

Mrs. Meals taught school one year in Plainview, Texas; four years in Rawls, Texas; another year in a small place between Eastland and Range Texas. Seven years of teaching before going to Valdez. In 1926 when she went there the teachers were Mr. Clifton, Mrs. Kelsey (John Kelsey's mother), Miss Brown and Nancy Sanderson. About 60 to 70 students then. Nancy arrived in Valdez about 2 a.m. Truck Egan, brother of current governor Bill Egan, was the taxi driver who drove her and Miss Brown (who came on same vessel) to a hotel. The next day Miss Brown and Miss Sanderson found a place to live and lived together for a year. The next year Miss Brown was married. In 1928 Nancy married Owen. She taught two more years and then became the postmaster in 1932, a job she kept until retirement in 1962.

(more)

Owen got into the power business because he needed power and the supplier was not too reliable. He got his own generator. He had the Ford auto agency then. He was talked into running a power line to the school. Gradually others asked for power. Finally when the courthouse needed reliable power he put a line there. The operating power company (run down by this time) went out of business and Meals' outfit became the sole supplier. He also went into the phone business then.

Owen started driving autos in 1913 when he drove a Ford taxi. That car was brought to Valdez by Bobby Sheldon of Fairbanks. Al White bought it. In 1915 Meals took over the Ford Agency and operated it until World War II. After the war he expanded the power and phone business. He talks about the old cars he and his family have preserved. Tells about the old steam fire equipment that the city used many years ago (he is preserving that and hopes to completely restore it some day). Also has the old bars from the Pinzon Bar in old Valdez. That bar came to Valdez from San Francisco and went through that 1906 earthquake and the 1964 Valdez earthquake. Truck Egan ran the Pinzon at quake time. He and his sister Alice Horton now operate the only liquor retail store in Valdez.

Owen and his sister Mary Whalen are the longest residents of Valdez this date.

He describes the hustle and bustle in 1903 and 1904 when thousands of people went through Valdez headed for the Fairbanks and Tanana Valley gold rush. He mentions hundreds of "Hindus" who were going north to work in the mining country. He mentions the herds of cattle that were off-loaded at Valdez and herded to Fairbanks and interior points (for slaughter).

He talks about pictures he took as a kid of cattle in Valdez. The traffic was in the winter, mostly, he said. Travelers could navigate over the ice up the canyons and down the canyons better than in summer months. The summer trail was suitable for automobiles in 1913, but not before. Wagons used the trail in 1910, he remembers.

The first car into Valdez was the Model T driven by Bobby Sheldon. Al White bought it. White sold the car to Harry Whitley and eventually it was converted into a delivery car.

Steam fire wagon....Owen has it stored and is the only one who has operated it. It is a 1907 model. Horse drawn fire pump. Pump is hand operated. He also has a model T Ford that was used as a chemical truck for the city. Also has two stage coaches from the Meyers Roadhouse. All these are stored in his big quonset for future renovation and safe keeping from vandals.