

**NOTICE OF MEETING
TUESDAY OCTOBER 28, 2025
in person at
Rasmuson Library
UAF Archives - 2nd Floor**

**Parking is Free at 5 PM Park and walk in together
Meet with archivists Fawn Carter & Monica Oatman**

NO ZOOM THIS MEETING, IN PERSON ONLY

**Program: Fawn will give us a tour of how to
access the archives in person.**



**REMINDER: FGS MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR THE 2025-2026 YEAR
ARE DUE STARTING JUNE 1, 2025.**

SINGLE \$25

FAMILY \$30

CORPORATE - \$25

Mail checks (FGS or Fairbanks Genealogical Society) to P.O. Box 60534,
Fairbanks, AK 99706 or use PayPal at the Fairbanks Genealogical Society's
website

www.fairbanksgenealogicalsociety.com/membership/

**THE TAPROOT IS NOT SENT OUT IF DUES HAVE NOT BEEN PAID BY
JANUARY OF EACH YEAR.**

GOLDEN RULES OF GENEALOGY

"SPELING DUSN'T COWNT"

1 Back in the day folks couldn't spell and many could barely write, so how a name sounds is more



important than how it's spelled. Use wild card or Soundex searches to help find variant spellings of names.

ASSUME NOTHING

2 Check all your facts, don't assume that any particular document is right or wrong, and always try to find other independent sources to corroborate your facts as much as possible. Verify, verify, verify. For instance, don't assume that:

- your ancestors were married
- census information is accurate
- vital (or other) records were correct
- your ancestor's life events were recorded
- ancestors had the same name as their enslaver

USE DISCRETION

3 **Never lie** in your genealogy reports, but use discretion when reporting family information, especially when it involves living relatives.

ALWAYS DOCUMENT YOUR SOURCES, NO MATTER HOW MUCH THEY CONTRADICT ONE ANOTHER

4 Over time, you will compile more data and those once seemingly contradictory pieces of evidence may prove to be just the pieces of the puzzle you need to prove or disprove your theory. Be consistent as you cite your sources. There are standard citation formats, but



even if you just make up your own format for listing your sources, be consistent with it. You want your descendants to be able to retrace your steps, so you always cite your sources.

MOST DATES ARE APPROXIMATE

5 It's okay to state that someone was born "abt. 1845," or died "May 1915" if you don't have an exact date or where various documents have different dates. Which date is "correct?" They all are.



IF UNSURE, SAY SO

6 Future researchers will thank you for being honest if you simply say that you cannot prove a specific fact, yet you "suspect" such and such is true. Don't fudge the facts. Ever.



YOU CANNOT DO IT ALL ONLINE

7 Yes, we love doing research online and there's nothing better than using the computer to find new sources, view digital images of original documents and even connect with relatives. For genealogists, the internet will never replace the wonderful work of libraries, county courthouses, archives, and historical societies. Do as much as you can online, then turn off your computer and hit the bricks!



JUST BECAUSE IT'S ONLINE DOESN'T MEAN IT'S TRUE

8 The internet is a wonderful thing but it's filled with oodles of bad information. Don't make the mistake of believing anything you find online at face value. Verify against other sources, even if you paid for the information you found online. Consult the original source whenever possible.

PASS ALONG YOUR RESEARCH

9 No matter how many decades you spend researching your family, your research will never be done. Plan on passing along your research to the next generation's



researchers. Leave excellent notes, cite all your sources, explain your shorthand ... in essence, leave your research the way you'd have liked to have found it.

DON'T DIE WITH YOUR STORIES STILL IN YOU

10 Giving credit to Dr. Wayne Dyer for his "Don't die with your music still in you," we want to remind you to tell the stories as completely and as accurately as possible. Genealogy isn't about just doing research. Genealogy is about telling the stories and ensuring that your ancestor's legacies live on for generations to come. Without the stories, the research won't do anyone much good. The legacy of your ancestors rests in your capable hands. Doing the research is fine, but always remember that you have been chosen to **tell their stories**.



