Rare Characters Aid Settlers in Matanuska

BY ARVILLE SCHLEHREN

The Journal Staff

Palmer—Alaska (By Air)—Who’s building an empire, if one is being built?

Colo. from off the relief rolls of the states, yes, but also college bred drifters, preachers and priests, traveling printers and traveling painters, butchers, bakers and shoeblacks. Tested executives, yes, but also executives who but 6 years ago were "on their upper." In our Matanuska valley colony of some 1,500 population there are men from every state, and from the strange corners of the earth, too. There is even a man named Gilt Field, although he’s never been there.

Max E. Shedd and his wife, both registered nurses, heard about the rural rehabilitation here, loaded their daughter, Janet, 5, in the family car and started for Seattle from Battle Creek, Mich.

Nursed Sick Kids

"We were lucky," Shedd says. "We got a job on the North Star, nursing the sick kids who’d been left behind when the Wisconsin and Michigan families sailed on the St. Mikhail. Then we came on to Palmer. We just had a tent and a little baggage. But Irwin (coloniization director) says we can have a little land and work part of the year."

A man named "Shorty" blew in with only a bedroll on his back and nothing in his pocket. He says he’s a newspaper man, and he wants to start a weekly—mimeographed at first and printed after while. Now he’s working in the commissary at $300 a month. A preacher beat him to the newspaper business.

The Rev. E. L. Bingel, educated at Naperville, and an episcopal seminary, dropped into Alaska seven years ago. Before he came here he was telling the good people of Cor- dova about the Lord.

"Why did I come to Palmer?" he says, weighing your question. "Religion, that’s it—a religion crusade, and a religious crusade is a hardighting fellow. If it wasn’t for religion there wouldn’t be a modern church. I just got to be moving around," that interests a fellow like me in the missions—there’s responsibility there."

"A Religious Raclal"

Short and round, with a heavy head, Bingel can’t be distinguished from a colonist. He dresses like them, works with them, and even occasionally swears with them. He’s just a man."

Baywire" drifted into some Califor-

nia transplant camp and enrolled for this Alaskan adventure. In their free time they curate the fate that set them down here among the mos-
quitos. But they work, and there have been but few deserters. Some of them take Elsie at his word when he says, "Boys, you’re making his-
tory."


Desertions Threatened as Work Lags in Colony

Some Families Ask Return to States, Others Talk of Tackling It Alone; Officials Worried

BY ARVILLE SCHLEHREN

The Journal Staff

Palmer, Alaska—(By Radio)—It is now confessed by officials that the magnitude of the task of settling 200 families in the Matanuska val-

ley was not realized when under-
able and, recognizing the tremen-
dous amount of work remaining to be done, authorities here are making
desperate efforts to get more help.

Already the administrative par-

tern of the colonization division—no differences between the con-

struction division, manned largely by California transients—has been bolstered. Howard Lynn of Nome has been asked as assistant to Gen-

eral Manager Don Irwin of the Anchorage and purchasing and discharging agent.

Huge Job Barely Started

To date the transient laborers and some of the colonists have been in the valley more than a month and have made no effort to work outside the colony. They have been rewarded by a brief summary of the work to be done:

The colony must construct a community center, a monumen-
tal task in itself considering available facilities.

Erect houses for all colonists (except for a few who happened to draw tracts with houses on them). Just one cottage is now started.

Erect shelters for livestock. Provide a water supply for settlers’ homes and livestock.

Clear 12 acres of land for each colonist.

Build thirty-mile miles of new roads in the valley, plus 12 miles connecting Palmer with the An-

chorage road now ending at Eklutna; and this includes a $125,000 bridge.

Prepare and harvest community gardens and field crops for settlers and livestock during the winter.

Most of these tasks have not even started and others just barely started. But instantly, the road program, under the Alaskan highway commission, is about a month behind. Director Irwin concedes that conditions are serious and other officials privately admit the situa-
tion is most alarming.

The colonists themselves are be-