

**B1987.072**

**William Robert Mathewson Photograph Collection**

Collection: William Robert Mathewson Photograph Collection

Donor: Ruth E. Johnson

Accession Number: B1987.072

Processing Note: Collection processed by ARC Volunteer George Darrow, Winter 2009

Arrangement Note: Collection arrangement by Megan Peacock.

Description: Entire collection consists of photographs of the early construction of the Alaska Railroad. All photographs are black and white.

1. Postcard. Photographer: Nokeo (?) Sept. 13, 1915. Anchorage about a month ago, it looks much better now – we have our shack here is the reason. (Photograph shows “Tent City.”)
2. Postcard. Photographer: McCain. Anchorage Oct. 14 1916. Anchorage, Alaska.
3. Postcard. Ship Creek, Alaska. Postmarked Anchorage, Alaska. Jul 10 am 1915. Dear Mother what do you think of this city, their [sic] are about 700 tents here – one of them belong to M. & R Co. We are having better weather here than in Oma. They say it has not been below zero here in 3 yrs.  
(Postcard addressed to:  
Mrs. W.J. Mathewson  
2931 Deer Park Blvd  
Omaha, Nebr.)
4. Postcard. Photographer: Noko (?) (Looking down 4<sup>th</sup> Ave towards the mountains. Pilger’s (?) General Store is on the left.
5. Postcard. Fourth Street. Anchorage. April 30, 1916. Photographer: G.L. Co. A small part of our city (heavy on city) for there are 7 or 8 Fords in town and a couple of real autos. (Sign on left above the clock reads: B.C. Nichols. The sign on the right reads: The Sydney Laurence Co. Photographers.)
6. (View of the tent city at Ship Creek) Anchorage Alaska August 24, 1915. Looking east over the former city, now the government yard, from the Gov’t Dock where our office is. The mountains are very beautiful in the evenings with the sun on them – this ground near the dock is covered with water at high tide – about every 8 hours it rises 52 feet here now. Will.
7. Postcard. Harbor at Anchorage, Alaska. 1915. SS Alameda and SS \_\_\_\_\_ (freighter). SS \_\_\_\_\_ auxiliary sloop – freighter also local sternwheeler. “Matanuska.”

8. Postcard. Photographer: Noko (?) Dec. 1922. Anchorage – foot of 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. Cook’s Inlet – frozen ice drifts with tide – looking North. (Photograph shows three buildings in the foreground with ice-covered Cook Inlet behind them.)
9. Postcard. Obst (?) Office 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. Anchorage Alaska.
10. Anchorage, Alaska.
11. Postcard. Photographer: The S.L. Co. (Sydney Laurence?) Early morning in the Yards. Anchorage – 1920. (Photo shows a rail-mounted construction crane.)
12. Postcard. Photographer: The S.L. Co. (Sydney Laurence?) Like the Ant and the Grain of Corn. April 1916. Laying a spur in the yards about April 1<sup>st</sup>. Our new building in the background to the left. May 1 – 1916. (Photo shows men laying track in the Ship Creek yards of the Alaska Railroad.)
13. (Personnel are numbered from 1-19 on the front of the photograph)  
 Personnel named on the front are:  
 Jim Coates  
 R.D. Chase  
 Bill Peletier was boss of outside heavy stock machinery etc.  
 E.R. McPhee was in-charge groceries  
 Stenagr  
 Me and my moccasins. Very worn in winter. Many others with shoe-packs and felt insoles.  
 Walter DeLong later Gen’l Storekeeper  
 Bill Manning

(Written on the back): This photo was made by Sidney [sic] Laurence 1915. On old dock on Alaska Engineering Commission Ship Creek Dec. 1915, now Anchorage Alaska.  
 Employees of the Stores Department

- #1 Forgotten
- #2 Jim Coates, Warehouseman #1
- #3 Joe Ryan, Warehouseman #2
- #4 Tom Black \* a very fine person “Masonic” (a former gold prospector now watchman)
- #5 ---- Heath – a warehouseman #1
- #6 Mcoy? Helper – material yard
- #7 ---- Farmer, helper – warehouse
- #8 Carl Sinclair (one-arm) typist (& homesteader)
- #9 R.D. Chase, General Storekeeper No.1
- #10 Bill Peletier, Chief Clerk
- #11 ?? → A warehouse man
- #12 E.R. McPhee – Supt of large material yard
- #13 W.R. (Christy) Mathewson – all-around stenographer and local purchasing agent
- #14 T.S. Oliver – material stock clerk, later warehouseman foreman

#15 -?

