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Harry Badger Interview, Mrs. Nikidham [sp] is the Interviewer, No Date, No Location

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Notes: Originals on 5 inch reels. Master copies CD.

Mr. Badger is discussing early days in Fairbanks. He arrived in Fairbanks in 1903. There wasn't any pay in sight when they got here according to Mr. Badger. Captain Barnette landed his trading post in Fairbanks because he couldn't get his boat any further up the river towards Tanana Crossing. Felix Pedro saw the smoke of a steamboat and came down from Pedro Creek and subsequently had a conference. He sent a Japanese person [Jujiro Wada] to Dawson to tell that they had 9 feet of pay dirt at 25 cents to the pan. That's 25 cents to a shovel of gravel. Badger arrived with Grant Murdock where they decided he would stake a claim on Goldstream. He would sink a hole there and Badger would go into town and take care of things here. Mr. Murdock moved to Dawson and wanted Badger to go along but he stayed because of the amount of nice hills. The following summer there was a rumor that there was pay on Fairbanks Creek and McChesney was the first editor of the Fairbanks News-Miner. They [McChesney and Badger] found some fellows with a hole and they asked what they had and they declined to say what they found. Badger and McChesney were told to leave. They waited for the men to leave and Badger snuck down and filled a hanky with gravel. They found an old greasy frying pan up the creek and panned 2.5 dollars' worth of gold. The next was Cleary Creek near the first of June. A man Badger knew from Dawson emptied a hopper and took the lid off a rocker and it was a streak of yellow gold. He said he had to change every 2 hours because it was running over. Subsequently, Badger went and opened up a real estate company. The appearance of Fairbanks was a few log cabins on Front St. which became First Avenue. Almost all of Circle City was building cabins in Fairbanks because the regulations were that you had to stake your claim which cost 2 and a half and you had to build a cabin within 30 days. When any stealing, shootings, or scrapes happened, they called a miner's meeting because of no police or court. A chairman and secretary would be elected and both sides would tell the story and the meeting would decide who was right. Badger says there was one shooting scrape over the town recorder selling a cabin. [The man, Koontz] got it up and went to Circle to get some food. The cabin was incomplete and the trail broke so he could not make it back within 30 days. William Dunkel, town recorder, sold the rights of the cabin. The man returned to find his cabin complete and occupied. The man [Koontz] went for a couple drinks to prepare to beat William Dunkel which he did. After the beating, he returned for more drinks and then returned with a pick handle to beat Dunkel's head off. Dunkel sought George Noble's Saloon for protection and George told him to go in the back room. Dunkel grabbed Noble's six shooter and went into the back. Koontz came in and was looking for Dunkel. Nobel said no. Koon jumped the bar, kicked the door and Dunkel shot him. A miner's meeting was called and the verdict was that Dunkel got what he deserved when he got beat and that he had the right to protect his own life and that squared things.

The first gold strike occurred was on Eight Above Discovery on Fairbanks Creek. Discovered by three Irish men. One of the three is the one who discovered the gold. The other strike, the big one, occurred at the mouth of Wolf Creek on Discovery claim of Cleary Creek. Within 30 days, there were hundreds of strikes on Cleary and Fairbanks Creeks. People traveled to Circle City with dog teams. Cabins were small because of the thirty day requirement. Rivalry between Chena and Fairbanks for the courthouse occurred. Chena said they couldn't get to Fairbanks with steamboats. Fairbanks businessmen sent George Matlock and Badger to blow out a log jam on the Tanana River to give water for navigation. They were paid 15 dollars a day. They had 10-12 kegs of powder and they used them. [Judge James] Jim Wickersham decided where the Fairbanks would be. Same Wickersham that went to Nome and "cleaned up that mess down there" also wrote several books. Mrs. Nikidam of the Telefact Program from the College Community Women's Club

Jim Dotson, otherwise known as Windy Jim, went right across country with no food. He contacted the telegraph people who sent a note to Washington asking for food from Fort Yukon for emergency purposes. Jim came around the first of June with three logs tied together with willows from the Goodpaster River with food.