DNA IS NOT A TRUMP CARD

11 DNA is just one of **many** possible sources of information you can use to verify or deny a relationship. Human error occurs when the results are transcribed, thereby providing false information. DNA results should **always** be used in concert with other sources.

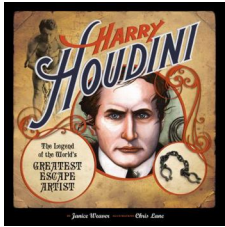
ANYTHING YOU POST ONLINE WILL BE "BORROWED"

12 You need to accept the fact that any family information you post online will be "borrowed" or outright stolen, and you will probably not get credit for all your hard work. This is the nature of the beast... the internet. Get over it.

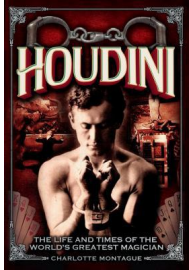
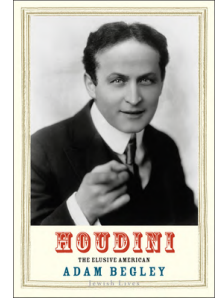
SPREAD THE WORD

You have our permission to use/publish these Golden Rules as much as you like. Just give us credit for them, okay?

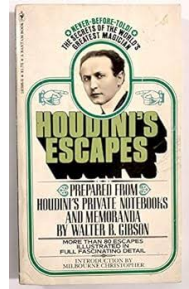
GetGenealogy.com
PO Box 10805
Oakland, CA 94610-0805
(510) 333-6933



Cemetery Corner

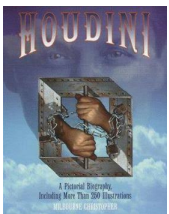


Harry Houdini who was born Erich Weiss on March 24, 1874 in Budapest, Hungary was best known by most as a legendary magician. What people may not know is that in 1920 Harry had resolved himself to the fact that he was no longer in physical shape to perform his death-defying acts of illusion.



Houdini turned his energies toward debunking psychics and mediums in order to stay in the lime-light and show how they were taking advantage of the bereaved.

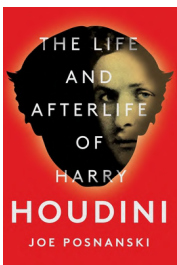
Houdini's training in magic allowed him to expose frauds who had successfully fooled many scientists and academics. He was a member of a Scientific American committee that offered a cash prize to any medium who could successfully demonstrate supernatural abilities. None were able to do so, and the prize was never collected. The first to be tested was medium George Valiantine of Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania.



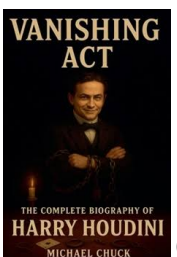
As his fame as a “medium-buster” grew, Houdini took to attending séances in disguise, accompanied by a reporter and a police officer. Possibly the most famous medium he debunked was Mina Crandon, also known as “Margery.” Margery often performed her séances in the nude to convince the participants that she was not using props or slight of hand. She would levitate and throw furniture, speak with the voices of the dead, produce ectoplasm on the walls and most notably would appear out of nowhere, a teleplasmic hand.



Houdini chronicled his debunking exploits in his book, *A Magician Among the Spirits*. These activities compromised Houdini's friendship with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Doyle, a firm believer in spiritualism during his later years, refused to give credence to any of Houdini's exposés. Doyle came to believe that Houdini was a powerful spiritualist medium and had performed many of his stunts by means of paranormal abilities and was using those abilities to block the powers of the mediums that he was supposedly debunking. This disagreement led to the two men becoming public antagonists, and Doyle came to view Houdini as a dangerous enemy.

