

MARGRETTA and ELMER GAUNDROE

Dawson, Yukon, Canada
Aug. 19, 1973

REEL 1

Reel 1 opens by talk of the mail service to Dawson (U.S. Postal Service thought it was in Alaska) and mail service to Old Crow, Yukon. Not until 1958 did the U.S. Postal service realize that Old Crow was in Canada and not Alaska. Dawsonites sent mail to Old Crow "Via Fort Yukon, Alaska) with a U.S. stamp.

grand
Margretha's/father was David Wesley Ballentine. He came to Dawson in 1898 with four sons. The father went out in 1899. Margretha's father married in 1900 and returned to Dawson with his bride. One brother (Uncle of Margretha) died of typhoid and was taken out in 1899.

Margretha was born Nov. 30, 1905 in Dawson. Her husband Elmer was born Sept. 7, 1894 in New Brunswick. They have two sons in eastern Canada.

The road between Dawson and Whitehorse was opened in 1952. Air fare by then had reached \$175.00. Before the airplane the stage in the winter was horse drawn. In summer months travel was by river steamer.

Most supplies were brought in by river. Talk about "over-the-ice eggs which sold for \$2 per dozen.

Talk about historical site preservation and origin of the Klondike Visitors Association. Five or six couples started the organization. The Shaws, Monroes, Butterworths, Gaaundroes... The group started saving historic things. Got use of the old fire hall and stored in there. Made it into a museum and opened it on individual basis. Margretha was the unofficial hostess and got very worn out eventually. They managed to get funding from the federal government for the restoration of the Palace Grand Theatre and the sternwheeler Keno. To do that they had to officially organize. Margretha describes the membership of the organization.

"Aims of Klondike Visitors Association: (1) To seek, collect, and protect articles of historical value (2) to seek, collect and preserve historical information (3) to collect photographs, old and new, of historical value."

The present preservation program began in 1970 when the first "as found" crew came in and studied, measured and photographed old structures.

This summer they started on a major stabilization program. The old post office is being jacked up and stabilized as are several other buildings. The "as found" crew spent six weeks studying the Palace Grand Theatre.

(more)

REEL 2

More talk about the Palace Grand acquisition. The man who owned asked Margretha's father if he would take it down, and her father asked her to do something with it. The new Klondike Visitors Association (at that time had no money) looked into it. They managed to gather together \$1,000 and bought the structure. They eventually gave it to the Federal historic site program. In 1962 they put on their first program with Beatrice Lilly and others. Their funding came through the Department of National Historical Sites. Calgary is the headquarters for the norther areas.

The Liberal Party took over after the Palace Grand and the Keno restorations and said restoring Dawson was a mortal sin. a waste of money. KVA still pushed for restoration. Finally got National Sites Preservation to go along. About 1970 the federal program began again. Eighteen buildings are in the program now. Palace Grand and Diamond Tooth Gerties generate the money. Both operated by the KVA. Sue Ward is the mistress of ceremonies at the theatre this summer. Gerties is the old Arctic Brotherhood Hall.

Erik Neilson of Whitehorse has been a great help. In 1958 John D. Baker, Algin Hamilton and Walter Dinsdale show great interest in the north and worked with Erik Neilson. That was the short lived project before the liberals took over in Ottawa and cut off the funding. Erik is a lawyer from the prarie country. His father was a north west mounted policeman.

The fire in 1959....that was when the museum in the old fire hall was lost.

Mrs. Coyle recalls that when she was a child they had their dancing lessons in the upstairs of the old fire hall (museum that burned).

Elmer tells about closing up the Eagles Lodge about 1955. There were 125 members but they went 12 months with 11 meetings with no quorum. At one time there were more than 2,000 members of the lodge. It was organized in 1904 and was the 50th lodge to organize.