ALASKA MINING HALL OF FAME FOUNDATION

INDUCTION CEREMONY

MAY 16, 1999

JUNEAU-DOUGLAS CITY MUSEUM

JUNEAU, ALASKA
PROGRAM: 5 – 7 PM

- Honorable Dennis Egan, Mayor of City and Bureau of Juneau, Welcome and introduction of Earl Beistline, President of Alaska Mining Hall of Fame Foundation, Fairbanks, AK.

- Remarks, Dr. Beistline on the Foundation.

- Induction: Kawa. ee—Mary Pat Wyatt. Curator, Juneau-Douglas City Museum

George Pilz—John Mulligan, Mining Engineer, Douglas, AK

Richard Harris and Joe Juneau—Chuck Hawley, Geologist, Anchorage

Bartlett Thane and Livingston Wernecke—David G. Stone, Historian, Juneau

- Introduction of relatives and guests by Willette Janes, Historian, Douglas, Alaska

- Refreshments, Courtesy of Alaska Women in Mining, Juneau
THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alaska Miners Association, Juneau Branch

Alaska Women in Mining, Juneau

AJT Mining Properties, Inc., Archives

Alaska Historical Library, State of Alaska

Juneau-Douglas City Museum

University of Alaska, Anchorage, Library, Archives.

And many other Alaskans, including friends and
relatives of the Juneau and Harris families
Kawa.ée
(1817 – 1892)

The birth of Kawa.ée goes back fifty years before the purchase of Alaska from Russia and
long before there were written records of most tribal births. (Kawa.ée, the most recently accepted
spelling of his name, means "It is cooked," a prestigious name. Early spellings included: Kow-
eeh, Kowee, Cow-eeh and Cowee which were found in Pilz’s memoirs, early newspaper reports,
maps, and mining claim documents.) It appears that Kawa.ée was a clan leader of the Young’s
Bay Auk village on Admiralty Island. He was Raven, and probably married to Ok.Lak, an Eagle
woman from the Auk village sixteen miles north of Juneau’s present location. He was living in
this village when he heard of George Pilz’s offer of "100 Hudson's Bay Blankets and work for the
tribe..." for each commercial gold discovery. Kawa.ée followed up with rich specimens of quartz
containing gold, galena, and stibnite (the ores of lead and antimony). The Auk leader was
persistent; it appears that he made more than one trip to Sitka with samples. We do not know
the source of the samples. Harris and Juneau later found rich-gold float in Gold Creek and Quartz
Gulch, possible sources, but they also staked the ‘Kow.eeh Gold and Silver Quartz Lode Claim’ on
Kowee Creek on Douglas Island on October 12, 1880 so a Douglas Island location is also
possible.

Pilz’s accounts credit Kawa.ée with persistence and perhaps with bringing the best
samples to Sitka, but written records are vague and often contradictory. To some extent,
Kawa.ée represents other Indians of southeastern Alaska who assisted the first prospectors. The
elder Kawa.ée could have brought samples collected by other members of the Auk group.
Harris and Juneau seem to have been directly assisted by at least three Indians from the Sitka area.
Harris also states that Auk villagers supported his and Joe Juneau’s prospecting efforts in the
expeditions of mid-summer and October of 1880.

Kawa.ée served as an Indian policeman during the days of Navy rule and an early
photograph depicts him in his uniform and policeman’s star. He was highly regarded by the
Juneau miners and residents, and was referred to as Chief Kowee in his obituary. After the
establishment of Juneau, Kawa.ée lived in the new Auk village near downtown Juneau, where
traditionally a summer fish camp was located. Kawa.ée died February 27, 1892 and was cremated
four days later at the mouth of Gold Creek (previously named Dzantik'i Heeni meaning the place
where flounder gather.)
GEORGE PILZ
(1845-1926)

George Pilz, as the first professional mining engineer in the new territory of Alaska, became a leading figure among the miners who entered Alaska in the first decades after purchase. He was born in Saxony and educated at the famed mining academy at Freiberg. He left Germany in 1867 after exploring for coal, but possibly abruptly to avoid conscription for the Franco-Prussian War. Initially Pilz looked at prospects in Canada and the United States for a German-owned company; he left that company to work for Calumet and Hecla at Hancock, in the Michigan copper ranges. In 1869, he left Michigan to erect a copper smelter in California. Over the next decade, in California, Arizona, and Nevada, Pilz established a reputation for cantankerous competence that assured him employment, but kept him moving for the rest of his life at prospecting, mining, and erecting mills and smelters.

