

Obituary

John Aito Pihlainen (1926-1964)

JOHN AITO PIHLAINEN, civil engineer and a Fellow of the Arctic Institute since 1960, died suddenly in Ottawa in January of this year. He was born in Finland and emigrated to Canada with his parents in 1928. In 1950 he obtained his B.Eng. degree at McGill University and his M.Sc. at Purdue University two years later.

He joined the Division of Building Research of the National Research Council in 1950 and pioneered the Division's investigations of permafrost and associated construction problems in northern Canada, beginning with a survey in 1950 of the construction and performance of buildings in the Mackenzie River valley. The following year he worked again in the Mackenzie Valley with an expedition examining the applicability of air photo interpretation methods for engineering site surveys in permafrost areas. In 1952 he established the Division's Northern Research Station at Norman Wells, N.W.T. from which numerous permafrost field projects were carried out in the Mackenzie Valley over a number of years.

The Aklavik Relocation Survey of 1954 took him and his colleagues to the Mackenzie Delta where he was in charge of permafrost investigations to select a new townsite. For the next few years he was closely associated with the varied and comprehensive permafrost engineering studies being carried out by the Division of Building Research at Inuvik using this new town as a field laboratory.

He also carried out field investigations in other parts of Canada's permafrost region and during his ten years with the National Research Council he became widely known for his broad knowledge of permafrost and associated engineering problems, and development of the philosophy of carefully executed site investigations prior to construction.

In December 1960 he left the National Research Council and entered into private practice as an arctic consulting engineer based in Ottawa. During the three years prior to his death he was engaged in various engineering projects throughout northern Canada. Through his field work and many published papers he made notable contributions to the advancement of engineering site investigations and construction in permafrost areas.

John Pihlainen was universally liked and respected for his practical approach mixed with an unusual sense of good humour. By many people living in the North, he was affectionately known as "Johnny Permafrost". His unexpected and tragic death cut short a successful career which had promised to add many more notable contributions to the development of Canada's permafrost region.

ROGER J. E. BROWN

Samuel Kleinschmidt

Erik Holtved

One hundred and fifty years ago, on February 27, 1814, Samuel Kleinschmidt, the eminent Greenlandic linguist, was born in Lichtenau in southern Greenland. His father, Konrad Kleinschmidt, was a German belonging to the Moravian Brethren, who had sent him to Greenland as missionary in 1793. In 1812 Konrad lost his wife, but in the following year, during a stay in Scotland, he married a Danish woman, Christen Petersen, who became the mother of Samuel.