

Austin Eugene "Cap" Lathrop, 1865-1950



Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

Collection Name:

Lomen Family Papers, 1850-1969

Identifier:

UAF-1972-71-1529

Title:

Cap Lathrop with blue prints

Description:

Caption created by cataloger. Photograph of Cap Lathrop at the base of a tower discussing blue prints. Image includes signature of Lathrop and inscription, perhaps to Carl Lomen.

Subject.TGM:

Blueprints

Towers

Business people

Personal Name:	Lathrop, Cap (Austin Eugene), 1865-1950
Time Period:	1913 to 1939 1939 to 1959
Type:	Collection Image (Photographs)
Ordering & Use:	For information on ordering and using this material: http://www.uaf.edu/library/apr/photo_use_forms.html
Holding Institution:	Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks. mailto:fyapr@uaf.edu --(907) 474-6594--PO Box 756808, Fairbanks, AK 99775-6808.

More about Austin Eugene "Cap" Lathrop:

One of Alaska's most successful businessmen was a Wisconsin farm boy named Austin Eugene "Cap" Lathrop whose greatest asset was his unstoppable determination. During a career that spanned decades, he would make himself and Alaska richer by developing his interests in coal, oil, copper, lumber, shipping, entertainment, banking, newspapers, moviemaking, and radio. Well before his death at 84, a bronze bust of Lathrop, installed in Fairbanks by his fans, paid tribute to him as "Builder of a Northern Empire."

The young entrepreneur moved to Seattle to help rebuild the town after the Great Fire of June 1889. But Lathrop was more than a philanthropist. Within months, young Lathrop earned the title of contractor by hiring workers to drive horses and clear debris. After his efforts contributed to a population boom that change Seattle from a town to a city, Lathrop turned his attention to the town of Anacortes on Fidalgo Island. In Anacortes, Lathrop made plans to settle. He began building a railroad and moved his family to the island. He built self-sustaining poultry farms and seemed content to concentrate his attention on the booming town of Seattle.

Lathrop's first major business venture proved to be his first failure. The Panic of 1893 caused Lathrop to reevaluate his options. Looming economic depression forced several growing railroads to go bankrupt. Lathrop's business was not immune. After his investors went bankrupt, he returned to Seattle somewhat defeated. Austin Lathrop met and proposed marriage to Maud Woodcock. But the ceremony would have to wait, he decided, until he determined how he could support his wife.

In the fall of 1895, Lathrop acquired his first vehicle for success: the steamship *L.J. Perry*. He partnered with an acquaintance known as Captain Kelly and an engineer named John O'Neil. Together they convinced A.E. Barton, an associate at a local meatpacking house, to front them the money to buy the ship. The decision reflected uncanny foresight. Lathrop suspected that there was profit to be made in moving goods from the continental coast to the Territory of Alaska, and believed the *Perry* was the perfect vessel for his plan.

Lathrop's vision soon proved more prophetic than even he could have imagined. The *Perry* truly was the perfect ship for guiding goods in and out of Alaska's Cook Inlet. The steamships' relatively small size made the *Perry* nimble enough to dodge the mud flats

and unpredictable tide. It could be propelled by raising sail or burning coal, a mineral that Lathrop and company found in cheap and plentiful supply on the shores of Kachemak Bay.

By the time that rumors of gold in the Klondike were spreading across the continent, Lathrop and Captain Kelly's crew were profiting from transporting the gold-seekers. Now that he was financially secure, Lathrop returned to Seattle, and found that Maud Woodcock had married another. Lathrop was to remain unattached and able to set his mind to more business.

Lathrop's successes mount. He had studied for his master's license and took over as captain of the ship. "Cap" bought out his partners on the *L.J. Perry* and continued to make money pulling less sturdy vessels in the choppy waters en route to Alaska. On February 18, 1901, Lathrop married the widow Mrs. Cosby McDowell in the first official wedding of Valdez, Alaska. Mrs. McDowell and her daughter quickly became celebrities of the town. Lathrop had built Alaska's first power family.

Lathrop's marriage was as unsuccessful as any business gamble he would take. Although the Valdez community adored Mrs. Lathrop and her daughter Cleo, the pair was ill-suited for Alaska life. They stayed only one year before returning to Seattle. Meanwhile, Lathrop's attention was focused on a struggling oil drilling project in Coal Bay. He was content to let them leave. Mrs. Cosby McDowell Lathrop died in Seattle in 1910, and was mourned by Lathrop and the city of Valdez. Lathrop's failed oil business and marriage left much to be desired, and rather than moving back to the States, Lathrop moved less than 90 miles southeast, to Cordova.

