

Henry C. "Klondike" Anderson

By Dennis Conroy



H. Anderson

The early days of Stanwood are linked with adventurers seeking gold. Countless settlers on the rich Skagit and Stillaguamish deltas came as loggers after the fever of searching for California and Fraser River gold had passed. Some of the next generation then rushed to the Klondike, and returned to give a major boost to this new port-side logging and farming town. One of the luckiest ones was H. C. Anderson who came back from the Klondike with cash, energy and plans and in a short time became one of the most prominent citizens of this growing community.

Henry C. Anderson was born in Norway in 1865 and a year later was brought to the United States by Madli Anderson, his widowed mother. They settled first in Wisconsin, then moved on to Kansas, Texas and Colorado. At the age of twenty-two Henry made his way to Stanwood where his Aunt Maria, Mrs. N. P. Leque, lived. His first job was in a sawmill, later he worked on Leque's farm. But the bright lights of Seattle beckoned and in 1889 he went there as a clerk. Two years later he was back in Stanwood, again farming.

In 1895 the gold rush in the Northwest Territory of Canada lured Henry and, along with a friend John P. Anderson, they went north to Fort Cudahy. There they worked for the North American Transport and Trading Company and Henry moved on to the Klondike where

he spent one spring delivering mail on the ice with a dog team. Ever industrious, he soon filed a claim on the Eldorado, developed mine No. 32, struck gold and then sold the mine. When the steamer "Portland" docked in Seattle with the first miners and their gold in the late 1890s, Henry C. Anderson was on it with a handsome baggage of \$225,000 in gold nuggets.

In 1898 thirty-three old "Klondike" Anderson returned to Stanwood and married Ida, the daughter of prominent citizens, Mr. and Mrs. O. B. Iverson. He bought 400 acres on the western end of Florence Island, across the river from Stanwood, finished clearing it, and built a home and barns facing the Stillaguamish River. On this rich delta he pastured a high grade of Durham cattle, about 150 head, and began raising beef. Later a dairy herd of 60 Holsteins was added and the milk was shipped to Seattle on the new Great Northern line that went through East Stanwood.

In August 1904 Anderson joined with Peter Leque (his brother-in-law), Alfred Densmore, W. C. Brokaw and Francis Giard and organized the Bank of Stanwood. Anderson remained the President of this successful institution until his death. He also ran the H. C. Anderson Land & Loan Company, bought more land, and became a stockholder in the Bank of Commerce and the First National Bank of Everett. Another important investment was help in financing the H. & H. Railroad that connected the port at Stanwood with the main rail line. Like other important citizens of the time, H. C. became a Thirty-second degree Scottish Rite Mason and a member of numerous other fraternal organizations.

He lived a good life but H. C. developed ptomaine poisoning and hired a nurse named Miss June Oakes from Seattle to care for him. The nurse was a follower of Mrs. Linda Barfield Hazzard, the so-called fasting doctor; her cure took care of the stomach problem but started an unfortunate series of events. Ida was so impressed with the cure she later hired the nurse to help care for their baby boy who, unfortunately, died at six months. Later, when their daughter Agnes was born, Ida again brought Nurse Oakes to their home. Within six months the baby was near death and a local doctor, Dr. McEacheran, was called in, against the will of the nurse and Ida Anderson. The doctor found the child suffering from starvation, and H. C. and Ida's family fired the nurse and gave the baby to Bertha Leque, Ida's sister, to feed and bring back to health.

Ida, not well, was obsessed with the "fasting cure" philosophy, and went to Seattle where she was treated by Dr. Hazzard and nurse Oakes. Sadly, on March 20, 1913, in middle age, in spite of attempts by her husband and her family to help her, Ida died of starvation in the Raleigh Hotel. A chemist found alum in her stomach that apparently had been taken to reduce her desire for food. There was an inquest into the actions of Miss Oakes and Dr. Hazzard who had already been tried for the death of Claire Williamson. Eventually, primarily in connection with the death of others, the two were sentenced to prison. Ida's body was returned to Stanwood where it rested in the Masonic Hall. After a funeral in the Trinity Church she was buried in the Lutheran Cemetery in a mausoleum befitting the importance of the family.

