Guide to Collection

Alaska State Library
Historical Collections

Alaska. Department of Highways

Alaska Department of Highway Photograph Collection
Walter Hickel ("Haul Road") Construction, 1968-1969
PCA 82

75 photographs  Processed by: Various

ACQUISITION: Provenance is unknown.

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HISTORICAL NOTE

In 1968, a decision was made to construct a winter haul road to the Arctic Slope. The Dept. of Highways Commissioner called for bids and when all came in too high, the department made plans to construct it with state forces.

The “Haul Road,” as it is known to Alaskans, was officially named the Walter J. Hickel Highway. It was completed on March 12, 1969.

See “The History of the Haul Road” included at the end of this guide.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

Images include equipment, construction, mobile camps, aerial views, Dept. of Highway employees and construction workers. The collection also includes a typescript "The History of the Haul Road."

INVENTORY

1 Twenty miles north of Livengood. [tractor cutting a path for haul road.] Dec. 1968.
2 Twenty-five miles north of Livengood. [three tractors cutting a path for haul road.] Dec. 1968.
3 Kanuti River Flats 45 miles north Stevens Village. [snow covered road; trees on either side.]
4 Dall River Flats 30 miles north Stevens Village. [snow covered haul road.]
5 West Fork Dall River Mile 50 north Stevens Village. [snow covered road.]
6 Portion of Mobile Camp at Bettles. [truck and two nodular buildings.]
7 Mile 28 going into Dall River Flats. [snowy haul road; wooded hills beyond.]
8 Kanuti River Flats Mile 60, Blowing snow. [snowy haul road with trees beyond.]
9 Koyukuk River Crossing, south bank. [trees beyond snowy road.]
10 Tractor pulling finishing drag. 10 miles north Bettles.
11 Mile 39 north of Stevens Village, descending into west fork of Dall River.
12 Approaching Bonanza Creek, Mile 85 north Stevens Village.
13 Mobile Radio Relay Station at Dall Summit will be a maintenance camp also. [mobile trailer.]
Two bunk houses and generator truck, part of mobile camp.

Kitchen and dining room, part of mobile camp. [exterior view.]

New construction 6 miles north of Bettles. [rough road bed; trees beyond.]

Seven miles north of Bettles. [Men and tractors.]

Kanuti River Flats. [truck using haul road.]

Kanuti River Flats, moving snow. [Haul road through flat terrain.]

Bonanza Creek. [haul road curving to the right; trees in background.]

West Fork of the Dall River. Original construction in middle of the picture and resulting glacier. Final road in foreground.

Eleven miles north of Bettles. [Four men, center; tractors right and left.]

Dall Hot Springs, road in foreground. [snow covered trees to right of springs.]

Camp while at Bettles. [truck and mobile trailers.]

Twenty miles north of Bettles. [rough path through trees.]

Livengood, beginning of winter trail. [buildings in trees; hill beyond.]

Part of "Cat Train," north of Kanuti Flats. [three "cats" on road.]

Lead Dozers, north of Bettles. [three bulldozers in wooded area.]

Yukon River Flats 20 miles north Stevens Village. [snowy road and trees.]

Load of drill pipe on Bob Sled. [long sections of pipe; man standing, right.]

Kanuti River Flats, "Cat Train" [Caterpillar] heading north. Empty tanker returning from road camp.

Between Koyukuk River at Bettles and Nine Mile Hills.

Construction drag. Built from 10BP42# piling.

Construction drag. [close-up view.]

[Misc. views of haul road in winter; most are blurred.]

