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Hazel Sheldon Ray, 1890-

Seward, Alaska

June 20, 1961

Dorothy Loftus, interviewer

Hazel Ray describes transportation in Alaska before 1940. Dog teams, boats and railroads were used. She came with her family to Iliamna Bay. She came on the Old Centennial boat. Her people were interested in a railroad from Iliamna to Nome. She was the first white girl the Indians ever saw. The Trans Alaska railroad was supposed to cross the Kuskokwim River and cross the Yukon River at Holy Cross. Ten men started out from Nome in 1901 with horses. The men and the surviving one horse made it to Iliamna in March or April 1901. She was given the horse for a pet. In May she and her mother walked to A.C. Point and took the SS Bertha for Seattle. Her father stayed on to work on the defunct railroad. She returned in 1904 to Valdez to see a rival railroad started. In 1907 there was a riot in Keystone Canyon between two railroads. Several men were killed.

Her husband L.V. Ray convicted Ed Hasey of giving the order to shoot. That was the end of the Valdez Railroad. She saw the spike being driven for the Alaska Railroad. Her husband was mayor of Seward at the time. Dorothy asked her what the A.C. stood for in A.C. Point. Hazel said she thought it stood for the Alaska Commercial Company. They traded with the Indians at Iliamna Village. She said when President Harding was here he felt safe and seemed very well. On the way home President Harding died. Mr. and Mrs. Hoover were also in the visiting party. Dorothy asked if the president was guarded all the time. Hazel Ray said he wasn't guarded and he enjoyed meeting the people. Gordon Steese was also in the visiting group. He planned the trip and the driving of the spike at Nenana. The ladies of Seward presented Mrs. Harding with an Attu basket.

Dorothy asked about the early Territorial legislature. Hazel said her husband won the primary election by one vote.

Steese was the head of the Alaska Railroad at the time of Harding's visit.

Mrs. Ray's husband was a member of the Territorial legislature. She tells a story about Judge Wickersham. Henry Rodin and Charlie Jones were members of the legislature who were still living at the time of the interview. Henry always wore overalls when he attended the legislature. Many or most of the first members of the legislature were married.

Hazel's daughter is Pat Ray Williams. When she was little she attended the legislature. She was lost when she was two years old and ended up on her own in the Senate house.

Dorothy asked her about Governor Walter Clark. Hazel said he wasn't too popular with the legislature. Her husband became friends with Governor Clark. He was a newspaper man from a southern state.

It took people a long time to travel to the legislature in those days. The person from Nome had to travel by dogsled to Fairbanks before going to Valdez and finally Juneau.

Hazel Ray talks about women's suffrage. When they passed women's suffrage in the first legislature there wasn't a single woman present. Women just didn't think they needed it in Alaska. Her husband wrote the bill and Senator Ingram presented the bill.

Dorothy asked about people from Iliamna. Hazel said she was a young girl at that time. Captain Lathrop was there at the same time they were there. He was a good looking man who wore a blazer, high boots and a cap. The night they arrived in Iliamna there was a big storm. The men had to go out and shore up the side of the building.