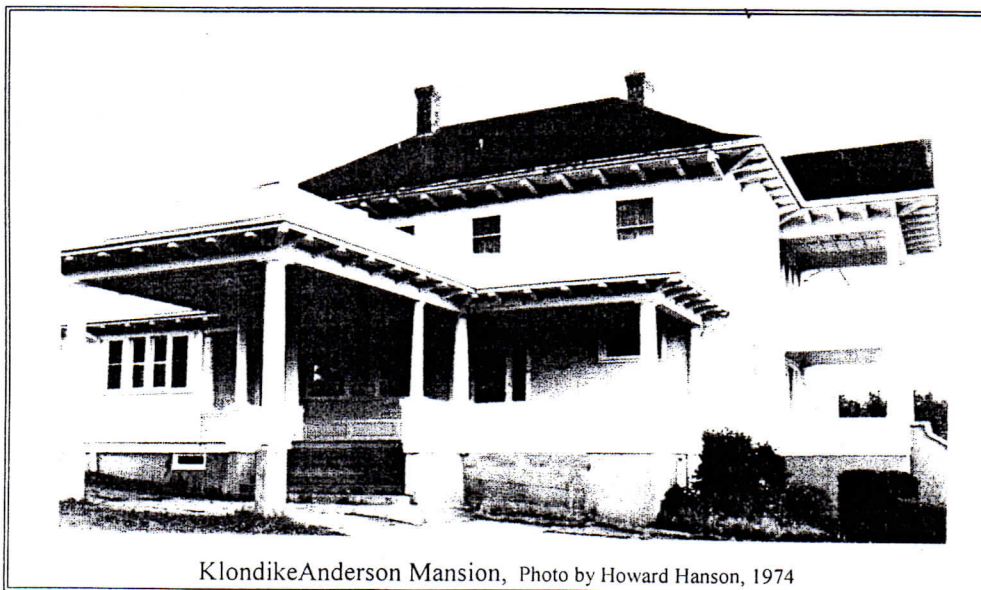
Over the years, from his farm on the Stillaguamish, H. C. had gazed east at the clear-cut land called East Stanwood and he decided to build a home on the west-facing bluff. He bought fifty-one acres and an architect designed a major 7140 square foot edifice which was situated with a sweeping view of the valley. It appears to be a modification of a Craftsman-style house with colonnades, popular in the west at the time. A large living room adjoins a formal dining room and all of these windows have beveled glass, with the upper panes set in lead, Tiffany-style. These wide windows have unusual inside planter boxes with a drain to the outside. Upstairs, five bedrooms radiate out from a large central hall; the view from the upstairs sitting room and porch takes in the whole town and valley, much like the fiefdoms of the Middle Ages. From each upstairs room a buzzer activates a number board in the kitchen so that

a maid will know which room wants service. The servants quarters were in the basement.

H. C. selected only the best materials for his home. Hardwood for the downstairs floors came from the eastern United States; clear local fir was used upstairs. He paid two cents a square extra for clear cedar shingles for the roof. Oral history is that he was onsite during construction and inspected all the materials before they were used. A central skylight with wire-reinforced glass graces the attic. The large house has steam heat that is created by two furnaces--one wood burning, the other converted to oil. Outside a circular driveway curves under a large portico so guests can enter the living area under cover. Front steps lead to a lawn running to the edge of the bluff. The house was finished in the spring of 1914 so, at the time of her death, Ida could have expected to move into it the next year.

According to personal accounts the events of Ida's death greatly affected H. C. and he turned to liquor for solace. Now portly, from his mansion on the hill he could view the town and his vast holdings. Sadly, he lived in the mansion less than a year. At the age of forty-nine he suffered chronic gastritis, accompanied by a heart weakened by severe rheumatism caused by exposure in Alaska. This caused his death on August 6, 1914. He was buried beside his wife and mother.

At the time of his death H. C. left a fortune of half a million dollars to his little girl, Agnes, whom everyone called "Goodie." The fantastic, short career of "Klondike" Anderson spurred the growth of Stanwood and is truly one of the amazing yet tragic success stories of the American Northwest.



Klondike Anderson Mansion, Photo by Howard Hanson, 1974