



441/D-110

A Wild Discouraging Mess

The History of the White Pass Unit of the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park



Color Scans

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Dear Colleague:

It is with great pleasure that I enclose a copy of *A Wild Discouraging Mess: The History of the White Pass Unit of the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park* by Julie Johnson. This report tells the story of the people and horses that endured the rush to the Klondike gold fields placed within the Victorian context within which they lived. It pays close attention to the buildings, objects, and structures that filled the White Pass during the historic period and what remains today.

If you have any questions about this document, or wish to obtain additional copies, please contact Greg Dixon of our staff. He can be reached at Greg_Dixon@nps.gov or by telephone at 907-644-3465.

Sincerely,

Sandra McDermott
Senior Historian

CHICAGO, July 28--At the railroad and steamship offices the same eagerness for information about the passage to the Klondyke gold fields was shown that characterizes the rush of inquirers a week ago. Not less than an average of 1,000 persons a day have called at the office of the North American Transportation and Trading Company, Thomas Cook & Son, the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern Railways. At Cook's agency the quota of the expedition under the management of William Chase was filled at an early hour and the negotiations were immediately begun by wire for a second steamship from San Francisco to St. Michael's. Meantime sixty men who could not get berths on the first steamer are waiting...



The ship *Excelsior* leaves San Francisco for the Klondike, July 1897. Courtesy Library of Congress. Negative: 29265-262-19412

Introduction and Acknowledgments

I firmly believe that history is more interesting than anything we could possibly dream up. The history of the White Pass Unit of the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (KLGO) is a perfect example – it features good guys, bad guys, death, naivete, broken hearts, abject cruelty, elation, irony. No Hollywood producer could ask for more. The main characters of the drama, those who developed the area for the gold rush, were born and lived in a fascinating era when there were few rules and the sky was the limit. Their grand Victorian bravado made this story possible. Men like George Brackett, Mike Heney, WB Close, John Hislop and the enigmatic Captain William Moore have been a part of my life for three years now. I have fallen in love with every one of them, and I will miss them. I hope next time I'm reluctant to follow a hunch that I will remember Captain Moore and his prediction of great things for the White Pass even before he laid eyes on it. Next time someone tells me something can't be done, I hope to remember George Brackett, who completed a wagon road in the wilderness despite losing the project's investors. And next time I take a sunny day for granted, I hope to recall why John Hislop's diary ends abruptly in February of 1901.

A few caveats may be in order before reading this history. The story of the White Pass is always interesting, but rarely pretty. It is especially difficult for those of us accustomed to a "politically correct" atmosphere to read the bigotry and cruelty that dominated so many events of this time. I have tried to stay true to the period by referring to ethnic groups the way in which they referred to each other. For instance, my reference to Indians and whites is generally how the groups spoke to and about each other. To pretend these groups treated each other politely and with consideration for ethnic differences is simply not true to what really occurred.

Particularly shocking in this story is the treatment of animals. These chapters are not for the faint of heart. The cruelty animals suffered on this and the Chilkoot Trail surpasses anything today's more enlightened animal rights advocates could even imagine. It was heartbreaking for me – a horse lover all my life – to write this part of the history. As my office colleagues can tell you, I was moved to tears many times and I must confess that I cannot read the diaries even one more time. But we must remember to take

these accounts into context – animals of this era were property, not pets. Stampeders did not set out on their trips with the intention of being deliberately cruel to animals. Many stamper diaries express frustration when the injuries to pack animals impeded their progress, and death of an animal was simply damned inconvenient. Happily, our modern sensibilities see the situation in an entirely different way. While I in no way condone the callous and merciless behavior exhibited by so many, I think it is important to read this portion of the story with an open, perhaps even a forgiving mind. I think the old saying goes something like "don't judge others until you've walked in their shoes..."

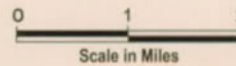
With the caveats delivered, it is time to acknowledge the many, many people who helped me in this process. Thank you, Sande Anderson, Alaska Support Office Senior Historian, for having the faith in me to do justice to this remarkable story. Your faith and optimism made this project possible, as well as helping me live through the difficult years during which it was written. In fact, so many of you at the Alaska Support Office helped me immeasurably – I was welcomed into your workplace with open arms and my life is much richer because of your friendship! Thank you, especially, Frank Norris, AKSO Historian extraordinaire, for generously sharing your knowledge, humor, patience and editing skills. By the time you had edited the manuscript, I was confident it was "really edited!" Thank you, too, Linda Cook, now Superintendent of Affiliated Areas Alaska Region. You probably remember that while you were interim superintendent of KLGO, I naively waltzed into your office and agreed to hike down to White Pass City on that now infamous reconnaissance mission. I will always appreciate your encouragement and I'll remember your humor when the going got rough. Karl Gurcke, KLGO Cultural Resource Specialist – you have always been so kind and helpful. Your vast knowledge makes you a valuable asset to the Park and a very interesting person to chat with – I hope that someday you will sit down and write out all the anecdotal and historical things you know about the area. I will be the first to buy the book, Karl! Thanks also to the staff at KLGO, for many times I have "moved in" and taken over your library and have received nothing but warm welcomes. Thank you, especially, Evelyn Meyer and Betty Ricklefs, as you have never complained when I monopolize your

wonderful copy machine, and thanks for filling up the candy dish when you see me coming! Thank you also to Bruce Noble, Superintendent of KLGGO, and Theresa Thibault, Chief of Resource Management, for your support and enthusiasm. One of these days, Bruce, I promise I'll lead you down to White Pass City – hopefully my knees can lead us back out again! Much of the research in this book could not have been possible without the help of you at the White Pass & Yukon Route Railway. You have never said “no” when I've asked to be dropped off at unlikely places along the track, and Conductor Lee Hartson, your enthusiasm for my adventures is always so gratifying! Thank you, especially, to former employees of the WP&YR, Tina Cyr and Glenda Choate – you two were invaluable to me! I cannot thank you enough for your enthusiasm and friendship. In fact, thanks are due to the community of Skagway, especially Jan and Jon Tronrud. I hope you both know your lovely bed and breakfast has become my second home! I also thank Bruce Merrell, of the Alaska Collection at Loussac Library in Anchorage. Bruce, your kindness, love of history and knowledge of the Alaska Collection have been absolutely invaluable to me, as I know it has to countless historians in Alaska. Every library should be so lucky to have someone like you on their staff! Much of this project involved detective work, and that is never done alone. Thank you, Jeff Brady, Alice Cyr, Cynthia Brackett Driscoll, Dr. Temple Grandin, Judy Munns, Stan Selmer, Bob Spude and Cathy Spude for helping me to uncover seemingly disparate facts and tie them together. And thanks in advance to you, my crazy friend Frank Broderick – you're a gifted artist, as well as one of my favorite guys!

Last but certainly not least, this book would not have been possible without the love and generosity of friends and family who helped me through this process, both professionally and personally. I am sad that my mother, the woman who taught me to love adventure, did not live to read the final product. It is, however, warm consolation to remember the people who helped me deal with it all. I am so lucky to know you and grateful to have you in my life. Thank you! I wish you all good things and grand adventures of your own!

Julie Johnson
July, 2003

WHITE PASS TRAIL HISTORICAL BASE MAP (1897-1899)



White Pass Trail map, adapted by Gecko Graphics from Bearss, *Proposed Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park: Historic Resource Study*, Plate 1



AMONG THE CREVASSE OF THE DENVER GLACIER

H.C. BARLEY

Nature Sets the Stage

A few rods from the track the woods were purely wild, while the mountains ahead and on either hand, laden with ice and snow, look down out of the cool sky and the Skaguay river goes roaring to the sea...

John Muir¹

Thousands upon thousands of years before anyone had ever heard of gold – before a town called Skagway was ever dreamt of – even before mankind roamed the valleys in search of food – the land now called the White Pass shook violently, over and over again. Earthquakes of the geologic Tertiary period – about 65 million years ago – caused enormous pieces of earth to scrape against each other, causing deep canyons and vulnerable cracks in the earth's surface. These cracks provided vents for an opportunistic liquid rock which pushed up from beneath the earth's exterior, cooling and solidifying as it rose to the surface. This process formed metamorphic rocks – quartzite, schist and gneiss among them.² These rocks intruded into older, stronger granitic rocks where they became permanently imbedded as the temperature cooled.³

More recently in the Pleistocene era, some 27,000 years ago, this unstable earth became buried under thousands of tons of ice.⁴ The great weight of this ice ground down onto the rock beneath it. What rock was strong enough to stand firm against the pressure remained – the rest was pushed away with the momentum of the ice, creating great moraines. As early as 10,000 to 12,000⁵ years ago the sharp peaks and winding valleys that characterize the White Pass began to emerge from their icy mold. As glaciers continued to retreat and melt, detritus newly shed from the terrain washed away with the frigid water. This water formed only a trickle at first, but gained mass and momentum as it followed gravity's natural pull to the sea. It sought the points of least resistance and enlarged pathways through the rock. Eventually these trickles gathered into streams, streams into creeks and creeks into swift rivers. The weaker stones, like quartzite and gneiss, gave way to the carving glaciers and rivers with little protest.⁶ What sediment didn't spill into the sea was left somewhere along the way, forming alluvial plains. Eventually, centuries of glacial waste – rocks, sand, gravel and silt – lined the valley.

Evidence of glacial action is found in the basin containing the lake system forming the headwaters of the Yukon at the White Pass Summit.⁷ The long-continual glacial action formed the basin by scooping out the beds of present lakes. At one time, this entire basin was filled by one immense glacier, formed by the union of a large number of lateral glaciers descending from the surrounding heights. As the ages passed, they disappeared and uncovered lakebeds until they, too, receded. Only remnants of their existence were found high in the surrounding mountains.

As the landscape changed through the centuries, so did the climate. The hot, desolate climate of the Tertiary period gave way to the forbidding cold of the Pleistocene. In present times, a balance has been struck which puts the White Pass at the northern point of the Moist Maritime climatic zone, where it is influenced by both its interior position and nearby maritime weather patterns.⁸ The valley has always been notorious for strong winds. Summer winds bring with them high-pressure storm systems from the Gulf of Alaska which clash with the low-pressure interior Canadian systems and both the Chilkoot and White passes take the brunt of it. In the winter, winds from the north whip through the canyons, bringing with it interior temperatures and unbearable wind chills. The climate where the Skagway River meets the Lynn Canal is generally mild and the annual precipitation is only about 28 inches, the lowest level in southeast Alaska. However, weather at elevations only 200 feet higher than sea level can get 200 inches of precipitation (mostly snow) every year. Temperature variations are mild – daily maximum and minimum temperature readings average about 14 degrees during the year. July is the warmest month, with a mean temperature of 58 degrees, but it has been recorded as high as 92 degrees. The coldest month is January, with a mean temperature of 21 degrees, although the coldest recorded temperature, 24 degrees below zero, was recorded in February 1947. The temperature at the Summit of White Pass can be just as warm as Skagway in the summer, but in the winter can be much, much colder.

Among the crevasses of the Denver Glacier, White Pass near Skagway, AK, circa 1899. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: UW 21936

Life was quiet on the White Pass as the end of the nineteenth century approached.

Combined with the wind chill, it is not impossible to reach temperatures of 80 to 90 degrees below zero at the Pass.

This contrast in climatology creates a varied vegetation habitat. The relatively mild climate on the alluvial plain of Skagway is a good place for both timber and smaller vegetation like shrubs and flowers to flourish. Trees of alder, birch, cottonwood, maple ash, hemlock, pine, subalpine fir and Sitka spruce abound. Shrubs like devil's club, with its sharp, spiny stalks, line the valley walls, as do elderberry bushes, mooseberries, dogwood, blueberry bushes, cranberries, currants, wild roses and raspberry bushes. The beautiful fireweed grow taller than a full-sized adult. Cow parsnip grows as big as buildings, its pie-plate sized leaves and strong stalk harboring a highly dangerous photosensitive liquid which blisters and burns human skin. Botanists delight in the various colors created by the arctic daisy, heather, arctic starflowers, Alaska paintbrushes, wild Irises, chocolate lilies and lupines. While aboriginal herbalists enjoyed the medicinal values of yarrow and ground cone, they learned to steer clear of the beautiful but poisonous Monk's hood, red columbine, hemlock parsley and astragalus alpinus of the dreaded locoweed family. Slippery muskeg, created by centuries of vegetation detritus and the rainforest's wet climate, lines the valley floor from near the summit to the ocean. It provides the perfect place for mushrooms, some edible, many deadly, to grow as big as dinner plates. Higher up the valley scrubby pines and wildflowers cling to the steep mountainsides, but up at the summit, very little but grass, scrubby bushes, stunted pine trees and hardy wildflowers can endure the rocky windswept habitat.

Bears, both black and grizzly, were drawn to the lush valley environment while the Rocky Mountain goats and Dall sheep were happy on the rocky slopes of the mountains. Early white settlers found wooden traps set by indigenous people, most likely for use of some of the smaller animals like wolves and coyotes.⁹ Cougars, lynx, and the feisty wolverine hunted and lived well on the rocky ridges. Beavers, porcupines, squirrels and showshoe hares lived in the alluvial valley. Fish, like candlefish (eulachon), trout, halibut and salmon were used by aboriginal people. The sky was filled with a variety of birds. Bald eagles, goldeneyes, Arctic terns, great blue herons, hummingbirds and grouse dotted the sky and delighted hunters. On rare days when the wind wasn't blowing, the birds competed for air space with an abundance of the mosquitoes which found fertile breeding grounds in the swampy valleys of the White Pass.

Life was quiet on the White Pass as the end of the nineteenth century approached. The sharp peaks, peaceful fjords, lush greenery and plentiful wildlife presented a stunning sight. But the story that was about to unfold here would be anything but peaceful. Until 1887, the jagged mountains, steep slopes, and the rocky 20-mile riverbed lined with sedimentary silt lay in wait for the thousands of prospectors and their horses— horses who would search in vain for a safe spot to step.

NOTES

- ¹ Merrell, Bruce, "A Wild, Discouraging Mess: John Muir Reports from the Klondike Gold Rush," Alaska History, Vol. 7, Fall 1992, p. 36
- ² The region between the southern Yukon south for approximately 1800 miles, through southeastern Alaska to Vancouver, British Columbia, is known as the Coast Range Metamorphic Plutonic Complex.
- ³ Connor, Cathy and O'Haire, Daniel, Roadside Geology, Mountain Press Publishing Co., Missoula, 1988, p. 112-113
- ⁴ Yehle, Lynn and Richard W. Lemke, "Reconnaissance Engineering Geology of the Skagway Area, Alaska, with Emphasis on Evaluation of Earthquake and Other Geologic Hazards," USGS, Denver, 1972
- ⁵ Connor, p. 115
- ⁶ Connor, p. 112
- ⁷ Heyden, A. Thurston, M.E., "The Geology of the White Pass," Mining and Scientific Press, Vol. LXXVII, No. 6, August 6, 1898, p. 133.
- ⁸ NPS - KLGO webpage: www.nps.gov/klgo/natural_resources.htm
- ⁹ Moore, B. J. Skagway in Days Primeval, Lynn Canal Publishing, Skagway Alaska p. f



Early Life in the White Pass Area

There is an old story that says how some strange people came from the western ocean. Among them were two sisters. They landed on Dall Island in Southeastern Alaska. There the sisters met and married men whose people were coming down the rivers from interior North America. One sister went with her family to the Queen Charlotte Islands. Her children grew and multiplied into the Haida Nation. The other sister went with her family to Prince of Wales Island. She became the ancestress or Mother of the Tlingit Nation.

“The Proud Chilkat” by Brendan and Lauri Larson, 1977

Very little is known about prehistoric human life in Southeast Alaska. Massive glaciation has probably contributed substantially to the loss of any information that may have existed. Many habitable regions of today were covered with ice relatively recently and the ice may have scoured away remains of early human habitation. Mountainsides of Southeast Alaska are typically too steep for habitation, limiting villages to low regions like river valleys, where they are vulnerable to isostatic rebound and flooding. The region's lush vegetation also limits investigations, making the discovery of sites difficult and promoting deterioration of artifacts.

Although there has been no prehistoric archaeological work on the White Pass itself, a few early sites have been located in the region. Several shell middens have been found near Skagway and Dyea, and a rock shelter found near Sheep Camp on the Chilkoot Trail all suggest prehistoric activity.¹ A number of prehistoric sites were incidentally documented along the route to Whitehorse, clustering around Carcross, Watson River, Lewes Lake, Cowley Lake and Whitehorse. Most were found in miscellaneous small surveys, and impact assessments by various archeologists between 1950 and 1999 place the sites in the Holocene period (a period beginning 11,000 years ago to the present).² A site found near Groundhog Bay in Glacier Bay National Monument, southwest of the White Pass, was radiocarbon dated at 10081 ± 800 B.P.³ It contained a number of microblades and chopping tools characteristic of cultures occupying Alaska immediately after the Wisconsin glaciation (as long as 75,000 years ago). These early occupants were part of the Northwest Coast Microblade tradition, and enjoyed a Maritime subsistence of salmon, saltwater fishing, marine mammal hunting and gathering intertidal shellfish and other resources.⁴ They were capable of navigating year-round open water along rugged coastlines characterized by the fjords, islands, rocky headlands and calving glaciers characteristic of the southeast Alaskan coast.

Whether or not these people were ancestors of the Tlingits is a matter of debate, but certainly the Tlingit peoples have inhabited Southeast Alaska for as long as written word can recall. Over 300 years ago, a few Tlingit clans from Prince of Wales Island, the Stikine River Valley, the Nass River Valley and Kupreanof Island came north and established villages at Klukwan (the Mother Village), Kalwatu, Yandestaki, and Chilkoot Lake. Other camps were Taiyasanka Harbor, Tanani, the mainland near Sullivan Island and Dyea.⁵

Tlingits are almost entirely a coastal people, although small groups settled inland near present-day Teslin, Yukon Territory and Atlin, British Columbia. The peoples most associated with the White Pass and Chilkoot areas are called the Chilkoot and Chilkat tribes of the Tlingit nation. There are divergent theories on the origins of these groups, even within themselves. One group of Chilkoot believes they are a subdivision of the Chilkat, and occupied all of the Lynn Canal area. Another group believes they are distinct from the Chilkats and that they lived in Deishu, Chilkoot, Dyea and other villages east of the ridgeline of the Chilkat Peninsula. They believe the Chilkats lived in Chilkat, Klukwan and other villages west of the ridge.⁶

The abundant local resources of Southeast Alaska provided an idyllic setting for the Tlingits. The forests supplied timber for their permanent wood dwellings. These were built with great care to architecture and construction as the climate demanded protection from elements like wind and rain. Game and wild berries were abundant in the forests, while the ocean was thick with fish and sea mammals. Because the abundance of resources made for plentiful subsistence, they had leisure time to develop an elaborate art recognized around the world, including totem poles, clothing and artistic blankets. Tlingits traded with the interior Natives, the Athabaskans, also known as “Sticks” by white explorers, from whom they obtained fur, meat, and tool stone.⁷

At the time the first non-Native people arrived, Tlingits were using five routes through the mountains to reach the interior.

The ocean provided a convenient transportation corridor, and like those who inhabited the area thousands of years prior to the Tlingits, they became highly skilled navigators with seaworthy canoes. They thought nothing of paddling for days in any direction. The Chilkats and Chilkoots also had overland trade routes to the interior. A trade empire was established from interior Alaska and Canada south all the way to northern California. In the Americas, the trade empire was rivaled in size only by the Incas.⁸

At the time the first non-Native people arrived, Tlingits were using five routes through the mountains to reach the interior. Each route was owned by a specific clan and managed by a clan leader.⁹ Two routes led from the head of Lynn Canal. One route is now known as the White Pass. The other, now known as the Chilkoot Trail, started at Dyea and followed the Taiya River to the headwaters of the Yukon. Use of this trail was monopolized by the Tlingit Raven clan of Chilkoot village. Once into the interior, the Tlingits traded with Athabaskans Indians,¹⁰ who lived along the Yukon River and the lakes that formed its headwaters. The Athabaskans trapped and exchanged pelts for fish oil and other sea products harvested by the Chilkat and Chilkoot.¹¹

As Russian, British and American exploration and trade increased during the later half of the nineteenth century, the Tlingits were forced to adapt in order to survive. The trading and packing of furs caught and prepared by the Athabaskans and traded with newcomers to the coast was a major part of the livelihood and wealth of the Tlingits in the early nineteenth century. However, their way of life was soon severely threatened by the passing of fur from fashion in Europe and the ongoing depression caused by the Panic of 1873 in the United States. By the late 1880s, Tlingits were also reeling from a loss of livelihood in the fishing industry. Two large canneries had opened near Chilkoot and originally employed Tlingit. When these San Francisco companies fired Tlingit employees to make room for cheaper Chinese workers, they were forced into unemployment – a situation absolutely foreign to their historical subsistence tradition.

Faced with a dying trade network and a failed first attempt at wage-based employment, the Tlingit had to assimilate their skills to fit the changing tide. Instead of chasing off prospectors and explorers, they offered their services – for a fee. Many of the first arrivals, upon seeing the task of carrying their packs over the rugged terrain, were happy to hire them, but some balked at the

fee. One such explorer, Lieutenant George Schwatka, United States Army, was sent to Alaska on a reconnaissance effort in 1883. Although at first he thought the fee sought by the packers to be too high, he changed his mind after making the trip himself:

I...in no way blamed the Indians for their stubbornness in maintaining what seemed at first to be exorbitant, and only wondered that they would do this extremely fatiguing labor so reasonably.¹²

With so much Native activity in the Chilkoot and Dyea region, it would be easy to assume that the White Pass was similarly used. While it may have been so, it surely was not used to the extent of the Chilkoot. In 1887, the first recorded reconnaissance of the pass was made by Captain William Moore and his Indian guide Skookum Jim.¹³ According to Moore, they found no trail at all, but had to forge one through the difficult terrain themselves.

Likewise, the first white homesteaders at the end of Lynn Canal which would later be called Skagway reported no Native inhabitants. Captain William Moore's son, Bernard J. Moore, helped his father settle what they called "Mooreville." He wrote:

I found places where camps had been made long ago; also very old axe blazes on trees, judging from the way the bark had grown around the cuts and the quantity of pitch surrounding them. I also found quite large spruce trees in which knots had been tied many years ago, while they were very small and pliable, but which did not seem to interfere with their growth except to make double the diameter of the tree at that place.

I found a dozen wooden fox and bear deadfall traps between the edge of the timber at the bay and where the railroad shops are now built. They were made of round spruce poles five or six feet long and were driven into the ground about two feet in a V-shape very close together. These traps were about two and a half or three feet wide at the entrance, and the same in length and height.¹⁴

Although no Natives lived in this particular spot when they arrived in June 1887, the Moores were assisted with their task of developing Mooreville by Nan-Suk, an Indian who lived with his family in a camp "...above the upper point of the bay."¹⁵ Nan-Suk

was introduced to the Moores by John Healy, businessman from Dyea, home of the Chilkoot Raven clan which managed the Chilkoot trail.

Although they rarely used the White Pass trail, which was 700 feet lower in elevation than the Chilkoot, the Tlingits fiercely guarded both passes. They forbade Athabaskan and other explorers to use the Chilkoot without payment, and although they didn't offer packing services over the other pass, it was rumored that they threatened retribution for any one who dared try it themselves. Why the Tlingits protected the eastern pass is no secret – it helped to maintain their trade monopoly. Why they did not use the lower pass in addition to the Chilkoot was less certain. The Chilkoot rose 13 miles to its summit, with gradual incline until the last several miles during which it rose almost 2,865 feet. The other pass rose more gradually to a summit elevation of 3,550 feet.¹⁶ Weather may have played a determining factor in which trail was used. While only a few miles apart, the weather in these areas is quite different. Wind especially defines life on the White Pass and Skagway. It howls both summer and winter, driving rain from the Lynn Canal or whipping bitter cold and snow from the interior. This alone could have made the difference between its being a desirable place for permanent dwellings or a just good place to hunt and fish, explaining the Moores' early discoveries.¹⁷

NOTES

- ¹ Gurcke, Karl, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Archaeologist, Personal correspondence with the author, 20 November, 2002.
- ² Gotthardt, Ruth, Heritage Branch Government of Yukon, Whitehorse, Yukon, Personal correspondence with the author, 21 February 2000
- ³ Blee, Catherine H., Archeological Investigations in Skagway, Alaska, Volume I. "The White Pass and Yukon Route Broadway Depot and General Offices Buildings, Klondike Gold Rush Historical Park" U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Alaska/Pacific Northwest/Western Team, p. 7
- ⁴ Dixon, E.J, Bones, Boats & Bison, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1999, p. 178
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Neufeld, David and Frank Norris, Chilkoot Trail: Heritage Route to the Klondike, Lost Moose Publishing, Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada, 1996, p. 22-25
- ⁷ Blee, p. 7.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Neufeld, p. 25
- ¹⁰ The same people known as "Stick" to nineteenth century European explorers are now known as "Athapaskans" to modern day anthropologists. Neufeld 26
- ¹¹ Satterfield, Archie, Chilkoot Pass: The Most Famous Trail in the North, Alaska Northwest Books, Anchorage, 1983, p. 3-4
- ¹² Schwatka's Report, Bearss, p. 13
- ¹³ Ogilvie, William, The Klondike Official Guide, Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co., London: 1898, p. 22; Moore, J. Bernard, Skagway in Days Primeval, Lynn Canal Publishing, Skagway, AK 1997, p. x
- ¹⁴ Moore, Bernard J. special middle insert.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 91
- ¹⁶ Neufeld, p. 7
- ¹⁷ Before a conclusion can be reached as to the extent of native use on the White Pass and Skagway area, however, it is important to remember that the Moores were first and foremost businessmen. William Moore was later forced to defend his claim on the Skagway area in court, and it stood him in good stead to convince people that there was little or no native activity on the land and that no trail led through the White Pass.



Capt. Moore

another of our residences rented out for private Hotel to Mrs H.S Paul

The Fortune Teller

In turning over the leaves of this diary and logbook, a great yearning comes over me as I read the lines written over twenty-two years ago now that they are before me, clear and distinct as though recently written to live it all over again... Between the leaves in this book marked Number One of my first trip into the Yukon in '87, I noticed a large mosquito, dried and flattened out, which had been caught there in shutting up the book...

J. Bernard Moore, Circa 1908¹

In 1887 Thomas White, Canada's Minister of the Interior charged William Ogilvie with the massive responsibility of surveying the drainage of the upper Yukon River and to determine the location of the 141st Meridian (the International Boundary).² Although not widely explored, the Klondike and Yukon River³ held great promise for development of resources and commerce, and consequently wealth for the pioneer country of Canada. The Fortymile strike of 1886 had created increasing traffic into the area which made a reliable survey – especially for the resolution of the boundary line between Alaska and Canada – extremely important. Ogilvie was an educated man, having been trained in surveying and mathematics, and was a stickler for detail. He was credited for civilizing the vast, uncharted country and would later become the second governor of the Yukon Territory.⁴

Ogilvie and his survey crew arrived on the shores of the Taiya Inlet in May, 1887. They found a village of 138 Indians and three whites: John J. Healy, his wife and George Dickson, owners of the trading post in Dyea.⁵ While waiting out three days of rainy weather, Ogilvie organized his survey and considered options.⁶ His official charge was to survey the Chilkoot Trail, used primarily by the Tlingit Chilkats. While on a stopover in Juneau, Ogilvie had heard of a low pass, which supposedly existed through the mountain range to the east and which was rumored to be lower and more easily traversed. As chance would have it, he was not the only person in the group who had heard of this pass. A member of his crew, Captain William Moore, had been told of the pass by his sons who began to explore the Klondike after the Fortymile discovery. The Captain was most anxious to explore it.

Ogilvie found Captain William Moore's experience both an advantage and disadvantage to his crew. By the time the 65-year-old joined Ogilvie's crew, he had already enjoyed a hearty pioneer

life and was accustomed to making his own way. Moore was born in Germany on March 30, 1822⁷ and had never completed a formal education, probably because he was too busy working to sit in a classroom. By the tender age of 7 he was sailing in schooners in the North Sea. He was a young man when he came to the New World in 1845 or 1846, arriving in New Orleans where he operated tugboats on the Mississippi River. It was here that he married Hendrika and where their first son John was born in 1848. In 1851 he went to California to follow the first of many gold strikes which led him all the way from Peru to British Columbia. Although never striking it rich on yellow gold, Moore made a fortune operating steamboats out of British Columbia, and even transported camels on the *Flying Dutchman*, his infamous sternwheeler.⁸ It was while he was operating the steamboats in the Cassiar district of British Columbia that he noted many prospectors heading up Lynn Canal to enter the Yukon via the Chilkoot Pass. The increasing interest and traffic into the Yukon led Moore to make his prediction that, some day, huge amounts of gold would be found and the area would teem with moneymaking activity.⁹

Adding fuel to Moore's fire was his mercurial financial situation. If Moore had a talent for making money, he was absolutely gifted in spending it. By the time he reached the age of 65, his bank account was depleted. In the course of his adventurous lifetime he had earned a fortune but managed to spend several. His beautiful mansion in Victoria was auctioned to satisfy debts and he watched helplessly as boat after boat was claimed by creditors. So when William Ogilvie needed crewmembers to work on his Yukon survey he leapt at the chance.¹⁰

Two of Moore's sons, William D. (also known as Billy) and J. Bernard (also known as Ben), had begun to explore the Yukon

Captain Moore lives his vision, Skagway, 7 July 1904. Photo by Case and Draper. Courtesy UAF Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, J.B. Moore Collection, 1976-00035-21

Discovery of an easier pass could be the key to an entrepreneur's success – and Captain William Moore intended to be that entrepreneur.