In 1878, Pilz met Nicholas Haley in San Francisco; the men had previously met at a job in California. Haley, who had been stationed with the U.S. Army in Sitka, had rich gold-quartz specimens from the Stewart and other lodes near Silver Bay, south of Sitka. At first, Pilz thought the ore came from the rich Grass Valley district in California, but Haley introduced George to army officers and soldiers in San Francisco who convinced Pilz the samples were from Alaska. Pilz found capital for the project and in February of 1879 moved to Alaska to start construction of a mine and mill at Silver Bay. Gold processed by Pilz's five-stamp mill was the first lode gold produced in Alaska. The mine shut down early in 1880 when it became evident that it was not rich enough to pay. Pilz was criticized at the time, but subsequent events have proved him right.

To extend his range of prospecting throughout southeast Alaska, Pilz enlisted the aid of several Tlingit tribes. He followed up on their samples with experienced prospectors, including Joe Juneau and Richard T. Harris.

One of his prospecting parties opened up Chilkoot Pass, later the gateway to the Klondike, after Navy Captain Beardslee convinced the local Chilkat tribe to open the pass on a profitable freighting basis.

Some of the best samples obtained by to Pilz were brought by Kawa.ee, who probably then lived with Auk people on Admiralty and near modern Juneau. The samples almost certainly were from the Gastineau Channel area. Harris and Juneau made their major discovery in early October 1880, following an early trip that took the men to Gold Creek where they found the best placer showings and fragments of quartz with gold. On the first trip, Harris and Juneau went as far up Gold Creek as Snowslide Gulch, a left limit tributary, where they found marginally commercial indications of gold. (Snowslide tapped the quartz vein system that became the Ebner mine.) A grubstake agreement recorded by Pilz allowed Harris and Juneau to stake placer claims for themselves; also the right to stake lodes in the ratio of 3:1 favoring Pilz. N. A. Fuller, a storekeeper from Sitka, appears to have been associated with Pilz in some way. Later, Pilz maintained that Fuller was a subsidiary player, always acting on behalf of Pilz not on his own behalf. The confused matter caused trouble later on for both Pilz and for Richard T. Harris. A Sitka jury sided with Fuller and awarded a judgement against Harris in 1886. Pilz, who could have aided Harris, was in the San Francisco jail waiting for trial on a fraud charge, a charge that Pilz always denied. Many years later Pilz had few good words to say about Harris, but numerous letters from the period show that Pilz then regarded Harris as one of his few friends. Harris and
RICHARD TIGHE HARRIS

(1833-1907)

Richard T. Harris was born in or near Drummadonald, County Down, Ireland, on 31 October 1833 to John and Mary Anderson Harris. He was the youngest child of the second marriage of John. Harris and least three of his siblings came to the United States in the great Irish immigration of the 1840s and 50s. Richard was in America by about 1855 and was naturalized by about 1858. Some of the Harris and Anderson families were already in the United States, making the transition easier for Harris than for some immigrants. By 1859, Harris was on his way to the frontier. He may have been in the Colorado territory, but by 1864 was definitely in Bannack City, Montana. Almost certainly he was in Virginia City and Butte (Silver Bow) Montana in the 1860s, and he was involved in both placer and lode mining.

In 1877, Harris was in British Columbia, and in the late winter and spring of 1879, Harris began to prospect and mine for George Pilz. By 1879, Richard T. Harris had twenty years of frontier experience and a better than average knowledge of mining law and procedures.

In October of 1880, Harris and his partner Joe Juneau, made one of the most significant discoveries of American prospecting. Within a two week period, the discovered and staked some of the richest placer mines in Silver Bow basin, but more importantly the lode system that ultimately became the Alaska-Juneau mine. The men shared discovery with the Takou claims, the basis of the Ebner. The Takou claims are above Last Chance Basin and would have been closer to the beach, hence probably more visible.

Although his partner, Joe Juneau, sold out his interest in the claims, Harris, relatives, other whites and local Indians mined the Discovery Placer claim profitably from 1881-1885. During the off-season of these years, Harris visited relatives in the United States and shared his wealth with them and with the Harris family remaining in Ireland.

In a lawsuit filed by N. A. Fuller, former partner of George Pilz, Harris lost all his mining interests. Pilz, who would have been his best supporter, was in jail in San Francisco, waiting for trial and unable to make bond. The trial needs further scrutiny, but regardless of its merits, Harris appears to have lost too much. Because he was unable to pay a judgement, he lost everything.

In the earlier and happier years, Harris and Kitty, a young girl from Hoonah entered into what each regarded as marriage. There were four children, but only William John and R. T. Harris lived past infancy. After Kitty's early death, much of Harris's concerns were on the education of his sons. The sons managed the extremely difficult task of living in two cultures much better than most.

