

The PAYSTREAK

Volume 18, No. 1, Spring, 2016

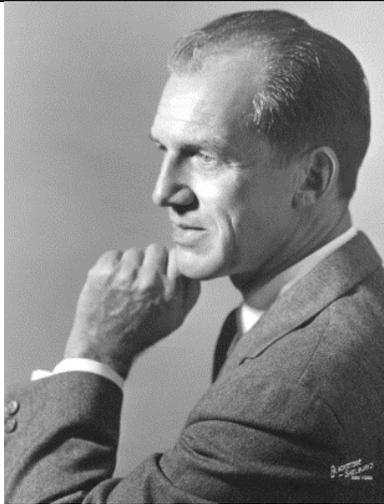
The Newsletter of the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation

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Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation New Inductees

AMHF Honors Two Pioneers Associated with Alaska’s Gold Dredging Industry



Patrick H. O’Neill was born into a large family of Irish origin in Cordova, when it served as a transportation hub for the Kennecott Copper Corporation’s copper mines in the Wrangell Mountains and in Prince William Sound. During the Great Depression, O’Neill moved to Fairbanks to seek education at the University of Alaska and employment in gold mines. He received degrees in mining engineering both before and after WWII, and served as a military pilot during the war. After employed as dredge superintendent for the FE Company in the Fairbanks mining district, he left Alaska in 1953 to pursue a highly successful mining career in Central and South America, where his companies operated numerous gold-platinum dredges, and hardrock polymetallic mines. During his long life (he is 100), Patrick has supported the University of Alaska, for which he gives substantial credit for success in life.



Walter W. Johnson was born in 1882 in Farmer City, Illinois, and earned his way through school by working on his uncle’s farm. He obtained a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Illinois. He moved to California in 1905 and soon after established a dredge and mine equipment enterprise in Oakland, California, known as the Union Construction Company (UCC). Walter traveled to Alaska in 1909 to construct bucket line dredges on the Seward Peninsula. UCC dredges would later be installed in the Iditarod, Innoko, McGrath, Ruby, Circle, Woodchopper, and Fairbanks districts. In total some thirty two (32) ‘Walter Johnson Dredges’ would mine gold in Alaska, more than half of all other dredges used in the Territory. UCC dredges would mine gold, platinum, and tin in Russia, Bolivia, Portugal, Canada, and in other U.S. States. Johnson was a ‘hands-on’ manufacturer and he made frequent trips to Alaska to insure product dependability for his Alaska dredge fleet.

Co-sponsored by the Alaska Miners Association
Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation (AMHF)
Induction Ceremony, Wednesday, April 6th 2016
Pioneer Room, Carlson Center, Fairbanks, Alaska

Program

The general public is invited to Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation (AMHF) induction ceremony from 6:30 to 8:30 PM on Wednesday, April 6th, 2016. The induction ceremony will take place in the Pioneer Room, in the Carlson Center, Fairbanks Alaska. There is no charge for admission. Refreshments will be served.

Coffee and Donuts----- 6:00-to-6:30 PM

Introduction, Purpose of the AMHF, by Tom Bundtzen President of the AMHF--- 6:30-to-6:45 PM

Presentation of Inductees

Patrick H. O’Neill----- 6:45-to-7:10 PM

Walter W. Johnson----- 7:10-to-7:35 PM

Coffee Break----- 7:35-to-7:50 PM

Interaction with Patrick O’Neill Via Skype----- 7:50-to-8:10 PM

Recollections of Inductees from the Audience----- 8:10-to-8:30 PM

Adjournment----- 8:30 PM

Introduction and Acknowledgements

The April 6th, 2016 induction of the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation (AMHF) features two important pioneers associated Alaska's gold dredging fleet: Patrick H. O'Neill and Walter W. Johnson.

O'Neill was a home-grown native son from Cordova that had a remarkable career in placer dredging not just in Alaska but also in South America. He learned his trade from the ground up, first employed in many small to medium-sized placer mines throughout the Alaska Territory, before working with the United States Smelting, Refining, Mining (USSR&M) Company, known locally as the Fairbanks Exploration (FE) Company. After serving with the U.S. Army Air Corps as a test pilot during WWII, he assumed the responsibilities of FE Company dredge superintendent, which placed him in an oversight role over eight, floating bucket-line stacker dredges that operated throughout the Fairbanks area. Patrick O'Neill's biggest professional move was leaving his Alaska base in 1953 to pursue a highly successful mining career in Central and South America. O'Neill was already an experienced Alaskan dredger by the time he arrived in the Choco district in Colombia, where his company, the International Mining Corporation, operated many dredges that recovered both gold and platinum. Patrick and his wife Sandra have made many trips to Alaska over the years since relocating to the east coast. He has passionately advocated for the programs of the University of Alaska, for which he gives substantial credit for his successes in life.

Patrick is 100 years old. Because of his desire to participate in the induction activities, we will be 'skyping' him in from his home in New Canaan, Connecticut.

Walter W. Johnson was a dredging icon. His firm, the Union Construction Company of San Francisco and Oakland, California, manufactured more than sixty (60) dredges that operated in Alaska, Russia, South America, Canada, Europe and in several U.S. States, especially California. He was a hands-on guy, and spent much of his career in Alaska making sure that his product lines, both dredges and placer mine equipment, were dependable.

Tom Bundtzen wrote the biographic sketch of Patrick O'Neill, drawing on an autobiography written by O'Neill in 2007 entitled *From Snowshoes to Wingtips*, and from other written sources, including O'Neill's 1953 University of Alaska Engineering of Mines thesis. Photographic images of O'Neill used in this biography have been supplied by Patrick and Sandra O'Neill and Erin O'Neill Argueta.

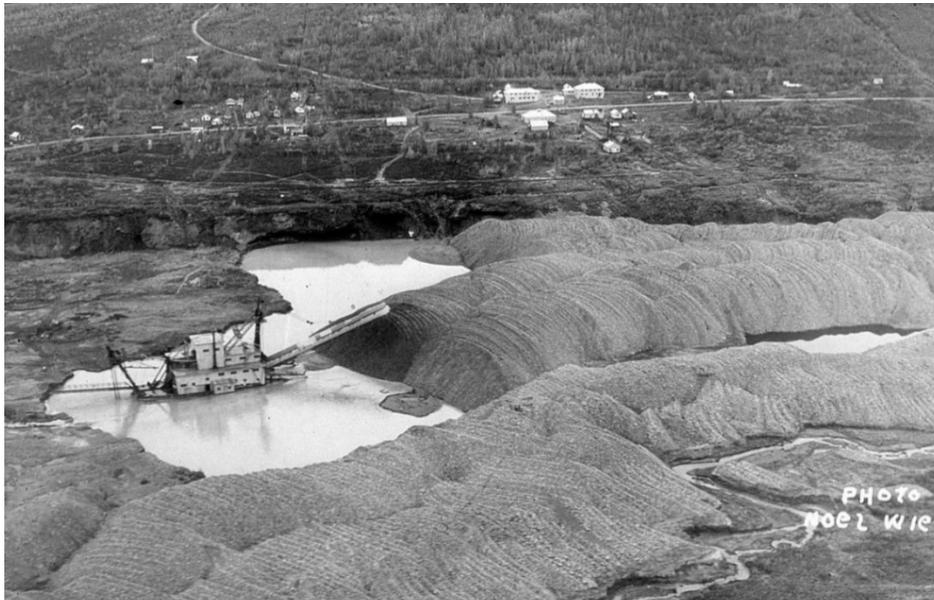
Bundtzen appreciates extensive assistance from Sandra O'Neill for communication with Patrick and Gay Ellen Heath-Griffin, who facilitated the skype connection from Fairbanks to the O'Neill residence in Connecticut.

Lynn Johnson, the granddaughter of Walter Johnson, has written the biography of Walter W. Johnson and has supplied all of the photographic materials used in this newsletter and in the power point presentation. Bundtzen edited and prepared the newsletter, which includes a short summary on *Alaska's Gold Dredging Fleet*.

Alaska's Gold Dredging Fleet

A spoon dredge built on the Clutha River on the South Island of New Zealand in 1865 is generally considered to be the world's first successful floating gold dredge. Later, in 1882, New Zealand gold miners built a gold dredge with bucket elevators, first powered with paddle wheels to rotate the bucket line using river energy. The first bucket line stacker dredge as we know it today was deployed in Bannock, Montana in 1895. The first successful dredge in California was built in 1898 by Butte County resident and AMHF inductee Wendell Hammon, who later founded Yuba Manufacturing Company. Successful large-scale dredging in California developed rapidly during the following decade. Subsequently, the 'California' bucket line stacker dredge design made its way into Alaska's placer fields. The cross-connected bucket line design, the vertical spud emplacements, and rubber stacker belts were the hall mark improvements to dredge design during that period, which are featured on dredges to this day.

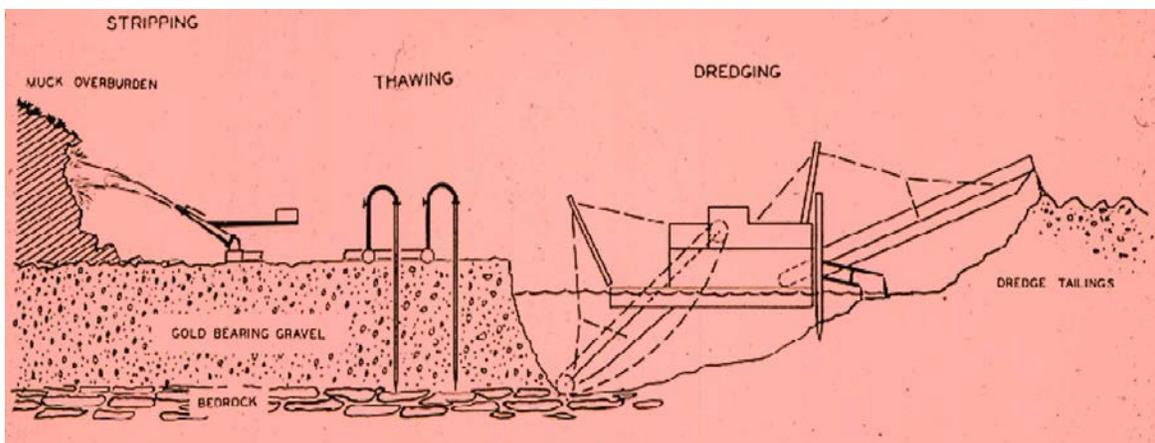
Most of Alaska's gold dredges were deployed in the mining districts of Interior, Western, and Southwestern Alaska, and were brought into the territory as a result of the Alaska-Yukon Gold Rush (1886-1917). The first dredge in Alaska was built on the Snake River near Nome in 1899. That same year, dredging commenced in the Yukon Territory, Canada, initially near Whitehorse. The number of dredges working in Alaska quickly grew from four (4) in 1908 to forty-two (42) in 1914. Inflation and gold fixed at a price of \$20.67/ounce caused the Alaska dredge fleet to reduce in size after WWI to about twenty two (22) boats by 1922. When the price of gold was increased from \$20.67/ounce to \$35.00/ounce in 1934, the number of dredges increased again, reaching a maximum of fifty one (51) in 1940. One dredge, the Goodnews Bay Mining Company unit in southwest Alaska, was primarily deployed to recover platinum. Another on the Seward Peninsula would primarily recover cassiterite, the principle ore mineral of tin.



USSR&M Dredge #3 mining Lower Cleary Creek paystreak near Chatanika, circa 1940. Photo by Noel Wein from Earl Beistline Collection.

