

H97-66-25

Jim Cassady

Fairbanks, Alaska

February 23, 1967

Side A

Jim Cassady gives a talk to the Tanana Yukon Historical Society. He talks about his life. He was born in San Francisco on November 25, 1901. He was born in a section of S.F. called Billy Goat Hill. His father was name Earl James Cassady. His mother was Isa Utterback Cassady. They knew each other in Iowa. His sister was born in Salinas, California. He attended school in Salinas. He drove a truck in Salinas and served an apprenticeship as a machinist. He worked in several businesses in San Francisco. He drove stage in Yosemite National Park one summer. He would help with the fire fall at glacier Point. He was accepted in the Maryland Navy Yard Apprenticeship School as a machinist. He served four years there as an apprentice. He was hired by Standard Oil on their tanker fleet. He found out after two years that he was not a good sailor. He made one last trip to Philadelphia and planned to get off in San Francisco. They then went to Seattle. He was ready to leave the ship. He got a job with the Packard Motor Company. He worked there seven years. He climbed mountains with the Alpine Club. He met his wife there. He had heard so much from his uncle about Alaska. On May 1, 1931 he left Seattle on a cannery tender with Lyman Culver. They arrived at Union Bay forty miles north of Ketchikan. He had worked in the engine room and they helped unload the boat. They then headed for Nome, Alaska in a canoe. They went up through the Inside Passage to Skagway, on the railroad to Whitehorse, down the Yukon to St. Michael, and then on up to Nome. He spent six years in Nome. On the canoe trip they used an Old Town canoe and carried a sail, oars, engine and a police dog. When they pulled into Petersburg they hit the narrow entrance just at the rip tide. They rowed for an hour and didn't move. They took turns and finally made it into town. They rested in Petersburg and took off the next morning. They had such a strong wind they pulled into shore to wait it out. They talked with the owner of a small fishing boat who took them up the inlet. He had to stay in the canoe and steer it as it was towed. It became very rough and they didn't have any place to stop for fifteen miles. He rode through some big waves. At Three Brother's Island they stopped. They stayed there for a couple of days. They went to Taku Harbor on Prince William Island. They rode up to Juneau on another boat. He went to Skagway and loaded up their canoe. They arrived in Whitehorse. They requested permission from the Canadian Mounties to take their boat down the Yukon. They started out and went down Lake LeBarge. The lake was frozen. A tugboat was going down to test the depth of the water. They bought passage on the tugboat across Lake Labarge for themselves and their canoe. The Whitehorse (boat) was pushing two barges in front of them. They climbed up on the front end of the boat. The barges were loaded with groceries. They took the lamp black trail. They took a ford truck and drove across the lake and dropped lamp black that helped the ice break up. The ice got thicker and thicker and they started breaking through the ice. One morning they drove up on the ice and it didn't break through. They had to blast dynamite to break up the ice. They finally broke out into open water at the lower end of the lake. At the mouth of the river was a riverboat

that froze in during the previous year. Jim took off with their canoe and headed down the river. There was a crooked little bend that was full of the ice from the lake. They were going down the Thirtymile River. The Teslan River comes in where the little village of Hootlinka is located. Thirtymile River is clear until you reach the Teslan River. They shot a few ducks and had something to eat. Where the Thirtymile River and the Teslan River meet is the beginning of the Yukon. They got into Selkirk late at night and they wanted to know where the Whitehorse was. At Dawson they found out that there was an ice jam in the Thirtymile River that formed behind the Whitehorse and dried up the river. The boat was stuck there for a number of hours when finally the ice jam broke loose and came down the Yukon River. It was also pushed over to the bank by strong winds for several hours. At Coffee Creek they stopped and saw a small cabin. No one was home. They cooked lunch on the beach. They walked down three miles to another village and on the trail they met a woman on the horse. She was carrying a dead black bear over the horse. They went home with her and had several meals. They traveled down the river to Olgilvie. He goes back to talk about Selkirk. They were invited in to the store and everyone seem to know about them. Their picture had been in the Seattle P.I. They slept in the middle of the hardware store. When they were in Olgilvie they were invited into someone's house for the night. When they finally arrived in Whitehorse they checked in with the mounted police. They left Whitehorse and took off down the river again. They got down to Fortymile and then down to Eagle. They broke a crankshaft on their engine before they got to Circle City. They decided to get on the steamer Whitehorse and sold the canoe to a storekeeper. They rode the steamer all the way to Tanana. They waited for a couple of days in Tanana. They went into a small café and ran into El McGee. They bought his boat but didn't have any money for gas. They ran into a salesman who wanted a ride to Ruby. He paid for their gas. They met Mr. Growden who told them to charge their groceries and gas to him. They went on to the mouth of the river. They arrived at St. Michael's. The Nesee boat was there, one of the N.C. Company's boats. They helped unload the steamer Victoria. They decided to buy passage from St. Michael to Nome. They arrived in Nome after fifty-two days. They worked there all summer. There was a Catholic mission north of Nome that he visited in the winter. He learned to drive dog teams there. He talked about KFQD sending messages over the air. Jim sent a note over the air to Mr. Growden. In January he heard an answer from Mr. Growden. After six years he went to Fairbanks. His last year in Nome he worked on a dredge. He met Mr. Richmond on a boat and asked for a job. He started working for the N.C. Company. He worked for them for thirty years. He worked as a service manager. He had just put an engine in a caterpillar tractor at Marshall. Oscar Winchell flew him down. Jim Dodson flew him out. Magdalene was coming into Valdez at that time and Jim needed to meet up with her. He drove down to Rika's place. They drove into Fairbanks together and went in to get a marriage license. Bill Growden was the one who sold him the license. Jim was servicing the whole territory at that time. He once had to go to Balleret Creek to work. The head geologist from Ottawa was visiting at the time. He had used a little rowboat to get to Thistle Creek. He visited the old cabin at Coffee Creek. The couple that lived there had moved down to another creek. Jim went to visit them in 1937.

