

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, June 16, 2023

Contact:

Ronan Rooney, Producer, Wrangell History Unlocked  
wrangellpod@gmail.com

Katie Ringsmuth PhD, State Historian, Alaska Office of History and Archaeology  
katie.ringsmuth@alaska.gov

Bethany Hawkins, AASLH Chief of Operations,  
615-320-3203, [hawkins@aaslh.org](mailto:hawkins@aaslh.org)

## **Wrangell History Unlocked Wins Prestigious 2023 AASLH Award of Excellence**

Nashville, TN – The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) congratulates Wrangell History Unlocked for receiving an Award of Excellence for *Rise & Fall of the Star of Bengal*. The Award of Excellence is part of the AASLH Leadership in History Awards, the most prestigious recognition for achievement in the preservation of state and local history.

*Rise & Fall of the Star of Bengal* is a 5-part documentary podcast detailing the horrific wreck of the Star of Bengal on September 20, 1908, off Coronation Island, sending 111 men, primarily Asian cannery workers, to their death. The episodes chart the ship's history from the beginning and focuses on the competing narratives around its final voyage.

"Getting to the bottom of this mystery seemed a worthy goal," explained Wrangell History Unlocked producer Ronan Rooney, "not only to honor the dead but to teach Wrangell about its cannery past." On a personal mission to uncover the factual story, Rooney, an amateur historian, spent nearly one year researching the ship's history and piecing together eyewitness accounts associated with the tragedy to tell the story like never before. Episodes, transcripts, photos and charts are shared online at [WrangellHistoryUnlocked.com](http://WrangellHistoryUnlocked.com).

"I worry there is a public misconception that History belongs to historians, confined to books and museums," added Rooney. "History is all around us, if only we can hear it."

The podcast was nominated for the Award of Excellence by Katie Ringsmuth, PhD, State Historian with the Alaska Office of History and Archeology.

This year, AASLH is proud to confer fifty-one national awards honoring people, projects, and exhibits. The winners represent the best in the field and provide leadership for the future of state and local history.

The AASLH awards program was initiated in 1945 to establish and encourage standards of excellence in the collection, preservation, and interpretation of state and local history throughout the United States. The AASLH Leadership in History Awards not only honor significant achievement in the field of state and local history, but also bring public recognition of the opportunities for small and large organizations, institutions, and programs to make contributions in this arena. For more information about the Leadership in History Awards, contact AASLH at 615-320-3203, or go to [www.aaslh.org](http://www.aaslh.org).

###

### **Wrangell History Unlocked**

WrangellHistoryUnlocked.com is a multimedia project focused on elevating the incredible history of Wrangell, Alaska. Since 2020, amateur historian Ronan Rooney has produced highly detailed, deeply researched podcasts for the public about meaningful conflicts, people, and milestones in Wrangell history. Through the podcast and website, Wrangell History Unlocked weaves together pieces of Wrangell history in an interesting and interactive way.

### **About AASLH**

The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), a national nonprofit association, provides leadership and resources to help the history community thrive and make the past more meaningful for all people. AASLH serves the tens of thousands of history organizations, professionals, and volunteers around the country who help people of all ages develop critical thinking skills and understand how learning history helps society make progress toward justice. Through research, advocacy, and our field-leading professional development program, AASLH advances public history practice and connects history practitioners to critical issues in the field and to one another. For more information about AASLH visit [www.aaslh.org](http://www.aaslh.org).