

# THE PAYSTREAK

\*Name subject to change

Special Issue of the Newsletter of the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation  
Published twice a year in Alaska

## FOUNDATION TO INDUCT THREE MEN IN ANCHORAGE

### THE THREE MINERS

The three men scheduled for induction into the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation November, 1999 in Anchorage, Alaska were multifaceted "mining men". They were characterized by common abilities in leadership and innovation. All led by example; if there was a difficult or dangerous task, Evan Jones, Andrew Olson, and W. E. Dunkle were at the front, not leading from a rear command post.

All of these three miners were born in the late nineteenth century with their main contributions in mining spanning the first quarter of the new century through World War II. Two of them, Jones and Olson, were immigrants to the United States, the same two, earned their technical education mostly in the field, although Jones took advantage of government sponsored training in coal mining.

Dunkle was college educated, but he retained the practical innovative skills of his pioneer ancestors. Jones' career was essentially in coal mining—he deserves his title "Father of Alaska Coal Mining".

Andrew Olson was a placer miner and organizer. He pioneered placer technology and with his younger half-brother Edward operated a nationally significant mine through World War II and the Korean War until 1975. Dunkle's geological and engineering expertise spanned hard rock, placer, and coal mining as well as aviation. All were exceptional men and miners and deserve this late day honor.

### PREVIOUS ALASKA HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

These inductees join twenty-two Alaska miners previously inducted at ceremonies in Fairbanks, Nome and Juneau. Six charter members of the Foundation—Stephen Birch, Frederick Bradley, Alfred Hulse Brooks, John Treadwell, Ernest Patty and Clarence Berry—previously had been elected to the National Mining Hall of Fame in Leadville, Colorado. Others previously inducted were, respectively, the founders of the mines in the heartland of Alaska, centered about Fairbanks, and at Nome and Juneau. Inducted in the spring of 1998 at Fairbanks were pioneer Yukon traders, Mayo, McQuesten, and Harper, also Howard Franklin, John Minook,

Jr., and Felix Pedro. At the Centennial of the discovery of gold at Nome the lucky Swedes—Lindblom, Lindeberg, and Brynteson—and their sometimes backer Charles D. Lane were added to the list.

Ceremonies at Juneau in May 1999 added the four men most involved in the discovery of the Juneau mines—Joe Juneau, Richard Harris, George Pilz, and Kawa.ee—and innovative mining men Bartlett Thane and Livingston Wernecke.

Over a hundred men and women have been nominated for the Hall of Fame Foundation. These nominees remain active. In general the task of an Honors Committee to date has been to select the earliest or broadest candidates. It is probably analogous to the Baseball Hall of Fame first inducting the Babe Ruths and Ty Cobbs before it dealt with well qualified but later or less famous players. The Foundation still seeks nomination of early or founding miners, but now must begin to broaden the base.

# **ALASKA MINING HALL OF FAME FOUNDATION**

## **INDUCTION**

NOVEMBER 4, 1999

History Night of the Alaska Miners Association, Annual Convention

**Anchorage Museum of History and Art**

7:00-9:30 PM

**PROGRAM: 7-9:30 PM**

(In conjunction with the Alaska Miners Association, History Night, Annual Convention)

**\*Donald G. Grybeck: Opening Remarks and Introduction**

**\*David G. Stone: "The other mines of the Juneau Gold Belt". Talk by the mining historian of Juneau, Alaska.**

**\*Mr. Stone: Brief remarks about miners of the Juneau Gold belt and the Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation.**

**\*Coffee Break**

**\*Earl Beistline, President of the Foundation.**

**Introduction of friends and relatives of the Inductees**

**Introduction of the Presenters and Induction**

**Andrew O. Olson, presented by Joe Fisher, Mining Engineer**

**Evan Jones, presented by Robert Stiles, President, DRVEN**

**W. E. Dunkle, presented by Charles Hawley, Mining Geologist**

## MANY AID INDUCTION IN ANCHORAGE

The induction ceremony is co-sponsored by the Alaska Miners Association, sharing "History night" for the affair. The staff of the Anchorage Museum of History and Art, particularly Diane Brenner and Walter Van Horn, are largely responsible for the parallel Museum display and assisted in assembly of background material for the inductees. Additional material was furnished by the Rasmuson library, University of Alaska Fairbanks and local historians, Mary and Melvin Barry.

