



# THE MILWAUKEE

Fifty-third Year

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# 450

## Alaska Holds Great Hopes, Says Hopkins

Driving Over Last Frontier Big Experiment by U. S.; Journal Reporter Will Write of Trip

BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN  
OF THE JOURNAL STAFF

Why is the United States government spending \$900,000 to transplant 200 northern Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota families to an Alaskan wilderness?



Arville Schaleben

Director Harry L. Hopkins of the federal emergency relief administration answered that question Saturday, on the eve of the departure of the 67 Wisconsin families, in a statement to The Journal correspondent in Washington.

Mr. Hopkins said: "Alaska is about the only unsettled country we have left. Now we are driving over the last frontier. Alaska is in the same latitude as Sweden and Denmark, and it is possible that it may develop into a dairy and agricultural country, as those have done, because Alaska is warmed by the Japan current while they are warmed by the gulf stream. This is a great experiment we are undertaking. If our people succeed there is unlimited ground for settlement, for the government owns 98 per cent of the land of Alaska."

### Trek Starts Monday

The Wisconsin and Michigan families start their 4,000-mile trek to the Matanuska valley in Alaska Monday night and Tuesday. The Journal has assigned me to report their progress. I shall ride their trains to Seattle and their boat to Alaska, and I shall accompany them into the valley. The Journal will report their story—as they live it and while they live it.

*The cartoonist - R. A. Lewis -  
was a Pulitzer prize winner  
his name*



*The Spirit of 'On, Wisconsin'*

## French Arrest Nazi Trooper

be known that 117 of their number do not smoke, but that only 60 do not drink.

One question was: "How many times have you been tied down?"

## 500 in Jubilee

# Wisconsin's Veterans of Adversity Acc

## Families Heed Alaska's Call

First Wisconsin Group Picked for Colony Says, 'This Is Our Chance. We Are Ready'

BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN  
OF THE JOURNAL STAFF

Rhineland, Wis. — Alaska challenges, and the challenge is accepted!

Alaska offers life and independence to those who can wrest them from her sequestered soil. The families whom the desolation of some parts of northern Wisconsin could not beat because they wouldn't be beaten stand eager for the effort. They give an outsider the thought that they're equal to it, too.

The first five Wisconsin families named to participate in the government's colonization of the Matanus-

### Honeymoon for Pair

International Falls, Minn. (U.P.)—Romance Thursday entered the group of 67 Minnesota families who will depart Friday for Alaska to settle in Matanuska valley. Miss Catherine Scarlett, 26, attractive school teacher, was married to Gilford Lemmon, 29, a member of the Koochiching county contingent, who was selected at the last minute because of his outstanding leadership.

ka valley in Alaska are those of Carl Erickson, Rhineland; Victor Johnson, Harshaw; Martin Soyk, Minocqua; Wesley Worden, Three Lakes, and Henry James Roughan, Monico.

### Still Full of Fight

When you see before you the adversity they have suffered, it is inspiring indeed to find them still brimful of fight. They come out of their shacks, set amidst twisted stumps or slashings or outcropping rocks, and say simply and stoutly: "This is our chance. We're ready. We want to be independent and make our own living. We think we can do it up there."

"Up there!" What mystery and romance and adventure in the words. Yes, and what hard work. No one can sense that more fully than the young Martin Soyks. They know first hand what it is.

After their marriage they bought a little plot of land and dug into the stubborn soil and drew a living from it. Soyk, a natural born carpenter, planned a cottage of logs and he pounded it together amid the young pines which grew in their front yard.

Mrs. Soyk bore a son, whom they called Sonny, and another whom they called Jimmie. Life was hard but this young couple seemed equal to it. But then Mrs. Soyk grew seriously sick ("The babies were rather close together," she explained), and Sonny, too, became sick and he died.

### Fire Took Their All

That terrible blow was followed shortly by another. While away one day the Soyks saw smoke in the direction of their place and thought a haystack was afire. It proved to be their home and all their furnishings.

"All we had left," said Mrs. Soyk, "was the clothes on our backs. This place here is just a shack. Martin threw it together so we'd have something. We've wanted another place but it hasn't been very hopeful this last year."

"Well, then, what do you think about this Alaskan adventure?"

"We're going through with it, all the way. We're enthusiastic about it. I think we'll have a better opportunity to make a living. Here our place isn't big enough. I think we'll have a place large enough so we won't just have to depend on what work Martin can get as a carpenter."

"It's going to be hard work and the mosquitoes will be hard on Jimmie and the other children. Some of our neighbors envy us but others had a chance and wouldn't go. I can't understand how any young people on relief can turn down a chance."

### Three-Month Baby to Go

Wesley Worden has five children, the eldest 6. Patricia, 3 months, probably will be the youngest emigrant in all the party of 67 Wisconsin and 67 Michigan families sailing from Seattle for Seward, Alaska, on May 15. Worden, a slight, wiry fellow who's done a bit of roaming in his 37 years, knows emphatically why he's getting out of northern Wisconsin.

"Aw, hell, there's nothing here," he snaps. "I've been in the army and I've been to the west coast and I've been to hell-and-gone in Canada and I've never seen a spot where a man had less of a chance to make a go of farming. Yeh, there's a little huntin' here, then what?"

"I know there's real huntin' up in Alaska. I've hunted all over the country and I'll take the back seat from no one in huntin' and fishin'. I'm stuck right now for a gun and not a cent to buy one with. But of course that isn't the big idea. The one thing I want is a home. I'm sick and tired of paying rent and this relief proposition gives me a pain in the neck."

Worden confessed to a slick piece of domestic maneuvering in getting his wife Alaska minded.

### Let Wife Propose It

"I saw in the paper about this program and mentioned at home that some of the fellows had been talking about it. Well, my wife and I chewed the rag about it, talked about it. I didn't mention anything about wanting to go. Finally, she broached the subject and that hit me right in the eye. That's what I'd been waiting for. We applied to go and passed, kids and all, A No. 1. "You see this country all around here? Well, my dad homesteaded

## First Wisconsin Families Selected for Alaskan Project



THESE are members of the first Wisconsin families named to go to Alaska in connection with the government's colonization of the Matanuska valley. A typical family is that of Henry James Roughan of Monico, Oneida county. He is shown reading a story of the venture to his wife and five daughters, Dona Mae, Carol, Beatrice, Bernice and Edith. The lower picture shows the Roughan home, with the rude log house at the right and the barn in the background. It is typical of the desolate homes 67 Wisconsin families will leave behind, perhaps forever, when they sail for new homes in a new country.

through here 44 years ago. Now I'm going to do a little homesteading on my own. I'm going to a new country!"

Worden is an emotional, dramatic fellow. He threw back his corduroy cap, looked straight into the noonday sun and, with clenched fist raised on high, defied man, beast and the devil to keep him out of the fertile Matanuska.

Unlike his friend Worden, Roughan is neither expressive explosive. But he is determined. He has five daughters, the oldest 13, and a wife who, in answer to some of the discouraging reports about Alaskan agriculture, says:

"We don't care. We want to take a chance at it. There's nothing here."

### Dreamed It for Years

Roughan built his own place of pine logs three miles from Monico. It is on a cleared flat and you approach it through a discouraging lane of protruding boulders and unsightly stumps. You observe to Roughan that you can't understand how even weeds can grow on such land and he explains how he happens to be there.

"When things go haywire and you can't get a job—well, you'll hole in anywhere, won't you?" he says.

To Mr. and Mrs. Victor Johnson a home in Alaska will be a dream fulfilled. Both longed for years for the far country and so by their marriage only a year ago and the grace of the government they will experience cherished ambitions together.

Mrs. Johnson, a former school teacher, once tried to get a job teaching in Alaska. Johnson made plans to go to Alaska 15 years ago. He has read all about it, knows its virtues and shortcomings. A carpenter with plenty of northern Wisconsin farming experience, young and intelligent, he seems exceptionally endowed to triumph over the hardships of a pioneering venture.