Basin soon after the Fortymile discovery of 1886. They had communicated to their father word of the existence of a low pass: “Had a long talk with one of the Indians who could talk a good deal of Chinook Jargon, and found that by way of the Skagway River was a longer route but not so high a pass to cross.”¹¹ This pass was nearly parallel to the oft-used Chilkoot Pass, on which the trip to the summit reached steeply into the sky, rising a thousand feet in less than a mile. Discovery of an easier pass could be the key to an entrepreneur's success – and Captain William Moore intended to be that entrepreneur.

Ogilvie acknowledged that a complete survey of the area would have to include one of the “low pass:”

...As Capt. Moore, who accompanied me, was very anxious to go through it, and as the reports of the Dyea Pass indicated that no wagon road or railroad could ever be built through it, while the new pass appeared, from what little knowledge I could get of it, to be much lower and possibly feasible for a wagon road, I determined to send the Captain by that way, if I could get an Indian to accompany him. This, I found, would be difficult to do. None of the Chilkoots appeared to know anything of the pass, and I concluded that they wished to keep its existence and condition a secret. The Tagish, or Stick Indians, as the interior Indians are locally called, are afraid to do anything in opposition to the wishes of the Chilkoots, so it was difficult to get any of them to join Capt. Moore; but after much talk and encouragement from the whites around, one of them named ‘Jim’¹² was induced to go. He had been through the pass before, and proved reliable and useful.¹³

The walk from the beach at Lynn Canal over the low pass to Lindeman Lake – approximately 40 miles — took more than a week. The two men slogged through the dense forests, the marsh, around and through the rivers and over the steep, slippery mountainsides. “It was hard work getting through,” Ben Moore wrote years later of his father's trek. “Mosquitoes were very bad, all the streams were swollen, there was dense underbrush, and traveling over and around rocky bluffs way above the canyons; but on nearing the summit and after reaching it, the going down to Lake Bennett was much better.”¹⁴ Moore took a few survey notes, but his work was later criticized as inaccurate by Ogilvie. It

is not surprising that Moore's work was not up to Ogilvie's exacting specifications, for Moore's primary concern was the exploration of routes for a wagon road and railroad for his own monetary gain, rather than accuracy for posterity's sake. Moore and Skookum Jim reconnoitered with the Ogilvie party at Lake Lindeman, where they continued on to Bennett Lake. Ogilvie later wrote in his journal:

The information obtained from Capt. Moore's exploration I have incorporated in my plan of the survey from Dyea Inlet, but it is not as complete as I would have liked. I have named the pass ‘White Pass’ in honour of the late Hon. Thos. White, Minister of the Interior, under whose authority the expedition was organised. Commencing at Dyea Inlet, about two miles south of its north end, it follows up the valley of the Skaguay River to its source, and thence down the valley of another river, which Capt. Moore reported to empty into the Takone or Windy Arm of Tagish Lake.... Capt. Moore estimates the distance from tide water to the summit at about 18 miles, and from the summit to the lake at about 22 to 23 miles. He reports the pass as thickly timbered all the way through.¹⁵

...Captain Moore has had considerable experience in building roads in mountainous countries. He considers that this would be an easy route for a wagon road compared with some roads he has seen in British Columbia. Assuming his distances to be correct, and the height of the pass to be probably about correctly indicated, the grades would not be very steep, and a railroad could easily be carried through if necessary.¹⁶

On August 12, 1887, the Ogilvie party fortuitously met up with a small party of men about five miles below Fort Selkirk, which was located at the mouth of the Pelly River.¹⁷ As Bernard Moore later recalled the event, “I noticed on one Sunday morning a large scow moored to the left bank of the river.”¹⁸

There were three or four Peterboro canoes tied to the scow... Through the overhanging willows I soon perceived several men among whom was Gov. William Ogilvie... I next noticed someone along the verge of the river, hurrying toward my boat and fighting mosquitoes with both hands. On a nearer approach I

saw that it was my father. I ran the bow of my boat into the bank, where we talked matters over, and he concluded to return with me to the coast. Rolling his blankets aboard and bidding Gov. Ogilvie adieu, we continued upstream.¹⁹

The father and son team made their way back to the head of Lindeman Lake and down the Chilkoot Pass to Dyea. Along the way, Captain Moore regaled his son with his enthusiastic stories of a place called “Skagway Bay” and about his trip up the White Pass with Skookum Jim. “My father reported this White Pass, about one thousand feet lower in altitude than the Dyea or Chilkoot Pass and he confided to me his great desire to locate on the coast at Skagway Bay on the shore of Lynn Canal,” wrote Bernard Moore in his diary.²⁰ Bernard found that his father had big plans for the future of Skagway Bay:

His object was to bring this route to the front, and divert the early spring travel through this pass to the interior over the ice and snow up through the canyons and chain of small lakes on this side of the Summit, a route which he reported would be easier going by early spring, or winter...My father also stated to me that Skagway Bay was accessible by large ocean steamers at all times of the year and that safe anchorage was there for them, and his idea was to exert all endeavors toward getting a trail of some kind blazed through this pass and to take up some land at salt water on Skagway Bay, and as soon as possible erect some kind of landing or small wharf in a suitable location.²¹

Upon reaching Dyea, the Moores enjoyed the hospitality of the Healys for several days while waiting for Captain Healy’s steamer, *The Yukon*, to arrive from Juneau. By September 12 Healy’s boat had yet to dock and Captain Moore could contain himself no longer. He and Bernard paddled away into the Lynn Canal in a canoe on their own. They spent the night in Haines Mission, and the next day they boarded a larger canoe with six passengers and set off for Juneau. The small group paddled through Lynn Canal, taking only 18 hours to row almost 90 miles from Haines to Juneau.²² While there, Ben worked for Treadwell Mine for a short time; his father, meanwhile, set out to create what he called “Mooreville.”

On October 7, 1887, the pair set out in a canoe heavily laden with supplies from Juneau bound for Skagway Bay. They aimed to claim a 160-acre homestead and build a wharf. After a harrowing trip in dangerous weather, they arrived at their destination on October 20, 1887. “Arrived at Skagway Bay at 10 a.m. and ran our canoe up in the creek about a quarter of a mile, then put up our tent and camped at the foot of a little bluff on the beach where a small creek comes down and joins the large creek on the right-hand or east side of the bay,” Ben wrote in his diary.²³ “I have never forgotten my father’s words to me,” Ben would add many years later. “‘Here,’ said he, ‘we will cast our future lots and try to hew out our fortune,’ as I struck my axe into our first tree.”²⁴

NOTES

- ¹ Moore, J. Bernard, Skagway in Days Primeval, Lynn Canal Publishing, Skagway, AK, 1997, p. x.
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- ³ “The Yukon District comprises, speaking generally, that part of the North-west Territories lying west of the water shed of the Mackenzie River; most of it is drained by the Yukon River and its tributaries. It covers a distance of about 650 miles along the river from the coast range of mountains.” William Ogilvie, The Klondike Official Guide: Canada’s Great Gold Field, The Yukon District, Toronto, Hunter, Rose Co., Ltd., 1898, p. 9
- ⁴ Ibid., Appendix written by Dr. Alfred Thompson, M.P., p. 301-302
- ⁵ Bearss, p. 20
- ⁶ Ogilvie, W.M., The Klondike Official Guide: Canada’s Great Gold Field, Toronto, Hunter Rose Co, Ltd., 1898, p. 16.
- ⁷ Andrews, Clarence L. “Biographical Sketch of Captain William Moore,” Washington Historical Quarterly, 1930, v. 21 p. 195
- ⁸ Berton, Pierre, The Klondike Fever, Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc. New York, 1985, p. 147
- ⁹ Minter, Roy, The White Pass: Gateway to the Klondike, University of Alaska Press, 1988, p. 21
- ¹⁰ Andrews, Clarence L. “Biographical Sketch of Captain William Moore,” p. 38-39
- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 38
- ¹² “Jim” is Skookum Jim, who in a few years time would be one of three men to strike gold on August 16, 1896, in Rabbit Creek, setting off the Klondike Gold Rush.
- ¹³ Ogilvie, William, The Klondike Official Guide, Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co., London: 1898, p. 22
- ¹⁴ Moore, J. Bernard, Skagway in Days Primeval, p. 73
- ¹⁵ Ogilvie, William, The Klondike Official Guide, Toronto; Hunter, Rose & Co., London: William H. Smith & Sons, 1898, p. 18.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., p. 24.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p. 28
- ¹⁸ Moore, J. Bernard, Skagway in Days Primeval, p. 97a
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Ibid., p. 72
- ²¹ Ibid., p. 73
- ²² Ibid., p. 79
- ²³ Ibid., p. 86
- ²⁴ Ibid., p. 86



Benny, Edith and myself at
Madison Park Seattle, Aug 1904.

Welcome to Mooresville

I fully expect before many years to see a pack trail through this pass, followed by a wagon road, and I would not be at all surprised to see a railroad through to the lakes.¹

Captain William Moore, October 1887

The Moores staked their 160-acre claim and worked throughout the fall of 1887 on a wharf and cabin. Knowing that a wharf would be critical to the success of his enterprise, Captain Moore and his son located a wharfsite "where the slide down the mountain appears down long the shore six hundred feet." To create the wharf, they built two log cribs, twelve feet square and fifteen feet high, filled these with rock and brush and bolted them together. The outer structure was at low watermark and both were connected by long spruce stringers.²

Eventually, the onset of winter drove them to Juneau, but they returned the next spring to complete work on the cabin and improve the wharf. They visited what they called Mooresville or Moore's Harbor on and off for the next eight years making improvements and keeping the wharf in usable condition. Ben Moore married Klinget-sai-yet, or Minnie, in 1890. They had two children by the time they moved to Skagway to live permanently in 1895 or 1896.³

In February 1895, Ben Moore was aboard the *Rustler* from Juneau to Skagway when he learned that seven fellow passengers from California were on their way to the Canadian interior.⁴ Ever the public relations man, he seized the opportunity to promote the White Pass by extolling its virtues to Captain Campbell. The captain said he would rather land them in Skagway than Dyea because of the convenience of the wharf. The Californians agreed to use the White Pass if Moore would help with their gear, which Moore estimated to weigh about 1,500 pounds each.

And in the course of a few days we had helped the party of seven with their five tons of goods up to the mouth of the first canyon, about four miles up the valley from tidewater, hauling the stuff along on the river ice.

Then we cut a trail across a ridge from a point below the first falls, which are about ten feet high, from

which point we went on northward to the second canyon. Sleigh loads of supplies could not be hauled up over this point: hence we cut the trail across the ridge a mile or so, and connected with the second canyon farther above.⁵

Ironically, this first group did not take any horses onto what would later be known as the Dead Horse Trail. "We did not venture taking the horses up into the canyon for fear of losing them in some of the many big, open holes among the huge boulders into which we could look and see the water rushing in many places where there were openings in the ice."⁶ Moore learned later that the men got all their supplies over the Skagway trail successfully.⁷

In May 1896 Captain Moore finally found financial help to realize his dream. He reached an agreement with Ernest Edward Billinghamst which provided the Moores with limited financial support for the development of their wharf and land in Skagway. Billinghamst was an English civil engineer and an associate of Charles Herbert Wilkinson of the Syndicate, a British investment group.⁸ Billinghamst had agreed to seek investors and projects for the group as a paid consultant. Billinghamst saw potential in the Moore scheme, but recognized the enormous amount of work to be done. He incorporated the Alaska and Northwest Territories Trading Co. in order to oversee the investment in the Moores' project.⁹ The amount of money invested was limited to the amount required to complete current construction and would not exceed \$1,800 for the purchase of two horses, two cows, and 6,000 feet of rough lumber. The Moores would also be given enough money to employ five men for the rest of 1896. In return, Captain Moore agreed to have the land surveyed and to obtain valid title, a task that in spite of many efforts he had yet to be complete. He also agreed to deliver a mortgage to Billinghamst to secure this and any future financial support.¹⁰

Ben Moore requested and was granted an official survey of their 160 acres which was conducted by Charles Garside.



Klinget-sai-yet, aka "Minnie" Moore and children, 1898, Skagway. Photo courtesy UAF Elmer E. Rasmuson Library. J.B. Moore Collection, 1976-0035-00008

Ben Moore wasted no time. Gold strikes in the Interior had caused swiftly growing interest in the trail, so attainment of right-of-way and toll privileges were waived by Billingham's corporation. He hired men to work at Mooresville and retrieved horses, wagons, cows, pigs, fowl and lumber sent by Billingham from Seattle to Juneau. In keeping with his father's agreement with Billingham, Ben Moore requested and was granted an official survey of their 160 acres which was conducted by Charles Garside, Deputy United States Surveyor of Juneau. Beginning in the following spring (1897), the Moores employed 15 men to construct the original pack trail "along the left bank of the river and canyons, crossing and recrossing farther up by bridges and fording the river about half a mile above here. We also made improvements on the cabin and built a sawmill."¹¹

NOTES

¹ Moore, J. Bernard, Skagway in Days Primeval, Lynn Canal Publishing, Skagway, AK 1997, p. 86

² Ibid., p. 97

³ Ben Moore contradicts himself regarding the year in which he and his family moved to Skagway. In his speech at the Pioneers' Banquet at the fifth Avenue Hotel in Skagway on August 2, 1904, he says he and his family moved there permanently in February 1895. In the text of his book, Skagway in Days Primeval, he suggests they moved there the following April.

⁴ Ibid., p. 173

⁵ Ibid., p. 172-3

⁶ Ibid., p. 173

⁷ Ibid., p. 173

⁸ Minter, p. 34

⁹ Minter, p. 51

¹⁰ Moore, p. 178-9

¹¹ Moore, p. m



CHARLINE PLACE, PENN. AVE.
51

The Restless Victorian

Migration and movement, mobility and motion characterized identity in Victorian America. A country in transition was also in transit. Everyone seemed en route. . .

Thomas J. Schlereth, *Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life*¹

As Ben Moore and his father built Mooresville in a rainy, remote pocket of Alaska, the world entered the final few years of the busy "Victorian Age," which was named after England's Queen Victoria. She was crowned after the death of her uncle, William IV, in 1837 and reigned until her death in 1901. Queen Victoria has become one of the most famous of all English monarchs not so much because of her politics or accomplishments, but because her name is attached to this age of invention, adventure and enthusiasm. The world literally opened up like an oyster for persons living in this age. Traveling became easier and more affordable and international trade prospered.

Nowhere in the world was there as much promise as in the United States of America, where many sought to better themselves in a New World. The population in the United States – not yet a century old – was about 40 million in 1870. By the turn of the century only 30 years later it had increased exponentially to almost 76 million, an increase of 52% — a third attributable to immigration.² The great American frontier virtually disappeared in the last three decades of the century. Seven states joined the union between 1870 and 1890: Colorado, the Dakotas, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho and Washington. Utah joined the union in 1896. The urban population grew at an even faster rate than rural. In 1890 a growing number of American cities boasted populations of over 100,000 while New York, Chicago and Philadelphia exceeded a million each.³ This was due in great part to the increasing presence of industry, which drew workers from farms to factories in the cities, making poverty an urban problem. This in turn created a new class of working poor or those who could easily become so.

This largely unskilled workforce, at least one-third immigrants, eked out a living at poverty level, about \$506 per year in 1877 and \$544 in 1893.⁴ Chronic unemployment plagued many unskilled workers, particularly through the American depressions of 1873-79, 1882-85 and 1893-97.⁵ The century's last depression was caused in part by the Silver Crash of 1893, which forced thou-

sands employed by silver mining into unemployment overnight. These people flocked to cities in search of work. Ten percent of the people who died in New York City between 1885 and 1890 were given a pauper's burial. Estimates suggest that as many as 40% of Americans lived in poverty as the end of the nineteenth century approached.⁶ Grim as they are those statistics do not include the plight of impoverished children. Over 18% of American children age ten to 15 were gainfully employed in 1890.⁷ To make matters worse, it is estimated that 23 to 30 percent of the industrial labor force was out of work for some time every year during this period.⁸

In sharp contrast, the Victorian Age brought many technological advancements to the common citizen, making America a much smaller country than its colonists ever imagined. Railroads extended farther and farther west linking the populated East with the frontier West. The number of miles of railroad track doubled between 1870 and 1890, encouraging the settlement of the West and effectively bringing an end to America's legendary frontier.⁹ Railroads changed the living standards of most Americans by forging the links necessary for a national economy and a mass market. Railroads also helped to make it possible for a smaller number of farmers than ever in history to feed the growing urban work force, accelerating the country's transformation from an agrarian/mercantile society to an industrial one. Also contributing to this phenomenon was the modernization of farm equipment and an increasing trend toward commercialized agriculture versus traditional single-family farms.¹⁰ Improved methods of communication, from penny newspapers to telegraphs and finally telephones, also brought far-flung areas of the country closer together. And although much of the country was plagued with poverty, the average family's wealth actually grew, increasing money for non-essential items.¹¹ As the middle and lower classes grew, so did the pocket books of a handful of industrialists, commonly referred to as the "Robber Barons." It was an age during which the rich got richer and the poor got poorer. It was the Victorian era that introduced an exciting new word: when

Example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture, Charlene Place, Pennsylvania Avenue, Denver CO, circa 1890. Photograph by Rose & Hopkins. Courtesy Denver Public Library. Negative: 19251

Their literature was filled with forthright heroes so certain of themselves, so brash and certain of the attainability of their lofty goals.



Right: The Molly Brown House Museum interior. Courtesy The Molly Brown House Museum, Photograph by Jeff Padrick, Klug Studios.

Facing Page: Historic view of the Molly Brown House Museum, Denver, CO, built 1889. Courtesy Denver Public Library. Negative: 19251



Pierre Lorillard, a manufacturer of snuff and tobacco, died in 1843 he left an estate of over a million dollars, making him America's first millionaire.¹²

To escape the frenzied contradictions of the world outside, Victorians looked to their homes not only as status symbols but as retreats. The creativity, love of adventure and importance of status of this era is well represented in the myriad of architectural styles typical of buildings built in this period. From the formidable Gothic Revival to the busy but inventive Richardson Romanesque style, these buildings were designed to impress. Interior decoration was just as important. Victorians decorated lavishly with rich colors, ornate furnishings and extraordinary fabrics. More so perhaps than during any other cultural period, Victorians cherished objects. They conceived them, produced them, acquired them and displayed them with an enthusiasm unfettered by any sense of self-consciously tasteful restraints. Between 1860 and 1900 more than 676,000 patents were granted by the US Patent Office, with 26,272 patents filed in one year (1890) alone.¹³ In 1884 Montgomery Ward's mail-order catalogue brought the tantalizing choice of more than ten thousand objects into the home; by the mid-1890s that selection more than doubled.¹⁴ Yet, looking at the nineteenth century "object lust" from a Victorian sensibility this carnival of accumulation is no surprise. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century even the most basic goods were scarce; purely decorative or art objects were in reach of the wealthiest classes alone. A scant fifty years later, invention and leaping advances in technology had materially improved American life. A fantastic array of affordable goods existed where once there were few. To own was godly – to be too poor to accumulate was a sign of poor character.

Reading was especially important to Victorians. Before the nineteenth century, books were few and expensive. They were largely tied to religious and political groups and were subject to frequent censorship. There were only 50 publishing houses in 1755 — by 1860 there were over 300. Books were no longer precious objects because mechanization made mass printing affordable. Children's literature and adult fiction surpassed religious literature. Penny presses and dime novels created a steady flow of entertaining novels.¹⁵ The world of books embodied the visionary ideals and adventurous spirit that shaped the temperament of the times. In the 1890s, the all-important Montgomery Ward mail-order catalogue offered more than three thousand book titles from which to choose in a formidable 39-

page section far larger than that for games, toiletries or women and children's clothing combined.¹⁶ Readers basked in a tidal wave of literature penned by the likes of the Bronte sisters, Charles Dickens, H.G. Wells, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Louisa May Alcott, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Jules Verne. Small wonder Victorians were as brave and adventurous as they were. Their literature was filled with forthright heroes so certain of themselves, so brash and certain of the attainability of their lofty goals.

Citizens of the Victorian Age were raised in an energetic atmosphere. Rich or poor, educated or not, theirs was a dynamic generation – theirs was a generation with an appetite for change.

NOTES

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- ³ Moss, Roger W. and Winkler, Gail Caskey, Victorian Interior Decoration, American Interiors 1830=1900, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1986, p. 113.
- ⁴ Schlereth, p. 34.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Keyssar, Alexander: Poverty in America: essay in "The Readers Companion to American History," Foner, Eric & Gamatz, John A., Editors, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1991.
- ⁷ Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970: United States Census Bureau.
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- ¹⁰ Schlereth, Thomas J. Victorian America, p. 35
- ¹¹ Moss, Roger and Winkler, Gail Caskey, Victorian Interior Decoration, p. 115.
- ¹² Leopold, Alison Kyle, Cherished Objects, Clarkson Potter Publishers, New York City, 1991, p. 42.
- ¹³ Ibid. p. 34.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. p. 36.
- ¹⁵ Tebbel, John, A History of Book Publishing in the United States, 4 vols, (1978)
- ¹⁶ Leopold, Alison Kyle: Cherished Objects, p. 16.



Serendipity

ser-en-dip-i-ty /serendipitee/ n. the faculty of making happy and unexpected discoveries by accident.

Facts of the discovery that started the Klondike Gold Rush are difficult for historians to agree upon, which is not surprising because the men involved couldn't agree on what happened. The stories have been passed down by storytellers for generations and are now shrouded in legend. Some of the voices were those of argonauts in the great rush who told stories to their grandchildren, some were Indians who inhabited the area long before the white stampede, and others were outsiders simply intrigued with a rags to riches tale. An interesting part of the story often left out of the legend is that the greatest gold strike in history was an accident.

For many years it was fairly common knowledge that gold could be found in the Yukon basin, but not in sufficient quantities to attract the masses. By 1896 fewer than 2,000 newcomers, mostly men, wandered the area on foot and by boat using the search for gold as an acceptable excuse to fulfill their love of the independent, rustic lifestyle. Here they could escape the chaos of growing cities and enjoy what frontier was left to the world. They lived hand to mouth in rough-hewn cabins, walking to small outposts like Dyea or Fortymile for only enough supplies to last until wanderlust struck again. Among them were men like Joseph Ladue, one of the first white men to cross the Chilkoot Pass and to figure out the real fortune was to be made from other fortune seekers; Robert Henderson, a dour soul with no love of Indians; and George Carmack, a sailor who deserted his ship in search of a richer life.

The newcomers' reaction to the First Nation peoples ranged from tolerance to pure disdain. Unlike his white brethren, George Carmack much admired the Native people and took it as a great compliment when he was nicknamed "Siwash George" (Indian George) by prospectors. He married a Tagish woman who died shortly thereafter, but was then married to her sister, Shaaw Tlaa. Kate, as Carmack called her, accompanied him down the Yukon much to the sorrow of her family's matriarch. Shaaw Tlaa's family had recently endured a particularly sad period. Within a few short years, they had mourned the deaths of one son and three daughters due to disease or accident. The summer of 1896, the distraught matriarch sent her son Keish to look for her daughters

Shaaw Tlaa and Aagee', who had also headed down the river with a prospector.¹

Perhaps one of the reasons Keish, otherwise known as Skookum Jim, was assigned to the journey was the belief by his people that he would be guided by the Tl'anaxe'eda'kw (Wealth Woman), an animal helper from a "long ago story."² This is a complex figure in Tagish oral tradition. She rewards anyone who hears her, catches her or follows a prescribed ritual.

As a young man...he once saved the life of a frog trapped in a deep hole. Later, it returned to him on two different occasions, once in its animal form, when it healed a wound he had sustained, and again in the form of a woman, showing him a gold-tipped walking stick that would guide him to his fortune downriver.³

Oral Tagish tradition and conventional written history provide differing versions of what happened on this journey. According to Tagish history, Keish and his nephew Kaa Goox, later known as Dawson Charlie, were in search of Keish's sisters.⁴

In the first place, he wasn't looking for gold. Skookum Jim went downriver to look for his two sisters, because (people) missed them.⁵

Tagish history also upholds that George Carmack survived that winter only because of the subsistence skills of his wife, Kate. When Skookum Jim's party caught up with Carmack and Kate, the two had survived the winter well.⁶ Carmack was fishing on the Thron-diuck, or Klondike River, when the parties met. Carmack had had a prophetic dream in May 1896, during which two king salmon that had been shot upstream came to a dead stop in front of him. "In places of scales," wrote Pierre Berton, legendary chronicler of the gold rush, "they were armored in gold nuggets and their eyes were twenty-dollar goldpieces."⁷ Instead of prospecting for gold, Carmack took it as a sign he could make his fortune catching salmon to sell for dog food.

Keish or "Skookum Jim," standing second from right at his cabin in Yukon Territory; Dawson Charlie far right. Photograph by Eric A. Hegg. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 859

Carmack, according to (Skookum) Jim, convinced the Indians that only a white man's claim would be recognized legally.

It was this unlikely party, now consisting of Carmack, wife Kate, their daughter Gracie, Skookum Jim and Dawson Charlie⁸ which met up with Robert Henderson on the banks of the Klondike. This would be a fateful meeting for both parties, as Henderson, directed by his friend Ladue, had just found a promising spot near the Klondike called Gold Bottom Creek. It was customary prospector etiquette to alert fellow prospectors of new discoveries. Henderson talked with Carmack, but later accounts from both parties document Henderson's disdain for Indians. Henderson commented to Carmack that he was willing to have Carmack explore the region, but he didn't want his Indian friends to follow. Because of Carmack's comradeship with his Tagish family and because they were not really looking for gold, he ignored Henderson's recommendations and his little party continued on its way.

Carmack's group chose not to follow the river, per Henderson's directions, but walked up the valley of Rabbit Creek, another Klondike tributary. They made camp near the fork of Rabbit Creek and the Klondike on the night of August 15, 1896. Accounts of what occurred the next day diverge. Tagish history remembers Skookum Jim as a man who not only upheld his familial responsibilities by searching for his sisters, but one who was guided by Wealth Woman, or the Frog, who enabled him to find the gold.⁹ Carmack, not surprisingly, would remember differently.

Years afterward Carmack insisted it was he who happened upon the protruding rim of bedrock from which he pulled a thumb-size chunk of gold. But Skookum Jim and Tagish (sic) Charley (sic) always claimed that Carmack was stretched out asleep under a birch tree when Jim, having shot a moose, was cleaning a dishpan in the creek and made the find.¹⁰

This was a strike of stunning proportions. "A single pan full yielded a quarter of an ounce, or about four dollars' worth. In a country where a ten-cent pan had always meant good prospects this was an incredible find," Berton wrote. The following morning the three men staked the claim according to Canadian law, which upheld that no more than one claim could be staked in any mining district by any man except the discoverer, who is allowed a double claim. Carmack, according to Jim, convinced the Indians that only a white man's claim would be recognized legally.¹¹ And so Carmack declared his claim:



To Whom It May Concern

I do, this day, locate and claim, by right of discovery, five hundred feet, running up stream from this notice. Located this 17th day of August, 1896.

G.W.Carmack

George W. Carmack, one of the discoverers of gold in the Klondike. Photograph by Asahel Curtis. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: A. Curtis 62086

Carmack's crew told everyone about their find as they floated downriver to register the claim in Fortymile and to celebrate their good fortune. When Carmack reached Bill McPhee's saloon, no one believed him at first – he had a reputation for spinning yarns – but when Carmack produced just a few gold nuggets, saloon patrons scrambled over each other trying to reach the Klondike first. Fortymile became a ghost town overnight. One and all headed off to the new gold discovery — everyone, that is, except the man who did not want Indians near his claim, for Carmack made a point of breaking prospectors' etiquette in defense of his Indian family by refusing to inform Robert Henderson.¹²

NOTES

¹ Cruikshank, Julie Images of Society in Klondike Gold Rush Narratives: Skookum Jim and the Discovery of Gold, *Ethnohistory*, 39:1 (Winter 1992) p. 30

² “Long ago stories” are a part of Tlingit and Athabascan oral tradition, whereby the chief actors are usually animal-named beings with superhuman powers, who look and behave much like human beings and rarely assume animal characteristics. (Lantis, Margaret, Editor, Ethnohistory in Southwestern Alaska and the Southern Yukon, The University Press of Kentucky, 1970, p. 115)

³ *Ibid.*, p. 27

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31

⁷ Berton, Pierre, The Klondike Fever, Carroll & Graf Publishers, New York, 1985, p. 42

⁸ Here is another place where conventional historians and oral Tagish historians diverge. According to many written accounts, it was Tagish Charlie who accompanied the group. According to Tagish oral history it was Skookum Jim’s nephew Dawson Charlie. “One additional issue continues to trouble Tagish people. Kaa Goox, Skookum Jim’s sister’s son, was with Jim when gold was discovered near the site later named Dawson City, earning him the nickname Dawson Charlie. In written accounts he is invariably referred to as Tagish Charlie, because whites identified him as coming from Tagish Lake. The misnomer causes confusion because a different Tagish man, Yeils’aagi, was known in the southern Yukon as Tagish Charlie. He was a prominent member of the Deisheetaan clan and was not involved in the discovery.” (Cruikshank, Klondike Gold Rush Narratives, p. 32).

⁹ Cruikshank, p. 34

¹⁰ Berton, p. 26-47

¹¹ Berton, p. 48

¹² Berton, p. 49



All Hell Breaks Loose

Other stampedes involved more gold and more men, but there had been nothing like the Klondike before, there has been nothing like it since, and there can never be anything like it again.

