

# **Anacortes Rotary History – A Story of Our Charter Members**

**By Duane Clark**

What do we know about our 17 charter members?

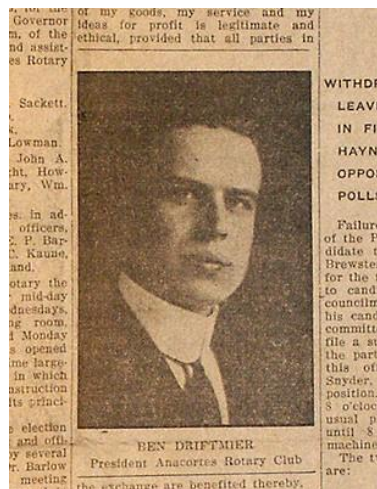
As I've reviewed the list of the Anacortes Rotary Club's 17 charter members, printed in 1922, I've wondered about the lives, occupations, and community involvements that surrounded this small group of gentlemen, and what brought them together just a few years after Rotary International was founded in 1905. Keep in mind that the population of Anacortes at the time was about 5,000, and the Anacortes Elks Club's membership was several hundred.

Yet, 17 men formed an organization that focused on business and service.

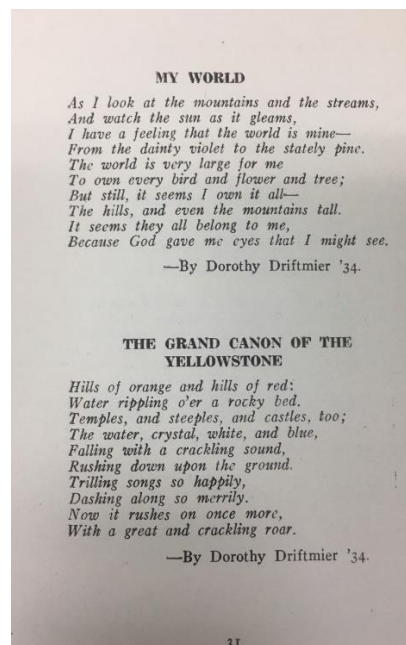
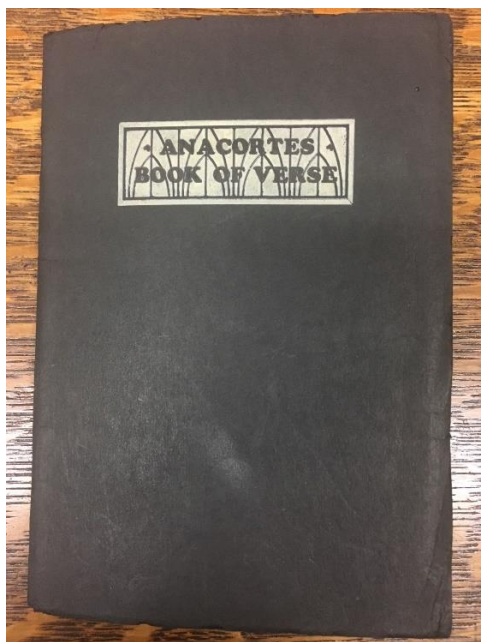
So, what do we know about these charter members? For several of them, not as much as we'd like. However, there are several interesting bits and pieces of information about each of them. The primary sources of information are the Anacortes American and the Anacortes Museum. Information about some charter members is supplemented by family histories. And Dick Johnson's booklet, "Club History," printed in 1997, provides information as well.

As we know, early Anacortes history reminds us that living and owning a business in a young city was hazardous at various times, including around 1890 when the big plans for an Anacortes railroad terminus collapsed, when the "Panic of 1893" struck, when WWI and the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 brought economic and community health disasters to town, and when the Great Depression that suddenly caused economic catastrophe in 1929 came to our doorstep. Failures were a regular occurrence. Fire was a perpetual problem for businesses and homes. And those bold early Rotarians were not immune to the hardships created by these events.

**Ben Driftmier, Sr.** was our first President.



Born in 1888, the fourth of seven children, Ben lost two siblings to “Typhoid Fever.” One was 3 months old, and the other was 3 years old. Ben and his wife, Lucille, had two children, both of whom are part of Anacortes Rotary’s early history. Dorothy was 15, when in 1930, Anacortes Rotary partnered with the English Department of Anacortes High School to produce the “Anacortes Book of Verse.” English Department students contributed all of the 39 poems for the book, and Dorothy contributed two of those poems, “My World” and “The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.”



