

Downers Grove Reporter

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YUKON TOWN THAT LEFT IN ONE NIGHT

Town Booming at Bedtime and Absolutely Abandoned Before the Break of Day.

(M. J. Brown)

I am going to open this story by telling a story—one of the most unusual that ever came out of Alaska. It is an absolutely true tale, and I got it directly from the main actor in the silent drama—or rather tragedy—as we sat on the bank of the Yukon one night, smoking and fighting mosquito.

He was a watch repairer and kept a few clocks and a little jewelry in the little river town—a supply town for the mines back in the hills.

Spring was breaking, (the spring of last year), daylight had returned the ice was going out and everybody was looking forward when the first boat would come in and new faces and new grub could be met.

"It was a bright, warm Sunday," said my friend, and then I wondered if the story would be as vexatious as the mosquito.

(But he soon made me forget the insects.) A friend hunted him up, he said, and told him it was his birthday and he proposed that a few of the A. B. (Alaskan Brotherhood) boys gather at a cabin and celebrate both the birthday and the return of spring by seeing how much booze they could drink in a given length of time—a sort of a capacity and endurance contest.

As fast as a man went down they let him lay and the victor had the privilege, and distinction of rubbing bacon grease over his face and then sprinkling on asbes.

I will cut the details short. My story-teller said that at supper time he realized he would soon be among those "laid out," so he slipped out, staggered to his bachelor cabin and went to bed.

During the night there was an alarm at the outer door, and the men called on him to get up and come out. He answered he would in a few minutes and they went away. Then he went back to sleep. He had had all he wanted of that celebration crowd.

He awoke at daylight. His head throbed and his stomach was on a strike, so he rolled over and slept again.

At about noon he again awoke, washed and beat it for the nearest saloon for a cocktail. But the saloon was closed, the door locked and no one around.

"I couldn't make it out," said the man. "Certainly this was Monday and the saloons were never closed on this date. So then I went across to the store postoffice to find the reason for this strange condition. The post-office was closed. There was not a man in sight.

"I looked up the street—not a living thing. I looked across to where a bunch of dogs had been tied for a month and they were gone. Then I thought I had it. A new strike had been reported and the whole town had stampeded.

"But on closer investigation I found the harnesses, sleds, packing outfits, etc. had not been taken, so it could not have been a rush. I must be crazy or dreaming.

"I went to my shop. The clocks were ticking. To be certain that I was awake I opened one and stopped the swinging pendulum. It stopped. When I started it again, the clock resumed its ticking.

"Say, friend, you can't imagine the fearful thoughts that came over me—I was crazy. The town was there, so were the people, but I could not see or hear them. I had "gone bugs" and would go out on the first steamer for the crazy house at Portland.

Lord how I was frightened. The sweat ran down me.

"I went outside and looked around. Not a sign of life. I went down the hill to the river bank. Everything was fearfully quiet. The river was very high, but as the town was on a rise far above it, certainly no sane person could be alarmed at the rising stream.

"Then I went back of the town, looking for something stirring, listening for some sound, when—oh, the joy of it!—I heard a shout, and looking up the hill I saw a man waving his arms, yelling and beckoning me to come.

"He need not have beckoned. I tore at him. A malamute couldn't have passed me. As I neared him, he disappeared over the hill. I followed and when I reached the top I was so exhausted and scared that I fell and could not get up.

"When I got my heart action slowed down and my senses began to work, I saw the whole population of the town was behind the hill, with dogs, food, etc., each family with its few belongings."

Now I will shorten the narrative and anxiety and tell you the rest in short meter.

The Northern Commercial Company had a large warehouse on the river bank. The ice had gorged in the river, held back the flow and the water had surrounded the warehouse. The company manager came in from the mines that night, had one look at the rising river and spread the alarm:

"There is carbide, dynamite and giant powder in the warehouse. If the water reaches the calcium, up goes the town. Run for the hill."