Pierre Berton, *The Klondike Fever*

The rush itself started innocently enough. Two ships, the *Portland* and the *Excelsior*, arrived in Alaska on routine supply runs in the summer of 1897. They stopped at St. Michael, a small port in Alaska near the mouth of the Yukon River, where prospectors from the interior waited impatiently to board. Ordinarily, the ships would carry back broke and weary explorers longing for the comforts of home. But fate had other plans for these passengers – they would change history.

The *Excelsior* arrived in San Francisco on July 14, 1897. The arrival of the old war-horse didn't create much of a stir at first. The crowd ashore parted to make way for disembarking passengers, among them Joe Ladue, friend of all prospectors in the Klondike region. They were unlikely celebrities. Some had been away from home for as long as 13 years, so their city manners were rusty and clothes old-fashioned. But there was something about the way they swaggered, something about their grins, and something about the way they struggled to carry carpetbags. Jackets drooped under the weight of gold in their pockets, and suitcases were pulled behind them on the ground. Gold had arrived in San Francisco!

By the time the *Portland* docked in Seattle three days later the entire West Coast was delirious with gold rush fever, quickly tagged "Klondicitis." A group of Seattle reporters, tipped off by the arrival of the *Excelsior*, was so enthralled that they hired a tugboat to take them out to the *Portland*, where they hopped on and scratched a few interviews on their notepads. The reporters got back on the tug, which beat the aging *Portland* to shore, then fled to their respective newsrooms, intent on scooping the story. Hundreds of others swarmed the docks to watch the *Portland* lumber in. Seattle police and Wells Fargo guards armed with rifles waited for the passengers. Surprised by the attention but certainly up to the task of their new celebrity, passengers disembarked to the cheers of onlookers.

Insanity swept the West Coast and spread east like wildfire. Farmers left their plows in the soil, tellers left bank customers, and young men begged family and friends for a grubstake. Seattle residents learned the hard way to lock up their dogs lest they be stolen by thieves and sold to stampedes for use with dog sleds. Farmers came from all over to sell their livestock – cattle, horses, sheep – to stampedes. Unscrupulous rogues raided glue factories where they bought horses on their last legs cheap to resell at vastly inflated prices. Seattle businessmen, anxious to recoup losses realized during the economic slump, raced to advertise themselves as the "official" outfitters of the Klondike.

Newspaper headlines from around the country sensationalized the possibilities. From the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Saturday July 17, 1897:

LATEST NEWS FROM THE KLONDIKE
GOLD! GOLD! GOLD! GOLD!
68 Rich Men on the Steamer Portland
Stacks of Yellow Metal
The Steamer Carries \$700,000

The July 19, 1897 *San Francisco Chronicle* sang:

THE RUSH TO HUNT FOR GOLD
Al-Ki Leaves Seattle Crowded to the Railings
Millions in Dust Said to be Piled up at St. Michael's

Newspapers used large print to extol the riches and adventure in the Klondike, but headlines that dared to warn the potential stamper were set in progressively smaller type to downplay the stampede's dark side. This headline from the July 16, 1897 *The Examiner* of San Francisco is a typical example:





EL DORADO IN THE ICY YUKON FIELDS
MARVELOUS ARE THE TALES OF ALASKA GOLD
DISCOVERY
FORTUNES IN NUGGETS PICKED UP ON THE CLONDYKE
Men & Women who brought the treasure tell of their adventures

Hardships faced by Prospectors
Bitterly Cold is the Word, Food is often Scarce and Prices
Of Provisions as high as in '49

Gold Fields Bleak and People Inhospitable

These half-hearted warnings went largely unheeded, for families of little means looked to the Klondike as a cure for their ailments and sent their men to seek the family fortune:

I have no thoughts now except those of home and the future beyond. Of the future I am hopeful. I go with a will and determination that cannot fail to win...²

I struck a job Tuesday at the rate of \$4.50 per day and expences (sic) and Chess (writer's companion) \$3.00 (as Assistant of Construction)...How is that, to be appointed Sup't (Superintendent) of Const (Construction) the second day on land at \$150.00 a month.³

Not everyone went to the Klondike for wealth:

One by one the conservative papers of the country, that had treated the first reports as sensational news, fell into line. On the 28th of July the Messrs. Harper & Brothers commissioned a correspondent to proceed to Dawson to furnish news and pictures of the new goldfields.

I, the one chosen for this work, spent the next three days getting together that part of a one year's outfit...⁴

I had travelled extensively, but always felt that I would not be satisfied until I visited the great river of Alaska.⁵

All around the world, the hue and cry was "Klondike." Those who were able to go were envied – those whose obligations kept them at home were pitied.

The man who had a family to support who could not go was looked on with a sort of pity...the man who didn't care to leave his business or for other trivial reasons, was looked on with contempt as many without ambition who did not know enough to take advantage of a good thing when placed in his reach; but the man who could go, and would go, and was going to the Klondike, the man who could not be stopped from going, by any means short of a wire cable anchored to a mountain, was a hero. He was looked up to; he was envied by everybody; he was pointed out in the streets.⁶

It is estimated that 100,000 left their homes to seek the Klondike. It is also estimated that only about 30,000 to 40,000⁷ of them made it to their destination. Among them only a handful actually found any gold and even fewer made any money from it. For unbeknownst to every hopeful who clambered aboard a tub north, most of the richest claims had been staked and were being worked well before news even reached San Francisco of the strike.

Joseph Ladue, who had always been a promoter of the Klondike also understood its inherent dangers. The "Klondicitis" fever sweeping out of control across the country alarmed him. He warned that:

...lots of them (prospectors) never come out, and not half of those who do make a stake. The country is rich, richer than any one has ever said, and the finds you have heard about are only the beginnings, just the surface pickings, for the country has not been prospected except in spots. But there are a great many hardships to go through.⁸

His caveats fell on deaf ears for all eyes had already turned hopefully to the Klondike.

Left: Chaos rules as a ship (perhaps the *Portland*) docked in Seattle. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: UW 8410

NOTES

¹ Berton, Pierre, The Klondike Fever, Carroll & Graf Publishers, New York, 1985, p. 100

² Diary of Robert J. Embleton, KLGO collection, p. 1

³ Johnson, Fred E. editor, "Skagway-Atlin Letters: Kirke E. Johnson, Oregon Historical Quarterly, 1980, p. 123-124: Johnson and his companion were hired by A. H. Brackett as Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of construction of the Brackett Wagon Road telephone line in March, 1898.

⁴ Adney, Tappan, The Klondike Stampede, p. 8, 9: Adney continues: "After my departure arrangement was made by Messrs. Harper & Brothers with the London *Chronicle* for simultaneous publication of the matter to be furnished."

⁵ Backhouse, Frances, Women of the Klondike, Whitecap Books, Vancouver, 1997, p.174

⁶ Berton, Pierre, p. 117

⁷ Berton, Pierre, p. 417

⁸ J. Lincoln Steffens, "Life in the Klondike Gold Fields," McClure's Magazine, Sept., 1897. p. 959

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1,200 pounds of goods....

Starvation was a real possibility to those living in Dawson and other areas of the Klondike in the fall and winter of 1897-98. As winter settled over the area it was impossible for ships to get supplies to its residents. Miners who had become millionaires found their shiny, gold nuggets were useless, as there were fewer and fewer provisions available. Pandemonium ensued as hundreds tried to leave the territory. Hoping to avoid continued unrest, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police declared that stampeders entering Canada would be required to have with them a pre-determined list of items which, when fully assembled, weighed roughly 1,200 pounds. The North West Mounted Police nailed this warning wherever they could in places like Skagway and Dyea:

Dawson Nov. 18, 1898

The Commissioner of the Yukon Territory orders that no person will be permitted to enter the Territory without satisfying the N.W.M. Police Officers at Tagish and White Horse Rapids that they have with them two months assorted provisions and at least \$500 in cash, or six months assorted provisions and not less than \$200 in cash, over and above the money required to pay expenses from the border to Dawson.

Signed, S.B. Steele, Supt., Commanding N.W.P.
Police, Yukon Territory

Superintendent Sam Steele later wrote: "the regulation...was a wise one and has saved the country much expense and has prevented a great deal of suffering in the Yukon this winter."¹

Travel guides encouraged readers to comply with this demand, as the popular guide "Alaska and the Klondike Gold Fields" warned:

Lest any should think too much stress has been laid on the matter of supplies to be taken into the Klondike, these words of Robert Krook, the young Swedish miner, who returned from Dawson City during the summer are given in full: "Every one who goes to Alaska must rely mainly on two establishments for supplies...Toward the close of last winter, before new supplies came up river, prices were doubled..."²

The list of items needed in one's provisions was long and impressive. "No one should venture into the region without some cash and a sufficient supply of provisions to last eight months," Harris wrote (although never having made the trip himself). A conservative estimate for one man for eight months included: 400 pounds of flour, 100 pounds of beans, 100 pounds of bacon, 100 pounds of sugar, 10 pounds of tea, 30 pounds of coffee, 150 pounds of mixed fruit, salt, pepper and cooking utensils.³

Harris had much advice regarding clothing: 3 suits of heavy woolen underwear, 4 pairs heavy socks, 2 pairs German socks, 1 pair hunting socks, 1 heavy sweater, 1 lighter sweater, 1 leather fur-lined coat, 1 pair jeans trousers, lined with flannel, 1 Mackinaw coat, 1 suit buckskin underwear, 1 pair hip rubber boots, 1 pair heavy overshoes, 1 pair heavy miners' boots, 4 blankets, 1 pair leather-lined mitts, 1 sleeping bag, 1 sleeping cap, 4 canvas bags and tools including miners pans, picks, shovels, axes, a saw, file and of course, a sharp knife.⁴

Inexperienced packer attempts to load all 1,200 pounds of goods on one ill-fated horse, Skagway, 1898. Photograph by M. M. Brackett. Courtesy C. B. Driscoll. Negative: BRWHP 105

NOTES

¹ Dobrowolsky, Helene, Law of the Yukon, Lost Moose Publishing, Whitehorse, Yukon Canada, 1995, p. 26

² Harris, A. C. Alaska and the Klondike Gold Fields, Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington, D.C., 1897, p. 178

³ Harris, p. 176

⁴ Harris, p. 175



Hell or Damnation

“There ain’t no choice,” said an oldtimer of choosing between the Chilkoot and the White Pass. “One’s hell. The other’s damnation.”

Martha Ferguson McKeown¹

When gold rushers descended upon the beaches at the end of Lynn Canal, they had a choice to make. Dyea or Skagway? The Chilkoot or the White Pass? The Chilkoot had been used for centuries by the Chilkoot Indians but it was not for the faint of heart. Photographs of the trail may have discouraged less ambitious individuals, as the final assault on the summit was a sheer 35 degree climb which may have to be made over and over, as it was difficult to carry all supplies on one trip. Rumor had it that the White Pass was a longer trail, but easier than the Chilkoot:

A liberal allowance of time would be two days for a pack train from Skagway Bay to Tagish Lake, of which not more than six or eight hours would be needed to reach the Summit from salt water....²

Ultimately, the choice to travel the White Pass was probably made most appealing by the claim that it was an easy pack trail, suitable for horses as well as wagons:

On the other hand, the Skaguay trail affords a comparatively easy and entirely safe means of approaching the lakes. The pass is fully 800 feet lower than the Chilkoot pass and fuel is abundant. The Skaguay river forms a bed of ice on which either dogs, horses or men can travel with ease and safety, drawing heavy loads. The trail at this writing is in excellent condition.³

Mining engineer F. H. Stretch, who spent 30 days on the White Pass Trail, believed stampedeers chose it simply because they thought they could make the horses do the work, whereas on the Chilkoot they’d have to carry their own goods over the pass:

By the Dyea route horses can only be used to Sheep camp, at the foot of the summit, after which human endurance must accomplish the rest of the transit; and the rush to Skaguay is due to this fact, for when it was

known that horses could be taken through from tide water to the lakes beyond the summit by the White pass, the bulk of the argonauts drifted to that route; fondly hugging to their bosoms the delusion that the horses alone would have to work, and that personally the trip would become a summer picnic to themselves. Hence Skaguay sprang into prominence.⁴

The White Pass Trail

The White Pass trail adventure began as soon as stampedeers landed at the beach at the end of Lynn Canal. The burgeoning town of Skagway was the first thing they saw, and what a sight it was!

Skagway:

On July 29, 1897, Ben Moore paddled from Mooresville to Dyea chasing the *S.S. Queen* and its 200-some passengers. When he caught up with them, he managed to convince the captain to bring the stampedeers – and their business – to the Moore homestead, where they could take the new, supposedly easier White Pass route to the Klondike.⁵ The younger Moore probably did this at the behest of his father, Captain Moore, now 75 years old. By this time, the father and son team had invested years of hard work in their homestead. They had brought in horses, wagons, cows, pigs, fowl and had even built a sawmill and wharf. In the spring of 1897, Captain Moore employed 15 men to construct the pack trail along the right bank of the river and on July 14, he had announced it officially “open” for travel.

So when the *Queen* sent out an advance committee to seek permission to land, Captain Moore was no doubt delighted – his gold rush had begun! But these first customers had other plans. By the time the committee returned with the boat’s passengers and gear, the whole group had decided that it would be a profitable idea to jump the old man’s claim and start their own town, which would cater to the hordes of stampedeers soon to follow. They would be rich! and there was nothing but an old man and a

...boat after boat dumped as many as a thousand stampedeers on the shores of Skagway every week.



Landing supplies by lighter on the beach at Skagway, Alaska, 1897. Photograph by Asahel Curtis. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: A. Curtis 46104

handful of men to stop them. The sheer numbers of stampedeers versus settlers dictated the outcome of the invasion. Captain Moore tried to stop them, but his protestations fell on deaf ears. The newcomers staked their own claims, cleared them and started building almost as soon as they got off the boat. Many, many stampedeers followed them. Only a few weeks later the town had been renamed Skaguay (changed to Skagway by the post office in November 1897⁶) and boasted 5,000 to 6,000 “citizens,” most of whom lived along the trail from Skagway Bay to the start of the White Pass Trail.⁷

Journalist Tappan Adney arrived in the middle of the fray on August 20, 1897:

...as we drew near we saw other vessels, and beyond them a faint streak of white sparkling in the fitful sunlight across a little valley, with the steep hills rising on each side, their tops lost in the canopy of clouds. Beyond the line of white were green trees, and far away stretched a narrow, flat valley, winding among hills. It is Skagway Bay; and it is White Pass that lies far away in the blue distance. As we steamed slowly into the little bay the white streak resolved itself into tents, a city of tents, stretched across a plain hardly a quarter of a mile wide, level, and presenting a straight front into the bay.⁸

As the weeks followed, boat after boat dumped as many as a thousand stampedeers on the shores of Skagway every week.⁹ The stampedeers didn’t come alone, either – they brought tons of gear, horses, oxen, sheep, mules wagons and guns. Adney disembarked on August 21, 1897. He wrote:

At dawn a call of “Get up; the horses are being taken ashore!” resounds over the ship. A large scow is ranged alongside the vessel, and the horses are walked aboard on a plank and ferried to the beach, where they are dumped ashore into shallow water. We notice that men from the Bristol are taking horses part way, then dumping them overboard and swimming them ashore... We got our personal effects ashore in small boats.¹⁰

Once gear had reached shore there was no guarantee it was safe, as stampedeer Mont Hawthorn recalled years later:

...Outfits was (sic) being dumped off every which way, and they had to be gotten out of there before the next high tide. There was every kind of an outfit, with dogs, horses, and men all pulling things up beyond the high-water mark. One man had a bunch of milk goats that he aimed to use for packing over the trail. He tied them to the piling under the dock while he got a wagon to haul his outfit farther up town....¹¹

The next morning, Hawthorn and his dog made a gruesome discovery:

The tide was in, and Pedro kept running down toward the water and barking. I turned back to see what was bothering him. It was them poor goats. That fellow that tied them to the piling didn’t get back to get them off the beach before the tide come in (sic). All I could see of them was just their tails, floating around the top of the water.¹²

The mushrooming pioneer town acquired a notorious reputation as confusion reigned supreme. Tales of lawlessness, chaos, and garden variety chicanery were rampant. But accounts of Skagway’s true character varied greatly, as journalist Annie Hall Strong wrote:



"Broadway," Skagway, Alaska, 12 August 1897.
Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington
Libraries. Negative: La Roche 372

...All went well until we reached Juneau and here my heart almost failed me for, judging from the terrible tales told by returning and disheartened gold seekers, I was to fall among riff-raff of the whole country at a place called Skaguay....Cut throats and mobs of evil-doers were said to form the population, and it was alleged that they lay in wait the arrival of "tenderfeet." Was it any wonder I hoped the time would be long ere we reached the awful place?

However, on the morning of 26th August we steamed around a point into a bay and right before us lay the really beautifully situated little tent city....Everyone was kind, and those that were already settled assisted in every possible way to smooth over the rough places and brighten camp life for the argonauts....Kindness was the watchword; there was no evidence of violence or crime—nothing but kindness.¹³



Skagway street scene, summer of 1897. Photograph by Asahel Curtis. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: A. Curtis 46009

A town “meeting” was called in early August and an unofficial “miners” committee was appointed to resolve complaints and control the rampant lawlessness. The town was laid out by Frank Reid, bartender at the Klondike Saloon. Reid had been left a survey transit as loan collateral, and he seized the transit and the moment by declaring himself the official city engineer. He platted the town, which would consist of 12 lots of 50 by 100 foot blocks,

and streets 60 feet wide, with the exception of Broadway, which was to be 80 feet.¹⁴ As a “city official” Reid took it upon himself to advise the horrified Moores that they had better fence off a few acres to keep as their own, for the rest would be made available for development.¹⁵ Reid platted Skagway by August 9, 1897, and the town council adopted the map of the city in March, 1898. The map brags:

This easy part of the trail was the lie, whereas the steep hill on the other side of Liarsville was the truth of the White Pass.

SKAGUAY—the youngest city in the world has now a permanent population of no less than 4000 people. Founded only last August it has steadily forged to the front...Until today the Young City bears the proud distinction of being the Metropolis of Alaska, and the most prosperous town on the North Pacific Coast (sic) it already has a Church, a School, an Electric light System, and water system.¹⁶

An elected town council took over on December 4, 1897.¹⁷ They made great strides in turning Skagway into a respectable community by creating fire protection, street maintenance and a water system.¹⁸ By Spring 1898, Skagway boasted 8,000 permanent residents with 1,000 stampedeers passing through each week. Tents which first lined the valley had been replaced by buildings ranging from shacks to hotels and theaters. Unfortunately, Captain Moore's 1892 residence turned out to be smack in the middle of the new town's State Street at 5th Avenue. Moore was able to thwart efforts by unofficial "committees" to tear down the house until October 1898, when it became obvious the town had grown around the building and he would lose the fight to save it.¹⁹

First Crossing of River: (1.5 miles from Skagway)

The first few miles of the trail were deceptively easy as they meandered along the alluvial valley through which the Skagway River flowed. The gray, flat rocks lined the path. Walking on them was fairly easy – crossing the Skagway River before the bridge was built, however, was dangerous, as the water was cold and swift. It was impossible for packers to determine the depth of the water until they entered it, and for one packer, that was too late:

The avarice of the owner of the pack train has resulted in his bringing out of the cavalry and in occasioning us some delay...So when a poor fellow from Seattle named Fowler, with 100 lbs on his back, fell off a log and was drowned, Cleveland charged \$10 for carting his body back to the beach in his empty wagon, that it might be shipped to Seattle for interment. Being remonstrated for his gaulish (sic) greed, he said "May be you know more about my business than I do..."

Marshall Bond,
stampedeer²⁰

Pack train stalled at Small Lake or Black Lake.
Photograph courtesy of Library of Congress.
Negative: US262-30616

Liarsville

Liarsville was a small settlement about 3.5 miles from the shores of Lynn Canal where sourdoughs bent the ears of tenderfeet with stories about the dangerous trail. It was the end of the easy part of the journey during which stampedeers walked along the flat, gravel riverbed of the Skagway River. This easy part of the trail was the lie, whereas the steep hill on the other side of Liarsville was the truth of the White Pass. As in other White Pass villages, Liarsville consisted of service oriented businesses, including restaurants and dry goods stores. The one known photograph of gold rush-era Liarsville was taken in summer 1897 and shows the businesses were run in a style typical of gold rush buildings – canvas tents with wood foundations.²¹

From Liarsville (also called "Foot of the Road" by Tappan Adney²², "End of Road" by an early mapmaker²³ and "Ragtown" by an unknown photographer²⁴), the trail climbed steeply about 400 vertical feet to Black Lake (also known as Small Lake).²⁵ From the lake the trail continued climbing another 3.5 miles to Porcupine Hill, 1000 vertical feet above Black Lake.²⁶

Small Lake or Black Lake:

(5 miles)



Porcupine Hill

The enthusiasm and naivete of the typical Klondike stampedeer was fueled in part by the dearth of reliable information of what lay ahead. "Legitimate" trail guides were written so that they would fly off the shelf, not necessarily to assist the stampedeer.



French Camp near Liarsville, White Pass trail.
Photograph by Asahel Curtis. Courtesy MSCUA,
University of Washington Libraries. Negative: A.
Curtis 46028

One of the most popular guides was *Alaska and the Klondike Gold Fields* by “well-known author and traveler” A.C. Harris who wrote that the White Pass was “considered one of the best that cuts the mountains of the coast... The pass lies through a box canon surrounded by high granite peaks and is comparatively easy.”²⁷ His carefully chosen words, however, betray but do not blatantly state that he never took the trail. The Canadian Pacific Railway Agency’s guide, “To the Klondyke,” which claims that “a liberal allowance of time would be two days for the pack train from Skagway Bay to Tagish Lake, of which not more than six or eight hours would be needed to reach the Summit from salt water.”²⁸ It was at Porcupine Hill that stampedeers discovered they had been lied to. “Now...the trail begins its steep plunge down the side of Porcupine Ridge, switching back and forth,” wrote journalist Tappan Adney. “At the turns it seems as if nothing could prevent a loaded horse from going clean over. The

bank goes downward nearly perpendicular several hundred feet, when one lands in the narrow gorge of the Porcupine, a branch of the Skagway (River)... The Porcupine is crossed by a corduroy bridge, and the ascent begins again. The surface of the rocks is now more in evidence, and the trail leads over these, slippery with trampled mud.”²⁹

The trail had been declared “open” by Captain Moore, but he was an experienced horseman and may have had no idea that such inexperienced stampedeers would attack the trail. His route was meant for lightly loaded horses and experienced packers, as naturalist John Muir witnessed:

...a few parties with animals lightly loaded and led by experienced mountaineers who were in the front of the crowd got through, but the trail was quickly blockaded

"A fall meant death, as a rule, unless he (the horse) could get up again pretty quickly, which, overloaded and exhausted, he seldom could."

S.H. Graves

again by the swarming inexperienced throng, many of whom had never before seen a trail.

Here at the end of August I saw perhaps from three to four thousand gold seekers with about two thousand horses, mules and oxen stalled and baffled at the foot of the half-made or less than half-made trail leading over muddy, rocky hills to the summit. These adventurers, with more energy than knowledge, were struggling like salmon in a bowldery pool at the foot of a fall.³⁰



Far right: "Porcupine Hill Wagon Road." Courtesy C.B. Driscoll. BRWHP 148

Near right: "On Porcupine Incline," Porcupine Hill. Courtesy Yulon Archives. PAM 1897-31

It was not uncommon for the trail to be blocked by a fallen horse. "A fall meant death, as a rule, unless he (the horse) could get up again pretty quickly, which, overloaded and exhausted, he seldom could," wrote S.H. Graves.³¹ Stampedeers never knew when the line would start up again so they chose not to lose time by unloading and reloading their horses. Consequently, horses might be forced to stand for hours at a time, packs strapped awkwardly to their aching backs.³² The trail was actually closed for a short time late in August 1897 because it had become impassable.³³ Tappan Adney was there to witness the drama:

Groups of men in charge of foremen are chopping down trees and building corduroy roads over the worst mud-holes and over the most dangerous portions of the rocks. The manner of building is to take two string-pieces, lay them side by side four feet apart, then lay half-round logs across, and hold these down by two more string-pieces pegged down solidly. They have piled wood over the bodies of dead horses that have



become offensive, and these are being consumed by fire.... A rope is stretched across the trail, and several committeemen of the miners stand guard and rigidly enforce the rule that no man with a pack must pass over the space for three days...³⁴

Horses struggled to comply with the demands made upon them, either in boggy mud holes or slippery rock. "This section, when traveled," wrote F. H. Stretch, "as the surface crust of vegetation and rotten wood soon disintegrates under the myriad feet of the cavalcade, and while it is possible to make new trails through the



Far Right: Skagway Trail near Porcupine Hill. Courtesy Brackett Family Collection. CBD 100



Blockade of Klondikers on Porcupine Hill, White Pass Trail, Alaska 1898. Photograph by Eric A. Hegg. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 181

bottom, these have no long lease of life. Many horses have lost their lives in these bog holes...³⁵ White Pass & Yukon Route railroad President S.H. Graves walked the trail on foot gathering information for his new endeavor. "The first time I went over a bad part of the trail, I saw a horse that had fallen and broken his leg a few minutes before in a place where the trail passed between two large boulders. His pack had been removed, and some one had mercifully knocked him on the head with an axe, and traffic had been resumed across the body, which was still warm as I passed. When I returned that evening there was not a vestige of that horse left except his head lying on one side of the trail and

his tail on the other. The traffic had ground him up."³⁶ Tappan Adney observed that in places on the rock where horses had tried to find footholds, it looked as if chisels had made the marks.³⁷

This section of trail was remembered in many stamper diaries:

August 19, Thurs.-Pack Train of 10 horses and 84 men start for Lake Bennett over the Famous Skagway Trail to the Klondyke. By the time we struck "old Pork-kupine" hill all hands are simply paralyzed at the exceeding toughness of the trail. No time now for many diary



Fine dining along the White Pass, Hungry Man's Retreat restaurant at Porcupine Creek, White Pass Trail, Alaska, 1897. Photograph by Frank La Roche. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: La Roche 2069

notes, stuck it out all day, camped in low land near river, rain all night, no tents, 'ell-of-a-time.'"

James S. Cooper,
stampeder³⁸

On the evening of the second day we returned to camp with all of our cache at the foot of Porcupine Hill. Here the canon (Skagway River canyon) became so full of boulders that it was impossible to make a trail

among them, so it led up over and around the hill, striking the canon a mile above in what was called the upper canon. As the trail up over the hill was quite steep, and at the time we struck it bare, all of our stuff had to be packed over on our backs. I remember this as the hardest half mile of the trail. I was heartily glad when we were through with it.

Thomas Moore,
stampeder³⁹

"The dullest or least sentimental man on the trail cannot but stop to admire this beautiful sight."

Tappan Adney

Second Crossing of river bridge 11.5 miles



Third Crossing of river, bridge, 13.5 miles:



Bridal Veil Falls (now called Moore Creek)
August 24, 1897, We cross Skagway on another corduroy bridge, where a fine view up and down the valley is to be had. Near here a stream of water comes down the mountainside out of the clouds, and before it is half-way down it divided into several more streams, which find their way into the Skagway in a dozen

places. The dullest or least sentimental man on the trail cannot but stop to admire this beautiful sight. From this bridge the trail follows the valley of Skagway, the ground being flat and boggy.

Tappan Adney,
journalist⁴⁰

Fourth Crossing of river, bridge, 14.5 miles:
White Pass City

White Pass City: A Busy Town of Tents:
Terminal of Greatest Packing Route on
Earth Will be Good Business Point for Several
Months⁴¹

Fifth crossing of river, 17.5 miles:



The Ford

The "Ford" was an innocuous name for a hodge-podge of tents that mushroomed at the end of one of the most traumatic stretches of the White Pass Trail. It was most likely called the Ford as travelers had to ford the White Pass Fork river before continuing up the trail.

While stampeders and their animals faced many dangers, these ugly miles were often referred to as the worst. Late in the

Near right: Klondikers with horse-drawn sleds on the White Pass Trail, Alaska 1898. Photographer: Eric A. Hegg. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 190

Far right, this page: Pack horses along Skagway Trail. Photographer: Erik A. Hegg. Negative: HD 3.4 p13

Near right: Klondikers camped on the White Pass Trail, Alaska, ca. 1898. Photographer: Eric A. Hegg. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 191



Man hauling sled on the White Pass Trail through Box canyon on the Skagway River, Alaska, ca. 1898. Photographer: Eric A. Hegg. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 128



Cutoff Canyon from the ford, White Pass Trail, Alaska, 1898. Photograph by Eric A. Hegg. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 198

summer of 1897, Seattle mining engineer, F. H. Stretch reported to the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*:

The next three or three and a half miles [from White Pass City] to the ford are the worst on the route and test the endurance of both men and horses. The trail immediately climbs the ridge and, in a distance of less than a mile, reaches an altitude of some 2,100 feet, over running water having in many places washed out all traces of earth. Beyond there are numerous bad shelving rocks,

and the route finally takes to the bed of the river before reaching the ford. These three miles have probably killed more than their pro rata of the dead horses.⁴²

A stamper from Cornwall, England remembered:

...disaster would overtake the careless here [Dead Horse Gulch]. Once, a horse and sled that had taken the corner too fast were precipitated to the bottom of



Klondikers with supplies just below the summit of White Pass, Alaska 1898. Photograph by Eric A. Hegg. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 195

the gorge below. When the sled slid over, the horse frantically held on, but at last, with a scream almost human, over it went—which was the last of that outfit.⁴³

Tents at the Ford perched on the rocks in the summer and disappeared under great piles of snow in the winter. The small camp was just below the spot where the White Pass Fork tumbled from the summit and converged with a creek from the east.