Ben Jr., born in 1922, followed in his father's footsteps, becoming the 30<sup>th</sup> Anacortes Rotary President.



Ben Jr. was Jim Anderson's first law partner.

Ben Sr. was a remarkable President, setting a high bar for all of those who followed him. He was a member for almost 47 years, having perfect weekly attendance for 36 of those years. The first meeting that he missed in 1969 was on May 28. He then attended the following meeting on June 4, and passed away six days later, on June 10.

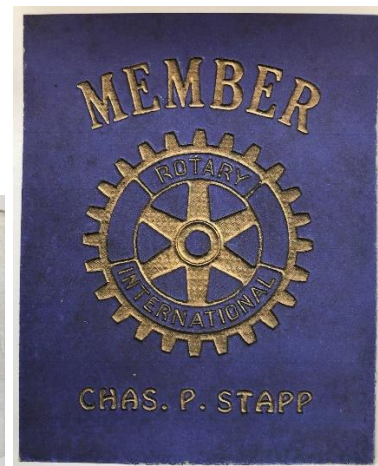
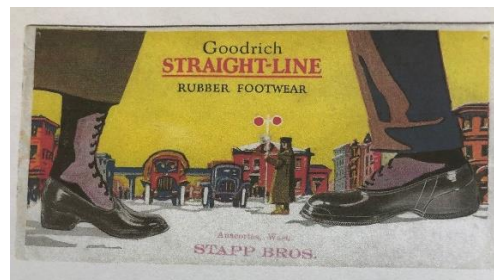
Ben was an attorney for the City of Anacortes for a time and had a private practice. For a few years in the early 1920s, he was a partner with Mike Kidder, in a business called the "Progressive Garage," the hub of the first registered bus line in Washington State with daily trips to Mt Vernon, and around town. The business was sold in 1924, folded shortly thereafter, and later became the home of the Masonic Lodge, then a funeral home, and then, as it is today, Village Pizza.

In 1921, while City Attorney, Ben was asked to draft an ordinance to require that a portion of the fines collected by Skagit County from bootleg operations be

returned to Anacortes, recognizing Anacortes' efforts in apprehending and processing these criminals.

Four Anacortes Rotary Club charter members, including Ben, sat on an advisory board in 1955 regarding the establishment of a People's Bank branch in Anacortes.

**Charles Poling Stapp** was our first Secretary.



Charles came to Anacortes in 1913, joining his brother, forming Stapp Brothers Shoes at 408 Commercial, moving later to 614 Commercial. In 1923, Charles became the Anacortes Postmaster, a position he held until 1935. The Post Office at the time was located at 719 Commercial, and was built by two other charter Rotarians, **Douglass Allmond** and **Ed Barker**.

According to the "Guemes Gleanings," "Charles Stapp, one of our long-time, hardworking islanders, was chairman of the Park Committee in Anacortes when it was decided, in 1919, that Mr. LePage should build the rock work at Causland Park."

In 1917, Charles was voted in as a new member of the Carnegie Library Board with the following note: "Mr. Stapp takes an interest in all public affairs and will use his best endeavors toward maintaining the library on the highest standard."

During WWI, Charles formed the local War Chest organization (funds from which, after the war, were directed toward the cost of constructing Causland Park), and participated in the Red Cross and Liberty Loan drives. In addition to being our first Secretary (1923-1935), he was a member of the Elks, and the Chamber of Commerce, serving one term as President. He served for three years as a member (and Clerk) of the Anacortes School Board.

Charles and his wife, Mary, lived on 8<sup>th</sup> Street, then on Guemes Island for many years. Four of his grandchildren (Sue, Sally, Tom, and Jenny), all children of his son "Stappie," still call Guemes Island home.

