

Esther Oliver Hall

Interview by Neville Jacobs
Fairbanks Pioneer Home
August 1974

1 hour

This interview was made to supplement the tape gathered by Mike Dalton at Central City. It is a fragmented conversation, rather than an oral history, but explores areas possibly not covered in the previous tape.

Esther was born in Douglas in 1899. Prior to that, her parents lived at Sitka; came to Sitka in the 1880's and were married by Bishop Rowe. Esther attended grade school in Douglas, graduated in 1916, went to college in the states and returned as a school teacher.

Esther taught at Perseverance, a community on the other side of the mountain from Juneau. She traveled through the Alaska Juneau mine to get to Juneau.

At that time there was no bridge between Juneau and Douglas; the two communities were very separate, while today, Douglas is the "bedroom of Juneau."

Esther describes Treadwell as a camp, a community with its own swimming pool, auditorium, movies, bowling alley, etc.

Conversation turns to parents' life at Sitka; Indian village; conversation switches to changing attitudes in race relations.

Conversation returns to Douglas, teaching in Perseverance, then Esther's move to Eska, the coal mine town on the Alaska Railroad near the Matanuska in 1918.

Esther describes meeting her husband Dixie Hall at Eska, and their marriage on May 6, 1922.

Dixie transferred to Nenana where they lived and raised their children; conversation abck to Chickaloon, railroad coal mining.

After seven years at Nenana, Dixie was transferred by the Northern Commercial Company to Bethel in 1929.

Conversation about life at Bethel, then on to Fairbanks in 1933. Esther tells how Dix was clerk of the court in Fairbanks for many years, then retired, they moved to Circle Hot Springs.

Conversation goes back to Juneau-Douglas; life, costs, commodities. Back to Fairbanks, talk about Russians' buying in World War II.

Conversation turns then to Bethel, the children who visited in their home, attitudes of people in the 1930's, philosophy of missionaries, church influences on remote areas.

Esther tells about taking a boy to the states to go to school for a year and attitudes toward the trip.

Tape runs fifty minutes, terminated by arrival of a nurse in her hospital room.