Buildings and tents were probably located on both sides of the White Pass Fork. Historical photos show only a small number of tents, anywhere from two to a dozen. There are also some photos which reveal what look to be wooden structures. Like those in White Pass City, these makeshift buildings housed hotels or bunkhouses and places to eat. Stampeder Frank Leslie remembered:

Returned to the Ford at 1 pm (March 1898) and had lunch, or a lot of garbage, after having walked twenty-

"We had supper about 6 p.m., or slops would be a better name for it, and turned in about 8 p.m. I believe there are twenty-three men in that small bunk-tent."

Frank Leslie

two or twenty-three miles over some of the very roughest trail and country I have ever seen or imagined... Arranged for a place for our party to sleep in a bunk tent, and then changed footgear, and fixed up papers for the Customs House... We had supper about 6 p.m., or slops would be a better name for it, and turned in about 8 p.m. I believe there are twenty-three men in that small bunk-tent.⁴⁴

A spring 1898 photo of the Ford shows a sign which reads "Pack Train Hotel,"⁴⁵ and the entry in stampeder Henry J. Woodside's diary refers to a "Ford Hotel."⁴⁶

Once arriving at the Ford, the earliest White Pass Trail (late summer and fall of 1897) veered off to the right or left, depending upon whether or not pack animals were used. The trail to the left was not suitable for pack animals until the George Brackett Wagon Road company carved a sled road on the mountainside in January and February of 1898.⁴⁷ Until then, horses and handlers were forced to ascend a steep, 300-foot hill before the trail leveled off.^{48 49 50}



Packtrain on White Pass Trail near the Ford crossing the Skagway River, Alaska. September 3, 1898. Photograph by Eric A. Hegg. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 454B

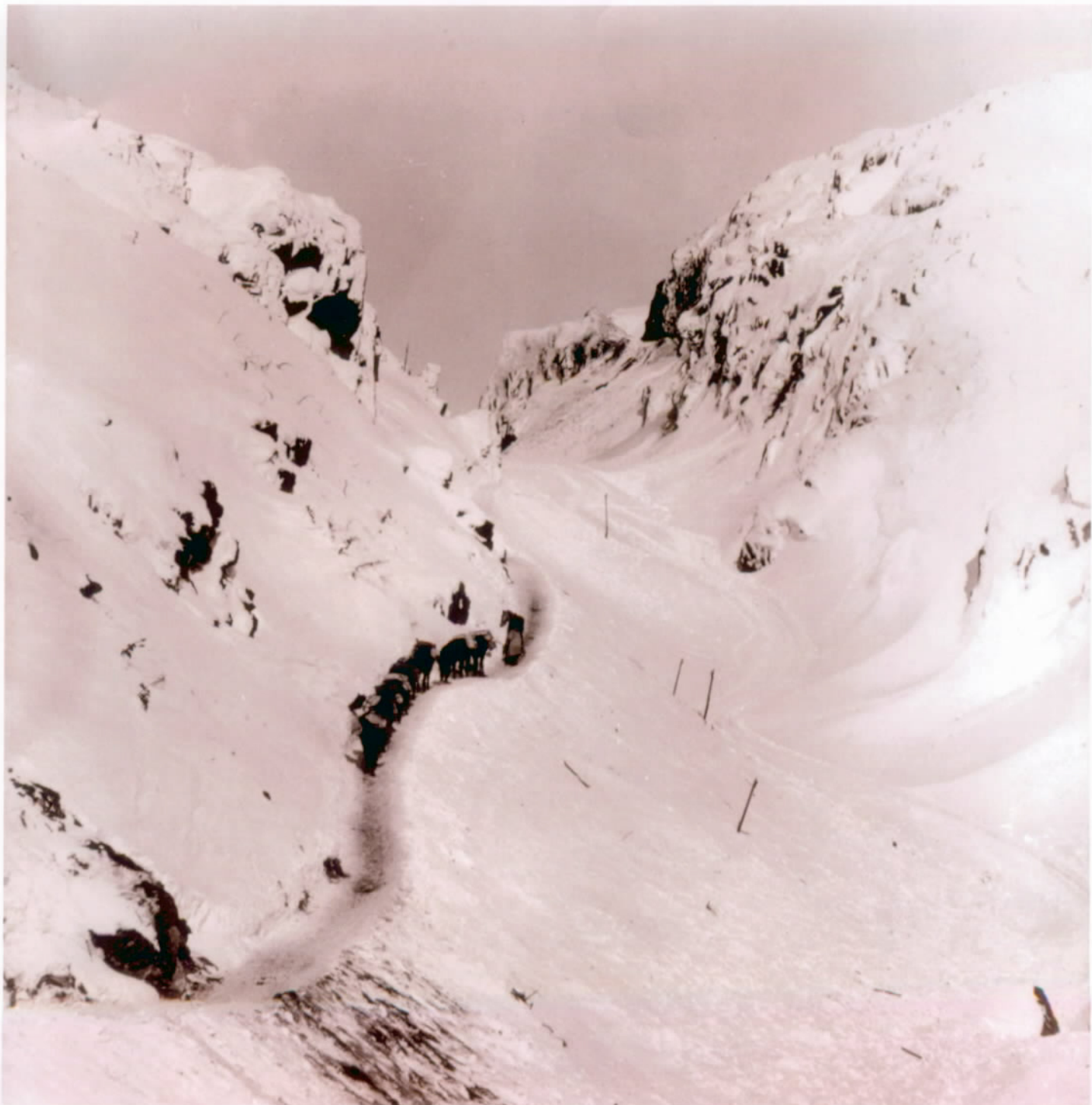
The Summit

The Summit of the White Pass is the highest point reached by travelers on the White Pass Trail. It was 15 miles as the crow flies (but not as the prospector toils) from the alluvial beaches of Skagway. The Trail of '97 crossed the summit a mile east, and several hundred feet higher than the present summit. This summit, used in 1898 and later by the railroad, rises 2,865 feet

into the sky, lower than its neighbor, the Chilkoot. The glaciers that carved this terrain thousands of years ago left the summit dotted with ponds and lakes. Although scenic, these waterholes made summertime travel slippery and, perhaps worse, provided fertile breeding ground for mosquitoes. In the winter, prospectors might be met with a 200 inch snow pack, some perhaps blowing into their faces, and wind chills down to -80°F . As with many camps along the White Pass Trail, the Summit provided a logical spot for businesses to operate. The number and types of establishments varied with the time of the rush itself, as needs of travelers evolved with the gold rush.⁵¹ Weather extremes near the summit probably kept the village at the pass from becoming as large as White Pass City, especially since conditions were significantly less severe at settlements only a few miles beyond the summit.

Because the location of the US-Canada border was under dispute at the beginning of the Klondike rush, little activity took place at the summit until the late winter of 1897-98, when the Canadian government moved to protect its border by sending the North-West Mounted Police to oversee the gold rush, including the collection of Customs and other duties in areas under their jurisdiction. The Mounties' first major deployment in the Yukon had been at Fort Constantine near Forty Mile in 1895.⁵² Just a year later the rich gold discovery on Rabbit Creek, a tributary of the Klondike River, started the Klondike Gold Rush. The North-West Mounted Police spent the next two years trying to maintain dignity in Her Majesty's Dominion, but border disputes and the sheer number of stampeders, mostly American, forced them to relocate Customs stations several times. Finally, on February 13, 1898, they set up shop at the Summit of White Pass.⁶⁰ Expecting trouble from packers who wouldn't want to pay customs to the Queen of England, and rogue Americans claiming a more advantageous boundary, they brought with them Maxim machine guns and Lee Metford carbines. On February 26, 1898, during a break in seemingly constant blizzard conditions, Mounties hoisted the Union Flag and began collecting customs.⁶¹ The presence of guns at the pass rendered headstrong packers speechless and ended arguments before they began.

The choice of the Summit as the boundary between Canada and US was made by Canada's Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, from his warm office miles away from the border itself, much to the misfortune of the North-West Mounted Police.⁶² Constant wind, snow and sub-zero temperatures made it the least habitable



Pack train heading up the Brackett Sled Road toward White Pass summit, Alaska, March 20, 1899. Photograph by Eric A. Hegg. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 596

spot along the trail. Adding to the miseries of the weather, Mounties were housed in poor accommodations, which made them vulnerable to frostbite, colds, kidney problems, bronchitis and pneumonia. But, to the chagrin of travelers, the stalwart Mounties did their duty with dignity.⁶³

March 23, 1898: Once more to the summit at White Pass. This is one of the greatest sights that I ever saw. It is nothing but snow and rocks in sight except the British Flag planted on the top and there is where you have to pay duty on all goods taken into Canada. Our duty on our goods will be about 4 or 5 hundred dollars. This is the greatest trail that I ever saw. Snow and rocks is all you can see...⁶⁴

April 17, 1898: Had a hard morning's work, opening boxes and bags, etc., to exhibit my things to the Customs Officers. They make you open up practically everything for inspection. Horrible job it is to do in a blizzard on the top of this mountain. Things get all covered with snow as fast as they are unpacked, and then have to be packed ready for sledding down the mountain. But at last it was done, and the outrageous duty they assessed me paid (60%), and I stepped across the boundary line into the territory of the Canadians as quickly as I could get ready to leave that dreary place.⁶⁵

Gold rush era photographs show both wooden and canvas structures at the Summit. One photograph reveals a sign declaring that wine, liquor and cigars could be purchased at the Summit White Pass Hotel.⁵² Another photograph shows the Monte Carlo Restaurant and US Hotel and Restaurant built on what look to be stilts.⁵³ While the stilts look out of place in this summer memoir, photographs taken and diaries written in the winter months reveal their purpose, which was to keep the businesses above snow in the winter. Stampeders Ward Hall remembered:

On reaching the summit I went into a roadhouse to get something to eat. All we could see of this roadhouse at the summit was the stove pipe, the rest being entirely covered with snow. To get inside we went through a tunnel cut in the snow. The meal I had there was largely tea, beans, and frozen baking powder bread.

Roadhouses, or hotels, in that country then were mainly large tents with rows of bunks three tiers high around the outside and the dining table in the middle. The kitchen stove was located at one end of the tent and if a heating stove was used, it was at the other end.

I remember they had one of those old time music boxes in this roadhouse, and it was going all the time. It really sounded good on account of the fact that music was seldom heard in these parts.⁵⁴

Another stamper was glad of the snow and cold for olfactory considerations:

Seeing all them dead horses like that made me feel pretty sick. Even knowing about it ahead of time from Sam didn't make it no easier (sic). I was glad it wasn't warm weather. Seems like the smell would have been more than a man could stand... There wasn't much at the Summit but some tents with Mounties inside, and stuff piled all around outside. One of them told me where I could pile my outfit so's it would be safe and out of their way.⁵⁵

Apparently, the Summit area had its share of raucous activity, both during 1897-98 (as a trail camp) and beginning in 1899 (after the railroad arrived). Remnants of broken bottles (perhaps liquor?) can still be found scattered on a mound on the US side of the pass. On June 6, 1899, a woman named May Burke was arrested at the Summit for "disturbing the peace,"⁵⁶ ⁵⁷ and as late as 1903, a Mrs. Olive Coram was arrested and tried for selling liquor at her Summit roadhouse "without a license."⁵⁸

Teddy Roosevelt and the Border Solution

The boundary line that was established by Canadian machine guns over 100 years ago is still the official boundary between America and Canada today. The flags of both nations fly quietly side by side there, but in fact the official establishment of that boundary was far from peaceful. Americans inherited the Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1825 when they purchased Alaska in 1867, but because of treaty language pertaining to areas east of the 141st meridian, a future dispute was inevitable. Several expeditions were conducted by both countries – not surprisingly with different results – but the border issue did not present itself as imperative until both Canada and America realized the great

Expecting trouble from packers who wouldn't want to pay customs to the Queen of England, and rogue Americans claiming a more advantageous boundary, (the Mounted Police) brought with them Maxim machine guns and Lee Metford carbines.



Captain Moore (5th from left, back row) and George Brackett (7th from left, first row) join Senator Charles Fairbanks and others at Summit, ca. 1899. Photograph by Eric A. Hegg. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 212

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Manifest Destiny created a zealous climate for expansion and a voracious appetite among Americans for the protection of their rights.

financial potential to owning the water port of entries at Skagway and Dyea. The United States felt its territory extended well beyond the shores of Skagway and Dyea. Canada, however, felt it owned Skagway, Dyea, and most of Lynn Canal between Skagway and Juneau.⁶⁶

If the American boundary was correct, American customs officials in Skagway and Dyea could extract a great toll on prospectors who purchased their supplies in Victoria or Vancouver.⁶⁷ (Americans would be forced to pay Canadian customs in either event since the Klondike gold fields were well within undisputed Canadian borders.) However, if establishment of the border south of the ports occurred, then stampedees looking to avoid payment of customs altogether could buy their gear in Victoria or Vancouver, costing American businesses (principally Seattle and San Francisco) a fortune in lost revenue.

Aside from purely financial matters, the boundary dispute presented a great philosophical battle pitting America's Manifest Destiny and Monroe Doctrine against Britain's Imperialistic foreign policy. "Manifest Destiny" was a phrase coined by a journalist in 1845 in an attempt to justify America's westward expansion. This philosophy, coupled with the Monroe Doctrine (whereby America would accept no interference on its continent from foreign countries) created a zealous climate for expansion and a voracious appetite among Americans for the protection of their rights. Britain, at the same time, had enjoyed tremendous growth and expansion throughout the world during Queen Victoria's reign, particularly during the period of Benjamin Disraeli's service as Prime Minister (1868 and 1874-80). He had Queen Victoria crowned Empress of India in 1876, and England became known the world round as the "Empire upon which the Sun Never Set." Canada was considered another dominion of Her Majesty and therefore, was part of Queen Victoria's Empire.

As "civilized" countries, the United States and England had much in common. Both countries had espoused the "White Man's Burden" policy, whereas it was the duty of the civilized nations to police the uncivilized nations and to spread their superior values and cultures.⁶⁸ The US and England had wrangled over a number of foreign policy expansion efforts, including that of the construction of the Panama Canal. During these and other negotiations, England and the US had established a special friendship, but in this border dispute, Roosevelt felt that America held all the cards and that Canada had no leg to stand on.

Roosevelt claimed that Canada started the aggressive saber rattling when they moved the guns to the summit; the US, in response to this action, had spent the past several years quietly strengthening its military presence in the disputed area.⁶⁹ Roosevelt's administration could not act with entire impunity, however, and he had no wish to damage America's relationship with Britain. Trying to meet them halfway, the American administration offered Pyramid Harbor (near Haines in Lynn Canal) to the Canadians so they would have the water port they wanted, but American citizens, buoyed by the recent decisive victory in the Spanish American War, wouldn't hear of it.⁷⁰ Roosevelt also tried to offer Wales and Pearse islands (between Portland Inlet and the Pearse Canal), but Canada was not interested.⁷¹

Finally, in 1903, President Teddy Roosevelt appointed a six-member tribunal to settle the matter once and for all. The charismatic Roosevelt chose three Americans, two Canadians and one British citizen – the Lord Chief Justice Richard E. W. Alverstone, historically an ally of Roosevelt's. Canada, under the dominion of Great Britain, had every reason to expect support from its mother country, but they did not bargain on competition from the strong bond that had grown between the United States and Great Britain. These two countries needed each other in foreign policy activities, and being the larger country, Roosevelt felt the United States held greater power. He reminded Lord Alverstone of the nations' mutually advantageous friendship and reminded him of the American military history of deployment in Alaska. Should there be "captious objections on the part of the English," wrote the President, "I am going to send a brigade of American regulars up to Skagway and take possession of the disputed territory and hold it by all the power and force of the United States... This will not be pleasant to do and will be still less pleasant for the English."⁷² Not surprisingly, in October 1903, Lord Alverstone voted in favor of America's summit boundary. The Canadians lost their water port of entry and after official surveys in 1905 and 1906, the summits of both the Chilkoot and White Pass trails became the official borders.⁷³

NOTES

- ¹ McKeown, Martha Ferguson, *The Trail Led North: Mont Hawthorne's Story*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1948, p. 101
- ² Canadian Pacific Railway Agency, "To Klondyke, Shortest, Quickest and Only Canadian Route," Yale University Library archives
- ³ *Skaguay News*, Volume 1, 12-31-97
- ⁴ *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, "From Skaguay to Bennett," 8-21-97
- ⁵ Moore, Bernard, *Skagway in Days Primeval*, p. m
- ⁶ Spude, Robert L.S., *Klondike Gold Rush: Skagway, District of Alaska*, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1983, p. 6
- ⁷ Ibid
- ⁸ Adney, Tappan, *The Klondike Stampede*, (originally published in 1900 by Harper & Brothers Publishers) UBC Press, Vancouver, 1997, p. 39
- ⁹ Spude, 1983, p. 11
- ¹⁰ Adney, p. 43
- ¹¹ McKeown, Martha Ferguson, *The Trail Led North*, Macmillan Company, New York, 1948, p. 104
- ¹² McKeown, p. 107
- ¹³ Strong, Annie Hall, "Before and After Taking. What I Expected to Find and What I did Find in the New Metropolis," *The Skaguay News*, December 31, 1897
- ¹⁴ Spude, 1983, p. 6-7
- ¹⁵ Blee, Catherine H., *Archeological Investigations in Skagway, AK, Volume 2, Moore Cabin and House*, 1988, p. 9
- ¹⁶ Spude, 1983, p. 46
- ¹⁷ *The Skaguay News*, Friday, December 31, 1897
- ¹⁸ Spude, 1983, p. 41
- ¹⁹ Captain Moore eventually built the Moore Mansion –later to become the Pullen House Hotel—at Spring and 5th Avenue. Moore took his case to the United States District Court. In January 1901, the court awarded Moore 60 acres of downtown Skagway. Instead of claiming those acres, however, on September 5, 1901, Moore and the businessmen of Skagway settled on Moore being granted 25% of the assessed valuation of the improvements built on his and his son's 160-acre homestead (Doreen Cooper, *A Century at the Moore/ Kirmse House*, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, 2001, p. 26)
- ²⁰ Marshall Bond letter to home, August 1, 1897, Yale University Library
- ²¹ Photograph KLGO archives WL 4, 1420
- ²² Adney, Tappan, *The Klondike Stampede*, UBC Press, Vancouver, 1994, p. 85
- ²³ *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 21, 1897
- ²⁴ Photograph, KLGO archives: WL 4, 1420
- ²⁵ Friesen, Richard J., *The Chilkoot Pass & the Great Gold Rush of 1898*, National Historic Parks & Sites Branch, Parks Canada, 1891, p. 45
- ²⁶ The original grade of the White Pass & Yukon Route railroad wound through this site, and Liarsville is today home for a scattering of Skagway citizens and tourist attractions.
- ²⁷ Harris, E.C. *Alaska and the Klondike Gold Fields*, J.R. Jones, 1897, pp. 149-150
- ²⁸ Canadian Pacific Railway Agency, "To the Klondyke, Shortest, Quickest and Only Canadian Route to the Klondyke and Other great Canadian Goldfields on the Yukon," 1897, p. 21
- ²⁹ Adney, p. 73
- ³⁰ Muir, John "Story of the Trail," *Alaska History*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Fall 1992, pp. 36-37
- ³¹ Graves, S. H. *On the White Pass Payroll*, Paladin Press, New York, 1970, p. 35
- ³² Stretch, F. H., "From Skaguay to Bennett," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 7, 1897
- ³³ Adney, p. 83
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Stretch, F. H. "White Pass From Skaguay to Bennett," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 21, 1897

- ³⁶ Graves, p. 36, 37
- ³⁷ Adney, p. 83
- ³⁸ Diary of James S. Cooper and Associates, "To the Klondike," Leaving Tacoma, Wn. Aug. 3, 1897, Copied by Patricia A. Seawell, August, 1978, KLGO library
- ³⁹ Moore, Thomas, Grubstake, IGA M78, BC Archives
- ⁴⁰ Adney, p. 78;
- ⁴¹ "White Pass City," *Skaguay News*, September 16, 1898
- ⁴² Stretch, F. H. "From Skagway to Bennett," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Tuesday, September 7, 1897
- ⁴³ Olive, W.H.T., The Right Way On, Timberhome Book, Langley, British Columbia, 1999, p. 47
- ⁴⁴ "Seattle to Dawson, a Klondike Diary," *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly*, May, 1900, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 8
- ⁴⁵ WU 6, 5 KLGO archives
- ⁴⁶ Diary of Henry J. Woodside, Henry J. Woodside Collection of the Public Archives of Canada (MG30,C64, entry #7-97), Vol. 26, folder 2
- ⁴⁷ Bearss, Edwin C., Proposed Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park: Historic Resource Study, Office of History and Historic Architecture, Washington D.C., November 15, 1970, p. 218
- ⁴⁸ Friesen, Richard J., The Chilkoot Pass and the Great Gold Rush of 1898, National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Parks Canada, 1981, p. 45
- ⁴⁹ In the vicinity of the summit, the railroad followed the Trail of '98 and passengers on the WP&YR railroad can still see remnants of the Brackett Sled Road clearly from the train.
- ⁵⁰ In the years since the creation of the Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park, hikers and researchers have searched the Ford on both the Brackett Sled Road, the Ford and the original Trail of '97. Although artifacts have been found on both the original Trail of '97 and the Brackett Sled Road, none have been found at the location of the Ford. This is not surprising as the camp was very small and temporary in nature, and it sat at the convergence of two streams just south of the White Pass summit. The Summit gets about 200 inches of snow per winter, and it is possible that everything left at the Ford during the gold rush washed away with the White Pass Fork's waters over the course of the last 100 years.
- ⁵¹ "Nearing the Summit," *Skaguay News*, December 16, 1898, "E.J. Proulx moves business from White Pass City to Summit," *Skaguay News*, February 24, 1899
- ⁵² Photograph KLGO archives, WS-74, 5880
- ⁵³ Photograph KLGO archives, WS 4, 935
- ⁵⁴ Remembrance of Ward Hall, 1899, KLGO archives
- ⁵⁵ McKeown, Martha Ferguson, The Trail Led North: Mont Hawthorn's Story, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1948, p. 119
- ⁵⁶ U.S. Commissioner's Records, Criminal Cases, Division No. 1, District of Alaska, Alaska State Archives Record Group 5056, Series 57, United States District Court First Division, Vol. II (OS568), p. 87
- ⁵⁷ Ms. Burke was a witness to the shooting of George Johnson by Jesse Rounds in White Pass City in January of 1899, six months before her arrest for disturbing the peace at the Summit.
- ⁵⁸ "More License Was Required" *Daily Alaskan*, February 15, 1904
- ⁵⁹ Dobrowolsky, Helene, Law of the Yukon, Lost Moose: The Yukon Publishers, Whitehorse, Yukon Canada, 1995, p. 18-21
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 28
- ⁶¹ Neufeld, David, & Frank Norris, Chilkoot Trail: Heritage Route to the Klondike, Lost Moose: The Yukon Publishers, Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada, 1996, p. 134
- ⁶² Dobrowolsky, p. 28
- ⁶³ Dobrowolsky, p. 30
- ⁶⁴ Diary of Marvin Sanford Marsh, "Gold Rush to the Klondike," KLGO archives, p. 12
- ⁶⁵ Memoirs of Frederick Stephen Wombwell, "A Year in the Klondyke, 1898-1899," p. 13, KLGO archives
- ⁶⁶ Neufeld p. 129

⁶⁷ All-Canadian routes to the Klondike existed, but all were more dangerous and inefficient than the Chilkoot and White Pass.

⁶⁸ Nash, Gary B., et al., The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society, Volume II, From 1865, Longman, New York, 2000, p. 529

⁶⁹ Collin, Richard H., Theodore Roosevelt, Culture, Diplomacy, and Expansion: A New View of American Imperialism, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1985, p.177

⁷⁰ Neufeld, p. 137

⁷¹ Collin, p. 182

⁷² Tilchin, William N., Theodore Roosevelt and the British Empire: A Study in Presidential Statecraft, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1997, p. 44

⁷³ Neufeld, p. 37



White Pass City

One day in the summer of 1917, Grandfather found time away from his duties to visit old White Pass City with us. We were investigating the inside of an old cabin which was about ready to topple after nineteen years of weathering the changing seasons. He put his hand into the pocket of a mackinaw that was ready to fall to pieces and took out a poke of gold nuggets.

Huberta Swensen, *Our Summer in Alaska 1917*¹

At the confluence of the Skagway River and its White Pass Fork, about twelve miles from Skagway and four miles from the White Pass Summit, there lay a city of tents where men, women, horses, mules and dogs swarmed busily night and day. Tents lined the small valley up and down the river, and a few wooden buildings lined the Brackett Wagon Road. It was a stopping spot for stampedees before the ascent up Dead Horse Gulch, a construction camp for the Brackett Wagon Road, and finally a construction camp for the upper stretches of the White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad. The town's purpose was to provide rest and services to stampedees and packers on their way over the White Pass Summit. And when the train made it up to the summit in February 1899, the city had outlived its purpose and was deserted almost as quickly as it sprouted in late 1897.

Within days of that fateful first train trip, the town became almost as quiet as it is today. A few professional packers, too stubborn to give up the way of life they loved, continued to use the trail for a few months. When the last packers left Skagway on their way to Dawson in July 1899, White Pass City became no more than a tourist attraction, like the White Pass Trail itself. The first tourists could walk or ride along the Brackett Wagon Road and hike up Dead Horse Gulch. They found artifacts and deserted buildings. As time took its toll, what was left of the White Pass Trail and City dissolved in the elements, only to be relived in the imagination. Today's tourist sees the spot where White Pass City existed from several spots along the Klondike highway and the train. The steep slopes of the mountains are quiet, and the floor of the valley is lined with trees, shrubs and grass. No sign of human habitation can be seen from the distance.

One of the most substantial structures to be built at White Pass City, if not the first, was a bunkhouse for workers hired to build the Brackett Wagon Road. The 50-man bunkhouse was built in

October 1897.² There could have been activity in the area before this time, though, as the severity of the so-called Dead Horse Trail hit its worst point in the late summer and fall of 1897 and would have provided a natural spot for stampedees to rest before ascending Dead Horse Gulch. The relatively flat river junction area that would later become White Pass City provided one of the largest level places along the entire trail where travelers could spread out and pitch a tent comfortably. It couldn't have been long before opportunistic business people set up shop to provide services to the stampedees, mining the gold rush in their own way.

Photographs indicate that hotels and restaurants greeted travelers well before they crossed the Skagway River and entered "downtown" White Pass City. The City may have begun where the Occidental and Seattle Hotels made up a compound on the south side of the Skagway River, approximately a quarter of a mile before the confluence. White Pass City ended abruptly at Toll Gate 9, placed there by Brackett Wagon Road workers because the canyon began to narrow where the trail marched up Dead Horse Gulch.

All tolled, the town existed for less than two years and was probably never thought of as a permanent community.³ Unlike Skagway, where town leaders held an election shortly after the rush began on December 4, 1897⁴, the only records of a White Pass City council are unofficial:

The principal caterers to public comfort in the city are R.J. Proulx, of the Seattle Hotel, which includes bar and restaurant; Richard Furbush, Iron Hotel, bar and restaurant; J.H. Montgomery, Occidental Hotel, bar and restaurant; J.J. Connors, of the Ham Grease saloon. These men are all members of the city council...⁵

White Pass City as seen from the newly completed railroad track, circa 1899. Photograph by M.M. Brackett. Courtesy C.B. Driscoll. Negative: BRWHP 139

Although situated in a beautiful valley, the physical appearance of White Pass City was unpleasant.

Although these community leaders are called “city council” by the author of this Skaguay News article which ran Friday, September 16, 1898, they are not listed as city or town council members in the Skagway archives.⁶ It is also unclear if they were elected officials, self-proclaimed councilmen, or if the author of the article dubbed them such himself. An official election is unlikely, as most of the White Pass City citizenry was of a transient nature with very few “permanent” residents. Any permanent citizens most likely owned or worked at one of the establishments, almost all of which were involved in the service industry (restaurants, hotels, etc.). Businesses and proprietors on record are:

Brackett Wagon Road, George Augustus Brackett and family, Toll Gate 9 and Summit Restaurant⁷;
J.J. Connors, Ham Grease Saloon⁸;
Richard Furbush, Iron Hotel Bar and Restaurant⁹;
D. Hachey, shoemaker¹⁰;
Thomas F. Lawrence, Jr. and F.A. Tabor, co-owners of the White Pass Hotel¹¹; J.H. Montgomery, Occidental Hotel Bar and restaurant¹²;
Patrick Murphy, blacksmith¹³
R. J. Proulx, Seattle Hotel Bar and restaurant¹⁴;
White Pass Yukon Route Railroad, ticket office and tram¹⁵;
Dr. Fenton Whiting, doctor’s office (tent).^{16 17}

According to journalist Stroller White, however, this list is a small representation of the businesses at White Pass City. During his August 1898 visit he observed:

White Pass City consisted mostly of tents but it also had sixteen buildings constructed of lumber and muslin, principally muslin. There were seventeen saloons—one for each building and one at large...¹⁸

In September 1898, the Skaguay News claimed that of the “...less than thirty houses including tents – all are tents but three – there are four hotels, nine saloons, three blacksmith shops, one shoemaker and one barber...”¹⁹ There may have been a dance hall, as one is mentioned in some diaries.²⁰ This dance hall may have been a place for traveling performers like Harriet and Harry Lyons to entertain. This couple traveled both the Chilkoot and White Pass Trails entertaining with piano, when one was available, and a coronet, which they carried with them.²¹ There were

boxers for the sports fans²² and plenty of betting games. Several writers describe a betting game called “Greyback.”²³

The game is this: Any number of packers, from two to half a dozen, walk up to a bar one of the number reaches to almost any part of his anatomy and picks off a large, well-fed, frisky “greyback”(bug) which he carefully lays upon the bar. The crowd stands still, and the man whom the “greyback” starts for is, in packer’s parlance, “stuck for the drinks...”²⁴

Before the death of Soapy Smith in Skagway on July 8, 1898, White Pass City would have been rife with confidence men under his employ. After his death Soapy’s men were chased out of the country, but because White Pass City didn’t have its own law enforcement, Soapy’s death probably didn’t entirely eliminate the type of scams and debauchery associated with Soapy’s livelihood. White Pass City was also the home to some prostitution, as evidenced by at least one incident involving a prostitute shooting a would-be customer. “On Monday (January 2) of this week, Jessie Rounds, a member of the White Pass ‘soiled dove’ sisterhood, shot a handful of shot and gun wads into George Johnson, a half breed, whom the woman claims had been annoying her with his attentions and threatening her life because she repulsed him...”²⁵ Johnson later died and Rounds was charged with his murder. Although she was acquitted a few months later, she was fined \$50 for drunkenness.²⁶

Although situated in a beautiful valley, the physical appearance of White Pass City was unpleasant. Most of the buildings were tents, as evidenced from diaries and photographs. Many of the tents had either wood or stone frames and floors.²⁷ There were some wooden buildings, most of which fronted the White Pass Fork River and the Brackett Wagon Road. Among those wooden buildings were the White Pass Hotel and Toll Gate 9, both on the way up Dead Horse Gulch on the White Pass Fork. Trees and shrubs were cleared to make way for buildings and streets. What was left, as evidenced by photographs, was thrown to the side in piles, making a mess of the streets and adding to the eye assaulting clutter. Also unlike Skagway, there appear to have been no formal street addresses. “Main Street” seems to refer to the Brackett Wagon Road, which crossed the Skagway River a few feet east of the confluence of the Skagway and White Fork Rivers. Advertisements for hotels and restaurants appeared in the

Outbreaks of tuberculosis, spinal meningitis, influenza and food poisoning (probably contracted from one of the City's eating establishments) took some lives and cost others many hours of progress on the trail.



