

Who's Who In Wisconsin Rapids

The Who's Who column will be run each Saturday in the Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune. It will include a brief sketch of the life of citizens who have helped make history for Wisconsin Rapids.

Edward Morris



EDWARD MORRIS

There is perhaps one man in the city of Wisconsin Rapids who has a life packed full of interesting experiences, whose stories of the Yukon and the Alaskan gold craze and the interesting romance of the railroad game, might equal those of famed bards and writers of this and the preceding generation. Just a glimpse into the past experience of Edward Morris, County Highway Commissioner, would convince one that he had enjoyed a life of varied experience which if put into books would satisfy the curiosity of the most enthusiastic of adventurers. We find that Edward Morris was born March 5, 1869 on his parent's homestead at Caledonia, Columbus county, Wisconsin. His father, Thomas Morris, was a native of Wales, and came with his parents to this country, early in 1840. His mother was born in Racine, Wis.

He left school at the age of 13 years and was employed on a farm at Cambria, three miles north of Caledonia, owned by John Jones. He continued in Mr. Jones' service for two years and then returned to his parent's home where he remained for about a year.

Went To Seek Fortune

In 1885 he left home to seek his fortune, travelling ninety miles on foot, to Spain, South Dakota. He arrived worn and hungry, his supply of food for the last two days of his journey being ten cents worth of ginger snaps, which was not sufficient to appease his appetite. This was the first answer to the burning wanderlust which led him to a life of real experience.

After being rested from his long journey Mr. Morris went to work in the Jim River Valley, for one Richard Owen, where he stayed for one year. In 1886 he received work with the National Elevator company of Minneapolis, Minn., at their elevator at Spain, S. D., remaining with them until 1891, when he returned to Baraboo,

Wis., and was employed as brakeman of a freight train on the Chicago and Northwestern railway. He worked at this job until February, 1896 when he was laid off, together with a number of other younger employes, owing to lack of business.

Became Baraboo Chief

The latter part of March, 1896, Mr. Morris was appointed Chief of Police of the City of Baraboo. In the fall of the same year, he resigned his office as chief and left for St. Paul, Minn., and again engaged in railroad work, as fireman of a freight train for the Chi., St. P., M. & O. Ry.

About the latter part of the year 1897, wonderful stories began to be circulated of the tremendous amount of gold in Alaska, and in January 1898 Mr. Morris with a party of twelve railroad men left for Alaska in search of gold. They purchased tickets from St. Paul, Minn., to Ft. Wrangle, Alaska. Through the courtesy of the Canadian Pacific Ry. a special train was placed at their disposal, in which they travelled to Vancouver, B. C. The favor was done for advertising purposes for the company.

The travelling agent of the company met the party two hundred miles east of Vancouver and upon reaching the town, entertained them with a dinner and theater party. Mr. Morris tells when they entered the opera house, the play was interrupted by the audience, who arose from their seats shouting "Klondike."

Refused Passage

The party remained in Vancouver ten days, during which time they purchased their outfit of clothing, portable stoves, tools, tents and also enough provisions for two years supply, amounting in all to about seven tons. On the arrival of the boat from Victoria, she was so overloaded with passengers and freight that the captain refused to take any more, although state rooms had been engaged by Mr. Morris and his companions.

First Break In Luck

Luckily for them, the commodore of the ship arrived in port so intoxicated that he was put ashore to sober up before the boat could proceed any farther. In the meantime the captain of the boat took a stroll to see the sights of the town, and during his absence Mr. Morris and his companions induced the first mate to allow them to load the freight and to proceed with the boat when she again put out to sea. Instead of sleeping in the comfortable state rooms they had engaged, the men were obliged to make pillows of their baggage and sleep on the floor.

The trip took seven days. While at sea a big storm came up and the boat and its passengers took safety in a nearby cove where they remained for two days. On the morning of the third day they headed out to sea again, but on finding the storm still raging returned to the harbor and remained un-

til the storm had abated. After the end of seven days, the boat arrived at Ft. Wrangle where both passengers and freight were unloaded. Mr. Morris and his party pitched their tents and unloaded their outfits on a small scow and continued their journey across Wrangle Bay. They then travelled 150 miles by foot to Telegraph Creek, where they loaded their outfits onto Yukon sleighs and hired forty horses for \$4,500 to transport the goods and themselves two hundred miles across country to Teslin Lake. They spent a month building four boats in which they sailed over Teslin Lake and down Lewis river, landing at Dawson City where they built a permanent camp.

Look For Gold

They then started prospecting for gold in different branches of the two streams. After eighteen months of prospecting without finding gold in paying quantities, and his funds becoming small, Mr. Morris engaged work from Thomas Lippe of Seattle, Wash., on his claim No. 16, which was the richest claim in the Klondike.

Returned to States

In the fall of 1900 Mr. Morris returned to the States, locating at St. Paul and again entered the employ of

the Chi., St. P., M. & O. Ry. Co., remaining with them until spring of 1901 when he changed his residence, this time going to Chicago where he worked for five years as yard master of the Chicago & Northwestern Ry. at North Ave.

In the spring of 1907 he came to Wood county and purchased a farm two miles north of Arpin. At the spring election he was elected chairman of the town of Arpin and was reelected at each succeeding election until 1909 when he sold his farm and moved to Seattle, Wash., where he was engaged in the grocery business for a short time, and in the spring of 1915 he moved with his family to this city. He is now on his second term as County Highway Commissioner, a position he holds and has filled with much ability.

Married in 1906

On April 15, 1906, Edward Morris was united in marriage to Miss Alice Lockhart of Baraboo, Wis. Their union has been blessed with one child, a son, Robert Lockhart Morris, now two and one-half years old. Mr. Morris also has three sisters and three brothers.

He is a member of the Modern Woodmen of America and also a mem-

ber of the Masonic order and in politics has been a life long republican.