



The Taproot

"Diggin' Deep"

March 2025



NOTICE OF MEETING TUESDAY

March 25, 2025

in person at

Alaska Mining Hall of Fame

406 Cushman Street

(in former Carr's Men's Clothing

Parking available in Sadler's parking lot)

&

via Zoom

(Members will receive a Zoom invite via email on
Sunday, March 23, 2025)



Program

Mr. Whitekeys will speak about his new Alaska Gold Rush book,
"The Voyage of The Alaska Union" at 7:00 pm

"Eighty Greenhorns from Chicago set out to strike it rich in Alaska in 1898. It was
the largest Gold Rush expedition ever launched, and they had no idea what they
were in for."

NOTE THAT THIS MEETING'S PROGRAM IS DIFFERENT FROM THE
ORIGINAL FGS SCHEDULE. APRIL 22ND'S MEETING WILL BE AT
THE FAIRBANKS DISTILLERY, THE CORNER OF 4TH & CUSHMAN
STREET. COME EARLY (5 PM) IF YOU WISH TO TRY THE SPIRITS.
MEETING WITH PATRICK LEVY WILL START AT 6 PM. NO ZOOM.



Mr. Whitekeys moved to Alaska in 1998 and immediately began playing piano in sleazy bars. He has described his chosen profession as “mouthing off and making snotty comments,” and his writings have appeared in an Anchorage Daily News column, Alaska Bizarre—a comedy print version of The Whale Fat Follies, humorous contributions to The Alaska Almanac, a monthly column in Alaska Magazine, and weekly satirical newscast commentary on Anchorage’s KTUU-TV.

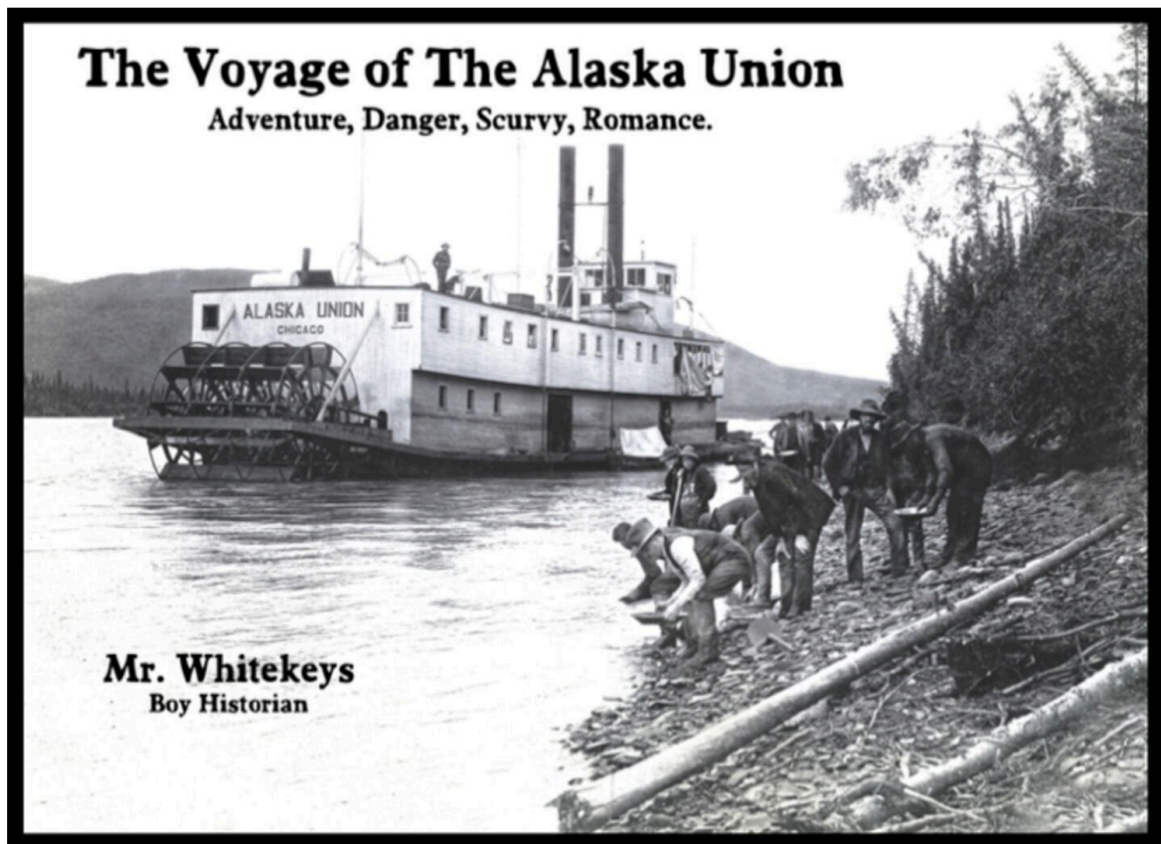
Mr. Whitekeys’ Fly By Night Club was a mecca for “Spam, Booze, Rhythm and Blues” for 25 years, and The Whale Fat Follies remains as the pinnacle of Alaskan vaudeville and satire. His DVD, Alaska, The First 10,000 Years, is a farcical romp through Alaska’s history, and despite its absurdity; it has been used instructionally by misguided history teachers throughout the state.