White Pass Hotel in White Pass City. Dead Horse Gulch looms ahead. Courtesy British Columbia Archives. Negative: A-00970

Skagway papers luring potential customers to the “White Pass Hotel at end of ten-mile road on Skagway Trail,” or to a hotel “on trail near bridge.”

There likely was no formal Chamber of Commerce as there seemed to be little enthusiasm for making White Pass City permanent. Promotion of the city came from local newspapers, no doubt placating the business people of Skagway, upon whose advertising revenue they depended. Competition between the Chilkoot and White Pass Trail business leaders sometimes reached blasphemous proportions, as when Dyea residents accused Skagway businessmen of trying to capitalize on the deadly avalanche on the Chilkoot in the spring of 1898.

White Pass City was apparently without regular worship services. The only occasion for services would be a visit from Skagway clergy.²⁸ Although illness was prevalent, the only doctor there for any length of time was Dr. Fenton Whiting, also the official White Pass & Yukon Route surgeon. Many doctors stopped in, however, and to lend a hand on their way to the Klondike, but would soon be on their way. Outbreaks of tuberculosis, spinal meningitis, influenza and food poisoning (probably contracted from one of the City's eating establishments) took some lives and cost others many hours of progress on the trail.²⁹ Catherine Wealthy Dowell Earl was five years old when her family went to White Pass City during the gold rush. In her recollections, she wrote about becoming ill at the supper table with what turned out to be

spinal meningitis. She remembered five different doctors attending her, because each soon left White Pass City to continue their migration with the rush. Each doctor told her parents to take their children back to Seattle, which they did in the Spring.³⁰

When the railroad laid track to a spot just south of the City in the summer of 1898, it was called Heney Station after Mike Heney, the railroad's construction contractor. A steep tram was built down to the City and a ticket station built at the end of it.³¹ The railroad also created a "suburb." Because of its convenient location (just below the mountain through which the first tunnel would be built), White Pass City was chosen as the base camp for construction crews and equipment. But photos of the road built up the side of the mountain show the camp to be just outside of the main cluster of tents. This may be because of Heney's strict assertion that no liquor or tomfoolery be allowed in camp,³² so perhaps he built it outside the fray so as not to tempt his workers by living amongst it. Aside from the few permanent business owners, these construction workers made up some of the City's longest term residents, as they were there between August 1898 and February 1899.³³ In January 1899 the railroad workforce was up to 1,800 men, half of whom were employed clearing snow from the construction sites, and most of the other half constructing the tunnel.³⁴

Determining the exact size of the city in terms of the built environment is an inexact science. There are many photographs of White Pass City, and an examination of them reveals different streetscapes on almost every photo, suggesting frequent change. Tents were easy to move and easily lost in deep snow. Photos show them to have been built with wood or stone foundations. There are some wooden buildings, large and small. Some photographs show only a few,³⁵ and other photographs as many as approximately 50.³⁶ Some of the more colorful accounts of White Pass City claim that thousands of tents lined the mountainsides. These are probably overzealous estimates. In the summer of 1979, the University of Washington conducted an inventory of cultural resources in the Chilkoot and White Pass units of the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park. In her published account of the activity, project leader Caroline Carley recorded six general features, two structures, two structural scatters, 26 foundations, five pits, two artifacts and 18 artifact concentrations in the White Pass City area. Unfortunately, structural remains on the west bank during preliminary reconnaissance could not be mapped or described in detail because the

river rose, making access impossible. The party also tried to locate the northern limit of the town. Although the slippery rocks and fast moving water of the White Fork River hindered the search, what appears to have been the northernmost structure of the town was documented at the base of Dead Horse Gulch.³⁷

The same general location was informally surveyed by Carl Bowman, a seasonal summer archaeologist, in 1978. Bowman found and documented 23 sites, including some of the same found by Carley. He found a number of foundations, artifact scatters and even remains of a log cribbing 3 ½' high which may have supported the Brackett Wagon Road above high water. Although sites were generally in fair condition, Bowman predicted that shifting river flow patterns would soon wash some sites away.³⁸ No official follow-up was made to determine if that ever occurred.

One modern amenity at White Pass City was instrumental in the last days of the Toll Gate Wars between the Brackett Wagon Road company and White Pass packers. Although George Brackett's company had built a wagon road all the way from Skagway to the entrance of Dead Horse Gulch, packers considered the trail beyond Toll Gate 9 to be theirs.³⁹ Toll Gate 9⁴⁰ was placed at the entrance of the Gulch because the canyon narrowed there making it more difficult for packers to go around the gate in order avoid paying the toll. The Brackett Wagon Road company had installed a telephone line from Skagway to Toll Gate 9 during construction of the road. Violence broke out between the Toll Gate keepers and packers on many occasions, but on January 23, 1899, the Toll Gate foreman was injured when a packer hit him with an axe he was using to break down the gate. The foreman was able to use the telephone to call Al Brackett in Skagway, who filed a complaint with law enforcement. A deputy marshal from Skagway boarded the afternoon train to Heney Station and the packer was arrested.

There will always be mysteries about what exactly existed and transpired in White Pass City, but it is certain that when the railroad completed the tunnel and connected track from Skagway to the summit on February 20, 1899, the little town of tents was doomed.

The following quotes give an inkling of life in White Pass City:

White Pass City: A Busy Town of Tents: Terminal of Greatest Packing Route on Earth. Will be Good Business Point for Several Months.

The person who has never visited a mountain mining camp can form but a slight idea as to the present appearance of White Pass City, which, by the way, is not a mining camp, only a station on the long road that leads to mining camps. By the toll road, White Pass City is distant from Skaguay only twelve miles, although by the railroad now in process of construction, it will be about fifteen miles. White Pass City is the wagon terminal and at present, and until the completion of the railroad, all goods must be packed either by men, horses, mules or burros over the summit, a distance of four miles, and on to Bennett, a distance of from twenty-five to twenty-eight miles east of the summit...

Skaguay News,
September 16, 1898

White Pass Hotel: White Pass hotel is situated at the end of the ten-mile wagon road on the Skagway trail. During the height of travel over the pass, it sheltered nightly hundreds of weary packers and gold hunters. The building is of frame and although not a palatial hostelry. Its comforts were appreciated by men who otherwise, on many a night, would have been compelled to sleep out under the blue vault with cold winds pouring down the canyon and piling the snow in drifts about them. An ordinary wood bunk paid the owners of the hotel \$1 per night, or as much as a well furnished room in some of the best hotels in Seattle. Many's the night that the bunks were full and miners were glad to buy the privilege of rolling themselves up in their blankets and sleeping on the floor.

Anonymous author

The men were whipping dogs up and calling, 'Mush! Mush!' to them. Alice (her 23-month old sister) and I thought it was great fun and were calling, 'Mush! Mush!' too."

Catherine Wealthy Dowell Earl,
5-years-old (daughter of the

owners of the White Pass Hotel??) when her parents ran the White Pass Hotel⁴¹

When I got to White Pass City, the men on the bobsled just dumped my stuff off in snow that was twelve foot deep. I like to never got dug down to where I could make camp and pitch a tent. Thousands of men was milling around; part of them was there to build a wagon road up to Summit...It was coming on night, some of the crowd was pretty rough. I got inside my tent quick as I could, after I tied the pony close and piled hay in front of her...

Mont Hawthorne,
stampeder⁴²

At White Pass City the wagons were unloaded, and pack horses were temporarily relieved of their loads, fed and rested before making the steep ascent to Summit, the boundary line of Alaska and British Columbia. White Pass City was aptly named. There were the huge white circus-like tents of the railroad camp – tents for the mammoth mess halls, sleeping quarters for several 100 employees and tents for storage. There were other tents, such as the one I headed for, with the sign of "Saloon, Eats and Bunks." Roughly dressed men were seated at both sides of a long table on which were many steaming platters and dishes of food. An attendant said: "Sit down and help yourself. If you can't reach what you want, just ask someone to pass it to you..."

Richard (Dixie) Anzer,
Brackett Wagon Road
Company⁴³

On Monday (January 2 1899) of this week, Jessie Rounds, a member of the White Pass City 'soiled dove' sisterhood, shot a handful of shot and gun wads into George Johnson, a half breed, whom the woman claims had been annoying her with his attentions and threatening her life because she repulsed him. May Bark was present at the time of the shooting and she corroborates the Rounds woman's story. Of George, with "true Siwash grit he is holding on remarkably well. Johnson was engaged in packing to the railroad camps

“...everybody will make a trip to White Pass City, if for no other purpose than that of seeing the place and watching the work of hanging a railroad up on the side of a perpendicular mountain 800 feet above the city.”

Skaguay News, January 6, 1899

from White Pass City, and is said to have been drunk at the time he was shot. Both the women are tough looking, and dissolute.” Johnson died the next day. A blacksmith at White Pass City, Patrick Johnson, is alleged to have furnished the gun that Jessie used...

*Skaguay News,
January 6, 1899*

During the next two or three months everybody will make a trip to White Pass City, if for no other purpose than that of seeing the place and watching the work of hanging a railroad up on the side of a perpendicular mountain 800 feet above the city. On reaching the new town, the place to stay, while there, is at the Seattle Hotel, E.J. Proulx, proprietor. A large American flag waves over the Seattle, and as it is the only flag in town, you can't miss it. Mr. Proulx has everything a traveler can desire—excellent table, good beds, fine bar and a large stock of groceries and general merchandise. Proulx makes a specialty of his table, and has in his employ one of the best cooks in Alaska. Don't forget the Seattle Hotel when you go to White Pass City.

*Skaguay News,
September 16, 1898*

The Iron Hotel
White Pass City
Richard Furbush, Proprietor
First Class in every respect
Good Beds. Elegant Table.
Moderate Rates.
Stables in connection.

...We passed through the latter, entering a long canvas-covered room, containing thirty-two bunks, sixteen lower and sixteen upper, with places made for two in each; all were of logs over which, as usual, canvas was tightly stretched. The part to be occupied by each person was clearly defined, as a pole was lashed down the centre, although the same blanket covered both individuals...

Mary Hitchcock,
tourist⁴⁴

The train went further up the road than it is scheduled to run. The guests got off within hailing distance of the tunnel where a view of unsurpassed splendor could be had. A thousand feet below lay White Pass City. The tents looked like tiny snow flakes and people seemed no larger than pin heads. White Pass City presents unusual natural scenery. It is hemmed in on all sides by mountains whose peaks are covered with snow from one year's end to another. When the engine whistle announces the arrival or departure, the sound vibrates from one side to the other and makes a complete circuit of the mountains. Sometimes the echo can be heard for five minutes duration....

*Skaguay News,
January 20, 1899*

It is a masterpiece of world building. The camp is a setting in a silver shield. Bejeweled in shimmering icicles, embedded in deepest snows, and overlooked by giants of purest white on every side.

J.A. Costello,
Seattle Times,
March 1898

At last the railways could be seen through the loop in the mountains as we crossed the bridge and went along the main street of White Pass City or Heney, passing tents and houses.... (Upon arrival at their hotel) The proprietor and his wife begged me to do them the honour of naming their hotel, but as the one opposite was called “Ham Grease Saloon,” and seemed to be very popular, I did not feel equal to competing where such names were in favour. After resting a while, Captain T— accompanied me to the railroad station to attend to the luggage, and to purchase tickets. The station was at the bottom of a hill seven hundred feet high, the train at the top. “Do you mean to say we must climb that to reach the cars?” I asked of the agent; “why that is steeper than anything we have done on the entire Skaguay Pass.” “You might go up in the car with the luggage,” he replied. “I don't advise you to try it, lady,” said a bystander, “coz sometimes it slips back.”

We went out to inspect. The power house was above, the car below, and a stout cable-line connecting them. It looked perfectly safe, while the climb seemed a dizzy and a dangerous one. E— arrived, and said that the latter she could not do, so she decided that she would take the risk of going up in the car. Then she took her seat on top of a trunk, while Mrs. F—and Mr. F— accompanied her. When the car had reached the steepest part of the road, more than half-way up, the cable suddenly slackened, allowing it to slip backwards. "Jump for your lives," shouted the man in charge. Mr. and Mrs. F—, seated in front, were out in a second, but poor E—was imprisoned by a trunk which the employees had scarcely time to remove and extricate her from her perilous position before the car dashed down to the bottom of the steep hill. Two men helped her up to the top. This accident prevented all others from entering so dangerous a conveyance.

To those of us who had congratulated ourselves too soon upon having reached the end of all fatiguing exertion, this seemed in reality the last straw. We gazed upward and shuddered. Two men kindly offered me assistance, which I most gladly accepted. The entire trail seemed as nothing in comparison, for we dared not use the rails, with the cable now slack, then tight, then flapping so that we were in danger not even a rolling stone on which to rest the foot for an instant, and as we neared the train, it was by main force that the two stout men carried my weight until some of the employees leaned over the embankment and drew me up. I sank into the first seat at hand, and looked down the steep hill of which no photograph can give a realistic picture.

Mary Hitchcock,
tourist⁴⁵

White Pass City, or Heney Station as the railroad people call it, is being removed to the summit. The city is composed of tents and can easily be pushed along. Several of the tent stores are moving to the summit.

Skaguay News,
December 16, 1898

E.J. Proulx, the pioneer settler of White Pass City, was here this week on business. Mr. Proulx opened the Seattle hotel at White Pass City over a year ago, since which time it has ever been a haven of rest and delight to the weary traveler. At the present time, however, Mr. Proulx's town is quiet. The completion of the railroad to the summit has done away with the necessity for a town at White Pass City, where Mr. Proulx says a town lot can now be had in exchange for a pair of socks.

Skaguay News,
February 24, 1899

NOTES

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- ³ "The completion of the railroad will sound the death knell to horse and mule packing over White Pass, after which there will be no excuse for White Pass City remaining on the map." Skaguay News, Friday, September 16, 1898
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- ⁷ Molly Brackett photo, KLGO library, BRWHP150
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- ¹¹ Helen Watson reminiscence, KLGO library
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- ¹⁴ Skaguay News, *ibid*
- ¹⁵ Hitchcock, Mary, Two Women in the Klondike, G.P. Putnam's & Sons, New York & London, 1899, p. 454
- ¹⁶ Daily Alaskan May 1899, p. c
- ¹⁷ Dr. Fenton Whiting was also the official White Pass Yukon Route Railroad doctor, and had offices in Skagway and Dyea, in addition to White Pass City.
- ¹⁸ DeArmond, R.M., Stroller White: Tales of a Klondike Newsmen, Mitchell Press Limited, Vancouver, Canada, 1969, p.50
- ¹⁹ Skaguay News, February 16, 1898
- ²⁰ Bearss, p. 278; Swensen, p. 38
- ²¹ Harriet Lyons Stampeder file, 1984, KLGO library
- ²² DeArmond, p. 50
- ²³ DeArmond, p. 51; Skaguay News, September 16, 1898
- ²⁴ Skaguay News, *ibid*.
- ²⁵ Skagway News, "A Perforated Siwash," January 6, 1899, p. 5
- ²⁶ The Daily Alaskan, "New Year's Edition," January 9, 1900, p. 15
- ²⁷ Carley, Caroline D., "Inventory of Cultural Resources in The Chilkoot and White Pass Units of Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park," Office of Public Archaeology, Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Washington, Reconnaissance Report 40, 1981, pps. 235, 236, 238, Appendix VII, p. 491-550
- ²⁸ Skaguay News, September 16, 1898 "White Pass & Yukon, A Great Railroad Constructed through a Great Country"
- ²⁹ Although disease was prevalent, Victorian health care could do little to stop the advance of disease. An archaeological visit to the site would likely uncover bottles which contained Victorian tonics, such as Baker's "Stomach Bitters" (42.6% alcohol) or Warner's Safe Tonic Bitters (37.5% alcohol). (Schlereth, Thomas J., Victorian America, Harper Perennial, New York, NY p. 290
- ³⁰ "Recollections of Catherine Wealthy Dowell Earl," KLGO Archives
- ³¹ Hitchcock, Mary, Two Women in the Klondike, Putnam's Sons, New York and London, 1899, p. 452, 454; Minter, Roy, photo (personal collection)
- ³² Tower, Betsy, Big Mike Heney, Elizabeth A. Tower, Reprinted 1992, p. 12, Graves, S.H., On the White Pass Payroll, Paladin Press, New York, NY 1908, p. 61

³³ Graves, p. 60; Minter, p. 239

³⁴ Minter, Roy, The White Pass, p. 259

³⁵ Photo, KLGO collection, WC 16 2739

³⁶ Photo, KLGO collection, WC 20 2737

³⁷ Carley, Caroline D. Inventory of Cultural Resources in Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Office of Public Archaeology, Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Washington, Reconnaissance Report No. 40, Seattle, 1981, p. 234, 235

³⁸ Map and Site Notes, White Pass City, Carl Bowman, July 1978, author's personal collection

³⁹ The Brackett Wagon Road company did improve the trail from Toll Gate 9 to the summit, building a trail through Dead Horse Gulch which was too narrow for wagons. Loads which had come to White Pass City on wagons had to be broken down and carted on sleds or pack animals up the narrow trail. In spite of his claims to the contrary, Brackett never completed a wagon road to the summit.

⁴⁰ Toll Gate 9 may have been so named because it was located at Brackett's Camp number 9, as described in the Brackett Wagon Road field notes (see appendix). It is unlikely there were nine toll gates along the wagon road. Early on during construction and use of the Brackett Wagon Road, packers, angered by having to pay a toll on a trail they had been using for months, skirted around the toll gates to avoid the toll. Winter time, especially, made it easy for packers to travel on the ice of the Skagway River avoiding the wagon road almost entirely. Eventually, earlier toll gates were abandoned as ineffective and Toll Gate 9 was set up above White Pass City where the canyon narrowed as it entered Dead Horse Gulch, making it more difficult – if not impossible – for packers to skirt by the gate unnoticed. Although the field notes do not make note of locations of other toll gates, reference is made to several camps. Also, the George A. Brackett Wagon Road company homesteaded three tracts also noted in the field notes. These tracts were 5.96, 1.26 and 8.03 acres respectively and were probably used as construction camps, if not also toll gates. The first tract was in Skagway, the second at the location entering White Pass City where the bridge crossed the Skagway River, and the last was the area at Toll Gate 9. (See appendix.)

⁴¹ Recollections of Catherine Wealthy Dowell Earl, KLGO archives

⁴² McKeown, Martha Ferguson, The Trail Led North: Mont Hawthorne's Story, p. 114

⁴³ Anzer, Richard C. "Klondike Gold Rush, as recalled by a participant" Pageant Press, Inc., NY 1959, KLGO Reminiscences file

⁴⁴ Hitchcock, Mary E. Two Women in the Klondike: The Story of a Journey to the Gold-Fields of Alaska, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London, The Knickerbocker Press, 1899, p. 444

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 454-456



THE DEAD HORSE TRAIL.

The Dead Horse Trail

How many horses died on the Dead Horse Trail? The most commonly repeated figure declares 3,000 died and only 30 survived. Where did this number come from? Who was counting? The simple answer is — no one. It is, however, no fairy tale that hundreds — possibly thousands — of horses died on the White Pass Trail. Approximately 3,800 horses were registered by the U.S. Customs, but in the chaos and haste characterized by the early days of the gold rush the chance for human error was great.¹ Diaries of several men who saw the melee² in person refer to 3,000 horses, including those of Tappan Adney² and Lindley C. Branson.³ Pandemonium reigned supreme as ship after ship dumped its cargo into the water near Skagway:

Tents and piles of goods are scattered thickly along the trail. No one knows how many people there are. We guess five thousand — there may be more — and two thousand head of horses. Of course there are means of knowing, if one has kept track of arrivals of steamers at Skagway, but no one I know has bothered. A steamer arrives and empties several hundred people and tons of goods into the mouth of the trail, and the trail absorbs them as a sponge drinks up water. They are lost amid the gulches and trees...⁴

Captains of shipping vessels, determined to mine another sort of gold, stuffed as many passengers and animals as possible onto whatever “tub” would float north. Conditions aboard were not only uncomfortable but unhealthy. Animals stood flank to flank for as long as two weeks straight and were not always granted the luxury of food or water. And just because a horse lived to be counted by Customs, doesn’t mean they lived long enough to pack on the White Pass Trail. If a horse didn’t die due to conditions on the boat, they may have been killed in accidents, as a good number of animals certainly perished during shipwrecks. The *Atlantic*, bound for Skagway loaded with Klondikers, wrecked near Duke Island. The passengers were saved, but the vessel and its 120 tons of cargo were lost.⁵ Pitting profit against safety, the crew of the *Clara Nevada* ignored laws against booking passengers when carrying dynamite, and the ship blew up between Juneau and Skagway. All, including passengers, crew and livestock, were lost.⁶ These and other animals on similarly ill-fated ships were certainly casualties of the gold rush, but their

bodies lined the ocean floor, not the trail. Customs figures also do not address those horses that arrived at their destination too ill and tired to swim ashore. Many of the horses sold for duty to the Klondike were on their way to the glue factory when fate intervened, some were old family pets, and some were so young they weren’t even trained at halter, let alone packing. Some may have drowned or died from fright after they were backed off the boats or thrown off in crates and forced to swim the cold waters of Lynn Canal. The U.S. Customs number also does not account for those that landed in Skagway but ended up serving their owners on the nearby Chilkoot Trail, for the number of horses tortured on that trail easily numbered in the hundreds, as well. An accurate number of those who survived either trail is also impossible to know, for most of the horses strong enough to endure were taken on to Lake Bennett and Dawson or sold to stampedeurs only to relive the ordeal again.

With some certainty, we can assume that the bodies of hundreds — possibly thousands — of horses line the White Pass Trail from Skagway to Lake Bennett. However, barring a thorough archaeological search of every square inch of the trail and its surrounds, a true and accurate accounting will forever remain a mystery. Surely then, the real tragedy of this story is not how many animals were brutalized, but that such brutality took place at all.

I must admit that I was as brutal as the rest but we were all mad — mad for gold, and we did things that we lived to regret.

Jack Newman,
White Pass packer⁷

We arrived at Skagway quite early the next morning. The boat was badly listed to one side by the shifting of the cargo and would have been worse had she not been stowed so full of cargo that there was little room for shifting. It was found, however, that two mules on board had been killed and a cow had both hind legs broken.

J.D. Fraser,
stampeder⁸

“This brute (I cannot call him a man) cursed at and beat this poor horse with an axe handle with all his might for half an hour.”

Clare Boynton

One outfit killed 37 horses, and there were others that equaled or surpassed that figure.

Tappan Adney,
journalist⁹

I tell you it was bad enough for men to kill their fool selves chasing in there after gold, but God knows there should have been somebody with the power to stop the things they was doing to them horses. Any horse that went in for the gold rush never come out; he just had a one way ticket.

Mont Hawthorn,
stampeder¹⁰

Cos' cayuse packed seven weeks for us. Never touched her pack to a hanging rock or tree, and stuck in the mud only once. That was the last day. We unpacked her and dug her up. Cos sold her to a packer and she lasted only a week.

There were three thousand dead horses on the Skagway trail in the fall of '97. You could walk on them for a half mile out of Bennett and not step on the ground. For forty-two miles from Skagway to Lake Bennett it wasn't safe to drink water from a lake, stream or spring. In the spring of '98, sled dogs fed on the carcasses and became so sick they couldn't pull the sleds.

Lindley C. Branson,
stampeder¹¹

Advertisement in The Daily Alaskan: August 3, 1898:

HOT AND COLD BATHS

City Water and Not Dead Horse Soup
“The Principal Barber Shop”

Prompt Action Necessary: Health Supervisor and Fire Warden James Larkin yesterday walked up the dry Skagway river bed to a point about half a mile above the city to try to devise some means of removing the numerous dead horses that are lying in the dry bed of the river and which, if not removed, will cause much

sickness this summer in Skagway...Some of these horses have been washed down from up the trail and others were taken out where they now lie by their owners and killed.¹²

So far as stench and decaying horseflesh were concerned, they were in strong evidence. The Desert of Sahara with its lines of skeletons can boast of no such exhibition of carcasses. Long before Bennett was reached I had taken count of more than a thousand unfortunates whose bodies now made part of the trail; frequently we were obliged to pass directly over these ghastly figures of hide, and sometimes, indeed, broke into them. Men whose veracity need not be questioned assured me that what I saw was in no way the full picture of the “life” of the trail; the carcasses of that time were less than one third of the full number which in April and May gave grim character to the route to the new Eldorado. Equally spread out, this number would mean one dead animal for every sixty feet of distance!

Angelo Heilprin,
geologist¹³

There was a dreadful suffering of the poor men and animals trying to get their outfits over the hill. My heart just ached for...the poor patient horses, burros, oxen and dogs that were bruised and bleeding till the trail was simply a trail of blood.... The strain and hardships told on the men and many for them were cruel almost beyond description. Numbers of poor beasts gave up the struggle and on both sides of the trail we could count their bodies in dozens. This is one of the most heartrending scenes I witnessed: A man was trying to drive up this awful hill with a spirited young horse, with a four foot loaded sled hitched behind. This brute (I cannot call him a man) cursed at and beat this poor horse with an axe handle with all his might for half an hour. Then he took a long rope and fastened it around the horse's neck and pulled the rope up over the limb of a tree, pulling the horse's two hind legs together, and then cut an ear off, leaving the horse to die! The man went on up the trail, and has never been seen since. The horse

*“Now and then a horse or mule
would fall on the rough trail and
break a leg or would become so
bruised and worn that they could
no longer stagger to their feet. . . .”*

Thomas W. Moore

died before morning, even though he was cut down
from his strangling condition.

Clare Boynton,
stampeder
p. 27 Women of the
Klondike⁴

Our horse died, was carried off by a bear.

Yakima Pete Norby,
stampeder⁵

...From time to time during the meal the boys glanced
at each other; their looks seemed to say; “I don’t know
what you think, but my moose meat is damned
tough.”...We started at daybreak on our journey, but
had not gone far before we came across the carcass
from which our supper was supplied. “The sons of
guns,” we exclaimed, “dead horse!” The steaks had
been chopped out with an axe...

W.H.T. Olive,
stampeder, 1898⁶

The first time I went over a bad part of trail, I saw a
horse that had fallen and broken his leg a few minutes
before in a place where the trail passed between two
large boulders. His pack had been removed, and some
one had mercifully knocked him on the head with an
axe, and traffic had been resumed across the body
which was still warm when I passed. When I returned
that evening there was not a vestige of that horse left
except his head lying on one side of the trail and his
tail on the other. The traffic had ground him up.

Samuel H. Graves,
President, White Pass Yukon
Route Railroad, p. 36-7⁷

I have seen men beat their horses over their heads with
clubs as large as your arm, until they fell to the ground
under the shower of blows. I have seen a pack mule
down with a heavy load on its back and three men
standing over with clubs showering blows over his
head and body as though they were working on a
wager. I have seen dogs laid stiff and cold by a blow
from a club in the hands of these merciless masters.
Now and then a horse or mule would fall on the rough

trail and break a leg or would become so bruised and
worn that they could no longer stagger to their feet. . .

Thomas W. Moore,
stampeder⁸

The horses died like mosquitoes in the first frost and
from Skagway to Bennett they rotted in heaps. They
died at the rocks, they were poisoned at the summit,
and they starved at the lakes; they fell off the trail, what
there was of it, and they went through it; in the river
they drowned under their loads or were smashed to
pieces against the boulders; they snapped their legs in
the crevices and broke their backs falling backwards
with their packs; in the sloughs they sank from fright
or smothered in the slime; and they were disembow-
eled in the bogs where the corduroy logs turned end
up in the mud; men shot them, worked them to death
and when they were gone, went back to the beach and
bought more. Some did not bother to shoot them,
stripping the saddles off and the shoes and leaving
them where they fell. Their hearts turned to stone –
those which did not break – and they became beasts,
the men on the Dead Horse Trail.

