

H97-66-40
Herbert Heller
Fairbanks, Alaska
October 19, 1961

Dr. Herbert Heller is a dean at the University of Alaska in Anchorage. He came to the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 1928. One of his uncle's was a curator of a historical society museum in Indiana. Herbert Heller became a history teacher in his hometown. He was interested in local and state history. He has published history volumes in Indiana and was the field archivist for the state library in Indiana. He gathered a lot of material. He stepped into the Alaska scene with great interest. He said there are three major causes of loss of historic materials: fire, flood and local historical societies. When the materials are gathered in one spot they are susceptible to fire and flood. He sees a lot of interest in history in Alaska.

He reads from his Uncle Lynn Smith's reflections about sourdoughs. He said there were many celebrity women in Alaska. He mentions the Melody sisters, the Whooping Grouse, and Oregon Mare among others. His uncle was a bachelor and spent thirty-five years in Alaska. He kept a diary from 1898 until he ended up in Rampart. He writes about coming over the White Pass as well as his travels from Rampart to Valdez. He stepped into the overflow on the Tanana and froze his foot. He was able to thaw the foot out with help.

Herber Heller comments on Sam Clark's account of the 1904 Fairbank's fire.

Herbert Heller speaks while he shows photographs from Lynn Smith's collection.

[at this point most of the comments from the audience are difficult to understand]

Most of the photos were taken before WWI. Photos shown include Father Jeddy, the bunny club of Ruby in 1917, Bill Dahlquist, St. James Mission, early Fairbanks about 1904, Manley Hot Springs, Ruby, Chena, a store at Flat, vegetables grown in Fairbanks, Ester, the NTAT at Rampart, dredges at Flat Creek, Christmas celebrations at Ruby, Rev. Forbes at Ruby, miners from 1898, and social activities in Fairbanks.

Lynn Smith lived in Chena and was reported to be the first mayor of Chena. He worked as a U.S. marshal in Fairbanks during the late 1920s and early 1930s. He was also a jeweler by profession. Herbert Heller said during prohibition he broke apart kegs after they were confiscated. The marshals would find illegal alcohol by the smell of the stills. Once they found a still inside a well hidden underground room. They could smell the odor from the still coming up through the snow.