[Unidentified snow-covered road.]
44  [Summer view of trees along a highway.]
45  [Winter scenics.]
46  [Unidentified creed in winter.]
47  [Unidentified aerial view.]
48  [Unidentified aerial view.]
49  [Winter scene of unidentified village.]
50  [Two men in front of one-engine plane.]
51  [Man with camera (?) on snowy road.]
52  [Man beside State of Alaska pickup.]
64  [Tractor and trailer in snow.]
65  [“Nodwell” caterpillar in snow]
66  Tractor with house trailer.
67  23 Feb 68. Loading light plant & fuel pump... 
68  21 Feb 68. Walt Mmano & Ray Jensen replacing spring on Nodwell [caterpillar?] wheel at Camp Site 6..
69  23 Feb 68. Nodwells being warmed before starting in morning with Herman Nelson heater.
70  Chris Angabook, Survey aide, filling fuel can for snow machine trip.
71  [Group of men posed with award from American Institute of Steel Construction: “Most Beautiful Steel Bridge, 1966” and photograph of Knik River Bridges.]
72  [2 men from AK Dept. of Highways and Canadian Dept. of Public Works, holding sign and short-wave radio microphone]
73  [Man in office holding shortwave radio microphone]
74  [Man inspecting (?) roadside snow berm]
75  [Two men in front of highway construction progress (?) map]

http://www.library.alaska.gov/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/PCA082.pdf
On October 31, 1968, in Fairbanks, some of the representatives of the Alaska Carriers Association and some legislators met with the Commissioner of the Department of Highways, Fairbanks district highway engineer as to the construction of the winter haul road to the Arctic Slope. Following this, another meeting with the Commissioner of Highways, the Governor and his staff, and the Commissioner of Public Works, and some of the legislators was held and as a result of this meeting the decision was made to proceed with the road and to poll the legislature on the supplemental appropriation to the Department of Highways for funds to accomplish the work.

On Monday, November 18, 1968, the Commissioner of Highways went to Fairbanks to determine the basis for a proposal with which to ask bids and to decide how best to proceed. In a conference with the Fairbanks engineer and his staff it was determined that the State would proceed with its own forces to construct the section of the road between Livengood and Stevens Village and the ice bridges across the Yukon River, the south fork of the Koyukuk River at Bettles. Also, it was determined that the only basis upon which the Department of Highways could ask for bids was to make-our best estimate of the equipment time needed to accomplish the work from Stevens Village to Sagwon and to ask for bids on this basis.

The Commissioner of Highways returned from this meeting on the evening of November 20 to finalize the proposal. On November 21 a conference was held in the Governor's office prior to advertising. The decision to proceed was made and the invitation for bids was completed on this date. On November 22 the project was released for advertising with bids to be taken on December 12. The Fairbanks Highways district was authorized, on this date, to proceed the work from Livengood in, with the work on the ice bridges. November 25 the first advertising appeared in the newspapers and work began by the State forces at Livengood. Work began on the ice bridge at Stevens Village on November 29.

On December 10 bids were opened in the Fairbanks district engineer's office and six bids were received as follows:

- S & B Construction Company - $127,750
- Anchorage Paving Company - $237,400
- Burgess Construction - $283,000
- Tundra Construction - $313,500
- Great Northern Equipment Company - $341,000
- Braund, Inc. - $347,500

On December 12 by a telephone call from their attorney S & B withdrew their bid. Since no bidder's bond was required in the proposal this was allowed. The lowest responsible bidder then under consideration for the work was the Anchorage Asphalt and Paving Company with a bid of $237,400. On December 21 work was completed on the road to Stevens Village and the Yukon crossing itself.
The State's estimated cost for the entire project was as follows:

- Preliminary engineering: $29,000
- Mobilization: $25,000
- Livengood to Stevens Village construction: $50,000
- Ice bridges: $40,000
- Stevens Village to Sagwon construction: $144,400
- Contingencies: $61,600
- Total: $350,000

At that time the following amounts had been expended on work to the point:

- Engineering: $25,000
- Mobilization: $22,000
- Livengood to Stevens Village construction: $50,000
- Ice bridges: $28,000
- Total: $125,000 approximately

It was estimated that the cost to the State for supervising the contract, should it be awarded, would be approximately $12,000. The cost of the contract as bid with no contingency whatsoever was $237,000. Therefore we would have had a total cost, without benefit of contingency, of approximately $374,000 which, of course, is in excess of the amount of funds anticipated for the work. Due to the experience that would be gained during the construction of the road from Livengood to Stevens Village, it was indicated that our estimate for the equipment time necessary to do the work from Stevens Village to Sagwon was low. Therefore we anticipated further overrun, even above the $374,000.