Significant climate conditions that affected the Alaska Gold Fleet included the presence of permafrost and the extremes of a long, cold winter, which forced dredges to close down. Skeptics like internationally acclaimed mining engineer Charles H. Janin initially doubted that dredging firms in Alaska could surmount the obstacles of expensive steam thawing and the ability to work deposits for only 4-6 months annually, except in fields with exceptionally rich ground. But through deployment of cold water thawing technology and well-engineered plans to lengthen dredge seasons, these obstacles were overcome. There were many small-to-mid sized firms that operated gold dredges, and one large firm that would gain an international reputation for efficiency and success, the United States Smelting, Refining, and Mining Company (USSR&M), known in Alaska by its operating subsidiary, the Fairbanks Exploration (FE) Company. This firm would operate up to thirteen (13) bucket line stacker dredges in four districts: Fairbanks, Nome, Forty Mile, and Hogatza. Gold dredges operated by USSR&M and both predecessors and successors were active from 1922-to-1996 or for more than 70 years. The figure below from a 1949 United States Smelting, Refining, and Mining Company (USSR&M) brochure illustrates the basic features of mining gold with an Alaskan floating, bucket line stacker gold dredge, which included four activities:

- *Hydraulic stripping of muck over burden with water giants*
- *Point field cold water thawing of gold bearing gravels*
- *Dredging of pay zones, often dug to bedrock, and processing of the gold-bearing gravel aboard the dredge's washing plant, using fairly standard sluicing technologies*
- *Disposal of waste gravel tailings via stacking at the opposite end of the dredge.*



Sketch showing the basic components of a gold dredge in Interior Alaska from 1949 USSR&M information brochure

Four companies dominated the manufacture and sales of dredges and related placer mining equipment to Alaskan dredge clients:

- *Washington Iron Works;*
- *The Union Construction Company (UCC)*
- *Bethlehem Steel Corporation; and*
- *The Yuba Manufacturing Company*



N.B. Tweet and Sons gold dredge in the Kougorok District, Seward Peninsula, circa 2010. Photo by T.K. Bundtzen

Union Construction Company manufactured and deployed more than half of Alaska's dredges, but most of the largest boats were built by the Yuba Manufacturing Company. After WWII, gold dredging declined, due to the fixed price of gold and soaring inflation caused by Alaska's Post WWII military buildup. By the 1960s, only a few dredges with rich ground were still operating. With price decontrols lifted on gold taking effect in the early 1970s, some dredges were reactivated and by the late 1980s, seven gold dredges and one platinum dredge again mined Alaska's gravels, including one of the world's largest dredges, the *Bima*, which mined offshore near Nome, Alaska from 1986-to-1990. But the inability to find new dredge ground in the 1990s, coupled with the aging condition of the Alaska dredge fleet, forced firms to again retire their dredges; most operations were moth-balled by 1996.

Twenty two (22) pioneers, more than 20 percent of the total inducted to the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation, were honored largely because of their association with Alaska's Dredge Fleet. They include: Clarence Berry, Jack C. Boswell, Doug Colp, James D. Crawford, James K. Davidson, Roy Earling, Glen Franklin, Carl S. Glavinovich, Walter A. Glavinovich, Wendell Hammon, Charles F. Herbert, Walter W. Johnson, Johnny McGinn, Genevieve Parker Metcalfe, Andrew Olson, Edward Olson, Patrick H. O'Neill, Earnest Patty, Chester W. Purington, Norman C. Stines, Nicholas Tweet, and Evinda Tweet.

Within North American jurisdictions, Alaska is second only to California in the number of historic dredges. Today, these are the only states in the Union where gold dredges still wash gravel for the yellow metal: 1) a Yuba Dredge near Grass Valley, California (reactivated in 2007); and 2) N.B. Tweet and Sons, which continues to operate their bucket line stacker dredge in the Kougorok District north of Nome, as they have since the early 1950s. Alaska's dredge fleet is intertwined with northern mining history. Today the old behemoths and a multitude of their sturdy metal buckets are not only symbols of a former era in mining, but a major draw for a growing visitor industry.

Suggested Further Reading:

Allan, Chris, 2015, *Gold, Steel, and Ice—A History of Mining Machines in Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve*: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service Publication, 113 pages (excellent summary of dredge activities in Woodchopper area by Alluvial Gold Inc., Earnest Patty's company)

Boswell, J.C., 1979, *History of Alaskan Operations of United States Smelting, Refining, and Mining Company*: Mineral Industry Research Laboratory, 123 pages (summary document for USSR&M Company dredge fleet).

Bundtzen, T.K., Miller, M.L., Laird, G.M., and Bull, Kate, 1992, *Geology and Mineral Resources of Iditarod Mining District, Southwestern Alaska*: Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys Professional Report 97, 48 pages.

Crawford, J.D., and Boswell, J.C., 1948, *Dredging for gold in Alaska—Fairbanks Operations*: Mining and Metallurgy Magazine, October, 1948, pages 574-576.

Glavinovich, C.S., and Glavinovich, W.A., 1948, *Dredging for Gold in Alaska—Nome Operations*: Mining and Metallurgical Magazine, pages 577-579.

Green, C.B., Bundtzen, T.K., Peterson, R.J., Seward, A.F., Deagen, J.R., and Burton, J.E., 1989, *Alaska's Mineral Industry-1988*: Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys Special Report 43, 79 pages (operating dredges)

Green, Lewis, 1977, *The Gold Hustlers—Dredging the Klondike 1898-1966*: Dacher Printing Limited, Vancouver, Canada, 339 pages (classic summary of Yukon's dredge fleet operating in Dawson area).

Herbert Charles F., 1934, *Gold Dredging in Alaska*: Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines thesis, 80 pages (first mining school thesis dedicated to dredging in Alaska).

Janin, Charles H., 1918, *Gold Dredging in the United States*: U.S. Bureau of Mines Bulletin 127, 346 pages (classic summary of dredging in United States up to WWI).

Ogburn, R.H., and others, 1942, *Operations of United States Smelting, Refining, and Mining Company, Fairbanks Alaska*: *Mining World*, January, August, and December (3 subchapters), 20 pages.

O'Neill, Patrick H., 1953, *Gold Dredging*: University of Alaska Engineer of Mines thesis, May 11th, 1953, 92 pages.

O'Neill, Patrick H., 2007, *From Snowshoes to Wingtips, The Life of Patrick O'Neill*: University of Alaska Foundation, and University of Alaska Press, 197 pages (contains details of O'Neill involvement in USSR&M fleet near Fairbanks, as well as his dredging career in South America).

Purinton, Chester W., 1905, *Gravel and placer mining in Alaska*: U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 263, 273 pages (classic summary describing ground conditions for miners and technologies being used by placer miners, including the emerging dredge industry).

Spence, C. C., 1996, *The Northern Gold Fleet—20th Century Gold Dredging in Alaska*: University of Illinois Press, 286 Pages (excellent summary of dredges that operated in Alaska through the late 1960s).

Alaska Mining Hall of Fame newsletters (various) and website information, which provide descriptions of dredge activities associated with the twenty-two inductees listed in this article.

Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation Operates Museum in Fairbanks

On July 18th, 2013, the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame opened up a museum at 825 1st Avenue in downtown Fairbanks. The 2,000 square foot facility, formerly known as the Rebecca or Odd Fellows Hall, was built in 1908 and is on the National Historic Register. It is situated just down the street from the Bridgewater Hotel, and has easy access to downtown Fairbanks. The AMHF is leasing the facility from Fairbanks historian Candy Waugaman.

This year (2016), the museum will be open from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM from May 25th to September 20th. In 2015, we had more than a thousand visitors from all 50 states and 27 foreign countries visit the facility during the four month season. With volunteers from such organizations such as Santa's Senior s (North Pole), we will be able to man the museum this summer. The AMHF wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the more than twenty (20) individuals who pitched in to help this year. Like many museums in Fairbanks, we closed the doors on September 20th. Although now closed to the public, the museum will be open to educators bringing through students from area schools and for special functions.

The museum is designed to honor the 105 pioneers that have been inducted since 1997. The inductees are arranged through time, which feature different events in Alaska's rich mining history. These include: pre-Gold Rush activities, pioneers of the Juneau Gold Belt; and pioneers of the Alaska-Yukon gold rush, and then moving into other categories such as pioneers associated with copper and coal mining, pioneers associated with strategic mineral developments, and pioneering families and individuals of modern placer mining. Considerable space is devoted to pioneer educators, geologists, engineers, and finally, those in the legal profession. During the summer, historic mining videos from several sources were shown. The Chuck Herbert family donated an enormous commercial-grade gold scale from the 40-Mile district, which now sits in the front office of the museum.

One important function of the AMHF Museum will be the establishment of an archive. We have already accepted records from the Earl Beistline, Chuck Hawley, Don Cook, Don Grybeck, and the Doug Colp families, which will be archived. *Paystreak* Newsletters are for sale, and we sold mining history books that specifically feature AMHF pioneers. We now have AMHF Coffee mugs and tea shirts for sale.

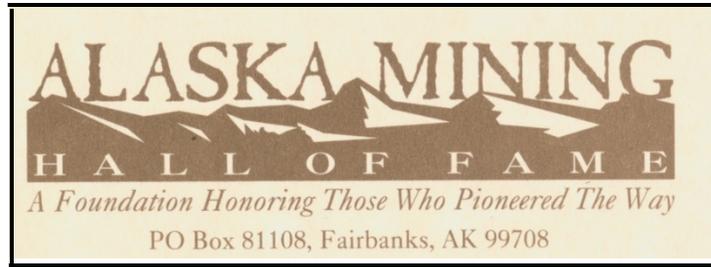
The museum opening and continued operations have thus far been made possible from various income sources acquired by the AMHF—a non-profit organization. Donations are graciously accepted. More information concerning this organization appears on our website: www.Alaskamininghalloffame.org We encourage the reader to visit this website, which already has a worldwide audience.



The Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation Museum at 825 1st Avenue in Fairbanks; note plaque indicating the national historic register designation and Reeves historic library building in foreground

Features:

- *Paystreak Newsletters that provide biographic sketches of AMHF Pioneers—from 1997 to Present*
- *Biographies with plaques and numerous photos and narratives that describe Alaska's Mining History*
- *A store with AMHF coffee cups and tea shirts*
- *Movie clips and other digital media that feature mine activities*



Contributions

The Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation is funded through donations of money, time and effort, and through sales at this Museum. The Foundation is a tax-exempt organization, so all donations are tax deductible.

Donations to the Foundation should be mailed to:

Karl Hanneman, Treasurer
Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation
P.O. Box 81108
Fairbanks, Alaska 99708

Recent Contributions to the Foundation

The AMHF would like to acknowledge individuals and organizations that have made financial contributions to the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation. These generous donations allow us to publish the *Paystreak* Newsletter, maintain this website, organize and carry out induction ceremonies Statewide, and especially pay for the expenses of the AMHF Museum in Fairbanks, which is being leased from Candy Waugaman. Contributions allow the AMHF Foundation to plan for future expansion plans and acquisition of materials.

We thank all contributors, regardless of the level of their donation, which are: Copper (\$1-\$99), Silver (\$100-\$499), Gold (\$500-\$999); '98er, (\$1,000) and Platinum (>\$1,000). Some of the more recent contributions have been in memory of legislator, businessman, and placer gold miner Robert Bettisworth, gold miner Walt Wigger, and mine educator Jim Madonna—who passed away in 2015. The AMHF especially thanks Teck Resources, operator of the Red Dog Zinc-Lead-Silver Mine, for the most generous donation ever to be given to the Foundation. Included below are those that have contributed through the Pick-Click-Give Program. We thank all those who have contributed (see below). Since 2013, the Usibelli Foundation has contributed to the AMHF. In 2015, the Bill Stroecker Foundation generously provided a grant to the AMHF. For the second year in a row, the City of Fairbanks has awarded the AMHF a 'bed-tax' grant' to help with display improvements and pay the costs of utilities. **To all of you that have contributed—THANK YOU!**

Name	Contribution Level	Dedication	Date(s)
Lyndon Transport	Gold	General	2013
Teck Resources Red Dog Mine ⁽¹⁾	Platinum	General	2013
Doug Colp Family ⁽¹⁾	98er	General	2013
Jason Brune ⁽²⁾	Silver	General	2014
Malie Gray ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2014
Clark Milne ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2014
Peter Montesa ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2014
Jules Tileston ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2014
Six Anonymous ⁽²⁾	Silver	General	2014
Usibelli Foundation	Gold	General	2014
Candy Waugaman	Platinum	General	2015
Karen Erickson	Copper	General	2015
Usibelli Foundation	Gold	General	2015
Alaska Women in Mining	Gold	General	2015
Brian Rogers and Sherry Modrow	Gold	General	2015
Marty K. Rutherford	Gold	General	2015
Karen Purdue	Gold	General	2015
Mr. and Mrs. Jim Thurman	Silver	General	2015
Karen Clautice	Copper	General	2015
Christine and Corbette Upton	Silver	General	2015
Bill Brophy	Copper	In Memory of Bob Bettisworth	2015
Leo and Fredi Brown	Copper	In Memory of Bob Bettisworth	2015
George Horner-Trust	Silver	In Memory of Bob Bettisworth	2015
Laurence Peterson	Silver	In Memory of Bob Bettisworth	2015
Sigwald and Arlene Strandberg	Silver	In Memory of Bob Bettisworth	2015
Laurence Peterson	Gold	In Memory of Jim Madonna	2015
Lisa and Milton Behr	Gold	In Memory of Walter Wigger	2015
David and Aldean Kilborn	Silver	In Memory of Walter Wigger	2015
Nathaniel May ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2015
Michael Whelan ⁽²⁾	Silver	General	2015
Aaron Pfeil ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2015
Clark Milne ⁽²⁾	Silver	General	2015
Joel Stratman ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2015
Karen Lapp ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2015
Jeff Lapp ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2015
William Groom ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2015
Jerry Sadler ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2015
Matthew Hanson ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2015
Jason Brune ⁽²⁾	Silver	General	2015
Patricia Peirsol ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2015
John Cook ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2015
Daniel Graham ⁽²⁾	Copper	General	2015
Six Anonymous ⁽²⁾	Silver	General	2015

(1) Also listed as 98er in back of newsletter

(2) From Pick-Click-Give Program

Italian Mayor Visits Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Museum

Stefano Muzzarelli, the Mayor of Fanano, Italy, briefly visited the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Museum in February, 2016 as part of a sister city exchange that began more than twenty years ago. Fanano is the birth place of Felix Pedro, who discovered gold in the Fairbanks District—thus leading to the founding of Fairbanks by E.T. Barnette and others. While at the museum, Muzzeralli was given a number of AMHF Felix Pedro T-shirts and AMHF coffee mugs, which he graciously received. He gave the AMHF museum the Fanano city logo, which will be displayed at the museum.

