

OUR STRANGE PEOPLE TO THE NORTH

By Frank G. Carpenter

(Continued from last issue)

As it is now, nearly every family in Hydaburg has stock in this trading company, and the people are rapidly growing well-to-do. Nearly every one has his gasoline launch and all have comfortable homes. The town elects its own officers. It has a mayor and councilmen and the business of the place is transacted in English. One of the first co-operative works was the building of a sidewalk. There was no money in the village treasury, but the young men brought in the proceeds of their season's fishing, and the Indian girls had a basket social, at which the food was charged for, the proceeds to go to the sidewalk. At that social \$290 was realized. This bought the lumber and the men gave their labor without charge. That sidewalk is the best in Southeastern Alaska. It is ten feet wide and more than half a mile long.

Since then the citizens have erected a municipal dock, which is 440 feet long, with a front of 55 feet. The co-operative store has created a hunger for business training, and business methods are taught in the school. The village has town meetings, at which all matters of public interest are discussed and the popular vote determines what shall be done.

The Haidas are not Thlingits. They belong to a different Indian family and for a long time their only home seems to have been on Queen Charlotte Island, in British Columbia. Later some of them moved to the west coast and about 200 years ago, according to their traditions, they drove the Thlingits out of a part of Prince of Wales Island and settled there. They have always been considered a superior Indian, and have had the reputation of being the best painters, carvers and canoe builders of Southeastern Alaska. In the past they hollowed their canoes out of single logs of cedar and they built houses with cedar beams and planks, which were worked out with adzes of stone. At one time there were something like 8,000 of them, but during our possession of Alaska the number in the United States territory has never been more than six or eight hundred.

The Thlingits are scattered everywhere throughout the Alexander archipelago and there are tribes that live on the mainland. Klukwan is a village of the Chilkats, on the Chilkat river not far from Skagway. The town is said to be 300 years old and to have once had a population of a thousand souls. Its people were traders, exchanging dried fish and oil for furs with the Athapascans of the interior. The Chilkats are great trappers. They have divided their hunting grounds among the various families and these rights extend from generation to generation. They have been noted for their skill in the various industries. They wove blankets a century ago. They also forged copper and did beautiful carving. Much of this skill has departed with the advent of civilization, but they now make moccasins and cut out totem poles and other things for the tourists.

The Chilkats are not as advanced as the Haidas, but the settlement of Klukwan has a co-operative store, which has just paid a dividend of 35 per cent. The store is so good that it gets much trade from the

whites, and it is said that the Indians come a distance of a hundred miles to buy there. Klukwan has its men's club, which holds meetings every week at which matters of town interest are discussed. Now the boys are talking of forming a clubhouse, with reading room, toilet and bath. The reading room will be large enough to hold meetings in. Magazines will be subscribed for and books added from time to time.

The government is trying to induce these Indians to go into canning and some canning machinery has been sent there. The school teachers advise that a sawmill be installed. They say that the boys are quick to learn carpentry, and they are now making chairs, tables and sleds in the school shops. Last year they began to work in sheet metal and made airtight stoves which sold from \$3.50 to \$5 each. Their sleds bring from \$7 to \$10 and cost about half that to make.

Among the other movements to better the Indians of Southeastern Alaska is that of school farming. Both children and adults are shown how to make gardens, and some of the villages are growing vegetables and berries of various kinds. At Klukwan they are raising turnips, potatoes and carrots, and also cabbages, peas and lettuce. One of the teachers reports that he has supervised the making of seventeen native gardens inside the Arctic circle, and that he has four large school gardens doing well. There are Indian gardens at Eagle, Fort Yukon and Klawock, and one has been started at Unalaska in the Aleutian island.

The government is doing all it can to improve the sanitary conditions among the Indians. The teachers are cleaning up the towns and the doctors and nurses of the Bureau of Education go from village to village and give directions for the care of the sick and how to keep the well healthy. It is estimated that 30 per cent of the natives have more or less consumption and that 8 per cent of the deaths are due to tuberculosis. Sanitary camps should be provided and means of preventing the spread of the disease inaugurated. The doctors have recommended a tuberculosis camp in Panchor. They want one established in the Chilkat valley between Haines and Klukwan.

Of late the Indians have taken up the fad of feeding their infants from the bottle. Many of them are doing that now. The women know nothing about the preparation of artificial food, and many of the children come out of the nursing stage feeble and scrawny. The school children are being examined for trachoma, adenoids and other diseases. They are taught to take care of their teeth and are warned against the using of tobacco and alcohol.

Alcohol is the great curse of the Indians of Alaska. Its sale is forbidden by law, but nevertheless whiskey is sold to the Indians, and it will continue to be sold as long as saloons are allowed in the white settlements. Of late there has been a strong prohibition movement, and the probability is that the territory will sometime vote itself dry. Congress is now appropriating a small amount per year to suppress the liquor traffic among the Indians, and it has its special employes who are working to do this, under the direction of the marshals and police.