

## Gariepy Publishes Book on Alaska History

### ***A Century of Service in Alaska***

*(Ed note: The following is excerpted from Colonel Henry Gariepy's book, A Century of Service in Alaska, which will be published in March 1998.)*

Joe Wright, a Tlingit, launched the Army in Hoonah in 1901. Before that, one night in a drunken brawl in the town of Douglas, a man came after him with a gun and in a fight with the man Wright accidentally killed him. The jury brought in a verdict of guilty and he was sentenced to the penitentiary.

In the penitentiary he met The Salvation Army at one of its weekly meetings for the prisoners. Among many of the men saved was Joe, and his whole life was changed. The Salvation Army taught him to read the Bible, and after some years he asked if he could be made a soldier. Because of his influence for good in the prison, this was granted, and each Sunday he was allowed to wear the red guernsey which had been given him. The prison officials came to see that Joe's life was truly transformed, and after eight years he was given a parole.

Joe Wright returned to Alaska with a Salvation Army flag, and a drum he had made himself by stretching deer skin over a wooden frame. The drum was used to call the people to meeting, as the churches did with their bell, with the first meeting in Douglas, held in 1898. Then Wright took The Salvation Army to the village of Hoonah, where he started a Sunday school and held open-air meetings, preaching to his own people. William Benson soon joined him, a revival commenced, and the work was firmly established. When a group of native leaders were taken to Wrangell for special training, Joe was included, and when the course was over he was commissioned an envoy.

Joe Wright is remembered by the elder natives as having a strong voice that "could be heard far across the harbor when he would sing on his boat."

...Brigadier Robert Leshner recalled, "Joe Wright was particularly effective in working with the Indians in summer camps during the fishing season. He held Sunday meetings, and was instrumental in leading many to Christ. We recall one fall when the fishing had been closed, Wright brought to us 35 converts asking that we enroll them as soldiers."



Wright conducted meetings with his people at the fishing cannery, with permission of the cannery superintendent. When someone asked the superintendent of the cannery why he allowed the Indian workers to take Sunday as a day of rest and worship he answered, "because they come to work Monday sober, rested, and happier people."

*Chapter 4, "Nuggets of Gold"*