

H97-66-38  
Sylvia Sexton  
Audrey Loftus  
Seward, Alaska

Sylvia Sexton was born in 1885 in Topeka, Kansas. She came to Alaska in 1898. She came to Alaska before Seward was established. She and her brother stayed in Portland, Oregon while her parents went to Alaska. Her father worked on the White Pass railroad. Soapy Smith was in the area at the time. They were in Skagway until the fall of 1899 and then she and her brother and mother went to Seattle so they could attend school. In 1903 they traveled from Seldovia to Sunrise. They had to go in and out on high tide. Her father lived in Valdez when they were in Seattle. He was appointed deputy marshal at Sunrise. They traveled by dog team from Seward to Sunrise. In 1902 the town site of Seward was surveyed. The railroad was promoted to go into the Matanuska country to haul out the coal. The first party landed on the beach in Seward in August, 1903. She and her family arrived in Seward in May of 1904. She was the first clerk in the Seward post office. They had to travel to Valdez for court. The office of marshal was moved to Seward and that is why her family relocated there. She remembers the town having lots of dances. She remembers when President Harding came to visit. The Alaska Central Railroad went into the coal fields. Then the Alaska Northern took over and ran it for a while. The Alaska Railroad took over.

When the coast was being surveyed the survey party would come into town for dances. Sylvia said they had card parties and dances, went fishing and climbed mountains for entertainment when she was a young girl. She described how they traveled down to the Russian River for fishing and camping.

Dr. Georgeson came from Manhattan, Kansas. He came up to Alaska in 1898. Under his direction her family raised the first vegetable garden grown in Skagway. Many other agriculturalists came up to Alaska from Kansas because of Dr. Georgeson.

When they had the gold strike at Atlin a lot of the men came through Skagway. A lot of people left Skagway at that time. She remembers when Soapy Smith was shot.

She decided to open up a store in the hotel. She sold postcards and curios in the hotel lobby for a while. She had a store from 1917-1935 when there was a fire. She moved across the street and had another store until 1951 when she sold out to Mrs. O'Brien.

When they had the fire in 1935 she lost everything she had. She lost all of her film. When she had the new store she was mainly in framing and the photo business.

The first school had a teacher named Miss Kurtz. They had a big log cabin with one room for all the students.

Sylvia said Resurrection Bay was discovered on an Easter Sunday and that's how it was named. Turn Again Arm was named when Cook traveled up the bay and then had to turn around again. Mount Alice was named for Alice Lowell.