The Johnsons have a lively terrier dog named Nerts. He's first on the list of the possessions they are taking along.

### She'll Take Her Dolls

Carl Erickson, a carpenter now living in Rhineland who formerly was a farmer, has three children, Lavon, 11; Cameron, 17, and Eugene, 22. Liveliest of these is Lavon. She has the map of the Scandinavian peninsula, where her parents were born, written all over her pretty face. She thinks going to Alaska will be "just lovely."

"My mother said I could take all my dolls, but I can't have a playhouse. There's no place for that in Alaska," she says. "And my dad says maybe he'll get me a gun. My parents think there's no future here for us kids or for them either, that's why they're going."

"We're going to take three beds and a cot and a dresser, and we're going to get a gas motor for our washing machine. All the kids in school wish they were me to go, and all the people tell my mother that now she can get back to Norway without going over the ocean."

"That's fine," the reporter interrupted, "but I suppose you have some boy friends you hate to leave."

"Well, there are some in our grade that I like pretty well but not so much that it'll burn my heart to leave them. The one I liked best spilled ink all over the back of my dress, so he's not so hot either."

"But they'll write to you, won't they?"

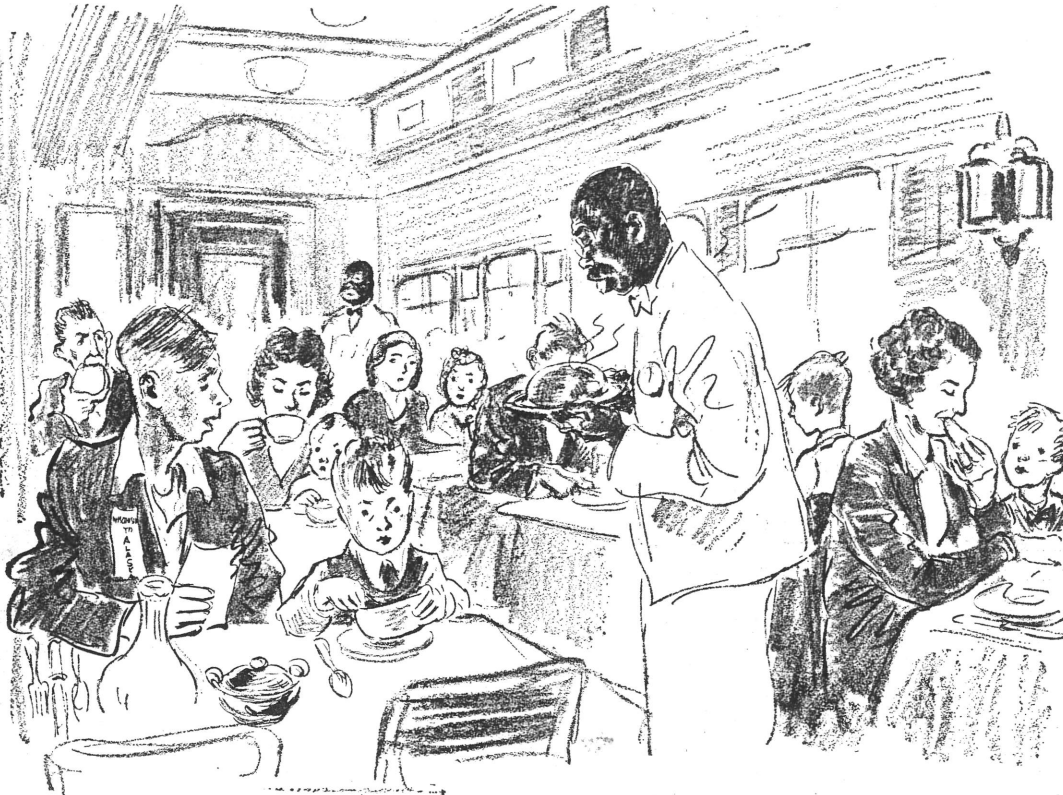
"Yes, but I'll have to write first so they'll know where I am. You can't just say 'Alaska' and expect a letter to find you."



Photos by Arville Sch.

# Life With the Wisconsin and Michigan Delegations as Modern Pilgrims Head for Alaskan Farmlands

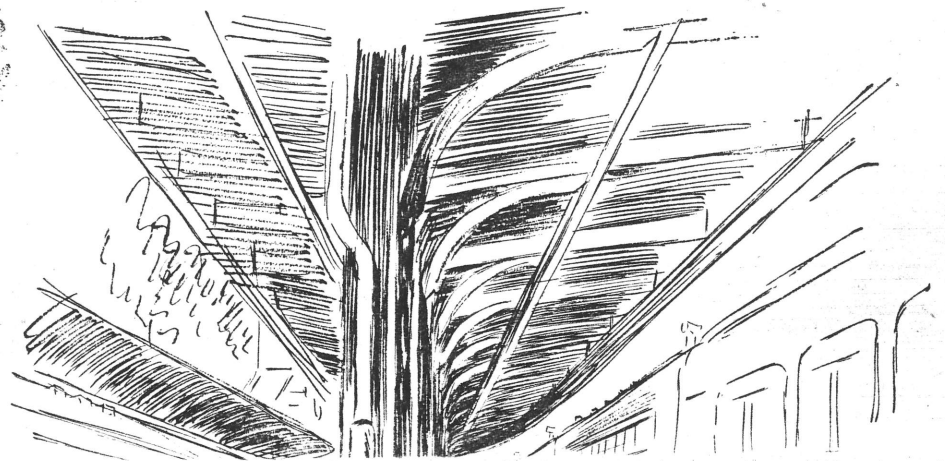
Sketched by Einar V. Quist, Journal Staff Artist



Eating on a Dining Car—mmm



Sleeping on the Day Coach—a Study in Angles



### Alaskan Pioneers Start First Log Building, Clear Townsite



[Photos by Arville Schaleben, of The Journal Staff]

THE Minnesota-Michigan-Wisconsin colony at Palmer, Alaska, faces a serious problem in getting settled before winter arrives and these pictures show that construction work is being rushed as fast as conditions make possible. Above, the Alaskan pioneers are shown starting the construction of the colony's first log building—an office for the construction division at the construction camp. Below, others are shown cleaning out brush on the townsite.

Other groups wanted to join Camp 5 in operating a sawmill now there.

**Councilman Is Ousted**

Conners was voted out as councilman because of his views and replaced by Ernest Porterfield of Michigan. After the meeting the men stood around arguing until John Bradley of Douglas county told Al Covert of Michigan to "keep your mouth shut so Conners can talk."

"You keep your mouth shut," Covert answered, "or I'll shut it for you!"

It happens that Covert and Bradley hold adjoining tracts and Bradley said: "If we're going to have an argument let's settle it now."

They grappled and fell with Bradley on top. The Bradley faction stood at one side yelling, "Let him have it, John! Let him have it!"

And someone on the other side answered, "Yeah, they're both 21, let them go."

**Men Pull Wife Out of It**

Mrs. Covert, in tears, jumped on Bradley as he held her husband down, but men in the crowd pulled her away. Bradley said he wouldn't hit a man while he was down, but he kept Covert pinned down so long that the Michigan man finally suggested, "Why don't someone serve cake and coffee!" and in a few minutes the two agreed to shake hands.

Since then, however, the Conners faction, badly outnumbered by the Porterfield faction, has refused to join in general colony sawmill operations—in which all men colonists are divided into work crews according to whatever they're fitted for—and declare they will build their own houses. They have asked for a team and wagon with which to get out logs.

"I don't care if we get only a shack," Bradley said Friday. "I don't need a mansion this year anyway. The only thing is that people back home think we are working in harmony and I wish we could."

just a blueprint, and onion graders for a prospective marketing cooperative although onions are just beginning to shoot sprouts through the fertile soil.

Speaking of soil, it was most disheartening last week for 11 colonists to discover that through error by surveyors they had been allotted tracts which were mostly gravel covered only by moss instead of the rich earth they so loudly lauded when they looked at it around Palmer. Irwin, who has stuck with the colonists through many annoying and unanticipated problems, immediately ordered new tracts for the unfortunate "gravel pit owners" as they designated themselves.