Muzzarelli was busy on a trade mission visiting various groups and institutions, including the University of Alaska, and enjoyed the start of the 1,000-mile-long Yukon Quest sled dog race from Fairbanks to Whitehorse. He remarked during his museum tour that he was impressed that the Fairbanks area still hosted a viable mining industry through operations of the Fort Knox and Pogo gold and Usibelli coal mines, as well as many smaller gold mining ventures.

Long time gold miner Roger Burggraf gave Muzzarelli a sample of gold taken from Pedro Creek, where Pedro first discovered gold in the area. That gold will go in a display in a community museum in Fanano, Italy.



From Left to Right, Fairbanks Mayor John Eberhart, Fanano, Italy Mayor Stefano Muzzarelli, and AMHF Board Member Mary Nordale at the museum, next to Felix Pedro display, February 5th, 2016. Fanano, Italy is the birth place of Felix Pedro. AMHF photo.

Previous Inductees, Alaska Mining Hall of Fame

Fairbanks, Fall 1997

Six charter members of the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation were previously elected into the National Mining Hall of Fame in Leadville, Colorado.

Stephen Birch: Founder and developer of Kennecott Copper Mines.

Frederick Bradley: Successful manager of Treadwell and A-J Mines, Juneau.

John Treadwell: Founder of Treadwell Mines, Juneau.

Alfred H. Brooks: Chief Geologist of U.S. Geological Survey in Alaska.

Earnest Patty: University of Alaska, and manager of Placer Dredging Venture.

Clarence Berry: Prominent Klondike and Interior Alaska miner.

Fairbanks, Spring 1998

Induction Ceremony Honoring Early Yukon Basin Traders and Prospectors

Alfred Mayo: “Captain Al” well-known Yukon River trader, prospector.

Jack McQuesten: Known as the “Father of the Yukon” grubstaked many prospectors.

Arthur Harper: Respected trader and prospector and promoter of the Yukon; his son Walter, first stepped foot on the summit of Mount McKinley (Denali).

Howard Franklin: Fortymile prospector, discovered first “bedrock” placer gold in Alaska.

John Minook: Creole-Athabascan prospector who discovered Rampart district.

Felix Pedro: Discoverer of Fairbanks district in 1902.

Nome, Summer 1998

Induction Ceremony Honoring Pioneers of Nome Gold Rush

John Brynteson: A ‘Lucky Swede’; an experienced hard-rock miner, discoverer of the Cape Nome district.

Erik Lindblom: The eldest of the “Lucky Swedes”, a tailor.

Jafet Lindeberg: The Norwegian of the ‘Lucky Swedes’, president and manager of the very successful Pioneer Mining Company.

Charles D. Lane: Tough, honest, and wealthy miner who helped the Lucky Swedes in their legal battle

Juneau, Summer 1999,

Induction Ceremony Honoring Discovery of Juneau District

Joe Juneau: Native of Quebec, a California 49er, co-discoverer of gold in the Juneau district.

Richard Harris: Irish immigrant, co-discoverer of gold in Juneau district.

George Pilz: German immigrant who sent and financed the Juneau and Harris prospecting ventures in the Juneau area.

Kawa.ée: Tlingit leader who brought rich gold samples from Gastineau Channel area to George Pilz

Livingston Wernecke: Geologist-engineer for the Bradley companies of Juneau.

Bartlett Thane: Promoter-founder of the world's largest gold mine, the Gastineau at Juneau.

Anchorage, Fall 1999

Induction Ceremony Honoring Mining Pioneers of Southern/Southwest Alaska

Andrew Olson: Swedish immigrant, innovator at Flat; the original organizer of the platinum mining complex in the Goodnews Bay Mining district.

Evan Jones: Welsh immigrant; the true father of Alaska coal mining industry.

Wesley Earl Dunkle: Kennecott engineer and innovative geologist, co-founder of Star Air Service, predecessor of Alaska Airlines.

Fairbanks, Spring 2000

Induction Ceremony Honoring Early 20th Century Interior Pioneers

Emil Usibelli: Italian immigrant and founder of Usibelli Coal Mine, Inc., Alaska's only and historically largest producer of coal; civic benefactor in Fairbanks.

John B. Mertie Jr.: Leading U.S. Geological Survey geologist; outstanding earth scientist, mathematician, and world expert on platinum.

Fannie Quigley: Prospector, renowned for her bush skills, legendary Kantishna character.

Juneau, Spring 2001

Induction Ceremony Honoring Early Government Role in Mining

Benjamin D. Stewart: State and Federal mining administrator, Alaska constitutional delegate at Alaska Statehood Convention in Fairbanks.

Fairbanks, Summer, 2001

Induction Ceremony Honoring the Pioneers of the Large Scale Gold Dredging Industry of Nome and Fairbanks Districts

Norman C. Stines: Visionary engineer who planned and supervised original USSR&M activities in Fairbanks district.

Wendell P. Hammon: Installed the first three dredges in Cape Nome district; helped design financing for what became USSR&M dredge fleets in Alaska

James K. Davidson: Designed and built Miocene and Davidson ditch systems.

Anchorage, Fall 2001

Induction Ceremony Honoring Discovery of Flat District

John Beaton: Co-discovered Iditarod district with William Dikeman.

Fairbanks, Spring 2002

Induction Ceremony Honoring Successful Miners and Engineers of Early 20th Century

Frank G. Manley: Highly successful miner in Fairbanks, Hot Springs district, and Flat. Founder of the First National Bank, Fairbanks.

Herman Tofty: Norwegian immigrant who worked prospects near Manley Hot Springs.

Chester Purington: Acclaimed international mining engineer; wrote treatise on Alaska placer fields.

Thomas P. Aitken: Arguably the most successful small scale mine developer during the Alaska-Yukon Gold Rush; worked both lodes and placers in Alaska and Yukon.

Anchorage, Fall 2002

Induction Ceremony Honoring Immigrant Pioneers

Peter Miscovich: Croatian immigrant who settled in Flat, Alaska 1910. Pioneered the use of hydraulic mining techniques.

David Strandberg: Swedish immigrant who joined the Klondike gold rush in 1898 and the Iditarod rush of 1910. Built placer mining dynasty Strandberg & Sons, Inc.

Lars Ostnes: Norwegian immigrant who mined in the Iditarod district and developed placer mines in remote western Alaska for over 50 years.

Fairbanks, Summer 2003

Golden Days Induction Ceremony (also recognized during Fall AMA convention)

Kyosuke “Frank” Yasuda and Nevelo Yasuda: Japanese immigrant and his Eskimo wife, discovered Chandalar gold and founded the community of Beaver.

Anchorage, Fall 2003

Induction Ceremony Honoring Early and Mid-20th Century Placer Miners

John Gustavus (Gus) Uotila: By 1915, Gus Uotila was known as a tough Iditarod teamster. He mentored placer mining operations throughout Alaska and became a respected overland freighter.

Simon Wible: He mined gold, built water canals, and became a wealthy man in California. When the time the gold rush came along, he pioneered hydraulic mine technology on the Kenai Peninsula.

Fairbanks, Spring 2004

Honoring Early Pioneers Associated with USSR&M Dredge Fleet

Roy B. Earling: Built pre-World War II FE Company into one of the most efficient and successful dredge mining firms in the world.

James D. Crawford: Well organized manager who acquired new dredge properties and guided FE Company into successful post-World War II period of gold mining.

Jack C. Boswell: Engineered the development of the rich Cripple deposit; and helped build giant FE machines used to dig deep placer deposits. Published historian of USSR&M era.

Genevieve Parker Metcalfe: Breakthrough woman mining engineer who developed initial plans for FE Fairbanks operations, wrote a landmark thesis on Alaska placer mining, and was a champion athlete and scholar.

Earl Richard Pilgrim: First Professor of Mine Engineering at University of Alaska. Independent Kantishna miner and pioneer, and noted FE consultant; "Mr. Antimony" in the US.

Anchorage, Fall 2004

Honoring Those in the Mining Legal Profession,

In Cooperation with the History Committee of the Alaska Bar Association

William Sulzer: Bill Sulzer became a prominent New York attorney and politician and briefly served as Governor of New York. The ever-optimistic Sulzer mined copper in southeast Alaska and developed gold in the Chandalar district.

Joseph Rudd: Shortly after statehood, Rudd drafted the State's mining law on state lands and was sought for his expertise on natural resource issues throughout his career. He was killed in a plane crash in Anchorage upon his return from Juneau after discussing with other Alaskans challenges to President Carter's Implementation of the 1978 Antiquities Act.

Anchorage, Fall 2005

Honoring the Discoverers and the Developer of Platinum Resources at Goodnews Bay

Per Edvard (Ed) Olson: Born in 1898, Edward Olson was born into a large farm family in Sweden and immigrated to the United States in 1905. In 1934, he assumed the position of general manager of the Goodnews Bay Mining Company (GBMC), the largest supplier of platinum in the U.S. during 1934-1975.

Walter Smith: In the summer of 1926, Yupik Eskimo Walter Smith and his young apprentice Henry Wuya found placer platinum in a stream draining a remote, uninhabited coast of southwest Alaska. The GBMC eventually purchase Smith's claims. Smith and Wuya are recognized as discoverers of Goodnews Bay platinum.

Henry Wuya: Henry Wuya was born to Eskimo parents in Quinhagak on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Wuya was proficient in English when few Yupiks knew English. He mentored with the older and experienced prospector, Walter Smith.

Fairbanks, Spring 2006

Honoring Two Pioneers Important to both Canadian and American Mining Communities

Ellen (Nellie) Cashman: Ellen (Nellie) Cashman was a quintessential gold stamper who participated in many gold-silver rushes of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Nellie's final home was Nolan Creek in the Koyukuk district of northern Alaska. Cashman died in 1925 at St. Anne's Hospital, Victoria, British Columbia, a medical facility she helped found several decades earlier.

Jack Dalton: One of the premier horse freighters of the Alaska-Yukon gold rush era, Jack Dalton opened up the 'Dalton Trail' for prospectors and trades from Haines to Central Yukon, Canada. In later years he worked as a freight engineer for the Alaska railroad. The Dalton Highway is a tribute to the Dalton family in Alaska.

Juneau, Summer 2006

Honoring the Mining Legal Profession, in Cooperation with the History Committee of the Alaska Bar Association

Frederick (Fred) Eastaugh: Nome-born Fred Eastaugh was an Alaskan accountant a ship's officer for the Alaska Steamship Company, and Alaska mining attorney. Eastaugh was appointed to the Alaska Minerals Commission in 1991 by Governor Walter Hickel. Upon Eastaugh's death a year later, Hickel ordered state flags flown at half mast.