#16 Art Hewitt

#17 George Voss (Harbormaster)

#18 Walter DeLong – later... Genr'l Storekeeper – my only boss plus “Harbormaster” first several months

#19 Bill Manning – Foreman of outside material yard stock

#20 Where is Howard Gardner not in photo...? In toilet? He was with our 31<sup>st</sup> Regiment in France {steel beams etc oil drums gasoline etc.}

#21

#22

Bill Richards & I arrived at Ship Creek landing {July 5, 1915 “SS Admiral Watson” anchored offshore approx. ¼ mile} A very low tide. We sloshed thru the slipper mud with approx. 50 passengers. There was a large Whse & no large docking facility. Small local gas boats would motor in on high tide and anchor in the Creek mouth that held approx. 5 ft. at low tode. This condition nearly one year.

(Across the bottom on the back): Bill Richards and I heard disturbing rumors at Valdez & Seward regarding living conditions... so we purchased an 8' x 10' tent on BLKS. Flour plus a slab of bacon.

(In left margin on back): Ramsey died suddenly during Xmas holiday... was born in China & his father was an English official. A wonderful guy!

(In right margin on back): We set up out tent about ¼ mile back of the Tent City. Several days later (unreadable) off account being squatters!!

(Writing on front of folded paper): Employee of the Alaskan Engineering Commission – Alaska Railraod also member of the 31<sup>st</sup> Ry regiment in France – WW#1 1918 -1919 Co. D.

(Writing on back of folded paper):

- Lincoln Nebr.
- Either in Lincoln
- Later named East Lincoln
- I attended school
- Our farm home

14. Boys Race, Recreation Park, Anchorage July 4<sup>th</sup> 1916. Photographer: The Sydney Laurence CO. (the note over the shack reads: “see note on other side”)

(Written on the back): The small black tarpaper cover'd one-room cabin was lined inside with a 8' x 10' tent and quite cozy with two bunks plus a sheet metal Yukon stove and we baked hot biscuits & hotcakes in the small over. WRM.

Bill Richards and I purchased this tent at Valdez when we learned that there was no housing available at Anchorage. Also we purchased 50 lbs of flour plus a slab of bacon.

This ballpark was a full-block and we all teams turned. All money received from the loyal fans that poured into the grandstand and bleachers. Also we paid Paddy Welch to use his team of horses to pull a harrow and a plank-drag over the ball field and it was smooth and professional.

Also we paid the Umpire! The carpenter had made a very sufficient locker-room underneath of the grand-stand, where we left our bats, gloves and the balls and the school kids help'd themselves after school and never stole a single article.

After the W-War #1, Ruth and I married (at Omaha.) How – about that---? And we traveled to Anchorage and I was employd in the office of the Trammaster – as Timekeeper – of all trainmen; also Depot Agents.

At this date they started a river-boat service out of Anchorage – North to the Talkeetna Dist. operating on the Susitna river; The project was to build the railroad to Fairbanks.

I was employed in the office [1<sup>st</sup> – R.D. Chase] of 2<sup>nd</sup> Walter DeLong → General Storekeeper of the Alaskan Engineering Commission later named The Alaska R.R. as a stenographer and local purchasing agent – buying emergency articles, tools, camp cooking utensils – also food; Plus hiking cooks (usually man & wife. Everything to hasten as start of construction of the railroad!)

My two night-school courses at the Boyles Business College in Omaha paid off excellent at Anchorage – Also when I enlisted in the Army.

15. A.E.C. Baseball Team – Tri League Anchorage, Alaska. June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1920. W.G. Wilt, Manager. (The man on front row – right is marked R.R. Engineer.)

(Written on the back): A.E.C. Ball Team June 20, 1920.

Upper row L to R

Mathewson

Johnson

Bayless

Wilt

Small

Frye

Johanson

Lower Row L to R

Crawford

X Harworth (a fireball) but an excellent ball player. He was killed several years later north of Seattle in a Roadhouse brawl ---?

Lynn

Berg

Stark

McDonald

Meyers

Balhiser

W.G. Witt – Manager Chief Clerk in Mechanical Dept. Alaska Railroad, Anchorage. I was rated as Principle Clerk plus timekeeper for all traincrews, enginemen, station agents. Also river steamboat crews operating on the Tanana and Yukon rivers.

We had many railroad construction train crew skattered between Seward and Fairbanks. I had to account for all work time and charge to each specific project. Several of the crews were always trying to fudge on their time and I checked them against the Dispatchers train sheets that were accurate and revealed every move and I charged the cost of ballast spread or “fills” also “ties”, rails, spikes and plats to specified accounts.

