

**Alaska State Library  
Historical Collections**

Guide to Collection

**Clemons, Basil**

**Basil Clemons Photograph Collection, 1911-1914**

**PCA 68**

173 photographs, b&w

Processed by: Staff

**ACQUISITION:** Neil Phelps-Munson and Maxcine Doyle loaned the original set of photographs for copying in 1978. Carol J. Adams, Jeanne Ostnes, Mitzi Gerrish Saunders and others donated additional photographs by Clemons over the years (Acc. Nos. 1978-15, 1992-8, 1995-13). Other photographs by Basil Clemons may be viewed in collections numbered PCA 236, PCA 281 and PCA 373.

**ACCESS:** The photographs may be viewed, however they may not be photocopied.

**COPYRIGHT:** Requests to reproduce from the collection should be discussed with the Librarian.

**PROCESSING:** Five by seven copy prints were created from the first collection of Clemons photographs, loaned to the Library in 1978. All photographs are sleeved in Mylar and stored in acid-neutral folders and phase boxes. An item-level inventory is available.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Basil Edwin Clemons was born July 22, 1887 in Lauderdale County, Alabama to Lemuel Joseph and Sarah Alice Clemmons. (Clemmons family members found that official documents list the name with two *m*'s although Basil spelled it with only one.) The family moved to Ridgeway, Texas while Clemons was a child. In 1903, at age sixteen, he left for California. He witnessed the San Francisco earthquake in 1906, learned photography in Hollywood, and trooped with the Tom Mix Wild West Show. Around 1909 Clemons drifted to Alaska where he photographed gold mining camps, Alaska Natives, including Eskimos, and dogsled races. While in Alaska, he joined the U.S. Army and trained at Fort Liscom, Alaska. He is listed in the 1917-1918 Polk's Alaska-Yukon Gazetteer as a professional photographer and resident of Ruby, Alaska. After his army discharge in 1918, he moved to Seattle, Washington and established a photograph studio.

After receiving word that his Seattle studio was destroyed by fire, he headed toward the oil boomtown of Breckenridge, Stephens County, Texas. There he photographed the oil fields, the town and its surrounding communities. Blindness and other health problems ended his career in 1949.

Clemons lived and developed his photographs in a gypsy wagon without benefit of running water or electricity. ...Clemons utilized some techniques largely unknown to the photographic profession. In 1936 he turned down an offer from Eastman Kodak Company for his process for color developing. The collection contains only a few examples of his color prints which are now badly faded. Basil Clemons died June 22, 1964, in Breckenridge and is buried beside his parents in Hopkins County, Texas [by Shirley Rodnitzky, *Archivist, Special Collections Division, Univ. of Texas at Arlington*. Sources: *Doodle Bugs & Cactus Berries* by Betty Elliott Hanna, 1975, and *biographical sketch* by Jean Ann Pellizzari Credicott, daughter of Frank Pellizzari, Jr., former assistant to Clemons.]

## SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

Clemons documented the waterfront and street scenes in the rapidly growing communities of Ruby and Iditarod following nearby gold discoveries. Athapascan Indians of the area, families of miners, storeowners, various gatherings and events are also depicted. This collection is significant to the history of Alaska because it provides a direct view of Iditarod and Ruby during a time of tremendous development. The photos are well documented because Clemons carefully engraved identification on each view.

## INVENTORY

- 1 Ruby, Alaska, 1912. [Waterfront, Steamer, Whitesea1 and large crowd of people.]
- 2 [Similar to #1]
- 3 Steamer Delta [arriving] at Ruby, Alaska. May 1912.
- 4 Landing at Ruby, Alaska, 1912. [Steamer Susie]
- 5 Navigation Scene at Ruby, Alaska. June 18, 6 A.M., 1912.
- 6 Ice moving in the Yukon at Ruby, Alaska. May 5, 1912.
- 7 [View of riverboat, Fox, with men on deck]
- 8 Steamer Florence
- 9 Steamer Julia and barges on the Yukon River, Alaska.
- 10 Steamer Schwatka and barges on the Yukon River, Alaska.
- 11 [Waterfront scene ] with small boats tied up to shore, man working in foreground-] Ruby, Alaska, 1912.
- 12 Waterfront. Ruby, Alaska. October 1, 1911. [Riverboat, St. Michael ]
- 13 Piles of freight on beach at Ruby, Alaska. October 1911. Clemons #10.
- 14 [Crowd of people] meeting the boats. Ruby, Alaska, 1912.
- 15 [Waterfront scene with piles of lumber and freight and crowd of people.]
- 16 Moving day on beach at Ruby, Alaska, Spring, 1912. [woman packing amidst dismantled tent site.]
- 17 [Waterfront scene, with small boats tied up, men and supplies on shore.]
- 18 Simon' s Sawmill. Ruby, Alaska, 1912.
- 19 Ruby Mill. Ed Simons Prop. [Shows piles of lumber on shore, and riverboat in background]
- 20 Moving Independent Sawmill off of beach. Ruby, Alaska. Spring, 1912.
- 21 Mouth of Ruby Creek, Ruby, Alaska.
- 22 [Waterfront view of] Ruby City, Alaska. July 21, 1911.]

