Description and Justification:**

Judge James Wickersham played a pivotal role in shaping modern Alaska. Described as a statesman, author, historian, and scholar, he brought justice to a sprawling new territory and was an early proponent of statehood. Built in 1898, the Wickersham House stands as both an historical landmark and a memorial to the life and works of this seminal figure.

The State of Alaska bought the historic Wickersham House in 1984, but its state of disrepair is such that it has seldom been open to the public. It is officially designated the Wickersham State Historic Site.

To maintain a museum/historical site, the first floor walls, plumbing, and electrical need replacing. This includes insulating the walls and refinishing them with drywall. The second floor needs finishing work (walls, doors, windows, and floor) as well as finalizing repairs to the plumbing.

A detail of needed work, including estimated costs, is attached. The department's estimates did not include a contingency factor. Experience dictates a 15% contingency as a prudent budgeting tool for restoration of historic buildings.

The division recently engaged the Juneau community in a public process. This included plans to use the site, as well as landscaping and upkeep considerations. Repair and restoration of this historic landmark (and state asset) will ensure it is available to this and future generations of Alaskans.

Project Timeline:

FY 2011

Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

Alaska Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

Name:	Michael Eberhardt
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Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? Yes No

**Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
House of Wickersham and Gruening Cabin
Estimated Repair and Restoration Project Costs**

Date prepared: 3/24/2010

Contact information:

James King, Division Director - 269-8701

Michael Eberhardt, Southeast Region Superintendent - 465-2481

House of Wickersham - \$213,000

To maintain a museum/historical site, the first floor walls, plumbing, and electrical need replacing. This includes insulating the walls and refinishing them with drywall. Work to be done and approximate costs:

- Fix/restore 1st floor walls and ceiling - \$13,300
 - Replace/ upgrade 1st floor electrical, plumbing and insulation while walls open – \$47,500
 - Restoration of main entrance and building access - \$9,200
 - Roof inspection and Rain gutter repair - \$4,500
 - Restore/repair 1st floor windows and doors - \$16,000
 - Improve handicap access and restroom facilities - \$10,200
 - Paint/repair exterior siding - \$27,000
 - Restore 1st floor entrance to original design up and through 2nd floor - \$7,300
 - Fix 1st floor flooring - \$8,000
 - Landscape exterior/ parking/ access - \$15,500
- Total first floor: \$158,500**

The second floor needs some finishing work (walls, doors, windows, and floor) as well as finalizing some plumbing. Work to be done and approximate costs:

- Refinish floors \$6,500
 - Finish trim and paint interior walls, doors \$12,000
 - Finish plumbing \$8,500
 - Window repairs \$27,500
- Total second floor: \$54,500**



Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation

Alaska Department of Natural Resources

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Wickersham State Historic Site

House of Wickersham - Home of Alaska's Pioneer Judge, James Wickersham

Built in 1898 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places



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James Wickersham was a statesman, author, historian and scholar. Evangeline Atwood, author of *Frontier Politics*, had this to say about Judge Wickersham - "...No other man has made as deep and varied imprints on Alaska's heritage, whether it be in politics, government, commerce, literature, history or philosophy. A federal judge, member of Congress, attorney and explorer, present-day Alaska is deeply in debt to him."

Gold and Law in Alaska

The gold discoveries of the Klondike and Nome had attracted hordes of prospectors and, along with them, corruption and claim jumping. By 1900, new criminal and civil codes, as well as the expansion of the U.S. District Court system brought the first law and order to the Interior. The 3rd Judicial Division, comprised of 300,000 square miles, was the responsibility of the new District Court Judge, James Wickersham.

Eagle City, a town on the Yukon River, was the official headquarters for the 3rd Judicial District. Here, after building his modest log home, Wickersham began settling mining claim disputes and collecting saloon license fees.

Seven Terms as U.S. District Court Judge (1900-1907)

- The Eagle to Rampart circuit comprised 1,000 miles round-trip which Wickersham covered by steamer or with a dog team.
- Wickersham held "floating court" in the Aleutians and elsewhere along the coast aboard U.S. Revenue cutters
- He also reestablished the court and confidence of the people of Nome after Judge Noyes was removed from office for abuse of judicial power in 1901.

Climbing McKinley

At age 45, Wickersham was the first white man to attempt to climb up Mount McKinley. He had climbed every major peak of the Olympic Peninsula before coming to Alaska. While delegate to congress, Wickersham won legislation creating Mt. McKinley National Park.

