

John D. (Jack) Urban B95.19

Scope and Contents

John D. Urban was born in 1882 in Portage, Wisconsin and moved to Washington state as a child. His mother sent him to Seattle in order to gain more schooling. During the Klondike Gold Rush in 1897, Urban and a friend stowed away about a scow leaving Seattle for Skagway. The two did odd jobs onboard to pay their way and were given a mule as payment for their labor. The two men used the mule and a sled found on the beach to begin their own business hauling freight up the Chilkoot Trail for stampedes. Urban moved to Nome and Fairbanks in 1900 and 1906, respectively, during the gold rushes there. Urban moved to Anchorage in 1922 and began working for the Alaska Railroad as a brakeman. Urban married Edith Edlund, one of eleven children from a Matanuska Valley homesteading family, in 1926. Edlund's family originally came to Knik and constructed a five-mile wagon road to their new homestead in order to bring in the family and their equipment. (This road is located in current day Wasilla: "Edlund Road.") The Urbans moved in 1931 to their homestead on Loop Road, a one-room log cabin, in order to help defray costs during the Great Depression. John continued his work on the Alaska Railroad, retiring as a conductor in 1944, while Edith worked as a telephone operator. John D. Urban died on December 13, 1949 in Idlewild, California.

The pictures were taken about 1925 when Mr. Urban was Tourist Agent for the Alaska Railroad. The albums were used by Mr. Urban to show Alaska to prospective railroad tourists. The pictures of President Harding were made when he visited Alaska to drive the golden spike at Nenana in 1925 (sic, 1923). Mr. Urban retired from the Alaska Railroad as a conductor in 1945.

772 photographs. #1 – 177: Alaska Railroad from Seward to Fairbanks, with a concentration on wrecks and bridges. #178 – 343: Predominately commercial photos, more than half hand tinted by Jack Urban, of commercial scenes throughout the state. Of particular interest: Gov. Parks playing golf, Fokker taking off (at Fairbanks?), Sydney Laurence paintings. #344 – 384: Commercial photos, dog teams, McKinley, the Riverboat Alice, glaciers, and the Alaska Railroad. #385 – 453: Photos predominately by Cann, of the Fairbanks Agricultural Experiment Farm, few Alaska Railroad. #454 – 531: Photos, some by Guy Cameron, hand tinted, of Sanctuary Creek Camp (McKinley Park), Chitina, Gulkana, Anchorage, tidewater glaciers and miscellaneous. #532 – 772: Chiefly of Alaskan wildlife, pelts, fish, and hunting and fishing.

Donated. Urban, John.

772 Photos.