

**Call number: 00-00-178-06 PT. 1**

**George Edwin, Alfred Starr, and David Henry are interviewed on the history of Tanana, 6/9/72**

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**Notes: Originals on 7 inch reels. Master and circulation copies on CD.**

A woman asks George if he has always lived in this area. George responds that he has. He says he moved here from Rampart in 1903 when he was a boy.

He says that Mr. Privos(?) was here as a priest. There was an army post, four stores, four saloons and four restaurants and a lot of people. Whole families of white people lived here; maybe about 2,000 people. People mostly trapped and fished. Al Mayo(?) was the one who had the first store here, thought George is not sure of the year perhaps 1900 or a few years before. By the time George got here Al(?) was already gone, having moved to Rampart.

Long before this there used to be a mission here. George does not know about this though, it was so.

Arthur Wright and Paul William learned at the mission's school, taught by Privos(?). Arthur Wright and Paul William went outside to school. When William came back, he was a pretty smart man, says George. William used to make a speech on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July day. The white people used to look at him because he was dark, a full-blooded Indian who used "high" words.

About ten years before that time Alfred Star's(?) father told George that there was a little trading post right where the gravel pit is now. The only things for sale in that trading post were leaf tobacco, gunpowder, rolled oats, shells, and a gun. George forgets the name of the man who put up that trading post. Nothing is written down. Whoever it was is the first person to put up a trading post for the Natives, says George. Another man makes a comment about the old time gun.

George says all the people moved up into the village here long before, over a hundred and fifty years ago by George's estimate. This is the main place where the Tanana people, Tanana River Indians – way up Tanana Cross and up from Fort Yukon downriver – come and meet each other, coming in birch bark canoes. The Indians would paddle all the way down from Tanana Cross and all the way back for some leaf tobacco and some gunpowder. Such a trip might take all summer, George and the other men guess.

George then talks about the first inboard engine he saw. George says that Alfred Grant(?) senior was the first Native to buy an inboard engine boat.

George says the frame of the old church is still standing.

Alfred Starr says he was born down at the old mission.

George is an Episcopal priest. George just went to school one winter up in Nenana, in 1910 or 1911. The woman asks if that was at St. Matthew's mission. George says he forgot the name of the building but that she might be right. He says the name of the building in Athabaskan, I think. George says the building holds 47 children, boys on one side and girls on the other.

George says that the big concrete cross that is visible across the Nenana is for the old deaconess. The deaconess died while George was there. A little girl of four or five that the deaconess loved especially became very ill, very suddenly. There was no doctor and no medicine available. There was only a wood chopper, and Jimmy Duke, the storekeeper. The little girl died and the deaconess stayed up day and night and became ill herself. One day the deaconess collapsed on the porch. A teacher, a nurse, George and another boy named John helped to carry the deaconess inside. The deaconess stayed unconscious and died the very early next morning without ever waking up.

The mission carpenter who built the mission buildings built the wooden frame for the Deaconess' concrete cross. George missed school to help the carpenter make the cross.

George says the school building was very cold. He says they used to run upriver across the Tanana River and gather dry wood from the hillside. The boys would then saw the wood with a six foot saw, two boys on each end of the saw. That is how they heated the building.

When George stopped going to school in spring of 1911 and went back to his mother they were poor. His uncle was very sick. George turned 75 last fall on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

George says he always tried to help the mission as much as he could by gathering wood, keeping the fire going to warm the church. He says he missed a lot of church services when he was young, staying out late and getting into mischief. But, because he always tried to help the mission, they chose him to be minister for his hometown, even as old as he is.

A couple years ago George decided to try being a lay reader. He did not want to because he cannot read well or pronounce things correctly or speak English very well. He thought that once the priests all go away we would make a lot of mistakes. He says he can pray in his own language and understands even the high words in his own language. But he became lay reader anyway. Then they asked him if he wanted to become a deacon. He was ordained as a deacon.

The tape cuts out.