

## **Agricultural Possibilities — Anchorage Region**

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1929

Present agricultural development in the Anchorage region indicates great possibilities for the farmer and stock raiser in the near future.

Progress made by a number of individual farmers clearly demonstrates that this region will eventually become a great dairy country and stock raising will be considered a safe business venture to the real farmer. With the clearing of the timbered lands and several years cropping to a grain crop the idea became widespread that the end of production was at hand. With the introduction of the pea and vetches as a general crop, it was found that the land would produce an abundant crop of these legumes. Heavy crops of peas and vetches make possible intensive dairy farming. Both crops with oats make excellent silage, and silage make possible profitable dairy farming.

Land contiguous to the town of Anchorage is ideal for small fruit production, poultry farming, vegetable farming, and is so admirably adapted to growing Canadian field peas and vetches. The shallower soils are not to be recommended for grain production from year to year, but with a reasonable rotation of crops grain can be grown every third season with a good yield.

There are about 150 sections of this land surveyed and ready for homesteading, about half of which is suitable for tillage. The other half is suitable for grazing purposes only. There are approximately 300 quarter sections of land suitable for general farming, and there are 75 sections that should be taken up under the Stock Raising Homestead Act if it could be applied to Alaska. A small portion of the farmland could be irrigated from the mountain streams to the east of Anchorage.

There are at present some 30 homesteads located near Anchorage with approximately 250 acres of land under cultivation and crop each year. There are thousands of acres additional grazing land on the mountain slopes east of Anchorage that would be available five months each summer for cattle, sheep and goats. Practically all the birch-timbered lands near the coastline is well adapted to general farming, and offers an excellent opportunity for those who are looking for a homestead to get choice land fairly close to the government wagon roads leading southeast and northeast from

Anchorage. Most of these locations are well suited to fur farming, which is one of the paying sidelines for the farmer of Alaska today. Alaska is the natural home of the furbearing animal, and Anchorage vicinity offers splendid opportunities in that line. Fish is largely the basis for food for furbearing animals, and is found here in abundance. Rabbits have been plentiful for several years past, and have contributed to the feeding of fur animals to a great extent.

Climatic conditions of the upper Cook Inlet country are comparatively mild in winter and delightful during the spring, summer and fall months. The precipitation varies from 12 to 18 inches annually. The snow seldom reaches 2 feet in depth at any time.

The city of Anchorage is located on a table land some 200 feet above sea level, has broad streets and wide alleys and is laid out in a sane and comprehensive plan that will always make it an attractive city, destined to become one of the leading cities of the northland. It now affords the best of grade and high school privileges, four churches, picture show, exceptionally fine lodge quarters and temples, and is the headquarters of the Alaska Railroad. It will in reasonable time become the shipping point of the vast coal deposits of the Matanuska and Healy River coalfields. It cannot quite claim the distinction of "Where Rails and Water Meet" but can be said to be "Where Rails and Water Come Together," and a way will be found to load the ships with coal at Anchorage.

The Anchorage market is largely supplied from the states with everything but strawberries during the summer time. Farming has been overlooked to considerable extent. Railroad construction days are over, and Anchorage finds that small industries are needed to replace the payrolls that were sufficient in the day thereof, but are no more. Two annual agricultural and industrial fairs were necessary to convert the people of Anchorage that her food supply could be grown right here at home. Farm products of every description were displayed. Grain, vegetables, dairy products, poultry and poultry products, beef, pork, mutton, chevon (goat meat), wool, mohair, furs, honey and many kind of small fruits, both fresh and canned. The people of Anchorage now realize that the farms and farming are equally essential to the prosperity of the country as are the fishing and mining industries, and every encouragement will be given to the new settler coming to develop the homestead.

To the Anchorage market rightfully belongs the supplying much of the fishing trade in Cook Inlet waters, the Matanuska Coal Mines, the Willow Creek Gold Mines, the Cache Creek Placer Mines, and much of the Interior country supplied by the Alaska Railroad.