Wickersham's Scholarly Contributions

- 47 personal diaries, 1900-1939, documenting his years in Alaska.
- 7 volumes of Alaska Law Reports, compiling the decisions made by the District Court Judges in Alaska.
- A bibliography of Alaska Literature, 1724-1924 containing the titles of 10,380 books and documents the Judge had collected.
- *Old Yukon: Tales, Trails, Trials*, an account of his years as a pioneer judge.

Fairbanks

The new Tanana Valley gold strike had started a stampede in 1902, and gold seekers poured into the area surrounding Barnette's Cache. Wickersham struck a bargain with Barnette that if he would rename the townsite Fairbanks, after the senator from Indiana, he would move the district headquarters from Eagle to Barnette's Cache. In 1903, the headquarters were moved to Fairbanks.

Delegate to Congress (1909-1920 and 1931-1933)

During his seven terms as Alaska's non-voting delegate to Congress, he was able to persuade an uninterested Congress to pass legislation of major importance to Alaska.

- Home Rule 1912 - Wickersham prized most of all his accomplishment of winning an elected legislature for Alaska. As part of the Organic Act of August 24, 1912 (Wickersham's 55th birthday), Home Rule brought to Alaskans a privilege that had been denied for 45 years.
- Alaska Railroad 1914 - In the face of bitter opposition from powerful private corporations, Wickersham, an eloquent speaker, delivered a 5 1/2 hour successful speech to Congress, which appropriated funds for construction.
- Alaska Agricultural College & School of Mining 1917 - Wickersham believed that with a college, railroad and Home Rule, Alaska would move closer to becoming the independent state it deserved to be. Later, the college became the University of Alaska.
- First Statehood Bill 1917 - Wickersham introduced the idea of statehood to congress 43 years before it became a reality.

Family

Deborah (Bell) Wickersham (1863-1926) was the judge's wife for 46 years. They had three sons, Darrell, Andrew and Howard. Darrell was the only one that lived to adulthood. He had no children of his own.

Grace (Vrooman) Bishop, a widowed school teacher with no children became the Judge's second wife in 1928. After his death in 1939, she continued to live in their Juneau home until her death in 1963.

House on the Ridge

Some of Juneau's most prominent early residents lived in this Victorian home.

Frank Hammond - Superintendent of the Sheep Creek Mining Co. wanted a residence suitable for a mine official. The house was built on the ridge overlooking town in 1898.

John Malony - Lawyer for Alaska Treadwell Gold Mining Co. & founder of Juneau Cold Storage. Malony was persuaded to sell the house to Bartlett Thane who needed a big

place in which to entertain.

Bartlett Thane - Manager & Director of the Alaska Gastineau Mining Company. Thane, a highly respected promoter of the mines, entertained Charles Haden, New York investment banker and Daniel Jackling, comptroller of the nation's copper industry.

James Wickersham - Lawyer, judge, delegate to Congress, collector and author. Wickersham purchased the home in 1928 and lived there until his death in 1939 at age 82.

Preserving The Past

Upon Judge Wickersham's death, the house passed to his wife and eventually to her niece, Ruth Allman. Recognizing the historical value of the Judge's accomplishments and the collection of historical photographs, artifacts, diaries and scrapbooks she now possessed, Mrs. Allman opened her home to visitors. For over 25 years she shared her stories of the Judge's life and Alaskan history with hundreds of tourists.

In 1984, the house and its contents were purchased by the State of Alaska with the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation designated as the managing agency.

Today the stories surrounding James Wickersham and the Gold Rush Era are told through historical photographs, Alaskan artifacts, memorabilia, and the period furnishings on display at the house.

House of Wickersham

Step back in time through the doors of the House of Wickersham, the first large Victorian home built on "Chicken Ridge", the "Nob Hill" of Juneau, Alaska. Sip tea from an elegant bone china cup and drink in the history of Alaska's territorial days as seen through the life of the man responsible for "Home Rule", the Alaska Railroad, the University of Alaska and Mount McKinley National Park (now known as Denali National Park).

Wickersham Society

A non-profit volunteer organization, the Wickersham Society sponsors events and solicits funding to assist with the operation of the house.

For more information

Alaska State Parks Southeast Area Office 400 Willoughby Ave., Suite 500 P.O. Box 111071 Juneau, AK 99811 (907) 465-4563	House of Wickersham 213 7th Street Juneau, AK 99801 (907) 586-9001
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