Cap Lathrop still thrived as the manager of the Alaska Transfer Company. While in Cordova, he bought the Arctic Lumber Company, and was soon the town's most famous citizen. Even after he was elected mayor of Cordova in 1911, Lathrop was rarely static, constantly researching new business and mining opportunities for copper and coal. After serving a term in office and declining a second, Lathrop and a partner converted a clothing store into The Empress of Cordova, the first in a chain of theaters Lathrop was to build in Alaska.

When Cap Lathrop began to produce "The Chechahcos," [sic] the first motion picture filmed entirely in Alaska, he had already begun or finished construction of theaters in Cordova, Valdez, and Anchorage. Lathrop had established a credible and consistent income and was free to take more risks. And as president of the Healy River Coal Mines Corporation, Lathrop was primed to profit from the nearly completed Alaskan Railroad. In 1927, he soon added another Empress theater, this time in Fairbanks. The Fairbanks Empress was concrete, and silenced many doubters that didn't believe modern building materials could survive the tough winter elements of the Interior. Although he still took an active interest in his businesses in Anchorage and Cordova, Lathrop the known wanderer primarily settled himself in a region many Americans of the time thought unlivable.

In Fairbanks, Lathrop oversaw his coal mining operations, published the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, and served from 1933-1950 as vice president of the Alaska Agricultural

College and School of Mines Board of Trustees. The school was renamed the University of Alaska in 1935, and role of Trustee converted to Regent.

In 1937, Lathrop began construction of a new building in Fairbanks. He planned to use the building to house the *News-Miner*, but found he had more than enough room for a completely new Alaskan venture. The official dedication of Alaska's first radio station was broadcast from the fourth floor of the Lathrop Building on October 1, 1939. KFAR (Key for Alaska's Riches) brought news and information to once isolated towns and villages. When World War II interrupted American lives, the station served the as a military outpost and radio link.

Lathrop's ambition was slowed dramatically by the war and growing debate concerning Alaska's statehood. Regardless, in 1948 he opened KFAR's sister station, KENI Anchorage. Lathrop had established himself as the creator of almost all major conduits of information in Alaska.

Lathrop died as he lived, ambitious and at work. In July 1950, still wiry at the age of 84, he boarded a train to oversee production in the Healy River mine. After the miners' lunch break on July 26, Cap Lathrop went alone to the rail yard. Later the mine timekeeper found the old man lying next to the tracks. None of the miners professed to have seen the accident, and assumed he was likely killed instantly by a loaded rail car. Ironically, it seems that only things capable of stopping Cap Lathrop were his relentless desire to work and a vehicle of his own industry.

Links:

University of Alaska website, "The People Behind Campus Names":
<http://www.alaska.edu/opa/eInfo/index.xml?StoryID=245>

Sites referring to "The Chechahcos":
<http://www.silentera.com/PSFL/data/C/Chechahcos1924.html>
<http://www.alaskarails.org/sf/film/cheechakos/>
<http://www.filmpreservation.org/>

More Reading:

Tycoons and entrepreneurs.

Macmillan Library Reference USA.

1998

English Book : Juvenile audience x, 349 p. : ill. ; 26 cm.

New York : Macmillan Library Reference USA, ; ISBN: 0028649826 (alk. paper)

Alphabetical articles profile the life and work of notable business leaders and entrepreneurs from antiquity to the present , beginning with Ah Quin and ending with Linus Yale.

Libraries with Item:

Location	Library	Code
AK	ANCHORAGE SCH DIST	XY4

Mining, media, movies :**Cap Lathrop's keys for Alaska's riches /**

Elizabeth A Tower

1991

English Book [v], 110 p. : ill., maps ; 22 cm.