Anchorage, Fall 2006

Honoring an Outstanding Statesman and an Outstanding Prospector Active in the mid-20th Century Alaska Mining Industry

Charles F. (Chuck) Herbert: Chuck Herbert was one of the premier miners of his generation. Educated at the School of Mines in Fairbanks, he mined placer gold deposits, sought metalliferous lodes, and served with distinction in several public roles. During early years of Statehood, he played a crucial role in the selection of Alaska's North Slope Lands. Later as DNR Commissioner, he revitalized the State land selection process.

Rheinart M. (Rhiny) Berg: Berg's strength and stamina were legendary during most of his 86 years of life. He worked as an underground miner in the Wrangell Mountains and Fairbanks districts, as a trapper and prospector, and he found the Bornite copper-cobalt deposit. He later developed the Candle placer district on the Seward Peninsula. He gained great wealth, which he mostly gave away.

Juneau, Spring 2007

Honoring an Outstanding Statesman and a Mine Attorney Active in Southeast Alaska's Mineral Industry

Phillip R. Holdsworth: Phil Holdsworth's professional career extended nearly seventy years. He was a practical miner at the age of sixteen. Later he operated mines, assay labs, and mills. In World War II, he defended a Philippine mine as a guerilla warrior. After serving as Alaska's first commissioner of Natural Resources, Holdsworth became Alaska's elder natural resource statesman before his death in 2001.

Herbert L. Faulkner: H.L. (Bert) Faulkner's law career extended for almost seventy years. He was a sheriff, U.S. Marshall and attorney. He would represent almost every major mining company operating in Alaska during his lifetime.

Fairbanks, Summer 2007

Honoring Two of Alaska's Outstanding Mine Educators

Earl H. Beistline: Earl Beistline had a distinguished career as mining educator at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. Beistline brought to the classroom a unique blend of theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of mining. During all of his adult life, he was a tireless and outspoken advocate of Alaska mining industry interests.

Ernest N. Wolff: Ernie Wolff was a notable personality on Alaska's mining landscape for more than sixty years. During this time he prospected, mined, taught and administered at the University of Alaska, wrote a classic book, *Handbook for the Alaskan Prospector*, and served on public bodies; all of this always in his unique style with a kind of gentle truculence.

Anchorage, Fall 2007

Honoring Those Involved in the Southwest Alaska's Quicksilver Mining Industry

Robert F. Lyman: Besides operating small scale mercury lodes, he managed Alaska's largest mercury mine at Red Devil, Alaska, which, during the 1950s, produced nearly 20 percent of U.S. domestic requirements of the strategic metal.

Wallace M. Cady: Produced, with other USGS colleagues, 'The Central Kuskokwim Region, Alaska', a geological framework of a large, 5,000 mi² area centered on Alaska's premier mercury mining region.

Russell Schaefer: One of Alaska's 'tough guy prospectors' that accomplished much in the Kuskokwim Mercury Belt of southwest Alaska.

Fairbanks, Spring 2008

Honoring Three Attorneys and a Civic Minded Woman Important to the Interior Alaska Mining Industry

Luther Hess: First rate mining lawyer and active mine developer in several interior Alaska gold camps. Helped organize the Alaska Miners Association (in 1939) and served as AMA's first President.

Harriett Hess: Worked with husband Luther on a variety of mining education issues and was a pioneer regent of the University of Alaska system. Worked as pro-development, pro-mining Democrats during the Roosevelt Administration.

Earnest B. Collins: Pursued a long and successful career in Interior Alaska as a placer miner, lawyer, Alaska Territorial legislator, and delegate to Alaska Constitutional Convention.

John (Johnny) McGinn: A smart mining lawyer who, with James Wickersham, cleaned up corruption in Nome and financed many small gold and silver projects in Interior Alaska and Yukon, Canada.

Anchorage, Fall 2008

Honoring Two Engineers and a Prospector Who Helped Bring Success to the Kennecott Mines in the Chitina Valley of South-Central Alaska

Earl Tappen Stannard: An innovative engineer at Kennecott's Alaska mines, and later a CEO of Kennecott Copper Corporation.

William Crawford Douglass: A gifted mining engineer and exceptional manager at Kennecott's Alaska mines.

Reuben Frederick McClellan: Organized the mining partnership that made the initial discoveries and negotiated the sales of the mineral claims that became the Kennecott mines in Alaska.

Anchorage, Fall 2009

Honoring Four Pioneers Important to the Willow Creek Mining District

Robert L. Hatcher: Began the lode mining boom in the Willow Creek district when he discovered gold-quartz veins on Skyscraper Mountain that later became part of the Independence group of mines.

Orville G. Herning: Instrumental in forming the east-coast based exploration group, Klondike and Boston Gold Mining Company and in forming the Willow Creek Mining district.

Byron S. Bartholf: Represents a large family group that was instrumental in the development of the gold lodes in the Willow Creek district.

Walter W. Stoll: An exceptional mine operator of the Independence gold mine, which became the largest gold producer (in ore tonnage) in the Willow Creek district.

Fairbanks, Spring, 2010

Honoring two-civic-minded pioneers important to Interior and Western Alaska Development

John P. Clum: Long after his involvement with the capture of Geronimo in Arizona, Clum established reliable postal service throughout Alaska—he became the Postal Inspector for the Alaska Territory.

Irving McKenny Reed: Notable Associate Mining Engineer for the Alaska Territory and pioneer of Nome; was chair of the Alaska Game Commission prior to WWII and the Territorial Highway Engineer prior to Statehood.

Anchorage, Fall, 2010

Honoring Pioneers Important to the Seward Peninsula Gold Dredging Industry

Nicholas B. and Evinda S. Tweet: Partners in marriage and mining, they created a family-owned firm that has mined gold in Alaska for more than 100 years.

Carl S. and Walter A. Glavinovich: Brothers who devoted more than 100 years of their collective lives to dredging in the Nome district, one of Alaska's premier placer gold districts.

Anchorage, Fall, 2011

Honoring Two Pioneers Active in South-Central Alaska Mining and Economic Development

Martin Radovan: A Croatian prospector who prospected the Chitina Valley for decades and found the high grade but also high altitude 'Binocular' copper prospect. He never made a mine but his dreams live on.

Arthur Shonbeck: He joined numerous stampedes during the Alaska-Yukon Goldrush and was an outstanding civic leader of Anchorage. He drowned with AMHF Inductee John Beaton in Ganes Creek west of McGrath.

Fairbanks, Spring 2012

Honoring Pioneers Important to the Mid-20th Interior Placer Mining Industry

Oscar Tweiten: Arrived in Fairbanks during the Great Depression and mined on Cleary Creek in the Fairbanks for more than 50 years.

Glen D. Franklin: A gifted athlete who studied business administration at the University of Alaska in the 1930s; mined with others in Alaska and Yukon Territory.

Donald Cook: An Oregon-born graduate of the University of Alaska, who pursued career in education.

Anchorage, Fall, 2012

Honoring Pioneers Important to the Iditarod and Innoko Districts of Southwest Alaska

Merton Marston: Indiana newspaper man who became wealthy as a result of grubstaking the discoverers of the Iditarod district—later managed hotels in the Pacific Northwest.

Mattie 'Tootsie' Crosby: Beloved personality in Flat, the center of the Iditarod district for more than 50 years—the only Afro-African who lived and worked in that district.

Toivo Rosander: Finnish immigrant who mined in the Ophir-Innoko area for early 70 years with wife Dyna and boys Ron and Ken. Managed to convince many skeptics about the value of placer mining.

Juneau, Spring 2013

Honoring Two Pioneers Important to Mineral Development in Southeast Alaska

Alexandre Choquette: French Canadian prospector who began in the 1949 California Gold Rush and ended in the Klondike Gold Rush of 1896. At the time of his death, Choquette was a true north-country legend.

John F. Malony: Was important to early mineral development of Southeast Alaska—served as mayor of Juneau and helped form Alaska Electric Light and Power, Alaska’s first modern electric utility.

Fairbanks, Summer 2013

Honoring an outstanding citizen, educator and placer mine expert

Doug Colp: Born and raised in Southeastern Alaska, Colp Became a Legendary Expert on Placer Mine Technologies, a UAF Educator, and, with his Wife Marcel, a Civic-Minded Resident of Fairbanks.

Anchorage, Fall 2013

Honoring Geologists from the U.S. Geological Survey

Arthur C. Spencer: Provided the first geologic descriptions of the Kennecott Mines in the Chitina Valley and authored a classic: USGS Bulletin 287—The Juneau Gold Belt in 1906.

Josiah E. Spurr: Forged a career as a renowned economic geologist—and helped found the Society of Economic Geologists. Best known for his pre-Klondike adventure--*Through the Yukon Gold Diggings*.

Stephen R. Capps: An outstanding regional geologist that specialized in the study of Alaskan placer gold deposits in glaciated areas. Was among the first to study strategic minerals.

Fairbanks, Spring 2014

Honoring Three Early Mining Pioneers Important in the Alaskan Mining Industry

‘Wise Mike’ Stepovich: Self-educated Montenegrin immigrant came to Fairbanks shortly after the 1902 discovery and mined gold on Fairbanks Creek for 40 years; his son Mike Stepovich II would be Alaska’s last territorial governor.

Helen Van Campen: Had a remarkable career in Alaska that included equestrian sports, journalism and gold mining. Helen Van Campen Memorial Scholarship Fund at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks provides journalism students with funding to help start their careers.

Peter Petrovich Doroshin: A Russian Mining engineer that discovered placer gold on the Kenai Peninsula in 1848; was a pioneer in investigating Alaska’s abundant coal resources.

Anchorage, Fall, 2014

Honoring Three Pioneers Associated with the Kennecott Mines in Alaska

Alan Mara Bateman: Important Kennecott consultant at McCarthy; Editor of *Economic Geology* for more than five decades.

Edward M. MacKevett Jr. Pioneer geologist of Kennecott deposits near McCarthy and Alaska’s premier mercury-antimony and REE-Th-U districts.

William H. Seagrave Best known for his management skills in the early Kennecott mines of Alaska.

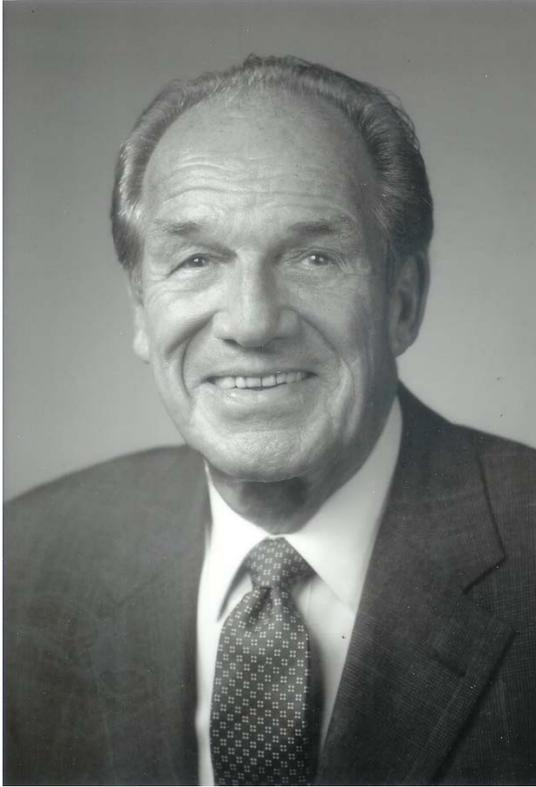
Anchorage, Fall, 2015

Honoring pioneers associated with the Red Dog Zinc-Polymetallic Mine and a Hatcher Pass Pioneer

Robert (Bob) Baker the Kotzebue-based bush pilot who is given credit for the discovery of the Red Dog deposit.

Irv Tailleir a legendary U.S. Geological Survey Brooks Range geologist who followed up on Baker's recommendations and wrote the open file report documenting the importance of the Red Dog deposit.

Don S. Rae Respected prospector and assayer who worked mines in Southeast Alaska and in the Hatcher Pass region near Palmer.



Patrick H. O'Neill undated from family files

Patrick Henry O'Neill (1915-)

Introduction and Family Roots

Patrick Henry O'Neill was born in the Prince William Sound community of Cordova, Alaska on August 11th, 1915 to Harry and Florence O'Neill. The marine inlet in front of present day town of Cordova was named Puerto Cordova in 1790 by the Spanish explorer Salvador Fidalgo, after the Spanish Admiral Luis de Cordova. Although the inlet's name changed to Orca Inlet, the name Cordova was eventually applied to the current town site, which became the railroad terminus that serviced the rich copper mines operated by Kennecott Copper Corporation in the Wrangell Mountains during the early-to-mid 20th Century.