**Howard J. Sackett** was our first Vice President, and a Director as well.



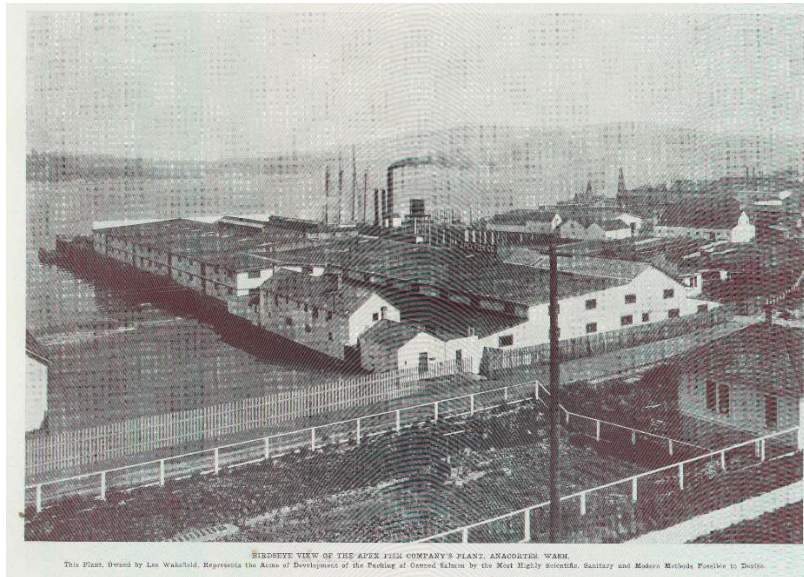
(Sackett – second from the right) (Anacortes Museum - WF 2590)



Howard, along with fellow charter Rotarian, **Will F. McCracken**, were two of the Port of Anacortes' first commissioners in 1926.

In 1932, Howard served on a committee, chaired by another charter Rotarian, **C. D. England**, which involved local Chambers of Commerce, and had the responsibility of drafting a resolution, "asking the government to place and maintain a dredge in the Skagit" River.

For many years, Howard was the Superintendent of the Apex Fish Company. In 1918, as Howard was leaving that position, more than 60 employees surprised him with a farewell banquet. The company's new superintendent spoke of the sadness of the employees at the departure of Howard, speaking about "the unity of spirit that pervaded the establishment under his direction." The employees responded as they "gave rousing cheers of appreciation."



After his time at Apex, Howard became the President and General Manager of the Mutual Packing Company.



Catalog Number	WF 0393
Caption	Mutural Packing Co. JITNEY
Description	This large scow is the JITNEY, built by Howard Sackett in 1919 for the Mutual Packing Company. This may have been used as a small cannery or a dormitory for workers. Numerous small rooms are on the second story of the vessel. The fishing boat to the left of JITNEY is the STARLIGHT. This view shows the vessel at dock, apparently in Tacoma. She sank at the American Can Company dock in Seattle in 1938 after loading empty salmon cans and other supplies for the Suryan company's floating cannery in Alaska.

(Anacortes Museum)

Howard's daughter, Barbara, authored two of the poems that were included in the "Anacortes Book of Verse" - "My Puppy's Bark" and "Lincoln."

**Wallie V. Funk** (Sr) was our first Treasurer and a Director as well.

Wallie was born in the Vendome Hotel, on the same site as the current Post Office. He grew up in Anacortes and served in WWI.

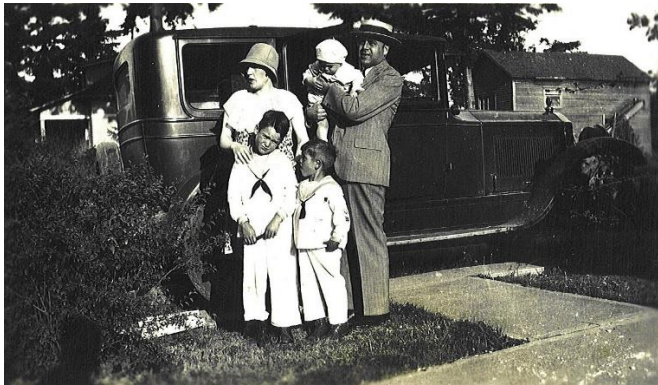


(Anacortes Museum - WF 0880)



(Anacortes Museum - 2015.059.091.001)

He purchased the Wilson Hotel in 1916. In 1929, he built the Paramount Theater at 801 Commercial, which became the Roxy Theater, which became the Island Theater, which became Island Savings and Loan, which became what it is today – the Anacortes Bank of the Pacific. Of course, we all knew Wallie's son, and former Anacortes Rotarian, Wallie V Funk (Jr).