The brief biography of Evan Jones is mainly adapted from manuscripts by three of his grandchildren, Margaret Visger, Bronwen Jones and Ralph Courtney, but with help and cooperation of Mr. Jones' surviving daughters, Margaret Bennet and Martha Visger.

Joseph Fisher, who was the last manager of Olson's Goodnews Bay Mining Company, was largely responsible for the article on Andrew Olson.

Dunkle memorabilia were sent by Mr. Dunkle's surviving sons, William "Bill" Dunkle and Bruce Borthwick Dunkle, both of California. Dunkle has been a main interest of Hawley for at least twenty years.

## AMERICA'S PLATINUM MINER: ANDREW OLOF OLSON (1885-1981)

Andrew was born Anders Olof Olsson in Krokvag, Sweden and educated through grammar school in Sweden. Olson's mother died in childbirth and he was raised by his mother's parents. In 1903, at age 18, Olson left Sweden for the greater opportunities in America. He first settled in Stanwood, Washington where his father's brother, John Olsson, had established a home.

In 1905, Andrew joined his father, step-mother, and seven children on a farm at Matsqui, British Columbia. The rugged young Swede attracted the attention of miners from Fairbanks who offered him a job. Andrew made the 400 mile trip from Valdez to Fairbanks by foot, but soon was making the then good wages of \$7 a day plus room and board; his first mining tools were pick, shovel, and wheelbarrow.

A severe injury in the fall of 1908, after his return from Alaska, kept Andrew in Washington and British Columbia until 1912. This time on his return to Alaska,

Andrew and his cousin Dan Olson walked from Seward to Flat.

For the next decade Olson sometimes mined, but also farmed and ran logging operations.

His first substantial mark as an innovative miner came in 1928. Olson and partners Tony Lindstrom and Axel Palmgren bought the mining rights on Happy Creek at Flat, they also bought a 1½ yard dragline, of considerable size for that time, and a large pump from NC company. The partners constructed an elevated sluice and pioneered a substantial mining operation.

The dragline was used for both stripping and feeding the elevated sluice box. It was an ideal system for the thawed ground at Flat and pioneered the operations that were used at Flat through the 1980s. Operating as Olson and Company, the partners profited where other miners had gone broke.

In 1933, on a train trip between Anchorage and Seward, Olson met Walter Culver, a prospector and promoter. Culver told Olson of a supposed platinum discovery near Goodnews Bay south of Bethel. Olson told Culver that if it looked promising to begin putting together a block of claims and to let him know.

Lindstrom and Axel Palmgren, Andrew also had placer operations at Deadwood and Harrison Creeks in the Circle district.

Andrew was first married to Frida Tilly who died in 1942; in 1945 he married Bea Austin, in later years maintaining a home in Arlington, Washington. Olson lived into his 9<sup>th</sup> decade, alert and innovative to the end.

## **THE FATHER OF ALASKA COAL MINING: EVAN JONES (1880-1950)**

Evan Jones was nick-named "Half-Pint" because of his lack of physical stature. But to early Alaskans, he was the "Father of Alaska Coal Mining" and respected as man as well as a miner. His first experience in the coal mines was as a trapper boy, opening and closing fire doors, at age 12 in his native Wales. Although he had other early jobs, Evan Jones was a coal miner for more than fifty years.

Jones was born March 5, 1880 in Aberdare, Wales. His mother died when Evan was two years old and his father died in the early 1890s, leaving Evan on his own. Attempts at earning a living in London were unsatisfactory as was his experience in the wheatfields of

Manitoba--it was too hot for him. His first experience in a Canadian coal mine camp was at Fernie in British Columbia, where his first job was as a bull cook.

