

Badly, Winter

Short of Labor and Necessary Working Tools

Center and School Not Yet Started, Well Digging Slow, Homes May Not Be Finished

BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN
OF THE JOURNAL STAFF
Palmer, Alaska—(By Radio)—A personal investigation of the entire Matanuska valley colonization project reveals that it is lagging in virtually all phases. It appears a certainty that the government can't make good on all its promises to the settlers this year and there is even danger that all may not get homes before snowfall, present facilities considered.

Additional help must be forthcoming immediately, even above the 80 lumberjack transients expected from Washington state. Additions to administrative as well as labor personnel seem to be needed. This, naturally, makes the colonization costs soar over original estimates. In fact, there are definite indications that the cost may be double the approximate million dollars allocated.

Reasons for Delay

The labor problem is further complicated by the quitting of a score of transient workers Monday.

There are three obvious reasons why the project—which in itself seems entirely practical—has hit rough going:

First, inadequate or careless preparations for problems to be faced in a virtual wilderness—and an isolated one at that.

Second, an unexpected wet spring which added tremendously to transportation difficulties in the valley.

Third, mismanagement, probably not so much here on the scene as in shipping of supplies

24 Men, Four Hammers

The land clearing difficulty is partly due to mismanagement somewhere in getting supplies to the settlers. Men have been going out cutting timber but few have adequate tools, such as the right saws and axes. The tools should have arrived from Seattle, officials say, but have unaccountably been delayed. But among the things that have arrived is a potato grader, although there are not yet any potatoes to grade, and community center electric power equipment, although there is still no community center.

Just as one instance of man power being wasted for lack of tools, one day 24 transients appeared to work on construction. There were just four hammers for the entire crew!

"Where are the tools?" everybody asked. "They're on the way," was all that could be said.

When some of the well digging equipment did arrive it was discovered that the casing was the size ordered but that the drills were too big to be worked in the casing.

No Sign of School

There is hardly any doubt that the community center won't be finished on schedule. The site was cleared with splendid swiftness, but the manpower simply is not here, considering all the things to be done,

to get the buildings up. Work is just about to start on the creamery and cannery. They are being built first because they can be used for warehouses, which are sorely needed because freight that can be damaged by weather must be put under roofs.

Not one thing has been done on the schoolhouse, which is to be an elegant affair for this part of the world and should be built with care. How can that be done before September? Colonists were told that they could start sending their children to school by that time, to classrooms far finer than anything most of them had been used to in Wisconsin, Minnesota or Michigan.

Anthony Karnes, commissioner of education for Alaska, visited Palmer during the last few days and was very much discouraged by the school outlook. He had planned for 18 teachers but said that he could see no reason for signing all of them now, when the building has not even been started.

The Log Problem

Another difficulty must be surmounted in getting out logs for the settlers' homes. At first the settlers were told that the logs would be squared on three sides, which would insure tight houses. Then Troast announced several days ago that because "there are less than 120 days until snow flies," the settlers would have to get along without squaring, much as the administration regretted that necessity. Now it has been decided to run portable mills 24 hours a day, with three shifts of colonists, so that the logs can be squared.

While three shifts may solve the squaring problem, it doesn't solve the log problem. There is plenty of spruce in the valley as advertised

Colony Faces Log Shortage

Two Small Sawmills in Struggle to Provide Ma- tanuska Cabins

BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN
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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 100 men 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.

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 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 extra teeth when some break."

Certainly it is apparent that the