

Navy
Ferryman - port of
Omaha, Nebraska

Ethel Road
New Brighton
Maine

The Alaska Highway

They pitched into the task with typical American enthusiasm, though many of them had little conception of the hardships and discomforts ahead. But in spite of all those hardships and the fact they lacked recreational facilities, they never wavered in their determination to finish the job.

Humor displayed itself everywhere. There was a lot of wisecracking. Road signs recalling familiar scenes back home were found around the camps. A pathway through the woods might be 42nd Street and Broadway, there were signs of well-known products, arrows showing the way to night clubs and road houses, and the usual Los Angeles city limits marker.

Cold Greetings First Troops

On a bleak, sub-zero morning in March, 1942, the first American troops ever to set foot in this area, stepped from a troop train at Dawson Creek, B.C., end of the Northern Alberta Railways. They were the vanguard—quartermasters' troops charged with the responsibility of establishing a railhead camp for the thousands of engineer troops who would follow.

From the time they entered Canada, the soldiers had been given a hearty welcome at stations where their train stopped for water or repairs. Though their coming was a secret, the news of an American troop train in town spread like wildfire. The Canadians gave them as best a western-Canadian welcome as possible under the circumstances.

The soldiers pitched their tents, and made ready to receive the engineers that started to arrive the next day. It was no picnic, setting up that camp in the cold along a wind-swept railway. Train after train arrived with soldiers and equipment, and soon heavy trucks and jeeps were familiar sights in Dawson Creek.

Similar advance parties came into Whitehorse, Yukon, through Skagway via the White Pass and Yukon Railway. A colored unit went in through Alaska and started work near the Yukon-Alaskan border.

At Dawson Creek, the work of the soldiers became a race against time.

North of the town and across the frozen Peace River, there was a government-graded dirt highway. In winter, the road crossed the ice, in summer, travellers crossed by ferry. In between seasons when the river was freezing or when the ice was moving out, the river could not be crossed. The ice usually went out in April.



The engineers had a real problem on their hands. It was essential that they get all possible equipment and men across that river before the ice went out—a break-up which might last several weeks and prevent the engineers from getting an early start in building The Road.

Twenty miles on the other side of the Peace lay Fort St. John, a small settlement, which soon became a base camp for the engineers.

M. Ellingsworth
(He is second choice - I hope)



BEST WISHES
EC. 338868
WIGG STEWARD
GOZAD NEBR.

The Alaska Highway

Once across to the north side of the Peace, the engineers had another problem. North from Fort St. John and along a narrow winter road was Fort Nelson, a trading post. The winter road covered over scores of miles of muskeg, a kind of swamp. The road is all right in winter when the muskeg is frozen, but in summer it's soggy muck 10 and 20 feet deep.

There also were many streams and rivers, not bridged. The command wanted engineer units to start building the highway out of Fort Nelson, but the problem was to get them and their equipment over the winter road and into Fort Nelson before the muskeg thawed and rivers went out.

Between Fort St. John and Fort Nelson, it was nothing but a wild, desolate country, some of it unexplored.

So the race to Fort Nelson started.

Drivers wheeling multiple-tired trucks with trailers attached, began to shuttle back and forth over the bumpy 250 miles. Farmers' trucks and cartage companies were pressed into service. It was a race against the thaw—a tough, tiring race that taxed the stamina of the strongest.

The men worked long shifts. Motors were seldom turned off. Drivers relieved one another but the trucks continued the long grind. Some men worked day and night, some for 60 hours at a stretch. Grades were steep, few at 45-degree angles. Coming down these grades with several tons of equipment loaded behind proved tricky and hazardous.



Bernard Peterson
1610. 3rd Av. S.
Minneapolis Minnesota
Spiff

(BAKER)

EDWIN R. PHIL
122 NO 1067
ATC# 1504 XAD

For your information, this ain't me.

Do not know what white this is.

May all your pain be champagne
and all your champagne be real

C. Robinson
Longmont Colo.

A Saga of the North

The days became brighter and the thaw started, but they kept on, floundering in a sea of mud, shoving and winching their way north.

River ice began to heave. The engineers laid down sawdust and planks to prevent thawing where trucks crossed the rivers.