During his early employment as a miner at Fernie, Jones took a correspondence course in coal mining from the Bureau of Mines and received his papers as fire boss. The training was put to use quickly when the mine exploded killing over 100 men. Disaster followed Evan at his next job, in the coal mine at Frank, Alberta. On April 29, 1903, Turtle Mountain slid, covering the town of Frank and the mine. The force of the slide was sufficient to throw house-size limestone boulders two miles up the opposite side of the mountain. The slide killed 66 people. Jones was underground and was the first man to dig his way out, perhaps because of his small size; in any event, he acquired his nickname at Frank.

Between 1903 and 1917, Jones worked in coal mines in Iowa, Missouri, and Washington. Another aspect of his Welsh heritage also emerged to his benefit. Like many Welsh miners, Jones loved to sing and he had an excellent voice. His voice instructor and fellow countryman was David Morgan. David in turn was the father of Bronwen, who became Mrs. Evan Jones in 1906. Another voice student of Morgan was George

Watkins Evans, who was mine inspector for the State of Washington. George Evans lined up Evan Jones for his first Alaska coal mining, as mine superintendent at the Doherty mine on Moose Creek east of Palmer, Alaska. Jones moved from the Doherty to the superintendent at the Eska and Chickaloon mines on the recommendation of Frederick Mears of the Alaska Engineering Commission.

In 1920, Evan Jones, as general manager, and Anchorage pioneers, Z. C. Loussac, Oscar Anderson, hotel man Collins, Dr. Blyth, a dentist and Dr. Boyle, a M. D., leased 2240 acres on the south slope of Wishbone Hill and opened the Jonesville mine of the Evan Jones Coal Company. As a privately owned mine, Jonesville could supply coal in Anchorage, unlike Eska that could only sell to the railroad. Jonesville quickly developed into the largest coal mine in Alaska. Recognizing the superiority of the mine at Jonesville, the railroad closed Eska and extended a spur line into Jonesville.

In 1924, the Jones family, now with three daughters, Vanny, Vivian, and Martha, moved to Seattle so Vanny could attend high school, but they were back in Alaska by 1926, this time for Evan to manage Cap Lathrop's coal mine at Suntrana near Healy. Another daughter, Margaret joined the family

during the Suntrana period. The tall Lathrop and half-pint Jones must have been an unusual pair. In addition to a common interest in coal mining, the two men loved cigars and were notably thrifty--after one spring flood, both Lathrop and Jones were seen rolling out their water soaked cigars to dry.

During the 30s, Jones was affiliated with several mines, most notably Wishbone Hill. Wishbone Hill and the nearby Premier mine were connected by narrow gauge railroad to the standard gauge track that went to Jonesville and the Eska mine. Wishbone was generally a faithful producer, but the engineer, Gasoline Gus, ran the train off the tracks after a New Years Eve party in Palmer and it was several months before the mine reopened. A major flood finally caused Wishbone to close.

Past age 60, Evan was called on for one more major task during World War II. At the request of Colonel Ohlson general manager of the Alaska Railroad, Evan reopened and operated the Eska mine, working tirelessly to produce coal for the railroad and military bases in Anchorage. In addition to Colonel Ohlson, General Buckner recognized the importance of Evan's work, a recognition that Evan turned into one personal favor. Ordinarily Jones was reticent to ask favors, but in this case his

youngest daughter Margaret wanted to marry a soldier, "Jack" Bennett. Evan approached General Buckner to see if Jack could have the week-end off; the next day Jack was approached by a phalanx of officers who told him that he could have a week for a honeymoon.

Later in the 1940s, Jones opened a mine at Houston, also worked at the Buffalo and Premier mines near Wishbone Hill. His last major effort began in 1946 when, with a silent partner in South America, he formed the Homer Coal Company. Jones drove two tunnels, built tippie, bunkhouse, shops and other support buildings and planned a dock below the mine in order to barge coal to Anchorage. The Anchorage market did not materialize and many people in Homer found it more convenient to pick coal off the beaches than buy it from the mine.

Evan died peacefully in Homer on March 27, 1950. Only a week before his death Evan had attended the AIME (Mining and Metallurgical Engineers) meeting in Fairbanks where he was recognized for his pioneer work in Alaska coal mining.