It didn't reach it. The ice dam went out and the river went down, and none too soon. Three inches higher and the carbide would have exploded and as the story teller said, "The berg would have went to where there is no nine months winter and the map of Alaska would have lost another dot."

As I run over this remarkable happening I think "What a frame for a short story." But I have spilled the beans—the Saturday Evening Post won't have it now.

And here is another one of the unusual while I am at it.

There was a German at Marshall who had lived in Alaska fourteen years and had been in Marshall since the gold strike. He was universally liked and was a good citizen. Just before I arrived at the town he had left for Nome, on a business matter.

Seeing the var excitement in Nome he told a friend he wished he had taken out his citizenship papers and could be a full American citizen. Doubtless some army official wirelessly the fort at St. Michael about the matter, for when the boat came in to St. Michael he was not permitted to land.

St. Michael is a government reservation and has a fort. Under the law no alien enemy is permitted near a fort or armory. The only way the German could return to his home was to transfer from the ocean steamer at St. Michael for the up-river boats, and the fort officials had forbidden this. For days, while the steamer was unloading and loading the man was held aboard. What disposition was made of him I could not learn, but he was not aboard when I boarded the steamer.

One more of the strange ones, then back to real things.

During the summer a half breed landed at Rampart in a canoe, coming down the Yukon. He was delirious, nearly starved and his face, neck and arms were a mass of poison from mosquito bites. He was taken to a cabin and for days raved in fever.

In his clothes a tobacco sack was found with several large nuggets—chunks of melted pure gold from \$20 to \$200 in value. It was plainly evident the man had made a rich strike, and the doctor and anxious miners watched over him for days, for the time for the delirium to end and he could tell his story.

And one day the fever left, but the breed had no story. It had gone with the fever. He thought he had had a long sleep and had dreamed strange dreams. He could not remember from where he came. His recollection was a blank. He had worked in Circle City, but that was last year. After that he could not remember.

Two miners hired a launch for \$300 and took him up the river, having him watch the shore and try to remember. Shown the nuggets he said he had a dream recollection of opening the sack and trying to buy something to eat with the gold. But no place on the river revived his memory and in disgust the speculators left him at a wood camp where he got a job cutting wood for the steamers. This man had struck it rich somewhere, but starvation and mosquitoes jumped his claim.

I was talking with a clerk in a store in Circle City when a man came in, bought some tobacco, chatted a few minutes and went out. The clerk told me he was a graduate from the state university at Madison, Wis., was married to a squaw and had four

children.

Afterwards I saw him at the boat landing and observed him closely. He was about 35 years old, roughly dressed and had his face set out to whiskeys. The clerk said he came into Dawson, as that town began to run out; he had considerable money and a mining education—the only value of the latter qualification in Alaska placer camps being to make its possessor an easy mark for the "sour doughs."

He bought worthless and worked-out claims and lost every dollar, then he drifted down the river to Forty Mile, got interested in a dredging proposition which never got further than on paper, and relatives sent him money, which he was quickly separated from.

Too proud to go back or acknowledge his second fleeing, he gave up, "let go," married an Indian girl and degenerated to a "squaw man," working in the stores, mines, managing pool rooms, etc.

It is a fact that there are many such derelicts in Alaska. North of Nome, far up in the Indian country, are several high-bred Englishmen, who have taken squaws and gone back to barbarism. These men were supposed to be "remittance men" who honestly, but foolishly got their London friends in on some bum investments and were cut off from their allowances.

Now they are almost on a level with the natives, seldom come out, are forgetting their language and they live in the squalor and filth of their Indian companions.

Up in this country north of Nome is unquestionably a big oil field. Many know of it, and many a capitalist has seen it, but none want it. An old timer who had been there told me that crude oil could be dipped up from the crevices and that prospectors used it for fuel. He said the superstitious Indians were afraid of it and would not go near the "burning water."

The locality is such that it would be almost physically impossible to get in the needed machinery, on account of the roughness of the country. There are miles and miles over mountains where a dog sled could not be drawn and only men with light packs and with the aid of ropes can get over.

