

Call number: 74-13

Ina M. Hamlin

Date: December 4, 1969 at William Cashen's residence.

Summary created by: Varpu Lotvonen

Date of summary's creation: 11/22/2013

Series: Tanana-Yukon Historical Society tapes

Notes: Original on 7-inch tape, master copy on CD

Bill Cashen introduces the recording which is done with Mrs. Ina M. Hamlin who came to Alaska in 1926 as an instructor in business administration at the College [Agricultural College and the School of Mines which later became the University of Alaska Fairbanks.] She is back to Fairbanks after a few years and she is going to tell about her life and her recollections about Fairbanks and the University.

Ina tells that she came to Fairbanks in September of 1926 to become an instructor at the College. She left Seattle on the steam ship and on her way north she met Professor and Mrs. Morgan and Professor Fuller [Veryl Richards, possibly Beryl?] who was also coming to Fairbanks to teach. Professor Morgan had been there before. They had bought a new car and Professor Morgan asked Professor Fuller and Ina for a drive from Valdez to Fairbanks. Ina agreed.

They left the steamship at Valdez and spent the night there. Afterwards, they spent 3 nights on Richardson Trail. They left Valdez before noon on their first traveling day. Professor Morgan asked Ina to go to a nearby restaurant and buy sandwiches and 5 apples for their lunch. Ina thought it was a skimpy lunch and asked the man to make them 10 sandwiches and 10 apples. After a while the man came back from the kitchen carrying huge bags of groceries. The price was fairly high, but not too bad and Ina took the food to the car and explained to Professor Morgan that the huge bags were their lunch.

3:33 They drove towards Copper Center for ½ day and ate their lunch sitting on logs. Ina was appalled by their lunch as each bag contained 5 sandwiches, hard boiled eggs and a great big pickle. They had lunch for two days. They spent the night at Copper Center and the next night at Paxton where the cook gave out his room so that Mrs. Morgan and Ina could have a degree of privacy. The road was pretty bad with mud holes, stones and all kinds of problems, which included having to cross the Tanana by ferry at McCarthy.

Cashen asks the names of the places where they stopped. Ina explains that the first stop was Copper Center which was a fairly large place, which, according to Cashen, is still in use. It was large because it was on a road to the copper mine area rather than because it was important for Fairbanks. Paxton's [roadhouse] was relatively new compared to Copper Center. They didn't get to Fairbanks until after dark. They had slipped and slid through many places and sometimes they had to walk ahead to see where they could drive. Ina stayed at the Nordale Hotel and Professor and Mrs. Morgan owned a nice

log house out on the flats, half-ways between Fairbanks and College. Ina says that despite the difficult traveling conditions it was a beautiful trip except for the no-seeums [also known as sand flies, midges or gnats].

After a few days at the Nordale Hotel, Ina was told that she could stay at the girl's dormitory at the campus. That was in a little 6 room house in which Dean Patty later lived. Other people who lived there were Miss Martha Parks who was the house mother and one of the instructors, two students and Ina. After a little while, they got another girl student and Ina had to move to [unclear]. Ina stayed in Alaska Hotel until the following summer.

At 7:55 Cashen asks how she commuted back and forth and she says used what they called the Toonerville Trolley which was a little, remodeled street car that was rather elderly. They had put in an upright stationary engine and Ina isn't sure what kind of fuel it used. She says it was probably gasoline. It [the engine?] took about a 4th of the total floor space. Ina doesn't remember how much the fare was, but they paid it regularly. It took only a short time to drive the narrow gauge railroad to the College from the regular railway station. When they got out there, they walked slowly up the hill in single file. There was a little path that they had worn on the south of the hill. The main road went around and behind the main building. They went in the West Door. In wintertime, everybody automatically stopped halfway up the hill to draw a few breaths and to look at sunrise. There was a beautiful sunrise view. They went in from the west door of the building.

10:20 President Bunnell was eager to have a post office established there at the main College because the mail came into Fairbanks once a week where it was sorted and somebody from the College was designated to bring the mail out to the College and make it available late that night or the next morning. Bunnell finally got the post office established and made an effort to hire a boy to carry the mail to the station to the west door of the Main Building. He found out that it was possible to hire a man to carry the mail if it was more than ¼ mile from the railroad station to the Post Office, but when they measured the distance to the west door that they used regularly – the front door was seldom used – they found out that it was 10 feet short. Bunnell simply ordered them to measure out the distance from the railroad station to the front door of the building and that distance filled the requirements. So they got the mail delivered.

12:57 Cashen asks what the enrollment was then and how big classes Ina had. Ina says that by that time, counting the 3-week courses that were given in home economics and minor classes, there was over 200 students. Her own classes ran from 5 to 20 students. Her accounting class consisted of 5-6 people and typing classes were averagely 20 people.

