

GENERAL INFORMATION COVERING RIVER TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM,  
THE ALASKA RAILROAD

On March 1, 1955, consequent to call for bids, The Alaska Railroad awarded to B & R Tug and Barge Company, under terms of Contract No. 14-04-003-884, a transportation system, formerly operated by them on the Tanana and Yukon Rivers, together with all vessels and facilities, for a period of twenty years.

The Lessee, in turn, transferred interest to Yutana Barge Lines, Inc., who since that time have conducted operation as a private enterprise.

Historical background of The Alaska Railroad in river navigation began in 1916. The Alaska Engineering Commission, who were charged with construction of the Railroad by Congress, established docks and various terminal facilities 192 miles above the mouth of the Tanana River at a native village known as Tortella, and renamed the location Nenana. Materials were brought in through the Port of St. Michaels and Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, for construction of the Railroad from M.P. 348 (McKinley Park) to M.P. 470 (Fairbanks), until 1920. Vessels operated by the Northern Commercial Company and American Yukon Navigation Company handled this cargo. Statistics concerning the tonnage are unobtainable.

In May, 1923, the Interior Department, as authorized by Act of Congress, established a passenger, mail and freight service to be operated by The Alaska Railroad between Nenana and Holy Cross, a distance of 642 miles. Subsequently the route was extended to Marshall, 132 miles below Holy Cross, in 1925. A service was also established in 1946 to Circle; later, (1947), only operating to Fort Yukon.

Initiation of the service is attributed to arbitrary withdrawal of American Yukon Navigation Company from traffic below Fort Yukon in the fall of 1921, except an irregular service to Tanana, which later in 1942 was suspended to Circle. This company had, by purchase of Northern Commercial Company River Lines and various independents, become the sole operator of a navigation system available to the public. Every effort was made by the Interior Department to persuade the above company and various individuals to establish a stable service. By fall of 1922, conditions were so chaotic immediate action was essential unless the entire economy of river area would collapse.

Since 1900, the War Department, through the Army Transport Service, had supplied Forts Egbert, Hamlin and Gibbon as well as the Military Telegraph System along the Tanana and Yukon. Connections were made at Fort St. Michael with ocean carriers and at Whitehorse, Y.T. with rail lines of White Pass and Yukon Route.

Two small stern wheel steamers and two barges were maintained for the service.

In the fall of 1921, the War Department abandoned all installations in Alaska except Chilkoot Barracks at Haines, a small detachment at Anchorage and a few signal corps locations. Floating equipment thus inactivated was made available for The Alaska Railroad, without charge, in the fall of 1922 by Executive Order.

During the years following, this original equipment was replaced. A rehabilitated vessel (Steamer Alice) was put in operation in 1929, and retired in 1953. Steamer Nenana was acquired in 1933. Recently, the vessel was put up for bid. Other vessels used during the years were the "Yukon" and "Barry K" which were retired in 1946 and 1947 respectively. Various other barges were purchased and have since been retired. The Railroad constructed Barges 401, 201, and 301 in 1935, 1937 and 1943 respectively. In the years 1947 to 1951 various steel tank barges were built by the Railroad at Nenana. In 1953 motor vessels Tanana and Yukon and Barges OB-2 and OB-3 were acquired. These hulls are the most modern of design for river service and have met the demands of a difficult service without failure. List of equipment available presently is listed and attached.

Cargo handled from 1923 to 1933 averaged around three thousand tons during the season of navigation of four and one-half months, which commences about May 15 and ends September 30. Due to low water, navigation on the average is almost impossible after that date. Tonnages 1933 to 1954 are attached.

Passenger traffic declined steadily from 1935 with advent of passenger aircraft. Mail service was completely taken over by aircraft in 1948. Passenger service, except to areas off route of aircraft, was suspended in 1949.

Distance within the area supplied by river vessels is contained in the attached Distance Table 11-C, ICC No. 168, Additional distances are as follows:

DISTANCES - YUKON RIVER ABOVE FORT YUKON

Tanana - Circle	423 Miles
" Woodchopper	473 "
" Coal Creek	483 "
" Charlie Creek	513 "
" Nation	545 "
" 70 Mile	576 "
" Eagle	598 "
" 40 Mile	647 "
" Dawson	700 "
" Whitehorse	1160 "

YUKON RIVER - BELOW MARSHALL

Marshall - Andraefsky	65 Miles
Andraefsky - Kotlik	150 "

BERING SEA VIA ST. MICHAELS CANAL

Kotlik - St. Michaels	70 Miles
-----------------------	----------

AVERAGE TOTAL ELAPSED TIME ROUND TRIP TO PRINCIPAL RIVER POINTS

<u>Miles One Way</u>	<u>Miles Round Trip</u>	<u>Between</u>	<u>Total Time</u>
192	384	Nenana - Tanana	60 Hours - 2½ Days
366	732	Nenana - Galena	144 Hours - 6 Days
530	1060	Nenana - Ft. Yukon	240 Hours - 10 Days
774	1548	Nenana - Marshall	384 Hours - 16 Days

Above includes loading, unloading, navigational delay.

TONNAGE HANDLED BY YEARS

1933-----1954

<u>Year</u>	<u>Tons</u>
1933	2482
1934	3376
1935	3166
1936	3925
1937	5215
1938	5635
1939	6007
1940	7419
1941	7900
1942	10203
1943	14039
1944	15693
1945	17365
1946	7662
1947	7234
1948	6649
1949	6575
1950	6155
1951	6576
1952	7488
1953	8047
1954	10655

FLOATING EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE 1 MARCH 1955

<u>DESTINATION</u>	<u>TYPE &amp; CONSTRUCTION</u>	<u>SERVICE</u>	<u>BURDEN TONS</u>	<u>AT DRAFT</u>	<u>LENGTH</u>	<u>BEAM</u>	<u>DATE ACQUIRED BY ARR</u>
M. V. Tanana	Steel, 1200 H.P. Twin Screw Motor Vessel	Towing	None	3' 9"	120' 4"	35'	1953
M. V. Yukon	Steel, 1200 H.P. Twin Screw Motor Vessel	Towing	None	3' 9"	120' 4"	35'	1953
Str. Nenana	Wood, 1200 H.P. Stern Wheel Steamer	Towing	70	3' 9"	238'	42'	1933
Barge 201	Wood, covered	Pkg. Frt.	275	3' 8"	130'	34'	1937
Barge 301	Wood, open	Pkg. Gen.	340	3' 9"	140'	36'	1943
Barge 401	Wood, covered	Pkg. Frt.	400	3' 9"	150'	38'	1935
Barge OB. 1	Steel, Bulk Oil	Bulk & Gen.	210	3' 8"	120'	30'	1947
Barge OB. 2	Steel, Bulk Oil	Bulk Gas & Gen.	210	3' 8"	120'	30'	1951
Barge OB. 11	Steel, Bulk Oil	Bulk Oil & Gen.	180	3' 9"	104'	29'	1947
Barge OB. 12	Steel, Bulk Oil	Bulk Oil & Gen.	180	3' 9"	104'	29'	1948
Barge OB. 3	Steel, Bulk Oil, JP-4, General	Bulk Oil & Gen.	580	3' 9"	175'	44'	1953
Barge OB. 4	Steel, Bulk Oil, JP-4, General	Bulk Oil & Gen.	580	3' 9"	175'	44'	1953
Barge Stewart	Steel, Bulk Oil	Bulk Oil & Gen.	385	3' 7"	140'	36'	1951