In his spare time, Whitekeys is addicted to coral reef marine biology and is currently the Commander-in-Chief of the Anchorage Audubon Society where he will continue to embarrass the entire environmental community until someone else agrees to take the job.

Mr. Whitekeys describes his chosen profession as “mouthing off and making snotty comments.” Over the years he has done this on radio, TV, in print, and in live performances of The Whale Fat Follies at Mr. Whitekeys’ Fly By Night Club.

In his spare time, Whitekeys is addicted to coral reef marine biology and is currently the Commander-in-Chief of the Anchorage Audubon Society where he will continue to embarrass the entire environmental community until someone else agrees to take the job

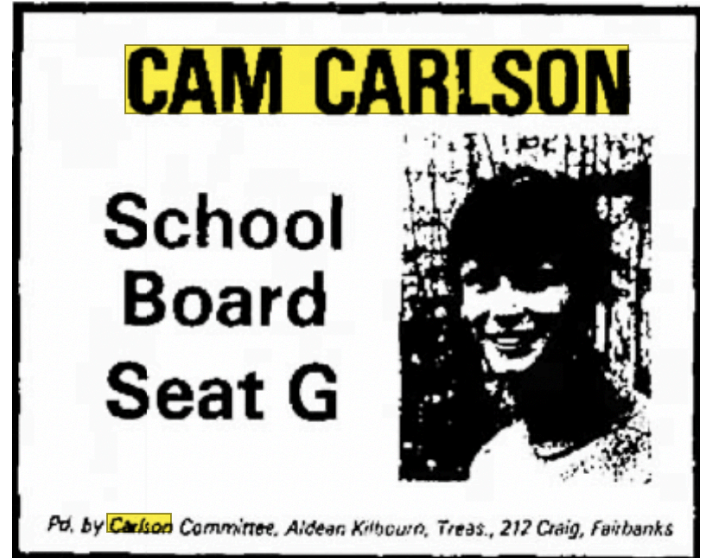
For the Voyage of the Alaska Union as a Real Paper or e-book, click HERE:
<http://www.mrwhitekeys.com/voyage-of-the-alaska-union.html>



LOSS OF TWO LONG-TIME MEMBERS

Word was received in January that Bob Carlson passed away Christmas Eve while he was in Anchorage. Cam was not with him at the time, and she subsequently moved in to Anchorage's Aspen House. At February meeting, we'd signed and sent a card to Cam and the family, only to hear a short time later that Cam had also passed. We will miss them as very supportive FGS members.

Cam Carlson became an Alaskan resident in 1968, she and husband Bob Carlson had three children, and she served on committees and boards for the League of Women voters, the Methodist Church and United Way for many years. She received a degree in education from the University of Wisconsin, and she was elected to the FNSB School Board in the 1970s. Cam was actively involved in Republican and conservative politics her entire adult life.



Bob Carlson worked at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in teaching, research, and public service from 1965 until retirement in 2005. He was noted for his innovative research to solving cold-region engineering, and published well over one hundred scholarly articles and research reports in prestigious publications. He also made presentations at numerous regional, national, and international conferences to share what he learned with others. With retirement, besides being active in the Fairbanks community, he was heavily involved in genealogical research for both his side of the family and wife Cam's.

MEETING AGENDA FGS 3/25/35

Call to Order, Welcome!

Discussion and approval of the Minutes from the Feb meeting.

Officer's reports:

President Amy Stratman:

Vice President Janet Richardson:

Secretary: volunteer needed.

Treasurer Aldean Kilbourn:

Unfinished Business: Princess Sophia display update?

New Business:

Announcements:

Next Meeting is April 22, where we will tour the Distillery which is on the corner. We will start the meeting at the normal time, 6pm, but will gather there at 5pm for drinks (optional).

Research Skills or Questions to discuss: Members may discuss tips, or genealogy they are working on.

Show and Tell: Show your item or tell your story.

Break for refreshments. Feel free to bring something to share if you desire.