Well, no wonder the sturdiest pioneers who ever came to conquer a "last frontier" are beginning to grumble! No wonder, too, that loyal Colonist Ray Wilkes threatens grimly:

"Maybe we'll have houses when snow flies; we're going to do our

damndest to get at least some kind of shacks up, and I think we can make it if we get the breaks. But if we don't and there's women and children without shelter, some of these fellows are going to have some explaining to do—and maybe it won't be over an office desk or radio either!"

**Fist Fight Over Logging**

Once again fistcuffs have been resorted to in the new colony and this time the results were serious. Wounds have been created that certainly must prove harmful if and when planned co-operative marketing of products develops.

The latest difficulties involving personalities occurred in Camp 6, one of eight temporary home camps scattered throughout the valley. The camp is split wide into two factions, so bitter toward one another that their members refuse to work with opposing members.

What to do about sawing logs caused the trouble. A group headed

by Camp Councilman George Conners, from Douglas county, Wisconsin, wanted to go into the woods and cut down logs for their own houses and later get a sawmill.

These are most amazing proofs of what that Ab Jenkins drove his 5,000 pound hot salt beds of Utah, 3,000 miles per hour, with temperatures of 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. These are most amazing proofs of what that Ab Jenkins drove his 5,000 pound hot salt beds of Utah, 3,000 miles per hour, with temperatures of 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

**QUESTION 3—"Without sacrifice will they give me longer economical tires I can buy?"**

**ANSWER—Firestone High Speed Tires, but also lowest cost per mile resisting tread built with higher speed rugged, scientifically designed tread.**

**ALIKE ON THE OUTSIDE THEY ARE DIFFERENT**

**QUESTION 2—"Are they blowout-proof?"**

**ANSWER—Firestone Gum-Dipped Tires have the most amazing records for being blowout-proof of any tires ever built. In the grueling 500-Mile Race at Indianapolis, May 30th, every one of the 33 cars was equipped with Firestone Gum-Dipped Tires. Kelly Pettilo won the race and broke the record over this 26-year-old rough brick track without tire trouble—in fact, not one of the 33 drivers had tire trouble of any kind.**

Anchor Oil Co.  
Texas Co.  
ned Stations

237 S. 1st St.  
vice Station  
a Court  
W. Greenfield  
vice Station

#### Talk Desertion as Colony Lags

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11]

other colonization problem, was overlooked. In the first place, just two bands of steel, representing the Alaska railroad, connect this wilderness with the rest of Alaska, there being no highway. It is a small system whose trains chase themselves around innumerable curves like a dog after its own tail. The entire railroad has only some 70 cars and there are some 12,000 and more tons of freight coming into the colony!

Approximately 4,000 tons have come into Palmer to date and it has kept the railroad practically swamped. Costly freight that never should be left uncovered has had to be dumped off and piled around Palmer to make cars available for more shipments. Bad weather could ruin thousands of dollars' worth of equipment.

**Tools Never Came**

Complicating the problem, materials have been shipped out of the United States that will not be needed for months.

"I've wired the shipping agent at Seattle time after time what we needed and had to have," Director Irwin declares. "I've told him ahead of time so we'd have things here when needed."

What has happened? Two hundred kits of tools, such as hammers, axes, saws, levels and planes for cutting house timber and erecting cottages, should have been here when the colonists arrived. They are still missing. Authorities here bought up all possible tools at Anchorage and Seward and these, with what the colonists brought along, are all that there has been to work with. Sixty-nine horses arrived a month ago. They were to be hooked onto wagons to haul timber out of the woods and supplement the over-taxed trucks on other haulage, but no wagons have come. They finally borrowed six in the valley and that is all they could get. Whiffletrees, which could be used on hand made sleds snaking timbers out, arrived one day, but there are no clevises.

"Wo are we, wo are we!" cried colonists helplessly and more official telegrams burned the wires.

**Unneeded Supplies Sent First**

But among the things which have arrived are eight carloads of cement which won't be used for months, retorts for a cannery whose site is not even staked out, radi-

## One Alaska Thorn Gone

Architect Is Removed by FERA; Prices Cut and Tools Arrive

BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN  
OF THE JOURNAL STAFF

Palmer, Alaska (By Radio) — N. Lester Troast of Juneau, one of the key men of the Matanuska colonization, is through with the project. Although he is still here, the FERA at Washington has dispensed with his services as architect. Troast has been recalled by the bureau of Indian affairs, of which he is an architect. The action is taken ostensibly because of press of business.

Actually much pressure had been applied here by colonists and others to have Troast released. The settlers blame him for much of their trouble in getting started on homes and they freely voiced dissatisfaction with him. They rank him as one of the "Juneau politicians" whom they hinted at in their wire to President Roosevelt Monday.

Troast's recall, however, came before the colonists appealed to the president. He was ordered last week to take the first available boat back to Juneau.

### Prices Are Revised

Word came Tuesday that the colonists' fight for lower commissary prices had been recognized. It is understood that corporation officers at Juneau have ordered revision of prices on some things.

Thousands of dollars of business has been done at prices based on so-called emergency purchases at Anchorage and the corporation has agreed to absorb the loss. In consequence all bills accumulated by colonists to date are being revised downward. Some emergency prices are said to be 35 per cent above what government supplies would have cost.

Director Don Irwin had another problem Wednesday after a visit by W. M. Sherman of Seward, Kenai district fire ranger. Sherman pointed out many existing fire hazards and provided a list of equipment needed. This included radio sets for outlying camps to notify headquarters in case of fire.

### Crews Are Short

With the arrival finally of long waited tools, more and more colonists have begun cutting logs for homes. There are now two homes under construction, with logs cut for more and both portable sawmills going with two shifts after the missing drive pulleys came. Foreman Ferber Bailey of one mill complained, however, that he had trouble getting enough colonists for crews.

"We ought to have 74 men on our mill but today we had only 34," Bailey said. "I think too many guys are doing too much sitting or fishing. We'd be better off if they went home to the States."

## Trials of Pioneers Bring Families Closer Together



[Photos by Arville Schaleben of The Journal Staff]

FAMILIES are knit more closely together by the trials of pioneer life in Palmer, Alaska. There is no place to go, so they work and play together. Shown splitting wood in order to build a fire are (left to right) Jimmy Pippel, Wilbur Seiber and his brother, Robert. At the right is a colonist washing his hands in a basin of water warmed by a wood fire.

## Love Light Is Revived by Alaska Hardships

This is the second of a series of four stories on family life in the Matanuska valley colony.

BY STAFF CORRESPONDENT OF THE JOURNAL  
Palmer, Alaska—(By Mail)—Pioneering, such as the 200 families from the States are doing here in the Matanuska valley, knits a matrimonial bond far stronger than that woven in the normal everyday life of the States.

For even though these families are for the present huddling under America's gold lined wings, here in Alaska this life is half a question of rustling food and conveniences for one's self. Thus the good man leans more heavily on his wife and she on him.

I am certain that hands have been held here that had not been held since the preacher said, "I pronounce you man and wife," and that in some instances gentle love taps under the

chin have replaced taps of a very different intent.

Now when so much must be done in getting homes ready before fall's first snow, the ordinary family day begins at 5 or 6 a. m. Husband arises with wife, instead of lying idly for another half hour snoring, and helps her get the breakfast. With them arise the children. Broad daylight reigns long before that hour and lively children simply will not stay in bed.

Thus there is quite a problem at the wash bowl—most families have but one.

The husband steps outside his tent and gathers an armful of wood for a fire; the mother gets ready to heat the water. Mr. Pioneer tidies up first, for it's his job to get breakfast started while Mrs. Pioneer washes herself and her children.