Jim and Magdalene were living on Wendell Avenue in 1937. The house was later burned down. Jim talks about his two children. His son lived in Anchorage. His daughter was a teacher and living in Corvallis.

El McGee later bought a caterpillar tractor from the N.C. Company and Jim would see him every so often. The first fifteen years that he worked for N.C. Company he worked with miners and their equipment. Jim talks about El McGee. He was a famous miner at Utopia Creek. He was now up at Manley Hot Springs and was also at Miller House. He saw El McGee every summer after El bought a caterpillar tractor from the NC company. He has spent thirty years traveling all over Alaska servicing equipment. During WWII the miners had to give up their equipment and they never recovered. Jim talks about the Alcan Highway. He would service the light plants along the highway. He would stop below Rika Wallen's and look down through the trees. He was told at the time that there would be a road down through Canada from that point. He brought the caterpillar tractors down for construction on the highway. He flew up to Barrow with Sig Wien. They had to land on a sandbar for the night. They went to the coal mine at Barrow. The DEW line was constructed about this time. He serviced the stations for the DEW line. He now works at the Tanana Yukon Historical Society and refurbishing part of the steamboat Nenana.

He has been collecting photos of Slaterville. They were the first house to build in Slaterville.

Side B

Jim Cassady talks about items of importance to Pioneer Park. He had information about Manley Hot Springs telephone company. Gus Benson had a switchboard from Manley Hot Springs that he gave to Pioneer Park for the A67 celebration. The switchboard was put in the NC trading post in the park. He reads a "continual history of the Manley Hot Springs telephone system , Manley Hot Springs, Alaska" by Gus A. Benson, 1/5/65. In the year about 1906, Charles E. Cavanaugh an individual as owner started up a telephone exchange in Manley (Hot Springs, Alaska) to be known as the Hot Springs Telephone Company At some time between 1906 and 1910 Charles E. Cavanaugh together with J.R. Frank, Pioneer Creek miner, strung telephone land lines from Hot Springs out to Eureka and Pioneer to serve the mining camps along these creeks and their tributaries. Telephones were installed and thus by his investment and contribution J.R. Frank became co-owner in the Hot Springs Telephone Company with headquarters in Hot Springs Territory of Alaska July 2, 1910, p. 396-397 v. 2 of deeds, Charles E. Cavanaugh sold his undivided one-half interest in the telephone company to Samuel D. Buck. September 1, 1912, p. 5, v. 2 of miscellaneous Samuel D. Buck sold his one-half interest to Arthur Cavanaugh. October 1, 1914, p. 112-113, v.2 of miscellaneous Arthur Cavanaugh sold his one-half interest back to Samuel D. Buck. August 30, 1917, p. 195-196, v. 2 of miscellaneous Samuel D. Buck sold his one-half interest to R.L. Stevens. August 22, 1919, p. 196-197, v. 2 of miscellaneous R.L. Stevens sold his one-half interest to Charles E. Cavanaugh. September 17, 1923, p. 236, v. 2 of miscellaneous Charles E. Cavanaugh sold his one half interest to A.T Rowe. November 11, 1927 p. 259, v. 2 of miscellaneous R.T. Rowe sold to Jenny Tillison. This transaction included one half interest plus a half of the J.R. Frank interest which comprised one quarter interest in the company. Three quarter interest in the telephone system was now vested in Mrs. Tillison. March 25, 1934 p. 414, v. 2 of miscellaneous Jenny Tillison sold her undivided three quarter interest in the Hot Springs Telephone System to Gus A. Benson of Manley Hot Springs, Alaska. May 30, 1945, p. 415, v. 2 miscellaneous, Gus A. Benson purchased the balance of the remaining one-quarter interest in said telephone system and thus became the sole owner and operator of the Hot Springs Telephone Company. This was the only telephone service within or near Manley (Hot Springs) The only