(Anacortes Museum - WF 6000)



(Anacortes Museum - WF 0900)

**Ed P. Barker**, as already mentioned, partnered with charter Rotarian, **Douglass Allmond** to build and own, in 1915, the Allmond-Barker Building (including the Post Office) located at 711-719 Commercial.



(Allmond-Barker Building)

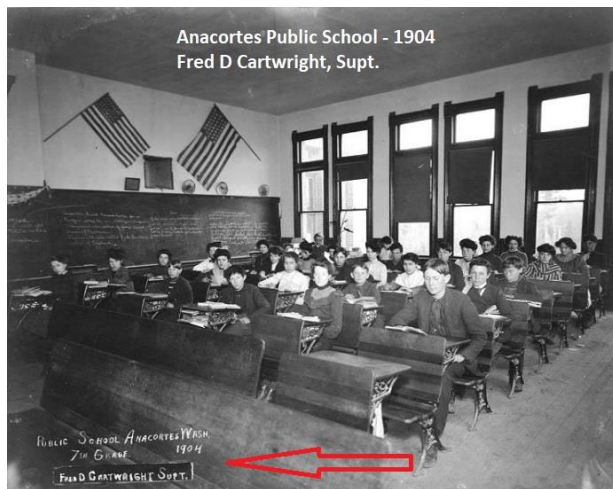
(Anacortes Museum - WF 0111)

Ed came to Anacortes in 1890, and worked for the Anacortes American (or Anacortes Progress)



**Fred D. Cartwright** was a Director during our club's first year.

Fred had a diverse career, including time spent as the Anacortes School Superintendent (including the year 1907), and as the Anacortes City Clerk (including the year 1919).

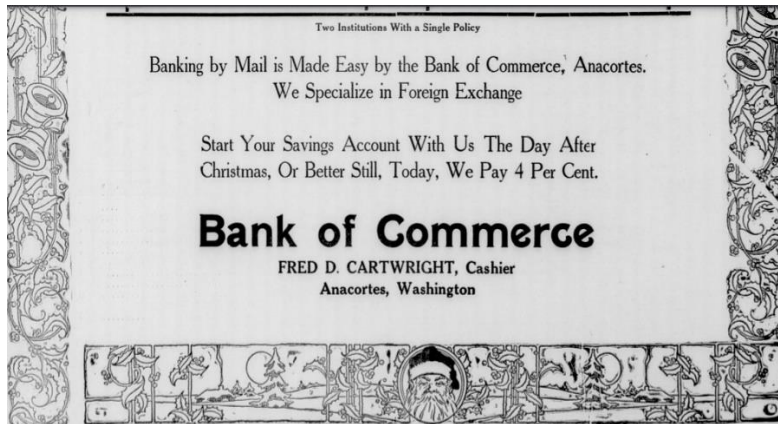


And his son, Fred G. Cartwright, was our club President in 1948-49.



(Fred G. Cartwright)

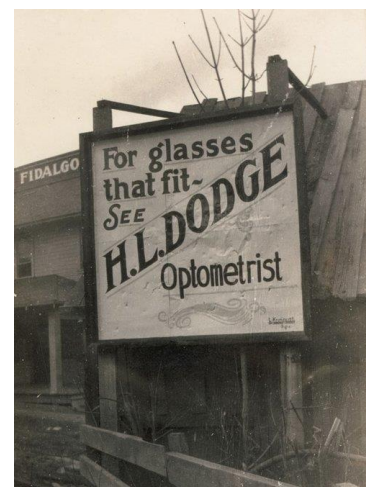
Fred D. became President of the Anacortes Bank of Commerce (appointed in 1930).



Bill Cartwright, son of Fred G. and brother of Fred D, wrote the poem, "Washington" for the "Anacortes Book of Verse."

**Harry Leon Dodge** came to Anacortes and opened a drug store, at 514 Commercial, expanding to include jewelry, optometry, pianos, musical merchandise, and Edison and Victrola devices, at a time when "cows then ran at large about the community, grazing on the grass in what is now Commercial Avenue."

In 1902, Harry took a two-week course to become an optometrist.



In 1925, the Dodge Music Company was incorporated with stores in Anacortes, Mt. Vernon, and Sedro Woolley.

Along with Anacortes Rotary, Harry was involved with numerous organizations such as Elks, Fidalgo Lodge, Masons, Bellingham Consistory (32<sup>nd</sup> degree), Ancient Arabic Order Nobles, Eagles, and the Skagit Country Club.