Begin Program at 7pm. We welcome Mr Whitekeys via Zoom.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

NOTIFICATION OF BIRTH REGISTRATION

This is to advise you that there is preserved under File No. D 20751, in the State office for the registration of vital statistics at LINCOLN, NEBR., a Record of Birth, as follows:

Name Gloria Lou Jensen Sex Female

Born on date blocked by request, at Scottsbluff, Nebr.

Name of father Nels Jensen

Maiden name of mother Leona Louise Bennett

 
Director of the Census.


Special Agent, Bureau of the Census.

11-9827

Kristine Thiltgen showed this family document at the last meeting. What a great find! What is it though? It is like a replacement for a birth certificate? Going to the website https://www.census.gov/about/policies/foia/age_search_and_birth_records/birth_records.html we find the answer.

From the website:

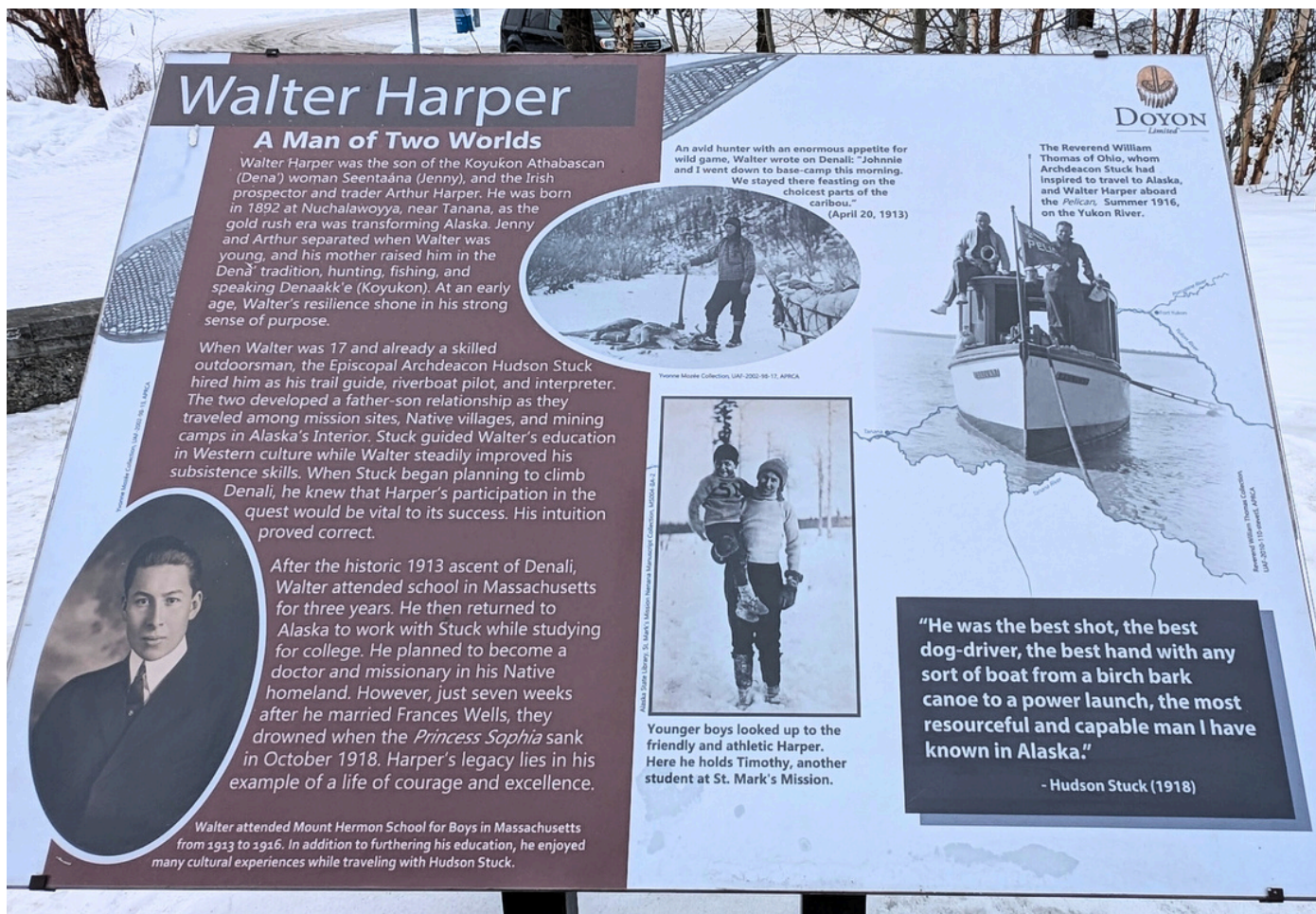
The "Notification of Birth Registration" form, issued by the U.S. Census Bureau during the first half of the twentieth century, is not a birth certificate. **The U.S. Census Bureau designed this form in 1924**, at the request of various state vital statistics offices, to promote the accurate registration of births in the United States. The notification was completed and sent to parents of newborns when the state office of vital records received information on the birth and made up a birth registration record. If parents found errors in the information shown on the form, they were asked to correct them and return the form so the state's record could be corrected accordingly. The notification was **used until the late 1940s** and then discontinued once states were keeping satisfactory birth records. The U.S. Census Bureau does not maintain these records. Certified copies of birth records must be obtained from the vital statistics office where the event occurred.

