

H76-15

Cleora Bachner Erickson

Fairbanks, Alaska

August 1974

N. Jacobs, interviewer

Cleora Bachner Erickson is interviewed by ^{Neville Jacobs} ~~an unknown person~~. They talk about Cleora's days in Anchorage. Interviewer's mother was Abby Abbott and her father worked for the Road Commission. Cleora lived in Anchorage in the 1940s and 1950s. She was known for growing African violets. Jess Bachner is her oldest son. Cleora was four years old when she arrived in Alaska in 1906. Her parents were Mr. and Mrs. Casady. Her father was an engineer in the mines. She thought her father was from North Dakota. Her mother was a Canadian. . She traveled up the Chena River to Fairbanks. They first went to live on Engineer Creek near Fairbanks. They later built a cabin in Fairbanks. She talks about the cattle, sheep and pigs that were brought to Fairbanks. She remembers going out to Birch Hill where the livestock was kept. The animals were slaughtered just a few at a time because they didn't have any way to keep the meat. She remembers when the animals were driven through town with cowboys and dogs. It was an exciting and noisy time. The slaughter house was on the slough where the FE Company was located [possibly Deadman Slough]. There was also a slaughterhouse on First Avenue. Cleora talks about Clara Rust. She lived with Clara's family when she was a teenager and went to school.

Cleora's parents separated and her mother remained in Fairbanks. Her mother later remarried.

She went to Livengood in 1915 when there was a stampede. Clara, her mother and stepfather were in a shipwreck on the Tanana River. The boat ran into a snag on the river. There were thirteen men and three women. Clara brought her cat with her. They spent a week on the shores of the Tanana River. It rained all the time. The women slept on oat sacks on the barge. The name of the riverboat was the Chisana. Captain Hackett was the riverboat captain. The Teddy H. was a boat piloted by Captain Finger. Carl and Teddy Finger were about Cleora's age. The Teddy H. picked them up eventually. Cleora talks about Mrs. Munson who owned Munson's Roadhouse. She was also in the shipwreck. Mrs. Munson was headed to Livengood, too. They traveled on the Tolovana River and were let off at Logjam. There was a tram with carts which was pulled by horses that carried their freight. They traveled up to West Fork. There was freight all along the riverbanks that had been inundated by the rising river. Most of the food was ruined. They had to have their freight taken in by pack horses. They had to walk the rest of the way. His father had built a cabin on Mike Hess Creek. Her stepfather's name was Jack Nielsen. They lived there for a couple of years. They were eight or nine miles from Livengood. Cleora talks about being isolated on Mike Hess Creek. She would walk over to Roy Ferguson's cabin to play with his daughter. Cleora talks about her mother papering the cabin with the paper they had from packing materials. Cleora talked about rabbit hunting and berry picking. She staked some claims with the help of her stepfather. The beds were made of poles and spruce boughs. They used dried grass to stuff into their mattresses. Her mother whittled a washboard from a board. The claims that she staked didn't produce anything.

Cleora talks about the other prospectors walking five or six miles for visiting. The men would play cards in the evenings. Her father didn't allow her to play cards. They made "bug lights" (a can with a candle in it) for lanterns to play cards. Cleora was in Livengood for ten years all together. The mining was done by sinking a shaft and sluicing the material in the summertime.

She met her first husband on Hess Creek. His name was George Bachner.

Cleora talked about everyone standing guard over their freight.

Cleora talked about her husband mining in the winter with a partner, Albert Jorgland. They struck gas when his partner was in the shaft. Cleora traveled up the creek to get more help at another camp. They drew out the gas from the shaft, but her husband's partner died.

They then traveled to Patterson Lake to stake some ground. Cleora talks about the size of the lilly pads on the lake. They then returned to Hess Creek.

She talked about traveling back to Fairbanks to attend school. She rode over the trail to Olnaus with Mrs. Ernie Shermer's brothers-in-law. One of them was named Jasper. They carried gold at the same time they hauled freight.

Interviewer talked about Bill and Thelma Esdorf. They were in Livengood in the 1920s. The interviewer asks about the men with nicknames. They talked about Two-Step Charlie and the Dutch Kid. Cleora talked about Irish Mary. Her boyfriend's name was Irish Ole. Cleora talked about panning gold on Ester Creek. She earned enough money to buy herself a gun. She would pan with a pie tin. Interviewer asked her about how she picked her spots to pan gold. Cleora talked about using a rocker. She would scrape up the gravel under some of the sluice boxes. On rich ground gold would also stick to the rocks that were removed from the sluice boxes.

Cleora was married in front of her parent's house. She was married by a justice of the peace from Livengood. They were living on Amy Creek. They were married in 1918. They stayed in the Livengood area for another five years. She flew out with Noel Wien on one of his first flights in the Livengood area. She had her two children with her and the flight wasn't easy. Cleora talked about how good looking Noel Wien was and how popular he was with the women. It was hard to get business for Noel Wien because everyone was afraid of flying. They cleared off the top of a hillside for a landing strip. It was a two hour flight from Livengood to Fairbanks.

She and her husband came to Fairbanks and bought a log cabin for \$175. They later built a house on Eighth. Her children are Betty, Jess and Carl. They left Fairbanks and her husband worked for the M.K. Company. She wintered in Seattle and spent their summers in Anchorage. Her husband died in 1960.

She knew her second husband for many years. Her second husband, Arnie Erickson came to Fairbanks in 1909. He had come from Norway. They had recently moved back to Fairbanks.

Series: Tanana Yukon Historical Society