

# Pioneers in Alaska; Off for New Homes

## Men Draw Lots for Land; to Pitch Camp While Women Wait in Seward

J. E. K. U.  
BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN  
OF THE JOURNAL STAFF

**Seward, Alaska**—The men of the Wisconsin and Michigan pioneers of 1935 turned their faces Thursday toward the interior of Alaska, where they are to set up new homes in the wilderness.

The flag waving, the cheering, the feasting and rounds of entertainment that have been daily routine for the pioneers since they left their homes in the middle west is about over. Reality is at hand. Ahead there is mostly hard work and they know it.

The women and the children of the party were left behind at Seward and will stay there until the men have set up camp at Palmer and have some kind of accommodations ready for them.

THURSDAY, MAY 23, 1935

Many of the women were so tearful at parting from their menfolk that one would think the separation was going to be permanent or at least for months, but remember that these women are in a strange country, more than 4000 miles from home and can hardly be blamed for being upset.

The women and children will sleep and eat aboard the St. Mihiel until they leave for camp. The men were to draw lots Thursday for their 40-acre lots in the Matanuska valley.

All the colonists were at the rail Wednesday when the St. Mihiel steamed up to Seward's timbered dock. As the boat nosed in the 12-piece band on the pier blared forth martial music and 200 or so smiling Alaskans were on hand to welcome their new compatriots. Cheers were few, but the crowd on the dock left no doubt of Seward's curiosity about the strangers from the States.

### Little Girl First Ashore

Of all the newcomers little Virginia Larose of Phillips, Wis., was first to disembark. She stepped shyly to shore looking cute as the doll she clutched to her. Her deep dimples showed as ready camera men snapped her and what she said was not "Alaska, we are here," but "Oh, daddy, they took my picture and it's

and about the new frontier at whose doorstep they then stood.

Words you heard most frequently were: "This looks great to me. It looks like rough country right through here, but I reckon we can cut her down."

The ship's crew had its hands full unloading passengers. Everybody wanted to get off at once and came stampeding out like pirates about to sack the city.

"Take it easy now," officers at the gangplank cautioned. "Don't forget your dogs. Got all your children?"

The advice was appreciated but these people demanded action. They got it.

"Come on, ma, hurry up. Grab Betty and get going." "Where's Wes? Where's Wes?" "Oh, gosh, we forgot our canary. Who's got our canary? Mister, did you see our canary?"

It seemed that nobody had seen that canary, lugged all the way from the upper peninsula, but it turned up later looking forlorn and forgotten on the plank runway between the pier and land.

Will Bouwens of Rhinelander, mighty man of a large family, almost came to blows with one gangplank custodian. As usual, he couldn't find one of his 11 youngsters.

### He Was Going Back

"Let me through here," he commanded, shouldering a husky sailor. "I'm going back on that boat."

"Never mind where you're going," the harried sailor barked gruffly. "I'm getting these kids off without any broken legs, ain't I? I can take care of them better than you can."

"No you can't," Bill pugnaciously insisted. "I've taken care of them 20 years and I'm not quitting now."

But finally he calmed down and presently his stray came bouncing out of the shuffle, right side up and laughing.

All the excitement, of course, was

without reason, for there was plenty of time to unload. In fact, the St. Mihiel will be here for five days, unloading the Matanuska freight it carried, including three school buses and five poles for the Palmer radio sending station.

### Inspect the Town

After the women had protested vainly against the orders to remain behind while the men pitched camp at Palmer, they became reconciled and walked serenely about Seward's main street, inspecting stores and making a few purchases. Many enjoyed the movies offered free by a local theater. The inspection was their only chance to take the children uptown, for all under 15 were later forbidden on the street because of the three cases of measles among children in the party.

Those with measles are Gloria La Flam, 7, Shell Lake; Byron Anderson, 9, Shell Lake, and Shirley Monroe, 5, Hiles. They were taken to the Seward hospital and put under quarantine.