Alternatively, when someone does not have a birth record, and cannot get one, they can use the census as proof of existence (birth). They then can be issued legal documents.

From the website:

On occasion, an individual needs to track down or establish a birth record when the traditional or normal birth certificate is lost or destroyed. The U.S. Census bureau provides an "Age Search Service" that provides legally recognized source documents for obtaining a passport or court-required documents or records. Specific census records from your childhood can serve as proof of age or citizenship. The state department recognizes certified census records as an alternative to birth certificates for passport applications. This is helpful if your birth certificate was lost or destroyed.

Here is a video to learn more: <https://www.census.gov/library/video/age-search-service.html>



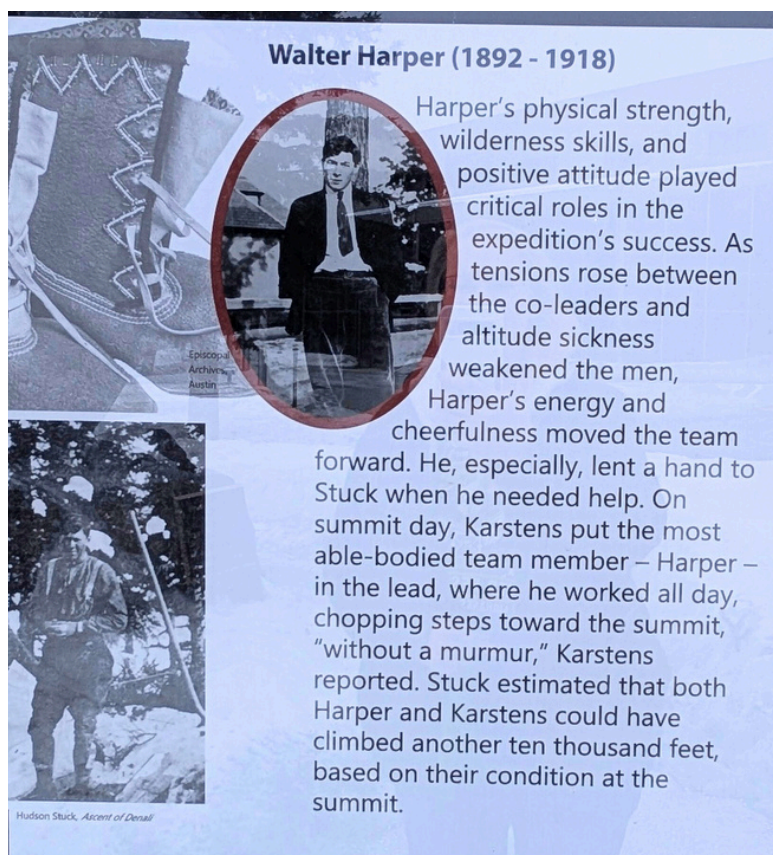
Photos show only a portion of the displays near the statue. The displays will be easier to see when the ground isn't icy.

Walter Harper and his new wife Frances Wells died on the *Princess Sophia* shipwreck. Others from Fairbanks and interior Alaska were also on the ship.

The sailing was the last ship out before winter began. During the boarding process, people without tickets were trying desperately to get on, otherwise they would have to winter over in Skagway or the Yukon.

Many of those on the ship manifest were employees from other ships that were already done for the season. Crew members, soldiers, seasonal workers, miners, shop owners, families, and animals all perished.

Photos by Amy Stratman



The Walter Harper statue, "A Hand Up", from the front and side. It is located in front of the Doyon building, near the walking bridge.



Checked by L. D. Henderson and H. H. Post

INFORMATION SHEET.

NAME **Walter Harper Eagle, Alaska**

Lost from the wreck of the steamer Princess Sophia, Skagway to Vancouver Voyage No. 391. Wreck occurred on Vanderbilt Reef, about four miles from Sentinel Island Light and forty-five miles from Juneau. The Princess Sophia belonged to the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company. Body recovered and brought to the undertaking parlors of the C.W. Young Co., At Juneau, Alaska.

