

Summary for H87-82-04

Adolph Stock is interviewed by Gayle Maloy in Fairbanks, Alaska on 10/26/84

Gayle Maloy interviews Adolph Stock in he and his wife Mary's home in Fairbanks, AK, on 10/24/84. The interview is broadcast on 10/26/84. Stock is 83 years old, born in Munich on June 18, 1901. He is best known for his 45-year career as maintenance engineer at the Nordale Hotel.

He was not quite 20 years old when his sister wrote him to say she wanted to have a relative over here in AK (she'd already been here 10 years). Their other sister was already married, so Adolph was the only one old enough to leave. He had to have permission from his mother to emigrate, since he wasn't yet 21. His sister, Augusta Bramstetter, had been married in 1910 to a man who'd been in the U.S. since 1904.

In October 1921, the peace treaty was signed between the U. S. and Germany, and the U. S. allowed 200,000 immigrants to enter the U. S. Stock was one of these. He left on June 4th, Trinity Sunday. His younger brother, who was on a football team, brought his whole team to the depot to say goodbye, and they gave him one real good team song. His other was also with him at the depot and she just cried. Before he left, his mother had sat on a chair in the living room and said, "Adolph, I'll never see you again." (Stock is crying during this part of the interview.) He said, "Mother, I'll do my best. I'll just stay a year." (When a year passed, he was mining, and it doesn't seem he was able to make it back.)

Stock had to go to Hamburg to come across the Atlantic. He came in to New York and saw the Statue of Liberty. His sister had arranged for someone to pick him up at the dock to board the train to Seattle. He didn't know a word of English at that time. The lady who got him at the dock saw that he had a pound of salami, a loaf of bread, and a bottle of milk for his train trip. In those years, Stocks says, he was always hungry, and those supplies didn't even last him until Chicago, where he had to change trains. He got into Chicago at 11 pm. There was a bus at the depot to bring them to the connecting depot.

Stock had nothing to eat for 4 ½ days. He didn't know how to reach the dining car. This train line had all black service men, who walked back and forth. Stock tried to indicate what he wanted, but they didn't understand. Eventually, one of them brought him some coffee and 2 slices of white bread. He was not used to white bread, but he was so hungry he didn't care. He had change; they took 35 cents out of it to pay for the food.

Stock also had a letter with him from the woman in New York to present at the information office in Seattle, to guide him to a hotel. He only had \$6 on him. He was taken to a restaurant and he ate a huge platter of meat. He was 20 at that time. Then he got some cigarettes and was helped to board the boat to AK. On this boat was Mr. Harry Platt, who'd just come from Mexico, where he'd been studying law. He later became a judge in Fairbanks. Platt told Stock to order what he was ordering, and if he liked it, to eat it, of course.

When they got to Seward, Stock was impressed at the way the train was set up. They boarded the train for Fairbanks. In Anchorage, Pratt arranged a room for both of them at the Anchorage Hotel (now called the Westward Hotel). From Anchorage, they went to Curry (halfway to Fairbanks) and stayed in a big log house hotel. It used to be a

horse barn, and was turned into a bunkhouse, where it was \$1 to rent a blanket. All night they had to fight the mosquitoes (it was July).

The next day they boarded the narrow gauge train to Nenana, where they stayed for one night. The next day, a boat took them across the Tanana to the train to Fairbanks. That train went about 25 mph. They arrived in Fairbanks at 11 pm, and Pratt got Stock a room at the Pioneer Hotel.

At that time there was a barber working at the hotel, Julius Hoffman, who was an old country German; he got Stock a room for \$1/night. The hotel owner asked for Stock whether anyone knew where Carl Bramstetter lived. Bramstetter also came to the Pioneer Hotel looking for Stock, and they found each other, went to the Model Café for Stock's first hamburger, and got Stock's room fare back. Stock found out from Bramstetter that his sister was in the hospital having their first baby.

It took about 8 days to go by boat up the Salcha River to Caribou Creek. On the way up, Stock saw his first bear in the wild. Carl fired a shot to scare the bear away; it disappeared. Up further they ran up against a herd of caribou. There must have been thousands of them crossing the river. They waited for 2 hours for an opening to pull their boat through. They were using a riverboat, which one person pulled by the neck, and the other steered it with a pole. Stock pulled it all the way from Salcha Bridge. In the boat were Stock's sister, brother-in-law, their baby, and a ton of supplies, including oats and hay for the horse they had.