At one time Bunnell and 2-3 boys were digging a little drain on the side of the road. All of them were working busily when up drove a car with a several tourists. One of the men stopped the car and asked where the president's office was. Bunnell directed them to the right building and the man thanked and handed him a quarter. After the tourist headed towards the building, Bunnell continued shoveling. One of the boys asked why he told the man where the office was when the tourist must have wanted to talk with Mr. Bunnell. Bunnell said the tourist didn't say he wanted to meet the president, but see the office.

15:29 They had many problems in getting underway. The classes were more or less organized and the library was just being set up. The following summer Miss. Breisclark [sp?], who was an instructor, catalogued the books in the library and got them in a good order. Before that, anyone who wanted a book could go find it and use it.

Bunnell had lots of plans and he wanted very much to get some agricultural work started in the vicinity. He and Ina argued [unclear]. He wanted to establish a family farm at the valley anyway and worked very hard to get help through the Hatch Act that was available to most land grant colleges, but not to this particular one. Ina argued in favor of community farming that would have living quarters for young, unmarried men who might want to later start a farm and a family. They could go there and get their farming methods established. Bunnell considered that communistic. Neither one of them got their ideas across. Shortly after Ina left, Hatch Act was made applicable to farming community.

18:31 Ina moved to Fairbanks into a small log cabin that is now on Front Street. They didn't have street numbers back then. Cashen asks if she remembers any town personalities. Ina says there were only about 1,400 people in Fairbanks then so one would get to know many people even in two years.

Avakoff and Brown had a jewelry store down town and there were two grocery stores: Lavery and Bailey. There was NC and a tiny grocery at the Front Street. Cashen asks if Ina stayed in Alaska in summer time. She says she stayed in one summer when she was living in the little cabin to which she had moved. The move into a cabin was partially a matter of economy because those days there were quite a few tourists and hotels doubled charges for rooms in summertime. Ina found a nice little cabin on Front Street and moved in. It had a nice little living room that was quite small, a tiny bedroom and an equally tiny kitchen. It also had a big back porch they used to call caches those days. She had a tiny little stove and Ina "practically had to stand on [her] head to fry an egg". She asked her landlord to put a box under the stove where she could put wood. Her landlord did that, but the carpenter had heard him mumble about it. When Ina got home that day when the carpenter had visited, the stove was still low: its legs were cut off and they were replaced with a box.

22:15 Ina says she raised a nice garden that summer with carrots. She never had that much trouble with carrots. She had planted them too thick. She had nice peas and other vegetables – a fairly nice garden. Cashen asks if the river boats were running at that time, in 1926-1928, but Ina says no. Ina says there were a very few boats of any kind. One winter morning when she was staying in the Alaska Hotel, she saw an airplane landing on the river. The plane was going north, but the snow was soft and the plane had to be brought to the river ice to take off on skis. It was below the Old Iron Bridge. Mostly they were pulled down the field by horses, but one time they were pulled by dog team. Ina doesn't know if it was just a stunt or if it was a necessity.

Cashen asks if anybody has questions to Mrs. Hamlin. [Unclear talking.] Ina says the town was much prettier than it is now. [Laughter.] The cabins were rather picturesque with flowers around and plenty of grass. The town extended only over 10 blocks and after that there were scattered houses around. Pretty part of town was the Front Street from the bridge to the band on the river. There were little trees and bushes and grass, gravel roadway and a wooden sidewalk. Most of the houses had fences around them

and all of them had flowers. One house had lots of sweet peas growing on an old porch. [Unclear talking about who lived there.] Ina's house had a big bed of petunias that almost grew her out of the front yard. Mrs. Knappe [?] had a beautiful lawn with all kinds of flowers one can think of. It was a very attractive looking place and there wasn't the bareness that there is now.

At 27:25 a lady asks if the post office stayed at the same building all the time at the College. Ina says it was there as long as the Old Main Building, but it was just a little place. There were only 3 or 4 instructors who lived down the hill and 2-3 lived on the campus. There were few dorms. All and all, there were very few people. Cashen says the post office moved to the Eielson Building just about when it was built in 1934 or 1935. [Unclear talking.] Cashen says the gym was still on the top floor of the Main Building when Ina was there. She says it was but that it wasn't a real gym. Another woman's voice says they used to play basketball in the gym. Ina says she was in plenty of basketball games there and that basketball was big at the time. There was a college team, a high school team, a FE [Fairbanks Exploration Company?] team. They were the only teams besides the girls' team.

Cashen asks if Lathrop had his theatre in town, and Ina says yes. They had a pipe organ there too. Don Adler, who was Dave Adler's brother, was the organist. Talking pictures came in just when Ina left, says Cashen. Ina says that when she went Outside, they were rapidly converting [?] boys. Cashen says he wasn't sure if Lathrop had established his theatre in silent pictures time. [Unclear talking.] Cashen says that that was the Empress [Theatre] that is now the Co-op Drug. There was a nice little bakery at 2nd Avenue and a butcher shop. The assay office was on 3rd Street where Paul Hopkins' tested purity of gold samples. He had invited Ina to come over and see the place sometime so one evening Ina walked over. Mr. Hopkins and a couple of men were working there and Mr. Hopkins asked how she got in. The screen doors should have been locked since there was thousands of dollars' worth of gold.