Patrick H. O'Neill is of Irish decent. Patrick O'Neill's paternal grandfather, William A.

O'Neill, immigrated to the United States in 1871 when he was 16, and initially worked on railroad construction projects. While living near Fargo, North Dakota, he married, became a farmer, and raised ten children. Patrick's father, Harry I. O'Neill, was born in Fargo in 1885. At the time of the 1897 Klondike Gold Rush, Patrick's grandfather, William, traveled north and rushed over Chilkoot Pass to the gold fields near Dawson. He didn't get rich mining gold at Dawson, but instead helped build the White Pass and Yukon (WP&Y) Railroad from Skagway to Whitehorse. After the railroad was completed, he returned stateside, but moved his family from North Dakota to Seattle.

The Guggenheim Syndicate; which controlled the rich copper deposits in the Chitina Valley, needed surface access from the coast to the remote Wrangell Mountains site in order to develop the copper mines. They contacted the builders of the WP&Y Railroad to secure their services for construction of a railroad from Cordova to Kennicott, a distance of 194 miles. The construction of the Copper River and Northwestern (CR&NW) Railroad, the first large scale transportation project in Alaska's history, took place between 1904 and 1911 and employed from 3,000 to 4,000 men. The railroad project, which involved construction of a bridge across the raging Copper River near the leading edge of an active glacier, must be considered an engineering feat equivalent in its day to the construction of the Trans Alaska Pipeline. Before completion, skeptics of the railroad project referred to the CR&NW as: *Can't Run and Never Will*.

'Grandpa' William O'Neill was a foreman on the project, but was killed during August, 1911 in a cave-in while inspecting the last railroad tunnel near Chitina—just as the CR&NW Railroad was being completed.

Patrick's maternal grandfather, Philp J. Leahy, who was also of Irish decent, was born in Pennsylvania. He worked his way west employe with the Central Railroad.



Ten of the O’Neill children in Cordova, Alaska circa 1921, with Patrick identified. Photo from family files

Patrick’s mother, Florence Anne Leahy, was born in Beardstown, Illinois in 1883. The family ended up eventually moving to Seattle, where Patrick’s father Harry lived. Harry and Florence were married in Seattle in 1904. Grandpa William O’Neill had acquired a lot in Cordova during the construction of the CR& NW Railroad. Patrick’s parents, Harry and Florence, moved to Cordova in 1908 and eventually built a large house on the lot that Grandpa William O’Neill had purchased. They continued to build a large family.

Cordova Years

Patrick was the seventh of twelve children. He was younger than his brother Mike, who was the sixth in the family. When Mike was born, Patrick’s parents originally named him Michael-Patrick but then his father Harry said:

“it’s a shame to waste two good names on one kid. Let’s call this one Michael and the next one Patrick”.

The children of the O’Neill family were, from oldest to youngest, Harry, William, Alice, Philip, Edward, Mike, Patrick, Florence (Rusty), Francis, Margaret, Teresa, and Rose Mary. They all played and worked well together and would remain close during their entire lives. The individualism of each sibling and their accomplishments would reinforce all of the others during life.

Patrick was a prolific letter writer throughout his life, largely due to his mother’s insistence that he keep up with her during his many travels and adventures. Patrick always wrote to his mother on Sunday and he missed very few of them during his nearly 30 years of corresponding with her before her death in 1959. He corresponded by letter frequently with many others.

Patrick’s home town of Cordova was, like many in the resource-rich west, composed of people from all over the globe and of many nationalities. As he relates in his book, *From Snowshoes to Wingtips*:

“several Jewish and Irish families, one black family and one or more Greek, Italian, Yugoslavian, and Russian families, as well as a large Native American Eyak community were all part of the greater. The Episcopal Church had the library (the Red Dragon). The Presbyterians had the gymnasium. The Catholics were in control of the social hall. The Masons had a great dance floor....there was practically no racial prejudice. It was quite a shock for me to find out years later that racial prejudice was deeply ingrained in some communities of the 48 States and countries where I worked and traveled.”

Patrick’s father Harry worked for the retailer Sam Blum out of a tent store in Cordova. Later, Harry and Sam formed Blum and O’Neill and when Sam died, it became the O’Neill Company Inc. The store eventually had three separate departments: groceries, hardware, and clothing. All of the O’Neill children worked in the O’Neill store, and would bring in coal, stoke the furnace, haul out the ashes, scrub floors, wash dishes, iron clothes, and help cook for the large family. Patrick would also shovel snow off of sidewalks around town.

As a member of a devout Catholic family, Patrick served as an altar boy during the celebration of Mass at the local church. Owing to the large family size, the O’Neill home was among the largest (if not the largest) in Cordova. Growing up as a young boy in Cordova included visiting workers in railroad construction camps and bootleggers (during Prohibition), fishing, hiking, and avoiding large bears. Once Patrick was attacked while delivering newspapers by a vicious dog, and had to be hospitalized.

Patrick was eight years old when President Warren G. Harding visited Cordova during 1923 for a day. The O’Neill family all lined up as the local chamber of commerce chair said: *“Mr. President, here are Harry and Florence O’Neill with their 12 children”*. President Harding shook hands with all in the O’Neill family as they walked past.

In 1932, at the age of 16, Patrick finished high school and wanted to go to college. Although gold mining was doing well in the Territory, such was not the case for the copper mines in the Wrangell Mountains and on LaTouche Island, which had shut down



The O’Neill family store in Cordova, Alaska, circa 1920s. Photo from family files

due to low copper prices caused by the Great Depression. The CR&NW Railroad was suspended due to lack of freight and ore concentrate deliveries (it resumed operations in 1935 until final closure in 1938). Cordova was beginning to experience a profound economic downturn.

Patrick's father, Harry, suggested that he write to Charles Bunnell in Fairbanks, the President of the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines about both educational and part time employment opportunities at the school. Bunnell wrote back and said that he could get Patrick a job as a janitor at the new school, in exchange for room and board. And if he could get summer employment in the gold mining industry, then he could pay for tuition and could enroll in the college. Patrick managed to make \$600 as a laborer during the mining season that summer, and as he was preparing to travel north to Fairbanks for school, his father told him that he was about to lose the family business. The economic downturn in Cordova was beginning to reverberate throughout the business community. Patrick gave his father the \$600 he had made at the gold mine, which temporarily helped the family business, but his schooling in Fairbanks was delayed.

Patrick managed to stay busy at odd jobs in Cordova during the winter of 1932-33. One day, he walked out to Eyak Lake, where the well-known bush pilot Harold Gillam had a hangar. Gillam was working on a plane and Patrick pitched in and helped. By the end of the day, Gillam hired Patrick at a rate of \$30/month to help with his business. Gillam had three airplanes to maintain. Patrick was involved in many aspects of the operation, including meeting the aircraft when they landed; draining engine oil, covering up the engines, and heating the engines. Patrick became a 'go-to' guy. Sometimes, Patrick would fly with Gillam and drop out bundles to remote mining camps as Gillam flew. Patrick's experience working with Gillam would have a positive influence on him later in life.

University of Alaska Years

Patrick O'Neill enrolled at the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines in the fall of 1933. This institution became the University of Alaska in 1935. Following the original plan of the previous year, Judge Bunnell gave him a janitorial position at the college and money made as an employee of gold mines was enough to take care of tuition and other expenses. Patrick served as athletic manager for several teams that the college could assemble, especially hockey and basketball. Because Fairbanks was not especially well suited for downhill skiing, Patrick became quite proficient at cross country skiing, and even won a few races while pursuing his academic career.

One memorable trip taken as athletic manager of the institution's hockey team morphed into a trip stateside. During the spring of 1936, in the euphoria of the university's surprising defeat of a hockey team from Dawson, Yukon, a decision was made to assemble a team from both Dawson and Fairbanks and play hockey teams from selected cities in the United States and Canada. After travel funds were raised, mainly from private sources, the team headed south. The hockey team actually managed to beat several teams in the United States, including tying a series in Minneapolis, Minnesota, but was usually soundly defeated by Canadian teams. The saga of the team's return to Alaska is told in Patrick's book, *From Snowshoes to Wingtips*, which involved a loosely contrived and unfunded cross country automobile trip from the Midwest to California; then north to Seattle; and finally finding steerage aboard an Alaska Steamship Company vessel back to Seward. The debt racked up from this trip would plague Patrick for several years. Through his uncles, Fred and Wilson Leahy, Patrick and George Karabeinikoff visited Paramount studios while in Los Angeles and met Hollywood actors Spencer Tracy, George Raft, Bing Crosby, and Edward G. Robinson.

Writers note-this trip was described in the AMHF Inductee Glen Franklin summary (Volume 14, #1)

Patrick O'Neill would receive three degrees from the University of Alaska, and win several prestigious awards. In 1941 he earned a four year bachelor of science in mining engineering and a five year bachelor of mining engineering. Concerning the latter, he was one of the first five year program graduates from the University. In 1953, Patrick earned his engineering of mines degree from the University of Alaska School of Mines. He was named the Distinguished Alumni in 1971 by the University of Alaska Alumni Association. He would also receive an Honorary Doctor of Science Degree from the institution in 1976. Finally Patrick received the Outstanding Alumni Award from the UAF School of Mineral Industry in 1982.

Besides Patrick, the older brother Bill and younger brother Francis went to school at the University of Alaska. Bill got his degree in mining geology at the former college in 1934. Francis obtained a degree in mining engineering in 1942. It was Bill for whom the O'Neill Building was named on the University of Alaska-Fairbanks campus in 1975.

War Years

In 1940, the U.S. Army Air Corps started the

Civilian Pilot Training Program at the University of Alaska, and Patrick enrolled in the program. Benefiting from his experiences working with Harold Gillam years earlier, Patrick learned how to fly and obtained a pilot's license. In anticipation of entering WWII, the United States Selective Service instituted a draft, and O'Neill was drafted in early 1941. He obtained the position of Aviation Cadet in the U. S. Army Air Corps, contingent on passing a physical.

After Pearl Harbor, Patrick was first stationed at Kelley Field in San Antonio, Texas. He began training in a PT-19, a single engine, low-wing monoplane with two open cockpits—one for the instructor and one for the student. Later he was transferred to Randolph Field also near San Antonio for basic training. Long before the establishment of the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Randolph field was known as "the West Point of the Air". After reaching the rank of Cadet Captain, he was then transferred for advanced training to Brooks Field southwest of San Antonio. There Patrick flew an AT-6, an aircraft which has been used in Alaska for spotting forest fires.



LEFT: Patrick O'Neill on a prospecting trip in the Goodpaster region in 1935 fairly near the site of the future Pogo Gold Mine. RIGHT: Patrick stands next to a B-17 Bomber which he flew for the U.S. Army Air Corps during WWII. Photos from O'Neill family files.

O'Neill graduated from Brooks Field advanced training on August 5th, 1942. From there, he reported to Selfridge Field in Michigan to join a P-39 Air Cobra fighter group. This aircraft was the center piece of the USSR-USA Lend Lease Program; more than 5,000 Cobras (both P-39s and the more advanced P-63s) were flown from Fairbanks to Krasnoyarsk, Russia during the war. Patrick wanted to be assigned a combat role with the P-39 unit, but was rejected despite exceptional letters of reference from past instructors at the University of Alaska and from a mining company in Fairbanks, which included University President Charles Bunnell and Senior Engineer Jim Crawford respectively. While at Selfridge Field, a B-17 Group came through with movie actor Clark Gable on board. Patrick and the group held a party for the actor, who was on a war promotion effort. Patrick again asked for an overseas (combat role) transfer, but instead was assigned to a B-26 bomber group in Fort Wayne, Indiana. That aircraft had various technical problems that made it potentially dangerous to fly.

Patrick and his unit worked out the bugs so that those bombers could be flown safely. He was later ordered to head up an arctic search and rescue group at Buckley Field, Colorado, where he spent several months as a flight instructor. With this assignment completed, he was transferred to Amarillo Texas, where he became an engineering test pilot for B-17 bombers. By war's end, he had accumulated several hundred hours flying the B-17s. Patrick was also very good at monitoring the repairs of the aircraft, and he frequently test-flew the big bombers after they emerged from a maintenance cycle. In 1944, O'Neill was ordered to attend Command and General Staff School in Leavenworth, Kansas. In 1945, O'Neill had an opportunity to join a B-29 bomber group, but paperwork and red tape would stall the assignment and ultimately caused this action to be terminated. As the war drew to a close, Patrick seriously considered making military service a career. He had accumulated excellent training experience as a test pilot in

different types of military aircraft, and the Command and General Staff School had prepared him for such a career.

