

Land, Sea, Air/ Dog Mushing
Ppl of the N/ Heroes & Scoundrels
Ppl of the N/ Explorers & Adventurers

Mushing Legend “Scotty” Allan
By Jennifer Houdek

A century ago, a Scotsman named Allan Alexander Allan, known in Alaska as simply “Scotty,” was the most famous musher of his time. Allan was an adventurer, champion racer, breeder, and a man who exploits aroused excitement about running dogs, not only as a means of transportation or moving freight, but as a recreational sport. Allan’s life in Alaska was entwined with major moments in the territory’s early history, ranging from gold rush days to the Japanese invasion of the Aleutians.

Allan was born in Dundee, Scotland, in 1867. As a boy, he loved working with animals, and at twelve he entered formal schooling to learn how to break horses. In 1886, when Allan was nineteen, his horse-training work took him to America, to deliver a prize stallion to a rancher in South Dakota. For years afterward, he roamed the country working odd jobs. In 1896 Allan was living in Oregon, where he met a young woman named Ella, and they were married. The Allans stayed in the Pacific Northwest for the next couple of years, settling in Washington, where their first two children were born: a son, Euphenne, born in 1897, and a daughter, Helen, in 1899. When news of the Klondike strike spread, Allan decided to head North. He moved his wife and children back to Oregon, and set out for the goldfields. Soon afterward, Ella gave birth to their third child, George.

In the Klondike, Allan prospected and trapped. He found work as a teamster, driving horses and then training dogs, moving supplies over the dangerous, frozen trails. Allan made his way from Dawson to Nome, collecting unwanted dogs as he traveled, with plans to train the best for a team. By 1910, Allan had reunited with Ella and the children,

and had settled in Nome. There Allan acquired a dog named Baldy, an extraordinary animal that would one day achieve great fame for himself and his master. Baldy was a scraggly mutt that had belonged to a young boy named Ben Edwards. The boy put Baldy up for sale when he could no longer care for him. Baldy would take Scotty Allan across the finish line of the All-Alaska Sweepstakes in a Top 3 position a total of eight times.

The Nome Kennel Club organized the first All Alaska Sweepstakes in 1908. The 408-mile race took five days to finish and was won by John Hegness and his team of Malamute crosses. The next year, however, Scotty Allan and Baldy took first place and repeated the win again in 1911 and 1912. In five other races, they finished three times in second and twice in third. The pair were as famous then as Iditarod champions are today, and his successes were followed and reported in the *New York Times* among other national newspapers.

As Allan and Baldy gained fame, Allan partnered with his sponsor, Esther Birdsall Darling, to form the Allan and Darling Kennel. The kennel was historically one of the best-known racing kennels in Alaska. Allan trained and raced all types of dogs, and developed the breed known today as the “Aurora Husky.” The dogs in the Allan and Darling Kennel also consisted of husky mixes named Tom, Dick, and Harry, and a pair of Irish Setters named Rover and Irish.

Allan’s name and dogs were so well-known that when the United States entered World War I, the government commissioned dogs from the Allan and Darling Kennel to haul supplies over the mountains between France and Germany. Allan retold the story of his service in his autobiography, recounting how he trained 450 sled dogs for the French military. The hardy animals became famous worldwide, and many received decorations of valor.

Nome voters elected Allan to the Alaska Legislature and he served from March to May 1917 as a representative in the 3rd Territorial Legislature under governor J.F.A. Strong. At that time, the legislature met for a sixty-day session and only during odd-numbered

years. When election time came around again, Allan was reelected and served in the 4th Territorial Legislature, from March to May 1919, under governor Thomas Riggs, Jr.

For politicians from Alaska's rural areas, transportation options were limited in those early years, and just getting to Juneau and getting back home took nearly as long as the legislative term itself. From Nome, Allan had to drive dogs many hundreds of miles to Fairbanks, then take the horse-drawn sleigh stageline to Valdez, a weeklong journey covering 360 miles. From there, a steamer transported passengers to Juneau. During his term serving in the House, Allan helped pass laws protecting fisheries.

Allan wrote his autobiography titled *Gold, Men and Dogs* some ten years before his death in 1941, and he was memorialized in a 1946 book titled *Scotty Allan: King of the Dog-Team Drivers*. As for famed lead dog, Baldy, his exploits became the subject of a best-selling children's book by Allan's kennel co-owner, Esther Birdsall Darling. Titled *Baldy of Nome*, the book was first published in 1913, and demand kept it in print through the next four decades. Other Baldy descendants, including Boris and Navarre, also were featured in Esther Birdsall Darling's books.