Representatives of an oil corporation went into this locality two years ago, thoroughly investigated it and abandoned the proposition. It was stated that it would require 700 miles of pipe line to get the oil to Nome, a distance of half this length and that with the tremendous undertaking of getting the necessary machinery in to open the field the risk was too great for even the Standard Oil Co. So nature has locked up this great asset for a future day, when necessity will develop it.

There are many coal deposits discovered in Alaska, but I was told that many of them were worthless, that they contained "green" coal that would have to lay a few thousand years yet to season, while those that were good were entirely worthless from the fact that they were too far from the river; and the cost of production and transportation would be so far above the price in the States that there would be no market for it. And in Alaska there would be little demand for the reason that wood and time are the too most abundant things. A miner talked to me for three hours about a rich deposit twenty miles back from the river and when he was through I showed him how the cost of getting it to the nearest river town would eat up its value, when he argued "that doesn't make any difference, we could organize a company and get some money out of it."

I told him I was not a promoter.

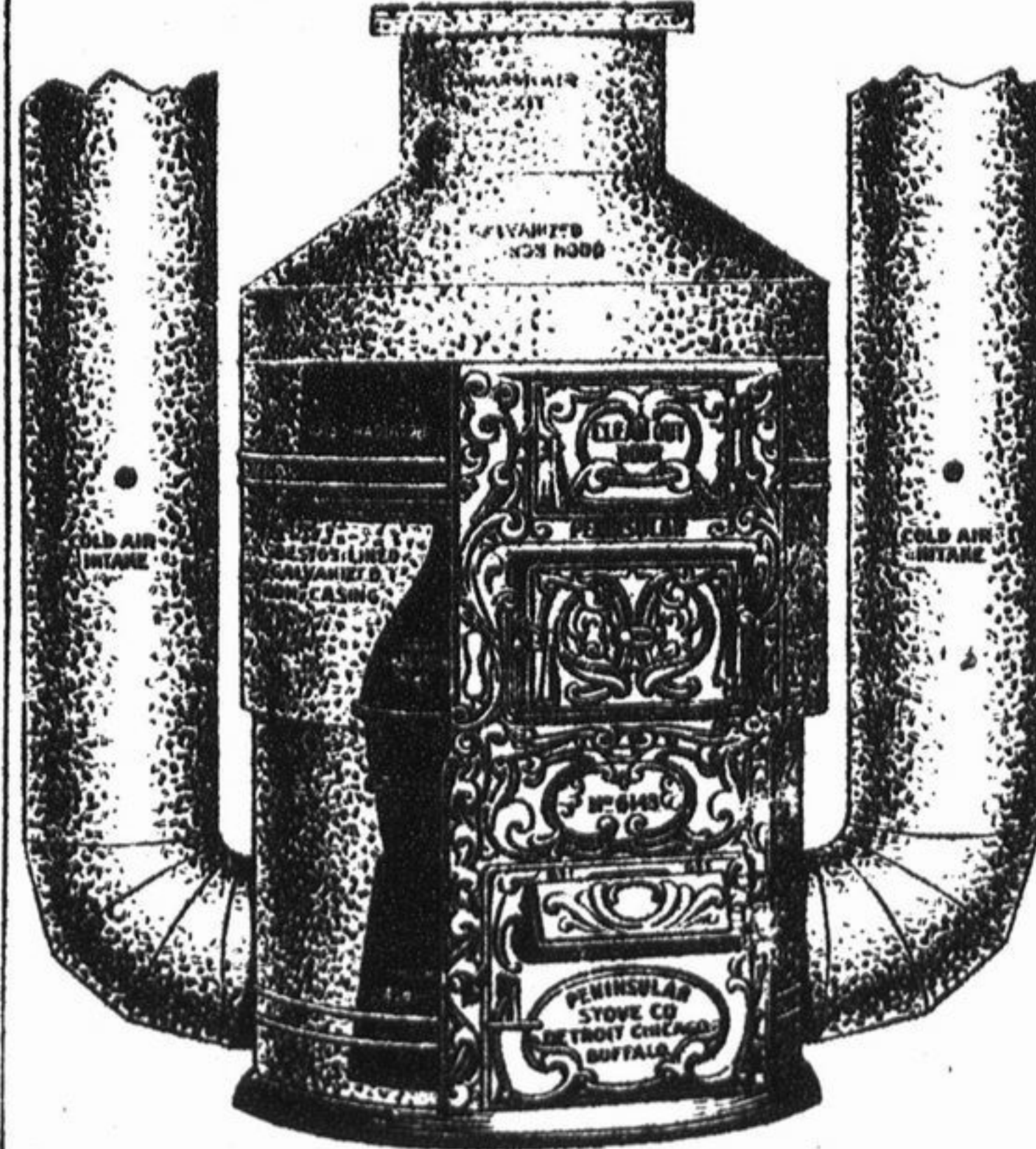
ARCADIAN CLUB ENJOYED 16TH ANNUAL BANQUET