Anchorage, Alaska (6761 Roundtree, Anchorage 99516) : E.A. Tower,

Libraries with Item:

Location	Library	Code
AK	A HOLMES JOHNSON MEM LIBR	XZ#
AK	ALASKA STATE LIBR	ALK
AK	ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL LIBR	XYZ
AK	ANCHORAGE MUS OF HIST & ART LIBR	XY6
AK	ANCHORAGE SCH DIST	XY4
AK	FAIRBANKS N STAR BOROUGH LIBR	X#4
AK	FORT WAINWRIGHT POST LIBR	V91
AK	HAINES COOP LIBR	Q2R
AK	KENAI COMMUN LIBR	XZ\$
AK	KENAI PENINSULA COL, UAA	X@5
AK	MOUNT EDGE CUMBE HIGH SCH LIBR	Q2W
AK	UNIV OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE	UAA
AK	UNIV OF ALASKA, ELMER E RASMUSON LIBR	UAF
AK	VALDEZ CONSORTIUM LIBR	X#2

Territory of Alaska.

Alaska Geographic Society.

2002

English Book 96 p. : ill. (some col.), col. maps ; 22 x 28 cm.

Anchorage, Alaska : Alaska Geographic Society, ; ISBN: 1566610591 1566610605

Libraries with Item:

Location	Library	Code
AK	A HOLMES JOHNSON MEM LIBR	XZ#
AK	ALASKA RES LIBR & INFO SERV	RLA
AK	ALASKA STATE LIBR	ALK
AK	ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL LIBR	XYZ
AK	ANCHORAGE MUS OF HIST & ART LIBR	XY6
AK	ANCHORAGE SCH DIST	XY4
AK	FAIRBANKS N STAR BOROUGH LIBR	X#4

AK	FORT WAINWRIGHT POST LIBR	V91
AK	HOMER PUB LIBR	XY8
AK	KENAI COMMUN LIBR	XZ\$
AK	KETCHIKAN PUB LIBR	Q2Z
AK	KETTLESON MEM LIBR	Q2V
AK	KUSKOKWIM CONSORTIUM LIBR	XY7
AK	MOUNT EDGE CUMBE HIGH SCH LIBR	Q2W
AK	PETERSBURG PUB LIBR	Q2T
AK	SEWARD COMMUN LIBR	X@3
AK	SKAGWAY PUB LIBR	Q6M
AK	SOUTHWEST REG SCH DIST	SWRSD
AK	TALKEETNA PUB LIBR	X@7
AK	UNALASKA PUB LIBR	X@8
AK	UNIV OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE	UAA
AK	UNIV OF ALASKA, ELMER E RASMUSON LIBR	UAF
AK	UNIV OF ALASKA, SE, JUNEAU	Y4Z
AK	US AIR FORCE, EIELSON BASE LIBR	AYH
AK	VALDEZ CONSORTIUM LIBR	X#2
AK	WASILLA PUB LIBR	XZZ

The Cheechakos

the new comers /

Austin E **Lathrop**

1920

English Visual Material : Videorecording 2 videocassettes (U-standard) (81 min.) : sd., col. ; 3/4 in.

Anchorage, Alaska : Alaska Moving Picture ; [s.l.] : Prathe, physical distributor,

Chronicles the adventures of a wronged woman, an abandoned child and two miners amidst the Klondike gold fields.

Libraries with Item:

Location	Library	Code
AK	UNIV OF ALASKA, ELMER E RASMUSON LIBR	UAF

The Chechahcos ^(sic)

the new comers /

Austin Eugene **Lathrop**; Lewis H **Moomaw**; Hobort **Brownell**; Raymond **Johnson**

2003, 1924

English Visual Material : Videorecording : VHS tape 1 videocassette (86 min.) : b&w ; 1/2 in.

[Fairbanks, Alaska : Alaska Film Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks,

Produced by Austin "Cap" Lathrop, this film was the first silent movie feature filmed entirely in Alaska. Fictional melodrama follows the life of a little girl who was separated from her mother as they travelled North. After nearly two decades the pair are eventually reunited.

Libraries with Item:

Location	Library	Code
AK	ALASKA STATE LIBR	ALK

Official diary of the Sweet-Wilson expedition into the frozen tundra of the far north,

Bruce A **Wilson**; Merilynn A **Wilson**; Ozzie **Sweet**

1946

English Archival Material 1 v. (388 p.) : typescript.

Diary of a trip to Alaska, April 27-August 31, 1946, with Ozzie Sweet, a friend and magazine photographer from Connecticut. They sought "real-Alaskan" stories and opinions on issues facing post-war Alaska. The diary's purpose was to gather notes for later writing. Records many interviews with Alaskans met during the trip including World War II veterans. In July, the two were joined by their wives, who contributed background notes to the manuscript. Sweet's photography notes are at the end. Handwritten index by Wilson is at the beginning.

