

IDITAROD TRAIL INTERVIEW - JOHN BAHNKE, SR.

August 17, 1980
Nome, Alaska

BLM Interviewer:

Tom Beck

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INTRODUCTION

INTERVIEWER:Historic Trail interview with John Bahnke, Sr., of Nome, Alaska. The interview was conducted at John's home in Nome on August 17th, 1980. The interview was conducted for the Bureau of Land Management by Tom Beck.

John was born in 1907 in the Rocky Point area of the Seward Peninsula. John's father was from Germany and came to Alaska during the 1898 Gold Rush. John's mother was a Native woman from the Rocky Point area. John's father ran the roadhouse, the Cheokuk Roadhouse, between Bluff and Golovin during the very early 1900s. The family later moved to Bluff where John grew up.

John worked summers for 13 years at the Quigley Mining Camp near Solomon. He later worked in Nome for the U.S. Smelting Company, now the Alaskan Gold Company, and is a maintenance foreman for the Nome Public Schools.

(Off record at Log No. 0103)

(On record at Log No. 0200)

INTERVIEW

A There was a lot of mining going on there in the early days.

Q Is that where you spent most of your time, around Bluff, when you were younger?

A Yeah, when I was around 18 or 20.

Q Mm hmm (affirmative).

A And, I mean, I got married when I was 25.

Q Did you -- were your parents from Bluff then?

A No. My daddy originally was from Germany.

Q Oh, really?

A And my mother, she was a Native of this country. She was born and raised around Rocky Point, in that area.

Q When did your dad come into the country?

A Yeah, he come up here on the Gold Rush.

Q Did he?

A Mm hmm (affirmative). Over the Iditarod Trail.

Q Really?

A Mm hmm (affirmative).

Q Did he ever tell you stories about coming over there?

A No, not too much, no. He spent one winter up there around Kooguk (ph) country, then he come out of there and ran a roadhouse down at between Bluff and Golovin one -- oh, a couple of winters.

Q Oh, did he? Which one was that? Was that.....

A That little place they call Cheokuk. It's an Eskimo name. I don't know -- they have no white-man name for that place. There's a -- there used to be a shorter cabin there, but I think that burned down.

Q That wasn't Topkok, was it?

A No. No, no. The other way, from -- east from Bluff.

Q East from Bluff?