In 1955, the optometry business Harry started was renamed “Island Optometry,” as it is today, operated by Anacortes Rotary Past President, and Past District 5050 Governor, Mel Farnsworth, and his wife Sue.

The famous Dodge Clock was located in front of his store, later moved to 7<sup>th</sup> Street next to Burton’s. Harry served as the Anacortes Chamber of Commerce President around 1929, with fellow charter Rotarian, **Howard Sackett** as Vice-President.

**John A. Douglas** was a Director during our first year and President in 1925-26.

He owned Eureka Pharmacy “Where Quality Counts” at 516 Commercial, later 720 Commercial.



(Anacortes Museum - 2001.010.001)



(Anacortes Museum - D.IV.168)



**Clyde D. England** was President of the Anacortes Chamber of Commerce in 1930.

For many years, Clyde managed the J. C. Penney store, which in 1928, moved to the “Brooks Block,” on the SE corner of Commercial Avenue and Sixth Street. The block was constructed by fellow charter Rotarians, **Douglass Allmond** and **Ed Barker**, along with Dr. Samuel Brooks. The J. C. Penney store remained at the same location until the mid-1980s, after which the building became the home of Bayshore Office Products, as it is today.



(Anacortes Museum – WF 3808)



(Anacortes Museum – WF 1263)

Clyde’s daughter, Beth (pictured above), wrote the poem, “Day,” which became part of the “Anacortes Book of Verse.”

In August, 1931, Beth, and a friend successfully swam from the north beach of Guemes Island to Jack Island, a distance of a mile, taking 45 minutes.

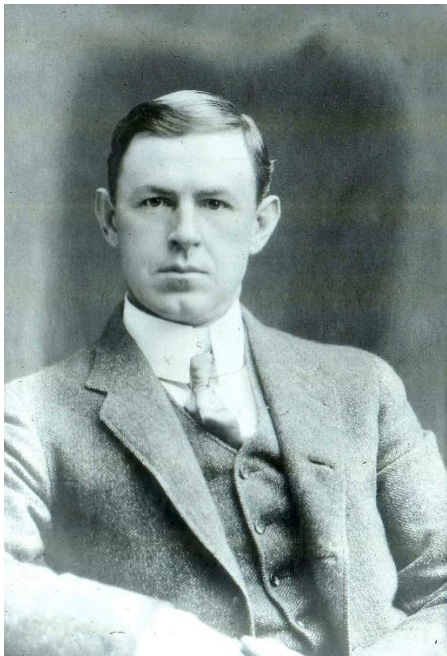
**Edmund Eric Haugen** was the Mayor of Anacortes from 1919-1920. In January, 1919, while Anacortes was battling influenza, Ed decided to “put a ban on church gatherings, on dances and on the pool halls, and to prohibit any person under 17 years of age from attending the theater. The schools have been closed for the remainder of the week, and if necessary, will remain closed longer.”



In 1911, Ed, with partner Herman Trulson, purchased a funeral parlor at 1005 8<sup>th</sup> Street, and named it Trulson & Haugen, Undertakers. In 1912, the men opened a hardware and paint store on Commercial.

Ed was respected as a businessman and community-spirited citizen. “He was a man respected for his accomplishments and esteemed for the contributions he made to the welfare and progress of his surroundings.”

**Gus Hensler** built his home, known as “The Breakers,” at 2011 8<sup>th</sup> Street, the current home of Bob and Deanna Murray.



(Anacortes Museum - WF 3972)

The list of his accomplishments is a long one, including those listed in an Anacortes Museum piece. “He came to Seattle in 1889 and that same year took a claim on Fidalgo Island, beginning a lifelong association with the Anacortes community. He was the first Skagit County Commissioner ever to be elected from Fidalgo Island. For almost forty years Hensler conducted his own real estate and insurance business, and during that time he worked endlessly for the welfare of his community. His efforts ranged from securing a dependable water system for the town to attracting new industries to Anacortes. Hensler's efforts also were

expended to beautify the city. He worked to secure Cap Sante Park and was a leader in the effort to purchase and dedicate Causland Park in honor of the community's World War I veterans. So extensive were Hensler's efforts on behalf of Anacortes that in 1926 the ANACORTES AMERICAN proclaimed, 'Every improvement since the foundations of Anacortes were laid thirty-five years ago bears the imprint of his personality.'"