### All the Food You Want

A wealth of breakfast supplies are one hand—two or three kinds of commercial breakfast foods, oatmeal, bacon or ham and eggs, the best

brands of coffee, fresh or canned fruits, and wheat, whole wheat or rye breads. All these things are carried in the camp commissary.

Each family is permitted to get what it wants simply by signing for it. This is a new experience for most of them, who came off relief in Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota, and they've been working the commissary staff to death. They are supposed to be on a food budget averaging \$300 a year. In the first three weeks some of them bought \$100 worth of stuff. They utterly forgot the day of reckoning.

After breakfast the family members go their separate ways. Sometimes they all get together again at noon but most often not until any time from 6 to 11 o'clock, when the man hikes or hitch-hikes home from work.

### Family Always Waiting

Then come the most pleasant hours of the day. A few tents have radios, and Mrs. Lloyd Bell has a piano. Many of the colonists have guitars or banjos or violins and get together for restful, homely music—no jazz, just "Oh, Susanna," "When It's Springtime in the Rockies," "There's a Long, Long Trail Awaiting," and the like.

"These nights in Alaska are great," says Harold Davis, a big strapping

fellow with a beard as black as the soil. "I can get home damn near any hour and my wife and kids are waiting for me. Sometimes they come into the woods to meet me. My property is right at the edge of Camp 6, where we live, and it ain't no trouble for them.

"We go over to the neighbors and chin pretty often—just talking about our work or exchanging pieces of news we pick up about the States. Only trouble is we never know when to go to bed and it's hard for m' wife to get the kids to sleep on account of there being no dark outside."

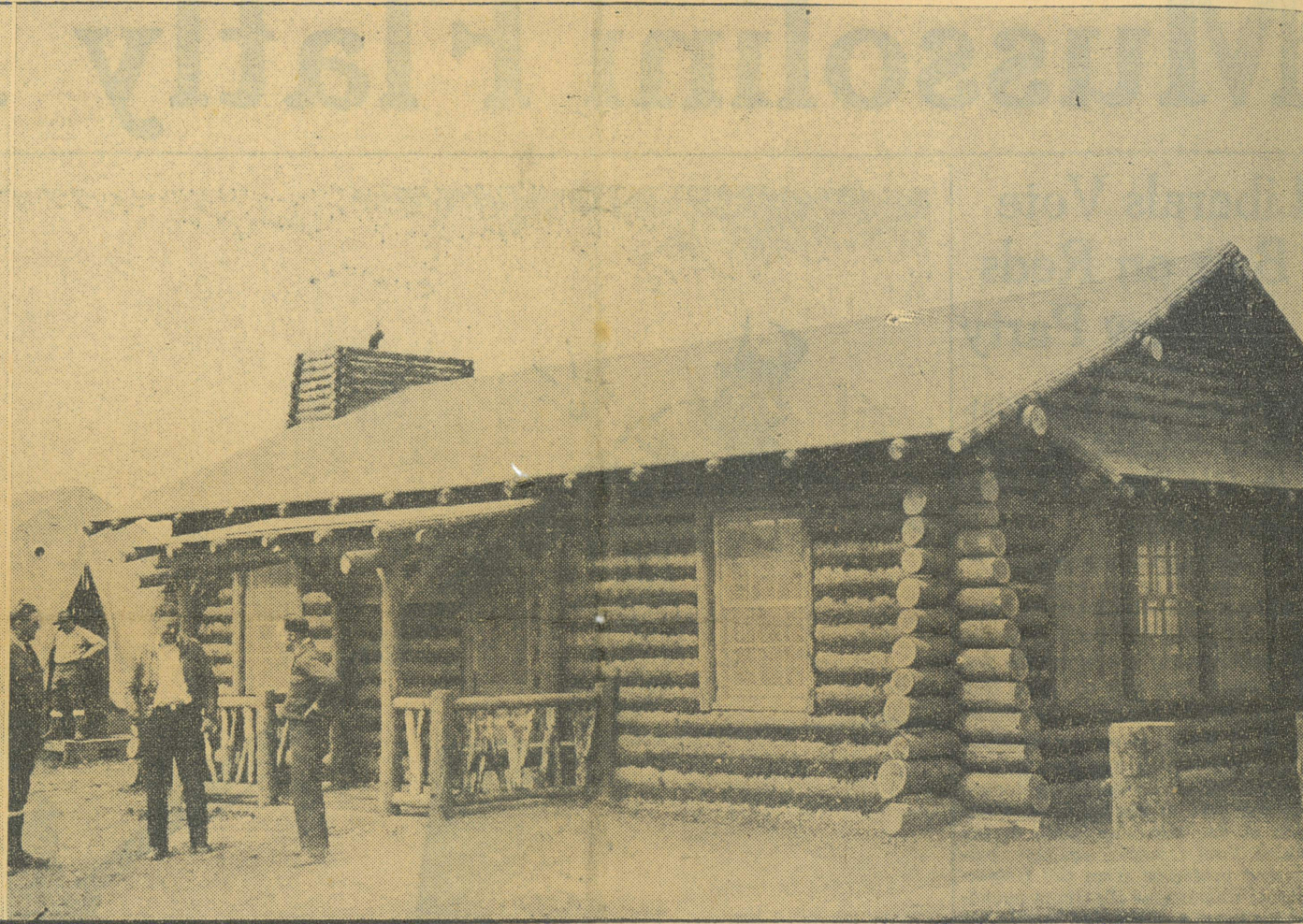
### And Sometimes Poker

Often the adults join in somebody's home for a game of cards, played perhaps on a home made table. Whist is more popular than bridge, as are hearts and rummy.

Occasionally the men sneak off by

# Politicians Put Own Heads on Block; Now the Ax Is Near

*Sorrow Strikes Alaskan Colony—First Funeral Is Held; Construction Headquarters Completed*



[Photos by Arville Schaleben of The Journal Staff]

**T**HE first funeral in the Alaskan colony was a solemn, simple event. The crowd of mourners is shown coming out of the temporary recreation hall just after the little casket containing the body of Donald Henry Koenen, 4, of South Range, Wis., had been placed in the back of a truck for the trip to the cemetery. Donald, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Koenen, died of a heart attack. The trim log cabin office of the construction division is shown in the other picture. Shown outside the building are Frank U. Bliss (left), former director of construction; Architect Gene Sedille and Alan Perkins (right), acting director of construction.

# Sorrow Strikes Alaskan Colony—First Funeral Is Held; Construction Headquarters Completed



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Wednesday, July 24, 1935

# Sudden Shift in House Plans Brings Howl From Colonists

## Call Buildings 'Sheep Sheds'

Matanuska Officials Kept  
Busy Soothing Settlers;  
Move Intended to Speed  
Construction

BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN  
OF THE JOURNAL STAFF

Palmer, Alaska—(By Radio)—A sudden change in house plans for the Matanuska valley colony, in order to speed construction, brought the wrath of colonists down on the heads of officials Monday.

With astonishing speed the rumor spread throughout the valley that the government was trying to pawn off "sheep sheds" on the new settlers in place of the handsome little homes they had expected. Until officials could explain what it was all about, there developed a general rush on administrative headquarters, with a yowl reminiscent of some of those which went up so often during the eventful last half of June, when the colonists first began to realize that they could not have everything they had expected, due to inadequate supplies and construction delays.

### "Just a Chicken House"

Some of the men colonists got hold of somebody's rough hand drawing of what they imagined the new houses to be. It showed a structure 40 feet long and 10 feet wide, divided into three equal rooms.

"Hell, that's just a shed," stormed Dean Ballard. "They can't get away with that."

"I never lived in nothing but a regular house and I'm not going to start living in a sheep shed now," added Arthur Hack. "Half the camp will quit on this one."

"I'd been planning a pretty house and now I'm getting a chicken house," another lamented.

Finally the boys got up enough steam to surround the door to the architect's office and cornered Ross

Sheely, who was recently placed in charge of homesites. Sheely would no sooner get through explaining to one crowd when another would pepper him with threats to leave and demands as to what he was going to do about it. He was kept busy most of the afternoon.

