



MRS. BUD HOLLER of Pine City, Minn., is the picture of domesticity as she sews in her tent home in the Alaskan colony at Palmer. The sewing machine beside her is used nearly every day because the rough work in the colony is hard on the pioneers' clothing. The other picture shows a row of neat tents in camp No. 8. [Photos by Arville Schaleben of The Journal Staff]

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**Tent Becomes Home,
 if There's a Housewife**

The Journal's staff writer with the Matanuska colony in Alaska is sending by mail a series of articles on everyday and family life in the camps. This is the first of that series.

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Palmer, Alaska.—Some say circumstances make the man. Alaska's boom town, Palmer, where Uncle Sam is spending a million and more—though he may not admit the latter—proves with each passing day that man or woman may make the circumstances.

Walk through Palmer's canvas city. White tents bloom row upon row in symmetry. Occupying them are families given nearly equal things to work with. Social workers who selected them in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan saw to that. Out of those simple things and what this wilderness had to offer, some have created comfort and cleanliness, others filth and squalor.

Tents Have Addresses

In Palmer there are tent homes where the most fastidious would dine in peace of mind. But there are tables, too, from which even starving mortals might with reason turn tail and run.

The tents here, the largest of the colonists' scattered camps, occupy about 10 acres. Streets are lettered alphabetically and homes are numbered. Thus we find E. V. Yohn's address is E-1, Perle Archer's is D-10.

In the center of the encampment is the town pump, painted red. Midway of each street a chemical fire extinguisher hangs on a pole trimmed from the scrubby woods which form a backdrop for the colony.

The tents are pitched in exact alignment, so that their lines make a geometrical design no matter from which point you look. They have board floors—poorly fitted and some housewives complain how hard it is to sweep them—and board sides. Men folks have heaped dirt around the foundation edges to keep the wind out and some of them have spaded up ditches to provide drainage. In the few feet of ground around each tent, a few families have set out strawberries and other table delicacies.

The "Model" Home

The pride of the settlement, in this observer's estimation, is the home of Mrs. Bud Holler of Pine City, Minn. She's a young woman, appropriately nick named "Tiny."

A planed wood door leads through the tent flaps to Mrs. Holler's home. In that respect it is similar to all other temporary homes here. But the revelation comes inside.

Her kitchen range shines with cleanliness. The pots and pans atop it gleam in sunshine filtering through the tent top.

Mrs. Holler has covered her kitchen table and her cupboards with blue flowered oilcloth. A tanned raccoon hide makes sitting easier in one of the trim chairs; the hide of the old family tomcat does the same for another. Cooking utensils hang in neat order from nails driven into the two-by-four frame of the tent. They are polished after each using.

Young Bud Holler's hunting equipment—guns and knives and woods clothes—also are arranged along the walls. Over Mrs. Holler's old fashioned sewing machine hangs a colored picture of her husband with a favored horse he had in Minnesota. Rugs fashioned from burlap sacks and a few small pieces of squared linoleum cover her floors.

Holler made two rooms out of the tent by stringing heavy blankets along a wire across the middle of the home, separating the combined kitchen and living room from the bedroom. The bedroom itself is partitioned, one part serving for storage and the other for sleeping.

Thus have the Hollers established themselves in comfort and cleanliness. From the simple things this new and temporary town offers they have built a tidy home.

Some women colonists are jealous of Mrs. Holler. "We could do the same thing, too, if we didn't have any children," they say. But when the Michigan and Wisconsin colonists arrived here before tents were ready for them, Mrs. Holler took in a woman with her children and it did not turn tidiness into squalor.

Most Are That Way

"I think she could have a million children," commented Miss Madelein deForas, the Red Cross nurse, "and she'd still have her home the same way."

Of course, many other housewives in all the camps keep neat houses. The tidy ones, in fact, are in the majority here. But some other places are the despair of the health authorities.

"They are terrible," they say. "They're the kind of places that start epidemics of one kind or another. We have to keep after them."

In such places, things lie around in confusion just where they happened to be dropped. On the floors amid the dirt—and there is plenty of that in the tents here for the soil is so fine textured any breeze gives it a ride—are rags and paper and half eaten slices of bread.

The family dog lies on his belly, chewing a bone; the family baby toddles around, sticky faced, half dressed and covered with grime. In one corner stands a swill pail, unemptied, and in another a bucket of overflowing stove ashes. Near a table loaded with unwashed dishes the broom leans at its ease. It's had a soft life in canvas city, the paper hasn't even been torn from its bristles.

No blanket partition divides the tent, no oilcloth covers the table. Jackets, guns, pictures and cooking utensils clutter the bed blankets. An opened crate of canned beef sits along the wall.

Happily for Boom City, this sorry picture does not prevail generally. Happily, the majority here demonstrate that man can make his circumstances, at least insofar as they affect his living conditions.