

H97-66-03 Pt. 2

Clara Hickman Rust

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Fairbanks, Alaska

Clara Rust said she planned to talk about her father's newspaper experience. When she was seven years old her father was a partner in a big printing company in Seattle, Metropolitan and Binding Company. The company building was still standing at the time of the interview. It was built in 1906.

Clara was born in Seattle, Washington on May 2, 1890. Her parents were from Ohio. They traveled to Washington and worked on the Great Northern Railroad. Her father was the third of thirteen children. When he was young he worked on a farm. At fifteen he ran away and got a job in Leesberg, Ohio with a press company. He learned all about the printing business. He eventually worked for the Leesberg Buckeye newspaper. He and his wife then headed west. Her brother, Thane Thurston Hickman was born along the way. Her father worked in a printing company in Seattle. It printed the first state papers in Seattle. In 1889 his printing plant burned down in the big Seattle fire. He continued with his newspaper work. Her father went up to the Klondike in 1897. He traveled over the Chilkoot Pass and went over to Dawson. He decided it would be a good place to start a newspaper. He traveled back over the White Pass and decided that would be the best route. The Klondike Nugget in Dawson was established on June 16, 1898. It was a weekly, then a daily and then finally a semi-weekly newspaper. On May 6, 1899 Zach Hickman was the general manager of the paper, Gene Allen was the business manager and the advertiser, George Allen was the overall editor, A.F. George was the city editor, and Art Buhl was the artist and cartoonist. In 1899 her father pulled out of the newspaper. The other newspaper, the Midnight Sun was established on June 14, 1898. Art Buhl later worked on the Sacramento Bee. Both the newspapers in Dawson first came out on the same day. It has been disputed which newspaper actually came out first.

Robert Service, Sam Dunham and Mr. Duncan all wrote for the Klondike Nugget. Gene Allen contributed material to a book which was written by Russell A Bankson in 1935. Gene Allen claimed in the book that he started the Klondike Nugget which Clara said was not true. The book is no longer being published. Clara said Gene Allen was later forced out of Dawson. Clara has given the university a copy of the Klondike Nugget.

Clara's brother came up in 1907 to work at the Chatanika Light Company. Her brother drowned in the Chatanika River in 1908 after falling through the ice. Clara was living in Seattle at the time. After her brother died she came up to Fairbanks to join her mother. She took the "Susie" up to Fairbanks. She and another girl and six men were the only passengers. She traveled up the Yukon River. It took her 32 days to get from Seattle to Fairbanks.

The Fairbanks Daily News was established on September 19, 1903 by George M. Hall and Frank Mason. Frank Mason was the editor and printer. R. J. McChessney was the manager until 1905. W.H. Raymond then became manager, proprietor and the editor. Zach Hickman and Casey Ryan were the printers. George Bellows joined Hickman and Wilber Ward to buy the newspaper in 1906. Hickman was editor and manager. Wilber Ward sold his share in 1907 to Hickman. W.F. Thompson had a paper called the Dome miner. Zach Hickman and Mr. Thompson used to go down to Chena to get the news. They had to walk the railroad tracks to Chena.

Clara's mother decided she didn't want to live in Fairbanks and went Outside. Her father then sold the Fairbanks daily news to W.F. Thompson in 1909. The newspaper was then named the Fairbanks daily news miner.

Clara said she wrote for Jessen's daily.

Someone asked Clara about W.F. Thompson. Clara said his little paper was from Dome City on Dome Creek. It was printed at the Fairbanks daily news.

Clara talked about Daphne Moody.

Clara talked about going to a public bathhouse when she first came to Fairbanks. One was located in what is now the Odd Fellows Hall. Jess Rust's mother, Cora Madole and Dr. Overguard started a bathhouse and clinic. Cora would advertise in the Hickman's newspaper. Clara met Jess Rust at the bathhouse. She married him in 1910. Her wedding supper was white grouse.

Clara talked about market hunting. Jess would go up toward Rapids and Livengood and hunt sheep and moose and bring the meat down to Fairbanks and sell it. He had a dog team to carry the meat. He had been raised in Montana and had learned to hunt. He also hoisted for miners. The hoist house had a large donkey engine which would run a cable which carried up the buckets.

Clara talked about mining in their first year of marriage. They mined on Five Above on Little El Dorado Creek. They put down a 185 foot hole. They had three men helping in the winter just for room and board. She described how they put in the hole. They would thaw the ground and then put in poles. They used a boiler and had points. They had a pipe go down the hole for air. They used carbide lamps. The miners next to their mine were Otto Nelson and Sherman Fraker. She talked about going down the mine and not enjoying the experience.

After her mother left Fairbanks she lived with Jess Rust's mother. She lived in a little cabin on Second Avenue at Cowles.

Someone from the audience asked what the young people did for entertainment when she arrived in Fairbanks. Clara said she went to card parties and dances. Clara said her

children would attend parties, skate and ski for entertainment. She talked about her children swimming on Birch Lake.

Someone from the audience asked Clara about her writing experience. She said she wrote several articles for the Alaska Sportsman. She said she worked as a telephone operator in Fairbanks for nine years. The telephone company was located at Second Avenue and Turner Street. It later burned down. People would request different numbers and the operators would operate the switchboard and place the calls. In the early days different creeks would have their own long distance line. Cora Weir and her sister Lillian were on the Dome Creek telephone line. Margaret Brandt worked as an operator in early Fairbanks. Lillian Watson was also an operator. Henry Weir had the telephone company in 1911 in Iditarod. He was the manager in Fairbanks in 1913.

Cora talked about their mine shaft being flooded. Her husband had to go into town to look for work and she worked as a cook for Fraker and Nelson. Paul Rickert was a lineman for the telephone company and he hired Jess to work on the telephone lines to Chatanika. In 1912 Jess started working for the NC Company.

She was working for a laundry when Henry Weir hired her to work for the telephone company. She had a fire alarm on her first night of work. She worked during black outs during the Second World War. She enjoyed working for the telephone company. She worked at night for nine years. She worked at Ladd Field for a year as an operator. She worked later as a telephone operator for the army. In 1942 she was the first one to be able to talk to Washington, D.C. on the long distance line.