16. A.E.C. Ball-Team “Pennent Winners” – Anchorage, Alaska. 1921. Photographer:

Logemann.

Shorty Conway – 3<sup>rd</sup> base

Wally McDonald

MJ McDonald catcher

Bill Darwin pitcher

Christy Mathewson (1<sup>st</sup> base)

Major

Cedar pitcher Lefty

Vic Nelson pitcher R-Hand

Tom Haines 2<sup>nd</sup> base

Smoky Joe Shulte fielder

Eddie Monan shortshop

? Mascot

Wilford Stump fielder

17. Three of Anchorage’s Baseball teams 1922. Photographer. Geo L. Johnson.

Com. B. 59<sup>th</sup> Inf. (on left)

A.E. Commission (in center)

Legion City (on right)

(written on the back):

“Legion”

Bill Darwin

Chas Bush

MJ MacDonald

Art Lilystrand

Wally MacDonald

Turman Purish

----- Danforth

Vic Nelson

Chas Bush Jr.

Christy

Herman Glossop

“Comm.” Team”

? -----

Hank Stoy  
---- Marsh  
---- Boomer?  
Doc Thompson  
Clarence Johanson  
Lefty Lein  
---- Simms  
Paul Bloomer  
Jake Ferrell  
Herb Beebe  
? Mascot  
---- Major  
Eddie Monson  
Chas. Balhiser

“Soldier Team”

I failed to write their names but did not know only a few by name.

18. Government Hospital Anchorage. Alaska Engineering Commission Anchorage Alaska Jan. 30, 1916. AEC '43. (Photo shows buildings at the mouth of Ship Creek.)  
Photographer: Sydney Laurence.
19. Stock of bridge ties. Mar. 1-17, A.E.C. Ry. Anchorage, Alaska. A.E.C. G333.  
Photographer: P.S. Hunt.
20. A.E.C G1230. Anchorage & Chickaloon Mixed Train at Matanuska Junction. “April 14-1919.” (Photo shows caboose no. 1010) Photographer: H.G. Kaiser.
21. Cottage No. 14. A.E.C. Photo No. G-1240. Photographer: H.G. Kaiser. (Photographer shows a cottage with an unidentified man and woman sitting on the front porch and holding two babies. The house has storm windows installed.)
22. Cottage No. 15. A.E.C. Photo No. G-1241. Photographer: H.G. Kaiser.
23. A.E.C. Cottage No. 28 – No. 24, 25,26, 27, 33, 34, 35, Same Style. A.E.C. Photo No. G-1249. Photographer: H.G.K. (Photograph shows a cottage with three unidentified people standing front of it. The woman on the porch is hold in a small dog. A ”Flexible Flyer” type of sled is leaning against the porch railing.)
24. A.E.C. G-1253. Matanuska Water Tank. April 14-1919. Photographer: H.G. Kaiser. (Photo shows a railroad water tank and a man riding a railroad speeder?)
25. Looking south over Bridge 49-3. April 12-1921. Two locs and plow buried. (Photograph shows a tram and trestle that have been destroyed by a snowslide.) A.E.C. G-1735.  
Photographer: H.G. Kaiser

26. Rotary Plough on way to snow-slide at Mile 49.4. Apr 12-1921. A.E.C. G-1744.  
Photographer: H.G. Kaiser.  
I was timekeeper and principal clerk in the Superintendent office.  
Halfway between Seward to Anchorage.  
One the Alaska Railroad  
(Photograph shows a rotary plow being pushed across a wooden trestle by two locomotives.)
27. Gov't Saw Mill. Camp 245. Nov. 8<sup>th</sup>, 1916. Dead Horse Camp.
28. Gov't Warehouse Camp 245. Nov. 1916.
29. Bennett House Camp 245. Nov. 8<sup>th</sup>, 1916.
30. An old trapper cabin beside the Susitna River Sept. 1916. Alongside of the new Alaska RR right-of-way under construction. Several years later I was assigned as a timekeeper and Camp Manager at Curry when they rebuilt the Alaska R.R. and extended it to Fairbanks.
31. Scene on the old-original Alaska-Northern Railroad approx. 20 miles north of Seward. I think this was narrow-gage??? (Photograph shows railroad tracks and a small trestle in mountainous terrain.)
32. Postcard: A.E.C. Boat Matanuska. This was year 1915 or 1916. Photographer: Sydney Laurence. (Photograph shows three horses standing in front of the riverboat.)
33. We had two of this type riverboats. We could feel them bump over rocks that were smoothed by spring ice breakup. They were contracted and constructed by the Barrington brothers Sid and Ben (?) whom had constructed similar boats and operated them on the fast and wicked Skeena River in Canada. They were equipped w/ two powerful motors (forward with a very long drive shaft and it extended back to propeller – the propeller rode above a skid type shoe that raised in shallow water and eased down when in deeper water. I could hear them approx two miles away. (I had to check off supplies & employees.) (Photograph shows a barge-like riverboat carrying supplies and personnel. Sign on boat reads B&B No. 3.)
34. This locomotive was derailed by melting snow and ice that built up like a small glacier.  
The brakeman was riding in the locomotive cab this time on account of the snow was melting and flooding the tracks in this dangerous area, and he was killed in the engine.  
I remember Charles (Charley) Odd was the victim at this accident, and he was watching ahead and apparently could not see the glacial ice that had spread over the rails.  
I was working in the Supt office as TimeKeepers at this time WRM. My mostly duty was Timekeeper for all trainmen also Depot Agents. Also river steamboat crews on

