

H97-66-33

Robert Bloom

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Robert Bloom has been a merchant since the town was started. He believes that anything that can be grown in the western states can be grown in Fairbanks. When Fairbanks was established everyone used their own ingenuity. He talks about the establishment of the land grant college. The university started as a school of mines. The agriculture was ignored for quite a while. Mr. Neal developed the wheat strain that was grown in Fairbanks. There was a mill that did not survive. The wheat would develop in ninety days. They are trying to redevelop that strain of wheat again. He has sold flour for thirty years and says it would be worthwhile growing wheat again in Fairbanks. When Fairbanks was established Mrs. Anderson developed a hothouse on the edges of the Chena River. She raised very good crops. John Charlie leased five acres from the Noyes grant and developed strawberries. It took him six years to develop a strain of strawberries that would survive the winters. Mr. Young staked a homestead and raised potatoes and carrots and other vegetables for local sale. He developed a turnip. Falcon Joslin held an agricultural fair. He took some products to Minnesota and brought back first prize from the fair. This was encouraging. There were several homesteaders. Johnny Edelman had a homestead that later became Hamilton Acres. M.D. Snodgrass was the head man of the agricultural station. He got the Alaska Road Commission to put in a road for the farmers (Farmer's Loop). Jim McGrath was a prolific farmer. They wanted the farmers to grow the particular wheat that did well in Fairbanks. The first year they grew 200 tons of wheat and the mill was established. The mill lasted four years. There were problems with the mill business.

They also tried raising cattle. Sutherland got congress to buy twenty buffalo. Musk ox and yak were also bought. Most of the buffalo were taken out to Delta. They were trying to prove that cattle could be successfully raised in the area. Robert said he took out Tanana Valley oats, barley and wheat to Idaho and he found out that the Tanana Valley grains produced more bushels per acre.

There was a small fair in Fairbanks every year. They started the first fair in 1910. The population was low and most people mined but there were a few individuals producing. Buzby, Rickert and Gilmore were also farmers. Hinckley had a dairy in town but the cattle became sick. Charlie Creamer later took over the dairy. There were a few other farmers on the flats around the College like Dan Wagner. Different farmers are discussed. Jack Horn and Harry Badger had land near the North Pole area. There are other farmers using the land now. There are farms out toward the Sheep Creek area too.