The Sixteenth Annual Banquet of the Arcadian Club was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Heintz Saturday evening, February 9th.

The tables were prettily decorated with dainty place cards, favors and candles the color scheme on one table being American Beauty and on the other the jonquil yellow. The candle shades were cleverly designed to carry out the color scheme, the yellow ones being intertwined with artificial jonquils, the others representing American Beauty roses. The favors, artificial flowers, and shades were the special design and work of the hostess Mrs. W. W. Heintz.

The regular business meeting was eliminated, the time being given to the installation of officers, speeches being made by both the incoming and outgoing. The staff for the current year is as follows:

- President—Miss Irene Tiffany
- Vice President—Miss Edna Finch
- Treasurer—Mrs. W. F. Heintz
- Secretary—Mr. W. F. Heintz
- Reporter—Miss C. D. Wheeler
- Banquet Toastmistress—Miss Irene Tiffany
- Chairman, Banquet Committee—



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Mrs. W. W. Heintz Chairman, Banquet Program Committee—Miss C. D. Wheeler. The program for the evening was as follows: Vocal Duet—Misses Mollie and Flossie Watts. Original Poem—Mr. John Gray. "Toast to the Ladies"—Miss Helen Benning. "A Hooverized Club"—Miss Mollie Watts. Piano Solo—Mr. S. J. Kenison. "Toast to the Gentlemen"—Mr. W. F. Heintz. Current Events—Mrs. W. F. Heintz. Impromptu Speech—Mr. Edward Lacey. "Camouflage"—Miss Agnes Dunn. "Looking Back"—Mr. W. W. Heintz. Impromptu Speech—Mrs. Edward Lacey. Original Story—Miss C. D. Wheeler. "Shrapnel"—Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Cramer. "Looking Ahead"—Miss Edna Finch. The members were all present, with one exception, and the usual good time was enjoyed by all. Mr. and Mrs. Edward Lacey, former members, and who were the guests of the Club, were reinstated as active members. The next regular Club meeting will be held at the home of Mr. S. J. Kenison, Saturday evening, February 25th.

Card of Thanks

We wish to express our sincere appreciation of the kindness and sympathy shown us by friends and neighbors during the sickness and at the death of our beloved husband and father.

Mrs. James M. Reninger and family.

Minute by Minute.

If you had tomorrow's work along with the work of today, of course you would find it too hard for you. But this is just what you are doing when you worry over what is going to happen. No day has so many hard things that we cannot bear them, but we never have strength enough at any one time to bear the worries of several days together. Live minute by minute if you would be equal to all that comes.

Wooden-Soled Shoes.

Wood is being used for shoe soles in some places. California redwood is used, because it is very light, and with tops made of the best obtainable leather, the whole shoe is lighter than most all-leather shoes. But, best of all, these shoes are really waterproof, if the uppers are greased.

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