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F.G. Schwatka's headstone

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ABSTRACT. The explorer F.G. Schwatka, a participant in the Franklin search is buried in Salem, Oregon. This note sets on record information concerning the headstone of his grave.

Lieutenant Frederick G. Schwatka is best known for his command of the Franklin search expedition that was sponsored by the American Geographical Society of New York from 1878 to 1880. Later he extensively explored Alaska, the Yukon and Mexico. Schwatka's 'search' resulted in the finding of a number of new relics and remains that were returned to England. His accomplishments included one of the longest sledge journeys completed to that time under some of the coldest conditions experienced in the Arctic. This brought him extensive praise (Markham 1880: 659; McClintock 1908: 71).

He was born in Illinois and he grew up in Oregon as his family had participated in the western migration in the United States. He was appointed to West Point, the United States Military Academy, and was commissioned as a lieutenant in the 3rd Cavalry in which he served in the Indian Wars, 1871–1876. Schwatka was clearly an unusual soldier as during his military service he was admitted to the bar in Nebraska in 1875 and received a medical degree from Bellevue Medical College in New York City in 1876.

He died from a self-administered dose of a narcotic in Portland, Oregon on 2 November 1892 after his return from his expedition to Alaska. He was buried in the Odd Fellow Rural Cemetery in Salem, Oregon on 4 November 1892. His chief pallbearer was Dr David Walker, who had been the surgeon and naturalist on Sir Leopold McClintock's *Fox* expedition in 1857–1859 (Johnson and others 1984: 11–12).

His headstone (Fig. 1) stands in a corner of the family lot, facing northeast, overlooking the Willamette Valley toward Mt. Hood, the area that he envisaged for a future expedition. The headstone was selected by his brother-in-law Thomas H. Reynolds, at the request of his wife Ada Brackett Schwatka. She returned to Rock Island, Illinois after his death and she remained there receiving a widow's pension until her death in 1930.

The headstone, which is barely 20 inches (0.5 m) high, is well worn but the inscriptions are still visible. Its face is decorated by with a chevron that contains 'Lieut. F. G. Schwatka, 3rd Cav.' Below are found 'Died, Nov. 2, 1892, EXPLORER.' The latter is hidden for much of the year by vegetation and snow and ice. The Friends of the cemetery diligently maintain the stone as best they can but it leans forward and would be prone on the ground save for a cement bar propping it up.

Schwatka's headstone is small, when compared to others and especially with those of his parents who died before him. Both stand well over four feet and are on pedestals. His father's headstone sits on a block that is blazed with 'SCHWATKA' in strong block letters. His mother's is a short stone placed on two pediments. Both differ from his in that they state their place of birth and are inscribed 'At Rest'.



Fig. 1. Schwatka's headstone. Photograph by the author.

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Century-old ski found at Mys Triest, Ostrov Champa, Zemlya Frantsa-Iosifa, Russia

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ABSTRACT. A fragment of a ski dating from the late 19th or early 20th century was found at Mys Triest [Cape Trieste] on Ostrov Champa [Champ Island] in the Zemlya Frantsa-Iosifa [Franz Josef Land] archipelago in August 2006. The age and location of the ski suggest a connection with the American era of exploration of Zemlya Frantsa-Iosifa (1898–1905).

The ski that is the subject of this note was found embedded in the sandy outwash of the moraine at Mys Triest [Cape Trieste], Ostrov Champa [Champ Island] in Zemlya Frantsa-Iosifa [Franz Josef Land] moraine in August 2006. A preliminary examination on the spot indicated that it was probably more than a century old. These factors suggested that it could have been lost or left behind during either of the turn of the century American expeditions to Franz Josef Land: the 1901–1902 Ziegler expedition led by Evelyn Briggs Baldwin (Baldwin-Ziegler expedition), or the 1903–1905 Ziegler expedition led by Anthony Fiala (Fiala-Ziegler expedition) both of which were active in the area. A search of Baldwin's papers at the Library of Congress adds weight to this possibility, suggesting that the ski could have belonged to expedition artist and surveyor Russell W. Porter, who participated in both expeditions and who, in 1906, drew the first comprehensive chart of the islands.

The ski, otherwise unremarkable for its age or single toe strap construction, was found on 10 August 2006, by Magnus Forsberg, at Mys Triest on the southeastern corner of Ostrov Champa (Fig. 1). The cape lies less than 8 km (5 miles) miles from the Krenkel research station built on Ostrov Kheysa (Hayes Island) in 1957. This wide plain consists of an area of grey sandy outwash cut with deep gullies created by glacial meltwater.

The ski is a fragment 1.09 m (3 ft 7in) long, being broken at the forward end. It is 9.53 cm (3.75 in) wide, and has a 2.22 cm (0.88 in) thick footpad beginning 60.96 cm (2 ft) from the rear edge of the ski. Cut into the sides of this footpad is a notch that is 30.5 cm (1 ft) long and 1 cm (0.4 in) wide. There is a similar notch, 1.27 cm (0.5 in) wide, cut in the middle along the length of the entire underside of the ski. There is a simple binding that consists of a double layer of 3.18 cm (1.25 in) wide leather, passed through the ski itself, with a thong strap to tie the two halves of the binding together.

Photographs (Figs. 2, 3) were sent to the Ski Museum in Oslo for inspection and the conclusion reached was that the ski is probably Norwegian dating from around 1900 or slightly later (S. Barr, personal communication, 2 October 2006). It appears to be of a type originating from northern Norway. The broadest point is at the front and it gradually narrows towards the back. It has well-preserved leather straps (and no trace of a heel strap) and has a notch or groove running the length of the underside. The wood is possibly birch.

Comparison of the routes of Julius Payer (Payer 1876) (whose expedition named the cape at which the ski was found but who does not seem to have visited it); of Walter Wellman (Wellman 1899) (who never went to Champ Island); and the Duke of the Abruzzi (Savoia 1903) (who did not operate in this part of the archipelago); leaves only the expeditions of Baldwin and Fiala as possible candidates for the ski's provenance, assuming that the age of the ski is approximately correct. As was the case in the previous expeditions, Baldwin and Fiala were both intent on reaching the North Pole, Baldwin with a largely Swedish team and Fiala with an all American team save for three Norwegians. Both expeditions visited Mys Triest, Fiala perhaps twice and Baldwin on several occasions.

In late summer, 1901, Baldwin considered Mys Triest for his base camp before settling on a site on the south shore of nearby Ostrov Aldzhera [Alger Island]. In the spring of 1902, Baldwin's teams spread 'eighteen or nineteen' depots between Ostrov Aldzhera and Ostrov Rudol'fa [Rudolf Island], of which three were more important than the others. These were at Ostrov Grili [Greely Island], Ostrov Koburg [Coburg Island] and Ostrov Rudol'fa [Rudolf Island] (Baldwin 1903: 436). This area was visited several times by nearly 30 men, 160 dogs and more than 12 ponies. These parties included twenty Scandinavians (seventeen Swedes, two Norwegians and a Dane).

The tonnage of supplies transported and the number of times these parties would have shifted between Ostrov

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