Jack London,
journalist⁹

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Horse Suicide?

Yesterday a horse deliberately walked over the face of Porcupine Hill. Said one of the men who saw it: "It looked to me, sir, like suicide. I believe a horse will commit suicide, and this is enough to make them; they don't mind the hills like they do these mud-holes...I don't know but that I'd rather commit suicide, too, than be driven by some of the men on this trail."

Tappan Adney, Journalist¹

Suicide? Can a horse commit suicide? Are animals capable of the kind of deliberate thought that would precipitate suicidal behavior? Despite numerous eyewitness accounts of "horse suicide" during the Klondike rush, horses are not consciously suicidal, according to Dr. Temple Grandin, Assistant Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University.² According to Grandin, the type of behavior described in White Pass diaries is extremely unusual.

When searching for an explanation for "horse suicide," Grandin first cites sheer exhaustion caused by conditions on the trail. The mud in the trail, for instance, required a great deal of energy from an animal. Removing one leg that was stuck in the mud – let alone four – would require tremendous effort, much more so than a normal stride. "Remember the most tired you have ever been," she says "and multiply it by four." There was so much mud on the trail in places that horses would actually be lost in the mud, never to be seen again. Considering, also, that the horses were over- and poorly-loaded with gear, and it is not surprising that horses were driven to such extreme exhaustion.

In addition, many animals were starving. Energy spent by horses was seldom replenished properly. Many were forced to make the trip without being fed, as hay or horse feed would have added extra weight to the stamperder's required 1,200 pounds of supplies. Starving horses were forced to wait until the trip was over to be fed. Hallucinations caused by starvation could easily explain a horse's walk off a cliff. In the wintertime, given the severe winter conditions on the White Pass, they faced another danger. Starving animals, when confronted with severe cold conditions, do not literally freeze to death, but rather can contract kidney infections because of ice buildup on their hides. The urine becomes bloody and the overtaxed animal dies.³

Grandin also suggests that this deviant behavior could have been a result of what animals tried to eat along the trail. Many were poisoned and died as a result of ingesting foliage that would typically be ignored by a well-cared for animal. But starving as they were, many reached for whatever they could find to alleviate the pain of hunger. For instance, plants such as *Equisetum arvense*, *Senecio triangularis* and *Astragalus alpinus* (cousins of locoweed) have been found along the White Pass in recent years. While *Equisetum arvense* and *Senecio triangularis* are poisons that impair the function of vital organs, *Astragalus alpinus* is known to impair an animal's nervous system, causing depression, lack of coordination, excitability, edema and death. Starving animals could easily have found these and other poisonous plants along the trail. Hallucination and pain caused by the ingestion of poisonous plants could most certainly explain self-destructive behavior.

In the average pack train can be seen all kinds and descriptions of horses, from the honest old plow horse down to the neat little smooth limbed Hambletonians which were never intended for other uses than the saddle or light driving. Here, also, is seen the sad eyed mule and the little Mexican burro, all far away from their native red top clover, orchard grass and thistles and not one of them in a thousand will ever return to the scenes of early life. Several authentic stories are told by owners of the animals and packers too, of horses and mules which have actually committed suicide on the trail within the past year by jumping over precipices or eating of rock moss which instinct has taught them to shun...

Skagway News,

Friday, September 16, 1898⁴

A packed horse fallen from a bridge, circa 1898.
Photograph by M.M. Brackett. Courtesy C. B.
Driscoll. BRSYG044

“On the White Pass in the fall of '97, horses loaded with all they could carry, have left the trail and deliberately walked off a precipice to be hurled to death on the rocks below.”

Thomas W. Moore

You will no doubt smile when I suggest a horse committing suicide, but I have been told by men whom I have no reason to doubt that they had actually seen it. On the White Pass in the fall of '97, horses loaded with all they could carry, have left the trail and deliberately walked off a precipice to be hurled to death on the rocks below. On the Copper river trail they have done the same, while on the Edmington (sic) trail, when turned loose at night, they have walked into the swamp, laid down and drowned. Not only one man has told me this, but dozens...

Thomas W. Moore,
stampeder⁵

Most of them perished at the hands of gold-mad cheechakos who believed that a horse could work night and day on nothing but Saratoga chips...

Cy Warman,
journalist⁶

On his (Ed Feero's) first trip out with experienced packers, the train made seven miles the first day. The lead packer then staked out the horses with only a handful of grain each and prepared to retire. Feero protested without avail that the horses should receive more feed, and protested even more when they were forced to resume the trip the next morning with the same bare ration. Feero refused to continue and returned to Skagway...Feero refused to go out on the trail unless there was proper food for the horses and a wrangler to take care of them en route. When he did make a trip in charge of a train, it was a most speedy and successful one, without the loss of a horse, which was unheard of in those days.

Howard Clifford,
The Skagway Story⁷

Our animals had to be willing or get the club, and as for justice, it was common practice for a man to give his animals a few good feeds in Skagway, load them with all they could possibly carry, and try to make Lake Bennett with them before they died of starvation. There was big

money in packing, but hay was selling for ten cents a pound and we couldn't afford to waste it on weaklings. But if the weaklings lasted to the end of the journey, that was velvet. ... We couldn't waste ten-cent hay on a worn-out horse.

Jack Newman,
White Pass packer⁸

On the White pass, or Skaguay trail, there is no point where there is any risk to human life. The loss of horses arises chiefly from bad packing, overloading, want of knowledge how to handle them on the trail, overwork or deficient feed... Some horses have been smothered in the mud holes, and a few have had their limbs broken by getting entangled on hidden roots in such holes...

Seattle Post Intelligencer,
August 21, 1897⁹

We wore rubber boots reaching to our thighs – and had use for them. Mud, moss, ice, slush, logs and roots of trees, with ever and anon the corpse of a horse to vary the monotony.

Frank Berkeley,
stampeder¹⁰

Everybody tried to be the first, and most everybody got stuck ere the first rough mile was passed. Of course, the tender, mossy sod over the humus accumulations was broken by the feet of the first animals that passed over them. The mosses and huckleberry bushes were trodden down and the inky humus welled up, fluent and puddly and scarce firm enough to support a fly. Greatly to their surprise, these hardy, bespattered pioneers found the craggy Alaska hillslopes about as much bog as rock – a slobbery bog between every three or four bowlders. If the bottoms of the miserable puddles were only level they might be easily wallowed through, but they are far from level. Most of them have slanting or hopper-shaped sides on which the feet of animals glint and slide, and oftentimes they get caught in hidden holes between the

rocks, and in their efforts to free themselves some of them broke their legs, and others, though uninjured, had to be dragged out with ropes. Many of these small interboulder bogs are barely big enough to take in one animal at a time; others accommodate a dozen or more with their masters, making a wild, discouraging mess on which the beautiful trees and flowers look calmly down.

John Muir,
naturalist"

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Homesick!

My first feeling of loneliness came when the steamer COTTAGE CITY, with me on board, moved out from its dock at Seattle, particularly when it was clear of the wharf and blew a long mournful whistle of departure.

Ward Hall¹

The next morning we lined up at the P.O. for the mail. This was a very long and tiresome operation as there was always a line of from 50 to 100 men waiting their turn and as you were only allowed to ask for one person's mail at a time, we had to go through the performance three times.

Thomas W. Moore²

My bed of snow and boughs was quite comfortable and warm but it was not like the bed I left at home.

Robert Embleton³

I have just sent a letter to you to Skaguay. It cost me .25 and it will cost me .25 for each letter he gets for me. I will gladly pay it if the letters are from you.

Robert Embleton⁴

Easter Sunday, Apr. 10, 1898

We did not know that it was Easter Sunday and worked hard as we did any day this week. The way I found out it was Easter, an acquaintance of ours was sitting on a sleigh eating hard tack and he called out to me these are hard boiled eggs for Easter Sunday.

Bruno Graf⁵

My neighbor has just returned from Skaguay with two letters for me from you. One contained the proof and the other the pictures of two of the prettiest, sweetest and dearest children on earth. Those two pictures will be a source of great pleasure to me. Why did you not have your own picture taken? I cannot tell you how glad I was to get your letters. I don't know what I shall do when the time comes that I can't send to Skaguay for my mail.

Robert Embleton⁶

Tuesday, January 25, 1898

Camp near Ford

Snow storm continued all day. Wind south. Thermometer in morning at 24 above...Coleman brought me batch of letters from home, of dates Jan. 8, 11, 13. I enjoyed their contents as a man only can who is buried away from civilization.

Emile Wishaar⁷

Well, don't expect another letter in a month as I don't expect to be in town again in some time. You have to stand in line from one to two hours in order get a letter, so you can know that I appreciate them when I get them. Above all don't worry about me as I am just as well off as though I was out with a gang in Wis.

Kirke E. Johnson⁸

Annie this letter writing is awfully discouraging. I write page upon page but get no response nor any sign of appreciation. I do not even know that my letters reach you. I would give all the gold in this country were it necessary for the letters which I know are on the way for me.

Robert Embleton⁹

Dec. 14 Tue. - Davis starts with 3 days rations for Boulder Cr. To investigate lay. J.S.C. feeling poorly, in cabin all day, no one called, lonely day of it. "Wish I were home." No mail.¹⁰

Dec. 24. Fri. - Stay in cabin all day, sick and blue, tomorrow is Christmas, nothing very merry about the blooming Klondyke...

James S. Cooper¹¹

I could go on indefinitely telling of the many curious things seen and heard here, and the funny episodes that occur, but I am writing this just in time to catch the boat. I wish some of you would write, as I have not heard a word since leaving (sic) home. All letters should be addressed care of Major Walsh, Administrator of the Yukon, Yukon to be forwarded, and they will probably catch me wherever I may be. It would not be safe to give any definite address, as it is impossible at this stage to tell where I shall be.

George R. (Duff) Pattullo¹²

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George Augustus Brackett and the Brackett Wagon Road

...“Let George Do It,”...for it was the common habit, when anything big or little, was to be done to turn everything over to Mr. Brackett.

The Minneapolis Journal, “George A. Brackett, Pioneer Leader, Dead”;
Tuesday Evening, May 17, 1921. Front page.

The Pacific Coast Steamship Company began running regular tourist excursion voyages through the Inside Passage of Alaska in 1884. By the summer of 1890 they showed the wonders of Alaska to 5,000 people every year.¹ Tourists saw for themselves that Alaska was not a wasteland of frozen tundra – that it was, in fact, a beautiful, lush landscape.

George Augustus Brackett and his wife Annie Hoit Brackett were just such passengers in the late 1880s. When Brackett first set eyes on Alaska, he could not have known what a pivotal role he would play in its future.² He saw first hand the steep mountains, lush greenery and experienced its erratic weather. His knowledge of the impressive Alaskan terrain would give him an advantage over the many businessmen who would scramble to the Klondike in just a few years’ time.

Brackett was born in Calais, Maine in 1836. Educational opportunities were limited in the small town, so the ambitious young man set about educating himself.³ He moved to St. Anthony, Minnesota in 1857 where he married Anna M. Hoit in 1858 and began to plan for his family’s future by opening a meat market. Brackett turned the business to his advantage during the Civil War by supplying the troops of the “First Minnesota” regiment with fresh meat. Later, he was entrusted with supplying food to the troops deployed to keep peace during the Sioux Indian uprising of 1862-64. During a hunting trip on July 24, 1863, a group of Sioux appeared from nowhere and Brackett’s companion was killed with a single arrow. The horses spooked and the Sioux pursued them. Brackett was left alive but alone and on foot. Seven days later he stumbled into Fort Atchison, Wisconsin, having survived the challenges of the drought stricken countryside for a week.⁴

Upon his return to Minnesota, Brackett embarked on less adventurous ways to support his growing family.⁵ In 1865 he became a miller and was made overseer of the highways and

later supervisor of the Minneapolis Township. In 1869 Brackett began his involvement with the Northern Pacific Railroad by leading a survey party as far as the Missouri River. He later contracted with them to build the railroad’s first section from the St. Louis River at the foot of Lake Superior to Fargo, North Dakota. In 1873 he became mayor of Minneapolis. Mayor Brackett promoted the beautification of his city and lobbied to create public parks. He continued his involvement in the Northern Pacific Railroad, and in 1881 built a section of the Canadian Pacific west of Winnipeg.

The financial depression that swept the world in 1893 cost Brackett much of his hard-earned lifetime savings.⁶ He lost most of his holdings in real estate, as did many others who were heavily mortgaged.⁷ Many people depended upon Brackett for their livelihood, including a number of his seven sons still living at home, a disabled sister and an uncle who raised horses for him in Montana.⁸ When news of the discovery of gold in the Klondike reached Minneapolis, Brackett, like thousands of others, was instantly intrigued.

Brackett was not interested in searching for gold himself – his would be a different kind of fortune. Because he had already been to Alaska, Brackett had an inkling of what gold seekers would need – food and equipment. The Brackett family’s distinguished involvement in the Skagway community began when the patriarch sent his son Jim in August 1897, on the barque *Shirley* with a load of cattle. Jim slaughtered the cattle on the beaches of Skagway and sold the fresh meat and other supplies to miners.⁹ By the fall of 1897, Frank, Brackett’s sixth son, had built the Brackett Trading Post.¹⁰ Among the items in the Trading Post’s inventory was a lightweight cooking kit designed especially for miners by Brackett’s son, William Davidson Brackett, a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.¹¹ In addition to regaining his wealth by providing services to the stampedeers, Brackett hoped to provide pioneering experiences for his sons in



Camp of Brackett's Battalion near Sioux City, May 28, 1865. Photograph by Mr. McDonald. Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society. MHS Locator: E420/r1. Negative: 4154

a bustling nation from which pioneer opportunities were rapidly vanishing.¹² All but one of his sons eventually joined him and brought with them an entourage of wives and children.

George Brackett's first trip to Alaska as an entrepreneur was in September, 1897 when he left Seattle bound for Skagway aboard the *City of Seattle*. It was during this voyage that he met J.H. Acklen, a Nashville, Tennessee lawyer and former congressman. The two men discussed the many transportation problems faced by Klondike stampedeers. The two split up upon their arrival —

Brackett went on to Dyea, and Acklen remained in Skagway. Brackett was convinced that the Chilkoot Trail was the better choice for a wagon road while Acklen remained steadfast in his preference of the White Pass. One reason for Acklen's preference was the fact that a man named Norman Smith claimed to have conducted a survey of the White Pass. Buoyed by the progress he believed had already been made, Acklen joined forces with Smith.¹³ Upon their return to Seattle aboard the *Rosalie*, Acklen and Smith were able to persuade Brackett that the White Pass was preferable to the Chilkoot, and that, because of his

experience building roads and railroads, he was the man to lead the work. Reluctantly, Brackett agreed to permit Acklen and Smith to use his name when promoting the idea to investors, but he refused to take stock in the project personally until he had an opportunity to return to Skagway and examine the project's viability himself.¹⁴

Upon their arrival in Seattle, the trio hired an attorney, John P. Hartman, to file articles of incorporation for the Skagway & Yukon Transportation & Improvement Company (SYTIC). The object of the corporation was to build whatever was necessary to facilitate transportation over the White Pass, including but not limited to wagon roads, bridges and a railroad. In accordance with the corporation laws of the State of Washington, the corporation was empowered to enter into contracts to carry out their objectives in any part of Alaska or the Canadian Northwest Territories. The corporation was authorized to issue \$500,000 in capital stock, consisting of 25,000 shares of preferred stock with a par value of \$10 per share and a similar amount of normal stock. The life of the corporation was to be 50 years, and it was to be managed by a five-man board of trustees.¹⁵ The Washington Secretary of State granted a charter of incorporation to the Skagway & Yukon Transportation & Improvement Co. in October 1897.¹⁶

From Seattle, Brackett wrote to his son Chapin (Chape) on October 27, 1897:

...I have taken hold with Judge Acklen and others to start this road over the Skaguay Pass. You understand, of course, there is much detail to be entered into before I can do as I would like, as the law in Alaska will not admit of the construction of a toll road without act of Congress, which does not meet until December...I shall, however, go to Skagway and commence work and push as rapidly as possible, taking chances of the necessary legislation. I have just closed a contract for a 250' span railroad bridge to cross the main canyon, which is in fact the key to the situation on the Skaguay river; having the right to collect toll over this bridge gives us possession of the one pass over which a railroad or wagon road can be built. We already have men at work at that point.¹⁷

In a letter written to his son Tom the next day, Brackett could not contain his enthusiasm:

...Opportunities are offered here every day, and I think I never have seen so much enthusiasm and so active a community as I find here, and everyone looking to the Clondyke; I say every one, I mean the majority; I am not a Clondyke man; I am only watching opportunities, and the little gold that I dig shall be in enterprises forwarding the interests of those who are going to the Clondyke. See my letter to Chape in relation to my wagon road enterprise and to Dave and Al relating to other matters. I find life to (sic) short to go into details with seven boys, I am therefore covering business with one, social relations with another, etc.¹⁸

Upon his return to Skagway a few weeks later on November 6, Brackett's enthusiasm felt its first blow. Much to Brackett's disappointment, he found that the only work accomplished during his absence was the construction of a 50-foot bunkhouse at the East Fork crossing, and a start on a second at the crossing of the Skagway River, where White Pass City had taken root. Brackett called a meeting that very evening to stir things up, and the next day, Engineer Norman Smith took a ten-man crew out to the trail to determine the right-of-way. Superintendent D. McL. Brown prepared to follow with the crew slated to build the steel trestles.¹⁹

There was more to trouble Brackett than just construction delays. Funding problems were already surfacing. At the same November 6 meeting, the wagon road promoters seemed to Brackett to be "all stock and no money."²⁰ Brackett refused to promote the company until he could demonstrate to prospective investors their money would receive a good return. The company's treasurer, David Samson, tried to assure Brackett that selling stock would be easy, but Brackett needed money, not promises. To get things rolling, Brackett offered to put up a certain amount of his own money if each of the board members matched it. Recognizing this issue as a deal breaker, the board agreed to Brackett's terms and each of the 16 promoters promised to front \$100 of their own money so that work could begin immediately. They also agreed to raise \$125,000 in additional capital through the sale of stock. Brackett was named general superintendent and general manager of the company and offered a salary of \$500 per month.²¹ Construction began two days later, but because only



Ch. H. H. H.



Toll gate on the Brackett Wagon Road, White Pass Trail, Alaska, ca. 1898. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg B411

a few of the enthusiastic promoters had actually paid their assessment, Brackett was forced to use money from his own personal account to finance the project's beginning.

Money was not Brackett's only problem. On November 9, just three days after his arrival in Skagway, Brackett sent a crew to explore the route with Smith's survey. The survey, which originally convinced Judge Acklen that the White Pass was a superior route, proved to be pure fiction. When Brackett confronted Smith, he admitted that he and two associates had run a line to Lake Bennett using a pocket compass, a discarded Canadian map

they had found along the trail, and "some good guessing as to the character of the country."²²

Unhappy but undaunted, Brackett walked out of town and up the trail to conduct a survey himself. By November 12 Brackett had determined to his satisfaction that the route was still possible and proceeded to design the road. It would follow the Skagway River as far as possible, with an extreme grade of eight percent and an average grade of four percent throughout the entire distance.²³ By mid-November, Brackett had 75 men on the payroll.²⁴ The rock work proved easier than anticipated. Crews worked at

Facing page: George Brackett (kneeling on right) discusses road plans with investors. Courtesy C.B. Driscoll (Brackett Family Collection)



Log Bridge on the White Pass Trail, Alaska, ca. 1898. Photograph by Eric A. Hegg. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 120

different points along the road. Brackett watched the crews with pleasure as completed sections were attached to form the road he visualized.²⁵

Construction advanced well under his supervision, but business matters continued to plague him. The first two paydays were met, but before the third was due, T.M. Word, President of SYTIC informed Brackett there was no money in the treasury. In an action that would ultimately doom the SYTIC, Word sent Treasurer David Samson to Seattle and San Francisco with \$125,000 of “blank stock to be filled out as he saw fit and to

whom, agreeing to return \$50,000 in gold in the next two or three weeks.”²⁶ Upon his departure, Samson helped himself to the small amount of money left in the SYTIC treasury to pay for his trip. A very suspicious George Brackett sent Superintendent Brown after Samson to monitor his activities.

To complicate matters, Judge Acklen had had little success interesting investors in the road for a number of reasons, including the speculation that the road’s grade was too steep for a railroad, which is where everyone believed the real money could be made.²⁷ Although his confidence was shaken, Acklen planned

to visit Congress to persuade them to grant SYTIC the right-of-way. This would be an important coup for the corporation, for if SYTIC held the White Pass right-of-way, any other speculators who came to the country to build a railroad would have to negotiate with them to proceed. Consequently, even if the SYTIC did not build a railroad, they stood to make money from whoever did.²⁸

In the meantime, investors balked at what they deemed to be extravagant salaries for company management. At the same time salaries created discord amongst investors, more alarming news reached them via telegram from Superintendent Brown. For serendipitous travel reasons, Brown reached Seattle before Samson, even though he left after him. Upon his arrival Brown sent a telegram to Acklen explaining that the very survey which initially sold them on the White Pass was a fraud. Unfortunately, Brown neglected to inform investors that Brackett had successfully completed the survey on his own. News that current investors had been hoodwinked did not help Acklen's search for investors.

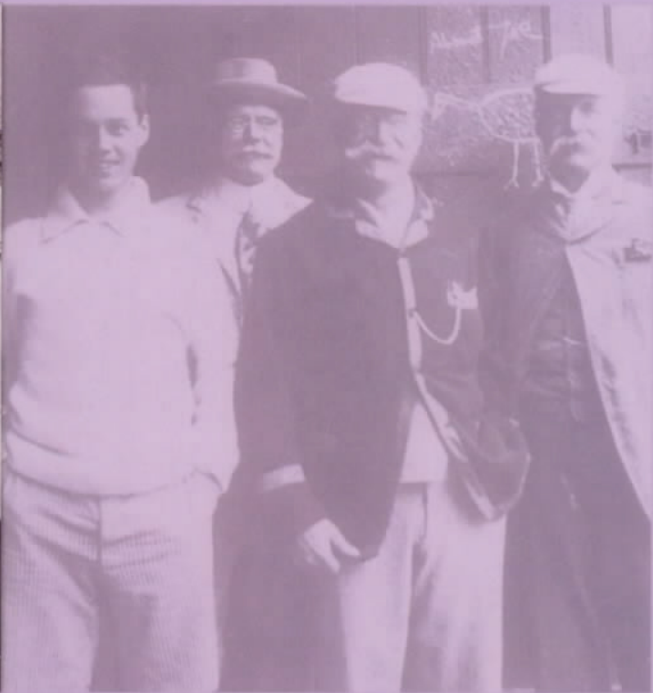
When Samson arrived in Seattle on November 29, he was enraged to hear of Brown's telegram and demanded he send another assuring Acklen of the road's feasibility. Samson was further enraged when Acklen did not immediately respond to his demand that Acklen wire \$500.²⁹ After applying for a loan from the Washington National Bank on behalf of the SYTIC, Samson met with members of the Board of Trustees and told them the bank's response: "you get rid of the Acklen combination and I will help you out to complete your road." Consequently, the Board rescinded the SYTIC president and secretary's order to deliver stock to Acklen, allowing Samson to get his hands on however much money he wanted. Samson, however, was in for a big surprise. The bank turned him down flat:

Your case is very weak.... I (bank president) know positively that no survey was made of the entire route; your engineers don't even know the route; that your engineer Smith is a man who cannot be relied upon, nor would I accept a survey from him, as everything depends upon a proper magnetic survey, and you cannot furnish it. I know perfectly well that none of you have ever been over the route any further than Porcupine Hill.³⁰

Samson saw that his scam was uncovered and, after helping himself to the \$800 left in the treasury, ran off to the Philippines. Brackett never heard from him again, but the damage was done. The foundation of the SYTIC had crumbled around him. Even an eternal optimist like George Brackett had to be discouraged by these shenanigans. To make matters worse, many of the Board of Trustees and Skagway promoters who had been so enthusiastic at the November 6 meeting had still failed to produce any money. At the same time the SYTIC treasury was on its way to the Philippines, Brackett had 200 men to feed with empty corporate pockets. Brackett paid the salaries with his own money, including that of Engineer Norman Smith because Skagway promoters had not authorized Brackett to fire him.³¹ Skagway promoters offered little encouragement and less money. In fact, President Word was so disgusted that he demanded his investment be refunded. Brackett paid Word out of his own pocket and accepted his resignation as president, effectively making himself president of what was left of the bedraggled company. With Brackett now in total charge, the Skagway Yukon Transportation & Improvement Company became the George A. Brackett Wagon Road.

NOTES

- ¹ Norris, Frank. Gawking at the Midnight Sun, Alaska Historical Commission Studies in History #170, June 1985, p. 16
- ² Driscoll, Cynthia Brackett: Personal correspondence with the author, 3-23-00.
- ³ The Minneapolis Journal, "George A. Brackett, Pioneer Leader, Dead"; Tuesday Evening, May 17, 1921.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Brackett and his wife Annie had seven sons and one daughter who lived to adulthood. They also had two children, a son and daughter, who died in infancy.
- ⁶ Driscoll correspondence, 3-23-00
- ⁷ Minneapolis Journal, 4-17-21
- ⁸ Brackett's wife died in 1890 when her youngest son was only 8. The couple's daughter, Susie, took charge of the household of six boys until her marriage in 1892.
- ⁹ Driscoll correspondence, 3-23-00
- ¹⁰ Spude, Robert, Klondike Gold Rush, Skagway Alaska, Anthropology and Historic Preservation, Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Occasional Paper No. 36, 1983, p. 157.
- ¹¹ Driscoll, 3-23-00
- ¹² Driscoll, Cynthia Brackett, One Woman's Gold Rush, Oak Woods Media, 1996, p. 26.
- ¹³ Bearss, Edwin, Klondike Gold Rush, Office of History and Historic Architecture, Eastern Service Center, Washington, D.C., 11-15-70, National Park Service, p. 199-200.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. p. 200
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 200-201
- ¹⁶ Ibid. p.201
- ¹⁷ Driscoll, Cynthia Brackett, p. 27
- ¹⁸ Driscoll, p. 29
- ¹⁹ Bearss, p. 203
- ²⁰ Bearss, p. 203
- ²¹ Bearss, p. 203
- ²² Bearss, p. 204
- ²³ Minter, Roy, The White Pass: Gateway to the Klondike, University of Alaska Press, 1987, p. 105
- ²⁴ Minter p. 106
- ²⁵ Minter, p. 106
- ²⁶ Bearss, p. 205
- ²⁷ Bearss, p. 205
- ²⁸ Bearss. p. 206
- ²⁹ Later in December, Samson received a message that Acklen was very ill, a product of overwork and worry about the state of the company. (Bearss, p. 207)
- ³⁰ Ibid. 209
- ³¹ Minter, p. 106



A Gentleman's Wager

There is going to be an enormous rush to the Klondike region and...those who own the 44 miles of this railroad, which in time may be extended to Dawson City, will, I believe, for years to come have an investment paying enormous dividends.

William Brooks Close, 18 December 1897¹

William Brooks Close was born in 1853 in the Kingdom of Naples.² His father, James Close, had left England for Sicily and Naples in 1819, where he used experience gained in the family's investment business to establish a merchant enterprise in 1856. James Close became adviser to King Ferdinand II of Naples for which he was given the distinguished title of "Cavaliere." He also wrote a treatise on his theories of education which influenced the unusual early childhood of his six sons and three daughters.³

William, known as WB,⁴ spent the first years of his life sailing with the family on their yacht, *Sibilla*. In accordance with their father's nonconformist theories on education, the children read, wrote and kept journals of their travels. When King Ferdinand II died, James retired and lived out his remaining years sailing. WB was 12 when his father died at their home in Antibes, France. His mother, Anne Brooks Close, soon packed him and three of his brothers off to school in England. Their father had hoped to convince his sons that it was possible to be gentlemen and good businessmen at the same time. He wished they "would acquire the impression that labour and industry are absolute requisites to their independence and happiness," in spite of his wife's inheritance of £100,000 from her late father, successful banker Samuel Brooks.⁵

WB went to Wellington College and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he discovered a love of rowing. He was the President of the Cambridge University Boat Club when he made his first trip to America to compete in a Philadelphia regatta. His team lost, but the trip proved profitable in other ways. While recovering from an injury, WB met Daniel Paullin, a charismatic Illinois landowner and speculator. WB convinced his brother Frederick, now a farmer in West Virginia, to go with him to Iowa to visit Paullin's investments. They toured the prairies of Iowa, where Paullin had made a great deal of money buying public land and selling it to settlers.

In 1878, WB and his brothers Frederick and James Close founded Close Brothers & Co., a London partnership. They purchased a 14,475-acre tract of fertile farmland in Iowa which would become the foundation of the Close Brothers' fortunes.⁶ The Close Brothers recruited men from English universities to become Iowa farmers. They even established a small agricultural college to teach western farming methods. In 1879, the partnership opened an office in Sioux City, Iowa, and moved to Chicago in 1884.

