

One Alaska Thorn Gone

Architect Is Removed by FERA; Prices Cut and Tools Arrive

BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN
OF THE JOURNAL STAFF

Palmer, Alaska (By Radio) — N. Lester Troast of Juneau, one of the key men of the Matanuska colonization, is through with the project. Although he is still here, the FERA at Washington has dispensed with his services as architect. Troast has been recalled by the bureau of Indian affairs, of which he is an architect. The action is taken ostensibly because of press of business.

Actually much pressure had been applied here by colonists and others to have Troast released. The settlers blame him for much of their trouble in getting started on homes and they freely voiced dissatisfaction with him. They rank him as one of the "Juneau politicians" whom they hinted at in their wire to President Roosevelt Monday.

Troast's recall, however, came before the colonists appealed to the president. He was ordered last week to take the first available boat back to Juneau.

Prices Are Revised

Word came Tuesday that the colonists' fight for lower commissary prices had been recognized. It is understood that corporation officers at Juneau have ordered revision of prices on some things.

Thousands of dollars of business has been done at prices based on so-called emergency purchases at Anchorage and the corporation has agreed to absorb the loss. In consequence all bills accumulated by colonists to date are being revised downward. Some emergency prices are said to be 35 per cent above what government supplies would have cost.

Director Don Irwin had another problem Wednesday after a visit by W. M. Sherman of Seward, Kenai district fire ranger. Sherman pointed out many existing fire hazards and provided a list of equipment needed. This included radio sets for outlying camps to notify headquarters in case of fire.

Crews Are Short

With the arrival finally of long waited tools, more and more colonists have begun cutting logs for homes. There are now two homes under construction, with logs cut for more and both portable sawmills going with two shifts after the missing drive pulleys came. Foreman Ferber Bailey of one mill complained, however, that he had trouble getting enough colonists for crews.

"We ought to have 74 men on our mill but today we had only 34," Bailey said. "I think too many guys are doing too much sitting or fishing. We'd be better off if they went home to the States."

Trials of Pioneers Bring Families Closer Together



[Photos by Arville Schaleben of The Journal Staff]

FAMILIES are knit more closely together by the trials of pioneer life in Palmer, Alaska. There is no place to go, so they work and play together. Shown splitting wood in order to build a fire are (left to right) Jimmy Pippel, Wilbur Seiber and his brother, Robert. At the right is a colonist washing his hands in a basin of water warmed by a wood fire.

Love Light Is Revived by Alaska Hardships

This is the second of a series of four stories on family life in the Matanuska valley colony.

BY STAFF CORRESPONDENT OF THE JOURNAL
Palmer, Alaska—(By Mail)—Pioneering, such as the 200 families from the States are doing here in the Matanuska valley, knits a matrimonial bond far stronger than that woven in the normal everyday life of the States.

For even though these families are for the present huddling under America's gold lined wings, here in Alaska this life is half a question of rustling food and conveniences for one's self. Thus the good man leans more heavily on his wife and she on him.

I am certain that hands have been held here that had not been held since the preacher said, "I pronounce you man and wife," and that in some instances gentle love taps under the

chin have replaced taps of a very different intent.

Now when so much must be done in getting homes ready before fall's first snow, the ordinary family day begins at 5 or 6 a. m. Husband arises with wife, instead of lying idly for another half hour snoring, and helps her get the breakfast. With them arise the children. Broad daylight reigns long before that hour and lively children simply will not stay in bed.

Thus there is quite a problem at the wash bowl—most families have but one.

The husband steps outside his tent and gathers an armful of wood for a fire; the mother gets ready to heat the water. Mr. Pioneer tidies up first, for it's his job to get breakfast started while Mrs. Pioneer washes herself and her children.

All the Food You Want

A wealth of breakfast supplies are one hand—two or three kinds of commercial breakfast foods, oatmeal, bacon or ham and eggs, the best

brands of coffee, fresh or canned fruits, and wheat, whole wheat or rye breads. All these things are carried in the camp commissary.

Each family is permitted to get what it wants simply by signing for it. This is a new experience for most of them, who came off relief in Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota, and they've been working the commissary staff to death. They are supposed to be on a food budget averaging \$300 a year. In the first three weeks some of them bought \$100 worth of stuff. They utterly forgot the day of reckoning.

After breakfast the family members go their separate ways. Sometimes they all get together again at noon but most often not until any time from 6 to 11 o'clock, when the man hikes or hitch-hikes home from work.

Family Always Waiting

Then come the most pleasant hours of the day. A few tents have radios, and Mrs. Lloyd Bell has a piano. Many of the colonists have guitars or banjos or violins and get together for restful, homely music—no jazz, just "Oh, Susanna," "When It's Springtime in the Rockies," "There's a Long, Long Trail Awaiting," and the like.

"These nights in Alaska are great," says Harold Davis, a big strapping

fellow with a beard as black as the soil. "I can get home damn near any hour and my wife and kids are waiting for me. Sometimes they come into the woods to meet me. My property is right at the edge of Camp 6, where we live, and it ain't no trouble for them.

"We go over to the neighbors and chin pretty often—just talking about our work or exchanging pieces of news we pick up about the States. Only trouble is we never know when to go to bed and it's hard for m' wife to get the kids to sleep on account of there being no dark outside."

And Sometimes Poker

Often the adults join in somebody's home for a game of cards, played perhaps on a home made table. Whist is more popular than bridge, as are hearts and rummy.

Occasionally the men sneak off by