- 23 [Overview of] Ruby City, Alaska. The day the ice went out. May 5, 1912.
- 24 [Overview of] Ruby City, Alaska. Taken from Lower Hill. Oct. 16, 1911.
- 25 [Overview of] Ruby, Alaska. At midnight. June 21, 1912. 12-5 AM Time F. 16.3 Seconds.
- 26 The waterfront. Ruby, Alaska. 1912
- 27 [View of street] Ruby, Alaska, July 21, 1911.
- 28 First Ave., Ruby, Alaska. 1912.
- 29 First Ave., Ruby, Alaska. 1912.
- 30 Front Street, Ruby, Alaska.
- 31 3rd. Street, Ruby, Alaska. 1912.
- 32 Front Street, Ruby, Alaska. 1911.
- 33 Pitching horseshoes in Ruby. 1912
- 34 The beach, Ruby, Alaska. 1912.
- 35 Louis Spitz. Ruby, Alaska, 1912 [View of storefront, The Fraction, with group of men standing in front of the store]
- 36 A business block in Ruby, Alaska. Photographed at mid-night. June 22, 1912. f. 8.2 seconds [Crowd of men on boardwalk]
- 37 The Pioneer Store. Ruby, Alaska, 1912. [Group of men on boardwalk; one is handing out cigars]
- 38 First restaurant in Ruby, Alaska, 1911. [Skookum's Eating House, tent on a flatboat tied up to shore]
- 39 Eugene Traveller's corner. Wrestling. 4th of July, Ruby, Alaska, 1912.
- 40 McGrath Introducing Eugene Traveller, wrestler. 4th of July, Ruby, Alaska, 1912.
- 41 "Kid Ross" Corner. 4th of July, Ruby, Alaska, 1912.
- 42 4th of July, Ruby, Alaska, 1912.
- 43 Sanders trapeze performer, 4th of July, Ruby, Alaska, 1912.

- 44 An Alaskan miner's last stampede. June 29, 1912. [Funeral procession on hill outside of town.]
- 45 Funeral of Thomas Emerson, July 24, 1912. Ruby Alaska. [Funeral procession on hill outside of town]
- 46 St. Patrick's Day Masquerade Ball, Ruby, Alaska, 1912.
- 47 First masquerade ball in Ruby City, Alaska. Arcadian Hall, Halloween Eve, 1911.
- 48 Mason's Ball, St. John's Day, A.D., 1911. Arcadian Hall, Ruby, Alaska.
- 49 Indian Camp, near Ruby, Alaska [Native woman with infant and two children, standing by fish drying rack on beach.]
- 50 [Two native women, one of them holding a small child.] Ruby, Alaska, 1912.
- 51 Native papa and his babies. Ruby, Alaska, 1911.
- 52 Alaskan natives. Ruby, Alaska, 1912.
- 53 Greetings from Ruby, Alaska, 1912. [A young native boy with two dogs]
- 54 Yukon Indians. Ruby, Alaska.
- 55 A group of Indians, Alaska. December 2. Fifty below zero.
- 56 Conley and Company Long Cr. Ruby, Alaska, 1912. [Two men at mining operation.]
- 57 The Tent Road House. Ruby, Alaska, 1912.
- 58 Mogeau's Roadhouse. Head of Long Cr. Ruby, Alaska, 1912.
- 59 Willett and Cox's Mess House and mine. Trail Creek. Ruby, Alaska, 1912.
- 60 [Two men in front of log cabin] Ruby, Alaska.
- 61 [Four women and two girls in front of a cabin] Ruby, Alaska, 1912
- 62 An Alaskan "musher" Ruby, 1912. [Unidentified man in furs and snowshoes]
- 63 Whipsawing lumber on Bear pup. Ruby District, Alaska. 1912.
- 64 [Men and dog teams] on the Boston Hill Summit [Summit] Ruby dist., Alaska, April, 1912.
- 65 Keys and Mayhan's team returning from creeks. Ruby, Alaska, 1912.