On the basis of these facts and judgment, the decision was made to reject the bids and proceed with the work with State forces. This decision was made on December 23 and the district highway engineer in Fairbanks was notified by the Commissioner of Highways to proceed.

On December 24 a record cold spell started in the Fairbanks and Fairbanks north areas. This cold spell precluded any work until 2 A.M. January 14, 1969. During this period the average temperature was 63.5 degrees below zero. There were four days during which the temperature was below 70 degrees and the coldest day recorded was -75 degrees. Due to the experience of the Highway Department in the section from Livengood to Stevens Village, it was determined that the construction equipment to be used on the section from Stevens Village to Sagwon must be in new condition. The Department of Highways had had the experience of extensive repairs becoming necessary on the used equipment that was being utilized on the section from Livengood to Stevens Village. With the long supply line from Stevens Village north, as little repair as possible was determined to be a necessity. Therefore the decision was made to acquire by rental agreement three new bulldozers for construction work north of Stevens Village. The Fairbanks district contacted 12 potential suppliers by telephone to determine what equipment was available. As a result of this telephone survey 7 potential suppliers were furnished requests for informal quotations and quotations were received from three suppliers. The low bid was accepted and felt in the best interests of the State and the equipment was so ordered. Work proceeded on January 14 when the temperature rose to minus 50 degrees. Work was completed
to Bettles on January 26. Equipment was overhauled at the Bettles shop, which is operated by the Division of Aviation at Bettles, and on the beginning of January 30 the work resumed north of Bettles, proceeding to Anaktuvuk Pass then on to Sagwon.

The construction of the Walter J. Hickel Highways was completed March 12 with the section from Livengood to Stevens Village, by 15 men and 26 working days. from Stevens Village to Sagwon was completed by 22 men and 58 working days. In addition to these men, on the project was the Fairbanks district administrative staff for logistical support.

The final day the total amount of loads hauled over the ice road was 343 for a tonnage of 6,078. The number of pieces of equipment loaded was 139 with a net tonnage of 1,386 for a combined total net tonnage of 7,464. Using this as an estimate for a total for four months usage next year, we would then have a total of roughly 30,000 tons. It also must be noted that highway user tax generated by this activity over a three-year period will amount to roughly around $75,000. Also, the increased motor vehicle license fee and the business license fee and general increased economic activity will serve as an additional economic factor, as well as the timber development in the south fork of the Koyukuk and the possibility of more prospecting being done by individuals and companies because of their ability to freight in their supplies and heavy equipment in the winter, whereas before everything has been air-lifted in and could only be of a small nature because of the length of the air strip at Bettles.

It should be noted there were only three, minor accidents during the construction of the winter ice road.

In order to develop the Walter J. Hickel Highway for next season, it was requested that maintenance work be done this summer and winter. This will require seven maintenance camps located at Livengood, Dahl Mountain, Bettles, Crevice Creek, Anaktuvuk Pass, Half Way, and Sagwon. Approximately 20 maintenance personnel will be required to staff these camps for 4-1/2 months at a cost of $154,000. Subsistence costs for food and lodging, airfreight, and travel will cost $70,500. Contractual services, including equipment rental, ice bridge construction, and miscellaneous will cost $161,400. Commodities, including fuel for camps and excess freight, and the cost of fuel for equipment will be $47,000, for a total cost of this operation of $433,400.

Capital improvement is anticipated to be about $441,000.

It is desirable to perform some of the work in selected locations along the route during the summer months after the frost has gone out. This will involve some side hill cutting along the Johns River between Crevice Creek and Anaktuvuk Pass, rerouting the Nine Mile Hills north of Bettles. It is felt certain that this work will more than pay for itself. The total cost for this summer maintenance is approximately $167,100. Capital equipment is necessary to provide for housing and facilities for the winter operation, warm storage and equipment to accomplish the work.