

Spotlight on Books



For the Yellowknife Public Library's weekly spotlights, we typically try to highlight resources that we own and are available for borrowing, either electronically or physical copies. This week's featured book, Christian Klengenber's memoirs *Klengenber of the Arctic*, however, was a little more difficult for us to acquire. It is long out of print (published in 1931) and even second-hand copies are rare, expensive, and of questionable quality. However, it's more the goal of the library to connect people to useful information, regardless of whether or not we own it and fortunately we've been able to track the text down online. You can access it by scanning the QR code available here. There are a few typos in this online

version and hopefully someone will republish it as a physical book with those corrected, but otherwise we are still lucky to find it.

Originally from Denmark, Klengenber was a world-traveled adventurer and jack-of-all-trades by the time he ventured north to Alaska and northern Canada. It was here that he seemed to be most at home and where he married an Inuk woman named Gemina and began a family. His was not a life without controversy, however. He once went to trial for murdering a man. While acquitted for that, some still had their doubts and indeed, he was also under suspicion for a few other criminal acts including the theft of a ship and the disappearance of another man.

Of course, one shouldn't expect to find any evidence against him in his own memoirs, but it was at least interesting to get his side of these, and other, stories. His large personality is immediately obvious and at times he can come across as a bit arrogant (about himself and his family), especially problematic when he suggests in one paragraph that he is easy-going and can get along with anyone while particular incidents (such as a near mutiny against him) belie such boasts. Some of his arrogance, I suppose, was warranted as there is no doubt he had superb survival skills and was more adaptable than a good many visitors to the north before and since. Nor, it should be noted, does arrogance prove he was guilty of any of the crimes accused of him.

Klengenber of the Arctic is a wildly entertaining and insightful collection of memories by an eccentric personality, one that has left an immeasurable impact on the north, including a large family of descendants spread across all three territories and Alaska.

John Mutford, Library Manager

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