one within the Manly Hot Springs recording district. With the switchboard and office in Manley Hot Springs, Alaska and besides the local lines right here in town, the company telephone lines extended out 1) easterly approximately six miles to the mouth of Baker Creek on the Tanana River where it connected with a government line upriver to Tolovana, Minto and Nenana. 2) Northerly, approximately 23 miles to Eureka and four miles beyond where it tied in with a government line to Rampart over the Yukon River servicing the mining camps in the Rampart area. Besides the seven miles or more of company lines from Eureka easterly over to the mining camps on Pioneer Creek and its tributaries the Hot Springs Telephone Company lines extended from Eureka westerly over to Glenn, Rhode Island, Omika and Thanksgiving Creeks, a distance of approximately seven more miles. Also at one time a line ran from the overland at Baker Creek Bridge Road roughly as Baker Creek runs down to its mouth on the Tanana River. 3) From Hot Springs northwesterly the company's lines went to Tofty, Woodchopper, American Creek and Fish Lake, a distance of about thirty-seven miles where it connected with a government line downriver to Tanana, Ruby, Caltag and on down river. Also a company line went from American Creek over to the Big Boulder Creek about eight miles. 4) Westerly company line out of Hot Springs down the Hot Springs slough to Kemperville and on down the Tanana River to a point about eight miles below Manley (Hot Springs) 5) Southerly a line from the switchboard to the Hot Springs steamboat landing on the Tanana River about three and one-half miles. This telephone service has been a blessing indeed to its patrons over the years as they can testify. When fires broke out here in town the switchboard operator could have the necessary manpower on hand immediately. And when accidents occurred out at the mines by telephoning they have been able to have an airplane land on their nearest airstrip within thirty minutes. Machinery and mining equipment breakdowns also expedited – saving time and dollars. A big item during the very short mining season Alaska affords. We have been able to save many lives by getting patients quickly to the hospital – an hour instead of days. It is sincerely hoped that this necessary and convenient public telephone service will always continue. December 31, 1963 Gus A. Benson sold the entire telephone system to Vilas D. Marsh and Elsie M. Marsh, husband and wife of Manley Hot Springs, Alaska.

May 25, 1967

History of the old N.C. Company Powerhouse. The report came from Edward Clausen's papers. 1903-1904 a new 75 horsepower engine was installed to supply the city with 1000 electric lights and steam heat. By 1905 the first fire pump was added to the steam plant. By 1907 the NC company had to enlarge their capacity. Equipment was added. By 1950 Fairbanks began to dispense its own power. About 25 percent of the city had steam heat. The rest of the city used oil. The whistle was replaced with a siren. Jim remembers the old siren blowing when there was a fire.

History of Fairbanks. It was written by C.W. Adams, captain for the NC Company written in 1948. In July 1901 Captain Barnette had a small steamer which he planned to take up the Tanana River and start a trading post. The boat struck a rock and it sunk. Captain Barnette asked C.W. Adams to take the supplies up the river on the LaVelle Young. Captain Adams wasn't sure about being able to get up the Tanana. He was told that he wouldn't be able to make it past the mouth of the Chena Slough. They loaded up the boat with supplies and people after agreeing to a contract. They left St. Michael on August 8 and had no trouble reaching the mouth of the Tanana. They had to cut their own wood for the boiler. About a mile

above the Chena Slough they mention a trading post run by Hendricks and Belt on the Tanana River. They went up six or eight miles and ran into channels that they couldn't go through. They went back and started up the Chena Slough until they couldn't get any further. Adams wanted to leave them right there on the bank. He was talked into going down river a ways. They tied up at what would become the town of Fairbanks. This was August 26, 1901. That evening trees were cut by Angus McDoogle, Shorty Robinson, and Soapy Smith, II. They had to clear a space in the timber. The next day two prospectors came along who were from the Goldstream area. The prospects for the area did not look good. Captain Barnette was angry because Captain Adams wouldn't take him to the mouth of the slough, but he was happy about the site later.

History of the Northern Commercial Company. The origin of the company started with the first trading post established in Unalaska in 1791 and run by two Russians. It was named Golikib Shelikov Company which was a subsidiary of the imperial Russian crown. The second branch was opened some five years later in Kodiak and it slowly grew. In 1867 it was the Russian American Fur Company. The center of its activities was in the Kodiak Cook Inlet areas. It reached its peak of activity with Alexander Barinof. The Alaska Commercial Company was formed in 1868. In 1901 various commercial and transportation companies merged as the Northern Commercial Company and the Northern Navigation Company. As late as 1940 they still had a few posts and interests. They went out of existence in 1941. The new Northern Commercial Company operates out of Alaska and the Yukon Territory.

History of the Fairbanks Curling Club. 1952? Curling started in 1905 by men from Dawson and the Yukon. The early games were played on the NC Company's dock. Exhibition games were played on the river ice in 1907-1908. During 1908 the curling club was constructed on land bought from the city on Second Avenue between Cowles and Wickersham Street. A description of the game is given. The rocks were purchased from Scotland.