

Paintings depict Russian Alaska

A collection of 53 paintings by Vasily V. Ushanoff depicting people, places and events in the history of Russian Alaska from the 17th century to its sale to the United States in 1867 will be on view at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art through Nov. 19.

The paintings by Dr. Ushanoff, a retired dentist and self-taught artist of Laguna Beach, Calif., were first exhibited at the museum in 1980. They are taken from 18th and 19th century black and white illustrations. They provide a unique visual overview of the Russian period in Alaska.

Since the exhibition in 1980, Dr. Ushanoff has donated the entire collection to the museum.

Dr. Ushanoff was born in Manchuria in 1904 and was graduated from a gymnasium in Harbin before coming to this country in 1922. After several years of working as a logger, dishwasher, stevedore, janitor and deckhand, he managed to obtain a degree in dentistry.

He retired in 1966 and became interested in the history of Russian America at the same time that he made his first experiments in painting. Guided by historian Dr. Richard Pierce, he explored historical sources for subjects to paint. The collection now owned by the museum is the result.