CAUSE OF DEATH: -Accidental Drowning.

SEX **male** COLOR AND NATIONALITY AGE **26**

COLOR OF HAIR **brown** HEIGHT WEIGHT COMPLEXION

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH

RESIDENCE **155 E. Walnut Lane, Germantown, Philadelphia, Pa**

DENOMINATION LODGE AFFILIATIONS

NAME OF FATHER

BIRTH PLACE

MAIDEN NAME MOTHER

BIRTH PLACE

MARRIED WIDOWED SINGLE DIVORCED

OCCUPATION: -PROFESSION TRADE

OTHER INFORMATION

NEAREST RELATIVES

OTHER NAMES & ADDRESSES FOUND ON DECEASED

A. D. Stone, 254 4th Avenue, New York City

Wm. Taylor, Nenana, Alaska

Frank A. Reynolds, 3816 Woodlawn Ave, Seattle, Wash

WAS DECEASED INSURED? INSURER

WHERE BURIED IF SHIPPED, HOW & WHEN?

GENERAL INFORMATION-REMARKS & LIST PERSONAL PROPERTY FOUND ON BODY

1 gold watch, chain and charm

1 registration certificate
Eagle Alaska

1 gold ring onyx setting

1 pr gold cuff links

1 Wells Fargo Ex receipt for trunk
shipped to Germantown

1 gold nugget

1 \$50.00 3rd liberty bond, No. 9,892,846

1 permit to depart from U.S

Wells Fargo Express money order \$100.00

2 1st class tkt Skag to Vanc

Currency \$200.00

2 1st tkt Vanc to Seattle

1 Leather wallet

1 parcel ok A79-24-90

1 leather card case

1 " " A79-24-52

stamps

1 " " A79-24-59

personal cards

1 " " A79-24-64

1 " " A79-24-95

S.S.tkt No. 4136 name W. Harper

S.S.tkt No. 4137 " E. S. Harper

From the Alaska State Archives, Juneau, via Family Search, the Princess Sophia shipwreck body recovery files can be researched. Some records are incomplete, as they did not have information, identification, or recognizable items on all the bodies.

INFORMATION SHEET.

AUGUSTUS D. PRATT

NAME A.D. PRATT Body No. 177 Picked up by King & Winge #6 10/29/18
Lost from the wreck of the steamer Princess Sophia, Skagway to Vancouver
Voyage No. 391. Wreck occurred on Vanderbilt Reef, about four miles from
Sentinel Island Light and forty-five miles from Juneau. The Princess
Sophia belonged to the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company. Body recovered
and brought to the undertaking parlors of the C.W. Young Co., At
Juneau, Alaska.
CAUSE OF DEATH: -Accidental Drowning.

SEX COLOR AND NATIONALITY AGE
COLOR OF HAIR HEIGHT WEIGHT COMPLEXION
DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH

RESIDENCE Notify L.O.O.M. #1392, Fairbanks, Alaska Probably from Nenana
DENOMINATION LODGE AFFILIATIONS L.O.O.M. No. 1392 ✓
Fairbanks, Alaska Receipts for dues

NAME OF FATHER BIRTH PLACE
MAIDEN NAME MOTHER BIRTH PLACE
MARRIED WIDOWED SINGLE DIVORCED
OCCUPATION: -PROFESSION TRADE Baker
OTHER INFORMATION Lately with Alaskan Engineering Commission

NEAREST RELATIVES

OTHER NAMES & ADDRESSES FOUND ON DECEASED

WAS DECEASED INSURED? INSURER
WHERE BURIED IF SHIPPED, HOW & WHEN?

GEN'L INFORMATION-REMARKS & LIST PERSONAL PROPERTY FOUND ON BODY

C.P.R. STEAMER TICKET No. 4228 to Vancouver. C.P.R. EXCHANGE ORDER No. 3336 last figure
illegible. (In ink) 4228. BAGGAGE CHECK to Seattle No. L 55-90-57
RECEIPT FOR ADVANCE PAYMENT ON LIBERTY BOND THIRD ISSUE FROM A.D. PRATT \$35.00
signed by C.H. Hall, Agent. Initialed J.A. Gives no information of whom Hall
is Agent for. RECEIPT FOR ADVANCE PAYMENT ON LIBERTY BOND THIRD ISSUE
AUGUSTUS D. PRATT \$5.00 \$100.00 Bond Signed by C.H. Hall, Agent.
RECEIPT FOR ADVANCE PAYMENT ON LIBERTY BOND THIRD ISSUE A.D. Pratt \$20.00.
Signed by C.H. Hall, Agent. RECEIPT FOR ADVANCE PAYMENT OF LIBERTY BOND? THIRD
ISSUE A.D. Pratt \$40.80 covering full payment Signed by C.H. Hall, Agent.
W.S. Certificate No. 01097322 \$100.00 worth Unregistered Series A Augustus
D. Pratt A.E. Commission Nenana Alaska: U.S. WS. Certificate No. 05280319 Series A
4 \$5.00 stamps (\$20.00) in all. Unregistered Augustus D. Pratt
Toothbrush Comb Misc. stamps (postage) 30¢ in cash. Moose Pin 3 pr. glasses
1 Pocket knife 1 Card Case
Checked by C.E. Davidson