Harris died in 1907 in a Masonic Home in Portland, Oregon. He was honored by the Juneau pioneers who recognized his tremendous accomplishment in one brief period in 1880. He continues to be honored by the vigorous descendants of Richard Harris, a son of Ireland, and Kitty, a daughter of Alaska's Hoonah.
BARTLETT LEE THANE

(1879-1927)

Thane was a brilliant promoter and mining engineer who had profound effect on the mining industry. One of a new breed of college trained engineers he graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1898. He was the star quarterback on Berkeley's football team. Many of his teammates were majoring in mining engineering and would play key supporting roles in Thane's most ambitious endeavor. At just shy of 20 years of age the young Thane came to Juneau Alaska to begin his mining career. Long time mining man Herman Tripp hired Thane in his first job running and maintaining the shaft pumps in the Sumdum Chief mine 60 miles south of Juneau. Tripp who had reservations about college boys quickly became a fan of the young Californian resulting in a lifelong friendship. In three years Thane gained controlling interest in the mine.

By 1911 Thane controlled six gold mines in the Juneau Gold Belt and had a mountain named after him.

Through a rather bazaar course of events Thane would gain control of the Perseverance mine near Juneau. The President of the company, Col. William Sutherland had been accused by stock and bondholders of mismanagement of the company and was sued. Sutherland dropped dead of a heart attack, two wives claimed his estate, neither of which knew about the other. The company seemed to be hopelessly caught up in litigation when with the backing of D. C. Jackling and W. P. Hammon; Thane raised $8 million dollars in 1912 to take over and develop the Perseverance mine into the worlds largest.

Thane had a three part plan for the Perseverance mine: 1. Provide for tide water access via a two mile tunnel; 2. Develop an year round hydroelectric power plant, and 3. Construct a revolutionary new mill that would handle up to 6000 tons per day of ore.

The Sheep Creek Adit, (as the tunnel was to be known) was started in November 1912 and completed in February 1914. It is 10,497 feet long and was driven at the fastest rate any tunnel had been excavated in the world. This tunnel gave Thane tide water access via Sheep Creek valley.

With the assistant of some of his former football teammates, Thane constructed the Salmon Creek Dam which is the first thin arch dam ever constructed. The dam is 172 feet high, 648 feet across at the crest, 47 1/2 feet thick at the base, tapering to 6 1/2 feet at the top. Today there are literally over one hundred of dam through out the world designed after Salmon Creek.

The new mill designed to crush, grind, and recover gold from 6,000 tons per day relied on a new rotating mill that was being used in the large copper mines of Nevada and Arizona. Completed in 1915, the mill which many in the mining industry were skeptical as to its
success, did not handle 6,000 tons per day, but instead it handled 10,000 tons per day at less than the cost projected.

With the success of the new mill, it became clear that more electrical power would be needed. Annex Creek on Taku Inlet was optioned from Herman Tripp in April 1915, the power project was producing power by December of that year. It is the first time a lake had been tapped via tunneling under and punching a hole through the bottom of the lake. Amazingly water was turning the water wheels 2 miles away within 42 minutes after blasting the hole through the lake. Annex Creek and Salmon Creek still produce 20% of Juneau’s power today, and are the lowest cost power producers in the State of Alaska.

The Alaska Gastineau for a short period prior to World War I was the largest gold mine in the World. It produced more than 500,000 ounces of gold.

The loss of labor during the war and post war inflation made the mine unprofitable. On June 3, 1921 the mine shut down. Thane promoted the hydroelectric plants, mill town, and support facilities for a new pulp mill site. In 1923 an apparent deal was made with Japanese investors. However, the Tokyo earthquake of the same year killed the investors and the proposed pulp mill died with them. Even though he had positively changed the course of the mining industry, Thane died in New York City in 1927 a broken and embittered man.

Fred Bradley the genius behind the Treadwell and A-J mines said of Thane upon hearing of his death, “he built great monuments to man, but forgot what he was here for.”
JOSEPH JUNEAU

(1833-1899)

Joseph Juneau, born 28 May 1833 in Repentigny, Quebec, was the second and most adventurous son of Francois and Marguerite Juneau. From his boyhood on, he heard of his illustrious cousin Laurent-Salomon Juneau who had followed the fur trade before settling down to found the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. By the time Joe was sixteen, he, also, was on the western path, traveling first to California in the rush of 1849. His trail is difficult to follow, but in the next twenty-five years, Juneau was in Oregon and the Fraser River, sometimes with his fellow countryman "Buck" Choquette. In the mid-1870s, Juneau joined the rush to the Cassiar, near Dease Lake in British Columbia. The district was best reached up the Stikine River from Wrangell, Alaska.

An event in 1879 changed Juneau's life. A German immigrant mining engineer, George Pilz, needed experienced miners and prospectors to work at a mine in Silver Bay south of Sitka, and to follow up on rich specimens of gold-ore brought to Pilz by Indian prospectors and scouts.