Almost from the day WB and Daniel Paullin were introduced, Paullin's pretty and refined daughter, Mary Baker Paullin, captivated him. She was charming and accomplished – her refinement reminded WB of the ladies of England, and they were married in 1880.⁷ Frederick Close married Margaret Humble, the sister of a young Englishman who had been recruited to join the Iowa farming colony, in 1881. Margaret's two sisters also joined the Close Brothers family: Susan married James Close and their sister Annie married Samuel Haughton Graves, a Close Brothers' employee. WB's wife gave birth to their son, Herbert in 1890. A year later, WB moved back to London after he and Mary were legally separated. The couple later divorced on grounds of his adultery – the only permissible justification at the time.⁸

A year before WB's departure from America, his brother Frederick was killed at the age of 35 while playing polo in Sioux City. Frederick's major responsibility, company investments, was offered to Samuel Graves, who had a thorough knowledge of Close Brothers' transactions.⁹ Graves, acting as chief executive officer in the United States, and WB Close in the London office, found the next few years challenging. The depression in the United States economy which began after the Panic of 1893 caused the Close Brothers difficulties because farmers, their principal customers, struggled to make ends meet.¹⁰ Close Brothers openly sought an investment challenge from an industry other than agriculture to get them through the hard times.¹¹

Arthur Close-Brooks (left) and the Close Brothers:
"WB," James and John Close, 1907. Photo courtesy
Close Bros. Group PLC, London, England

“The key to the situation is to commence work at once.”

Charles Wilkinson

Just such an opportunity presented itself in November 1897 when WB was introduced to Charles Wilkinson, an entrepreneur fresh from the excitement of the Klondike gold rush. He brought with him a number of maps describing Alaska and the Yukon and many photographs and stories about the country and its many possibilities. A railroad, extolled Wilkinson, was the key to development of Alaska and Canada and offered the perfect investment. WB sensed an investment opportunity with little risk because Wilkinson was so enthusiastic that he would accept almost any deal.

Negotiations which had been taking place for almost two years had begun to take a desperate tone. Wilkinson was an agent for the British Columbia Development Association, or Syndicate, as he called it. This Syndicate was made up of a number of prominent British businessmen, including one of Queen Victoria's sons. Wilkinson had met with several business people in Victoria, British Columbia, in January 1896, including one very enthusiastic promoter of the White Pass – Captain William Moore. The Captain had been persuasive enough to convince Wilkinson that the Syndicate should take immediate action. Wilkinson was persuaded and, with encouragement and money from the Syndicate, proceeded to pursue railroad charters from all three entities involved – the United States, British Columbia and the Yukon Territory, a task which would take more than seven months.¹² Upon his return to London Wilkinson was greeted by a less than cordial group who turned him down flat. They graciously offered him the opportunity to keep the charters for the tidy sum of £30,000, in addition to various other fees. Wilkinson accepted their offer in principle. Lacking cash, however, he met with other London financiers, but found little interest. To ask well-heeled bankers in comfortable London offices to finance an expensive railroad into the far-flung frontier of the Yukon seemed all but impossible. Time was money and Wilkinson had run out of both. Even as they spoke, thousands of hopefuls stormed the banks of Lynn Canal and scrambled up the Chilkoot trail and the White Pass on foot.

While WB was interested in the railroad, he had no intention of Close Brothers financing the entire project. Close Brothers advanced a short-term loan of £10,000 to the grateful Wilkinson, but this meant he still had to find £20,000. The quest for more funds eventually took him back to Canada, and in February 1898 he announced to reporters that his company was ready to begin construction, much to the surprise of Close Brothers and the

Syndicate, to whom Wilkinson still owed £20,000.¹³ And as if his life weren't complicated enough, Wilkinson now faced competition from a new plan taking shape for an all-Canadian route into the Yukon.

In the meantime, the April 9, 1898 deadline for repayment of the £10,000 loan approached.¹⁴ Correctly assuming Wilkinson could not meet the deadline, Close examined the various options open to him. Eventually the seduction of building a railroad prevailed and he began negotiations with associates. Close included in these meetings key individuals upon whom he knew he could rely, including Samuel H. Graves, Sir Thomas Tancred (civil engineer) and members of the Syndicate. All agreed that time was of the essence. Wilkinson, who by now was in Canada looking for funding, was informed via telegram that Close had decided to take command. Accepting the inevitable, Wilkinson did not attempt to stop Close's action – instead, he replied by telegram “The key to the situation is to commence work at once.”¹⁵

On March 8, 1898 Close incorporated the Pacific Contract Company, Ltd., to hold all the rights and concessions that had been Wilkinson and the Syndicate's. Close sent his team to the United States for reconnaissance and to untangle the massive legal issues which threatened to destroy any progress on the White Pass, including definition of the Alaskan/Canadian border, which they believed must be solved before construction could begin.¹⁶

NOTES

- ¹ Minter, Roy, The White Pass: Gateway to the Klondike, p. 83
- ² Vaizey, Wendy, A Brief History of Close Brothers, Close Brothers Group PLC, London, 1995, p. 6.
- ³ Ibid., p. 5
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 3
- ⁵ Harnack, Curtis, Gentlemen on the Prairie, The Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa, 1985, p. 9
- ⁶ Vaizey, p. 8
- ⁷ Harnack, p. 14 and p. 17
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 8
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 8
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 9
- ¹¹ Minter, Roy, The White Pass: Gateway to the Klondike, University of Alaska Press, 1987, p. 81
- ¹² On November 14, 1896, Wilkinson incorporated the Pacific and Arctic Railway and Navigation Company under the laws of the State of Washington for construction of the railway from Skagway Bay to the line of demarcation between Alaska and British Columbia. Wilkinson incorporated the British Columbia-Yukon Railway Company in Victoria, British Columbia, on April 22, 1897 whereby he was authorized to build a railway from a point on or near Lynn Canal to the border between British Columbia and the Yukon. He incorporated the British Yukon Mining, Trading and Transportation Company in Ottawa under the federal laws of Canada on June 29, 1897 for completion of the railway from British Columbia into the Yukon Territory. (Roy Minter, "The Borderlands and the White Pass & Yukon Route", speech to the "Borderlands 1989 Heritage Conference, June 2- 4, 1898, Yukon Historical and Museums Association, Yukon College, Alaska Historical Society and the University of Victoria.
- ¹³ Minter, p. 129
- ¹⁴ Ibid. p. 147
- ¹⁵ Ibid. p. 148
- ¹⁶ Ibid. p. 153



Big Mike Heney

Now and then terrific blasts rent the air, as tons of dynamite responded to the fuse's spark, and ripped and gutted this virgin country as it had never before, the thunderous reports echoing and re-echoing against the towering walls of stone far up the canyon. This was real music to Heney, the kind he was accustomed to. He had heard the great symphonies in the States, but this to him was greater. He was in his best mood and humor, and joked and chatted in his usual fascinating manner. He was in his element. "This is life," he remarked jovially, and it certainly was, even to a novice at the game.

Co-worker on the White Pass Yukon Route, F.B. Whiting, M.D.¹

Much to the chagrin of his parents, it was apparent very early on in the life of Michael James Heney that his would not be an average destiny. Heney was born in Pembroke, Ontario, Canada in 1864. His parents, Thomas and Mary Heney, had emigrated from Killashandra, Ireland in 1854. ² Heney was an energetic, active young man, but his lack of interest in education disappointed his parents. Instead of finishing school, he wanted to follow in the footsteps of his Uncle John Heney, an ambitious Ottawa merchant, entrepreneur and construction contractor. During the late 1800s and on into the early years of the twentieth century, John Heney erected buildings and bridges as far west as Calgary, and harbor installations and other works throughout Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritime provinces.³ Heney was fascinated by his Uncle's adventures and at age 14, ran away from home to work with the Canadian Pacific Railroad⁴ as a muleskinner and grader. His early railroad career was cut short, however, when his elder brother Peter showed up to take him home.⁵ The dye was cast, though — railroad life was in his blood.

A few years later in 1883, Heney joined a survey crew in the Selkirk Mountains in southeastern British Columbia. He was soon promoted to instrument man, running grades and establishing survey positions. The work through the mountains and Fraser Canyon east of Vancouver included surveys for bridges, culverts and tunnels. He worked closely with construction crews and got on well with the workers. They gave him the nicknames of "Big Mike" and "The Irish Prince," monikers which followed him the rest of his life. In 1887, Heney was hired to construct a 40-mile section of track for the Lake Shore and Eastern Railroad in the State of Washington north of Seattle. He later established an

office in Seattle and worked on a number of railroad projects in western Washington.⁶

Heney's first Alaskan construction project was inauspicious. In early 1897 he was the low-bidder on the construction of a hydraulic line on the Kenai Peninsula for the Anchor Point Gold Mining Company. His crew dug a ditch to carry water from an inland lake on a high bluff to the beach below, so the lake water could be used to wash small amounts of gold from the beach sands.⁷ The operation was largely financially unsuccessful, but it provided Heney with an insight and interest in Alaska that would soon pay off.

Heney was back in his office in Seattle on July 17, 1897, when the *Portland* arrived with 68 happy miners and \$800,000 of Klondike gold. Heney, just like the rest of the world, was entranced. He spent the next few months talking with those who had returned from the Klondike. He pored over maps and anything else he could find that described the trails. Heney read with great interest the writings of F. H. Stretch in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. Stretch was a civil engineer who had traveled in southern Alaska and the Yukon interior assessing mining potential for investors. He was appalled at the transportation difficulties and wrote that development of the area was limited to the efficiency of transportation into the country. These letters were an important factor in his decision to travel.⁸

There was no time to lose. While Heney studied the challenges of travel into the Klondike, potential competitors formulated their own plans. George Brackett, Captain William Moore and Charles

All (Heney) needed was capital, which he did not have. What he had, however, was very good luck.

Wilkinson travelled the world promoting the White Pass in separate efforts and raced each other for required rights-of-way and funding for a railroad. Also, the boundary dispute between Canada and Alaska prompted the Canadian government to consider financial support for an all-Canadian railroad up the Stikine River to Teslin Lake.⁹

Because Heney's Alaskan endeavor on the Kenai Peninsula had been financially marginal, he borrowed money for his trip to Skagway on the *Utopia*. The ship was carrying many first-time prospectors, but some had already been to the Klondike and knew the trails. Heney spent his time on board by talking with everyone about the trails, the beaches, the rivers and the towns. But the overwhelming consensus of those who had seen the terrain first hand was that a railroad would be impossible. Heney was undeterred by their opinions.

The *Utopia* arrived in Skagway on March 31, 1898. Heney walked off the boat and into bedlam. Skagway had grown into a city of some 800 buildings, log cabins and shacks.¹⁰ He checked into the Saint James Hotel, a prominent establishment which bragged about electric lights and individual room call bells, both a luxury in fledgling Skagway!

His first task was to determine the feasibility of the wharves at Dyea and Skagway. A quick trip to Dyea revealed tide-swept, muddy beaches and shallow water making it unsuitable for a wharf big enough to support the big ships needed to haul construction materials.¹¹ Skagway, on the other hand, boasted three wharves and a fourth was under construction. Its deep harbors enabled it to handle the biggest ships on the coast. There was, at least among Dyea promoters, the popular belief that the Chilkoot was a better trail for a railroad. Heney decided that the Chilkoot Pass was too steep, and the April 3 avalanche, which killed a number of people, relieved any doubt about the trail's suitability. Also, the preference for the White Pass was reaffirmed in mid-April when the East Fork Bridge at White Pass City was completed by the Brackett Wagon Road Company.

Next, Heney set about a personal reconnaissance of the White Pass Trail. He walked the trail and took in the jagged cliffs, steep mountainsides, rivers, swamps and other hazards. He talked with the packers regarding their opinion of the Trail of '97 and the Brackett Wagon Road. This mostly corduroy Brackett road, which started at First and State Streets in Skagway and continued

to Toll Gate 9 above White Pass City, was of much higher quality than he had imagined. Its few problem areas included steep grades at places like Porcupine Hill, where two horses with a single sled loaded with only 400 pounds could barely climb to the top.¹²

He returned to Skagway on April 21, after having walked the entire 40 miles from Lake Bennett to Skagway in one day. Heney had determined that, although it wouldn't be easy, a railroad over the White Pass was feasible. All he needed was capital, which he did not have. What he did have, however, was very good luck.

Upon his return to Skagway, Heney checked in with the clerk at the Saint James Hotel. The clerk, knowing Heney's mission, alerted several businessmen in the hotel's bar that another guest had just returned from the very trail they were discussing. These men were all involved with Close Brothers of London, the investment firm that attained the railroad charters from Wilkinson when he could not repay their loan.¹³

Their trip to Skagway had been a reconnaissance trip as well, but their approach to the project was different from Heney's. They were about to give up on the railroad not only because of the trail's intrinsic challenges, but principally because of legal and logistic difficulties. The Canadian/Alaskan border had yet to be firmly established. Captain William Moore's homesteading claim to the property that was now Skagway had not yet been settled, making the attainment of a right-of-way difficult if not impossible. There was competition from the tramways on the Chilkoot Trail, and surprise competition from the Brackett Wagon Road. They, as well as Heney, had expected the wagon road to be a somewhat-improved horse trail but instead it was a functional, profitable road moving people and supplies fairly efficiently over the pass. E. C. Hawkins, destined to be chief engineer of the railroad, recognized the competition and had offered earlier to buy the road from George Brackett. Brackett, however, had declined the offer outright.¹⁴ Competition from the wagon road would have to be dealt with for a railroad to succeed. In fact, the road was only one of many challenges that would have to be met to build a successful railroad.

Heney was invited to join the gentlemen and they talked throughout the night. Heney had the guts and the nerve to build the railroad - these gentlemen had the money and logistical background that could make it possible. As Heney described his plans

for the railroad in detail, the other gentlemen were swayed to see possibilities, rather than difficulties. When asked point blank if it was possible to build a railroad, an exhausted but exhilarated Heney replied: "Yes, with plenty of accent on the capital."¹⁵

NOTES

¹ Whiting, F.B., M.D., Grit, Grief and Gold, A Narrative of Pioneer Days in Alaska, Peacock Publishing Company, Seattle, 1933, Facsimile Reproduction, The Shorey Book Store, Seattle, 1967, p. 32-33.

² Quinn, Alfred O., Iron Rails to Alaska Copper, D'Alonquin Publishing Co., Quaker Mountain, Whiteface, New York, 1995, p. 7; Minter, p. 131,

³ Minter, Roy, The White Pass: Gateway to the Klondike, University of Alaska Press, 1987, p. 131

⁴ Quinn, p. 7

⁵ Minter, p. 132

⁶ Quinn, p. 7

⁷ Tower, Elizabeth A. Big Mike Heney, Anchorage, AK, the author, 1988, p. 2

⁸ Minter, p. 128

⁹ Tower, p. 5

¹⁰ Minter, p. 135

¹¹ Minter, p. 135

¹² Minter, p. 137

¹³ There are discrepancies in the record as to who exactly was present at this fateful meeting. According to F B. Whiting, M.D., the railroad's medical doctor, the group was made up of Sir Thomas Tancred, an engineer of international reputation from London, Erastus C. Hawkins, engineer, and Samuel H. Graves, the American representative of Close Brothers (Grit, Grief and Gold, p. 3,4,5). A document prepared by Close Brothers, "A Brief History of Close Brothers," concurs ("A Brief History of Close Brothers," Close Brothers Group plc, London, 1995, p. 9). According to Roy Minter, author of The White Pass: Gateway to the Klondike, the group included Sir Thomas Tancred, Erastus Hawkins and John Hislop, a Canadian civil engineer (p 153). Interestingly enough, Minter cites Dr. Whiting's book, Grit, Grief and Gold, as the source for this information, even though Whiting clearly indicates Graves was at the meeting. Subsequent writers used both Whiting and Minter books as sources, including Stan Cohen (The White Pass and Yukon Route) who mentions only Sir Thomas Tancred's presence at the meeting and Betsy Tower (Big Mike Heney, Irish Prince of the Iron Trails), who says the trio was made up of Tancred, Hawkins and Hislop. Minter goes on to explain that Samuel Graves was working on attaining right-of-way for Close Brothers in various cities in the United States (p. 150), but gives no source for this information. In his own personal memoir, On the White Pass Payroll, Graves does not mention any meeting, but also does not talk of any pre-construction dealings. Hislop's personal diary begins after construction begins, so does not address any meetings beforehand, either. It is important to note that while Whiting worked with the men whom he claimed were at the meeting, he himself was not at the meeting and he waited to write the book until some thirty years later, when memory may have dimmed. Minter, however, did not work with the individuals in question and had not heard of the railroad until he was posted to Whitehorse by the Canadian Army for duty with the North West Highway System in 1955 (p. 13).

¹⁴ Minter, p. 195

¹⁵ Whiting, p. 7



White Pass & Yukon Route Railway

Alaska, the jumping-off place on top of the world, which had slumbered for ages in unmolested solitude, was now undergoing a strenuous initiation into the ways of civilization; this last vast wilderness was now awakening to the onslaughts of man, to the realization that its hour had struck when it must finally take its turn in the trend of progress.

F.B. Whiting, M.D.¹

The big break for the Close Brothers team came on May 14, 1898, when the United States Congress extended the Homestead Act to include the Territory of Alaska. Immediately after President McKinley signed the bill, Samuel H. Graves, now president of the White Pass & Yukon Route Railway, requested and was granted a right-of-way from Skagway's northern limits to the White Pass summit. Because much of the railroad team had been assembled and was ready and waiting, construction materials arrived only three weeks later. Eleven years after Captain Moore had first envisioned it and after countless hours of political and financial maneuvering,² the railroad was at last underway on May 28, 1898.³

Graves found himself managing a colorful crew. At the helm was contractor Michael J. Heney, 34 years old, the Canadian who ran away from home as a teenager to build railroads. Head surveyor was Sir Thomas Tancred, friend of WB Close. Fifty-eight-year-old Tancred had been senior contractor on the Firth of Forth Bridge in Scotland, and was involved in the construction of railways in the Transvaal, Mozambique, United States, Mexico and Turkey.⁴ Chief engineer Erastus Corning Hawkins had recently completed a large southern Colorado irrigation project in which Close Brothers had invested and during which his skills had impressed Samuel Graves.⁵ Hawkins, a quiet 38-year-old, lived in Denver, Colorado, and was junior engineer of the Denver South Park and Pacific Railroad. He brought experience in mountainous terrain, winter conditions and narrow gauge railroad construction⁶ to his new post.⁷ Hawkins's assistant was former high school teacher John Hislop, aged 42, upon whose personal observations the entire project depended.⁸ Hislop was in charge of all the surveying along the White Pass; he would become legendary for his ability to walk many miles in all kinds of weather every day to keep on top of progress along the grade.⁹ Foreman of construction was Hugh Foy who, at age 67 and in poor health, had postponed retirement to take on the White Pass railroad. His

background was in bridge building and railroad construction.¹⁰ Hawkins chose an old friend from Denver, Frank Herbert Whiting, to be general superintendent. Whiting cancelled his plans to take a senior post in a Mexican mine in order to work with Hawkins again.¹¹ Dr. Fenton B. Whiting of Seattle (no relation to Frank Whiting) was appointed the railroad's chief surgeon, as well as chief surgeon of the base railway hospital planned for Skagway.¹² To round out the crew was Harry C. Barley, a photographer hired by Graves before construction began. His job was to illustrate the nature of the pass, the difficulties faced by the crew and the high standard of work. Although Heney did not approve of time lost from construction to pose for photographs, Graves knew visual proof of progress was imperative to good investor relations.¹³

In stark contrast to this group of experienced railroad and engineering professionals was the actual construction crew itself. Hiring construction workers at first seemed problematic. It would be difficult, expensive and time consuming to transport an experienced railroad construction crew from southern ports. Heney had brought with him a small entourage of experienced men to work directly under him, but hundreds more were needed. Luckily, at the same time he needed to hire, Skagway was filled with men looking for work. Many were waiting for money from home, for friends to join them from other places, or were simply trying to make enough money for passage on the next available boat out of town. By joining the construction crew, these men could actually make money rather than spend it. By August 8, 1898, the work force was up to 2,000 men. Among them were:

...lawyers, doctors, artists, college graduates, French chefs, schoolmasters, and in short every conceivable sort of occupation – except laborers. Probably no



John Hislop surveys White Pass with friends, ca. 1898. Photograph by H.C. Barley. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: UW 21938

other railway in the world was built by such highly educated men as worked on our First Section.¹⁴

Heney immediately set about building construction camps along the grade. Each camp was a small city including bunkhouses, mess halls, stores and field hospitals made from canvas tents with wooden flooring and sides. They rented office space in various buildings in Skagway until permanent office buildings were constructed. Excitement prevailed as news of development spread throughout the White Pass valley. Promoters of Dyea and the Chilkoot trail were less enthusiastic knowing that once the train was completed their trail and town would be obsolete. Dyea businessmen did their best to discourage the masses, but it is

likely that a number of Heney's crew consisted of men frustrated with the lack of activity at Dyea and along the Chilkoot.

Getting construction materials to Skagway presented another challenge. Finding cargo space on any west coast ship was problematic; any ships not sold or chartered to the United States government for duty in the Philippine Insurrection were already headed to the Klondike with prospectors and their supplies. Graves and his staff solved the problem by purchasing "wrecks," large, deteriorated ocean-going sailing ships. Because they were fully depreciated, they had been sold inexpensively to underwriters who partially repaired them. As Samuel Graves recalled them:

Facing page: Railroad crew cutting edge across valley from Pocuipine Hill. Brackett Wagon Road visible, bottom left. Photograph by Eric A. Hegg. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 372



VIEW FROM PVA RYN CO'S ROAD ON PARROTINE HILL, MONTANA

WHITE PASS TRAIL, YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

20-A
M&S

1898

It was immediately apparent that the Brackett Wagon Road would be imperative to the efficient delivery of supplies.

Some of them had no masts and spars, and none of them were sea-worthy for an ocean voyage. But the voyage to Skaguay is more sheltered than the lower Thames, and we were able to arrange to have these wrecks, which were euphemistically called "barges," towed backwards and forward with our men and material, and were able to get insurance on their cargoes. But at the best it was slow work, and the absence of telegraphic communication in those days added greatly to our difficulties.¹⁵

Among the supplies transported on these "wrecks" were horses, lumber, food, canvas, medical supplies, railroad cars, wet-weather gear, meat, boots, socks, desks, chairs, tons of 56-pound rail, thousands of cases of tinned food, axles, grease, brake shoes, shovels, coffee, pickles, chewing tobacco, tea, 450 tons of dynamite and a variety of other incendiary powders.¹⁶

The next issue: how to get these supplies up the trail to construction sites. It was immediately apparent that the Brackett Wagon Road would be imperative to the efficient delivery of supplies. WP&YR officials sought a logistical solution and hoped to purchase the BWR, but it was clear that George Brackett would not go down without a fight. Brackett was insulted by Hawkins' first offer to purchase the road for \$25,000. He even suspected that Hawkins was behind his arrest for contempt of court when he refused to show books to an attorney claiming against the defunct Skagway & Yukon Transportation & Improvement Co. When U.S. District Judge C.S. Johnson dissolved the order to place Brackett's company in receivership because he liked the old man's "spunk,"¹⁷ it was clear to railroad administrators they were dealing with a popular citizen of Skagway, and public sentiment would most likely sway against the railroad.¹⁸ They had to tread carefully, as the outcome of current negotiations depended greatly on how the community perceived them.

Heney had done an amazing job of hiring and organizing crews but their work was slowed because of difficulty transporting materials from the wharves to the grade through Skagway. They had tried to negotiate with the Skagway council to attain a right-of-way through town, but these talks were initially fruitless. Superintendent Whiting was furious with the delays and even sent a scouting crew to Dyea to look at the Chilkoot trail again. This was probably just a scare tactic designed to force the Council into action, as much work and money had already been invested in the



White Pass. If Whiting wanted to scare somebody, he should have turned to the Broadway businessmen who did not want a train rumbling down their street, for they were the main reason the town council had not progressed. The railroad had originally attained a temporary right-of-way along the east side of town, but Skagway hadn't cleared that area because squatters there refused to move. The town's main street seemed the most likely place for the track. Long and lively town meetings were held on June 13 and 14. Discussion on the 14th continued well into the wee hours of the following morning. The competing parties were at loggerheads. The Skagway Council wanted the railroad. The railroad needed a track through Skagway to move their supplies from the beach to the grade. The Broadway businessmen wanted a quiet

Horse and wagon cross a log road on the White Pass Trail, Alaska, September 3, 1898. Photograph by Eric A. Hegg. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 442

Facing page: Brackett Wagon Road Bridge over Skagway River. Courtesy C.B. Driscoll. Negative: BFCCBD149



BRIDGE OVER SKAGWAN RIVER

100 1/2

...in May 1898, Skagway had grown from the chaotic tent city that first welcomed George Brackett to a bustling town of between 8,000 to 10,000 more-or-less-permanent residents.



Cutting grade on Tunnel Mountain near White Pass. Photograph by H.C. Barley. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: UW 21937

street on which to operate. Squatters along the bluff wanted land. By the time the meeting ended at 3 a.m. Whiting had had enough. He contacted Heney and instructed him to set their Broadway construction plan in motion. The townspeople woke on the 15th to find crews laying ties and rails on Broadway.¹⁹ The problem of transporting supplies from the beaches through Skagway to the start of the grade was solved. The next link in the chain was the Brackett Wagon Road.

By the time construction materials for the railroad landed on Skagway Bay in May 1898, Skagway had grown from the chaotic tent city that first welcomed George Brackett to a bustling town

of between 8,000 to 10,000 more-or-less-permanent residents.²⁰ The George A. Brackett Wagon Road had been open for six months and his tireless efforts to promote the road were paying off. But this prosperity had come only after months of financial struggle, which still plagued Brackett. By the end of the year he was broke again and the next payroll, the last of which had come from his own pocket, was now a week in arrears.²¹ He left Skagway for Seattle on the *Rosalie* on December 29, 1897, on yet another quest for financial backing.

He spent many hours promoting his road to prospective investors all over the United States. He claimed that nine miles of the road had already been constructed, and the “other eight miles is so thoroughly in hand that 225 men with the necessary teams, working in four sections, will have it completed by January 15, 1898.”²² Despite his characteristic enthusiasm and the tangible evidence of progress, little money was forthcoming. Finally, a trip across the United States to see his old friend James J. Hill of the Great Northern Railroad earned him a check for \$15,000. Brackett, with characteristic candor, reminded Hill he had no collateral to offer. Hill replied: “I want none... go back and let this go as far as it will toward paying your help.”²³ By the time Brackett boarded the *City of Seattle* bound for Skagway in January, he had \$10,000 in his pocket in addition to that which Hill had lent him.

Buoyed with new confidence, Brackett’s next logical step was to secure a right-of-way for a railroad from the Skagway Town Council. He bargained with them that if he received the right-of-way, his wagon road would be complete to the summit by February 10 and into Lake Bennett by May.²⁴ But Brackett didn’t bargain on competition for that franchise.

The first personal contact Brackett had with the railroad people was when its representatives Sir Thomas Tancred and Erastus Hawkins approached him in April 1898, asking to purchase the Brackett Wagon Road. Hawkins estimated that Brackett made about \$1,200 to \$2,000 a day based on his toll charges of one and a half cent per pound. During their first negotiations, Brackett refused to sell but offered to make a portion of the road’s right-of-way available for \$206,000, an offer immediately dismissed by Tancred and Hawkins. Brackett was, after all, a businessman and any deal he made would have to reap a profit for him and his investors. Other options were considered by the White Pass & Yukon Route staff, including negotiations with the already

...men dangled by ropes from the tops of the mountain as they drilled blast holes, set charges, and levered the broken rock off the grade, leaving a gash in the side of the mountain and a pile of rubble below.



"Cutting the grade on Tunnel Mountain." Photograph by H.C. Barley. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: UW 21939

defunct Skagway and Yukon Transportation and Improvement Company and another examination of the Chilkoot Trail. Ultimately, however, Tancred and Hawkins knew their success depended upon negotiations with George Brackett.

Brackett was generally well-respected in Skagway, except for a few disgruntled packers unhappy about paying tolls on the road. His family had made many contributions to Skagway from its earliest days through commerce and community involvement, but their popularity could not solve the patriarch's financial woes. Graves knew this. But Graves also knew that Brackett had two very important bargaining chips: one, the railway's surveyed line

crossed and interfered with Brackett's road at several points; and two, Brackett and his investors held a franchise granted by the Skagway Council to operate a railroad through Skagway. Just a few days before, on the morning of June 15, the WP&YR had begun placing its tracks down Broadway, but Brackett's franchise granted him the right to build a railroad on Runnals Street (later changed to State Street) which paralleled Broadway. Graves recognized that, even though Brackett was currently down and out, he was a formidable businessman. Graves also knew Close Brothers wouldn't sleep well until this right-of-way belonged to them. Had it been a horse race, these two horses would have hurtled neck and neck down the homestretch.

Tracks of the WP&YR, Alaska, June 1899. Photograph by Edward Henry Harriman. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Harriman 23



Cold, hard reality caused Brackett's horse to stumble near the finish line. Brackett owed his investors a great deal of money and although he was currently returning a profit on the toll road, he knew it would be deserted once the train made it over the summit. Brackett chose responsibility to investors over his own pride, but he still had a few bargaining chips. He negotiated with Graves: he would give up any and all financial claims of damage caused to the BWR by railroad construction, and the BWR would forgive past and future toll charges incurred by the railroad in exchange for \$50,000. For an additional \$10,000, Brackett agreed to give Graves first option to buy the railroad. Graves agreed, but also insisted that this payment include Brackett's Runnals Street railroad franchise. On June 24, 1898, George A. Brackett and Samuel H. Graves signed a Memorandum of Agreement whereby the railroad would pay Brackett \$60,000 up front and the railroad would pay \$50,000 should it choose to purchase the wagon road outright.²⁵

Although Brackett wasn't happy about the deal, he was a realist. He had done his best but had not been able to secure funding. Americans still suffering from the effects of the Panic of 1893 were unable or unwilling to take the risk when the British, whose Imperialist mission was still colonization of the planet, stepped in. This deal offered Brackett an opportunity not only to pay off investors but to recoup losses and return a modest profit. It offered Close Brothers a way to prohibit competition, to look good to the community, and to control management of the road should they exercise their option to buy it outright. Close

Brothers and their railroad not only had crews and supplies but now had the sole option to own the most effective methods of transportation to deliver them.

