

**Andrew Nerland, 1870-1956**



Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

<b>Collection Name:</b>	Charles E. Bunnell Collection
<b>Identifier:</b>	Vertical File Photograph Collections-People
<b>Title:</b>	UAF-1958-1026-80
<b>Description:</b>	Andrew Nerland
<b>Subject.TGM:</b>	Title taken from verso. Portrait photograph of Andrew Nerland.
	Portrait photographs
	Men
	Portrait photographs
<b>Personal Name:</b>	Nerland, Andrew, 1870-1956
<b>Region:</b>	Alaska
<b>Time Period:</b>	1939 to 1959
<b>Type:</b>	Collection
	Image (Portrait photographs)
<b>Ordering &amp; Use:</b>	For information on ordering and using this material: <a href="http://www.uaf.edu/library/apr/photo_use_forms.html">http://www.uaf.edu/library/apr/photo_use_forms.html</a>
<b>Holding Institution:</b>	Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks. <a href="mailto:fyapr@uaf.edu">mailto:fyapr@uaf.edu</a> --(907) 474-6594--PO Box 756808, Fairbanks, AK 99775-6808.

## More about Andrew Nerland:

Andrew Nerland was an entrepreneur, ever-ready for adventure and gifted with good business sense. A Norwegian immigrant, he had crossed the ocean by cattle boat and steamship, enduring coarse accommodations and nearly inedible food, in the hope of a sweet life in the United States. He found what he sought.

Nerland and his partners, two brothers named Herman and Louis Anderson, were among the gold seekers who climbed the Chilkoot Pass in April 1898, five days after an avalanche buried scores of people. Upon arrival at lake Bennett, the trio built a boat and sailed for the Klondike. There they decided it was too late to stake a claim, but they had another plan: Money could be made in the trade they already knew, painting and wallpapering. Homes were springing up everywhere in the boomtown of Dawson, and homemakers didn't want to look at rough log interior walls. All told, in six months Nerland made three trips over the formidable Chilkoot Pass, bearing paint, wallpaper, and supplies. Once he was settled his wife, Annie, joined him.

Like Andrew, Annie Nerland was a Scandinavian immigrant. The couple first met in Seattle, even though they had been raised in neighboring valleys back in Norway. Their only son, **Arthur Leslie "Les" Nerland**, was born on March 11, 1902, at Dawson City, Yukon Territory.

By 1904, the Fairbanks gold rush was in earnest, and three partners—Nerland and the Anderson brothers—were ready to follow the other boomers. Fearing there would be no proper community for a wife and child, Andrew sent Annie and young Les back to Seattle and they settled in the Capital Hill area. That year "Anderson Bros & Nerland"—advertising wallpaper, paints, signs, paper-hanging, glass, doors, and sashes—opened on Cushman Street across from the post office. For the next few years, the business flourished in Fairbanks and for brief periods, more stores were opened in Iditarod and Nenana. Andrew bought out the Andersons and took over the operation in 1922.

In 1926, Annie Nerland rejoined her husband in Fairbanks after their son, Les, completed school at the University of Washington and married Mildred Kildall. Each

winter Andrew had traveled south for several months at a time to see his wife and child. Back in Fairbanks, he was a leader in the Masonic Lodge, the Elks, Odd Fellows, Pioneers of Alaska, and the Presbyterian church. He was instrumental in establishing and overseeing the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines, predecessor to the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He was city mayor, served on the city council, and was elected to the Territorial Legislature seven times, where his last term of office ended when he was 80.

Les and Mildred Nerland came north and joined the Nerland family operation in 1930, and he followed his father's footsteps in community service and political leadership. Also, under the guidance of the younger Nerland, the home furnishings store expanded widely, and by 1953, after forty-nine years in its original location, Nerland's moved to a 15,000-square-foot, three-story building between Third and Fourth Avenues in Fairbanks. The new building included a top-floor apartment for Les and his family, plus accommodations for Andrew and Annie on the second floor.

In 1955, Les was elected a delegate to the Alaska Constitutional Convention. Andrew was especially pleased because in 1917, while serving in the Territorial Legislature, he had introduced a bill advocating statehood. On February 6, 1956, the last day of the convention, Les brought his copy of the document home to show his 85-year-old father. He remembered his father saying, "This is a big step toward statehood." Fifteen minutes later, Andrew collapsed and died. Annie lived six more years before her death at age 92.

### **Links:**

The Political Graveyard: <http://politicalgraveyard.com/bio/nemanich-neveu.html>

**Nerland, Andrew (1870-1956)** — of Fairbanks, Fairbanks North Star Borough, Alaska. Born in Molda, Norway, April 18, 1870. Republican. Furniture merchant; mayor of Fairbanks, Alaska, 1915; member of Alaska territorial House of Representatives 4th District, 1917-18, 1931-38; Speaker of Alaska Territory House of Representatives, 1921-22; member of Alaska territorial senate 4th District, 1945-50. Presbyterian. Member, Freemasons. Died, of a heart attack, in Fairbanks, Fairbanks North Star Borough, Alaska, February 6, 1956. Burial location unknown.