

Call number: 02-00-08

Harry Badger Interview, Mrs. Nick Eidam of the College Community Women's Club is the interviewer, No Date, No Location

Summary created by: Jacob Metoxen

Date of creation of summary: 2/4/2013

Notes: Originals on 5 inch reels. Master copy CD.

Mrs. Nick Eidam asks what started the Chena town site. Badger says Hendrickson Beltz had a trading post on the other side of the Tanana River from the Chena town site. When they made a strike of gold in Fairbanks, they moved across the river to Chena thinking that would be where the real town was with courthouse, officials, etc. They claimed they couldn't make it up the river because of the shallowness so the progression would have to stop in Chena. Badger assisted in blowing out a log jam and when Judge Wickersham went to Fairbanks, he decided to put the town in Fairbanks. A lot of people went to Chena when they thought that was going to be the town. There was a strike on Ester Creek, right across the hill from Chena. Badger and Bonnefield were packed and ready to go stake because they thought Chena was trying to make a name for themselves. Turns out Chena was a prosperous place. Badger describes Chena as having two or three stores with a population of 600-700 people. There was gambling and saloons. Good hotels and lodging. Badger started his homestead in 1916 and has been there for 35 years. Badger got his first strawberries from old John Charley. He was a Swiss gardener and had a garden and hot house where the F.E. Company is now. Charley went outside and brought in all the trails of the strawberry plants he was growing. He wanted to make a hybrid of wild plants with domesticated plants. He did 400-500 crosses before he got what he wanted. The final product is what Badger used. Charley wouldn't let any of the plants go until he left. Badger got 3 dozen. He paid 2 bits a piece for them in September. 7 of the plants lived. Charley raised the strawberries in the hot house. He picked them and brought them inside for the winter time. Charley had big berries. Charley put 9 berries in a box and sold them for two and half dollars.

Trip Badger took to Bonnefield country. Badger, Bonnefield, Dr. Sterns, and a man name John Ogelester [sp]. They had to go down the mouth of Wood River to get there. About 40 miles below Fairbanks. They camped one night and Bonnefield went ahead to see if he could find the mouth of the river. While he was gone, they camped on an island in the river. When the river froze, the ice piled and they put up their tent and went down to latch their sled. When they did that, 10 feet of ice broke under Ogelester and Badger jumped in to save Ogelester. Dr. Sterns grabbed Badger's ankles and they pulled out Ogelester. They traveled with two dog teams. They lived on a pot of beans, flap jacks, bacon, rice, tea, and not much coffee. Some amusing incidents: Coming down Goodpastor River, Badger stopped to make a trade of caribou with an Indian camp. There was one Indian and the others were in the hills. The Indian wanted to show some money he got from white men. He showed Badger some silver and asked if that was the amount the white men said it was, the amount was correct. He took out a hand of

bills and asked if that was right, the amount was right. He brought out an old Canadian penny the size of a silver dollar and says he was told it was 10 dollars' worth of gold. The Indian described the man to Badger and Badger went into town and got the money to bring back. Badger made a lifelong friend. The man's name was Guinness. Guinness had a brother named John. Guinness and John came into town. Guinness always had small skins and John had bear hides. Badger gave Guinness a hard time by saying Guinness always had small skins and John had big hides and why, Guinness replied "Buy and Buy, no job."

What kind of stoves did they have in the cabins? They were usually Yukon stoves and if they couldn't get a Yukon stove, they took two coal oil tins and cut them in two and put them together and cut a stove pipe in and took another tin and made a pipe out of it. Barnette brought a lot of real stoves when he established his trading post. Another story...An Indian came up from Chena camp to buy an outfit. He had 30 dollars' worth of meat he sold to Barnette. Barnette wanted to know what he wanted and the Indian took half a pound of tea, a club of tobacco, a sewing needle and thread which cost four dollars. Barnette asked what he wanted with the rest of it. Barnette had a whole string in brand new dish pans and the Indian wanted the rest in tin pans. Barnette talked him out of it.

What did Badger do when he first got to Fairbanks? Badger was appointed town recorder. The rule was anyone who wanted a lot would go and stake it. The town recorder would show where he could stake. They would go and stake and pay the recorder 2.5 dollars. He had thirty days to build the cabin and it was his. It was a lucrative business because there were hundreds of people coming in and Badger would make 75 dollars a day. When people found out there wasn't much of a pay streak lots of people left and they'd sell their cabin for 15-20 dollars. The next time somebody wanted a stake Badger would sell that cabin for 15-20 dollars more. Badger prospected between times all the time. When Badger couldn't go he'd grub stake somebody to try and go find something in the hills.