

# HISTORY OF THE PIONEERS OF ALASKA

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Geo J. Love, Alaskan resident of Valdez, member of the firm of Love A Whitley, in the meat business and for many years U.S. Commissioner at that point is the grand historian of the Grand Igloo, central body of all the Pioneer Igloos of Alaska in the June number of the Pathfinder, official organ of the grand igloo and a most excellent publication. Mr. Love gives the history of the Pioneers of Alaska as follows: To the Officers and Members of the Grand Igloo Pioneers of Alaska: Brothers and Sisters: I accepted the high office of Grand Historian conferred upon me at the last session of the Grand Igloo in the hope and belief that I would be able during the year to collect such data as would allow me an present to the body a concise and true history of the pioneers of Alaska.

With this and in view shortly after adjournment of the Grand Igloo, I sent a letter to each of the Igloos asking their cooperation and assistance. But few I'm sorry to say responded to my request. I do not wish to censure anyone on this account for I know the true Pioneer, while ever ready for a Wa-Wa, is seldom anxious to reduce his knowledge and experiences in writing for publication. This attribute of the Pioneer was, most forcibly decried by an old Historian Sourdough when in the discussion of the qualities of the old pioneers he remarked "By gob, they're a dom sight better with a pick and a pan than with a pen My financial condition did not permit of my visiting remote sections to obtain the information desired and this most important matter must be left to future Grand Historians who have more information and are better qualified than myself.,

As to the organization of the Pioneers of Alaska, I cannot do better than quote the brief

history written by Brother Frank A. Aldrich, one of the organizers Grand President from 1914 to 1915 and who is still an active member of our organization. This article of Brother Aldrich was published in the issue of the Pathfinder of Alaska, our official organ, under date of February 1922 and is as follows:

I am unable to give you the entire history and struggle of the different Pioneer organizations that have from time to time been organized in the different sections of Alaska but part of the early history is accumulated among the numerous historians and will be preserved by the local igloos and this will enable future historians to gain accurate knowledge of the Alaska Pioneers.

The real Pioneer of Alaska while proud of his achievements is most backward about coming out in the open with any events of hardships encountered on the trail. These events were mere incidents of the day and they allowed them to go at that and at no time will you find one of them keeping a diary or making any notes of such events hence much valuable data will be lost to future historians. I will endeavor however to briefly outline the incidents and events of the ups and downs of the Pioneers Organizations which I was part. These notes are entirely from memory, as I have never at any time kept a diary. You may find some error as in time and data but the events are a matter of record.

The present organization of the Pioneers of Alaska is an off-shoot from the Yukon Pioneers of Alaska. This organization was originally organized at Forty- mile in 1898 by George T Snow, Jack McQuesten, Al May, Tom O'Brian,

Jim Bender and others. Later they organized at Circle City, Dawson and Rampart. In 1899 the stampede to Nome found these early Yukon Pioneers stampeding down the Yukon. The Pioneers of Rampart followed taking with them the records and regalia of the Yukon Order at Rampart and reopened the Yukon Order of Pioneers at Nome.

The Constitution of the Yukon Order confined the membership to the watershed of the Yukon and its tributaries; the time limit had lowered from 1893 to 1896 and did not, for some reason, seem to fit for the Nome environment. H.... the Pioneers of the Yukon met the Pioneers of the Seward Peninsula, the Kobuk, Point Hope and Point Barrow of the North, and the Pioneers of the Kuskokwmi, Bristol Bay, Dutch Harbor, Unga, Kodiak and other points in Southern Alaska that had never resided in the Yukon Valley yet. As far as the time limit all were eligible for membership. The Nome Yukon Order of Pioneers struggled along however, until the strike in Fairbanks in 1903. The exodus from Nome to the Tanana left a bare quorum and finally for want of membership the Order discontinued meetings. At Nome, Alaska in 1907 a notice was posted for Alaska Pioneers to meet at the office of Dr. W D'Arey Chace. At this meeting it was decided to organize a society of Pioneers of Alaska broad enough to cover the entire Territory of Alaska. At this meeting eighteen Pioneers met and signed the charter roll. This meeting was held on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1907, with D.A. McDonald as temporary chairman and Conrad Siems as temporary secretary. Following this a permanent organization of Igloo No. 1 was affected February 20<sup>th</sup> 1907 with the following officers:

J.J. Chambers	President
R. B. Milroy	Vice President
Conrad Seims	Sec'y and Historian

P.H. Watt	Treasurer
George S. Stanley	Sergeant at Arms

A week later one hundred and sixty members had signed, and within two months from the date of organizing five hundred and twelve members had signed the charter roll. (The correct number of charter members as reported by the Secretary of Igloo No. 1 was ...5) The committee on Constitution and By-Laws in drafting the Constitution made a provision that when three or more Igloos had been organized that delegates would be elected to meet at Nome and form a legislative branch. The present Grand Igloo Candle Creek soon organized with one hundred and forty members as Igloo No. 2 and St Michael organized next as Igloo No. 3.

