



PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Black Americans have played significant and historically underrepresented roles in the history of the nation's economic, cultural, spiritual, and political development while working tirelessly to maintain and promote their culture and history; and

WHEREAS, the United States government first formally recognized Black History Month in 1976 as part of the U.S. Bicentennial to celebrate and highlight these unacknowledged contributions; and

WHEREAS, the theme Black History Month for 2024 is "Rhythms of Resilience: One Soul, One Sound" and centers on the concept that Black history, culture, and music embody a tapestry of diversity and interconnection, rather than being a single narrative; and

WHEREAS, African Americans have made positive and indelible contributions on Alaska's history and culture since well before statehood, including participation in early whaling and maritime exploration activities, involvement in the Gold Rush, the founding of Anchorage, the building of the Alaska Highway, the fight for Alaska Civil Right in the 1940s and countless other historical events leading up to the present; and

WHEREAS, one fascinating example of unrecognized Black History in Alaska is found in the life of Old Valdez's influential early resident, Melvin Dempsey, a prospector of African-American and Cherokee descent who was born into slavery in 1857 and went on to found Alaska's first free reading room, Valdez's first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and a relief station for prospectors on Valdez Glacier; and

WHEREAS, the celebration of Black History Month is a positive way of recognizing the culture and history of African Americans as vital to the core beliefs and values of our society.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Sharon Scheidt, Mayor of the City of Valdez, do hereby proclaim and observe February 2024 as

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

and urge Valdez residents to learn more about the legacy of Black Americans and Alaskans who have shaped the history of our community, state and nation.

CITY OF VALDEZ, ALASKA

Sharon Scheidt, Mayor

ATTEST:

Elise Sorum-Birk, City Clerk