Augustus Dennison Pratt was a resident of Nenana and Fairbanks, previously lived in Nome. He was divorced with 2 sons. Almost 2 years after the ship sank, his wallet and address book were found in the safe that was recovered. His son Norman's name was found in the book.

Cemetery Corner
by Janet Richardson

THE CHENA CEMETERY

The location of the Chena Cemetery is not exactly known, as the town of Chena no longer exists. Archeological surveys have been conducted since 2021 in the area to locate building foundations and the cemetery. Much of the town was flooded by the changing routes of both the Chena and Tanana Rivers. Burials in this cemetery are from historical records. There were 4 recorded deaths and at least 3 unrecorded deaths. There are no known headstones left.

Chena, Alaska, 1907 Filed in Alaska--Cities--Chena was located on the north bank of the Tanana River, 1 mile west of the mouth of the Chena River and 7 miles southwest of Fairbanks. The name was derived from the Chena River and was first reported in 1903. The village was called Chena Junction because it was the south terminus of the Tanana Valley Railroad; however, it was incorporated as Chena in 1903. With the growth of Fairbanks, Chena decreased, having only 18 persons in 1920.

Note: This is not the same location of the Chena Indian Village which today is at the mouth of the Chena River and a popular tourist location. The Indian Village had its own cemetery but that too has not been located.

Three known burials at Chena consist of 2 known men and 1 John Doe.

Dave McCurdy, a miner, had started a fire (to thaw the frozen ground) in his shaft and it had gone out. His partner, James Clark, having gone to town, McCurdy requested one of his neighbors to let him down into the shaft so that he might rekindle the fire. E.W. Stevens volunteered, but several minutes after McCurdy reached the bottom of the shaft, Stevens could hear no activity. He called down and received no answer. Stevens called for help and Dan Cresap rushed to the shaft and gave orders to be lowered. He put his foot into a loop such as commonly used for descending into a shaft and swung himself free from the cribbing. He paid no heed to the warnings of his friends. When half way down the shaft he instructed his windlass man to unwind faster. He reached the bottom and informed those on top that Dave McCurdy was dead. When asked about the gas he replied that it was not bad. Suddenly the rope began to move and he called up "hoist away". Around went the windlass and the Cresap yelling "Faster, as fast as you can" yet this was his last command. His friends on top saw him rise in the same position as he had been lowered. They saw he was getting weak. "For God's sake hold on, Dan" are the last words that struck his ears. His hands let go of the rope, and he fell head first. For a minute or two he could be heard groaning and breathing heavily. After that everything was quiet. The heroic remark of Dan Cresap, "Never mine me, Dave may still be alive" led him to his death. For the safety of his fellow prospector, he sacrificed his life. Funeral services were held in Chena Hall, the

the Reverend H.M. Frank officiated. The two prospectors were laid to rest side by side in the presence of many citizens of Chena and the fellow miners from the creeks. The highest tribute to the memory of the departed was expressed by the presence of almost half the population of Chena. They are resting in a common grave, a noble prospector and a hero. David McCurdy was survived by one sister who lived in Pennsylvania. Dan Cresap was the father of a minor son in Petaluma, California. He was among the first men to locate on Dome Creek in 1904.