Delegates from the three above named Pioneer Organizations met at Nome, Alaska, September 1908 and organized the Grand Igloo fixing the time limit at December 31, 1898 for membership.

Three years later Fairbanks Yukon Order of the Pioneers applied for a charter as Igloo No. 4. Ruby followed and applied for a charter as Igloo No.5. This brought into the order new blood and a consolidation of the Yukon Order of Pioneers.

About 1911 Igloo No. 4 sent delegates to the Grand Igloo at Nome, instructed to have the date advanced from December 31, 1899 to December 31, 1900 basing their argument that Seward Peninsula and the Tanana Valley were pioneered by the 1900 stampede, and were entitled to membership. After a heated debate it was finally agreed upon as a fitting date, ending with the 1900 and beginning with the twentieth century. But it was further resolved that in the future no advance date would be considered. The Grand Igloo further guarded the Organization by a clause that no charters would be granted outside of the Territorial

boundaries of Alaska other than a close bond of reciprocal mutual fellowship with the Yukon Order of Pioneers, Yukon territory, our foster parent.

In 1911 a bill was introduced by the author and passed by the Grand Igloo, providing for the establishment of the Women's Auxiliary, to which were eligible for membership the wives, mothers and sisters of Pioneers, and all women who had resided in Alaska prior to December 31, 1900, and all native born white children.

Those native born automatically became Native Sons and Daughters of Alaska.

The 1911 session of the Grand Igloo placed a fifteen percent assessment on all dues for the erection of a Pioneer's Home at or near Fairbanks. The first session of the Alaska Legislature, 1913 relieved the Pioneer society of this burden by establishment of the Pioneer Home at Sitka.

In 1907 the Pioneers of Juneau organized the Pioneer Order of Alaska, fixing the time limit of admission for members at 1887. This organization flourished up to 1910. In 1913 Igloo No. 6 was organized at Juneau, absorbing the 1887 Pioneers as charter members and is today a live igloo. The organization of Igloo No. 6 paved the way for the Southeastern Alaska members to assist in organizing No. 7 at Valdez which also led to organizing No. 8 at Iditarod and Igloo No. 9 at Seward; other organizations following until at the present there are 24 Igloos with a probable membership of four thousand (As shown by the Grand Secretary's report there are now 24 igloos, 4 Auxiliaries and a total membership of 2240)

"Women Pioneer Organizations of Alaska are the guardians of the Native Sons and Daughters of Alaska who are the lawful successors of the entire Pioneer organization within the Territory of Alaska. These organizations are in many parts of Alaska especially in Southeastern

Alaska where the Native Sons and Daughters are men and are cheerfully and enthusiastically assuming the responsibility.

Every white child born in Alaska automatically becomes a member of the Native Sons and Daughters of Alaska and is enroll as such by the Women's Auxiliary until such child is sixteen years of age when the member so enrolled becomes an active member and is entered on the roll as any other dues-paying member.

"To many of those who have the welfare and interest of the Pioneers at heart the question of the future is a most serious one. Father Time is slowly but surely depleting our membership by calling home our brothers and sisters and unless proper action is taken, at no very distant time the Alaska Pioneer will be but a memory" Brothers and Sisters-We may sit around the stove in our pleasant homes which have taken the place of the old campfires of past days and jolly ourselves into believing that the pioneers days in Alaska are ever; that we now have modern transportation, up to-date cities and in every respect of up-building our day is over. Such however is not the case. There are thousands of square areas in which we at one time labored and made productive have gone back and must again be prospected and developed. For many years to com Alaska will truly be a Pioneer Country. Those that are working for its development, and many who will within the next few years join us, are having and will have as many hardships to overcome (though perhaps of a different nature) as those of "98" or 1900. Many of them are Pioneers in every sense of the term and should be, with proper restriction entitled to enrollment among the PIONEERS OF ALASKA:

Fraternally Submitted

GEO J> LOVE

Grand Historian