Also ill is Ralph Archer, 7, Cumberland. The ship doctor fears he may have pneumonia. His mother is to remain in Seward with him until he recovers. The other pioneers are in good health. The distressing sea sickness miraculously left most of them at the sight of the sheer cliffs guarding the narrow entrance to Seward's harbor.

### Beclines for Saloons

In fact, men who had not eaten heartily since they left Seattle made beclines for the saloons. They hooked their heels over brass rails and cocked elbows on bars and im-

mediately became rugged men of the north country. They knew there was work to be done, but there was time enough tomorrow for doing it.

"We're drinking to luck in Alaska," said brawny Al Covert of Cable. But they couldn't drink much for some of them had landed with hardly a dollar in their pockets. Beer sells here at two glasses for a quarter.

**Seattle, Wash.**—(AP)—A barnyard symphony of discord sailed Thursday for the federal colony in the Matanuska valley of Alaska—70 cows and 70 horses, all bellowing in protest.

One mare, Fanny by name, sat down on the dock and flatly refused to go aboard the federal ship North Star, which had been outfitted as a stable.

"Come on, Fanny, get aboard and be your age," said "Hell Roaring" Jones, boss of the cattle shipping project.

Fanny just sat and they had to carry her to a crate that was hoisted aboard the North Star by a steam winch.

## Draw Farms From a Box

Alaska Pioneers Get Plots  
but Some Trade, Now  
for Hard Work

J. E. K. U.  
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**Palmer, Alaska**—It was journey's end Thursday for the 128 men settlers from Michigan and Wisconsin who are to establish new homes in the Matanuska valley.

After a sleepless rail ride from Seward they lined up in the open under a warm, smiling sky. They were joined by the Minnesota settlers who arrived here two weeks ago and drew lots for the 40-acre plots which will be their future farms.

### Farm From a Box

Director Don Irwin stood on a crude platform of planks over steel barrels and briefly explained the procedure. Then a cardboard box was brought forth, containing little folded slips of paper, each giving the legal description of one of the 40-acre farms. Each settler stepped forth and drew his slip. Fate ruled those moments. It smiled kindly on some, giving them land near this tiny railroad station and to some

exchange—and got it to drive too hard found no takers. A number were completely the drawing and bar over and most of the who had come from Wisconsin or Minnesota had managed to get fa other.

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But the settlers had held their own little lottery first to determine places in line for the important drawing. Some of the Minnesota settlers played "hunches" and designated their wives or one of their children to draw for them. Arthur Hack of Ogilvie, Minn., pulled first. He got No. 168. No 1 stayed in the box until but a handful remained, then fell to Martin McCormick, East Tamas, Mich. So McCormick, tall and rawboned, stepped up to pick, sight and unseen, the little slip that would allot him his new farm. He was intensely sober that moment. Not a muscle of his face moved as he thrust his hand into the lottery box, but his fingers trembled.

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McCormick slowly withdrew the slip, unfolded it and read aloud to the others the description. He pushed through the crowd to the map and discovered that his luck had indeed been good. He had drawn a fine piece just two miles from the station.

"That suits me," he smiled. "That's good land. I can make it there."

The drawing continued for three hours. Some got what they had hoped for, smiled ear to ear and

exchange—and got it. Others tried to drive too hard a bargain and found no takers. A surprising number were completely satisfied when the drawing and bartering was all over and most of the little groups who had come from Michigan or Wisconsin or Minnesota together had managed to get farms near each other.

One settler had swapped a strip along the crystal clear Finger lake to a fishing enthusiast for a tract near town with buildings and 30 acres cleared. That partly cleared farm was considered a particular prize, as indeed it should be, for most of the tracts are covered with brush and light timber.

Care had been taken, however, that no sterile land should be assigned. Every piece was examined and tested for fertility before it was surveyed.

Friday many of the settlers were plodding out over narrow dirt roads or across lots through the brush to get their first look at their farms. They must have realized as they stood looking over the valley that "Uncle Sam's joy ride" was over and from now on it was sweat and lame backs and aching arms.