Although he would never serve in combat, the Air Corps saw O'Neill's mission as one to train many pilots and to test-fly aircraft to insure safer deployments for everyone. When the war ended, Captain O'Neill was honorably discharged and he returned to the mining field.

O'Neill's Alaskan Mining Career

Patrick O'Neill's first mining job was as a laborer with his older brother Bill at the Chititu placer gold mine, about 20 miles from McCarthy. He worked there for several years beginning in 1932, mostly before his university career.

In 1935, while attending classes at the University in Fairbanks, Dean Patty, Patrick's mining professor, asked him and a seasoned prospector, Carl Tweiten, to accompany investor George Pond to the Goodpaster River basin east of Fairbanks. The group polled up the Goodpaster River from the Tanana River for a number of days. The mosquitos were unbelievable. Gold was panned on several tributaries of the West Fork, Goodpaster River, and claims were staked. But when the Buhach™ ran out (a powder made of ground-up pyrethrin flowers and burned to kill mosquitos), the expedition ended. Patrick eventually transferred his claims to Carl Tweiten. After Tweiten suffered a mine injury several years later, he abandoned his mining career and left Alaska. The claims were also abandoned. In 1990, Carl Tweiten published a book that described his prospecting in the area (see bibliography). Tweiten's brother, Oscar, was inducted into the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame (AMHF) in 2012. Prospecting undertaken by the O'Neill-Tweiten-Pond group occurred in the general area where the Pogo gold mine would be discovered in 1994 and placed into production in 2006. Today, the Pogo mine is one of Alaska's largest gold mines; the 3 millionth ounce of gold from Pogo was recently poured.



Dredge #3 of the USSR&M gold dredge fleet in Fairbanks, known as the Chatanika Dredge, had many seasons of good gold recoveries and challenging engineering problems that had to be solved in order to mine the deeply buried paystreak. O’Neill was the superintendent of dredge operations for USSR&M from 1948 until his departure to South America in the 1950s.

O’Neill’s first job as a mine laborer was working for an FE Company exploration crew near Fox. Later, he would work for several seasons on placer gold exploration crews in southwest Alaska near McGrath and the Moore Creek placer mine, and later in several gold-bearing streams near Aniak.

One work change for O’Neill was working at the McCarty underground hardrock gold mine northeast of Fairbanks near the divide between Fairbanks Creek and Cleary Creek. In 1939, KFAR came on the air, the first radio station in Interior Alaska. The first song Patrick heard on KFAR while working at the McCarty mine was Judy Garland singing *Over the Rainbow*, something he never forgot.

In 1948, the United States Smelting, Refining and Mining Company (USSR&M) promoted O’Neill to Dredge Superintendent of their dredges in the Fairbanks district. USSR&M operated a large fleet of dredges in the Fairbanks district from 1928-to-1965.

In 1948, six of their eight dredges were working after being moth-balled during the war due to the implementation of Federal Order L-208. At the age of 33, O’Neill was considered young for the job, but proved to be most capable. During the late 1940s, several of the big, floating stacker dredges, some weighing more than 2,000 tons, had exhausted their paystreaks and had to be moved to new ground. Dredge #6 was moved from Ester Creek to Gold Hill via a two mile long canal. Dredge #2 was moved from Goldstream Creek to Fairbanks Creek, a distance of more than ten miles. Dredge #5 was moved from Cleary Creek to Little Eldorado Creek—and then to Dome Creek. Each move required that dredges be disassembled to a degree and pulled to new construction sites overland by tractors and cables during winter months. Patrick oversaw the dredge moves.

Before the war, it was not difficult to obtain a quality work force. But after the war, the company had to compete with Alaska military

construction projects that offered fundamentally higher wages.

Patrick became very involved with the Pioneers of Alaska, an Alaska-wide organization with 'Igloos' all over the Territory. In 1947, Patrick joined Igloo #4, which represented many pioneers from the interior. You have to be an Alaskan for 30 years to join the Pioneers of Alaska; he was just 32 when he joined. Gold was discovered in the Fairbanks area in 1902 by AMHF inductee Felice Pedroni; a.k.a. Felix Pedro, an Italian immigrant. In 1952, the Pioneers of Alaska decided to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Pedro's discovery. That year, Patrick was the President of Pioneers Igloo #4 and was the chairman of the project. The Italian government sent over a bust of Felix Pedro. A bronze plaque depicting an image of Felix Pedro was made in Seattle and was affixed on a granite boulder at the 'Pedro Monument' on Pedro Creek, where the discovery of gold was made.

The event, originally known as 'Discovery Days', became 'Golden Days', an annual celebration held in Fairbanks every year since. O'Neill gave the first address at the Pedro Monument and has returned several times for re-dedications.

In the fall of 1952, at the suggestion of AMHF inductee Dean Earl Beistline, Patrick O'Neill began a thesis project in order to receive an Engineer of Mines degree at the University. The thesis, which evaluated the status of the USSR&M dredging operations in the Fairbanks district, was finished in May, 1953. O'Neill was still dredge superintendent for the firm, which encouraged him to work up forecasts about future operations as part of the thesis.

In his thesis, O'Neill wrote:

"The present outlook for gold dredging in Alaska is uncertain. This uncertainty is due to the exceedingly high cost of labor and materials and steadily increasing taxes, coupled with the fixed price of gold and restrictions governing regulations of gold sales in domestic and foreign markets. Many Alaskan dredges that operated prior to WWII cannot be operated profitably today and there are no new searches for new dredge properties.....Never-the-less, dredges today mine cassiterite (ore of tin), platinum, monazite, scheelite (ore of tungsten), garnets, sapphires.....and aggregates. Dredges are dependable producers of new wealth all over the world."



**Dedication of Pedro Monument by gold miners and prospectors that actually knew Felix Pedro, circa 1952
From O'Neill (2007)**

O'Neill concluded that placer gold reserves suitable for dredging in the Fairbanks area would be finished in just ten more years or by about 1963. It occurred to him that future job opportunities should be considered elsewhere.

As he walked down the main hallway of the University of Alaska School of Mines, Patrick noticed a letter on the bulletin board from the South American Gold and Platinum Company (SAGPC) in New York advertising for junior mining engineers for their dredge project in Colombia, South America. O'Neill asked Dean Beistline to add his name to a list of experienced dredge operators that might be interested in working for the firm. O'Neill soon received a telegram from SAGPC asking for additional information (a resume) and a request to come to New York for an interview. While considering the employment opportunity, Patrick discussed the matter with former mines professor and mentor Ernest Patty, who would become a University of Alaska President. Patty strongly urged O'Neill to accept a position if offered; which he did. The decision profoundly changed the life of the experienced Alaskan placer mining engineer. In later years, O'Neill credited both Beistline and Patty for encouraging him to pursue mining opportunities in Central and South America.

A Mining Career in Central and South America

At the time that O'Neill left the USSR&M Company in 1953, inflation and the fixed price of gold had made their Alaskan dredge fleet economically marginal. Gold was at \$35/ounce and had stayed at that level since 1934. In contrast, placer mines in Colombia, except the ones where O'Neill would initially work, were doing quite well at \$35/ounce gold. The Colombian peso was devaluating faster than inflationary mine costs were increasing. The Colombian subsidiary of the SAGPC was called Compania Minera Choco Pacifico, which was located in the Choco region of Colombia. It was hot and rainy there, in complete contrast to the cool, subarctic desert of the Fairbanks district.

The Choco region of Colombia had been mined for gold and platinum by the Spanish for several hundred years, and later by British and American interests. Some of the first platinum mined in the world came from this area. The mineralized sources for the platinum in the Choco region, known to geologists as 'zoned ultramafic complexes', are remarkably similar to those at Goodnews Bay, Alaska, where platinum and byproduct gold has been placer mined. Only the Ural Mountains of Russia has produced more placer platinum than the Choco basin.

Upon arriving at the work site, O'Neill was disturbed to find that working and housing conditions were primitive and completely inadequate for the 600 miners working in the main camp at Andagoya. Diseases like malaria were prevalent. Educational programs for the children of miners was required by Colombian law, but were not being provided. Patrick was hired as chief engineer with the understanding that within one year, he would have sufficient proficiency in the Spanish language to be able to take over management of the operation from the existing manager, who was in poor health and wanted to leave. After one year, O'Neill did become proficient in the Spanish language, and he did much to improve mine efficiencies, but much depended on improving the working and living conditions of the workers. After the first year, he threatened to quit if working conditions for the employees did not improve.

At the same time, the man controlling the stock of SAGPC, Sam Lewisohn, unexpectedly died. His widow wanted to sell out. The broker that placed the stock and several others wanted O'Neill to show them around the Andagoya mine site, which O'Neill did. While doing so, Patrick offered his frank advice about what should be done to make the operation successful. A proxy fight occurred in New York and new company decision makers asked Patrick to move to New York and assume the position of Vice President of Operations.



Dredge #2 operated by the International Mining Corporation out of Andagoya Camp, Choco Basin, Colombia. Photo of painting from Patrick O'Neill files



Dredge #4, a 13 cubic foot unit operated by the Pato Consolidated Gold Dredging on the Nechi River near Bagre, Colombia. Photo of painting from Patrick O'Neill files.

O'Neill, now based in New York, made regular trips to the Colombian mine operations. Modern appliances and new living structures were built. Social workers arrived and teachers taught workers how to make clothing. Educational programs were implemented for the children of mine workers. A new hospital with modern laboratory equipment was built and staffed with competent doctors and nurses. A recreational hall and movie theater were also provided. Almost overnight, work efficiencies and employee moral improved dramatically.

In the meantime, test work commenced on the dredges to improve gold and platinum recovery. Bucket line speeds were increased and prospect drilling tested new reserves. There were thousands of people mining gold and platinum in addition to the five dredges that were operating in the Choco region. The small miners used bateas (wooden gold pans) to recover the gold and platinum. It was thought by native people that platinum was 'unripe' gold and frequently discarded as worthless for many years. But when demand for platinum increased after WWI, tailings were re-mined for their platinum values. O'Neill's dredges sometimes dug up pre-Colombian gold fish hooks, nose rings, and old Spanish gold coins.

Instead of bringing in foreign mining engineers for permanent positions, O'Neill used local Colombian talent wherever he could. He did bring in professional engineering consultants that he knew from time to time, when engineering problems needed to be solved. When O'Neill first stepped foot on the property, the mine manager at Andagoya, who was from Montana, refused to work directly with minorities, including the Governor of the region, who was of black African descent. O'Neill was appalled that such strong racism existed among his colleagues. By the time the dredge fleets were taken over by Colombian companies, a Colombian engineer was the general manager.

At the time that O'Neill arrived in South America, the SAGPC had two operations: 1) the five dredges that worked at the Andagoya camp; and 2) two dredges that worked at the Narino camp much further to the south. Not long after, the company name was changed to International Mining Corporation (IMC). O'Neill took over all responsibilities for IMC in South America, which mined the properties for about 25 years. A few years after O'Neill took over operations, a DC-3 carrying Vince White, the company dredge superintendent, crashed into the mountains of Colombia killing all on board. Vince was an experienced dredger from the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation in Yukon Territory, Canada, and his expertise was sorely missed by O'Neill. A shipment of gold and platinum was on board the aircraft. The gold bars disappeared but the raw placer platinum, which required special refining processes prior to sale, eventually turned up.

Under O'Neill's leadership, the International Mining Corporation (IMC) would expand. Their first acquisition was the Pato Consolidated Gold Corporation, which operated seven dredges on the Nechi River in Colombia. These dredges were newer units than those at Andagoya and Narino. IMC would later acquire stock in Placer Development, which had operated a large fleet of gold dredges at Bulolo in New Guinea both before and after WWII. Japanese air forces sank the dredge fleet during WWII, but the dredges were refloated and operated after the war. O'Neill would assume the chair of Pato Consolidated Gold Corporation. When the Colombian mine operations were sold to a Colombian Company, IMC was acquired by Pacific Holding in 1977. Patrick O'Neill would also be involved with other firms, including Moly Corp and Zemex Corporation during his years in the mining business.