Little is known about the end of Scotty Allan's life, where he was buried, or the whereabouts of his children.

LINKS:

Cairngorm Sleddog Adventure Centre, Scotland, dedicated to the memory of Scotty Allan:

http://www.sleddogcentral.com/features/scotland/scotland_calling.htm

***Baldy of Nome*, download the book:**

<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/11758>

History of the All Alaska Sweepstakes:

<http://www.allalaskasweepstakes.org/History.html>

History of the Alaska Husky:

<http://www.ridethewilderness.com/Bancroft Ontario Alaskan Huskies.htm>

History of the Nome Kennel Club:

<http://www.nomekennelclub.com/nkchistory.htm>

VISIT THE LIBRARY FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Alaska's libraries hold audio, visual, and written material about Scotty Allan and his times in Alaska. Visit your local library or go online to see what's available in holdings all over the state. Take these simple steps:

1. Access **SLED** (State Library Electronic Doorway) at <http://sled.alaska.edu/library.html>.
2. Click on the listing for **ALNCat** (the Alaska Library Network Catalog) to view the Basic Search window. Go to the Keyword field, and type in **SCOTTY ALLAN**.

MORE READING:

Allan, A.A. *Gold, Men and Dogs*. New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1931.

Darling, Esther Birdsall and Hattie Longstreet. *Baldy of Nome*. Pennsylvania: Penn Publishing Co., 1926, 1937, 1940, 1944, 1958.

Darling, Esther Birdsall. *Baldy of Nome: An Immortal of the Trail*. Pennsylvania: A.M. Robertson, 1913.

Darling, Esther Birdsall. *Navarre of the North: A Thrilling Story of the Grandson of Baldy of Nome*. New York: Doubleday, 1935.

Garst, Shannon. *Scotty Allan: King of the Dog-Team Drivers*. New York: Julian Messner, 1946, 1960.

ARCHIVAL MATERIAL:

Nome Kennel Club. *Souvenir of Second Annual All Alaska Sweepstakes, Nome, Alaska, April 1st, 1909*. Nome, Alaska: Nome Kennel Club, 1909.

Nome Kennel Club. *Souvenir of Second Annual All Alaska Sweepstakes, Nome, Alaska, April 1st, 1909*. Knik, Alaska: Iditarod Trail Committee, 1969, 1909.

Darling, Esther Birdsall. *The Great Dog Races of Nome held under the auspices of the Nome Kennel Club, Nome Alaska: Official Souvenir History*. Knik, Alaska: Iditarod Trail Committee, 1969, 1916.

Nome Kennel Club. *Nome Kennel Club's 3rd Annual Sweepstake Race*. Nome, Alaska: The Club, 1910.

PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTIONS:

B.B. Dobbs Photograph Collection, 1900-1910. Alaska State Library. 298 black and white photograph. Includes images of Nome and the All Alaska Sweepstakes.

Lomen Brothers Photograph Collection, 1903-1920. Alaska State Library. 258 black and white photographs. The Lomen Bros. collection, a major source of Alaskan history, covers northern Alaskan people and activities, including sled dogs and racing, arctic explorers, Eskimo portraits, Eskimo hunters, Eskimo traditional activities, beach mining activities, Nome activities and businesses, reindeer and the reindeer industry and views of various Alaska towns. Includes images of All Alaska Sweepstakes and Baldy of Nome.

William Allen Moore Photograph Collection, William Allen Moore, 1915-1919. Alaska State Library. 148 black-and-white photoprints. Most of the photographs in this collection were taken by Moore while he was stationed at the Fort Davis Army Post from 1915-1919, as a private in D Co., 14th Infantry. The images record the daily life of the soldiers, including their barracks and living areas, and people from Nome, Eskimos, primitive settlements, wildlife, ships and nature. Includes 21 views taken by Lomen Brothers; includes images of Scotty Allan.

Dr. Daniel S. Neuman Photograph Collection, Daniel Saheyause Neuman, 1911-1920. Alaska State Library. 1,166 black-and-white photographs. The collection portrays life in Nome, Alaska, during the early 1900's, including images of the sled dog races that began there. Original photographs from the Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913-1918, identifies Northwest Territory Inuit from Coronation Gulf, Cape Bathurst, Dolphin and Union Straits, and Bernard Harbor. Images of the All Alaska Sweepstakes.