

H97-66-43

Ben Falls

Fairbanks, Alaska

March 1962

Tanana Yukon Historical Society meeting

Ben Falls is introduced by Irving Reed. He is a miner in Livengood on Ruth Creek. He arrived in Livengood in 1916-1917. They first started gold mining in Livengood in 1914. He has been mining there ever since. He took a lay on Lillian Creek. He worked on that creek for three years. He spent ten years on Ruth Creek. He took about 100,000 dollars out of that creek. He then went Outside and met his wife in Seattle. They built a home on Ruth Creek. He also worked on Wilbur Creek.

He was born in Ontario, Canada. He came west when he was eighteen years old in 1898. He worked in the sawmills in Vancouver. He signed on to the Navy Reserves and went to China. On their way back they were in a typhoon. He talked about pulling into the harbor in Nagasaki. After returning to Vancouver he went back to the shops. He then traveled to Whitehorse to build riverboats in 1901. They built three boats and then he went to Chilkat to build a cannery. In the spring he helped to build the Koyukuk. When they got to Bettles there were reports of gold on the Hammond River. He talked about going to Coldfoot and up Wiseman Creek. He prospected for a summer in that country and it was hard country to live in. He joined a group of men and traveled over to Stevens Village. It took them nine days to travel. There were hundreds of lakes to walk around and finally they reached the Yukon. There were many ducks and geese in the area. They took a small boat they found and patched it up. He got to Chena and describes Barnette's store. He and his partner and went out to the creeks to have a look. His partner didn't see anything worth staying for and headed to Rampart. He couldn't travel to Rampart because he was using a horse. He describes feeding his horse through the winter. He talks about the large departure out in the spring. Someone he met talked to him about the Livengood country. He partnered with John (?) Patterson. He talks about some of the miners on Cleary Creek. He went over to Livengood. When the war broke out many people left and didn't come back. He prospected up in the Chatanika River area for a month or so. He talks about fishing in the area. He said there were lots of caribou in the Livengood area but they don't come into the area any more. He saw a lot of caribou up in the Beaver country. He talked about hunting a bear in the same area. When the bear got within twelve feet of him his partner finally killed the bear. They saw other grizzly bears and decided to leave them alone.

Someone asked him about Dale Livengood. He talked about the Hutton (Huxton?) brothers who made the discovery at Livengood. That same country was known by John Manooka and Weatherspoon. The trail they traveled into Livengood is the same as the present road. Teams pulled the boilers over to Livengood. The tramline brought the freight in and was built by the government with road funds. Ben had a sawmill there and worked on the tramline. There was a log jam about half a mile across. The boats could come as far as they could on the West Fork. He knew a lot of the old timers in Fairbanks. He met Ted Farbs in 1902. He knew John Bonnefield and Barnette. He knew Frank Wada. People thought Frank was lying about the stampede and were angry with him. He knew Dan McCarty. Dan was a generous fellow.

Ben talked about hydraulic mining on Ruth Creek. He started on Lillian Creek which did well but it didn't last long. He was sinking holes in Ruth Creek and found gold up on the benches where it was shallow. He used water out of the creeks for mining.