- 66 Billey Robinson Freighter. Ruby Mining District Alaska, 1912. [Three men and freight team.]
- 67 Moving mining machinery to creeks. Ruby, Alaska, April 13, 1912. [Machinery labeled] "Jordan and Doyea, Bear Pup" [and] "Schutte and Doty, Long Cr"
- 68 Keys and Mahan. First freight train on trail to Creeks. Ruby, Alaska. October, 1911. Dome R. house [location indicated in background]
- 69 Long City, (long Cr. Ruby Mining Dist) Alaska, 1912.
- 70 Office Discovery Claim [Group of log cabins on hillside]
- 71 Sherborn Ave- Long City. Ruby Mining District, Alaska, 1912.
- 72 Johnson & Fernander's Cabin. Long City Alaska, 1912. Where we voted August 15. First cabin in Ruby Mining District.
- 73 Jack Connolly's Cabin. Long Creek. Ruby Mining District, Alaska. 1912.
- 74 The Windy Bench Mine, Long Cr. Ruby, Alaska, 1912. Warren, Burk, and Heney.
- 75 Warren, Burk, and Heney. Windy Bench Claim. Long Cr. Ruby Mining Dist., Alaska, 1912.
- 76 Stroup and Labosky- Emil Bench, Long Cr. Ruby Mining Dist., Alaska, 1912.
- 77 Conors \_\_\_\_\_ Ruby [Mining operation]
- 78 D. McCloud and Bell's Mine. Bear Pup. Ruby, Alaska, 1912.
- 79 Sinclair Bros. Mine. Bear Pup. Ruby, Alaska. 1912.
- 80 Ground Sluicing. Bear Pup. Ruby Gold Mining Dist., Alaska 1912.
- 81 Pine Tree Asso. Bonanza Cr. Ruby, Alaska. Backlund, Curey & Westerlund.
- 82 U.S. Mail Carrier Snow's camp on trail. Yukon to Iditarod, Alaska, 1911.
- 83 Gray & Cc). Driving cattle from Iditarod, Alaska to Ophir diggings. 1911
- 84 Steamer, Little Snug on the Iditarod River, Alaska. 1911.
- 85 "Gnat" and "Mosquito" Freighting on Iditarod River, Alaska. 1911.
- 86 Captain Norron's launch Comet on the Iditarod River, Alaska. 1911
- 87 The little steamer Gertrude leaving Iditarod for Ruby, Alaska. 1911.

- 88 Iditarod, Alaska, 1911.
- 89 Before the fire. First Avenue, Iditarod, Alaska 4-11.
- 90 Noonhour. Iditarod, Alaska, 1911. [Two story log building advertising "Turkish Steam and Plain Baths" in background]
- 91 From top N.C. looking to Merchant's Cafe. The Iditarod fire. April 4, 1911.
- 92 Archie Allen's residence. Iditarod, Alaska, 1911.
- 93 Mining - Discovery - Otter Creek - Iditarod, Alaska, 1911.
- 94 Doc Mading's Mining on upper end of Flat Creek, Iditarod. 1911.
- 95 Gold Street. Flat City, Alaska. 1911.
- 96 Dikeman, Alaska. September 1911.
- 97 Yukon River fish wheels, Alaska.
- 98 Yukon River fish wheels.
- 99 Man standing in front of the office of Dr. I.H. Moore.
- 100 A man and a woman in front of Commissioner's tent.
- 101 Group of people in front of log cabin.
- 102 Group of people in front of log cabin.
- 103 Mining operation, with group of miners in foreground.
- 104 Three ministers.
- 105 Two men in front of log cabin.
- 106 Man and horse drawn sled in front of log cache.
- 107 Man in Sailboat.
- 108 Three women and a girl in a graveyard, probably outside Ruby.
- 109 Seven women in Oriental costumes. Interior.
- 110 Group of native children, on a beach.

- 111 Three native children, standing in front of log cabin dressed in winter clothing. One of them is holding a basketball.
- 112 Old native man.
- 113 Close up of Old native woman.
- 114 Church building by waterfront.
- 115 [Overview of] Ruby, Alaska. The one year old metropolis of the Yukon. June 26, 1912. (This photo is between numbers 25 and 26 in the album.)
- 116 Keys and Mayhan's leaving for the creeks. Ruby, Alaska, 1912. [Two men and freight wagon] (This photo is between numbers 64 and 65 in the album.)
- 117 Iditarod, Alaska, 1914. [Iditarod Post Office exterior with William Edward on left, his father, Alabama Bill on right, and unidentified woman.]
- 118 First sack train leaving Iditarod, Alaska for the New Strike on the Kuskokwim. September 1910 [Men in the horse and supplies in front of the Moose Cafe].

