

L
Chugach - Boundaries.

January 9, 1917.

The Forester,

Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

I am enclosing a copy of a report submitted by Mr. Flory as a result of his recent trip to the Chugach. This report presents a condition of affairs at Anchorage that, to my mind, call for immediate action, and I know from former conversation with you on the subject that you agree with me. I feel strongly that the best way to meet the condition is by immediate elimination. I understand that Capt. Mears is now in Washington and while I did not know of this matter at the time of his visit to Portland, I am confident from the talk that I did have with him that he is anxious to see Anchorage made a clean town.

Specific recommendations as to the form and lines of the elimination will be sent by separate letter immediately.

Very truly yours,

Geo. W. Cecil,

District Forester.

Copy for Sup. Weigh

Strictly Confidential.

L
Chugach - Trespass.
Anchorage Nuisance.

January 6, 1917.

Memorandum for District Forester:

In a letter dated October 28, 1915 under designation L* Chugach, Trespass, Anchorage Nuisance, Mr. Graves calls attention to a street of women of ill repute that is being maintained on National Forest land immediately adjoining the government town of Anchorage Alaska.

The particular area in question is located within the original Ship Creek Townsite Reservation, which was withdrawn from the Chugach National Forest April 21, 1914, and immediately adjoins the Anchorage Townsite Elimination. More specifically it is bounded on the north by Ninth Street, and on the west by C Street and adjoins an area set aside for free camping purposes on the east.

Thus, on paper it is not a part of the town of Anchorage, but actually it is a very important part of the social fabric of this rapidly growing young railroad town.

In order to understand the situation fully and that there may be a record of affairs leading up to the present status of the problem, I give a brief outline of its past

*Copy sent Forester
" " Sup. Hunt.*

history.

At the time of Mr. Graves visit the site occupied had been apparently either unofficially surveyed or plotted by running a blind street beginning at 9th Street, south, through the center of the block bounded by C Street on the west and B Street on the east. (See sketch attached). The women, as I understand occupied both sides of the street for a block or so.

Part of these women had formerly occupied ground at the mouth of Ship Creek along with other trespassers before the Alaskan Engineering Commission had formally taken possession of the area. In anticipation of Government activity in the building of the Alaska Central Railway, quite an advance settlement sprung up at this point just prior to the actual beginning of operations. As soon as the Commission decided that they would need all the available bottom land at the mouth of Ship Creek for headquarters and terminal purposes all trespassers were notified to vacate. In the meantime the new town of Anchorage had been located on a flat bench above the main stream valley at the mouth of the creek and all those who intended following legitimate occupations immediately purchased lots and began improvements. The first sale of lots was held sometime during the middle of July, 1915.

The question at once arose as to what disposition should be made of these women, since, under the terms of the sale of lots by the Government they would be barred from purchase.

Before the actual opening of the townsite for sale a conference was held between Lieut. (now Captain) Mears of the Alaskan Engineering Commission, A. Christensen of the General Land Office and Supervisor T. M. Hunt of the United States Forest Service. Captain Mears, according to Supervisor Hunt apparently took the stand that so long as the women did not occupy land needed by the Commission the problem was not really his to solve. Supervisor Hunt was emphatic that under no circumstances would they be permitted to occupy National Forest lands, it being understood that the Forest Service still maintained some sort of administrative control, although ill defined, of the area inside of the original Ship Creek townsite withdrawal, but outside the specific Anchorage elimination.

The stand taken by Captain Mears and Supervisor Hunt had the effect of putting the matter squarely up to Christensen. His position was indeed difficult. The women had to be moved, and they could not be admitted to the new town of Anchorage. Since no satisfactory solution presented itself regarding the women for the moment, it was apparently allowed to rest temporarily until the Commission had actual physical need for the ground they occupied. Unfortunately exact dates can not now be given, but it is to be understood that the details of the various problems arising at the time were being considered over a period of several weeks, just prior to the opening of Anchorage lot sale in July, 1915.

Immediately after the conference with Capt. Mears and Mr. Christensen, Supervisor Hunt left Anchorage and was absent about a week on business in another part of the Forest. During Hunt's absence, Christensen took advantage of the situation. He, in conjunction with Deputy United States Marshal Wardell hastily established the blind street mentioned above and upon his return Hunt found the erection of crib houses going on with feverish haste, and the women fast establishing themselves.

Hunt was greatly surprised that Christensen had openly taken advantage of him. He called upon Christensen immediately and demanded an explanation. Another conference was at once held with Captain Mears, at which Christensen made the statement that Hunt "had caught him with the goods" and wanted to know what was to be done. The situation had now become acute. Hunt's position was not only extremely embarrassing, he had been openly outraged.

