

coming out again, hour or two of rest. Their cars and ramble wooded lanes; so ends Matanuska.

mush'om city business. Maybe they were right. But Uncle Sam is weaving a pattern as incredible.

On May 5 Palmer's population was five, all members of the Felton family. On May 6 it jumped to 122. That was when Uncle Sam's transient laborers from California hit town. Now the population exceeds 1,500. The FERA settlers from the states have scrambled in with their families; additional transients are on hand; the administrative force has doubled, tripled and grown to tenfold, and the inevitable boom town drifters came along with their varied wares. Why we even have a pastor or two.

I said things that can't be done are done every day. They dumped 400 women and children settlers on this town at 5 o'clock one afternoon. There wasn't any place for them to sleep or eat. But they slept and they ate.

#### Tents Fairly Bulged

Settled families gave room until some of their 16 by 20 tents bulged with 14 men, women and children besides their own brood. Food wasn't ready so 20 men pitched into the commissary and clapped together hundreds and hundreds of sandwiches—cold meat, cheese and plain butter.

Next day at 12:30 an authority came dashing into the transient laborers' mess cars. Most of the prepared grub had been gobbled. But the authority shouted, "Got 36 families to feed. Can you do it in half an hour?"

"Half an hour? Yes, sir."

But a half hour is a long time in Boom City, so in 10 minutes the families were chowing.

Ed Anderson drifted in from Anchorage one morning. He rented part of Felton's cabin. At noon he had a restaurant in operation. He gets 50 cents for a pork chop. Down the road, in neighboring Matanuska village, hamburger and egg sandwiches retail at 25 cents.

#### Buildings Up in Day

Once they moved 50 men seven miles between camps, over roads so bad they were part corduroy, in 20 minutes. How?

"How the hell do I know?" barked the straw boss. "But they're there, ain't they?"

Buildings blossom like magic. You walk down main street in the morning, past a vacant lot. You walk back main street in the evening, and on the vacant lot a temporary recreation hall is being hammered together. It was just that somebody decided we ought to have one.

From their tent homes in the scattered camps, a handful of farmers head for one of their properties. They shoulder axes, saws and spades. Maybe mosquito netting hangs from their hat brims. In the evening they return, sweating, muddy and exhausted. They've cleared another homestead.

tured power has made man's achievements possible. In the winning of America's west it was the horse. In the building of America's metropolises it was the steam shovel and the derrick. In Palmer it is the truck and the tractor. What has been done could not have been done without them.

#### But Things Are Done

Yes, we're jumbled and rough in Boom City. But there's direction here, too, that steps in miraculously and rights things just when it seems confusion is getting the upper hand. And there's no confusion about the main objective—putting 200 farmers into operation in the Matanuska valley. It is just the individual effort that is jumbled, as most individual effort appears to be when things move as swiftly as here.

Whittier said it like this:

"I hear the tread of pioneers,  
Of millions yet to be;  
The first low wash of waves where  
soon  
Shall roll a human sea.  
The elements of empire here  
Are plastic yet and warn,  
The chaos of a mighty world  
Is rounding into form!"

the sand is black as coal here. It's loaded with humus. All you got to do is work it up and then plant it. Then leave your crops to the land and it'll push 'em up. We've got a hold of some land here that'll really produce."

"This is the kind of soil a farmer dreams about," Arvid Johnson of Crystal Falls, Mich., adds. "I saw in a road cut where the loam was 12 feet deep."

Claire La Flam, from Shell Lake, Wis., said that he had traveled quite a bit around the United States but he had never seen any soil that looked better to him.

The land does make an impression on anyone who knows anything about farming, especially when compared with the sterile stuff the colonists abandoned. You can see in the patches under cultivation how well it works up. No clumps, no big rocks, no sandy wastes—just jet black, fancy soil that needs only the right growing weather to return heavy yields.

Undoubtedly some of the soil in the valley is sour. Moss is one indication of that. Director Don Irwin of the colonization, says, however, that in laying out the farm tracts efforts were made to avoid sour soil through tests. Of course, even though some sour acres are found on the tracts, commercial fertilizer could restore the land's sweetness in a year or two.

#### Uses Milwaukee Drier

One farmer in the valley, A. A. Shonbeck, has used commercial fertilizer successfully. He is considered a large scale farmer, having some 120 acres under cultivation. One piece of his equipment, a hay drier made in Milwaukee, cost him \$10,000 last year. It is the only one in Alaska. Through oil heat it makes wet hay dry in 20 minutes.

John Griffith came into the valley from California several years ago and has had no trouble getting good crops. His trouble has been finding a market for his products, but he expects to join the colonists' Palmer co-operative—as do many of the other earlier settlers—and hopes that it will solve his marketing problem.

Incidentally, Griffith's biggest disappointment in Alaska has been his cow. He brought a cow with calf from California. She produced a bull calf which was fine. He bred his dam to her son, and—

"Dammit, I got another bull. Now I've got three more bulls in a row and no cows. What I want is cows, so's I can get some milk. Well, my old cow is with calf again and this time I'm hoping the colonists' being here will change my luck."

Irwin plans that the colonists' main cash crops will be peas, cabbage, potatoes, carrots, parsnips, beets, turnips, onions, lettuce and various berries and fruits. He expects wheat, oats, rye, hay, barley and flax to be principally for subsistence.

#### "Let Me Roll in It"

"This soil can't be beat for any of

that stuff," he tells the  
"You'll be amazed at the way  
grow."

The colonists already have  
amazed by the stories of how they  
grow—grass four and five feet high,  
beets as big as a man's head, straw-  
berries the size of coffee cups. But  
when you see day merge into night  
and night merge into day with hardly  
an hour of darkness and when you  
cup Matanuska's soil in your hands  
and sniff it's sweetness, you're in-  
clined to explode, as Perle Archer of  
Cumberland did:

"Brother, let me at that land. It's  
beautiful. It makes me want to get  
down and roll in it."