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Axel Edman

1970s?

Nome, Alaska?

Chapter 1

Axel Edman said the radio station at Manley Hot Springs was a wireless station.

Axel Edman said in order to start his story about his adventure in arctic Alaska he will begin when he first came to Alaska. In the spring of 1924 he was working on a road construction job in Oregon. He met Ira Reedfer (?) who asked Axel if he ever wanted to go to Alaska. Axel had always wanted to go to Alaska. They left Portland on a freight train and arrived in Seattle. They contacted the office of the Kennecott Copper Mine Corporation office which was located in Seattle. They were told the mine was only hiring experienced miners on a six month basis. He lied about his experience. They left on a steamer after a week. They both got seasick on the trip. They traveled steerage. He said he ended up spending most of his time on the top deck. He described his fellow passengers who were headed to fishing villages or canneries. They arrived in Cordova. They were to leave on the Copper and Northwestern Railroad the next morning. They spent the night in Chitina. They arrived in Kennecott and checked in at the main office. They were assigned to the Jumble Mine. They were hired as muckers. They rode the ore tramway to the mine where they were working. He described the ride. There were special freight cars on the cable too. He was put in a room with three Italians. He started work on the night shift and worked as a mucker for two months. He got a job bulldozing. He blasted loose ore so it would come down the chute. They used horses to haul the ore in the mine. He described his job. After doing this for two weeks he was called upon to open a chute. He tied four sticks onto the lumber and lit the fuse. The dynamite he had set fell from the chute and he picked up the bundle and threw it up into the chute and the blast went off and knocked him down. The crew cleared up the mess and rebuilt the chute. He transferred to the loading dock. He talked about the positive aspects of the job. It was hard work at times. In April 1925 both Ira and he decided to move on. They decided to get to the Interior and find gold.

Chapter 2

Ira and Axel left Kennecott after collecting their final paycheck. He described conditions on the railroad in the spring. They spend the night at Chitina again. After dinner they sat and talked with Oscar Reedman the roadhouse keeper. He talked about the food served at the mine. The cooks didn't appreciate criticism of the food. They had beautiful weather for their trip out of the area. There were two large glaciers close to the railroad, Miles Glacier and Childs Glacier. It was beautiful and rugged scenery. The speed of the train was not constant, sometimes fast and sometimes slow. They arrived in Cordova and found out the boat left for Seward in three days. He described Cordova. He visited the canneries. They boarded the S.S. Alameda for Seward. He talked about the accommodations on the ship. The trip was uneventful. In 1925 the Copper Mines on Latouche Island were operating at capacity. They arrived in Seward and took a tour of the town. They boarded the train then next morning for Anchorage

and Fairbanks. He described the train. Anchorage in 1925 was just a small town. They stopped overnight in Curry. The hotel was owned and operated by the Alaska Railway.

After leaving Curry they slowed down and then stopped. There were a couple of moose on the railroad track. The snow was deep and the moose could not get out. After an hour the moose got off the railroad tracks. They stopped at Healy at noon. The coal mine there was owned by Captain Lathrop. They headed towards Nenana and Fairbanks. As they passed the cut banks they could see the coal veins. They got to Fairbanks and went out to see the town. They hadn't made up their minds about what they were going to do. Fairbanks in 1925 was a small town. They decided to head up the Koyukuk for prospecting. He talked about Mike Cooney who ran a hotel in Nenana. Cooney had been a prospector and was a wonderful cook. He talked about the boats in Nenana. They talked with the old timers in Nenana and a few areas were suggested for prospecting. They decided to take the winter trail to Manley Hot Springs. Norton Commercial Company had the contract to carry the mail from Nenana to Tanana. Then the mail was carried by dog teams. There were a number of stores along the way. Supplies were transported along the trail in the winter. They got their supplies at Coghill's store. Mrs. Cooney gave them two loaves of bread. They each had a rifle. It was April and the trail was soft. They decided to walk at night when the trail was hard. They shot rabbits for food. They didn't know the first thing about cooking and described their attempt at cooking rabbit. They stopped at Johnny Campbell's roadhouse the next night. They started out to Tolovana. They got out into the Minto Flats. They kept following the road which kept getting further and further away from the river. They finally found a dog team trail to follow. They came to a lake that had little houses. They belonged to the Natives who were catching muskrats. They found someone who could speak English who told them they were far from the river and told them where to go. After camping out they found out they had stayed just a quarter of a mile from the Tolovana Roadhouse. They had a meal at the roadhouse.

Edman said the weather was starting to warm up and the going was slow. It wasn't freezing at night. After stopping another night at a roadhouse they finally arrived at Manley. They were to stay there until the break-up of the Tanana River. He described the community of Manley and the hot springs. The freight arrived by the river and then was hauled into town. There wasn't any mining around Manley. The mining camps were at Eureka, Tofty, Woodchopper, and American Creek. Edman talked about the telephone system used in Manley. It went up to Tanana, Eureka and up to Nenana.

There was a road from Manley to Eureka and there was a road to Tofty and Woodchopper. In the wet season it was almost impossible for the horses and wagons to get over. It was maintained by the Alaska Road Commission. In the summer of 1925 there were eight or ten small mining operations in the vicinity. At Tofty and Woodchopper there were half a dozen mining operations. Most of the mines were low grade. There were about fifty people in Manley Hot Springs and about the same number on the outlying creeks. When the Tanana River broke up it backed because of ice jams and the whole town was flooded in 1925. The flooding did a lot of damage. He and his partner decided to go to work at one of the mines in Eureka for the summer. Their plans changed after break up.