Along with the question of the prostitutes another problem was urgently pressing itself. There was another class of trespassers who were entirely without substance. They were laborers belonging to Russian, Slav, Greek, Italian, and other nationalities, commonly known as "bohunks". They were floaters who had come to the locality for the purpose of working on the new railroad and could not be expected to pur-

chase lots and establish themselves. Supervisor Hunt suggested that a free camping area be set aside, beyond the boundaries of the Anchorage elimination but within the original withdrawal. This was agreed upon and subsequently Hunt plotted an area beginning at the corner of East C Street and extended it westward to the center line of West B Street and south two blocks. This provided an area of several hundred lots upon which the floating or cheaper class of laborers could maintain living quarters. (See sketch) It will be noted that this area was immediately bounded on the west by the district of prostitutes. The idea of a free camping area seemed to suggest to Mears and Christensen a sort of solution of the problem. Wardell assured them his office would police and maintain order on the two areas and that proper sanitation would be enforced by the local doctors, one of whom was employed as public health officer. Although no free camping area was officially established for the women, they were given some sort of supervision by the town authorities.

This was the status of affairs at the time of Mr. Graves visit early in the fall of the same year, 1915.

The women were left uncollected by any competent authority for the remainder of the winter, until the summer of 1916. On July 16, 1916 notice was served by the town auth-

erities to all persons occupying the free camping area that they must vacate by a certain date, since the area was to be officially surveyed and sold under regulations provided. The following is a copy of a notice posted near the area.

"All persons occupying the free camping ground south of Ninth Street are hereby notified to vacate the premises on or before October 1, 1916. This area will be surveyed into lots and acre tracts and sold under the Alaska Railway Townsite Regulations.

All persons who were permitted to temporarily locate on Blocks 20 & 21 of Anchorage Townsite must vacate on or before August 1, 1916.

Anchorage Alaska.
July 18, 1916.

J. A. Moore,
Townsite Manager."

There was an immediate dissolution of the red light district. In their haste to comply with the order many women sold their houses at a great sacrifice and within a short time all buildings were removed from the area. I understand that practically all the women left the community, some going to other towns in Alaska and some to Seattle and other parts of the States.

Shortly after this turn of affairs a very interesting thing happened. Apparently about September or early in October of 1916 the word was quietly passed to the scattered women that there was an opportunity for their return. Who was responsible for extending an invitation for their return and establishment is not known. That it was done by understanding and knowledge of those locally in authority of this complicated administrative

region is evident. Hunt knew nothing of the situation and apparently the local ranger was not appraised of what was going on, evidently in a secret manner.

Openly, however, a new area has been selected for the red light district. Two streets a block or so long with 25-foot lots have been plotted and lies immediately south of the area which has recently been vacated, and is still within the withdrawal. One of the streets is a continuation of the original blind street mentioned above. The area is situated in a low land near Chester Creek and is very near the south boundary of the original townsite reservation. Immediately south of the line the land has already been taken up as homesteads under the Act of June 11 and the land occupied by settlers under special use permits in advance of listing.

At the time of my visit to Anchorage in November, 1916 there were houses still in process of construction, although most had just been recently finished. Community wells were being dug and board side walks were in process of construction at the time. In lieu of a telephone service a complete electric signaling system has been installed connecting each house with a jitney station and restaurant, which are located several blocks away within the town proper. One woman who had been forced to leave Anchorage earlier in the summer sailed from Seattle on October 20, in company with a

notorious gambler on the same ship that I did. This woman, I later learned, purchased the most pretentious house in the district, paying between \$2,000.00 and \$3,000.00 for it. (See photographs attached). Several other women boarded the same ship at Alaskan ports. Practically all the women have their own individual house, or crib located on a lot specifically assigned to her. The houses are all small one-story frame two or three room affairs, with the exception of one large two story log house, which is owned by the woman mentioned above. I understand that the lots were distributed among the women by the device of a public drawing. That is, a drawing was held especially for the women themselves. There was no sale or lease, but merely an arrangement of this kind to prevent dissatisfaction among them. Each woman built her own house upon the lot awarded to her in the drawing. I did not count the houses but from the ground the entire settlement covers I should judge there are approximately sixty all told.

These details I have just recited show that prostitution in Anchorage is now well organized and is becoming firmly established. Who its present sponsors are I was unable to learn. I did observe, however, that it is a lucrative source of income to a number of the principal merchants of the town. The items of fuel, groceries, laundry, restaurant meals,

jitney hire, clothing, furniture, etc. is no doubt very large. The women are notoriously good buyers and spend their money freely. There is also considerable illegal traffic in liquor, I am told.

