

H97-66-34

John "Jack" Marks Brooks

Fairbanks, Alaska

October 22, 1960

Audrey Loftus

Some sections difficult to understand

John Brooks (born 1870) came to Alaska in 1895 to mine. He worked at the Comet Mine with his partner. It was a gold mine located about 100 miles north of Juneau. He decided to go prospecting. In January they started into the Alsack country with Joe Goldsmith. They went up to Shorty Creek. He worked on a cattle outfit. There were a hundred and two head of cattle. Some of the cattle were butchered at Dawson and taken down the river. Jack Dalton contracted for 75 cents a pound. What they butchered there they got a dollar to two dollars a pound. There weren't any caribou in the country and just a few moose. Parts of the cattle were used for dog feed. There were about five men on the drives. John talks about Jack Dalton. They had the first herd of cattle to come into Dawson. Dalton blazed the trail from Chilkat.

John prospected in the Fortymile area. He went to Nome in 1900. In 1903 he came to Fairbanks for the gold stampede. He worked on his claim for seven years before he sold out. He used to haul wood in the winter. He got into politics for a few years. He was chairman of the town. Fairbanks had a population of about 1,500 to 2,000 but there were many people out on the creeks.

John said he remembered the Blue Parka Man. He robbed people outside of town. They finally picked him up.

Jim Courtney started out with 680 head of sheep. They lost about forty head on the four hundred mile trip. They started trailing at the same time as Dalton's herd.

They also trailed oxen which were used for meat.

One of the first prospectors who came over the Dyea trail was Goldsmith. The miners came down as far as Cassiar Bar and then returned to Juneau to overwinter. In 1896 they came down to the Fortymile River. It wasn't until 1899 when the North American Trading and Transportation Company came in with provisions. They didn't want miners in the area to begin with. McQuisten wanted to trade with trappers and not miners. Circle was supposed to be the largest log cabin town in the world at one time. There was a lot of mining going on in the country. In 1896 when Dawson was struck just about everyone left Circle. The same thing happened in Fortymile country. Ft. Reliance was a Russian Fort on the Yukon River. A lot of distances were measured from that fort (Twelve mile, Fortymile etc.)

Audrey asked about travel over rough trails. John said he was young and husky and they wanted to see Dawson. It was pretty much staked by the time he arrived. It took them about two and a half months to get to Dawson. Dalton also took another herd from Circle. They brought about 300 head into the Interior. Dalton later went to Valdez and returned to the lower Forty-eight. The Dalton trail was used quite a bit. It was an old Indian trail from Chilkat to Fort Selkirk. Fort Selkirk was an Old Russian fort.

John talked about a few people who made it over the summit past the Mounties. Billy Dougherty, Johnny Triggs, Jack Wallace and Jack Hays got into Dawson when they were thrown out of town. Jack Hays was the first mayor of Eagle. On the Canadian side there

weren't any holdups. Nome was a terrible place -- without law. When John arrived in Nome it was already well established. A lot of the law was crooked. Quite a few of the miners were kicked off their claims.

His brother Billy Brooks was in Candle.

He mined on Wade Creek in the Fortymile.