*Views 119-125 donated by Jeanne E. Ostnes, daughter of Leif R. Ostnes on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Lars Ostnes*

- 119 The arrival of Santa Claus, Christmas 1913 at Discovery City, Otter Creek, Alaska. Iditarod Gold Mining District. [Interior view of Celebration. Identification on verse of photograph].
- 120 Grand Thanksgiving Ball given by the Artic Brotherhook, Camp No. 26 in A.B. Hall Flat City, Alaska 1913. [Interior view].
- 121 The Grand Team In First Dog Race of Season. December 1, 1913. Sture Steinberg driver. Distance 22 miles. Time 1 hour. 52 minutes, 25 seconds. [Crowd watches as dog team nears log building]
- 122 The Grand Pretzel Ball. Discovery, Otter. [Interior view].
- 123 Al Chapin's stage to the Red Cross Ball . Iditarod, Alaska. [Horse drawn sleigh with Lars and Elsie Ostnes, and others bundled under a fur blanket].
- 124 The Red Cross Ball. A.B. Hall. Iditarod, Alaska, 1918. [Men, women and children in group portrait. Red Cross banners hang from ceiling overhead. Lars and Elsie Ostnes in view].
- 125 The St. Valentine Dog Race Ball Moose Hall. Flat City, Alaska. 1918 [Group portrait of Lars Ostnes and others. Identifications on reverse of photograph-].

- 126 Iditarod's Machine Shop. June 1910,
- 127 First Newspaper in the New Camp Iditarod - 1910.
- 128 1st. Avenue, Iditarod [Building a Town, September 1910].
- 129 Str. Louise and Barges on the Yukon River, Alaska.

*The following photos were added in May 1992. Gift of Mina Lang (Acc. No. 1992-8)*

- 130. Iditarod, Alaska. Clemons Photo. [Bird's eye view of Iditarod, faded view.]
- 131. The Yukon Gold Co.'s Power-House & Office Building Flat Creek, Alaska, 1912. Clemons Photo. [View of buildings along a creek.]
- 132. Uper [upper] Madding B. Ingles & Duncan Michey Flat Cr. Iditarod Min. Dis., Alaska. 1912. Clemons Photo. [Three men and one child posed in front of a sluice.]
- 133. Face in open cut Gold Mine. 'Little Guggs' Flat Creek, Alaska. 1912. Clemons photograph. [Group of men working in a mine pit.]
- 134. Tribe of Kuskokwim Eskimos Dr. Sper (?) witnesses in Campbell Murder Case. Clemons Photo Iditarod Als. [Eight men posed in front of a cabin.]
- 135. Good Things to Eat in the Flat City Garden. Who Says You can't Raise Anything in Alaska? GJ Barret. Clemons photo. [Display of large vegetables.]
- 136. The Wireless. Iditarod, Alaska. 1912. [Telegraph station in background with two people standing on a small foot bridge. Mining operation on the right.]
- 137. The Wickler Greys Hauling Wood. Flat, Alaska. 1912. [Horse team hauling cut wood in winter scene.]
- 138. Sam Adams Home. Iditarod, Alaska. [Man standing outside a small cabin with a dog team, winter scene.]
- 139. Alaskan Miners Hauling Lumber to (?). Clemons photo. [Dog team hitched to a sled of lumber, people and cabins in the background, winter scene.]
- 140. The Swanson-Mutchler Wedding Party. Aug. 19, 1914. The only one in Flat, Alaska. Clemons & Koon photo. [Group of people posed inside a large room draped with greenery and the American flag.]
- 141. Grand Thanks-Giving Ball. Given By the Arctic Brotherhood. Camp No. 26. In A.B. Hall Flat City, Alaska 1913. Clemons & Koon Photo. [Group of people posed inside a hall draped with streamers and American flags.]

