

Southern Oregon Miner

SUCCESSOR TO JACKSONVILLE MINER

EIGHT PAGES

ASHLAND, OREGON, FRIDAY, MAY 10, 1935

COMICS AND FEATURES

"PIONEERING" MOVEMENT INTO ALASKA

By WILLIAM C. UTLEY

PROBABLY countless times since depression and drouth struck sub-marginal lands and poor farming country, farmers and their families, discouraged and in some cases destitute, have prayed for a chance to go away somewhere—anywhere—and start all over again, with nothing more perhaps than the strength of their hands and a few fundamental pieces of equipment, but with a clean slate and an equal footing for all.

In one of the most spectacular experiments the Brain Trust has yet devised, the Federal Emergency Relief commission is trying to determine whether a literal answer to that prayer is not, after all, the solution to the farmer's plight in many advanced cases of economic collapse.

The FERA is taking 200 families from drouth-stricken farms in northern Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, families who had just about given up all hope of ever again "making a go" out of their farms, herding them and a few of their effects into a boat and shipping them away to a brand new state and a new life—in Alaska.

Here is a land which to most of them is one so cold that ice cream bars are named after it, so wild that most of the life consists of Eskimos, caribou and grizzled prospectors panning for gold. But they care not. For them it is the land of new hope, and in it they are going to build a Utopia in the wilderness, where everybody starts from scratch and where, they are certain, reward will come in actual proportion to sweat and sincerity of effort.

The exodus has, in newspaper accounts somewhat colored, been called the "exiling of families to bleak territorial outposts," inferring a parallel to the exile of Russian peasants into Siberia. It is not like that at all. Nobody has to go who doesn't want to—and everybody in the party seems to be tickled to death of the chance.

Selecting the Company.

For the past few months FERA workers have been going about quietly selecting members of the company. This has been an exacting task, for only the purest American farming stock will be allowed to settle in the Alaskan colony. They must also be healthy and well equipped physically to stand pioneer life and temperatures which sometimes fall to 40 degrees below zero. Most of them are families that have been entirely dependent upon the government for their existence.

Along with the 200 families, 400 single men, CCC workers, are being sent to help in the hard work of starting the frontier Utopia. They will help in the clearing of government land and in the building which will be necessary.

Each family is allowed to take but 2,000 pounds of belongings. Many an heirloom, itself carried west in an earlier day by an earlier pioneer, is being left behind, making way for equipment that will be of greater value in the new life. There is no room for an unnecessary pound. Live stock and machinery are being disposed of, for at the end of their journey these families will get tools and equipment better suited to Alaskan

climate and terrain. Not a few heartaches may be imagined as some treasured possession, of great sentimental, but no practical value, is kissed good-by. But then, moving day is always a house-cleaning for non-essentials.

The average family making the trip has four members. Each family will have the benefit of a government drawing account of \$3,000, which must be paid back in 30 years with 3 per cent interest. To finance the project the government has set aside \$500,000. In some quarters it has been suggested that half a million dollars might be more wisely spent by buying these people new farm lands in the United States proper. This, officials declared, would be simply handing out alms, and one of the objects of the entire experiment is to find out whether such families can be rescued without alms.

The same officials admitted that the payment of the passage in itself constituted alms, but they claimed that the situation was modified considerably by an agreement that the money will be paid back when the new farm land produces more than a living for its people, if it ever does. Besides this, it is argued, the colonists will have a new mental outlook they could never attain were their new homes established in one

in many sections of the United States, will be turned into bird refuges, wild life preserves, forests and other adaptations, but will never again be farms.

Up in this rugged country Arctic winds chill the climate but at the same time warm Pacific currents from Japan temper it. It is not really as bad as imagined by those not familiar with Alaska. The winters are not really much more severe than those of many well-populated parts of Canada, and the summers are quite comparable to those of the Middle West, although the winters are longer and the summers shorter.

From Seward the little band will pass onward through Anchorage, which is the southern gateway to

Slips of paper, numbered, will be mixed up in a hat, just as at a raffle. The number on each slip of paper will correspond with the number of a plot of 40 acres of unsettled, wooded land. For temporary dwellings the Alaska Colonization corporation will have set up a tent on each plot. Each family, when it draws a number, will move into the tent designated by that number. The process will be repeated when the second half of the migration arrives.