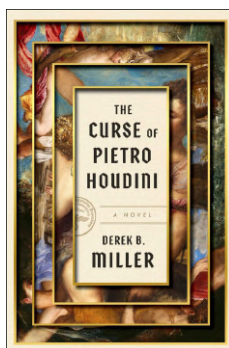
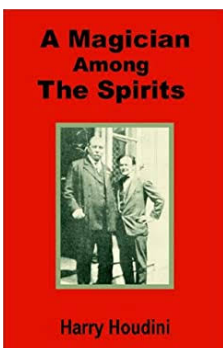
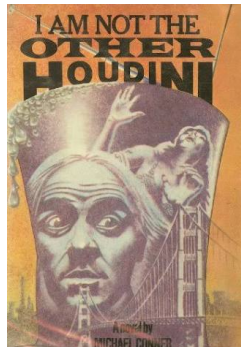
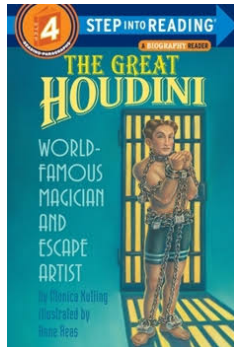
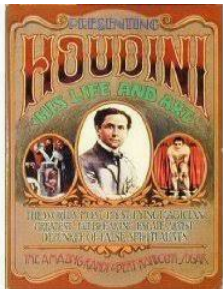


In the 1920's, spiritualism was quite the rage and extremely popular, so much so it was almost like a mafia organization. There was a lot of money involved. It was feared that Houdini would be targeted, and he should have feared for his life.



On October 22, 1926 in Houdini's dressing room at the Princess Theatre in Montreal, three college students named Jacques Price, Sam Smilovitz and Jocelyn Gordon Whitehead came in to interview Houdini. Whitehead asked Houdini "whether it was true that punches in the stomach did not hurt him." Houdini offered a casual reply that his stomach could endure a lot. Whitehead then delivered "some very hammer-like blows below the belt." Houdini was reclining on a couch at the time. Price said that Houdini winced at each blow and stopped Whitehead suddenly in the midst of a punch, gesturing that he had had enough, and adding that he had had no opportunity to prepare himself against the blows, as he did not expect Whitehead to strike him so suddenly and forcefully.

Houdini remained in constant pain for the next two days, but did not seek medical help. When he finally saw a doctor, he was found to have a fever of 102 °F and acute appendicitis, and was advised to have immediate surgery. He ignored the advice and decided to go on with his show. When Houdini arrived at the Garrick Theater in Detroit, Michigan, on October 24, 1926, for what would be his last performance, he had a fever of 104 °F. Despite the diagnosis, Houdini took the stage. He was reported to have passed out during the show, but was revived and continued. Afterwards, he was hospitalized at Detroit's Grace Hospital where he died from peritonitis on October 31, 1926, Halloween.



AGENDA - October 28

Meeting at the UAF Archives at

5pm. Free parking begins at 5.

Park and walk in together. Meet with the archivists. After the tour, quickly discuss any FGS business and approval of the minutes from Sept.

Next meeting November 25, right before Thanksgiving.

Peggy Merritt will speak on her new book, "Finding Democracy Through the Lens of a Young German Woman, 1944-1950. Her plan is to give a power point presentation of a synopsis of the story, then explain how she was able to find WWII records for her research.

Back in April of 2023, the old antiques store, formerly "Airport Road Store", was featured in our Taproot newsletter. The building was for sale, and it was in rough shape. This summer (2025), the building was removed. Fairbanks lost quite a few buildings recently, mainly due to neglect and age.

Photo to the side shows the building in 2011 (from Google Maps), photos below, a close-up of the old foundation and parking area, and how it looks today (by Amy Stratman).



The Drop Inn Lounge / El Sombrero Restaurant, formerly Drop Inn Bar and Drop Inn Cafe (sometimes spelled as Drop In) on Cushman Street was also demolished this summer. Driving by this location, we will all miss it. Those who ate there and had memories there will always remember.

Summer 2025, photo by Amy Stratman



The way it was in the early 1950's. Note the airplane Squadron Club next door!