142. Alaskan Miner's Home Sweet Home. Clemons & Koon Photo. [Four men and several dogs outside a small cabin, winter scene.]
143. U.S. Timber Cruiser Nelson O. Brigham and His Team of Huskies Flat, Alaska. Basil Clemons, photo. 1918. [Hitched dog team posed in snow.]
144. Yukon Natives, Alaska. Basil Clemons, Ruby. [Portrait of Athabaskan woman and young girl with a baby.]
145. Stenberg & Glantz's Racing Team. Iditarod, Alaska. Basil Clemons, Photo, Ruby, Alaska. [Blurred view of two men with a small dog team, winter scene.]
146. The Winners-Mrs. Swanson In First Ladies' Dog Race of Alaska. Jan. 14, 1914. Course Flat-Discovery-Flat-Discovery-Flat-Distance 20.2 Miles. Time 2-17-44. [Crowd gathered to watch a woman and dog team race through the town.]
147. The Grand Teams' Finish in Iditarod, Alaska Kennel Clubs' 3rd Feb. 22nd Annual Handicap Dog Race. Distance 22 Miles. Time 1-45-52. Clemons & Koon photo 1914.
148. All Fool's Day Masquerade Ball. Ansley Hall Iditarod, Alaska. 4/1/11. Clemons photo. [Group of people dressed in costumes inside a decorated hall.]
149. Similar to PCA 68-119.
150. Similar to PCA 68-6.
151. Henry Wagner G.B. Gold Stream. Fairbanks Mining Dis. Alaska. Clemons Photo. 1913. [Four men and one woman posed outside a shack with chickens in the foreground.]
152. The Buckets on Yukon Gold Co's Dredge, Flat Creek, Alaska-Which Broke Preveis Reckerds [previous records] by Digging \$84,000.00 in 4 Days. 1912. Clemons Photo. [Dredge equipment and buckets as seen in a mining pit.]
153. Hauling Wood on Flat Creek, Alaska 1912. [Team of horses and three men hauling lumber on a winter trail.]
154. Clemons & Koon photo. [Group of men standing in snow at Iditarod or Flat with a team of dogs.]
155. "Sourdough Bachlers" [Bachelors] Home Sweet Home. Ruby, Alaska 1911. Clemons [Six men posed on the porch of a small log cabin with several dogs.]

*The following photographs were donated by Carol Adams of North Carolina in March 1995.*

156. Douglas City, Alaska [Bird's eye view of Douglas, tinted postcard view].
157. Looking Down Colorado Cr. Cripple, Alaska; Cripple, Alaska 1912; Looking Up Colorado Cr. Cripple, Alaska; Christmas Day 1912 at White & L.F. Furgies Cigar Store,

- Cripple, Alaska; General Store Cripple, Alaska; [Erickson's House]; Looking Up Cripple Cr. Cripple, Alaska; Riverfront Cripple Alaska. [Series of small photos on one image showing scenes in Cripple, Alaska]. Clemons.
158. [Unidentified river scene.] Clemons photo.
159. The Arrival of Santa Claus. At Discovery City Otter Creek, Alaska. Xmas 1913. [Same photo as 68-119.] Clemons & Koon photo.
160. Alaska Miner's Home Sweet Home. [Same photo as 68-142.]
161. The Winner-22 Miles. Time 1-57-5. \_\_\_\_\_ in Iditarod Alaska's 4th Anuel [annual] Handicap Dog Race. New Year 1914. [Crowd on street with "Northern Commercial Co." building on right front.]
162. First Ave Flat City, Alaska Nov 1912. Clemons [Street scene with "Flat City Restaurant" sign on left-hand.]
163. \_\_\_\_Gibney Winner 3d Prize...[1914, crowd watching a dog race.]
164. Little Girl's Race. July Fourth. Flat Alaska. 1914. Clemons & Koon Photo.
165. Chris Shubert's start in Iditarod, Alaska's 4th Anuell [annual] Handicap Dog Race. New Year. 1914. Winner 3rd Place 22 miles Time 2-19-40. [Crowd gathered around a dog racer "Koon & Clemons photo" sign on right.]
166. \_\_\_\_Dogteam. [Posed view of a sled dog team in the snow.]
167. Pine Tree Asso. Bonanza Cr. Ruby Als. Backlund, Curey & Westerlund. [Two men standing next to a kiln with rock debris nearby.] Clemons Photo. 1912.
168. [Interior view of a saloon, behind the bar.]
169. [Unidentified woman standing on a bridge in the snow.]
170. Ruby's First School. [Blurry view of school children posed outside the school.] Clemons.
171. Winter Lights and Shadows. Ruby, Alaska. [Frozen river scene with a village on the right.]
172. Alaskan Gold Miners-Fairbanks. [Group of men posed outdoors next to a wooden structure.] Clemons photo.
173. [Unidentified man posed with a dog team, blurry view.]

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