

Nathaniel Kellogg Fairbank

Nathaniel Kellogg (N.K.) Fairbank, son of Stephen Taylor and Mehitable Simmons Fairbank, was born on October 20, 1929 in Sodus, New York. After the death of his parents, Nathaniel moved to Rochester, New York and at age 18 began working as a bookkeeper's apprentice. In 1855 he was sent to Chicago as the western representative for agricultural firm David Dows & Co. Nathaniel Kellogg joined the newly formed Chicago Board of Trade and was elected Vice President of the Board in 1863.

Production in Chicago's meat packing district flourished during the Civil War and Fairbank invested in lard, a rising commodity. Building a lard and oil refinery on the south side of Chicago, he became associated with the firm of Smedly, Peck & Co.

Fairbank founded N.K. Fairbank and Company, a manufacturer of animal-based compound shortenings. David Wesson (developer of Wesson Oil) was employed as chief chemist at N.K. Fairbank and Company. As the industry moved away from lard and moved toward the development of liquid shortenings, Fairbank expanded his business into the manufacture of soap and cleansers made from lard and cottonseed oil. The brands Fair Soap and Gold Dust Washing Powder were common household products.

In addition to his business acumen, N.K. Fairbank was a civic leader. He was founder and long time president of the Chicago Club, president of the University of Chicago Board of Trustees, first president of the Board of Trustees of the Orchestral Association (now the Chicago Symphony Orchestra), and a member of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society after the Great Chicago Fire. Fairbank, Arizona, now a ghost town, was named for him because of his role in financing both the Grand Central Mining Company and the railroad in nearby Tombstone, Arizona.

Fairbank was the original owner of the part of Chicago now called Streeterville in downtown Chicago; now some of the most expensive real estate in the city. Despite unanimously winning several court cases Fairbank, the Pinkertons, and the Chicago Police were unable to remove the squatter and Chicago legend, George Streeter, from the property for 28 years. As a testament to the long running feud a street running near the outside (western) edge of Streeterville is named Fairbanks Court.

Nathaniel Kellogg Fairbank married Helen Livingston Graham in New York on April 24, 1866 settling in a house at 18th Street and Michigan Avenue in Chicago where they would reside for the rest of their lives. The Fairbanks had eight children: Graham (who died in infancy) Helen Graham, Kellogg, Wallace, Dexter, Margaret, Livingston, and Nathalie. In addition to their homes in Chicago and Lake Geneva, the Fairbanks had a cottage on Jekyll Island off the coast of Georgia.



