



JAMES GORDON STEESE COLLECTION, #3043377685, DICKINSON COLLEGE ARCHIVES

Near Nenana, on July 15, 1923, a hatless President Warren G. Harding prepares to take another swing at driving the Golden Spike signaling completion of the railroad. Harry Karstens, in campaign hat and open jacket, is in the middle of the photo. Next to him in gray suit and sport cap is Herbert Hoover.

11



PEOPLE OF THE STATION

PANDEMONIUM IN THE DOG YARD at three a.m. roused Harry Karstens from a deep sleep. Dressed only in a nightshirt he grabbed his rifle and rushed outside, thinking a grizzly was in among the dogs. In the cool June twilight he saw nothing amiss, just the dogs barking and circling wildly on their chains. He shouted them into silence and lingered to watch as they slowly settled down. Sudden shouts and drunken laughter echoed from downstream near the Riley Creek trestle. Karstens, muttering under his breath and batting away squadrons of whirring mosquitoes, trudged back into his cabin.

Less than half an hour later, the dog yard erupted a second time. Karstens again jumped out of bed and rushed outside but found nothing amiss. With heavy steps he went inside once again, fully awake. Karstens put the coffeepot on, reassured Louise that all was well and, with further sleep impossible, dressed quietly for the day ahead. It was just after four a.m., only five hours since he'd gone to bed the night before. "Oh well," he shrugged, "an early start to the day." What he didn't know was that someone had disturbed the dogs, and his sleep as a practical joke.

The dogs were normally very quiet. "Except at feeding time," Eugene "Skippy" Karstens said, "the only other time we heard from the dog area was during those nights with a full moon. Then about three in the morning one lonely howl would start—then another dog would come in and another and another until all 60 would be in full howl for about an hour and then it would stop." The Karstens never knew the whole story.¹

The station began to expand in 1923, a trend that continued for about ten years. Seasonal roadwork, mining, trapping, and tourism brought new people to the area. By mid-decade, as many as 60 people over-wintered with dozens more in summer residence. Some worked only one season before moving on; others