The rumpus boiled down to this: The time before winter is considered so short that officials have decided they must build some 75 frame houses. They won't be completed houses. They'll be so-called "growing houses"—that is, the primary structure consisting of three rooms in a row with a total length of about 30 feet are to be built to assure shelter for all. Then those who need more room may add to their houses, possibly with government assistance, when there's time this fall, next winter, next summer, in 1941, or whenever they get to think of it.

### Fuller Misses the Fun

The design as explained by the architects seems sound. Most colonists appeared not too greatly disturbed when the "sheep shed" idea was dissipated.

"Speed, that's why we're doing it," Sheely asserted. "Right now it's a case of where the roof counts most, and we're going to be sure we have them."

S. R. Fuller, Washington's temporary director of the colony who had gone on an inspection trip to Camp Butte to discover how to handle the construction of 30 houses to which nothing but a muddy wagon road now leads, missed most of the excitement. The house change rumor somehow beat him there, however.

"Those fellows are real workers," Fuller said of the Butte colonists. "They're out there sweating and knocking over trees and they are real pioneers. They asked me about the changes. I explained them and said they could build all the fancy work onto their houses they wanted to when they get time. The men said that was all they wanted to know. I didn't find one who had any fundamental kick with the country."

Inquiring colonists were assured that frame houses would not cost more than log houses, and maybe less. They are to be built on tracts where logs are not available. Material will be pre-fabricated as much as possible.

### Trim Details, Save Hours

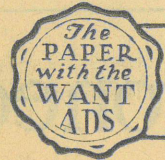
Officials are also considering plans to cut out some details of the log cottages. They would omit for the time being such things as alcoves, porches and other features which add to appearance but not to comfort. Elimination of one alcove alone, it is estimated, will save 125 man hours per cottage.

Scattered over the valley now is much "boughten" material for homes. It is being trucked to home sites as fast as it arrives and stacked there awaiting the time when it is to be used. That is a precaution against what the rainy season will do to the roads. It is comforting evidence to the colonists that foresight is finding a place in the project.

Many of them say, "That's what we needed all along," and they are showing appreciation by being more willing workers.

"They are buckling down pretty good," said Sheely, who is also in charge of colony labor. "I think they could do better—and they will—but they are at least showing that they are not loafers at heart."





Friday, July 19, 1935

# Alaska Colony in Gear Now, Problem Is to Make It Run

## New Officials in Job Line-Up

### Money Spent Freely by Fuller; Army Man Is Determined to Finish Settlers' Homes

BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN  
OF THE JOURNAL STAFF

Palmer, Alaska—(By Radio)—A fast acting corporation president, snatched out of private life to save a sinking administration project, Thursday had finished gearing up a machine to house the Matanuska valley colonists. Now the problem is to make it run.

S. R. Fuller, special emissary from Washington, set trusted Lieut. Col. L. P. Hunt of the marine corps at the top of the heap, and then laid out new and former big time officials on an equal footing, responsible directly to Hunt when Fuller leaves, which will probably be next week. This move is intended to centralize control and stop bickering among various factions.

Col. Hunt is prepared to wield the big stick. He is a typical army or-

ganizer — blunt, quick, forceful. When diplomacy fails he will swing an iron fist.

#### "Must Have Breaks"

Viewing construction in the first nine weeks of the colonization project, Hunt says: "I think it's damn far behind." Of the future he says: "It's a race against time. I think we'll win. We'll get those houses up, but we haven't got any margin. We have got to have the breaks."

Fuller came here with authority to spend money as fast as necessary. When he leaves he will delegate that authority to Col. Hunt.

Already the new order is dipping into Uncle Sam's money bag. Some 85 Alaskans are to be hired as working foremen. It is estimated that it

## Gold in the Valley!

Palmer, Alaska—(U.P.)—Discovery of gold on one of the colony farms in the Matanuska valley served Thursday to allay some of the discontent of the homesteaders. Anton Anderson, veteran of the early gold seeking days of Alaska territory, struck "pay dirt" in digging a water well. He tried to keep his find a secret but it leaked out and colonists gathered in excited groups. Anderson said pannings showed "substantial values," but other sourdoughs claimed the area had been prospected thoroughly and little gold would be found there.

will cost \$1,000 daily to pay and feed them. Assuming that the cabins are done by Oct. 15, which is the goal, their cost probably will exceed \$75,000. That and other thousands of dollars have been charged up against government blunders. The first 30 foremen are due Monday.

The reader might wonder why the project needs so many foremen. Actually they'll be just glorified workers, so titled to get around the FERA law which permits hiring only relief labor plus certain skilled men.

In addition to the foremen more than 70 transients are due from the States on the next trip of the North Star. If even more are needed, more will be obtained, for the rule on the colonization project now is "get it done and count the cost afterward."

#### New Hospital on List

The cottages will be of logs if possible. If not, frame house lumber is already ordered—and almost certain to be used. Sash will be cut and hammered into homes. Fuller said the colonists will have to expect to build their own livestock shelters. For those who will not or cannot, a big temporary barn is to be built at the community center for winter use.

One piece of urgent community center construction besides the warehouse ordered by Co-ordinator Eugene Carr has been added to the building program for this year. Plans have been drawn for a hospital costing \$15,000 to \$20,000. It is to accommodate about 25 beds this year, with space for 15 added later.

Dr. C. Earl Albrecht, who was rushed here during the scarlatina emergency, will be the permanent colony physician. Arrangements have also been completed to have an Anchorage dentist make periodic visits to Palmer.

There are now 15 cases of scarlatina and scarlet fever in the temporary isolation hospital made from the community dance hall. Dr. E. E. Ostrom, physician for the transient who has also been looking after the health of the colonists, said that only one case of measles and a few scattered cases of mumps are current in the camp.

Fuller declared that the new plans solve the health, sanitation, police, fire and school problems. A permanent doctor and a hospital will take care of health, he feels, while government sanitation men who arrived with him have been insisting on proper sanitation measures in the camps. Twelve men under a chief have been designated as colonial police to control thievery and disorderly conduct. Merrill Sulzman, the Catholic priest here, has been named to organize the fire fighting force.

To provide schooling as soon as possible, it is planned to erect four frame buildings as temporary schools. They will be situated in farm communities throughout the valley. It is believed that the remainder of the pupils can be taught at the Wasilla and Matanuska village schools.

Of the high powered staff which Fuller brought with him, three will remain here until essential construction is completed. They are Col. Hunt, A. M. Goodman, farming expert, and Lieut. H. V. Martin, an engineer. The others will return with Fuller on the United States cutter Shoshone which has been waiting at Seward under Fuller's orders since the arrival of the group.

Also returning on the Shoshone will be Frank U. Bliss, former director of construction, who has been ill.

# Colonists Sign New Petition

## Settlers' Favorite Weapon Turned This Time to Aid Irwin

BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN OF THE JOURNAL STAFF

Palmer, Alaska (By Radio)—Don Irwin, first director of the Matanuska valley colony, stifled rumors Tuesday that he might resign as colony general manager and return to the Matanuska experimental farm, which he formerly managed. "I want to stay with the project and I am going to stay," he said.

The colonists, noting that for the formative period of the colony he had been replaced in top command by Col. L. P. Hunt, who came here with the Fuller commission, had circulated a petition that if Irwin quit they would demand return to the states. About 75 per cent of the colonists signed it.

### Had Tiffs With Carr

Irwin has been dissatisfied with certain changes in the administrative set-up made first by Eugene Carr, FERA co-ordinator, and later by S. R. Fuller, Hopkins investigator. Irwin had had several tiffs with Carr, who is now called business manager, and from time to time had expressed to the colonists that he felt like resigning and taking the position open in the agricultural experiment work.

Loyal to him as always, the colonists drew on their old standby, a petition, to express themselves. Incidentally this now provides Irwin with a substantial club in colony administrative politics that still come occasionally into the open.

