



Artist Jon Van Zyle and Connie Harper Paddock display portrait of climber Walter Harper. photo by M.A. Klueber

## New lodge at Denali Park carries name of Native hero

by Holly F. Reimer

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DENALI NATIONAL PARK — A new, 154-room lodge here bears the name of the first man to reach the summit of Denali — Walter Harper, an Athabaskan Indian who made the historic climb in 1913.

The \$6.3 million Harper Lodge is owned by Princess Tours, which last week brought reporters to tour the new facility, the second major lodge within Denali National Park and Preserve.

Ray Pederson, president of the tour company, said the name was chosen because "there was a climbing theme that wasn't being utilized here."

And choosing to name the lodge after an Alaska Native "shows culture and accomplishment," he said.

Walter Harper was, at the age of 21, a member of the Hudson Stuck Expedition, which is recognized as the first official ascent of North America's tallest peak. At the time, the world knew the mountain as McKinley, but it is now known by its Indian name as well, Denali.

The ascent consisted of four men: Archdeacon Hudson Stuck; Harry Karstens; Robert Tatum; and Harper.

The men began their journey in mid-May 1913. Harper reached the summit on June 7 — without oxygen, and wearing mocassins insulated with five pairs of socks.

Harper Lodge is the company's first hotel property in Alaska.

Construction began in the fall of 1986. The company said \$5.35 million was spent in Alaska on the job, and the lodge employs 96 seasonal workers during the busy season at the national park.

Also present at the opening were two of Harpers' nieces Connie Harper Paddock, of Juneau, and Yvonne Mozee, of Sitka.

Paddock didn't know she was related to the first man to reach the mountain's summit until her first son was born. The doctor attending the birth asked Connie her maiden name. When she told him it was Harper, the doctor suggested she might be related to the famous climber.

The doctor told me to go his grave and I would see the most beautiful inscription about him," she said.

Harper died at the age of 25 and is buried in Juneau.

At the ceremony to open the lodge,

Paddock had a few words of her own to say about her uncle and his climbing mates.

"The presence of all these men are with us" she said.

Naturally, Paddock is pleased that the lodge is named after her uncle Walter. "Young kids need Native idols to help boost their egos," she said.