Alaska Bound Colonists
Welcomed at Seattle

Station Crowds Increase as Train Nears Coastal City, Curious to Meet New Neighbors on North

BY ARVIDE SCHULLEN
THE AUCKLAND STAR
Seattle, Wash.—Into the welcoming arms of Seattle, their new friend, 4,000 Wisconsin and Michigan pioneers marched Thursday afternoon. They piled off their two special trains from Superior, Wis., and St. Paul and there at the station stood a battery of dignitaries, headed by the governor of Washington himself.

This was a reception that cheered the weary travelers to the bottom of their beating hearts.

Before the first train on the Milwaukee road steamed into the depot, the pioneers knew already that two pleasant days here awaited them before they sailed for Alaska Saturday. A half dozen Washington emergency relief administration men had boarded the train 50 miles out of the city to make advance preparations for the arrival. They went through the train, checking baggage and telling the colonists what room they were to occupy at the Pyle hotel, where every room was reserved for them.

Governor Welcome Group

Once off the train, they trudged in family groups to the hotel. Mothers and fathers carried infants. Older youngsters tagged along behind and split the bright atmosphere with "ohs" and "ahs." Another crowd of colonists stood crowded around the hotel entrance. And the pioneers marched in through a line opened by the police.

Respectable Gov. Clarence D. Martin's speech of welcome was reserved for the arrival of the second contingent, which comes in over the Great Northern. Most of the earlier arrivals walked back to the station to hear him praise their luck for undertaking this adventure.

As the train neared the coast, crowds of colonists gathered at the railroad stations increased.

"They're more interested than the Dakotas and eastern Montana because if we make a go of it in Alaska we'll mean more to them," reasoned Oils Brown of Pelican Lake. "They'll be our near-est neighbors in the states. We'll have to work with them. We'll be selling them stuff and we'll be buying from them, too."

Coast Crowds Interested

The curious stood about stations platforms or sat on fences and waved as the train roared on. At every stop they were eager to gossip with colonists. Small town newspapermen turned out, too, getting interviews and inquiring about their health.

Al Avery, Idaho, William Putnam stayed up until midnight to meet the train. He left Alaska two years ago. "Not so good as Matanuska," he said disarmingly. "Too hard to market stuff. You should be going to Homer.

Said a man who had read a railroad through Alaska: "I don't agree. You people are going to paradise."

The conflicting stories on Matanuska's desirability has the prospective settlers baffled. Most of them now have decided to quit thinking to them until they can find out for themselves.

Seasoned travelers now, the pioneer passengers looked out upon Montana's mighty mountains. Certainly that was a momentous adventure and fortunately there was an able reporter around to record it. He is Joe Hynes, 12, of Fairbank, Mich. His report follows. He was at my shoulder to see that it was faithfully transcribed:

"We are climbing the mountains and boy is it ever fun. You should see the beautiful scenes along the railway through the Rockies, when you look down upon hills where trees are as green as the grass. There were hills of rocks which also makes beautiful scenery. They seemed like someone piled up the rocks, but no, they are built right in the ground.

"Do we ever have fun when we go through the tunnels. It gets dark all of a sudden and baby this get so afraid they begin crying. There are some short tunnels and some long ones. We went through eight tunnels so far and intend to go through some more. Right now we are 6,000 feet above the sea level. Now we have gone through 31 tunnels. We went through a large town named McCall between the mountains. It was in a large valley which could be seen through two cemeteries, one on each side of the town. In about three hours we pass through the longest tunnel."

Some Were Bored

Well, it went with Joe's tunnels and mountains. And so it went with the pioneers, too. The show started about noon Wednesday, when a lucky youngster claimed the honor of spotting the first snow range. From then until the continental divide lay behind us one fresh scenic surprise followed another. Russell Pukanka, who used a telescope, declared it was more fun than his honeymoon. (On his honeymoon Pukanka went to Mercer, Wyo., 20 miles from his home at Ironwood, Mich.)

But none had more fun than the children. One minute they poked their noses against the window. The next they would reach out to each other to reach the opposite side of the car to examine a new discovery. "There's a higher one," they would say. It became the signal for the scramble. More than one led a nerved or scared shin or bruised head at nightfall. Adults, too, exclaimed about the wonders. That is, all but a few who had crossed the Rockies before. They watched with a bias air, like travelers who have completed a long journey.

Ends Got Light

At 5 o'clock we crossed the continental divide, 6,332 feet above the sea. For an hour we had walked eastward a rowed-famed Horseshoe curve, where it seemed you could almost reach from one car to the other, touch the last with your hand, and into Pipenetee pass. That's the very trail that Lewis and Clark blazed. These explorers had Uncle Sam's endorsement, the colonists recalled, as they have these new day pioneers.

Only little Donnie Ridsworth of Otaconia county, Michigan, saw a bit of the railroad above high altitude. He got a nose bleed. Mrs. Elsworth rushed him off to cold water and presently they returned with Donnie all chipped up a lark for the swift, de- scent. Several passengers developed ringing heads.

"It feels like my ears are full of water," said Mr. Arthur Nelson of Shell Lake, and a few of the children complained about stomach aches.

A Real Divide

Otherwise the evening was uneventful to the colonists physically, but it wasn't uneventful to them in thought. Ray Griese of Starks put what I mean into words:

"The whole damn middle west is behind us now," he said. "It didn't give me much and I wouldn't go back if I could. But, well, I got a..."