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# Sudden Shift in House Plans Brings Howl From Colonists

## Call Buildings 'Sheep Sheds'

**Matanuska Officials Kept  
Busy Soothing Settlers;  
Move Intended to Speed  
Construction**

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Palmer, Alaska—(By Radio)—A sudden change in house plans for the Matanuska valley colony, in order to speed construction, brought the wrath of colonists down on the heads of officials Monday.

With astonishing speed the rumor spread throughout the valley that the government was trying to pawn off "sheep sheds" on the new settlers in place of the handsome little homes they had expected. Until officials could explain what it was all about, there developed a general rush on administrative headquarters, with a yowl remindful of some of those which went up so often during the eventful last half of June, when the colonists first began to realize that they could not have everything they had expected, due to inadequate supplies and construction delays.

### "Just a Chicken House"

Some of the men colonists got hold of somebody's rough hand drawing of what they imagined the new houses to be. It showed a structure 40 feet long and 10 feet wide, divided into three equal rooms.

"Hell, that's just a shed," stormed Dean Ballard. "They can't get away with that."

"I never lived in nothing but a regular house and I'm not going to start living in a sheep shed now," added Arthur Hack. "Half the camp will quit on this one."

"I'd been planning a pretty house and now I'm getting a chicken house," another lamented.

Finally the boys got up enough steam to surround the door to the architect's office and cornered Ross

Sheely, who was recently placed in charge of homesites. Sheely would no sooner get through explaining to one crowd when another would pepper him with threats to leave and demands as to what he was going to do about it. He was kept busy most of the afternoon.

The rumpus boiled down to this: The time before winter is considered so short that officials have decided they must build some 75 frame houses. They won't be completed houses. They'll be so-called "growing houses"—that is, the primary structure consisting of three rooms in a row with a total length of about 30 feet are to be built to assure shelter for all. Then those who need more room may add to their houses, possibly with government assistance, when there's time this fall, next winter, next summer, in 1941, or whenever they get to think of it.

### Fuller Misses the Fun

The design as explained by the architects seems sound. Most colonists appeared not too greatly disturbed when the "sheep shed" idea was dissipated.

"Speed, that's why we're doing it," Sheely asserted. "Right now it's a case of where the roof counts most, and we're going to be sure we have them."

S. R. Fuller, Washington's temporary director of the colony who had gone on an inspection trip to Camp Butte to discover how to handle the construction of 30 houses to which nothing but a muddy wagon road now leads, missed most of the excitement. The house change rumor somehow beat him there, however.

"Those fellows are real workers," Fuller said of the Butte colonists. "They're out there sweating and knocking over trees and they are real pioneers. They asked me about the changes. I explained them and said they could build all the fancy work onto their houses they wanted to when they get time. The men said that was all they wanted to know. I didn't find one who had any fundamental kick with the country."

Inquiring colonists were assured that frame houses would not cost more than log houses, and maybe less. They are to be built on tracts where logs are not available. Material will be pre-fabricated as much as possible.

### Trim Details, Save Hours

Officials are also considering plans to cut out some details of the log cottages. They would omit for the time being such things as alcoves, porches and other features which add to appearance but not to comfort. Elimination of one alcove alone, it is estimated, will save 125 man hours per cottage.

Scattered over the valley now is much "boughten" material for homes. It is being trucked to home sites as fast as it arrives and stacked there awaiting the time when it is to be used. That is a precaution against what the rainy season will do to the roads. It is comforting evidence to the colonists that foresight is finding a place in the project.

Many of them say, "That's what we needed all along," and they are showing appreciation by being more willing workers.

"They are buckling down pretty good," said Sheely, who is also in charge of colony labor. "I think they could do better—and they will—but they are at least showing that they are not loafers at heart."