

# Wisconsin's Veterans of Adversity Acc

## Families Heed Alaska's Call

First Wisconsin Group Picked for Colony Says, 'This Is Our Chance. We Are Ready'

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Rhineland, Wis. — Alaska challenges, and the challenge is accepted!

Alaska offers life and independence to those who can wrest them from her sequestered soil. The families whom the desolation of some parts of northern Wisconsin could not beat because they wouldn't be beaten stand eager for the effort. They give an outsider the thought that they're equal to it, too.

The first five Wisconsin families named to participate in the government's colonization of the Matanus-

### Honeymoon for Pair

International Falls, Minn. (U.P.)—Romance Thursday entered the group of 67 Minnesota families who will depart Friday for Alaska to settle in Matanuska valley. Miss Catherine Scarlett, 26, attractive school teacher, was married to Gilford Lemmon, 29, a member of the Koochiching county contingent, who was selected at the last minute because of his outstanding leadership.

ka valley in Alaska are those of Carl Erickson, Rhineland; Victor Johnson, Harshaw; Martin Soyk, Minocqua; Wesley Worden, Three Lakes, and Henry James Roughan, Monico.

### Still Full of Fight

When you see before you the adversity they have suffered, it is inspiring indeed to find them still brimful of fight. They come out of their shacks, set amidst twisted stumps or slashings or outcropping rocks, and say simply and stoutly: "This is our chance. We're ready. We want to be independent and make our own living. We think we can do it up there."

"Up there!" What mystery and romance and adventure in the words. Yes, and what hard work. No one can sense that more fully than the young Martin Soyks. They know first hand what it is.

After their marriage they bought a little plot of land and dug into the stubborn soil and drew a living from it. Soyk, a natural born carpenter, planned a cottage of logs and he pounded it together amid the young pines which grew in their front yard.

Mrs. Soyk bore a son, whom they called Sonny, and another whom they called Jimmie. Life was hard but this young couple seemed equal to it. But then Mrs. Soyk grew seriously sick ("The babies were rather close together," she explained), and Sonny, too, became sick and he died.

### Fire Took Their All

That terrible blow was followed shortly by another. While away one day the Soyks saw smoke in the direction of their place and thought a haystack was afire. It proved to be their home and all their furnishings.

"All we had left," said Mrs. Soyk, "was the clothes on our backs. This place here is just a shack. Martin threw it together so we'd have something. We've wanted another place but it hasn't been very hopeful this last year."

"Well, then, what do you think about this Alaskan adventure?"

"We're going through with it, all the way. We're enthusiastic about it. I think we'll have a better opportunity to make a living. Here our place isn't big enough. I think we'll have a place large enough so we won't just have to depend on what work Martin can get as a carpenter."

"It's going to be hard work and the mosquitoes will be hard on Jimmie and the other children. Some of our neighbors envy us but others had a chance and wouldn't go. I can't understand how any young people on relief can turn down a chance."

### Three-Month Baby to Go

Wesley Worden has five children, the eldest 6. Patricia, 3 months, probably will be the youngest emigrant in all the party of 67 Wisconsin and 67 Michigan families sailing from Seattle for Seward, Alaska, on May 15. Worden, a slight, wiry fellow who's done a bit of roaming in his 37 years, knows emphatically why he's getting out of northern Wisconsin.

"Aw, hell, there's nothing here," he snaps. "I've been in the army and I've been to the west coast and I've been to hell-and-gone in Canada and I've never seen a spot where a man had less of a chance to make a go of farming. Yeh, there's a little huntin' here, then what?"

"I know there's real huntin' up in Alaska. I've hunted all over the country and I'll take the back seat from no one in huntin' and fishin'. I'm stuck right now for a gun and not a cent to buy one with. But of course that isn't the big idea. The one thing I want is a home. I'm sick and tired of paying rent and this relief proposition gives me a pain in the neck."

Worden confessed to a slick piece of domestic maneuvering in getting his wife Alaska minded.

### Let Wife Propose It

"I saw in the paper about this program and mentioned at home that some of the fellows had been talking about it. Well, my wife and I chewed the rag about it, talked about it. I didn't mention anything about wanting to go. Finally, she broached the subject and that hit me right in the eye. That's what I'd been waiting for. We applied to go and passed, kids and all, A No. 1. "You see this country all around here? Well, my dad homesteaded

## First Wisconsin Families Selected for Alaskan Project



THESE are members of the first Wisconsin families named to go to Alaska in connection with the government's colonization of the Matanuska valley. A typical family is that of Henry James Roughan of Monico, Oneida county. He is shown reading a story of the venture to his wife and five daughters, Dona Mae, Carol, Beatrice, Bernice and Edith. The lower picture shows the Roughan home, with the rude log house at the right and the barn in the background. It is typical of the desolate homes 67 Wisconsin families will leave behind, perhaps forever, when they sail for new homes in a new country.

through here 44 years ago. Now I'm going to do a little homesteading on my own. I'm going to a new country!"

Worden is an emotional, dramatic fellow. He threw back his corduroy cap, looked straight into the noonday sun and, with clenched fist raised on high, defied man, beast and the devil to keep him out of the fertile Matanuska.

Unlike his friend Worden, Roughan is neither expressive nor explosive. But he is determined. He has five daughters, the oldest 13, and a wife who, in answer to some of the discouraging reports about Alaskan agriculture, says:

"We don't care. We want to take a chance at it. There's nothing here."

### Dreamed It for Years

Roughan built his own place of pine logs three miles from Monico. It is on a cleared flat and you approach it through a discouraging lane of protruding boulders and unsightly stumps. You observe to Roughan that you can't understand how even weeds can grow on such land and he explains how he happens to be there.

"When things go haywire and you can't get a job—well, you'll hole in anywhere, won't you?" he says.

To Mr. and Mrs. Victor Johnson a home in Alaska will be a dream fulfilled. Both longed for years for the far country and so by their marriage only a year ago and the grace of the government they will experience cherished ambitions together.

Mrs. Johnson, a former school teacher, once tried to get a job teaching in Alaska. Johnson made plans to go to Alaska 15 years ago. He has read all about it, knows its virtues and shortcomings. A carpenter with plenty of northern Wisconsin farming experience, young and intelligent, he seems exceptionally endowed to triumph over the hardships of a pioneering venture.

The Johnsons have a lively terrier dog named Nerts. He's first on the list of the possessions they are taking along.

### She'll Take Her Dolls

Carl Erickson, a carpenter now living in Rhineland who formerly was a farmer, has three children, Lavon, 11; Cameron, 17, and Eugene, 22. Liveliest of these is Lavon. She has the map of the Scandinavian peninsula, where her parents were born, written all over her pretty face. She thinks going to Alaska will be "just lovely."

"My mother said I could take all my dolls, but I can't have a playhouse. There's no place for that in Alaska," she says. "And my dad says maybe he'll get me a gun. My parents think there's no future here for us kids or for them either, that's why they're going."

"We're going to take three beds and a cot and a dresser, and we're going to get a gas motor for our washing machine. All the kids in school wish they were me to go, and all the people tell my mother that now she can get back to Norway without going over the ocean."

"That's fine," the reporter interrupted, "but I suppose you have some boy friends you hate to leave."

"Well, there are some in our grade that I like pretty well but not so much that it'll burn my heart to leave them. The one I liked best spilled ink all over the back of my dress, so he's not so hot either."

"But they'll write to you, won't they?"

"Yes, but I'll have to write first so they'll know where I am. You can't just say 'Alaska' and expect a letter to find you."



Photos by Arville Sch.