Libraries with Item:

Location	Library	Code
AK	ALASKA STATE LIBR	ALK

Building Designs and Plans:

Revised design for public lounge & offices, KENI, 4th Ave. Bldg., Anchorage, Alaska

Augustine A **Porreca**

1948

English Visual Material : Technical drawing 1 technical drawing : blueprint ; 75 x 102 cm. Seattle, Wash. : A.A. Porreca,

Includes 1 architectural plan for radio station KENI public lounge and offices in the 4th Avenue Theatre Building, Anchorage, Alaska. Includes 1 blueprint with floor plan, detail, and sections.

Libraries with Item:

Location	Library	Code
AK	ANCHORAGE MUS OF HIST & ART LIBR	XY6

Theatre Building, Anchorage, Alaska for Captain A.E. Lathrop /

B Marcus **Priteca**

1945

English Visual Material : Technical drawing 9 technical drawings ; 84 x 107 cm. or smaller.
Seattle, Wash. : B.M. Priteca,

Includes 9 architectural plans for the 4th Avenue Theatre Building, Anchorage, Alaska. Includes 5 electrical wiring plans and 4 mechanical plans (heating, plumbing, and ventilation), printed on clear plastic.

Libraries with Item:

Location	Library	Code
AK	ANCHORAGE MUS OF HIST & ART LIBR	XY6

Theatre Building at Anchorage, Alaska for Captain A.E. Lathrop /

B Marcus **Priteca**

1945-1946

English Visual Material : Technical drawing technical drawings ; 92 x 112 cm. or smaller.
Seattle, Wash. : B.M. Priteca,

Incomplete set includes 22 architectural plans for the 4th Avenue Theatre Building, Anchorage, Alaska. Includes floor plans, elevations, sections, details, door schedule, and framing diagrams. Plans executed in various physical formats including blueprints, blackline prints on vellum, and blackline prints on clear plastic film.

Libraries with Item:

Location	Library	Code
AK	ANCHORAGE MUS OF HIST & ART LIBR	XY6

Studio for station KENI, Anchorage, Alaska, 4th Avenue Theatre Building for Captain Austin E. Lathrop /

Augustine A **Porreca**

1947-1948

English Visual Material : Technical drawing 7 technical drawings : blueprints ; 76 x 107 cm. or smaller.
Seattle, Wash. : A.A. Porreca,

Includes 7 architectural plans for radio station KENI studio in the 4th Avenue Theatre Building, Anchorage, Alaska. Includes 4 sheets with floor plans, sections, details and sections, and 3 sheets with mechanical drawings.

Libraries with Item:

Location	Library	Code
AK	ANCHORAGE MUS OF HIST & ART LIBR	XY6

Fourth Avenue historic facade study

Sam Combs

1980s

English Visual Material : Technical drawing 10 technical drawings ; 76 x 107 cm. or smaller.
[Anchorage, Alaska : Downtown Deli : Municipality of Anchorage : National Park Service,

Includes 10 architectural drawings of buildings on Fourth Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska, including 6 black and white architectural renderings on clear plastic, 1 hand-colored architectural rendering on clear plastic, 1 negative architectural rendering on film, and 1 photograph transparency. Buildings include the Wendler Building, Old City Hall, Visitor Information Center, Convention Center, Gill's Garage, Food Cache, and the Lathrop Building.

Libraries with Item:

Location	Library	Code
AK	ANCHORAGE MUS OF HIST & ART LIBR	XY6

The Lathrop Building--1915 to ???.

1984

English Book 1 v. (unpaged) : ill. (some col.), maps (some col.) ; 28 cm.
[Alaska : s.n.,

Libraries with Item:

Location	Library	Code
AK	ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL LIBR	XYZ

Theatre and Commercial Building, Anchorage, Alaska for Capt. A.E. Lathrop /

B Marcus Priteca

1941

English Visual Material : Technical drawing 14 technical drawings ; 61 x 107 cm. or smaller.
Seattle, Wash. : B.M. Priteca,

Includes 14 architectural plans for the 4th Avenue Theatre Building, Anchorage, Alaska, printed on plastic. Includes floor plans for the first floor, mezzanine, and basement, plans for heating and

ductwork, framing plan for the first floor, electrical plans for the basement, mezzanine, attic, projection room, and main switchboard, and longitudinal sections.

Libraries with Item:

Location	Library	Code
AK	ANCHORAGE MUS OF HIST & ART LIBR	XY6