All this land of new hope is entirely overgrown with spruce, cottonwood and birch. This must all be cleared away, and with the help of the CCC workers, the families hope to have a large share of the work done before the short

eral other capacities. It will be the center of all community life. It will have a community hall and a gymnasium where meetings, dances and entertainments of various kinds will be held.

If the workers are able to maintain the schedule laid out for them, the coming of the next winter will also find a comfortable dormitory for the teachers in the school, and a house for the manager of the colony. There will be erected a community industrial building which will include a creamery and a greenhouse. Construction will be speeded on a barn for 40 teams of horses, a warehouse, shops, garages, a community poultry farm and other essential community projects.

The permanent houses of the families will be equipped as are many modern farm houses in the States, with running water, wood-burning stoves, chemical toilets and other conveniences. About the only thing that will be lacking is electric light. Kerosene or oil lamps will be used. Just as their cousins who attend the consolidated schools in the States, the children will be taken to their lessons each day by a motor bus.

Each family will keep one milk-Longhorn cow, supplied by the government, which, in fact, will supply all work animals and tools. Even here, however, the farmer-citizens will not be free from close government supervision over their industry, for the government reserves the right to regulate strictly the crop production of each farmer.

Reason for this regulation is said to be that the colony is being formed to supply stores in the Matanuska valley with \$1,000,000 worth of goods annually. The valley now imports this amount of goods every year from the United States and Canada.

The land in the Matanuska valley is fertile and is especially good for dairy and truck farming. Although the summers are short, the days are really much longer than they are in the States and give about twice as much sunlight. The land is rich in natural and mineral resources. The rivers and streams abound in fish and there is plenty of game to be found in the wilds.

Alaska could support a population much larger than the 60,000 it now does, and it is quite possible that this colony may be the start of a progressive growth. It is at least the largest attempt the federal government has yet made to colonize the northern possession.

Alaska needs more people to make use of its vast agricultural and mineral wealth. It is the only part of the United States where unemployment does not exist, although it is not hard to get a job in Hawaii, either. It is one of the very few parts of the world which invite immigration.

© Western Newspaper Union.

Forwarding Mail

The postal regulations say that unlimited requests for the forwarding of mail to other post offices shall be observed for a period of two years, unless revoked, except that such requests affecting general delivery mail at city delivery post offices shall expire at the end of 30 days unless renewed.



Just as These Pioneers in the Gold Rush Days of '98 Set Forth to Conquer the Wilderness, Will 200 American Families Seek a New Start in Alaska This Summer.

of the states. The movement will further serve a useful purpose by helping to build up Alaska.

Bound for Seward.

On steel rails, over the Oregon trail famed in pioneering history, the adventurers and their meager accoutrements will go to Seattle, where they will board a steamer for Seward, Alaska. Some of them are already on their way as you read this.

Perhaps a good share of these people will never again pass south of their point of entry into the Alaskan peninsula. At any rate, they will never again return to the farms they have left, for these, in accordance with the FERA plan of relocation of destitute farm families

the rich Matanuska valley. They will travel by train to Palmer, a little village 150 miles north. It is in the wild country near Palmer that their new plots of land will be staked out.

Leader of the party is Don L. Irwin, son of a man who was among the leaders in the Oklahoma land rush. He is superintendent of colonization in Alaska. The organization itself is known as the Alaska Colonization corporation.

Draw for Locations.

Not until it has reached Palmer will the party settle the question of location of individual farms. There a drawing will be held which will assure the dispensation of land with complete impartiality to all.

Alaskan summer draws to a close. Log dwellings will be erected at first, from the gleanings of the timber clearing. According to the plan, the women folks will have to pitch right in, maybe even swing an ax or two, to help the men with their work.

FERA architects have designed a sort of hamlet for the center of the colony, and the CCC workers will begin upon this project soon after their arrival. A modern schoolhouse, accommodating 480 children, will be erected first, for these people have no intention of robbing their offspring of the cultural and educational benefits of the civilization back home.

The schoolhouse will serve in sev-