"Some colonists told Irwin they were planning the petition and he said it would be all right, that it would show these new 'tin-hats' that the colonists were with him, and he could kind of hold it over their heads," one colonist confided.

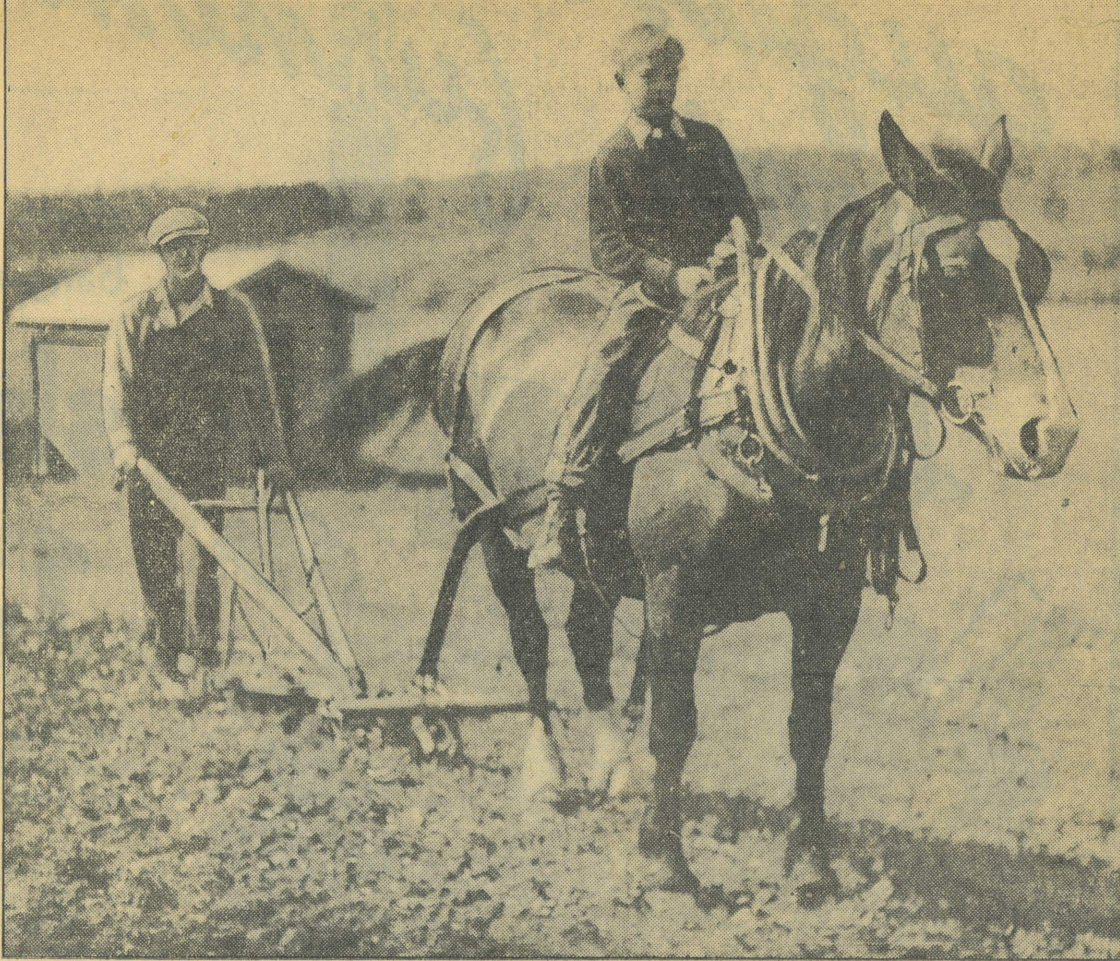
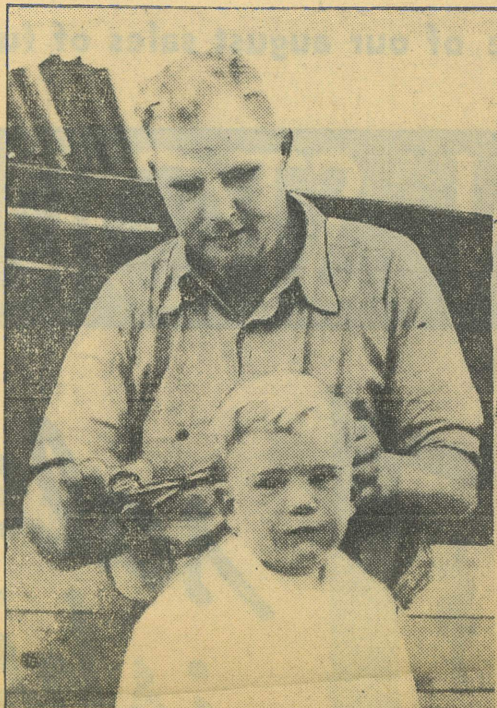
The petition also demanded that Irwin be restored to full authority on the project immediately. Under the arrangement set up by Fuller, he will again become general director in fact only after the main construction is completed. Irwin has pigeonholed the petition, but has displayed it to various officials.

### Rainy Season Begins

Intermittent rains, some of them heavy, have interfered somewhat with construction lately. The recently graveled main roads have stood up, but the minor roads into many tracts have aggravated the transportation problem. It is difficult now when there's a great rush, to get materials to homesites.

"It looks like the start of the rainy season," said Ross Sheely, an Alaska native. Hardly a day has gone past in a week in which some rain has not fallen, usually at night. The heavens have been dull, with low clouds, and daylight has shortened until it is necessary now to use automobile lights at 10 p. m.

# Hair Grows in Alaska; Colonists Hope Crops Will, Too



THE family washing is hanging out in Walter Anderson's front yard in the Matanuska valley, Alaska, and little Shirley Nichols, daughter of Harry Nichols of Luck, Wis., is just "hangin' around." "Heavy," a transient who headquarters at the colonists' settlement, is giving Harry Jacobs, 4, a haircut in the Jacobs' tent at Palmer. Harry's dad is Leo Jacobs, a Washington (D. C.) architect. The lower picture shows Lawrence Larson from International Falls, Minn., and Henry Jensen from Little Fork, Minn., cultivating a community garden at Camp 2, with young Larson on the horse.

[Photos by Arville Schaleben of The Journal Staff]

# Tax Valuation Is Protested

## Assessments Penalize Improvements, Is Cry in Eleventh Ward

Repairs and improvements to homes in the eleventh ward are being deferred indefinitely and property is allowed to deteriorate, according to Elmer Reinke, secretary of the Eleventh Ward Taxpayers' club, because of excessive assessments made for such improvements by Stanley Krolkowski, assessor for that district.

Krolkowski declined to comment. The club, Reinke said, is distributing affidavit blanks to support its charges and will turn them over to the common council and then petition the civil service commission for a hearing on the charges against Krolkowski.

"If the commission fails us, we are going to carry our fight to the circuit court, because we must have relief," Reinke said.

In many instances in which assessments were increased because of minor repairs or improvements, such work should have been exempt, the taxpayers' club claimed. Reinke told of a man on S. Thirty-first st. who built a garage for \$225 and learned that his assessment had been increased \$500, and of another man on the same street who painted his home himself, at a cost of \$60 and found that his assessment notice also carried an increase of \$500.