the Yukon River at the Susitna River when not frozen. W.R. Mathewson. J.T. Cunningham, Supt.

35. Alaska RR. This train was caught by a snow and rock slide out south near Girdwood station. (Photograph shows a derailed locomotive and tender.)
36. Eagle River Bridge – 12 miles from Anchorage. Photographer: NOKO (?) (Photograph shows a log railroad trestle across Eagle River.)
37. Postcard. Old Greek Church Seldovia. Approximately 40 miles west of Anchorage. (Note: Seldovia is over 200 road miles from Anchorage.) Photographer: Sydney Laurence.
38. Postcard. Wintertime Seward Alaska. Addressed to: Mr. & Mrs. W.R. Mathewson Box 1835. Anchorage Alaska

Dear friends:

Around about 3:30 yesterday & no boat due until 6 tonight. Wind blowing a gale. Suppose Mrs. Baughman (?) told you about the records & pictures we left with Mr. Jennings for you? I bagged the records so don't blame me if they aren't good. Bob & Brownie.

(Postcard of Seward date-stamped November 11, 1926[?] showing the dock. Resurrection Bay is in the middle background.

39. Main business street of Talkeetna. Summer 1916. Indian graves at left. J.J.H.D (?) (Early photograph of Talkeetna showing walled tents.)



## Subject Terms

Alameda (Steamship)  
Alaska Engineering Commission  
Alaska Northern Railway  
Alaska Railroad  
Anchorage  
Avalanches  
Baseball  
Baseball Teams  
Chugach Mountains  
Cook Inlet  
Docks, piers, and wharves  
Houses and buildings  
Log cabins  
Matanuska (Boat)  
Mountains  
People  
Resurrection Bay  
Riverboats  
Running  
Sawmills  
Seldovia  
Seward  
Sleds and sledding  
Talkeetna

## **People:**

Balhisser, Charlie  
Bayless (A.E.C.)  
Beebe, Herb  
Berg (A.E.C.)  
Bloomer, Paul  
Bush, Chas  
Bush, Chas, Jr.  
Cedar (A.E.C.)  
Chase, R.D.  
Christy  
Coates, Jim  
Conway, Shorty  
Danforth  
Darwin, Bill

DeLong, Walter  
Ferrell, Jake  
Frye (A.E.C.)  
Glossop, Herman  
Haines, Tom  
Harworth, (A.E.C.)  
Hewitt, Art  
Johanson, Clarence  
Johanson, Frank  
Johnson (A.E.C.)  
Lein, Lefty  
Lilystrand, Art  
Lynn (A.E.C.)  
McDonald (A.E.C.)  
McDonald, M.J.  
McDonald, Walter  
McPhee, E.R.  
Major (A.E.C.)  
Manning, Bill  
Marsh  
Mathewson, Christy  
Meyers (A.E.C.)  
Monan, Eddie  
Monson, Eddie  
Nelson, Vic  
Oliver, T.S.  
Peletier, Bill  
Pilger, Newt W.  
Punsh, Truman  
Shulte, Joe (Smoky)  
Simms  
Sinclair, Carl  
Small (A.E.C.)  
Stark (A.E.C.)  
Stenagr, (Mr.)  
Stoy, Hank  
Stump, Wilford  
Thompson, Doc  
Voss, George  
Wilt, W.G.