

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF

COMMERCE

Alexander H. Trostbridge, Acting Secretary

Washington, D. C.

Office of the Secretary

G 67-108

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARK TRAIL, legendary hero of the comic strips, has joined the government's drive to lure foreign visitors to Alaska and America's other varied vacationlands, the U. S. Department of Commerce announced today.

Alaska this year celebrates the 100th anniversary of its transfer from Imperial Russia to the United States. The Alaska '67 Centennial Exposition opens May 27 in Fairbanks.

James G. Morton, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Commerce, said that MARK TRAIL will dramatize Alaska as a travel attraction in a series of cartoon adventures reaching millions of prospective foreign visitors.

"Travel has great economic promise for Alaska," Morton declared. "The jet airplane has brought this once remote land with its incomparable wonders within ready reach of all those who seek travel adventure. And we consider it likely that those journeying to our far-north state will visit other great U. S. attractions en route."

"Alaska is America's last great land frontier," the Commerce official said. "We hope many of our own citizens will explore it this summer along with visitors from foreign lands."

Cartoonist Ed Dodd, creator of MARK TRAIL, undertook the Alaska theme at the request of the Department of Commerce and United States Senator E. L. "Bob" Bartlett, member of the Senate Commerce Committee. He will accompany Senator Bartlett to Alaska to obtain story material.

The project was initiated to help achieve objectives of the President's Task Force on Travel of which Vice President Hubert Humphrey is chairman.

MARK TRAIL, distributed by the Hall Syndicate, is read by millions in Mexico, Australia, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, France, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Liberia, Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Chile, Ecuador, Bolivia, Uruguay, Argentina, Bermuda, and other countries. It is translated into five languages.

In the United States and Canada the popular Hall Syndicate feature appears in more than 300 newspapers with some 98,000,000 readers.

"The universal appeal of this legendary outdoorsman makes MARK TRAIL a very effective means of encouraging travel to America," Morton said. "We think that Ed Dodd's depictions of the excitement, romance, and scenic grandeur of Alaska will induce many people of other lands to visit our 49th state."

"Not only will this help balance our international payments," the Commerce official noted, "but travel to Alaska and other parts of the U. S. A. helps achieve a better understanding of America, the kind of person-to-person contact that is the very weave of peace."

Morton pointed out that more than a hundred languages are spoken in the United States by Americans who represent the entire spectrum of nationalities from Eskimo to Slavic.

"We hope many of our own citizens will take the cue this year and travel to Alaska and other regions of the country they haven't visited," Morton said. "Meeting and mingling with Americans in other sections improves understanding and strengthens national unity as well as providing new and satisfying experiences."

When the United States purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867 it was widely ridiculed as Secretary of State "Seward's folly." As it turned out, it proved one of the greatest real estate bargains in history.

The transaction cost the United States only \$7,200,000 or two cents an acre. As President Lyndon B. Johnson has noted, "America never made a better investment."

Centennial events are being planned from now to September. The most elaborate will be in Fairbanks where some 175,000 visitors are expected to attend the Alaska '67 Centennial Exposition.

In the main exhibition area--Bartlett's Plaza, named for Alaska's distinguished senior Senator, E. L. "Bob" Bartlett--art, industry, and other exhibits will trace Alaska's development from its earliest days and describe its growing importance to the world today.

One of the highlights will be a U. S. Government pavilion featuring the theme "Building Alaska's Future." Other Federal exhibits will be opened by the Commerce Department in Sitka, Ketchikan, Anchorage, and Juneau.

"But the biggest attraction for tourists," Morton said, "will be Alaska itself--land of glaciers and midnight sun, of huge caribou herds and mighty moose, of 30-foot tides and mountain grandeur, of Eskimos and totem poles, of snow-capped peaks that scrape the sky, of a vastness and a stillness like the dawn of time."

It is this that MARK TRAIL will depict in the effort to make Alaska an exciting new destination for Americans and the world. His adventures start on the comic pages May 22.