Thirty-six miles northeast of Anchorage, the Matanuska Valley lies above the tidewaters of Knik Arm. Roughly speaking, the Valley is 10 miles wide and 20 miles long. It is all surveyed, and contains approximately 270 sections of land, half of which is tillable land, but there is a considerable strip of tide land on the south and hillside land on the north that is well adapted to grazing.

Something over 275 homesteads were taken up in the Matanuska Valley and has demonstrated that many phases of farm operations can be made profitable. Many varieties have been grown and distributed among the farmers of the region, as well as numerous varieties of small fruits, bushes and plants. Free sire service is furnished the settlers of the country, with shorthorns and Holstein cattle.

During the past winter, the Station has demonstrated that the crop from one and one-half acre of farmland will winter a cow. Maintenance cost for stock and dairy cows has been worked out and demonstrated. The root crop and silage crop plays its part in cattle ration.

Grain crops were grown and threshed on 10 of the Valley farms the past season and give assurance that farming has come to stay. Yields are very fair, ranging from 20 to 35 bushels per acre of wheat, 35 to 80 bushes per acre of oats, and 30 to 45 bushels per acre of barley. Canadian field peas and common vetches ripen seed crops. Potatoes and root crops make very fair yields and the quality is very good.

The Matanuska Valley now produces beef, pork, mutton, chevon, mohair, wool, poultry and poultry products, and is beginning to get into the dairy work. A small creamery is planned for the coming season.

There is room for 300 or 400 more farmers in the Valley. Men with families insure success. Schools are run for nine months of the year, and two school routes have been established the past two years. There is approximately 100 miles of roads constructed within the Valley, and some road work done each year. It is expected that a road connecting Anchorage and the Matanuska Valley will be built within the next two

years. The railroad affords good shipping facilities both to the coast and the Interior points.

The soil of the Matanuska Valley is similar to that of Anchorage, but is of greater depth and more suited to the growing of grain crops. The precipitation is a little less than at Anchorage and summers are warmer. The lakes and streams abound in fish and is the campers' paradise. With the completion of the road joining the two communities will come the tourist travel that will tend to dispel the idea that there are no agricultural possibilities in Alaska. A 50-mile drive through the finest of farming land will send the traveler back home with a different idea than he now takes back – that Alaska has no farm land.

The markets of Alaska are largely supplied from Seattle. The following data will give the prospective homesteader a correct idea of what to grow when he comes here to farm. To supply this demand, it would require more than 1,000 farmers more than we have today, and leave them more than \$5,000,000 market to supply. The figures might well be reversed and say the 5,000 farmers could be located here, with the \$1,000 market to supply. The real farmer will make the most of his living off the farm over and above the products sold from the farm.

The Tanana Valley lies at the upper end of the railroad and will readily absorb all the homesteaders who wish to come, after the Matanuska Valley and Anchorage vicinity is fully settled. There, the US Agricultural Experiment Station and the Agricultural College and School of Mines will render such service as the farmers need. Alaska has long called the miner, and today is calling the farmer and his family to come to the last of our great frontier, where a farm is awaiting your coming and developing. Alaska, since thought to be land of perpetual snow, is a land of wild roses in full bloom by June 15th. The opportunity is now yours, and as the years go by, those now living here will marvel at what they once thought the impossible. At that Alaska could feed and sustain her population that is bound to double many times in the next 50 years.

That Alaska can produce the above products at a profit to the producers has been fully demonstrated many times on farms now in operation. Alaska needs a farming population who knows the game, and we can feed themselves on the farm. The above shipments, exclusive of livestock amounts to 28,178 tons of freight, which will average

\$10 per ton to the various ports of Alaska, and will amount to above \$560,000 annually. These shipments should be reversed and go south from Anchorage for all the coast towns now supplied for Seattle. When the agricultural lands of Cook Inlet Region and that contiguous to the Alaska Railroad is developed and in production, Alaska will need but very little food stuff shipped from the States.

Anchorage offers to the homeseeker the first and best chance to get themselves a homestead, with transportation facilities right at your command, and a market awaiting your products at good prices.

Very Sincerely,

M.D. Snodgrass

Supt. Matanuska U.S. Exp. Station