

Alaska State Library
Historical Collections

Guide to Collection

Greve, John Paul

John Greve Photograph Collection

Building the Alcan Highway, ca. 1944

PCA 527

168 black and white images
Set of color postcards

Processed by: Gayle Goedde
December 2009

ACQUISITION: The collection was donated by Sharon A. Campbell in 2009 (Accession number 2009-21).

ACCESS: The collection is available for viewing.

COPYRIGHT: Request for permission to publish or reproduce photographs from the collection should be discussed with the Librarian.

PROCESSING: The photographs were removed from album pages and sleeved in Mylar for preservation purposes. The original order was maintained as much as possible; however, many images had come loose, and the exact order was lost.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Provided by Sharon A. Campbell, John Greve's daughter.

John Paul Greve was born on April 9, 1898, in Irwin, Iowa. He was the second oldest son of eleven children born to German immigrant parents from Schweig-Holstein. Throughout the 1920s, John Greve worked in wholesale hardware for Marshall Wells in Duluth, Minnesota, where he enjoyed a comfortable social life. That all ended when the Depression hit and work dried up. For ten years, employment was spotty. He said, that he knew how it felt to be really hungry. That changed when he was drafted in 1942 at the age of 44. He was discharged later that same year for being over age; but, in the Army, he heard about employment opportunities in the Yukon Territory. He left a job in Minneapolis that paid \$.82 an hour and went to work in the Yukon for \$1.50 an hour, nearly doubling his salary. He absolutely fell in love with the Yukon; and, from there, he fell in love with Alaska.

John Greve's first job was in Whitehorse, Canada, where he worked for Marvin Tinker on a regular carpenter crew during the building of the Alcan Highway. This photograph collection dates from that period. When the contract ended, he applied to and was hired by Ladd Field in Fairbanks in May of 1944, and he was employed there until August 19, 1949. In 1946 he had married Nancy Lee Scott, the 41-year-old secretary to the Fairbanks High School principal. The following year, John was surprised to become a father at the age of 50. The asthmatic baby, Sharon, needed a more moderate climate and mom and daughter moved outside Alaska. John worked one more year before taking the same difficult step himself. In later years, he was never able to speak of Alaska without a break in his voice. He always assumed he would return, but the opportunity never came.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

John Greve assembled this collection of postcards and personal photographs to chronicle the building of the Alcan Highway when he was on the scene in 1944. Most of the images show views along the Alcan, with prominent lakes, mountains, and buildings. Also shown are scenes of construction personnel and road-building equipment. There is one set of small commercial photographs of Jasper National Park and one set of color postcards depicting scenes from British Columbia and Southeast Alaska.

INVENTORY

When descriptions were written on the front or back of the photograph, these are noted. The images were numbered consecutively throughout the collection.

Box 1 of 1

Folder 1

- 1-9 [Small, 2 ¼ x 1 ½-inch unidentified black and white scenery shots, including one of a black bear on a graded road and one of a man in overalls, standing by a sign that reads "Small Bridge, 1st Lt. Roland Small"]
- 10 Lake Victoria
- 11 [Road construction crew, posing in front of a truck]; identified as follows: Nels, Dick Sharp, Albert Beutler, Hugh, Gus Wietzbe?, Art, Vetsch, Red Ingram, Virgel Noble, John Tinkler, Bob OConner? Posey, John Greve, Thos? Chapen, Jake, Burt Tripp, Witmer, "Wit," Emil, Hank, Bob, Marvin, and Irvin
- 12 Dog team
- 13 Maintenance on airport
- 14-22 [Small black and white photos (same size as 1-9), including another one of the same black bear as above and many shots of construction trucks working in a shallow river;] the final shot in this series is labeled "Indian Village"
- 23-42 [3-inch-square photographs showing men working on construction projects; locations and buildings are unnamed]; a few men's names are on the back, including: John Brooker, Bob OConner, Leo McDound?, and Jim Scriver?
- 43-52 [Small, 2 ½ x 4-inch tourist cards with scenes of Jasper National Park]
- 53 [Snow-covered, river valley landscape, with contours indicating past construction activities]
- 54 Dog team [three dogs pulling a sled with two people along a wide trail]

Folder 2

- 55 Alcan
- 56 Fuel camp where river boats refuel up river

- 57 Buoy on Lake Bennett
- 58 [River boat at] Whitehorse dock; on verso: “ On to Dawson”
- 59 Old time [train] engine, Carcross
- 60 Carcross Indian village, Lake Bennett
- 61 Lake Bennett
- 62 [Three men fishing in a river]
- 63 Swimming pool behind the Indian School, Carcross
- 64 Alcan [road under snow, with building and tall flagpole on right]
- 65 Lake Bennett
- 66 Australian Point, [Lake Bennett]
- 67 Ben-Ma-Chree [Lake]
- 68 Lake Aishikik (Indian Country)
- 69 Jakes Corners and Alcan Highway, 4000’ elevation
- 70 Jakes Corners, 4000’ elevation
- 71 Lake Tagish
- 72 Lake Tagish
- 73 Trading Post and mink farm at Tagish, Y. T. [Yukon Territory]
- 74 White Pass and Yukon Railroad [wooden bridge in foreground; buildings on other side]
- 75 Carcross, Lake Bennett
- 76 Carcross Inn
- 77 TUTSHE passenger boat, plying between Carcross and Ben-Ma-Chree
- 78 [View of bridge on] Lake Bennett!; [Carcross visible through trees]
- 79 White Pass and Yukon Railroad