In June, 1967, Patrick met Sandra Elaine Dorris on a flight from Mexico to New York. Sandra was a stewardess working for Eastern Airlines.



Patrick and Sandra O'Neill, circa 1967

Patrick was on his way from one of his many business meetings in Mexico. The couple hit it off famously on the dance floors of the Waldorf Astoria in New York and elsewhere. Patrick and Sandra were married on December 5th, 1967 and had two children, Erin Dorris in 1969 and Kevin Reddy in 1972. Sandra, who could speak fluent Spanish at a high professional level, would frequently provide invaluable communication skills for Patrick during his complicated and sensitive mining negotiations with mining executives and government officials. Her knowledge of the social nuances in the Hispanic culture of Central and South America was also invaluable.

O'Neill learned about the potential to dredge gold in Bolivia. SAGPC managed to acquire from the Bolivian government several prospective properties, and eventually, a subsidiary was created, South American Placers, with Patrick as President, to develop the Bolivian placer deposits. A dredge originally deployed in New Guinea before WWII was barged to South

America and trucked to Caranavi, where it was constructed. The dredge was reassembled in six months and the President of Bolivia, Victor Paz Estenssoro, christened the operation. The dredge did not perform at the designed level, but was profitable.

IMC examined and developed mining properties in Peru and Mexico, and acquired shares in the Fresnillo Company in Mexico, which produced both base and precious metals. After IMC was acquired by Pacific Holdings in 1977, the Fresnillo Company was merged with Rosario Resources, and O'Neill became the Executive Vice President. Rosario operated mining properties in Mexico, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. O'Neill spent 24 years on the board of the Fresnillo Company, and worked with many excellent engineers and executives during that time. He would finally retire from the mining business at the end of his tenure on the Rosario board in the 1990s.

Other Interests

Patrick had many interests in addition to the mining field. During WWII, American and Canadian military personnel and academia became concerned about the strategic and economic importance of arctic regions. In 1944, representatives from the United States and Canada met in New York and agreed to establish a private, binational organization to study the arctic regions. Thus the Arctic Institute of North America was formed, with headquarters in Montreal and Washington D.C. Funding was provided by both Canadian and U.S. government entities as well as from private foundations and corporations. Eventually liaisons were established with Greenland (Denmark), the Scandinavian countries and the USSR—now Russia. The journal *Arctic* was launched in 1948. O'Neill became a member in 1958 and was elected to the Board of Governors two years later. He served as chairman of the board for two terms in the 1970s. He remains a fellow of the organization.



LEFT: Patrick O'Neill second from left in back at Fresnillo hardrock mining operation in Mexico, undated. RIGHT: The O'Neill Family, from left to right, Sandra, Kevin, Erin, and Patrick in Antarctica circa 1988. From O'Neill files

The Explorers Club was founded in 1904 as a multidisciplinary society dedicated to field research and scientific exploration. Patrick joined the club in 1957, and has been very active over the years. He had the opportunity to meet with Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Sir Hubert Wilkins, Admiral Bird, and other renowned arctic explorers. Patrick's wife Sandra, attended many meetings of the Explorers Club. Patrick remains one of the longest-running members of the Explorers Club.

For several decades, Patrick raised funds to fight Diabetes. Both of his children are diabetic. In 1970, he was asked to join the Development Committee of the Joslin Diabetes Center (JDC) in Boston, Massachusetts. He remained on that committee for 25 years, 15 as Chairman of the Board. During that time, the budget for the JDC grew from \$22-to-\$88 million and the patients served grew from 36,000 to over 100,000. In 1987, the JDC was named the Diabetes and Endocrinology Center of the National Institute of Health, one of only a few active in the U.S. Patrick retired from the JDC Board in 1995, but remains informed about their current programs.

Other organizations in which Patrick has played an active role include the American Geographical Society for 46 years, the Society of Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration (SME) for 80 years, and the Ireland-United States Council for Commerce and Industry for 52 years.

Patrick H. O'Neill has had a remarkably successful international mining career. Yet he embodies the virtues of a pioneer Alaskan: hard work, honesty, and patience. He has a quick and charming wit and is capable of entertaining guests and colleagues with tales of his incredibly interesting life. Although he doesn't always agree with others, he is tolerant and respectful of other points of view.

And he never forgot his roots. Patrick and Sandra have made many trips to Alaska over the years since relocating to the east coast. He was on the University of Alaska-Fairbanks campus in 1988 along with his friends and colleagues Earl Beistline and Glen Franklin, who presented the life-sized statue of Charles Bunnell, the first President of the University of Alaska on the central campus green. Patrick gave the dedication speech for this event.



Patrick O’Neill, Earl Beistline, and Glen Franklin (all AMHF inductees) dedicating a bronze of Charles Bunnell, the first President of the University of Alaska, circa 1988.

When recently asked what his greatest achievement in life was, Patrick responded:

“It’s the education that I received at the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines—and later the University of Alaska. It is absolutely the best thing I could have done in my life.”

On March 4th, 2016, the Alaska Legislature issued a proclamation honoring Patrick H. O’Neill for his achievements in the mining field, his contributions to the University of Alaska, his love for Alaska as a whole, and for his induction into the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation.

The Board members of the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation are honored to have Patrick H. O’Neill inducted into the organization.

Written By Tom Bundtzen, March 24th, 2016

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THE ALASKA LEGISLATURE



* HONORING *

* DR. PATRICK H. O'NEILL *

* 2016 ALASKA MINING HALL OF FAME *

The members of the Twenty-ninth Alaska State Legislature join family and friends in commending Dr. Patrick H. O'Neill, UAF BS'41, MS'53, ScD (Hon) '76, for his lifetime of achievements in the mining industry. Most recently, he is now being inducted into the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame in April 2016.

This 'hometown' boy hails from Cordova. One of 12 children, early in life Patrick found his calling in the mining industry, following in the footsteps of his grandfather who had been a part of the famous Alaska Klondike Gold Rush in 1897.

Patrick began his career at the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines (now UAF) thanks to strong encouragement and a job opportunity from university president Charles Bunnell.

It took nine years for him to achieve his first two of three degrees in mining engineering - a decision that ultimately took him all over the world, starting in Colombia, South America, where he revitalized a failing mining operation, eventually becoming president of the International Mining Corporation.

His mining career took off when he worked for the US Smelting, Refining and Mining Company out of Fairbanks, rising up through the ranks, and working alongside many prominent Alaska pioneers. Dr. O'Neill would go on to serve as president or chairman of eight affiliated mining companies, and director of several others including The Fresno Company, Zemex Corporation, Placer Development, Moly Corp, Rosario Resources, and others. These companies developed and operated some of the western world's great metal resources.

This remarkable individual brings honor to UAF and the College of Engineering and Mines, as well as the state of Alaska. Along with his three degrees obtained from UAF in 1941 and 1953, UAF awarded Patrick with the Distinguished Alumnus Award in 1971, and an honorary doctorate of science degree in 1976 in recognition of his professional achievements and service to his university.

When asked about his greatest achievement, Dr. O'Neill responds, "It's the education I received at the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines. Absolutely the best thing I could have done in life!" He also credits his wife Sandra for supporting him in all his achievements through almost 50 years of marriage.

The members of the Twenty-ninth Alaska State Legislature praise the commitment and achievements of Dr. Patrick H. O'Neill for his lifetime of achievements and contributions to the mining industry worldwide. We extend our congratulations and share in the pride felt by family, friends and the community.



Mike Chenuault
MIKE CHENUAULT
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

Kevin Meyer
KEVIN MEYER
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Steve M. Thompson
REP. STEVE THOMPSON
PRIME SPONSOR

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SEN. CLICK BISHOP
PRIME SPONSOR

Date: March 4, 2016

Cosponsors: Representatives Chenuault, Claman, Colver, Drummond, Edgmon, Foster, Gara, Gattis, Guttenberg, Hawker, Herron, Hughes, Johnson, Josephson, Kawasaki, Keller, Kito, Kreiss-Tomkins, LeDoux, Lynn, Millett, Muñoz, Nageak, Neuman, Olson, Ortiz, Pruitt, Saddler, Seaton, Stutes, Talerico, Tarr, Tilton, Tuck, Vazquez, Wilson, Wool; Senators Kelly, Meyer, Coghill, Costello, Dunleavy, Egan, Ellis, Gardner, Giessel, Hoffman, Huggins, MacKinnon, McGuire, Micciche, Olson, Stedman, Stevens, Stoltz, Wielechowski



Walter Johnson at Cottonwood Camp, Seward Peninsula, circa early 1900s. Source: Lynn Johnson

**Walter W. Johnson
(1882-1971)**

Walter W. Johnson, Alaska gold dredge pioneer, was born on August 3, 1882 in Farmer City, Illinois. He was the fifth of nine children born to Perrin Eskew and Eva Clifford Williams Johnson. In 1898, the Johnson family moved from Farmer City to nearby LeRoy where Perrin found work as a butcher in the local market. Walter attended Empire Township High School where he excelled in both academic and athletic pursuits. His mechanical engineering gifts were soon recognized, and he was pulled out of school on more than one occasion to fix problems with the city's power plant. Due to the family's modest circumstances, Walter worked on his uncle's farm after school and during the summer in order to save money for college. After graduating from high school, he studied mechanical engineering and mining engineering at the University of Illinois

In 1905, Johnson took a train to California where he found employment in the Natomas Company's Folsom gold dredging operations. His fiancée, Pearl Elizabeth Clarey, also from LeRoy, followed him to California, and they were married in Sacramento on November 6th, 1905. Walter and Pearl had four sons, Thomas Keith, born in 1908, Paul Warren, born in 1910, Walter Scott, born in 1919, and Phillip Clarey, born in 1921. Three of their sons eventually worked in the family gold dredging business which, by the mid-1930s, was known as the Walter W. Johnson Company.



Walter W. Johnson in football uniform, who valued physical fitness and healthy eating habits. He exercised religiously all his life. Photo courtesy of W.W. Johnson Collection

Johnson began designing dredges as early as 1906, and over the course of his long career, built a total of 58 gold and tin dredges in places such as Alaska, California, Canada, Siberia, Thailand, Portugal, Bolivia and perhaps elsewhere. Thirty two of the 58 dredges were built for mining placer deposits in Alaska, and Johnson is credited with building more dredges in Alaska than any other dredge manufacturing company.

By 1909, Johnson, now living in Berkeley, California, was building dredges both as an employee of the Judson Manufacturing Company and as co-owner of the Northern Dredge Building and Construction Company (*Nome Nugget Mining and Dredging Edition*, October 1910:36; Spence 1996:33; Gibson 1911:18). On June 2, 1910, Johnson, now 27 years old, sailed from San Francisco to Nome on the steamship *Umatilla* with parts for three dredges slated for installation in the Nome Mining District, including one for the Arctic Gold Dredging Company, managed by Frank Middaugh, and one for the Sioux-Alaska Mining Company, managed by Colin Murray (*San Francisco Call*, June 3, 1910; Gibson 1911:18). Parts for both dredges were made at Union Iron Works, a San Francisco Bay Area company. Johnson spent the 1910 season on the Seward Peninsula engaged in the construction of several dredges, but also found time to acquire claims on which he would soon operate his own dredges.

After returning to the San Francisco Bay Area in the fall of 1910, Johnson entered into a partnership with Harry Garfield Peake. The two men formed the Union Construction Company, with headquarters in San Francisco. Johnson was President and manager of field operations and Peake, formerly the chief engineer for the Yuba Manufacturing Company and the Boston Machine Shop, as well as a draftsman for the Bucyrus Company, was Vice President and manager of the engineering department (*Mining and Scientific Press*, January 14, 1911).

Johnson returned to Nome in 1911 and built two more dredges that year, including a gold dredge for the Julien Gold Mining and Dredging Company and a dredge for mining placer tin for the York dredging company, the first of several dredging companies he would own in Alaska. Parts for the Julien dredge were made at the Judson Manufacturing Company works in California and transported by steamship to Nome. Wood for the hull was picked in Seattle on the way.