The original building was small, and only 10 patrons could be seated. They had an ice cream counter and a neon sign! In 1953, they expanded to 85 seats. Air conditioning was installed in 1954. The building was remodeled several times over the years.



Original building in the early 1950's before the expansion, above, and after, below. .



It was said to have delicious food the entire time it was in business!



Photos courtesy of Gail Navin Holzmüller



Aug 2025, preparing for demolition



Aerial view before demolition.



July 2009

LAST CHANCE!

EL SOMBRERO is changing hands. This is the last weekend that George and Charlie will be there for Prime Rib and Authentic Mexican Dinners.

For Reservations call 456-5269

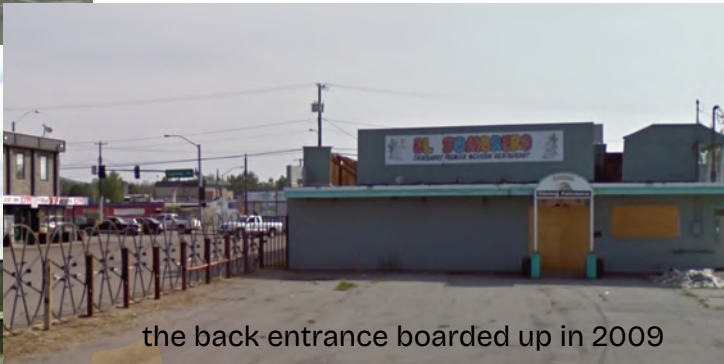
Thank you for your patronage!

EL SOMBRERO
1420 Cushman St.

Sept 29, 1989



Sept 2007



the back entrance boarded up in 2009

EL SOMBRERO

Now Open at our **NEW LOCATION!**

In the Drop-In Building at 1420 Cushman

TWO ENTRANCES: Cushman or Stacia Street

Mexican Food: OUR SPECIALTY!

Lunches Served Monday thru Friday
Dinner Served Seven Nights A Week

EL SOMBRERO

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner
June 15, 1978

DROP INN LOUNGE

ANNOUNCES

Johni Naylor

★ IN PERSON ★

JOHNI IS BACK IN FAIRBANKS

• Piano • Vocals • Sing-Alongs

STARTING SATURDAY NIGHT
April 5th - 9:00 p.m.

★ Johni has appeared at Pat O'Brien's in New Orleans—the Gay Nineties in Shreveport, La.

1420 Cushman 456-5682

April 5, 1969

El Sombrero's first location was 556 Gaffney Rd. It opened in 1967. They moved to the Cushman St location inside the Drop In building in 1978. There were several owners over the years.



Drop In Cafe and Lounge and The El Sombrero Restaurant

The Drop In Cafe was built by Robert (Bob) and Doris Gavin after their arrival in Fairbanks in January of 1949. The cafe opened as a small coffee shop and diner in October of 1950 with Bob and Doris operating as cook and waitress and a very small staff, Bob named the cafe as a place for people to just drop in to chat.

By 1954, several additions were added. A soda fountain was opened to serve ice cream and floats. One day while Doris was working behind the counter, a truck crashed into the end of the fountain addition. At this point in time, a major remodel occurred with the addition of the Drop In Lounge and a separate entrance. The cafe now had its own entrance as well.

These were operated as a family affair with sister-in-laws working at various times through the years and Bob's brother Rex taking part when Bob died in 1972. Rex, his wife Bonnie, Doris and her second husband Ted Willner ran the business for many years, sometimes leasing it out. Some time in the 1970s, they decided to add another addition by building the Sombrero as another add-on. To do this, they removed the old family home to Badger road, put in a new entrance and a parking lot for the Sombrero. In the late 1980s, Doris' son, daughter Gail and son-in-law operated the business. At that time in Fairbanks, it was the oldest family-run restaurant continually owned by the same family. Doris moved to South Carolina permanently in 2005, but she continued to lease out the restaurants until they were finally sold.



FGS Meeting Minutes for September 23, 2025:

Amy started Zoom and those in person gathered at the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame by 6pm.

