

## EMMA LEACH - Circle Hot Springs

August, 1973

NOTE: Mrs. Leach is considered a recluse by most people in the Circle-Central district. But she's really quite busy reading. Reads all the time. However, she won't talk to people and doesn't want to be bothered. She lives in a cottage immediately behind the Circle Hot Springs Hotel. The house is stuffed with her belongings. Just about the only person she will allow in the house is Mrs. Charlotte Ames of Fairbanks. Mrs. Ames managed to talk Mrs. Leach into going to Central (8 miles away) to visit one evening with Mrs. Esther Hall, Mrs. Ruth Olson and Mrs. Clara Rust. The tapes are not good biographical stuff, but they probably are the only tapes in existence with Mrs. Leach's own voice and own recollections of the springs. We asked and received her permission to tape those recollections on the springs...hence our attempts to keep on the subject of the springs. It was a real, old fashioned gab session between women who had not seen each other for a long, long time...ending with freshly brewed coffee and blueberry cake that Ruth Olson made that day.

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Circle Hot Springs Hotel was built in 1930. Mrs. Leach recalled. The road (from Fairbanks to Circle) was completed in 1923. Ruth Olson recalls that the road was opened because she returned to Central in 1929 over that road.

Mr. Frank Leach came to the Central-Circle District in 1904 and mined in the Miller House area.

Recall how a miner...chasing down a moose...discovered the hot springs from steam rising into the cold air. Mr. Leach acquired the springs in 1907 or 1908 (hazy on that), Mrs. Leach said. He homesteaded the spot.

Emma and Frank Leach were married in 1924. No children. Recalls that Frank Leach made the air strip on hill by hotel. Noel Wien was the first to land there. He got stuck once and Leach pulled the plane out of the mud with a team of horses.

Mrs. Esther Hall recalls Noel Wien flying into Nenana in 1924.

Frank Leach made most of the furniture in the hotel. Kept three cows - milking two most of the time - and grew lots of vegetables (carrots, potatoes, celery, turnips, rutabagas, etc). Kept vegetables in root cellar all winter. Made lots of sauerkraut.

Billy Bowers was the main carpenter in the hotel construction. Lumber for the hotel came from Fairbanks and from local mills. Recall that lumber mills were located at Jumpoff, Sawpit (which was between Central and Miller House).

(more)

Mrs. Leach - a nurse by training - was working at the hotel constantly, 24 hours a day....hotel work, laundry, cooking, nursing, cleaning, etc.

Emma Leach came to Alaska in 1922. She was a nurse. She was assigned to the Hudson Stuck Hospital in Fort Yukon. She remembers Helen Callahan and her niece Rose Rasmuson who worked at the hospital. In 1922 Emma was the only nurse. Then she was joined by Mrs. Nellie Grandison.

The Casey family leased the hotel from the Leaches...then he sub-leased it to someone else. Finally Leach sold the place to John Berdahl. Frank Leach died May 15, 1955 (born Feb. 19, 1878 according to his grave marker at the Springs cemetery).