## **MINER, FLYER, INVENTOR: W. E. DUNKLE (1887-1957)**

Wesley Earl Dunkle was known to his old and close friends as Dunk or Bill. To his family, he was Earl. He was born in Clarendon, Pennsylvania in the spring of 1887. Earl was raised in nearby Warren when his father, attorney John Wesley Dunkle, was elected county attorney and moved to the county seat. The Dunkle family were English speaking Pennsylvania Dutch--Germans who immigrated to the new world in the 1730s. Earl attended public schools in Warren and graduated with honors from Sheffield Scientific School of Yale University in 1908. Shortly after graduating from Yale, he read of the Guggenheim plans to build a railroad to tap rich copper deposits in Alaska's Wrangell Mountains. He resolved to go to Alaska, and arrived in August 1910.

His first position was at the Guggenheim's Beatson Mine on Latouche Island in Prince William Sound. By December 1911, he was promoted to field engineer. In that position he had two main jobs, first to examine mining properties for Stephen Birch and the Guggenheims; second to undertake geologic studies at

Birch's Kennecott mines in the Wrangell Mountains.

In the first of these jobs, Dunkle traveled throughout Alaska, also the western coast of Canada. At Kennecott, Dunkle worked on the origin of the rich copper ore and strongly advocated the acquisition of the Mother Lode, the deep continuation of the Bonanza lode. In the 1920s, Dunkle returned to project examination, but managed development operations for the Guggenheims at Mt. Eielson near Kantishna and at the Mabel mine in the Willow Creek district.

In 1929, Kennecott sent Dunkle to Africa to look at new mines for possible purchase. He was there for almost a year, and recommended several properties.

Dunkle left Kennecott in 1930 to open the Lucky Shot mine on behalf of Pardners Mines of New York. The mine has been destroyed by fire and had to be completely rebuilt. Dunkle had a salary and a share of the profits. In the winter of 1930-31, Dunkle opened the Lucky Shot as the first year round modern operation in the Willow Creek district. His faith in Lucky Shot was warranted. The average grade of ore in its first three years of operation never was less than 2 ounces of gold per ton, a rarely duplicated grade.

Each day a small but efficient mill with gravity, flotation, and Deveraux cyanide circuits recovered about 100 ounces of gold, sufficient to make Lucky Shot the second or third largest lode gold mine in Alaska and one of the largest in the United States.

Usually with some backing from Pardners, Dunkle embarked on a whirlwind of activities in the early 1930s. He opened the Golden Horn lode mine and the Willow Creek placer in the Flat district, as well as developing the Parks mercury mine on the Kuskokwim.

He prospected as far north as the Brooks Range and used a long time Kennecott friend, Bert Nieding, to examine prospects in southeastern Alaska. His crews drilled placer deposits at Circle and in the Yentna district. In 1936, he began to develop the Golden Zone lode on the south flank of the Alaska Range near Broad Pass.

Pardners left Alaska in 1938, but Dunkle and local Alaskans kept the Golden Zone project going and opened a placer mine at Caribou Creek in Kantishna. Golden Zone aimed at self-sufficiency. Most of the power needed for the mine was generated by hydroelectric systems of Dunkle's own design.

Shortly after opening the

Lucky Shot in 1932, Dunkle began to develop a latent interest in aviation. With Steven Mills, Charley Ruttan and Jack Waterworth, he formed Star Air Service; Dunkle was chief shareholder and later was president of Star Airlines, its successor. Star is the direct ancestor of Alaska Airlines.

Dunkle was also a skilled and adventurous pilot, who established several records, including fastest time between Seattle and Anchorage. Star also successfully freighted a bulldozer over the Alaska Range, another first.

Dunkle was the main mover and shaker behind the plan to connect Lakes Spenard and Hood to provide adequate room for sea plane take-off and landing at Anchorage. An incentive might have been the fact that he crashed in a Travelaire on an attempted takeoff, when the plane hit a tree.