Johnson arrived at Nome on June 13th, arranged for the transport of the Julien dredge parts to Osborn Creek, a tributary of the Nome River, the same day. The dredge was constructed in record time under the personal supervision of Johnson, and was put into operation on July 22nd. The Union Construction Company soon became well respected for their efficiency in erecting small, specially-designed, bucket-line dredges that were well suited for mining the shallow placer deposits typically found along stream courses on the Seward Peninsula (*Mining and Scientific Press*, October 14, 1911, January 6, 1912; Janin 1912; Spence 1996:33). The company was the first to introduce the use of internal combustion engines on small dredges in Alaska, and made a number of other modifications that allowed Union Construction Company dredges to operate more efficiently in the harsh conditions in Alaska.

Johnson's York Dredging Company dredge was the first placer-tin dredge built in the western hemisphere (Eddy 1911; Peake 1911). The machinery and buckets for this dredge were also made at the Judson Manufacturing Company works. The hull was framed in Seattle and then disassembled for shipment. The steamship carrying the machinery and lumber arrived in Nome on August 3, 1911. Johnson had made prior arrangements with the steamship company to pick the construction crew and extra teams for hauling at Nome and transport the men, horses, and cargo York, the port nearest the dredge site on Buck Creek. The roadstead at York is very shallow, so the steamship had to anchor three or four miles from shore. The freight was transferred to lighters and carried as near to the shore as possible. The cargo was transferred the remaining 300-200 feet to shore by wagons. A wagon-road had previously been constructed for the 14-mile haul to the dredge site. Construction of the dredge began on August 7th and was completed on September 6th.



Lomen Bros. photo of Sioux-Alaska Company's 2½-cu. ft. open-connected gasoline-driven dredge on Moss Gulch, a tributary of the Nome River, August 10, 1910. This was the first dredge entirely constructed and put in operation on Seward Peninsula during the 1910 season.



Walter W. Johnson (left) and Harry G. Peake (right), founders of the Union Construction Company.



Julien Gold Mining and Dredging Company, Osborn Creek, Nome, Alaska. This 2¾-cu. ft. gasoline-powered dredge was designed and built in 1911 by the Union Construction Company. Photo from the Carrie McLain Collection courtesy Carrie McLain Museum, Nome, Alaska.



The York Dredging Company's placer tin dredge on Buck Creek, York, Alaska, 1911. Photograph by W.W. Johnson.



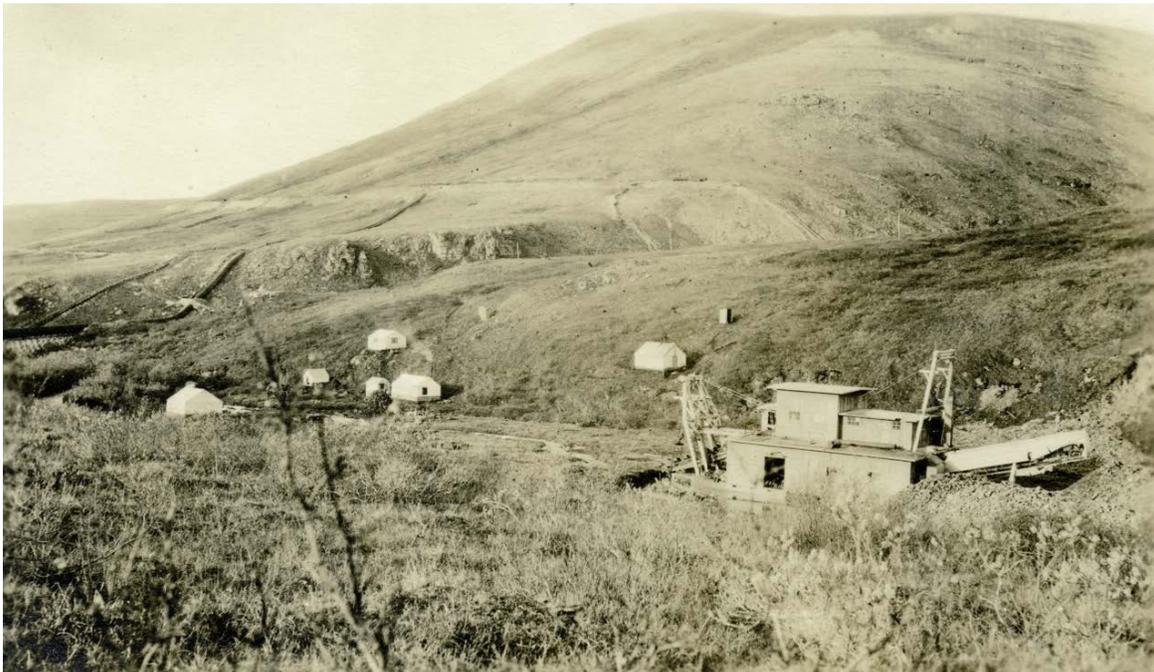
Walter W. Johnson and his pupmobile on a trip from Nome to Shelton, the terminus of the narrow gauge railroad tracks, in 1912. The dogs pulled the pupmobile on level or uphill ground, but would jump onboard without command when the vehicle began to coast downhill. Johnson also traveled by boat, on horseback, and on foot when prospecting or visiting the various dredging operations.

In 1912, Walter Johnson sailed from San Francisco to Nome with parts for five new dredges and seventy mechanics to install them. This time he also brought along his wife Pearl and two young sons, Keith and Paul. Four of the five dredges shipped to Alaska in 1912 were installed that summer, including a 3-cu. ft. dredge for the Pasadena Gold Dredging Company on Budd Creek in the Port Clarence Mining District; a 3-cu. ft. dredge for the

Inmachuck Dredging Company on the Inmachuck River in the Fairhaven Mining District; a 2¼-cu. ft. dredge for the Ruby Dredging Company on the Casadepaga River in the Solomon Mining District; and a 1¾-cu. ft. dredge for the Candle Creek Dredging Company on Candle Creek in the Candle Creek Mining District. In addition to arranging for the transportation of men, machinery, materials, and supplies to the dredge sites and checking up on the progress of construction, Johnson also spent time with the operation of his tin dredge.



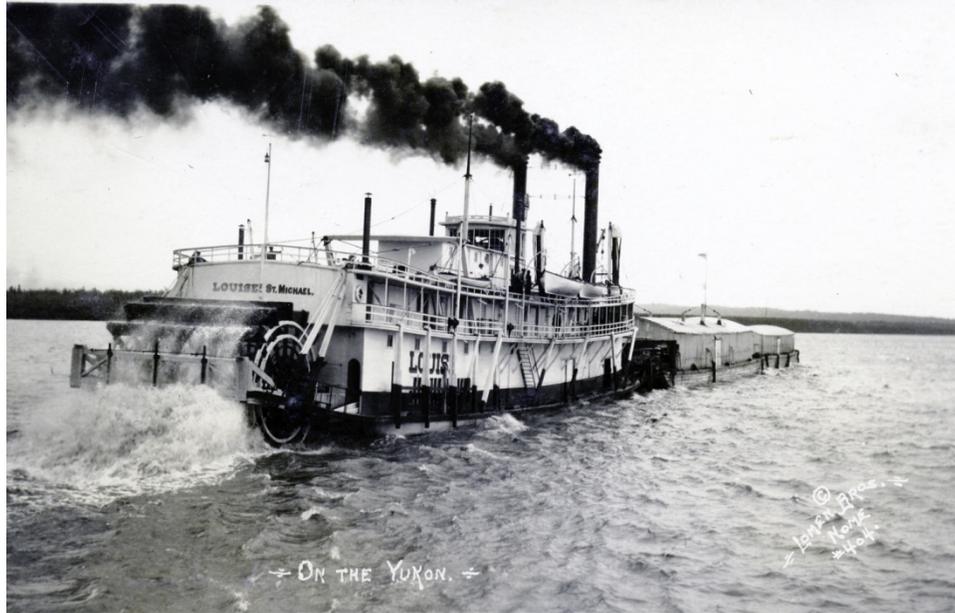
From left to right, Pearl Johnson, Paul Johnson, Keith Johnson and friends on the beach at Nome, circa 1913.



The Arctic Gold Dredging Company's dredge on Hobson Creek. The machinery from the company's original dredge, built by the Union Construction Company on Grass Creek in 1910, was moved to the junction of Nome River and Hobson Creek in 1914 and installed on a new hull. The Union Construction Company was in charge of this work. Water for the dredging operation was obtained from the Miocene Ditch. W.W. Johnson Family Photograph Collection.

Transportation difficulties hampered dredge installation and increased the cost of dredging on the Seward Peninsula, and Johnson lamenting the lack of good roads in the 1916 Mining and Dredging Edition of the *Nome Nugget*.

The Union Construction Company also shipped six dredges to the Alaska Interior between 1913 and 1918, including the C.J. Berry dredge on Mastodon Creek in the Circle Mining District, the Beaton &



Sternwheel steamer Louise pushing barges laden with cargo up the Yukon River from St. Michael. Lomen Brothers photo from the Walter W. Johnson Family Collection.



Walter W. Johnson (left) with his horses at a mining camp circa 1916. As reported in the December 23, 1916 edition of the Engineering and Mining Journal, Johnson had recently returned to San Francisco from Alaska where he had visited Dawson, Fairbanks, Tanana, Iditarod, Black, Otter, and Flat creeks, Kuskokwim River, Rock Creek, and Buck Creek, in addition to looking after the operations of other dredges built by the Union Construction Company. Photo from Walter W. Johnson Family Collection.

In 1918, at age 36, Walter Johnson and his partner H.G. Peake constructed a shipyard and manufacturing plant in Oakland on the shore of San Francisco Bay. The focus of Union Construction Company shifted to building ocean-going

vessels, and between 1919 and 1923 the company built ten freighters, four Coast Guard cutters, one Coast Guard tugboat, and six oil tankers, but apparently also built a dredge for mining placer tin in Bolivia.

**Union
Construction Co.**

Shipbuilders and Engineers
Ships for Cargo, Passenger and Government Service
Dredgers for Gold and Tin, Etc., Etc.
Marine Engineering Installations and Repairs

Organization and Special Facilities for **Installation of Diesel Engines** In Place of Present Steam Power

BUILDERS FOR

Emergency Fleet Corporation United States Coast Guard Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Corporation, Ltd. Fairbanks Gold Dredging Company Etc., Etc.	Standard Oil Co. of California General Petroleum Corporation, Ltd. Guggenheim Exploration Company Bolivia Tin Corporation Ltd.
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Union Construction Company

Main Office: Balfour Building, San Francisco Works: Key Basin, Oakland, Cal.
 W. W. JOHNSON, President H. G. PEAKE, Vice-Pres. and Gen. Manager

Advertisement for the Union Construction Company published in the January 1922 edition of Pacific Marine Review.

The Union Construction Company's manufacturing plant was destroyed by fire in 1925 and Johnson and Peake eventually dissolved their partnership and by 1935 had formed their own companies, the Walter W. Johnson Company and the H.G. Peake Engineering Company. Johnson entered the ship scrapping business, but between 1935 and 1946 also designed and built seven additional dredges for Alaska. Three of these dredges were built for other companies, including the dredge on Coal Creek for Gold Placers, Inc., the dredge on nearby Woodchopper Creek for Alluvial Golds, Inc., and the dredge on Deadwood

Creek for the Deadwood Mining Company. In 1942, Johnson also built a dredge in Yukon Territory, Canada, for Clear Creek Placers; this dredge is now owned by Tony Beets and is featured on the TV show *Gold Rush*.

Four of the seven Alaska dredges built during this same time period were owned and operated by the Walter W. Johnson Company, including the Brinker-Johnson dredge on Caribou Creek, the Bristol Bay Mining Company dredge on Wattamuse and Slate creeks, the Boundary Dredging Company dredge on Canyon Creek, and the Johnson-Pohl dredge in Rocker Gulch on the outskirts of Nome.



The Swanberg Dredge. Photograph by Lynn Johnson.



The Julien Gold Dredging Company dredge, 2013. The dredge was built on Osborn Creek, a tributary of the Nome River, by the Union Construction Company in 1911. Photograph by Lynn Johnson.

Walter W. Johnson remained active in the gold dredging industry into his 80s, making two trips to Alaska, the Yukon Territory, and British Columbia in 1964 at the age of 82. He retired in 1970, and passed away in Oakland, California on April 5th, 1971. Johnson passed on his love for Alaska to his grandchildren.

Many of the dredges constructed by Walter W. Johnson have been destroyed and others are suffering from the ravages of time. Lynn Johnson, the author of this biographical sketch, is attempting to locate any remaining dredges built in Alaska by her grandfather.

Written by Lynn Johnson, March 28th, 2016

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