N.K. Fairbank - Businessman, Family Man, Yachtsman, Civic Leader

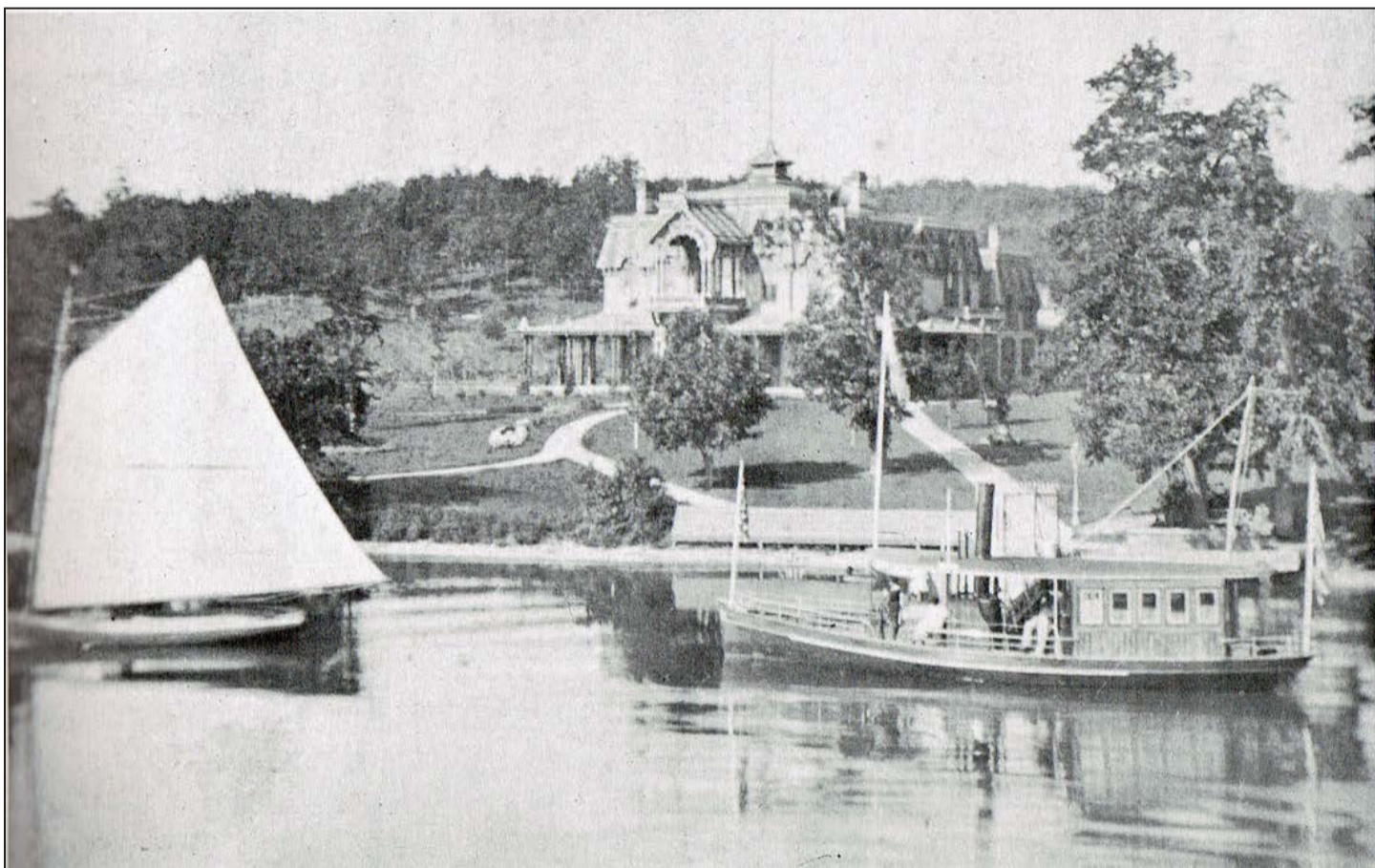


Butternuts about 1890, residence of Nathaniel Kellogg Fairbank

In 1874, N.K. Fairbanks decided to build the family's summer estate, Butternuts on property to the west of Snug Harbor, the estate of George Sturges. Fire would destroy the Eastlake style home in October of 1875. The second home, an exact replica of the first was begun the following Monday morning. Four generations of the Fairbank family would enjoy summers at the estate which covered 20 acres and included a coach house, greenhouse, tennis courts, a barn, several service building, and a five- hole golf course. Fairbank heirs would maintain the estate

until 1955 when it was sold and the mansion was razed

A founding member of the Geneva Lake Yacht Club, N.K. Fairbank was the first club commodore. He was reelected Yacht Club Commodore in 1877, and 78 and again in 1894. N.K. Fairbank won the coveted Sheridan Prize in 1877, 1878, 1880, and 1884 in the Whisper, a 25-foot class sandbagger. Kellogg Fairbank son of N.K. would win the Sheridan Prize sailing the Whisper in 1885, 1886, 1887, and 1890



N.K. Fairbank's estate Butternuts, sailboat Possum and steam Yacht Cisco (photo credit: Full Steam Ahead; Larry Larkin)

N.K. Fairbank's influence on the history of Geneva Lake went beyond the yacht club, the five-hole golf course constructed on his estate was an inspiration for the formation of the Lake Geneva Country

Club. Many of Geneva Lake's early millionaires were introduced to the game of golf at Fairbank's course. N.K. Fairbank loved fishing and is perhaps best remembered for his passionate interest in the fish in Geneva Lake. Long before the state was responsible for restocking the lake, N.K. Fairbank built fish hatcheries at the west end of the lake and voluntarily restocked Geneva Lake's fish population.

N.K. Fairbanks remained active in business until 1901. In April 1902 he suffered a paralytic stroke; he would live until March 27, 1903. N.K. Fairbank is buried in Graceland Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois.