

Alaska Colony

He does it, and the more.

Dances of Dancing

out on the floor, the dancing their ladies, and are swinging them round, crisscross, up and forth—flea hoppers, two-steppers, a general's who just walks backward and varies a little except for a stiff sort of way.

native Indian couple and. She's got on tennis wearing a buckskin

you don't dare cut in," list to another. But ad just enough Brigadier (bottled, for you can't ink in Alaska) and he's the buckskin shirt on and bundles the tennis his embracing arms.

ce!" he shouts, and

1935

the women wear boots but a few boast fancy y are flowered or lid colored. Some of and the resident women mighty fine pictures are on the floor. There ong the men, in loudly and ties, but mostly t plain ordinary farm vy shoes and work

clock the music stops. ts coming out again, hour or two of rest. their cars and ramble wooded lanes; so ends in Matanuska.

A City Booms as of Yore in Alaska Wilds

You Walk Down a Street in Palmer, When You Come Back There Is Something New

BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN
OF THE JOURNAL STAFF

Palmer, Alaska—(By Mail)—Boom City, where things that can't be done are done every day . . . Boom City, mushrooming out of a wilderness . . . Boom City, which never sleeps . . . which throws grime in your eyes and makes you like it . . . which gives you hell and makes you take it. Boom City, that's Palmer.

Incredible, fantastic, confused, blundering, blustering, miraculous, every man for himself and yet every man for his neighbor, contrary today and obedient tomorrow. America, that's your Palmer.

Uncle Sam is doing this. It's his gold that's gilding the city. It's his men that are peopling the streets. It's his money that is peopling the valleys. It's his miners that are leveling the wilderness.

Five Are Now 1,500

They said in the Colorado and Yukon and Nevada gold rush days that it wouldn't be done again—this mushroom 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.

Airplanes Drop In

Special excursion trains run out from Anchorage. The fare is 6 cents a mile—one way. Wealthy excursionists zoom in out of the clouds, for Alaska is air-minded and enterprising pilots from Anchorage quickly established connections. The 40-mile trip costs \$25.

Before Boom City boomed, the Alaska railroad ran one train a week into Palmer. It operated this branch line by the calendar, instead of the time table. Now trains come in every day, bringing gravel, baggage, food, coal, lumber, stoves, tools, tractors, pencils and what have you.

Much of this stuff is dumped off along the sidings. The tiny station platform can't begin to accommodate it. Mattresses, bed springs, suitcases, big timbers and all clutter the railroad grade. By and by they disappear, when the consignee gets time to wander among them and find his own, only to be replaced in night or day by new shipments.

Trucks roll ceaselessly along the dirt roads—always either dusty or muddy. The workers operate them in shifts, for transportation is a real problem in Palmer and available equipment must not stand idle. Loaded until their sides bulge with freight and men, the trucks cut roads to ribbons. Roads must be repaired continually. A mudhole develops. Gravel rattles off the rail cars into dump trucks. Two or three loads are poured into the road hole. Half a dozen men spread them and the parade of trucks over them renews.

Forty-horsepower caterpillar tractors wriggle through the town, lugging wagons and trailers laden with supplies. They attack the cleared lands with their glistening plow blades and slicing discs.

In every great development cap-

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!"

Wisconsin

Best of Land Given Settlers

'Brother, Let Me Roll in It.' One Pioneer Exclaims on Seeing Rich Loam of Valley

BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN
OF THE JOURNAL STAFF

Palmer, Alaska—(By Mail)—You can't find a man among the unshaven, tobacco spitting oldtimers who inhabit this wild Matanuska valley who speaks badly of its soil. Even the dour boys back in the hills, who since Klondike days have been "clean mad for the muck called gold," concede its fertility.

Small wonder then that not one of the new colonists from Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota has uttered a complaint against the soil they have come to till.

Take Nicholas Weiler of Medford, Wis. He digs his booted toe into the black sandy loam, fashions a tiny pile of soil between his cupped hands.

Loam 12 Feet Deep

"See this?" he inquired. "You can't beat it. There's nothing like it where I come from. We had sand and a lot of it—red and yellow. Even 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

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
ly an hour of darkness and when you
cup Matanuska's soil in your hands
and sniff its sweetness, you're inclined
to explode, as Perle Archer of
Cumberland did:

"Brother, let me at that land. It's
beautiful. It makes me want to