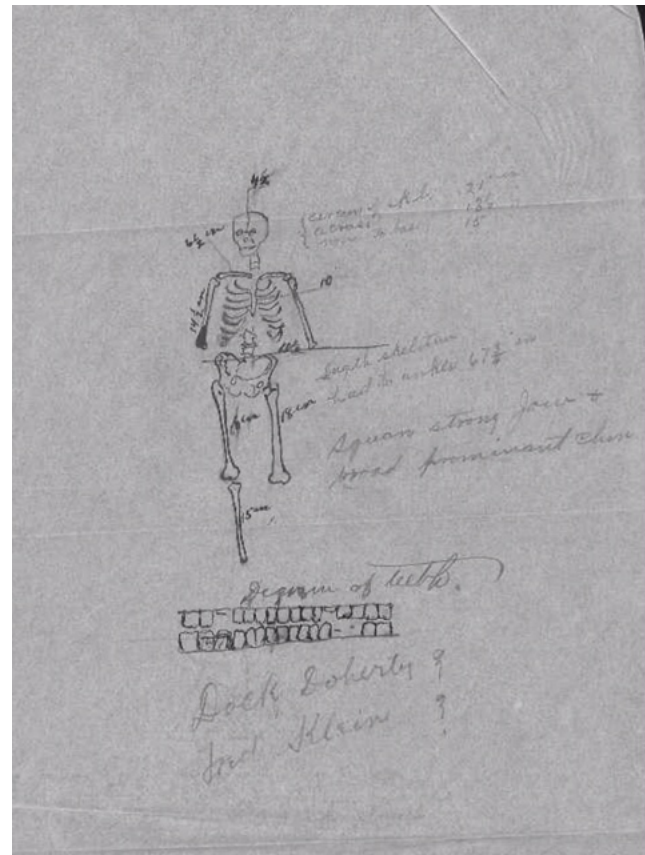
On May 16, 1911 several young men from the local Native tribe found the skeletal remains of a man on an exposed sandbar on the left bank of the Chena River across from Hyde's Farm near the town of Chena. The remains were taken to Chena by US Commissioner Dillon for examination and an inquest. The only clothing that remained was a collar and the front plait of a black sateen shirt and a black collar fastener. The skeleton was devoid of tissues or any other identifiable material. Measurements were taken of the remains. An inquest was held at Chena and being there was no sign of violence, it was determined by the jury of six men that the man had drowned sometime in the past and that the remains surfaced after the recent spring flood.

Judge Dillon ordered the body to be buried at Chena after giving citizens the opportunity to try and identify the man.

The first thought was it was the remains of Fred Kline who fell into the Chena River in 1905 and drowned and whose body was never found. After seeing the skeleton's measurements and what remained of the shirt, it is believed to be the body of a well known gambler, Doc Doherty, who's body fit the measurements and who was known to always wear such a garment.

Doc became despondent after learning he had consumption and after a night of drinking, it is believed he drowned himself in the Chena River as he disappeared and was never heard from again by a sister in California who was waiting for him there with plans to go to Nevada for his health.

Sources:
Fairbanks Inquest Files, Alaska Archives, Juneau
Dawson Daily News, May 31, 1905
Fairbanks Sunday Times, November 10, 1907
Alaska Court Probate Records
"Dying for Alaska Gold" Rex Fisher



From the inquest trial at Chena, John Doe May 17, 1911

Minutes for 25 Feb 2025 FGS meeting.

Member Attendance in person:

Aldean Kilbourn Leonard and Kristine Thiltgen Amy Stratman Karen Tanner

Zoom:

Cheryl Berrong Elizabeth Cook Shirley Sterner Jane Lott James Bartlett

Guest Attendance:

Charles and Dawn Lincoln Maverick Tobin Brenda McFarlane Jakob Lewis
Jessica Del Rosario Carolyn Curley

Amy opens the meeting with a welcome and referenced the Taproot and minutes. Aldean made the motion to accept the minutes as written, and Karen seconded the motion. All members voted to pass the minutes. No corrections were made.

The museum bathroom plumbing is being repaired. It currently has original interior plumbing and its age is showing. Tom, the museum curator, says it will be completed this week.

Amy has been cleaning up the website and refreshing the content.

Amy said creating the content for the Taproot can be stressful. That being said, we ask that all members contribute at least one item for the Taproot once a year, and it would be very appreciated.

Janet is traveling but her message is that she has secured a great speaker for the April meeting. Mr Whitekeys is locally famous, a dynamic speaker full of personality, a historian, and author. [NOTE: Mr Whitekeys will present in March, not April]

We have the position of Secretary open if anyone is interested. The main job is to record the minutes.

For the Treasurer's report, Aldean presented the numbers in our account. \$296 went to the Post Office for our PO Box, which was \$20 more than last year. We have had the same PO Box for over 40 years. We debate whether or not to let it go every year, as we rarely receive snail mail.

No dues and no research paid in Feb.

For the Princess Sophia display, the Noel Wien Library turned us down for whatever reason they have, which we all thought was strange and that it was terrible they aren't interested in Alaska history and its people. The Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center expressed interest in hosting the museum display. Aldean has raised the funds to bring the display to Fairbanks, shipped from Juneau via Lynden Transport. Since the original quote only weeks ago, they raised the price by \$57. Aldean donated her own personal money to pay the balance (by donating to the FGS). Those contributing were: Pioneers of Alaska, Doyon, and the FGS.