Just as rivers looked as though they were going to break up and muskeg become impassable, General Frost came along one night and froze the whole route tighter than an iceberg.

General Frost, incidentally, is a cousin of Russia's General Winter.

Ice cracks in rivers were cemented, the soggy muskeg froze stiff, and everyone danced with glee. It gave the soldiers an extra week to get their supplies north to Fort Nelson. Hundreds of trucks were used day and night.

A pilot who flew along the route one night said, "That stretch to Fort Nelson looked like Broadway. It seemed to be lit up all the way with the headlights of trucks."

Finally, rivers started to go out. But the engineers had won the first round.

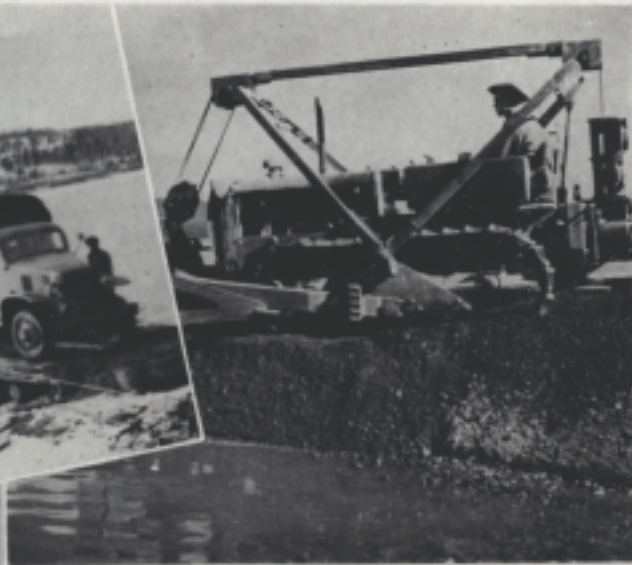
There was still the airplane. Men, machines and food were flown to airports in the area.

Bushmen Aid With Route

Almost immediately, work was started on America's "Burma" road. Air reconnaissance and ground survey parties aided by experienced Canadian bushmen established the approximate route. These survey parties were the first white men ever to set foot in parts of that little known hinterland.

At first, road construction was under the command of Brigadier-General William H. Hoge, but lack of





BARGES FOR TRUCKS

RIVERS WERE SPANNED

THE BULLDOZER WAS KING

W. W. Cooney
Palmyra
W. W. Cooney

(13)

Minn. W. Blair
 1930 - same bar
 Calgary, also.
 Lito (Lith) is Banff
 Sometimes.

The Alaska Highway

communications between working points caused construction to be divided into two sectors. The Whitehorse or northern sector was placed in charge of Brig.-Gen. Hoge, and the Fort St. John or southern sector under Colonel (now Brig.-Gen.) J. A. O'Connor.

Gen. Hoge had four engineer regiments in his sector and Gen. O'Connor had three regiments in the southern sector. There were, of course, attached ancillary troops.

When work got under way, there were units working north from Fort St. John, north and south from Fort Nelson; north and south from points in the Whitehorse area, and in Alaska itself.

Original plan for the soldiers was to build a "tote" road, over which equipment could be hauled and supply lines established. The "tote" road then would be widened, straightened, gravelled and generally brought up to road standards by civilian contractors working under the Public Roads Administration.

The original idea was abandoned, however, when it became certain that a uniting of all the forces, engineers and contractors, was needed to complete the assignment by the end of the year. War in the Pacific might not wait for the corps to finish its job and the P.R.A. its task.

Roughly, The Road followed this route:

1. Beginning at Dawson Creek, B.C., 400 miles northwest of Edmonton and end of the N.A.R., over a government dirt highway north to Fort St. John, 65 miles.
2. From Fort St. John, where the highway leaves a fairly well inhabited district and plunges into densely-wooded, rolling country, north to Fort Nelson, B.C., 250 miles.
3. From Fort Nelson, a trapper's paradise, past mountains northwest to Watson Lake, on the Yukon-British Columbia border, 360 miles.



Keep up the
 Marshal + well
 Sink the King
 "Baw" Alex
 1311 Sherburne Ave
 St. Paul, Minn.

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