

GEORGE SHAW - Dawson, Yukon Territory
August, 1973

It was Aug. 19, 1973 that interviewer Mike Dalton talked to George Shaw in his home in Dawson. Mrs. Shaw was present but said very little. Also present was Mrs. Adriana Coyle who went to Dawson in 1900 as a four-year-old child.

Shaw was born in England and came to Canada in 1928. He arrived in Dawson in 1937. He came north from Vancouver where he worked as a millright in a sawmill. He had the gold bug and went to Dawson to mine gold...unsuccessfully always!

He said he went broke five times mining so he went into the sawmill business for 12 years. He took one more fling at mining and went busted again. After that time he went to work for a jeweler and bought out the jewelry business eventually.

When he arrived in Dawson the population was approximately 1,500 people. The large mining companies hired between 400 and 500 men for the summer season. He describes his trip by stage to Dawson. Trip usually took 7 to 10 days. Several sleighs were pulled by one tractor, and passengers sat under buffalo robes. No over-night stops. Ate frozen sandwiches all the way. Cost \$40 to come by stage from Whitehorse. Bill Hickey and Norman Hartnel were tractor drivers and would spell each other off on the long trips. Tractors used were D-4 Caterpillar. Later airplanes came in. About 1939. In 1938 the White Pass and Northern Airways had a price war on fare into and out of Dawson. Northern finally went out of business.

Mrs. Coyle tells about her trip by stage in 1911 with horses pulling the sleighs. Shaw's descriptions of trips was 1937, some 26 years later.

Coyle and Shaw recall the official opening of the Taylor Highway connecting Alaska highways system with the Yukon system. That was in the summer of 1951 (Mrs. Coyle was Queen Regent for Pioneers of Alaska though she doesn't mention it on the tape). Also present for that occasion were Territorial Police from Alaska, E.B. Collins, the King Regent of Pioneers in Fairbanks; dignitaries from the Yukon and Dawson. Shaw recalls that officials forgot to bring the ribbon for the official ribbon cutting ceremony (opening the highway). The ceremony was near Boundary Roadhouse (operated by George and Dorothy King). They borrowed some ribbons from Mrs. King's lingerie!

Shaw goes back to his trip into Dawson. Costs in 1937 broke down like this: \$50 from Vancouver to Skagway; \$11 to Whitehorse on Whitepass Railroad; \$40 on stage to Dawson. Totaled \$101.00.

Ralph (Socks) Troberg in Dawson would know when the tractors began towing the sleighs on the stage line.

(more)

In 1949 Dawson City organized its city government. The Territorial government had operated city functions, but the capital of the Yukon had been moved to Whitehorse. Elected to Dawson's council in 1949 were Shaw, Tim Cole and Jimmy Mellor as aldermen. Howard Firth was elected mayor.

Shaw talks about Joseph Clark, the workingman's candidate who was active in Dawson City politics. Clark went on to become the long time mayor of Edmonton.

He describes the early water, electrical and sewer systems in Dawson. Mrs. Coyle remembers lights and phones in 1902. About 800 people in Dawson then, she thinks.