- 80 Carcross, Y. T. [Yukon Territory]; [Carcross was originally known as Caribou Crossing]
- 81 Whitehorse Depot
- 82 Supplies coming up to Army and Construction companies at Whitehorse from Skagway, Alaska [on the train]
- 83 Rainbow Lake
- 84 [Three men unload fuel drums from plane] YUKON SOUTHERN, CF-BMW
- 85 Plane coming in
- 86 Lake Aishihik, Indian Country
- 87-104 [Small 3 ½ x 2 ¾ -inch souvenir photographs of various scenes from the] White Pass and Yukon Route

Folder 3

- 105 Narrow Gauge Railroad, 36"
- 106 Drilling for gold in gold fields
- 107 Indian graves
- 108 Indian graves
- 109 72 Below, Whitehorse, 1943
- 110 Graves
- 111 [Graves]
- 112 Construction camp [Quonset huts]
- 113 Buzz saw Jimmie, Whitehorse, Y. T.
- 114 Highway in Yukon before Alcan [looks like a streambed]
- 115 Ice breaking up on Yukon River
- 116 Breaking [ground for] Alcan
- 117 Marsh Lake

- 118 Whitehorse Dam
- 119 Whitehorse
- 120 Typical log house, Whitehorse
- 121 [Boats line up along] docks at Whitehorse
- 122 R. C. M. P, Mountie
- 123 Mountie checking on Indians [Officer with four people, standing outside log cabin]
- 124 Old R.C. M. P. barracks at Carcross
- 125 Mountie checking on Indians [Officer, holding map, visits with two people outside tent]
- 126 Mountie bringing in his man [prisoner on horse, followed by pack horse, mountie, and fourth horse]
- 127 R. C. M. P. tennis courts, Dawson [next to river]
- 128 St. Mary's Hospital, Dawson City, Y. T.
- 129 YUKON ROSE at dock
- 130 Lewes River; on verso: Yukon River
- 131 Shooting Whitehorse Rapids
- 132 Miles Canyon, where Robert Service wrote; on verso: Miles Canyon, where Robert Service wrote many poems

The following, 133-162, are Alcan Highway postcards

- 133 Alcan Highway
- 134 Trout River, Alcan Highway
- 135 Watson Lake, Alcan Highway
- 136 Trapper's plane at Ft. Nelson, Alcan Highway
- 137 Liard River, Alcan Highway
- 138 P. R. A. camp on Alcan Highway

- 139 Liard River, Alcan Highway
- 140 Liard River in the Rockies, Alcan Highway
- 141 Cable bridge over Miles Canyon
- 142 Summit Lake, Alcan Highway
- 143 Summit Lake Alcan Highway
- 144 Alaska Highway
- 145 Rocky Mountains, Alcan Highway
- 146 Military, Alcan Highway
- 147 Fort Nelson, B. C. C., Alcan Highway
- 148 Alcan Highway
- 149 Alcan Highway
- 150 The First Mile, Alcan Highway
- 151 The Alaska Highway: Peace River Bridge, between Dawson Creek and Fort St. John.
Overall Length, 2200 feet. Cost, \$1,700,000.
- 152 Original Fort St. John, B. C. C., Peace River, Alcan Highway
- 153 Peace River, Alcan Highway
- 154 Dawson Creek, B. C. Canada, Alcan Highway
- 155 Alcan Highway
- 156 Mancho Lake, Alcan Highway
- 157 Alcan Highway
- 158 Pack train, Alcan Highway
- 159 [Men and large crate of gear in the mud], Alcan Highway
- 160 Steamboat Mountain, Alaska Highway

- 161 Alcan Highway
- 162 The midnight sun, Yukon; Photo made at 15 minute intervals as seen from the Alaska Highway, Whitehorse, Y. T.

Folder 4, loose photographs and postcards

- 163 Alcan Highway [road construction signs]
- 164 [Map of] Alaskan Highway
- 165 [Fold-out, color postcards]
- C. N. R. S. S. PRINCE RUPERT and PRINCE GEORGE
The Mendenhall Glacier and Auk Lake
Beautiful Lake Bennett on the White Pass Route
Dawson, heart of the famed Klondike gold fields
Whitehorse, head of navigation on the Yukon
Main Street, Skagway, famous in gold rush days of 1898
Juneau, capital of Alaska\
Wrangell, Alaska, fishing headquarters
C. N. R. S. S. PRINCE RUPERT
Ocean Falls
Prince Rupert, B. C.
Ketchikan, Alaska, fishing center
Idyllic Ben-My-Chree, a garden at the foot of a glacier
Miles Canyon and Whitehorse Rapids, five miles long
Taku Glacier
Five Finger Rapids
- 166 Ice breaking up [along river]
- 167 Pan American Ship [Pacific Alaska Airways]
- 168 Ice breaking
- 169 Grouse hunt; [grouse hanging from line along outside of building]