Discussion

6:03pm Welcome to the beautiful September meeting. No minutes to go over because the last meeting in May was at the Clay St Cemetery. We had a great walk and tour there with many excited residents of Fairbanks. After the walk, members in attendance gathered for informal discussion and refreshments.

Officers Reports: President - Going over the email received over the summer, Ellie wrote in to say she wanted to mail in old Fairbanks photos and documents. That was 2 months ago, and no mail yet.

A local woman, Anne, had a box of photos to show the FGS. Turns out the photos and documents were related to someone buried at Birch Hill Cemetery, Thomas O'Donnell and wife, and another person, Fairbanks former mayor Maurice Johnson. Amy will present a program based on these findings and share documents on our website. After the FGS documents these photos, they will be turned over to the UAF Archives. The story of the papers found from the mayor and lawyer Maurice Johnson were featured on the HGTV show "If Walls Could Talk" in 2005. [season 12, episode 10]

Fawn Carter and Monica Oatman, archivists at the UAF Rasmuson Library, 2nd floor, Alaska and Polar Regions Collections and Archives, will be hosting an Open House on October 16th from 4-7 p.m.

They will be displaying highlights from its collections for the public and University to come in and view. The FGS will have a program in person at the Archives on Oct 28. Fawn will give us a tour of how to access the archives in person.

Oct 23 some of us will head to the Pioneer Home for a spooky creepy story time with the residents about Fairbanks. Aldean mentioned the rumored story about the Satterberg garage downtown, which he bought in 1985, from Wanda Brown. Aldean thinks based on news reports that the murder was not there, but two streets over on 7th.

Vice President: Janet announced the next meeting at the UAF Archives October 28th.

Treasurer: Aldean reports that the bank statement did not arrive in the mail yet. As of August 30, the balance in the checking account is \$3362.32. This money came out of our savings to cover the shipping of the Princess Sophia display from Juneau. That Lynden check hadn't been cashed yet. Doyon and Pioneers of Alaska also contributed \$1000 each for the shipping. The display went from Juneau to Fairbanks, at the Morris Thompson Center. Then on to Anchorage at the Loussac Library, where the librarians there were happy to receive it. They had a better display in Anchorage than we did, no thanks to the Noel Wien Library personnel. It was displayed at the Morris Thompson Visitors Center instead. It is now back in Juneau. Return shipping Anchorage to Juneau was \$1400 instead of the original \$900 quote from Lynden Transport. \$2354 was for the shipping to here. Loussac Library originally said it could pay for the return shipping to Juneau. But they claimed their "funding was cut"; yet still benefitted directly off of us. Since we do not have this kind of money and likely will take us years to recoup, Aldean repaid the balance (\$780.68) , depositing it into our savings account.

Show and Tell: Amy showed the BIRLS file she received in the mail after waiting 6 months for it. It was a screenshot print off of the computer screen, the same as what you can see

on the website, and nothing more. She was hoping for a detailed military record. We are unsure why the order form on their website (birls.org) would say "request and receive photocopies of a deceased veteran's full Claims File (C-File) through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Each C-File will contain many more details about the veteran's life and service, with sometimes a hundred pages or more of additional information, including biographical details, service records, educational ("GI Bill") or home loan benefits, pension or life insurance, and many other types of historical information related to a veteran's service". Maybe others will have better luck. Amy is still waiting on 4 additional requests to arrive in the mail.

Break for refreshments.

MaryBeth Groves passed away this summer and will be remembered.

Program began shortly after with Amy leading the discussion about using online AI, starting with FamilySearch selections on FamilySearch.org/labs and ChatGPT.com. Janet took over to tell us about FamilySearch Full Text searches and how it opens up records that were previously very hard to find because they were not or are not indexed or out of order in the files. Examples were shown and everyone practiced his or her searches on his or her laptops.



Something Startling.