Dunkle's timing at Golden Zone failed with World War II. The mine was undercapitalized and then was closed as a gold mine by War Production Board Order L-208. For his part in the war effort, Dunkle immediately opened up a coal mine north of Golden Zone and shipped bituminous coal to the military bases in Anchorage. An attempt to re-open Golden Zone immediately after the war with Thayer Lindsley's

Ventures Co. failed largely because of economics of the time.

In the late 1940s, a once wealthy Dunkle occasionally worked as a coal miner in his own mine and held on to what was left of his mining empire. Gradually recovering economically, Dunkle briefly worked for the Corps of Engineers before starting his last mining venture.

The venture was a coal field at Broad Pass. Dunkle invented a coal drier to upgrade the lignitic coal. He died on the trail in October 1957, while prospecting for his coal venture.

Dunkle established two families. His first wife, Florence Hull, was an adventurous 1908 Oberlin who taught school throughout the west before moving to Cordova and employment as Stephen Birch's secretary. The Dunkle sons, the late John Hull and William (Bill) were b respectively in 1915 and 1917. The Dunkles lived in Washington, Alaska and Idaho. Florence Hull Dunkle died in early 1932, just as the Lucky Shot was attaining success.

Earl married Billie Borthwick Rimer, whom he had met in Africa, in 1935. Billie was an honors graduate of St. Andrews in Scotland and earned a Ph.D. in biology at the University of Cape Town, studying under famed scientist

Lancelot Hogben. A son, Bruce, was born to the Dunkles in 1937. Billie was a much more aggressive person than Florence; in the early 1950s she and Bruce moved to Washington D. C., where she was associated with a successful lobbying firm and active in both Eisenhower campaigns.

In the early 1950s, Dunkle commuted between Alaska and Washington, D. C. A long-time Mt. McKinley area acquaintance, Bradford Washburn, encouraged Dunkle to record his life and adventures in Alaska. Dunkle wrote Washburn several long and interest accounts of his own exploration work near Mt. McKinley. Washburn, in turn, lined up a publisher for Dunkle. But the Broad Pass coal field took precedence to the proposed story. Only pieces of his story were written.

After Mr. Dunkle's death, Billie reorganized and managed the Broad Pass coal project--obtaining aid from Goodnews Bay Mining Company--and tried, unsuccessfully, to elicit interest in Golden Zone. The Dunkle mining presence, more than one-half century, in Alaska finally ceased with the death of Billie in 1962.

## NAME THE NEWSLETTER

The name, **The Paystreak**, was one of several that emerged in a brainstorming session. Others suggested: Fire-In-The-Hole

The Grubstake

The Mucker

The Historic Mucker

The Adit

The Ore Bucket

The Sluicibox

The Dredge

The Miners Lamp

The Canary.

Send your opinion or suggestion to the Foundation!

# **DISTINGUISHED ALASKANS AID FOUNDATION AS '98ers**

The Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation was incorporated as an Alaska non-profit corporation on April 27, 1997. The Foundation was organized exclusively for educational and charitable purposes, including donations to organizations that are tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code. The foundation is a non-membership corporation that depends on services provided by its officers and directors, others interested in Alaska mining, and on donations and grants.

The Foundation is especially indebted to eleven persons who have each contributed \$1000 to become 98ers, in honor of the first stampeders to Alaska in 1898 at Nome.

## **The 98ers**

**Earl Beistline  
Thomas K. Bundtzen  
Douglas Colp  
Walter Johnson  
Wallace McGregor  
John Mulligan  
Patrick H. O'Neill  
Elmer E. Rasmuson  
Robert H. Trent  
Joe Usibelli, Sr.  
William R. Wood**

Most of the 98ers are recognizable as miners of national or international reputation. But William R. Wood is President, Emeritus, of the University of Alaska. Dr. Wood suggested the organization of the Foundation. Elmer E. Rasmuson is Alaska banker and benefactor, long interested in Alaska natural resource history. Dr. Walter Johnson's career was mainly in Native public health, but he knew many pioneer Alaskans. His own research has taken him to Sweden and Norway in search of the true story of the so-called 'three Lucky Swedes' of fame at Nome.

The Foundation is seeking about ninety more 98ers, but it welcomes contributions at every level. For further information contact:

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