

CHARLES CREAMER - Fairbanks
August, 1973

NOTE: Interviewer Mike Dalton talked to Charley Creamer in the Fairbanks Pioneers Home. Charley had a hard time getting around and didn't want to walk as far as the lounge. And he would not submit to a wheelchair...so we went down the hallway to the sitting area closer to the dining room. As a result, there is (are) background noises, some periodic conversations with passerbys, and a couple risque stories by Louie Black. But, by and large, it's a fairly good resume of Charley's life...and early Fairbanks history...the intent of this taping session.

Charles (Charley everybody called him) Creamer came to Fairbnks Pioneers Home this early summer from the home of ~~this~~ neice Mrs. Marion (Sis) Weeks. He had been living with her for some time. She is the sister of Bill Stroecker and the late Ed Stroecker. Creamer's sister was married to their father (Ed Stroecker Sr.).

Charley was born in Weaverville, Calif. May 4, 1889. He went to Dyea in 1897 and lived there until 1899 when the White Pass Railroad was built and put the horse and mule freighters (to Sheep Camp near bottom of Chilkoot Pass) out of business. Charley's ~~sister~~ Tessie had fallen on the ice and had a broken hip (hip disease he called it). The family went out to Tacoma in 1899 and stayed there until Tessie's death. In 1904 the Creamer family came to Fairbanks.

Charley's father was Charles Creamer, Sr. Mother was Mary Jane. He was the only boy and had six sisters, three older and three younger: Tessie, Mattie, Frances, Camillia, Geneive and Marion.

In Dyea the senior Creamer had three two-horse teams. He hauled freight from Dyea to Sheep Camp. When they were short a driver Charley was put to work.

Charley was eight years old when he arrived in Dyea and remembers the bustling town. Remembers there was a steady stream of people heading north in 1897 and 1898. He knew who Soapy Smith was. Was not a bad fellow, Charley said, even though he was a gambler and con man.

He remembers that after the shoot-out (Soapy and Frank Reid) the people of Dyea would not let any of Soapy's gang land in Dyea.

When Charley came to Fairbanks later he recognized three of Soapy's former con men who were living in Fairbanks. He always refused to identify those three men though many people have tried to get him to tell. Two were okay, he says, but one was bad.

(more)

Before going to Dyea Charley's family lived in Weaverville, Calif. His uncle talked his father into going to Juseau in 1896. The uncle later was returning south on the Clara Nevada when the dynamite it was carrying exploded, killing everybody aboard (near Burners Bay) . Sixty plus people and the entire crew were killed, including Uncle Al Noyes. Noyes was an uncle by his marriage to Charley's father's sister.

In Dyea the Creamers had a nice two story log house, Charley say He hiked part way up the Chilkoot Pass just for fun.

In 1903 Charley's father came to Fairbanks and went to work for Fred Noyes in sawmill and lumber business. The family came in 1904 and traveled via Skagway, the Yukon (thru Dawson), and down the Yukon River to Tanana and up to Fairbanks. Traveled on the "Sarah" from Dawson to Tanana, on the "Tanana" from Tanana to Fairbanks. On the Selkirk to Dawson. Sternwheeler tied up in front of the N.C. Co.

He describes Fairbanks in 1904.

The first winter here the family lived in a log cabin and then Creamer Sr. built a two story frame house on the north east side of Chena (where Wendell Street Bridge now is).

In the summer of 1905 Charley helped drive some cattle from Circle to Fairbanks. Ralph Waechter and Charley herded together on horseback.

Remembers Jack Dalton bringing in a herd of 200 cattle that he drove from some spot on the Canada U.S. border (Down near Montana somewhere) all the way to Fairbanks via Circle. Not in too good shape when they arrived.

(Louie Black comes by and chats for minute or two)

Mentions Champagne Bill Knight butchering cattle.