There are a few housewives in the Klondike region, and when they go to market they cheerfully pay such prices as given below, pinching the gold dust from out a box or can. Bank notes and minted coin seldom pass over the counter of an Alaskan storekeeper. Virgin gold is the general tender, weighed often in scales as crude as those which measure out the commodity for which it is to be the equivalent: Butter, a rare delicacy, is \$1.50 pound; beef, 50 cents; bacon, 75 cents; rice, 25 cents; tea, \$1; coffee, \$1; ham, \$1; lemons, 25 cents each; eggs, \$1.50 a dozen; oranges, 50 or apiece, and other necessaries in about the same proportion.

Looking back in Fairbanks history this month, so many years ago

Special for Halloween!

Pumpkin Center ICE CREAM



Delicious Meadowmoor's (Pumpkin Center) Ice Cream bricks—you'll be the perfect hostess with that added touch.

ALSO

- At Your Favorite Grocers
- Or the Shake N' Steak Open Till Midnight

Straight Pumpkin flavored Ice Cream — for those who prefer.

Meadowmoor Alaska Dairy, Inc.
AIRPORT AND GILLAM PHONE 3141

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner Oct 27, 1956

**EXTRA MAIL ON
WAY HERE**

CHITINA, Oct. 20.—At noon yesterday the Northern Commercial company stage, with first class mail, which arrived in Cordova on the steamship Admiral Farragut, left for Fairbanks. Besides the regular shipment, there were 500 pounds extra of mail.

There were two passengers aboard, William McLean and William Cameron, both bound for Fairbanks.

Besides this, there was a crate of squash and a crate of pumpkin for the Northern Commercial company, and some express for F. S. Gordon. Miss J. O'Bryan, Fairbanks Clothing company and Wells Fargo Express agent.

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner Oct 20, 1917

PETITION FOR NATURALIZATION BY J. F. BRADLEY

**UNUSUAL APPLICATION FOR
NATURALIZATION IS MADE BY
JAMES FREEMAN BRADLEY,
OF FAIRBANKS.**

In the office of the clerk of court this afternoon, J. F. Bradley made application for naturalization as a citizen of the United States. The application is unusual and probably is the first case of the kind ever to come before a court in Fairbanks.

The applicant sets forth that he was born in the town of Kempt, Nova Scotia, Canada, and that, with his adopted parents, he migrated to De Kalb, Missouri, when he was 17 years of age. He says in his affidavit that he has been in the United States all the time since then, with the exception of about five years, which was spent in Dawson.

Acting under the belief, as informed by his adopted father, that he (the father) had taken out his citizenship before the applicant reached his majority, he has always exercised the rights of an American citizen in good faith, and he, therefore, prays that he be made a citizen. The applicant says that his citizenship was brought into question a short time ago and that it was then that he learned that he was not a citizen. He voted in Fairbanks for several years, but had not registered for any election since 1913.

Fairbanks Daily New-Miner Oct 30, 1917

SPOOKS AND KIDS WILL WALK TONIGHT

Today is Hallowe'en and we have to shut our eyes every time we go past Pete Steil's California Market, and tell ourselves firmly that we're all growed up at last, lest we weaken and purchase a pumpkin for the altogether frivolous and unworth-while purpose of constructing a Jack-o'-Lantern.

Tonight an extra watchman will be on guard in Our Town that the younger generation may not take its Hallowe'en fun too seriously. Woodpiles will no doubt suffer from the onslaughts of the "Vandals," and any loose automobiles or wagons are apt to appear in strange places tomorrow morning but remember, when a racuous tick-tack-too thrills down your window tonight, that you were once young yourself, and grit your teeth, pray that you haven't omitted to lock anything up and go to bed thankful that tomorrow will usher in the first of November with nothing harder than a Thanksgiving dinner to look forward to.

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner
Oct 31, 1925

On this day in Fairbanks on Oct 27, 1955, the first Montgomery Ward Catalog store opened in Alaska. It was located at 525 4th Ave, downtown Fairbanks. Juneau opened a store soon after in November, then Anchorage in December.