Juneau and another experienced miner, Richard Harris, pursued Pilz's best prospects. In mid-summer in 1880, the two men followed Gold Creek as far as Snowslide Gulch where they obtained marginal but commercial pans (about 10 cents worth of gold per pan). Before tackling the rest of Gold Creek, the men returned to Sitka. Juneau was back in early October, and this time he and his partner proceeded up Snowslide Gulch and dropped into a basin cut by hundreds of gold-bearing quartz veins. They followed a creek that they named Quartz Creek into the basin. In thirty years of mining and prospecting, Joe Juneau had never seen its equal.

Juneau, more the easy-come easy-go prospector than Harris, sold his interest in the new district by about 1882. But his name remained. Miners decided to name the new city at the base of Gold Creek—formerly Harrisburgh or Rockwell—after Joe, who then bought drinks for any and all takers for several weeks in celebration of the name-change.

Joe Juneau never had another comparable success, but he did make one more rich gold strike in the Circle district of Alaska in about 1895. Before he left his named townsite, Juneau and a young Tlingit girl, called Susie by the miners, conceived a child. Susie's family did not approve of the much older and alcoholic miner, and Susie was sent to Sitka where she married a man named Andrews, in order that the baby would have a name and would arrive in wedlock. The baby was Mary Andrews Marks, matriarch of many descendants in the Juneau area. Mary lived to the age of 102.

Joe made one last rush to the Klondike in 1897, but the rough years had taken its toll on a once rugged constitution. Juneau died in the Yukon in 1899. A few years later, miners and citizens of his city brought the body back for burial in Juneau, a belated honor, but well deserved.
LIVINGSTON WERNECKE

(1883-1941)

Livingston Wernecke, explorer, scientist, and mine executive, was born January 16, 1883 in Livingston, Montana and named for that rocky mountain city. Wernecke graduated with honors in mining engineering and geology from the University of Washington School of Mines in 1906.

Wernecke started his mining career as a draftsman, and later as a construction engineer at the Nevada Consolidated Copper Company plant in Ely, Nevada. He was chief engineer for the Copper River and Northwestern railroad from 1910-1912.

From 1913-1917 Wernecke was chief geologist for the Treadwell mine. During that period he investigated causes of subsidence in the mine and wrote a lengthy report with a recommendation of a 40-month plan of action on controlling the problem. The Treadwell Board of Directors approved his recommendations in September of 1916, but there was not enough time to fully implement it before the mine flooded on April 21, 1917. While investigating the cave-in and flooding of the mine, he was the last man to be lifted out of the mine.

During the four years following the flooding of the Treadwell mine Wernecke examined hundreds of prospects by dog sled and aircraft throughout Alaska, British Columbia and the Yukon on behalf of the company. His search led to the development of the Nixon Forks mine near McGrath, which he managed from 1919 to 1925.

From 1918 until the time of his death Wernecke was the chief geologist for the Alaska Juneau mine, vice-president and manager of the Treadwell Yukon mining company. In 1921 on behalf of the Treadwell Yukon Company he purchased and operated the northernmost silver mine in the world in the Mayo district of the Yukon. It was there that he pioneered aviation in northern mining and the use of tractors to haul ore over snow. Much of Wernecke's early flying was over territory never before explored by air or ground. His notes and photographs taken on flights east from Point Barrow into the vast reaches of the Canadian Arctic were turned over to the Canadian government, which hailed them as valuable contributions to the knowledge of its geography.

In 1929 Wernecke's geologic report predicted that a richer orebody would be found at depth in the northern half of the A-J Mine. His prediction came true and led to the most profitable years in the mine's history.

A co-founder of the mines loan fund for needy students at the University of Washington, Wernecke lectured there many times on visits while traveling between his Berkeley home and his northern interests.
SOURCES

AJT Mining Properties Archives, Corporate records of the Treadwell, Perseverance and Alaska Juneau Companies. Juneau, AK.


Barry, Mary J., CA 1997, "Joseph Juneau of Juneau, Alaska" Anchorage. Typescript from Barry-Verboncoeur genealogy. (In addition to family sources from her husband, Melvin Barry who is a Joe Juneau fifth cousin, historian Barry searched the mining records in Juneau and, many years ago, interviewed Mrs. Nellie Brown, a Juneau pioneer who had known both Harris and Juneau.)


District Court Alaska, Civil Case File 1884-1900 Sitka. Case Files Nos. 13 and 25, Box 1 and Nos. 28 and 53, Box 2. National Archives, Anchorage, AK.


Stone, David G., 1980, Hard Rock Gold, the story of the great mines that were the heart beat of Juneau, Alaska.

Walle, Dennis Francis, 1980, "Guide to the family papers of Richard Tighe Harris, co-founder of Juneau, Alaska" Archives, Library, University of Alaska Anchorage, including p. 6 quote.