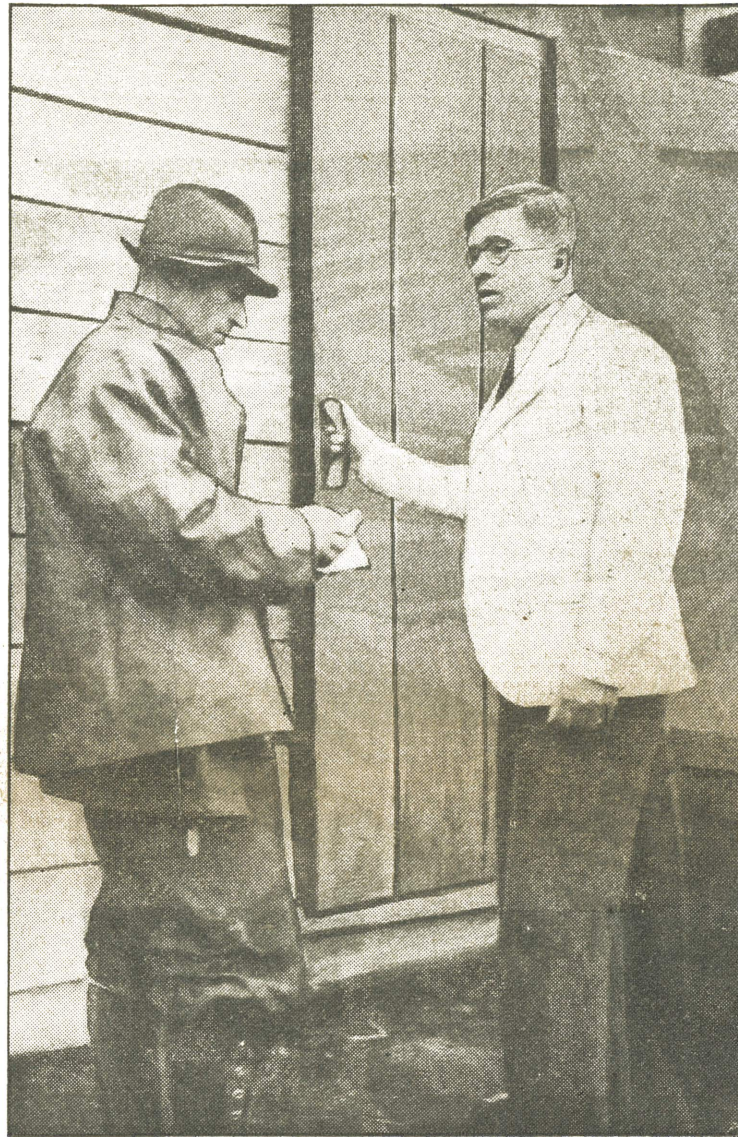
"The complaint has not been submitted to me," Louis A. Arnold, tax commissioner, said, "but this much is certain: We don't increase a man's assessment because he paints his house. We receive many complaints but after an investigation nearly all of them prove to be without grounds. Improvements made up to May 1, 1935, may be taxed. Improvements made during 1936 and 1937 are not taxable under a new law."

# Allotment Trails State Relief Load

Madison, Wis. (AP)—A sum of \$3,331,911 will be available for general unemployment relief in Wisconsin during August, State Relief Director Alfred W. Briggs said Thursday, explaining that the figure is 11 per cent less than that available for July.

Briggs said the federal allotment of \$2,500,000, which is \$244,706, or 9 per cent less than the requested

# Consulting the New Doctor



[P photo by Arville Schaleben of The Journal]

WILLIAM CASLER (left) of Mesick, Mich., confers with C. Earl Albrecht, the new physician for the Matanuska valley colony.

# Suit Over a Song Out of Tune With Facts, Is Answer

"Pop, Goes My Heart" has started a new type of popping at the federal building. An answer to a suit charging unlicensed playing of the song was filed Thursday in the federal court in behalf of Alfred and James San Filippo, operators of the Bright Spot cafe, 428 E. Detroit st.

The suit against them was filed in behalf of Gene Buck, president, and the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.

Many suits of this kind are filed, but none of them has ever been

the society have been studied by national and state legislative committees. Thomas E. Leahy, attorney for the San Philippos, said he would ask for a jury trial. The answer denies playing of the piece and asks for dismissal of the suit.

# Find Body of Infant

The body of a new born girl, wrapped in gingham cloth, was found floating in the Milwaukee river below the Racine st. bridge early Thursday. The baby had been dead about 10 days, according to the coroner.

Phone Your Want Ads to Marquette 6000.

**SPECIAL — Short Time Only! — SPECIAL**  
**OIL CROQUIGNOLE**

# Colony's Chief Topic: Where Is Our Market?

BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN OF THE JOURNAL STAFF  
Palmer, Alaska—(By Mail)—Some time or other in the course of any extended conversation among colonists, the men get to arguing about whether there will be a market for what they can raise in the Matanuska valley.

Most of them concede that they can draw a comfortable subsistence out of the soil. They also believe that they can produce enough to make a fair profit—if they can sell their surplus. Indications are that they can sell all their surplus—if they can capture the market.

For the 12 months ending June 30, 1934, United States producers shipped to Alaska \$2,234,684 worth of products which this valley could produce. These included beef, pork, mutton, poultry and fresh game, milk, butter, cheese, eggs, potatoes and various fresh and canned vegetables. The largest individual commodity was \$346,000 worth of eggs. The second largest was \$319,000 worth of beef.

## Market of 15,000

Matanuska farmers can conceivably sell to about 15,000 persons. Give them the equivalent of one-fourth Alaska's 60,000 population and you concede them about \$550,000 of Alaska's import business. Most Alaskan experts believe this figure too low. General Director Don Irwin of the colonization project estimates their market at \$1,000,000; Ross Sheely of the University of Alaska at Fairbanks puts it at \$800,000, and General Manager O. F. Ohlson of the Alaska railroad figures it at \$1,500,000.

But even taking the \$550,000 figure, it is plain that the approximately 200 new valley farmers and the 100 old have more market than they can supply with their surplus products. To reach this total each farmer would have to sell \$1,800 worth of produce yearly through the marketing co-operative the government intends to establish for them through the Alaska Rural Rehabilitation corporation when and if the colony gets into production.

The backbone of the market is the so-called "railroad belt" served by the government owned Alaska railroad. It extends 470 miles from Seward on the coast to Fairbanks in the interior and includes the environs of the rail towns. Col. Ohlson says the belt has 8,000 permanent residents.

## Vegetables by Plane

"You can't tell how much greater the population is in the summer, when this part of Alaska does most of her work," the colonel adds, "but

the railroad alone employs 1,000 men. That is an increase of about 50 per cent over the winter. I think one out of every five new men added comes from the States each spring and goes 'outside' again in the winter.

"Now then, besides the winter and summer railroad belt population, the Matanuska farmers can extend their



market through airplane service to mines. The airplanes carry a great deal of tonnage in fresh meats, eggs and vegetables.

"I don't believe that Alaska can ever export agricultural commodities. It's not in the cards. But the railroad belt is all the colonists will need."

Besides the railroad belt, the Willow Creek, Cash Creek and Broad Pass gold mining districts add to the potential market. Anchorage, which probably will become the marketing outlet for the valley, also supplies the Kuskokwim mining district, part of the Nome country and the fishing hamlets along Cooks inlet. The Bristol bay fish canneries area has a summer population of about 7,000 but gets few supplies through Anchorage.

## May Become Consumers

It appears from this study, therefore, that a market already exists in Alaska for the Matanuska pioneers. How different this is from the situa-

tion America's first western pioneers faced! For years they themselves made their only market until finally their productiveness became such that they could afford to ship back to the market they had left behind.

One of the chief complaints in the States against this FERA project develops from the thought, "Why send these families to Alaska when

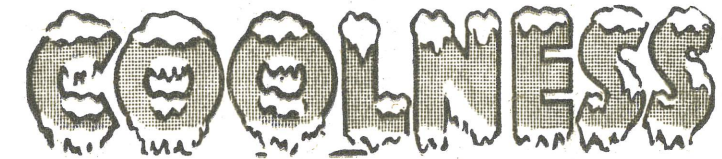
we have good land at home that they could be rehabilitated on?" The answer is that while most certainly the United States has the land, it does not appear to have the agricultural market at present.

Alaska has the market—now. If eventually the territory is to be peopled extensively by people who have not done so well in the States—and therefore could buy little—it may be

that through shrewd marketing the persons could become consumers of products from the States, such as automobiles, clothing and electrical supplies, which Alaska does not produce.

Many settlers have left the Matanuska valley in the last 15 years, claiming they could not market their products. This will be discussed in a second article.