For Stock, coming from a big city, the log house wasn't too elaborate. His sister did the cooking. The house was pretty comfortable, with a kitchen, bedroom, and a baby bed. Stock slept in another log house by himself. One day he got a good fire going after working. Some wood shavings were ignited while he was sleeping and a fire started. He woke up and went to get water to put it out. Luckily, he wasn't bothered by the smoke.

In the summer, they had a large vegetable garden, with cabbage, potatoes, carrots, and lettuce. They had a "root cellar" which was dug 10 feet underground in a cabin. The summer crop lasted quite a while into winter. Carl had killed a caribou; he cut it in half and he carried the hind portion, while stock carried the front.

They had a piece of ground sown with oats for the horse. Stock was plowing that ground one day, when the horse began to act uneasy. There was a great herd of caribou crossing the river. Stock ran for the 30/30, because he knew they didn't have too much meat. He hit one of the caribou.

He walked 3 miles up the creek to a neighbor's to get help operating a boat to go fetch the caribou. He was very excited (this was his first caribou) and couldn't make the neighbor hurry up. The neighbor was very calm and told Stock to wait for him to finish his supper. When he was done he said, "Adolph, I'm going to wash my dishes now." The man made Adolph sit down and take it easy. Finally they were in the boat. They couldn't get there fast enough for Stock. Finally, they got the caribou, and brought it to the homestead by horse and double-ender. The people's reaction overwhelmed Stock, because there wasn't any meat at hand for several weeks.

His first year at Caribou Creek, Stock was longing for a trip to town, but there wasn't much call for it. In the fall, they started into town for supplies. After 7 miles, they crossed the river into a cabin on Butte Creek. Another man and Carl stayed at the cabin and told Stock to walk back home, as they didn't need him any more.

While he was walking, the temperature rose, and he broke through the ice on the river. His right foot was under water. It was -15, and 15 miles home. He ran as much as he could stand. By the time he got home his foot was frozen. His sister had him put it in a bucket of coal oil that was standing outside, to thaw out the foot. That made the frostbite painless, says Stock.

About 2 or 3 weeks later, the heel of his foot came off like the heel of a shoe. He didn't go to town, but just "let nature take care of it." It healed OK, but it took a long time before he could feel nothing of the incident. It was 90 miles to the doctor. The more he worked, the less pain he could feel.

Right before he'd got home from that run, he heard wolves howling all around. He saw one up ahead, but he was downwind from it. All he had with him was a pocketknife. Obviously, though, he got home alright.

There wasn't much fun to be had up on the creek. All the neighbors were men; sometimes they visited with each other. During Prohibition, one of the men made his own booze. On Sundays they used to find him sleeping on the floor, which was all wet.

They had a bedrock train, a wooden wagon, and homemade rails. On Sundays they used to get things in shape for the week of work ahead. They didn't play cards; everyone was just prospectors and miners and didn't know how, says Stock.

The year he came to Caribou Creek was 1922. His first trip to town was in 1926. Even though he had been longing to come to town, there was no entertainment-related reason to; it all involved work. They didn't make very much on their claim. In 1925 he started a new beginning in Fairbanks, working for the F.E. Co. In 1927, after 2 years working out on the creeks, he contracted typhoid fever. He came in to Fairbanks to the hospital. He had no money. He was living in town with his sister and her husband, who worked for the AK Railroad, at that time.

Stock was ground-slucing for the F. E. Co. when he got the fever. He drank the river water every morning. Then a new camp was opened upriver from where he was, and that's how he and 2 others got sick. He was in the old St. Joseph's hospital for 12 weeks; his fever was continuously 104-105 degrees for 6 weeks he says. Dr. Dillerwin was the F. E. Co. doctor. Dr. Sutherland was "anybody's doctor." Of the other 2 who had the fever, one was in for 6 weeks and one for 3 weeks.

After Stock got over this illness, he went to work for the Nordale Hotel as a maintenance engineer, and worked there for 45 years until it burned down in 1972, on Washington's Birthday. His sister had already been employed there as a maid when he got his job there.