

FRED HANSON - Anchorage

Sept. 20, (1974)

Fred Hanson was born Feb. 15, 1888 in Skoning, Sweden. He is 86 in 1974. He spent the past summer in Manley Hot Springs area doing assesment work on his gold claims there. Been in the Manley and Tofty area since 1911. Came from the Klondike to Manley.

When he first came to the United States he went to Colorado where he lived with an uncle. Worked in mining camps and then for the Moffit Railroad. Then he headed west to Salt Lake, Ogden, Nevada and California. Worked with some partners in a tunnel contract in Quincy, Calif. They got another tunnel contract in Colefax, Calif. Headed north and finally landed in Skagway in 1911.

He was headed for the gold fields in the Klondike. Stopped at Atlin, B.C. on way to Whitehorse. He traveled with some other men in a boat they built themselves. They were at the head of the spring group of river travelers and the lakes and rivers were still frozen, but the ice was breaking up and melting. They rigged up skis to put under their boat when they were on ice.

As they crossed Lake LeBerge Hanson was in the lead, pulling the boat on skis. He fell through an overflow (thin ice cover) and went down into the lake. He held on to the rope and was pulled out. It was about three miles to shore and the wind was blowing. But he made it...stiff and cold but not frozen too much. He and partners found a shelter that the stage line used. Continued on the next day after he was dried out. Rigged up a sail on their boat to help propel them over ice.

They were one of the first boats into Dawson in spring of 1911. Hanson said they stopped and camped on an island before they got to Dawson so they could clean up. If they had not done that they would have been number one boat into Dawson that spring.

He went on down stream and prospected and sniped a little gold. Heard about the Ruby Stampede so he and partners headed down stream. Stopped at Tanana and heard that the Ruby Stampede was not all that great so he was persuaded to go to Manley where the colors were reportedly good. Arrived in Manley July 1, 1911. The first year there he worked for wages. In 1912 he staked his first claims. Been working them ever since.

His partners down from Dawson and up to Manley were John Johnson and Oscar (somebody...he could not recall the name). The partners went on up to Fairbanks...a rather new camp.

During the winter of 1911-1912 Hanson and another partner prospected Boulder Creek near Manley. Adolph Bock and Hanson partnered in drilling and mining for a couple years. Bock arrived in Manley in 1909. They used a Keystone drill, steam powered with wood as ~~fuel~~ fuel.

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What did they eat? Hotcakes, bacon, moose, beans, beef (when they could get it freighted in frozen, of course). Kept their meat in ice shaft that was about 30 feet deep and had two tunnels off the shaft for storage in frozen ground.

Hanson mined steady for 40 years. He met his wife Amante Tonseth (Hanson) in Fairbanks. She was teaching in Fairbanks and later taught in Gold Basin, Tofty. Gold Basin was six or seven miles from Tofty and nine or 10 miles from Woodchopper. Bob, the eldest son, was born in Fairbanks. Stan, another son, spent 30 years in the Air Force and is now retired from military and living outside. Bob is now executive vice-president of Reeve Aleutian Airlines. Don is a school teacher in Anchorage.

Grandchildren: Don has two children; Bob has six; Stan has one. Also has six great grandchildren.

Hanson left Sweden in 1906. He returned in 1963 and again in 1968. Still has a brother living in the old Hanson home in Sweden.

Axel Edman of Nome worked for Hanson one season in the 1920's. Axel went to Barrow with Wilkins by dog team, Hanson recalls.

During the war Hanson worked at Ladd Air Base in Fairbanks. His heavy equipment was requisitioned for military construction. He stayed on at Ladd and retired in 1959. But he kept his mining operations going in Tofty in summers.

Talks about food, getting it shipped in by river. Frozen meat which was stored in deep freeze (shaft).

Mail? Dog team from Fairbanks in winter. River in summer. Bob Buzby of Fairbanks was mail team driver couple seasons. Jay Buzby of Fairbanks ran the store in Manley for awhile. Lot of mail was left for summer (by boat). In spring they received lots of magazines and newspapers. Dog team delivery took only important stuff and letters (space and weight problem).

Hanson said he had radio contact with the outside world, coming in...that is. He had a battery powered radio receiver as early as 1917 or 1918. Got KNX from Los Angeles "real clear". Reception was excellent at Tofty, he said. Received radio from all over the world. Short wave.

Phones? Had telephone system between Tanana, Manley, Tofty, Minto, Nenana and Fairbanks. The Army Signal Corps ran the system. Could call Fairbanks any time, Hanson said.

Travel: Inw In winter they went by dog team or walked. In summer it was by river.

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Son Bob says he drove Julian Hurley's dog team in the 1930's. Raced six seasons. One year he raced when Mary Joyce of Juneau came up. Also in that race was Mary Hansen (Bert and Mary's...now run the Rapids roadhouse). Bob Buzby also raced in 1936. Bob Hanson's last race was in 1941. Seppela, the famous dog musher, also was in the last couple races Bob entered.

The 1917 flu epidemic? Tofty and Manley were quarantined so nobody there got it.

Hanson recalled that Woodchopper had 7,000 people at one time. Only a few living there now.