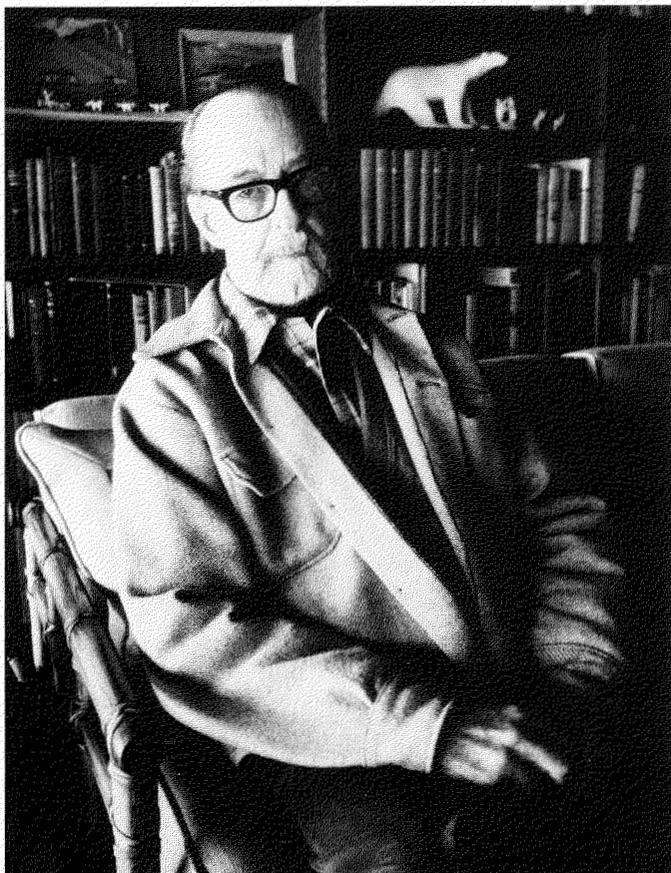


RICHARD STERLING FINNIE
1906-1987

Richard Sterling Finnie, a resident of Belvedere, California, since 1951, died at his home on February 2, 1987, at the age of 80.

Finnie was born in Dawson City, Yukon Territory, Canada, where his maternal grandfather, Richard Roediger, founded the *Dawson Daily News* in 1899. Finnie's parents were Nelly Louise and Oswald Sterling Finnie, chief mining recorder in Dawson City at the time of their marriage in 1904.



The family moved to Ottawa in 1909, when O.S. Finnie became inspecting engineer for the Department of the Interior and later served as Director of the Northwest Territories and Yukon until his retirement in 1931.

Highlights of Richard Finnie's early career, which led to his recognition as an authority on the geography and history of the Arctic and northern Canada, were five seaborne expeditions to the eastern Canadian Arctic, the first flight made over the North Magnetic Pole and around King William Island, a year living among the Copper Eskimos, the first direct flight from Norman Wells to Whitehorse and two years as northern adviser and documentary film maker with the civilian contractors and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the building of the Alaska Highway and its related Canol project.

In 1924-25, Finnie sailed with Captain J.E. Bernier as assistant radio operator on board the Canadian government ship *Arctic* on the ship's last voyages to the eastern Arctic. After-

ward, Bernier gave the ship's bell to Finnie, who recently presented it to the Bernier Museum in Quebec.

In 1942, when Bechtel was asked to undertake the major defense project in northwestern Canada and Alaska, Stephen Bechtel, Sr., noted Finnie's recently published book *Canada Moves North*, which his friend Vilhjalmur Stefansson recommended as "the best general book about Northern Canada." Bechtel then hired Finnie to serve as liaison officer to help launch the project. Finnie produced *The Alaska Highway*, a film that has come to be regarded as a unique documentary of this historic project.

Finnie retired as official historian and film producer for Bechtel Corporation in 1968, after 25 years covering in word and picture Bechtel's international construction projects.

During Finnie's 25-year tenure with Bechtel, he produced more than 60 films in sound and color, often being his own cameraman as well as writer, director, soundman and narrator. The subjects included a refinery project in Norway, iron ore and hydroelectric projects in Labrador, the first major Athabasca oil sands development in northern Alberta and Alaska's first big crude-oil pipeline and offshore tanker-loading facility at Cook Inlet. Other documentary films are *AUB* (American University of Beirut), *Stones of Angkor*, *Exploring Libya* and *Trans-Arabian Pipeline*.

The official record of the Canadian government shipborne expedition to the Arctic in 1928 was the first professional film made by Finnie, launching him on his distinguished career. The Public Archives in Ottawa has the Finnie Collection of Films and Arctic Photographs.

After Finnie retired, he continued an active life, lecturing and publishing on the Northwest and Yukon territories. His books include *Lure of the North*, *Canada Moves North*, *Canol*, *Bechtel in Arab Lands*, *Korea's New Energy* and *Marinship*, the complete account of World War II ship building in Marin County on San Francisco Bay.

Affectionately known as "Klondike Dick," Finnie was a fellow of the Arctic Institute of North America, honorary member of the Yukon Order of Pioneers and emeritus fellow of the Explorer's Club of New York and co-founder of the San Francisco Bay Area chapter, of which he was chairman for a decade. He also was a life member of the California Academy of Sciences and an active member of the New Orleans Jazz Club of northern California.

His marriage to Alyce Robert, of San Francisco, ended with her death in 1965. He is survived by his wife, Anne Ackerman, a fourth-generation San Franciscan, whose great-grandfather Louis Sloss was founding president of the pioneer Alaska Commercial Company, whose ships took the first gold seekers from San Francisco to the Klondike Rush. Her grandfather Leon Sloss was founding president of the Northern Commercial Company. A sister, Dorianne Eltinge, of Cincinnati, Ohio, also survives.

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