

Colony Faces Log Shortage

Friday June 14
**Two Small Sawmills in
Struggle to Provide Ma-
tanuska Cabins**

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Palmer, Alaska—(By Radio)—A shortage of available house timber, which had been represented as so plentiful when the Matanuska valley colonization was undertaken, is causing project authorities to plumb the possibilities of constructing some frame houses.

This was revealed by Don Irwin, project director, when members of the colony council in its second meeting Tuesday night fell to discussing their homes. Irwin said that Frank

No Jobs, Lots of Men

Nome, Alaska—(U.P.)—A false rush for jobs rivaling the rush for gold before the turn of the century has left hundreds of men walking the streets of Nome. The steamer Victoria brought 375 men lured from the states by reports of jobs in rebuilding the city, swept by fire last fall. The jobs did not materialize. All available quarters were occupied before arrival of the Victoria and the transients sought shelter in tents along the beach.

U. Bliss, construction chief, wanted to know the sentiment of colonists about frame houses, since it might be necessary to resort to them.

Later Architect N. Lester Troast said that he didn't know whether there were sufficient logs for 200 houses and that a survey was being made to determine this point.

"No Timber to Spare"

Councilman Allen Frederick, whose tract is situated where there had been said to be an abundance of timber, declared: "I think we have enough for the 18 families in Camp 9 but we won't have any to spare. On three tracts there is practically no timber."

The timber situation is just another instance of mismanagement somewhere along the line, such as is being revealed each passing day. Workers have been here since May 10, and not one permanent building anywhere is nearly constructed. In fact, not one settler's cabin has been actually started.

It is admitted by many persons that conditions are becoming alarming, especially in view of the fact that July is a rainy month, when potential production of any group of men will be materially reduced. Temporary housing and office facilities, consisting almost exclusively of

tents, went up well enough, but the permanent construction program is bogging down.

"It's been going down and down," a sub-official wailed. "Things have got to be done in an awful hurry or we'll have terrible trouble on our hands."

Saw Works Slowly

The problem to be confronted in construction of cottages alone was indicated this week when 20 colonists finally got a portable saw mill in operation. Two experienced sawyers estimated that it would take the machine 64 hours to square logs on three sides for just one house. Thus if the mill operates 14 hours daily without a single breakdown, it would take 92 days to square all house timbers in that group. There is one more mill available and authorities hope to rent another—they've been doing a lot of hoping in vain during the last several days—so milling might be done by July 15.

There is therefore little doubt that the colonists will have to throw their homes together without curing the logs and it is certain that many will not have the pleasant little dwellings they looked forward to when they left the United States.

Incidentally, as an indication of how colony freight shipments are coming to Palmer, the sawmills arrived looking fit and proper except that there were no drive pulleys. It was necessary to borrow one from the experimental farm to get one mill going and finally two pulleys were secured from Anchorage.

Special Wrench Lacking

Each mill has only one blade, the kind with inserted teeth to make repairing possible, but there were no

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extra teeth nor the special wrench required to change teeth. One unfortunate toothache might lay up the whole mill.

Many colonists who are experienced woodsmen feel that they won't be able to get their houses done under present circumstances. Others feel they can get out and do all the work themselves if necessary before snow flies.

"I think Lawrence Arndt and I can make the grade on our places," said Les Monroe from Hiles, Wis. "He knows how to build a cabin and so do I. We're not looking for squared logs. We want ours round and we'll have places that'll be warm, but, of course, they won't be much finished inside. But some of these other guys—you can tell they don't know the woods—I don't believe they'll get under roofs without a lot of help soon."

Martin McCormack of East Tawas, Mich., has been helping get the second portable sawmill ready. "We may be all right," he said, "if we can get a proper pulley and if the blade holds up. If we had a wrench for the teeth we'd pull every other one. You can do that on this soft lumber and that would give us ex-

tra teeth when some break."
Certainly it is apparent that the difficulties the project finds itself in cannot be blamed on the colonists. To be sure there are dissenters and lazy ones among them, but the big majority have done the best they could with what they had to work with. They have gone out into the woods and slashed down building timbers with limited tools. They have organized crews to speed up cutting. When Irwin called for colonists to run the sawmills three eight-hour shifts daily he was swamped with volunteers.
"Sure we'll do it," they shouted, "it don't make any difference what time of day you sleep here. We want to get things started. Just turn us loose and we'll turn out the work."

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