Silas Firth of Standing Tides Productions is currently creating a film about the Princess Sophia. He will come to speak about the disaster and share some of his film so far. He will be at the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center in the auditorium on Monday night, April 21, at 6:30pm. This is a free event.

Cheryl went to see the statue of Walter Harper (who died on the Princess Sophia) which is in front of the Doyon building. It depicts Walter reaching down to another climber on Denali. He was the first to summit Denali. The statue was installed last year or so she said.

[NOTE: the statue was installed in 2022]

Amy tells about a researcher, Nancy, who wrote in asking for help. John O'Conner is buried at Birch Hill Cemetery. His wife is Elizabeth Hartman. She cannot find info on Elizabeth. Amy could not find anything with a typical search, so she asked Anne Castle for help. After a few days, Anne found the info Nancy was looking for and contacted her. Elizabeth was buried in Sitka. Nancy was delighted with the research. We will write more about this research hopefully in the next Taproot.

Amy found the article about Norwegian Dave Speilberg online that we had discussed last month. The information Amy provided to a Mr Bakkeli in Nov and Dec about Dave was not included in the article, so we will write our own article with all the accurate and pertinent information.

Next month we will tour the Distillery next door, learning about the old building. [NOTE: moved to April 22. Mr. Levy was out of state for when it was scheduled in March.]

Research Skills: Aldean discusses a map on burials at Clay St Cemetery, and compared the online database project to one in Connecticut, which has a nice mapped database. Aldean said someone from her Teachers group will present on the book "Witch of Blackbird Pond", which takes place in 1687 and talks about the early days of Wethersfield in CT. Aldean's husband's ancestors (the Kilbourn family) emigrated from England to Wethersfield in 1635. Aldean asked the Wethersfield Historical Society about burials, and they told her the relatives for whom she sought information location were all created with wooden markers, and they are all lost to time. The map of their cemetery is online, and mapped as best they can with the very old data.

Show and Tell: Kristine brought 2 items to share. One appears to be a birth record, and the other appears to be a dog tag of sorts.

She has been looking in her old papers and came across/found an acknowledgement of birth for her sister in 1933. It is issued by the Dept of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. "Notification of Birth Registration". She asked if we have seen or heard of anything like this. None of us had! What a find! Reminds us of a delayed birth certificate. We will research this find! Her second cousin will help her research it also. It was issued out of Lincoln, Nebraska.

Another item she brought was a metal piece that reminds us of a military dog tag. Her father was an air raid warden. It shows his name, the town he lived in during WW2, and social security number in between the words "social security". Her research will continue!

Karen Tanner asks "What do people do to share their genealogy with their friends and family?". Amy answered that she has a Facebook group to share with her family. They look at details of photos and discuss or hear stories or facts that were found.

Another way to share is to copy an old book with family history, but look to see if it is free online before reprinting it. Others agreed Facebook history groups love to share old photos and stories of their area. Aldean likes to create books, created online with photos and stories, and give them as gifts. Aldean posts photos to her family Facebook group, including ones that have no identification, asking others to help with id.

Karen has corresponded with kin in Denmark and posted info on a website for Denmark. She also published a cookbook with family recipes. Before her mother-in-law passed away, she went through an album and asked her to identify photos. Now she will share them with family by sharing online. She has a file cabinet and a half full of info. We all agreed we understand! "You should see Aldean's office!", Amy said. Karen gave herself 2 months to do this. The 3rd month she will confirm they are all sourced. She will put it on a media device to share with family. Alternatively, she can put it in the cloud. For the FGS, we add info to the Google Drive, Slides, etc, while we are working on it.

Aldean noted that not only do marked photos and files identify people, but it also helps people determine that it is NOT their family.

Jessica asked if photos or files are sent to anyone related on Ancestry or other websites, and the answer is sometimes, as people don't respond sometimes.

We announced to the Society that our long time member, Bob Carlson died on Dec 24, 2024. Cam, his wife and also long time FGS member, went into a care home in Anchorage shortly after. A card was passed around to sign and send to Cam and family from all of us. We signed the names of those on Zoom with their blessing. The Carlson's will be greatly missed.

Meeting ends, refreshments are served. The final display of books from Adele Virgin were given away. Amy takes note that the Zoom program drives her crazy with the settings, as each month brings changes to the program.

Our Program by the Toastmasters began at 7pm. The Safe Harbor Toastmasters present speeches related to family history.

The speakers and titles of the speeches are:

Charles Lincoln, Growing Up Lincoln

Brenda McFarlane, A Man Known By Many Names

Maverick Tobin, A Little Bit Mixed Up

Amy Stratman, My Strange Family

Jakob Lewis, Family Business

Jessica Del Rosario, Dark Winter Nights