At 32:14 a woman's voice asks if there were robberies. Ina tells that there was only one robbery in 2 years she was in Fairbanks. Some young man stole some furs and there was lots uproar and heart break. That was the only robbery in two years. Cashen says it was relatively crime free because it was generally hard to get out of Fairbanks. [Laughter.] [Unclear question.] Ina says she wasn't there very much but knew about its existence. Sometimes they walked from the College, but they usually walked across the railroad tracks. The girls hated walking on the tracks with their long dresses but they usually took that way. Mostly they came in with the little trolley car and walked from the railroad station over to town and to her cabin. When she lived at the Alaska Hotel, Mr. Foster [from the hotel] was there [at the railroad station?], picking up prospective customers. He'd frequently invited Ina to a ride to the hotel with the hotel's station wagon which Ina wouldn't do. She always excused herself. She was very shy.

34:30 A man asks what other recreation the students had besides basketball. Ina tells that during her second year, they built a little ski run on the campus. That was about it. There was no football. Everybody was busy with earning a living and they had quite a few northern European students who earned living with mining. They didn't have much time for recreation, but there was dancing at the gym and at the hall in town. It was perhaps the Moose Hall on First Street. [Unclear talking.]

A woman asks why she decided to come to Alaska. She says she heard of the position through her own college's office which was in Illinois. She had a friend who was a secretary to the dean and [unclear] had written them asking if they had someone who would come for business administration. They referred the letter to Ina who had been teaching in a high school in Detroit. She thought it was a good chance to take a trip.

A woman's voice asks about a bonfire in the fall. Ina says she was impressed by it. Three weeks into school, they built a huge bonfire in front of the main hall. Freshmen students picked up a [unclear] from the fire. That was their signal light that they were learning. Cashen asks if it is still going. [Unclear talking.] He says there used to be a nice ceremony about it where the freshmen put their own bonfires around the big bonfire and then they got fire from the center bonfire to light their own. They were getting light from the central pile of knowledge to light their own individual shares. Ina says it was very nice and appropriate to the place. [Unclear talking.]

39:20 Ina was very impressed with an albino moose that the College Museum had. Cashen says it's somewhere in North Pole. Ina thinks it might have been obliged to disappear for a while since Smithsonian wanted it. Bunnell wasn't going to give it up and so Ina wouldn't be surprised to know if it had to disappear for a while. Cashen says it's not on display anymore, but it was until they moved the last time. [Unclear talking about animals specimens at the Museum.]

They had reindeer. They brought a bunch of reindeer from Nunavuk Island and they were going to keep them at Farmer's [Loop] Road for a while. Mr. Miller was working for Mr. Palmer who was in charge of the overall work, but Mr. Miller had the particular assignment. He trained some of those reindeers to a harness. Ina has a picture that was taken in Collegeville. It had some girls with Mr. Miller holding the reindeer. Ina was in Fairbanks when the buffalo came to Big Delta. Cashen says they were all experiments that were conducted by the Biological Survey. [Unclear] Palmer was the biologist.

[An unclear question.] Ina asks: "Lathrop?" She says she knew him, but not enough. Lathrop was a power, but Ina doesn't know much about him. [Unclear talking.] He was important in building up the city. [A lady's voice asks something unclear.] Ina says they were burning wood. The locomotives on the railroad couldn't burn the coal and that caused a great deal of laughter and criticism Outside. Territory was asking money to build a coal mine and they had a government railroad that was carrying coal, but also [not?] burning coal in its locomotives.

43:53 Cashen asks if they were able to use it in the Matanuska –area. Ina says it came from Healy and that Matanuska was only developed long after that. [Unclear talking.] A lady asks if somebody delivered lots of wood for people with large woodsheds in the south part of town. Ina says she bought wood, but doesn't remember who delivered it. She wonders if it came from the NC-Company, but Cashen says that they burned it in their boilers. [Unclear talking.]

Ina says that she had the tiny cook stove that was wood fueled. When she wanted to bake, she built a big fire just as she had done in Appalachian Country where they have hardwood to burn. She built the fire and started her batter, but by the time she stuck the pan in the oven, it was practically cold. By the

time she got another fire going, her dough was [unclear probably failed to rise]. She realized that it's different to burn soft wood.

At 46:23 Cashen says they have enjoyed the tales of the early days and asks what Ina did after 1928 when she left. She tells that she taught in Atlanta, Georgia, for a year and then went to Washington, D. C. in 1935 to be a civil service employee. Most of the time she worked for the Bureau of Public Roads, but during the WW II she worked for Economic Administration. Cashen summarizes: she did office work. Ina tells that she retired from Government service. Then she did some odd jobs to keep an edge, decided to move to Albuquerque, New Mexico, and visit Alaska on her way. She's been to Fairbanks for several months, "babysitting a house".

Cashen thanks Ina and closes the interview.

[End of the recording.]