Led by Minister, Pioneers Hold Memorial Day Rites in New Community Building

By ARVILLE SCHAEZEN

In the Journal State

POMERON, ALASKA
(May 31, 1953)

By RADIO - In the light of the soft midnight sun, the Matanuska colonists, Thursday remembered the brothers and fathers who were lost in service to the hall.

They met in the tiny temporary recreation hall, with guests gathered around the walls by the railroad where 170 regular train a week.

The sheltering canvas roof they bowed their heads and prayed and thanked God for the "new chance" He has given them.

Flag of Peace Preceding was the Rev. E.J. Bingle, stumpy Presbyterian pastor who came with the first of the colonists and hopped the train to bring them into the forest helping them with the many pioneer troubles that beset them.

"Thank God," the pastor said, "that we can meet here amid all his glory and the fine soil, with its majestic mountains and retreating forests."

At the front of the hall hung a faded American flag whose staff was a splintered stick. Around the plane gathered a violinist, a guitar player and two singers. Carried on wooden benches and clutched about the hall's edges was the audience. Eight little girls with wands in big ribbons wriggled on the first bench. Seven little girls and a girl conscious by smuggled on the second.

Mosquito Bothering

Claire Lachtan of Shell Lake, Wis., dressed in her best brown suit, assisted the Rev. Bingle. It was his duty to announce the program.

"Now the ladies' chorus is going to favor us with a couple of numbers," he announced gaily.

The women and girls sang "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and when applause flattered them beyond words came back with "Johnny, Get Your Gun."

In an aside, as the cheerful clapping subsided over the hills, the pastor remarked, "Those busy mosquitoes are getting bad."

And indeed they were. Only one person in the hall had wisely prepared against them. She was a woman of great proportions with striking eyes and a severe face."

Hall Is Dedicated

The booming, voiced strumming from the transient laborers' camp died - and the kids did.

Lester N. Truvel, the Alaskan architect on the project, spoke briefly in dedicating the building.

"I dedicate this hall to no religion, to no social group, but to you pioneers of Alaska," he said. "Let's call it Memorial Hall. Let's dedicate it to those brothers and sisters and fathers who are not here. May it be of service to us in making this project succeed."

30 Seconds of Silence

Now came the wandering preacher's turn to lead the flock in song.

"We are going to sing together," he explained. "Those of you who have books, hold up yours of you who haven't can hum the tune. We're going to sing 'Ta's' and then have 30 seconds of silence. This program is being sponsored by the colonists who were World War veterans - there must be 60 or 50 of them. You all know what 'Ta's' means."

"Breathe and with heads undergird the pioneers stood. Rev. Bingle breaks the silence. These are his words:

"God bless those who yet live that were connected with that terrible conflict. God bless those who live no more. Help us to be worthy followers of them. Amen."