Considering the situation as a whole the Forest Service is brought face to face with a very grave problem. It will not permit of delay or temporizing but should be frankly met and settled immediately. The maintaining of this district within an area which under present federal procedure requires certain administrative control by the Forest Service places it in a position which could readily be made subject of some public criticism. Although we could readily establish our innocence as a party to the existing conditions to do so would be embarrassing to others.

Our position is apparently weakened by the Forester's letter of November 2, 1916, designation L-Boundaries-Chugach, Anchorage Townsite. Quoting from the letter:

"It is believed that no action is desirable with regard to the area which still remains under withdrawal for townsite purposes in the vicinity of Anchorage until after the land classification of that portion of the Chugach has been completed and approved by the Secretary. In the meanwhile, the lands thus withdrawn, and which have not subsequently been eliminated by Executive Order or proclamation, continue to retain their status as National Forest lands, subject, however, to the special restrictive features of the townsite withdrawal. The status of such areas is similar to that of tracts within the National Forest which have been placed under First Form Reclamation Withdrawal, and which, nevertheless, retain their standing as National Forest lands, subject, however, to the dominant withdrawal for reclamation purposes."

These instructions place the burden squarely upon the Forest Service to exercise administrative control of the withdrawal area. Under this interpretation the Anchorage red light district at once becomes a trespass nuisance which under the regulations must be removed.

No matter what stand the Service might take at this time, the women are there to stay until next spring. Winter has set in and navigation to Anchorage has been closed. Neither would it be possible to send them out overland. In fact, I do not believe any drastic action on the part of the Forest Service in bodily removing this nuisance is exactly the proper course to follow in solving the problem. It would probably involve a fight with an unsavory element and at best would create too much publicity, which should be carefully avoided. I believe there is a better way to handle the matter, which will remove all unpleasantness for the Service and will result in the problem finally solving itself.

There is, after all, no very good reason for the Service continuing to interest itself in the withdrawal area of the original Ship Creek townsite reservation. A glance at the attached map shows that a large portion of it has already been eliminated by Presidential proclamation, for various purposes, leaving only a comparatively small area still under

withdrawal. There is not very much timber within the remaining area and outside of free use permits for fuel and a few sales of cordwood which in fact have been handled by the local land office in the past, and fire protection there is practically no work for the Service requiring its attention. The fire protection does not present any special problem. The town authorities keep a man employed to look after the free use and sale of fuel wood and fire protection on the townsite area already eliminated. It would not be much of a burden for either them or the local land office to attend to the same kind of business on a little larger area. There is a special agent of the General Land Office located permanently in Anchorage.

Not a very large part of the area would be suitable for homestead purposes. Undoubtedly the Alaskan Engineering Commission or the townsite authorities will have future need of part of it. The Forester's letter of November 2 apparently contemplates elimination of the withdrawal area but advises waiting until the final determination of what action to take in respect to adjacent portions of the Chugach now under consideration for elimination. I feel that there is a grave possibility of danger in delaying action on the nuisance until that time. However, the immediate elimination of this specific nuisance area alone would be decidedly undiplomatic and might result in departmental complications, since it would look on

the face of it as a direct slap at Christensen and thus involve the General Land Office. However, the Service could with entire propriety officially announce that it had no more interest in the general withdrawal, without in the least referring to the nuisance, or intimating that it existed, and could eliminate the entire remaining withdrawal as an act of regular departmental procedure.

Thus the Service could wash its hands of the nuisance for all time. There could be no possibility of its removal to another portion of the Chugach for the reason that all the land outside and adjoining the withdrawal for several miles on each side is taken up by homesteads. The possibility of an attempt to establish it on an unperfected homestead, I believe would be rather remote. Those interested in its affairs will desire its remaining just as close to the town proper as possible. Since it is now well established and is apparently fostered and encouraged by the community, the Forest Service is in a position to quietly withdraw from the scene without scandal.

I therefore urgently recommend that all the remaining uneliminated portion of the original Ship Creek Townsite Reservation be immediately eliminated by Presidential proclamation, and that the matter of the elimination of other portions of the Chugach National Forest in the vicinity be

deferred until a later date.

The whole subject has been thoroughly discussed by me with Supervisor Hunt while we were both on the ground together in November, and he has since read this memorandum. He fully agrees to all that I have said and recommended.

Very truly yours,

Chas. H. Flory
Assistant District Forester.