

William J. Chalmers - Former Williams Bay Resident, Pioneer Business Leader, Dies in Chicago

The William J. Chalmers were very active in the social and philanthropic life on Geneva Lake in the first part of this century. Their home, Dronley, near Collie Point, now a part of Conference Point Camp, was the scene of many of the grandest parties on the lake.



The Chalmers home, Dronley ca. 1906



Chalmers Monument, Graceland Cemetery

Mr. Chalmers was the retired chairman of the Allis-Chalmers Company of Milwaukee. His death occurred on Saturday evening, December 10th at his home at 1100 Lake Shore Drive, at the grand old age of 86 years. Burial was at Graceland Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois.

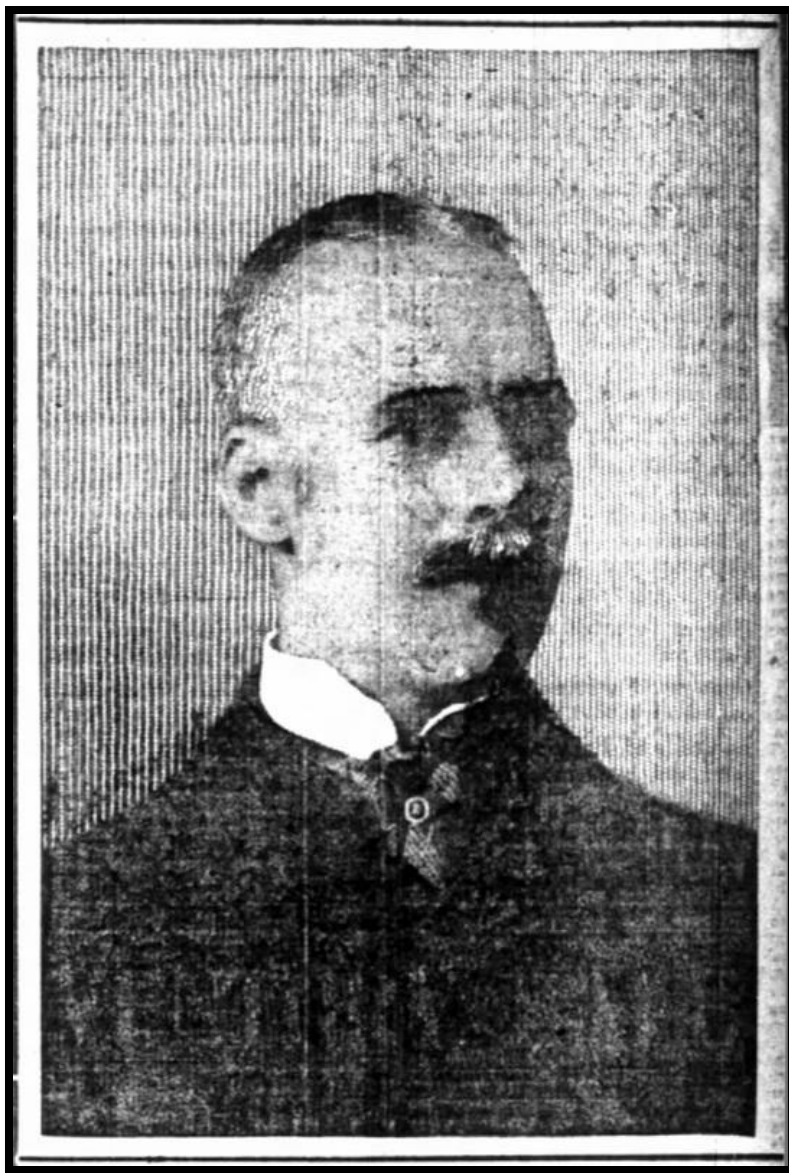
From his boyhood to his retirement, Mr. Chalmers was engaged in the manufacture of mining machinery. Under his direction the Allis-Chalmers Company grew to be the largest maker of mining machinery in the world.

He was born at 112 West Monroe Street near Ashland Avenue on July 10, 1852 to Thomas Chalmers, a Scottish immigrant.

Surviving are his widow, Mrs. Joan Pinkerton Chalmers, the daughter of Allen Pinkerton, President Lincoln's secret service chief; his sister Mrs. William Dandy. Mr. Chalmers was predeceased by his son Major Thomas Stuart Chalmers and his daughter Mrs. Norman Williams Jr. (Joan).

Reprinted from The Bay Leaves, Vol 6 No. 46, December 15, 1938.

William James Chalmers



William J. Chalmers 1900. Photo credit: Chicago Daily Tribune.

William J. Chalmers was born July 10, 1852 in Chicago, the son of Thomas and Janet Tesler Chalmers Scottish-born immigrants who arrived in Chicago in 1843. Thomas Chalmers was engaged in the manufacturing of mining machinery. At the time of William's birth his father was superintendent of The Eagle Works Manufacturing Company. Educated in the Chicago public school system, William attended the Scammon School on Madison Street between Union and Harvard streets. He attended the old Chicago high school on West Monroe Street between Des Plaines and Halsted streets. At 14 years of age he became an apprentice in the machinist trade. He would remain at the shop for four

years learning the details of machinist engineering.

After a yearlong trip to Europe, Mr. Chalmers returned in 1872 to assist in the formation of Fraser and Chalmers & Co. Mr. Chalmers was a director of the Worlds Columbia Exposition. During the Washburne administration Mr. Chalmers served on the Chicago Board of education, and was appointed by Mayor Washburne to the commission that made the elevation of Illinois Central railroad possible. His other civic activities included serving on the board of directors of the Commercial National Bank, memberships in the Chicago Union League, Chicago Athletic Club, Lake Geneva Country Club, Engineers Club of New York, and the Saddle and Cycle club of Chicago.



Joan Pinkerton Chalmers on her wedding day.

William Chalmers married Joan Pinkerton, only daughter of Allen Pinkerton, founder of the Pinkerton Detective Agency, and Joan Carfrae Pinkerton, on October 21, 1878 at the Third Presbyterian Church.

William Chalmers was described as a dashing and handsome young man. Joan Pinkerton Chalmers was a striking brunette. Both loved the arts and music. The Chalmers had two children Joan and Thomas.

William Chalmers inherited and grew his father's company Fraser & Chalmers, was President of the Commercial Club of Chicago, and Director of the Field Museum of Natural History. The Chalmers name is associated with the orange tractors that bore the Allis-Chalmers name. The merger of Fraser & Chalmers and Allis Engine

Works resulted in the Allis-Chalmers Company producers of farm equipment and mining machinery.

Article by Michelle Bie Love. Reference: Chicago Daily Tribune