Remarkably, there is more. In 1911, Gus was President of the Anacortes Chamber of Commerce. In 1923, he sold the house at 32<sup>nd</sup> Street and M Avenue to Anacortes Physicians and Surgeons, which was then remodeled as a hospital, which then, sadly, burned to the ground in 1928. Gus, along with fellow charter Rotarian, **Douglass Allmond**, donated the first large parcels of land which became part of the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. In 1934, Gus donated 120 acres of land atop Mt. Erie.

Gus was a leader in the Masons organization. He was an Anacortes City Councilman from 1897-1899, and 1903-1907.

**Edward C. Kaune**, of the Anacortes Lumber and Box Company, was an Anacortes City Councilman from 1912-1913, and 1919-1933. He was also a Port of Anacortes Commissioner.

He was in charge of day-to-day operations of the Anacortes Lumber and Box Company where the mill cranked out an astounding 150,000 board feet of lumber per day, and the box factory produced 80,000 board feet per day. He was associated with the Elks and the Masons.

**W. A. Lowman** was our club's first Sergeant-at-Arms.



Jacob Wasserman Lowman, 75, (standing) and his wife Nancy, 72, (seated) are surrounded by their three adult children in this photo taken at the time of Jacob and Nancy's 50th wedding anniversary. Their children include: Will A. Lowman (kneeling), age 49, a canneryman and resident of Anacortes; Effie Lenore (Lowman) Dillies, age 49, then of Seattle (the Dillies later moved to L.A., CA);

“Will” was an entrepreneur as a young man. “Within a few years of the start of his first local business, the Lowman Manufacturing Co., and working as an agent for the New York Life Insurance Company, Will turned to the fishing industry, first by starting a clam cannery in 1896 and then by initiating his first salmon cannery in 1901. By establishing fish traps and processing large quantities of salmon, his White Crest Canning Company (later Coast Fish Company) proved lucrative. As investments, Will purchased land in Anacortes and properties in other areas of the state.”

Will was active in business and political organizations, which included city (President of the Commercial Club of Anacortes in 1907, Anacortes City Council from 1909-1910), county, state (President of the Puget Sound Cannery Association, author of the Fisheries Code for the State of Washington, a Washington State Legislator in 1915, a member of Washington State’s Council of Defense during WWI, President of the Washington State Fisheries Association), and federal (member of the Advisory Committee on the National Rivers and Harbors Congress) positions.

He also belonged to numerous fraternal organizations including the Elks, Masons, the Nile Temple, and the Ancient Order of Nobles. He also belonged to the

Seattle Press Club, the Transportation Club, the Chicago Athletic Association, the Arctic Club of Seattle, and the Friars club of New York.

Will's wife, Beatrice, was just as civic minded as Will, belonging to numerous church and civic organizations.

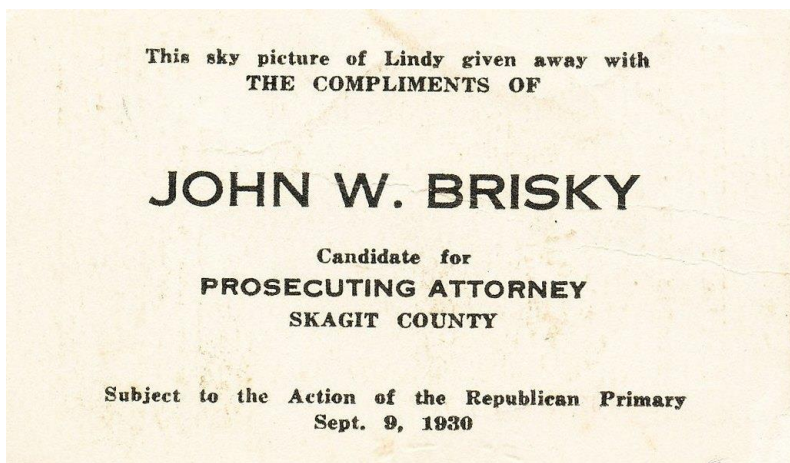
In the early 1950s, Will's son, Bill brought a baby gorilla, "Bobo," home from Africa. Bobo was well known in Anacortes, and became famous when he was moved to Woodland Park Zoo.

Will's granddaughter, Betty, wrote the poem, "Amos 'n Andy" for the "Anacortes Book of Verse. Betty became nationally famous for being the first woman to singlehandedly row the Inland Passage. She was 22, and rowed an authentic dugout canoe from Anacortes to Ketchikan, Alaska. At age 49, she repeated the trip, in the opposite direction.

**John Brisky** was closely connected with fellow charter Rotarian, **Will A. Lowman** in at least two memorable ways. John Brisky's Grocery Store (started around 1915) was located on the ground floor of the Anacortes Hotel (8<sup>th</sup> Street and J Avenue), owned at the time by Will Lowman. And, in 1918, John married Will's oldest daughter, Ella Lowman.



(Anacortes Museum - WF 3572.001)



(Anacortes Museum - 2012.115.011)



John was, at one point, the Secretary of the Anacortes Chamber of Commerce. He was also a leader in the Masons organization. John also sold real estate and insurance.

John and Ella eventually moved to Mt. Vernon, where he became the Skagit County Clerk, then Prosecuting Attorney, and later a Judge.

**Will F. McCracken** was one of our club's first Directors.



(Young Will McCracken on the right, with his father)  
(Anacortes Museum - 2019.040.011)



(Anacortes Museum - D.I.032)



(Anacortes Museum - WF 1083)

And, as mentioned earlier, “Will”, along with fellow charter Rotarian, **Howard J. Sackett**, were two of the Port of Anacortes’ first commissioners in 1926. Will was also an Anacortes City Councilman from 1925-1935.

Will’s father, Benjamin Franklin McCracken, opened the Eureka Saloon (4<sup>th</sup> and Commercial) in 1893. Will was likely born in 1894, when his family lived in the home behind the saloon, which today is the location of How It Works. In 1929, the saloon burned to the ground. Will built a brick building on the site, which is currently the home of the Rockfish Grill. Will was Director of the Bank of Commerce. In 1926, the bank was moved to a new building constructed by Will on the SW corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Commercial, now the home of Gere-A-Deli.

Will was a Washington State Legislator from 1929-1932. He was a promoter of the Deception Pass Bridge in 1935.

**Joseph O. McNary** was one of our club’s first Directors.



(Anacortes Museum - WF 4316)



(Anacortes Museum - WF 4319)

In 1915, Joseph and his wife, Margaret, purchased the Anacortes Citizen newspaper for \$5,200. The McNarys launched a second weekly newspaper in 1926, and combined the two papers, creating the Daily Mercury-Citizen (later called the Anacortes Daily Mercury), touted as “The only daily paper covering

Fidalgo Island.” “It was published six days a week, had a news wire service and a cadre of local paperboys, hand-picked for their rehabilitation by McNary himself,” wrote Wallie Funk [Jr.], whose first reporting job was for the McNarys.”

**Douglass Allmond**’s name was often associated, in print, with fellow charter members, including **Edmund Haugen, Fred D. Cartwright, Ed Barker, Gus Hensler, Harry Dodge, C. D. England, Joseph McNary, and Charles Stapp.**



Douglass and a partner founded the Anacortes American in 1890, at the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> Street and M Avenue, with the intention “To publish an honest, independent, aggressive newspaper that shall tell the story of our marvelous city and its surroundings.” His newspaper career began at the age of 8, folding papers, working his way up as pressman, writer, editor, publisher and owner.

He became President of the Washington Power, Light and Water Company, and was a party to the agreement with the City of Anacortes to provide watershed land protection for the lakes used by Anacortes for its water. These watershed lands became part of the initial property donations/acquisitions for the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. “His (Allmond’s) donation of forested acreage around the city, with the condition that it be preserved, has been his most lasting gift.”

Douglass spent 7 years as a deputy collector of customs, and in the late 1890s was the Prosecuting Attorney for the City of Anacortes, with no formal legal training.

In 1904, at the age of 40, Douglass purchased, for \$75, a 14 karat Tiffany diamond ring and had it sent to Miss Cora Rowland, age 27, in Berkeley, California. Two years later, they were married. Cora had been a teacher at Anacortes High School in the early 1900s.

Without a doubt, our 17 Anacortes Rotary Club charter members created and sustained a legacy that we today can rightly be proud of. As early club members and community leaders, they left a clear path for us to follow. "Service Above Self" was, and after 100 years, still is our driving force.