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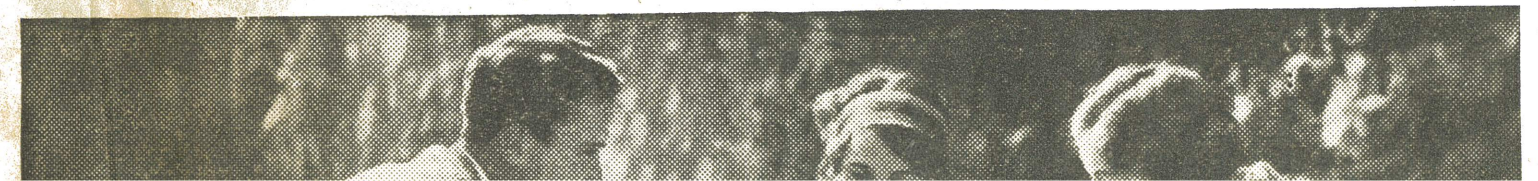
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Wednesday, August 14, 1935

# Colony Outlook Better as Everyone Works in Unity

## Even Officials Are Optimistic

More Than Half of Homes  
Finished or Started;  
Houses Are Attractive

BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN  
OF THE JOURNAL STAFF

Palmer, Alaska - (By Radio) - At the start of the fourth month of the Matanuska valley colonization project Monday, the construction report gave reasonable assurance that the settlers are going to get their houses before snow flies. Authorities are now optimistic and most colonists are rapidly following suit.

The records show 17 families in new homes, 61 homes started and 16 families living or preparing to live in homes that were on the tracts of land they drew. That leaves 81 homes to be started. Just 25 of 200 families have forsaken the pursuit of this experimental rainbow.

### Houses Are Attractive

Although in the rush for roofs no interior finishing has been attempted, the new houses stand out attractively in the woods. Tourists are constantly astonished at the beauty of both the frame and log dwellings.

Only 23 wells are ready. It is certain that some colonists will have to carry water despite the fact that more drilling equipment is due.

"Most of them have water within a quarter mile," Col. L. P. Hunt, administrator, said Monday. "A few may have to carry it farther. The well drillers will keep going right through the winter."

### Hunt Is Optimistic

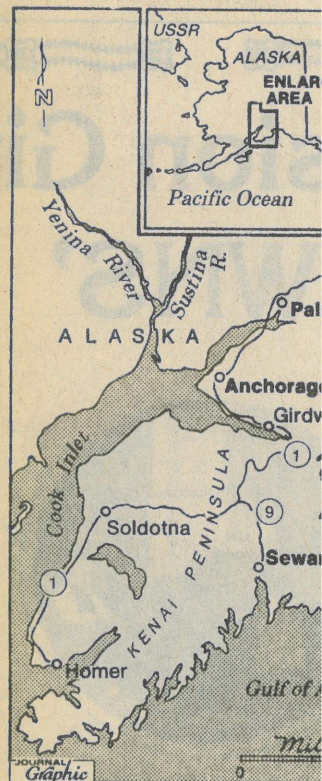
At the community center, the trading post is nearing completion, the floor of the permanent warehouse is laid, workers are excavating for the foundation of the hospital and the power plant is going up.

"We're making good headway despite the rainy days and the failure to receive some necessary replacement tools," Hunt said, in an optimistic moment. "We've sufficient building material for our immediate needs and have every reason to believe that other material will arrive on schedule."

"The colonists are turning to in fine shape on the houses, feeling in general is excellent and complaints are becoming fewer. The general health is good. I can see sunlight



When the Midwestern residents arrived in the Matanuska Valley (left) they were amazed by the surrounding mountains. They lived in tents until new homes were built.



## North to Alaska

### Colonists from Wisconsin mark 50th year in Matanuska

Special to The Journal

**Palmer, Alaska** — The year was 1935. Depression-era farm families from the cutover timber region of northern Wisconsin were locked into lean economic times.

Would they grasp at a financial straw offered by the federal government by volunteering to be colonists in the Territory of Alaska?

A group of 69 Wisconsin families — 134 adults and 174 children — took the dare, abandoned their marginal land and packed up for a 4,000-mile trip to start a new life farming in a land that would not see statehood for another 24 years.

Their destination 50 years ago was the fertile but undeveloped Matanuska Valley, 60 miles north of Anchorage. They became part of a project planned by New Deal social architects.

The project included 903 people from logged-out regions of northern Wisconsin, northern Minnesota and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan who made up what officially was called the Matanuska Valley Colony.

#### Lived in tents

The Matanuska Valley is a flat area ranging from 1 to 10 miles wide and 50 miles long. It now has a population of 34,000. When the colonists arrived in 1935, the valley had a population of about 700.

On May 22, 1935, the Wisconsin group anchored in a bay in Seward, Alaska. Cold winds whipped the icy rain typical of spring in southern Alaska. Through the clouds they could see the outlines of towering, snow-covered mountain peaks, a contrast to the land they left behind.

Colonists lived in 16-by-20-foot tents for about two months, then were allowed to choose their permanent homes — log or lumber — from five designs made in Washington, D.C. But none of the homes could have full basements or full foundations.

The colonists faced many disappointments. Some became disillusioned before the colony became self-supporting. Many families failed and went to Anchorage in search of easier and higher-paying work.

But others stayed, made good and became leaders in the experiment. Wisconsin's contributions to the colony still are reaping benefits for the former territory, which was admitted to statehood in 1959.

#### Now Senate president

Jalmer Kertulla, who was born in Milwaukee and was 6 when he left on that trip to the Matanuska Valley with his parents, is in his second term as president of the Alaska State Senate. He was speaker of the Alaska House for several years.

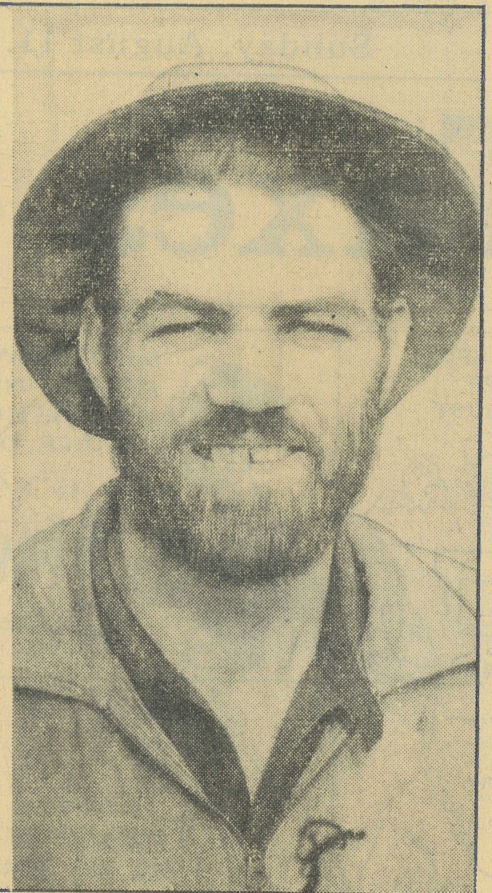
Turn to **Alaska**, Page 8



Grace Mornson of Shell Lake spent three years in Palmer with her family.

*Milwaukee Journal June 2 - 85*

# Now This Looks Something Like the Oldtime Pioneering



[Photos by Arville Schaleben of The Journal Staff]

WHAT with Will Rogers suggesting that Matanuska colonists need a polo team, maybe you have been wondering whether there is any pioneering going on. Norris C. Sturdy (right) at least looks the part; he's from Stambaugh, Mich., and is the first one to grow the beard approved by the ninety-eighters. At the left are Mr. and Mrs. Russell Pakonen of Iron Mountain, Mich., with the skin of a 400-pound bear shot by Pakonen and Harry Nichols. It's against the law to shoot black bears but Nichols and Pakonen said they had to shoot in self-defense when the bear approached the Pakonen porch. Mrs. Pakonen fainted in the yard when running for help.

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