About a month later, on July 20, the first train chugged down Broadway towards the construction front with supplies loaded on two flat cars.²⁶ Its departure was met with little ceremony or excitement, perhaps because the townspeople had just learned that Frank Reid, one of the town's early leaders, had died.²⁷ Perhaps more exciting to the citizens than the train itself was the \$50,000 payroll that the railroad had made that same day.²⁸ Townspeople were generally amazed at the progress of the railroad but it wasn't fast enough for Heney, Hislop and Hawkins. Harassment by the North West Mounted Police, a small gold strike near Atlin, employee hassles and the attainment of assorted small but necessary rights-of-way were all unexpected annoyances and cost the team precious summer days. Graves was especially infuriated when the crew attempted to set up camp at the Summit and was turned back by the Mounties. "I suppose we will have to do what they say," reported an engineer to Chief Engineer Hawkins, "as they have a Gatling gun up there that fires 600 shots a minute."²⁹ Construction at the Summit was halted until September, 1898, when negotiations were completed.

Construction elsewhere proceeded well. Day in and day out, Heney and his crew assaulted the sides of the granite mountains with hundreds of pounds of dynamite and black powder. They left the comfort of their camps every day to hike to the grade, drill and blast the rock, hand pick and discharge the rubble. They returned to their camps at the end of their shift utterly exhausted. Heney maintained a strict blasting schedule for safety reasons. The first charge of the day occurred well before breakfast, the second during lunch, third during the evening meal and the last at the end of the second shift at midnight.³⁰ Canyons echoed continually from the blasts. In areas like Rocky Point (Mile 7) and Slippery Rock (Mile 15.8) men dangled by ropes from the tops of the mountain as they drilled blast holes, set charges, and levered the broken rock off the grade, leaving a gash in the side of the mountain and a pile of rubble below. The Brackett Wagon Road was often blocked by the result of their handiwork, and delays were incurred when crews had to clear the road of rubble and boulders so that wagonloads of supplies could continue their journey. It was dangerous work. On August 3, 1898, an accident at Mile 10.4 of the grade cost the lives of two men. An unusually

large boulder broke free from the mountainside by a blast of dynamite, rolled down the mountain and came to rest on top of the workers.³¹

Only a few days after the train's first trip down Broadway with supplies, townspeople and visitors climbed onto boxcars and were treated to a ride up the track to see the train's progress. "Summer Tourists Come to Skaguay," said the *Daily Alaskan* on Monday, July 25. "They ride up the railroad and are enchanted."

Engineer Hawkins, Mr. Whiting and in short, the whole of the railroad officials took pleasure in welcoming the excursionists and in preparing the trip up the line. Temporary seats were placed on three box cars, and on these about one hundred and fifty people were comfortably seated. These included many of the Yukoners, some leading citizens who in other ways entertained the visitors... The train pulled out just before noon and proceeded as far as the rails are laid, where most of the passengers then alighted and walked a distance along the road bed, where rails are already laid, but not ballasted...³²

One of the greatest challenges faced by Heney's crew was construction of the track from the tunnel near Mile 16 to the Summit. Even though Heney and crew did their best to avoid winter construction, it was now inevitable. "By that time," wrote Graves, "winter was upon us and we had to fight the forces of an Arctic winter as well as the natural difficulties of mountain railway construction. The strong winds and severe cold made the men torpid, and be-numbed not merely their bodies but their minds, so that after an hour's work, it was necessary to relieve them by fresh men."³³ Men dangled from the slippery mountainsides on ropes and so as not to be carried away by gusts of wind, they were roped to each other.

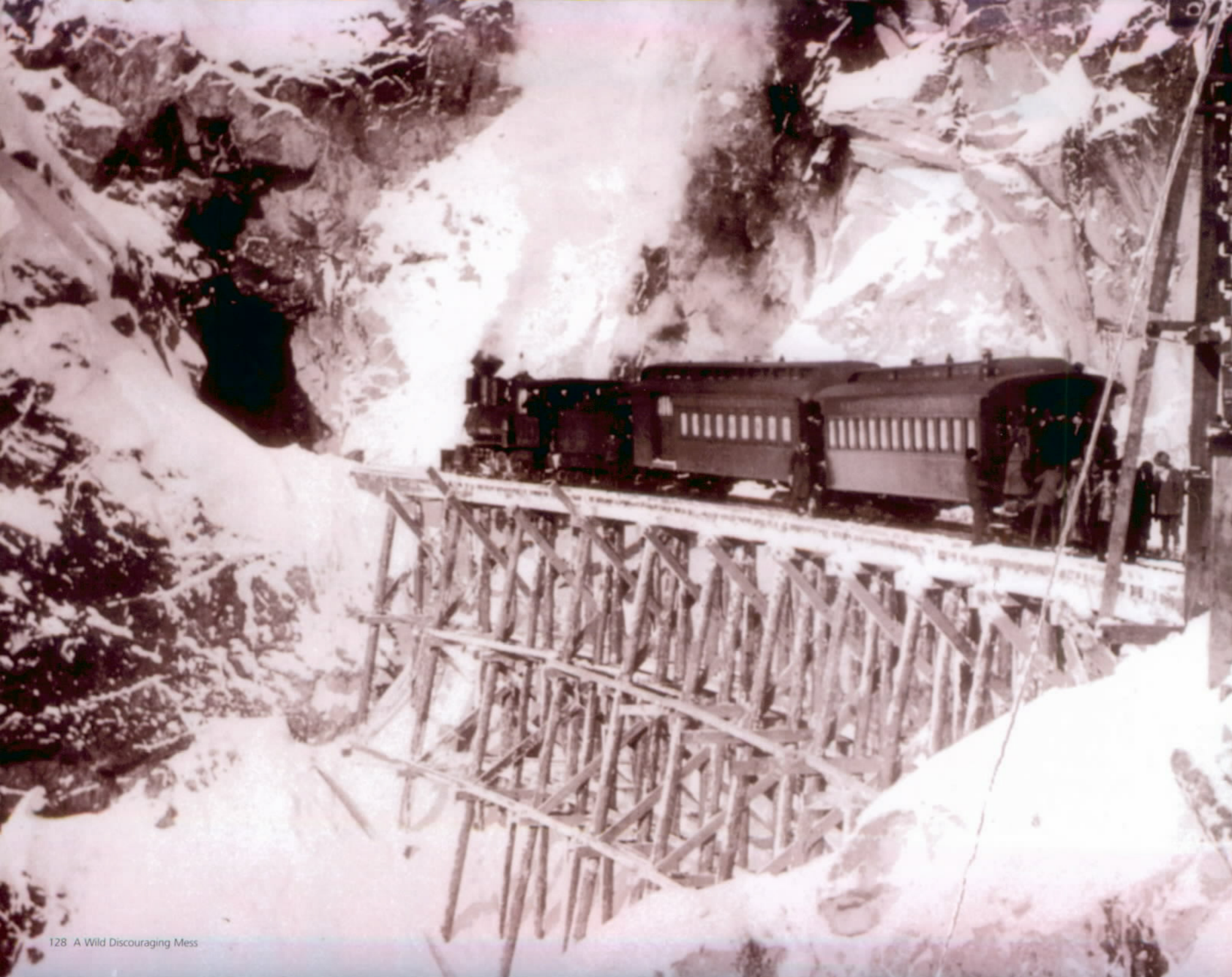
It was necessary to blast the road-bed out of the solid granite of the precipitous mountain sides which in many places were so smooth and polished by the action of extinct glaciers that there was no foothold for the men and they had to build working platforms secured to crowbars drilled into the polished granite. The wind was so strong that the men in exposed places had to be "roped" while at work in order to prevent

their being blown off the mountain side. By October 1898 the work had got above the "timber line" so the men were exposed to the full fury of the Arctic winter.³⁴

The tunnel pierced through the mountain 800 feet above White Pass City. A chasm between the grade and the east side of the tunnel could not be bridged until rails were laid to the site from Heney Station, a distance of more than three miles. Until this occurred, supplies had to be carried via railroad from the Skagway wharves to Heney Station, where they were loaded onto a tramway which steeply descended to White Pass City.³⁵ Supplies were then transferred onto horse-drawn wagons which carried them up the steep switchback road leading from the railroad construction camp near White Pass City up to a platform the crew had leveled at the tunnel site. The horses slipped on the wet trail in the summer and slid over the frozen ice and snow of winter.³⁶ On this platform the crews precariously placed a blacksmith shop, lumber, blasting powder, food, water and machinery, including an Ingersoll steam drill which was used night and day for almost three months.³⁷

Work continued in spite of worsening weather and oppressive darkness. It became necessary to employ men solely for the purpose of clearing snow from the grade, the various construction sites and the switchback trail on Tunnel Mountain. Work on the bridge over the chasm to the tunnel was extremely dangerous because of terrain and weather. Many days the weather was so severe the crew was able to accomplish very little. Because of the high wind and snow one day in late December, crews spent one eight-hour shift erecting a single timber, and the next day put up only two more.³⁸ The tunnel crew had it a little easier because the space inside the tunnel provided protection from blowing snow. Those lucky enough to work inside drilled and blasted without interruption 24 hours a day. The weather at the summit was so bad that construction was practically on hold. Occasional lulls in the storm granted small windows of opportunity for the crew to clear tracks of snow and to bring in equipment and machinery via Skagway packers.

Meanwhile, back in the comfortably warm offices of the Close Brothers in London, investors became increasingly concerned about delays in construction and requests for additional funds. As a way to assuage their fears, the "Trustees for the Bondholders"





sent their own engineer to oversee the work. The arrival of Robert Brydone-Jack was met with great trepidation among the crew, especially Heney, Hislop and Hawkins, but they were pleasantly surprised by his enthusiasm and expertise.

I don't know what his instructions were, but he evidently thought he had better be on his guard and watch things pretty sharply. But he did his duty so considerably and showed such mastery of his profession, that our men realized at once that he was no "Consulting Engineer" and soon learned to respect him.³⁹

The railroad carried considerable freight with its twice-daily scheduled freight trains to Heney Station. However, Hawkins still had headaches caused by loss of revenue from a handful of packers who, intent on maintaining their way of life, still used the Brackett Wagon Road. Hawkins was also concerned about continued competition from the Chilkoot tramways. He needed to make money and could not afford to lose revenue to George Brackett. Stampeders demanded a reliable source of transportation all the way over the Summit, and, so far, the railroad hadn't delivered.⁴⁰ Further delays were caused when a fire destroyed the railroad's Skagway offices on November 17, 1898. All of the company's files, including engineering notes and drawings, were destroyed. "As I roomed in the building," Hislop wrote, "and was away at the time I lost almost all of my personal property including diary of the past 18 years, college medals and instruments, etc. We have now more commodious offices but not so conveniently situated."⁴¹

Clearly, the next thing on the railroad's agenda was the settlement, once and for all, of competition from the Brackett Wagon Road. Brackett had done an amazing job of keeping his road open and profitable, but he knew that as soon as the train crossed the Summit that it would be purposeless, no matter how low his toll rates dipped. But if Brackett waited until after the breach of the Summit, the railroad would no longer need his road and he would never see the additional \$50,000 promised by the railroad should they exercise their option to buy.

I had feared for some time that they would not accept my \$50,000 option and take the wagon road which would be a useless piece of property after they finished to the summit. I made up my mind that there was only

The tunnel pierced through the mountain 800 feet above White Pass City.

Bridge at Tunnel Mountain, February 1899. Courtesy British Columbia Archives. Negative: A-00969

By January 23 the railroad employed 1,800 men, half of whom were assigned to clear snow.

one way, viz. to make a bold stand and insist that I was going to do a freight business by sled, and that I could operate the sled to the summit as cheaply as they could the railroad. They thought not... I finally convinced them that it would be a very difficult matter for them to make any money unless they made a compromise, and today I closed a trade whereby they are to pay me \$5.00 per ton on all freight except lumber that shall go over their road until such time as they have paid me \$50,000, when I agreed to transfer to them the wagon road. I feel I have made the best terms possible, and shall now be able to repay you quite an amount, if not all, of the money you so kindly advanced.⁴²

On Wednesday, November 9, 1898, the Brackett Wagon Road purchase agreement was signed. It stipulated that George Brackett was to continue to manage the road under Hawkins' direction, and that all profits from operation would go toward the purchase price. The agreement was to take effect on December 1, 1898.⁴³ Brackett's bluff had worked. Although surely disappointed that he had not been able to instigate a railroad himself, Brackett paid creditors and turned a modest profit on his efforts, having successfully mined the gold rush in his own way.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, work on the grade progressed more slowly than expected because of the appalling winter conditions. Slowly, however, limited service became available to passengers:

SEATTLE, Wash. Jan. 2, 1899:
Mr. L. H. Gray, General Traffic Manager,
White Pass & Yukon Route, Dexter Horton Building, City
Dear Sir.—Having just arrived in Seattle from Dawson City, I will state that I came out over the White Pass & Yukon Route: and to say it was in good condition would be drawing it mild....I will say that the White Pass & Yukon route is the safest, easiest and swiftest way to the Klondike and the Atlin gold fields,
Yours Respectfully,
Jack Carr⁴⁵

January 15, 1899, dawned bright and cold when, according to the *Daily Alaskan*, the first official passenger train left Skagway:

The officials of the railroad company from the water front to the summit are jolly good fellows and entertainers of rare merit. They believe in making a good

railroad and accommodating the people first... Yesterday a number of the officials of Alaska and members of the legal fraternity took a trip over the picturesque White Pass railways and on the way back stopped at Mr. Holister's for lunch and to make a visit between trains. The party was in charge of Assistant Chief Engineer John Hislop. Taking the morning train the party proceeded to Heney, where they were joined by Dr. Whiting, company surgeon... Thence they proceeded on up the grade to the present end of the road. It was the first train ever run up the track. When the end of the track was reached the party walked up the grade and passed the mammoth tunnel. It was a sight that only a few have had the good fortune to witness, outside of the thousands of workmen who labor on the great enterprise...⁴⁶

By January 23 the railroad employed 1,800 men, half of whom were assigned to clear snow. On January 29 powdermen blasted the last piece of granite that separated the west end of the tunnel from the east. By late that evening workers had cleared the rubble, and for the first time they walked from one end of the tunnel to the other. Inside the tunnel was calm and relatively warm – outside, men building the bridge over the nearby chasm battled frightening winter conditions. One particular period was so bad that construction of the bridge was suspended for three full days. Morale was low:

The work for the past three months has been going distressingly slow and I have never been so thoroughly disheartened and discouraged with anything in my life but will keep right at it and think we have things going more satisfactorily now...⁴⁷

Ironically, even as Hawkins wrote this letter to Graves on the night of February 2, 1899, his crew successfully bridged the chasm in front of the tunnel. Men had been laying track on the bridge even before it reached across the chasm. By the morning of February 3 the track was through the tunnel and was already linked to the grade beyond. It was a huge psychological boost to the entire WP&YR crew, but sadness was soon to dampen their spirits.

Robert Brydone-Jack, the consultant sent from the Trustees in London, had worked diligently, sending regular reports to the



"Shoveling on the grade, June 18, 1899." Photograph by H. C. Barley. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: UW 21935

Trustees and working with Heney and Hislop on the grade. As winter progressed the three men traversed the valley by snowshoeing from one construction site to the next even in the worst of weather. After traversing the trail in early February in some particularly brutal winter conditions, Brydone-Jack fell ill with pneumonia. After he languished for some days in a camp hospital, Heney and Hislop bundled him up and put him on the work train. In spite of a fast trip down the mountain, Brydone-Jack died in Skagway's railroad hospital the next day.⁴⁸ The death of their friend caused great sorrow, for Brydone-Jack had become valued to the company as a "White Pass man."⁴⁹ Heney and Hislop ordered the railroad offices closed all day February 13, 1899, and all the locomotives draped in black. Hawkins and

Brydone-Jack's cousin accompanied the coffin to Vancouver where Graves awaited their arrival.⁵⁰

On February 20, 1899, a train left Skagway in sub-zero temperatures headed for the Summit where workers hammered furiously to complete the track. The passenger train carried nearly 100 invited passengers⁵¹ and pulled a boxcar full of freight at Hawkins's demand. He wanted to prove to the Trustees that the WP&YR was a viable railroad, complete with its ability to haul freight, and he wasted no time in proving it.⁵²

After running between snow banks from three to thirty feet high, the summit was reached shortly after

“...the excursionists engaged in warming themselves around the huge stoves in the large commissary and other tents and by a free use of Scotch.”

Erastus Corning Hawkins

one o'clock and from that time until dinner was announced in the large mess hall, the excursionists engaged in warming themselves around the huge stoves in the large commissary and other tents and by a free use of Scotch.⁵³

A festive mood prevailed in spite of the 14 below temperatures at the summit. Late that evening, as the train waited patiently to chug into Canada, the invited guests and some 200 railroad workers already assembled there listened to the dedication ceremony speeches.

Contractor M.J. Henry (sic) made one of the best talks of the occasion. He did not devote much time to praise of the company's officials, least of all himself, but he did speak in most flattering terms of the thousands of horny handed laborers who have performed the “bone labor” required in the construction of the line. As an employer of labor, Mr. Henry (sic) is one of a thousand. He is one among his men and they all honor and respect him.⁵⁴

He then drove the last spike on Alaskan soil and the first spike on Canadian soil. When he stepped back, the first freight train chugged patiently over the Summit into Canada. The White Pass was conquered.

Between Skaguay and Fraser, near Log Cabin, a distance of 28 miles, there was not a wheelbarrowful of gravel or loose earth, the line was entirely on solid rock or bridges.... Without going further into details, it will doubtless be clear that the construction of the First Section was a remarkable performance in railway building, and that the men who did the work earned their money and are entitled in addition to be held in kindly remembrance by the men who provided the money...⁵⁵

...Our men had plenty to be proud and thankful for when the rails reached the Summit, but nothing gave them keener satisfaction than the knowledge that they had put the unspeakable Dead Horse Trail out of business forever...⁵⁶

NOTES

- ¹ Whiting, F. B., Grit, Grief and Gold, Peacock Publishing Company, Seattle, 1933; Facsimile Reproduction 1967, The Shorey Book Store, Seattle, 98104, p. 44
- ² At least 26 separate organizations were incorporated for the purpose of building a railroad into the Klondike, including but probably not limited to: Alaska & Northwest Territories Trading Co., Alaska & Northwest Railway, British Columbia Northern Railway, British Columbia-Yukon Railway Co., British Columbia Pacific Railway, British Yukon Mining Trading & Transportation Co., Canadian Development Co., Canadian Pacific Navigation Co., Caribou Cassiar Railway, Dyea & Chilkoot Railway Co., Exploration Co. Ltd. Of London, Humbert Transportation Co., Klondike Mines Railway, Klondike Mining Trading & Transport Co., Ltd., Lynn Canal & Dalton Railway, North American Transportation & Trading Co., North & Yukon Railway, Pacific & Yukon Railway, Pacific Contract Co. Ltd., Railway Share & Trust Co., Red Line Transportation, Skagway & Lake Bennett Tramway Co. Ltd., Skagway & Yukon Transportation & Improvement Co., and the Yukon & Pacific Railway.
- ³ Minter, Roy, The Borderlands and the White Pass & Yukon Route, speech to the "Borderlands 1989 Heritage Conference," June 2-4, 1989, Sponsored by Yukon Historical and Museums Association, Yukon College, Alaska Historical Society and the University of Victoria, p. 6., Minter, Roy, The White Pass: Gateway to the Klondike, University of Alaska Press, 1987, p. 180
- ⁴ Minter, Roy, The White Pass: Gateway to the Klondike, p. 153
- ⁵Ibid.
- ⁶ The crew chose to build a narrow gauge railroad for two reasons. One, the tracks of a narrow gauge railway are 3 feet apart in contrast to the standard 4 feet, 8 ½ inches, requiring only a ten foot railbed as opposed to the normal 15 feet, thereby saving construction time and materials when blasting the bed onto the mountainsides. Also, a narrow gauge track requires a smaller turning radius than standard gauge to better negotiate the tight curves along the White Pass. www.whitepassrailroad.com
- ⁷ Quinn, Alfred O., Iron Rails to Alaskan Copper, The Epic Triumphs of Erastus Corning Hawkins, D'Aloquin Publishing Co., Quaker Mountain, Whiteface, NY, 1995, p. 13
- ⁸ Minter, p. 153, Graves, S. H., On the White Pass Pay-roll, Paladin Press, New York, 1970, p. 43
- ⁹ Graves, p. 43
- ¹⁰ Minter, p. 193
- ¹¹ Minter, p. 178
- ¹² Minter, p. 178
- ¹³ Minter, p. 208, Graves, p. 47-48
- ¹⁴ Graves, p. 58-59
- ¹⁵ Graves, p. 57
- ¹⁶ Black powder is an explosive consisting of black gunpowder, a mixture of sodium nitrate, charcoal and sulfur. Railroad powder is black powder mixed with nitroglycerin. Because nitroglycerin freezes at 50 degrees Fahrenheit it would have been impractical much of the year, so black powder would have been used more prevalently. Dynamite was also undoubtedly used by the railroad but the dynamite of 1898 was not as stable and predictable as today's product, and in many areas along the grade, dynamite would have been too dangerous to use. (Logan Hovis, Historian, Cultural Resources-Alaska Support Office)
- ¹⁷ Bearss, Edwin, Klondike Gold Rush HRS, Office of History and Historic Architecture, Eastern Service Center, Washington D.C., Nov. 15-1970, National Park Service, p. 231
- ¹⁸ Minter, p. 197
- ¹⁹ Bearss, p. 254, 255 and Minter, p. 187,188
- ²⁰ Spude, Robert L.S. Skagway District of Alaska 1884-1912, Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Alaska Fairbanks and Alaska Regional Office of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, p. 11.
- ²¹ Bearss, p. 211
- ²² *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, December 27, 1897
- ²³ Bearss, p. 213

²⁴ Bearss, p. 215

²⁵ Minter, p. 199

²⁶ Minter, p. 228

²⁷ Reid, who had defied Captain Moore's claim to Skagway by surveying Mooresville into lots and blocks, died July 20 from gunshot wounds sustained on July 8 in a gunfight with Jefferson Randall "Soapy" Smith, a confidence man who had come to Skagway with a number of henchmen. White Pass & Yukon Route Railway employees were forced to become lawmen when some of these thugs, attempting to escape arrest, scurried up the valley after Smith's death. Railroad employees helped round up the suspects and bring them into Skagway.

²⁸ Minter, 219

²⁹ Minter, "Borderlands", p. 7

³⁰ Minter, 207

³¹ This spot – now known as Black Cross Rock – is clearly seen from the grade and is pointed out to modern day train passengers.

³² *The Daily Alaskan*, Monday, July 25 1898, p. 1

³³ Graves, p. 59

³⁴ Graves, p. 60

³⁵ The tramway was the brainchild of Hugh Foy, and so was called "Foy's Tram."

³⁶ Although horses and mules were treated abominably on the Skagway Trail, the White Pass & Yukon Route Railway took great care with animals, employing its own veterinarian and blacksmith.

³⁷ Minter, p. 241

³⁸ Minter, p. 244

³⁹ Graves, p. 50

⁴⁰ This is about the time when onlookers began joking that the WP & YR stood for "Wait Patiently and You'll Ride," instead of White Pass & Yukon Route.

⁴¹ John Hislop Diary, December 17, 1898 to February 19, 1901; WP&YR archives; author's personal collection.

⁴² George A. Brackett to Sir William Van Horn, Nov. 9, 1898, Brackett Papers, KLGO archives (Minnesota Historical Society)

⁴³ Minter, p. 251-252

⁴⁴ Brackett and some family members remained in Skagway for only a short time after the gold rush. Brackett died in Minneapolis on May 16, 1921. According to his obituary in the *Minneapolis Journal* on May 17, Brackett returned to Minneapolis permanently in 1905. He apparently spent winters back east starting as early as 1900, according to his great-granddaughter, Cynthia Brackett Driscoll, in her book *One Woman's Gold Rush*. Brackett's obituary was on the front page of the *Minneapolis Journal*, and ran 132 column inches. Although making an extraordinary impact on the town of Skagway and the White Pass drama, so great were his contributions to Minneapolis that his obituary devotes barely more than a column inch to his accomplishments in Alaska.

⁴⁵ *Daily Alaskan*, Monday, January 16, 1899

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Quinn, p. 26

⁴⁸ Graves, p. 55

⁴⁹ Apparently, reports sent to London by Brydone-Jack had been favorable, as Hawkins was appointed by the Trustees to fill Brydone-Jack's place, and Hislop became Chief Engineer to replace Hawkins. "It was a graceful act on the part of the Trustees," said Graves, "and a very wise one as well, because Hawkins-himself the soul of honour-was so touched with this proof of their confidence that their interests were doubly protected in his hands, if any protection had been needed." Graves, p. 55

⁵⁰ Minter, p. 265, Graves, p. 55

⁵¹ A photograph taken of the group by E.A.Hegg captured at least two recognizable, ironic guests: Captain William Moore (front and center) and George Brackett's daughter-in-law, Mollie Brackett (second row on top of locomotive, second person on right from man wearing striped coat).

⁵² Minter, p. 266

⁵³ *Skaguay News*, February 24, 1899

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Graves, p. 61

⁵⁶ Graves, p. 37



DRAPER
LUMBER CO'S

U

JULY 6

1899

FIRST TRAIN TO BENNETT AT LOG CABIN

The Golden Spike

"Be Jakers—the first thrain into this country was a thrain out!"

WP & YR trackman, July 1900¹

Completion of the first 20.4 miles of track was an accomplishment of epic proportions but it was not the end of the construction story. The project was fully five months behind schedule and there were still 90 more miles of track to complete. Delays in construction and the consequent loss in revenues threatened to shut the project down entirely. Orders from London to work harder and faster were heard with frustration by the men who labored day and night, seven days a week in increasingly bad weather. Heney agreed to allow workers Sunday off and, on a more personal level, he implored his ailing right-hand-man, Hugh Foy, to slow down. Foy agreed to some time off, but not before a particularly bad February storm paralyzed the grade at the Summit. The entire workforce set about digging a locomotive out of a drift. Foy joined in the effort, even though the work was rigorous and co-workers pleaded with him not to dig. The exhausted Foy contracted pneumonia and died on February 28—the very day his holiday was to begin.

The WP&YR was now, weather permitting, delivering three to five loads of freight up to the summit per day. Although this initially boosted spirits and provided limited revenue, it created a mess at the summit. Freight piled up there because the summit was the end of the track through the winter months. To ease the transportation crunch, Heney took matters into his own hands, and with Hawkins's permission formed the Red Line Transportation Company. Heney built a large warehouse tent at the summit for storage of freight when the weather prohibited transport. This company contracted with the WP&YR to carry freight on his fleet of wide-runner, four-horse sleighs that could carry a ton of freight each. He hired William Robinson ("Stickeen Bill") as general manager. "Stickeen Bill" was a colorful character with a sense of humor and a penchant for solving problems. And he was masterful with horses:

He did not think you could pay too much for a good horse, and would not take a present of a bad one. When he had got the horse he did not believe you could work him too hard (in reason of course), or feed

him too well, and his test of a horse's value was the amount of oats that could be got into him and the amount of work that could be got out of him....²

Weather continued to play havoc through the winter. Valuable productive days were lost to blizzard conditions along the track. Drifts had to be cleared by hand because the railroad did not have a rotary snow blower. Locomotives left Skagway but were occasionally trapped in snowy conditions. Because the worst conditions were at the higher elevations, it was eventually decided to deliver freight to Heney Station where it was transported to White Pass City and carried up the gulch by packers, reverting to methods devised before the train had been completed to the summit.

The railroad was also plagued with labor problems. Attracting a skilled labor force had always been a problem, but now there were stirrings of discontent. Heney had been forced to reduce wages of all the railroad workers from 35¢ an hour to 30¢ because of investor demands. Those reductions gave "anarchists" grist for the mill. An all-out strike was declared on February 28, 1899, just ten days after the tracks had reached the summit. The men left their jobs in droves, and by March 2 more than 1,200 men were on strike. The town of Skagway was at first sympathetic to the strikers, but as time wore on they realized the strike could harm the prosperity of their city. Tensions came to a head when the strike committee and railroad administration met at Camp 1 at the north boundary of Skagway. Heney, Dr. Whiting, and an assistant were three against a hundred men. When Dr. Whiting was challenged by the group's ringleader, Whiting struck him with the butt of a rifle in self defense. The henchmen fled the scene, even as their leader writhed in pain on the ground. By March 15 most workers were back on the job and by March 17 the entire strike organization had collapsed.

With the strike behind them, the WP&YR team focused on progress. Rail was laid all the way to Lake Bennett on July 6, 1899, only 6 days beyond the initial goal. Summer's arrival had

Passengers aboard the first train to Lake Bennett, 6 July 1899. Courtesy British Columbia Archives. Negative: C-05097

WP&YR freight and passenger station, Log Cabin, British Columbia, ca. 1899. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 126



lifted everyone's spirits and enhanced construction efforts. Hawkins predicted that the train would roll up in Whitehorse by June 1900, less than a year away. The crew set about building the last 71 miles of the track and building a strong rolling stock to travel it. By March 1900 the WP&YR railroad had in service 13 locomotives, 250 stock, box, or flatcars, and eight passenger coaches. Many of the cars, as well as a snowplow, flanger, and derrick car, had been built in the railroad's Skagway shops. By the beginning of May, the WP&YR employed 75 men in the town's machine shop:

With the opening of the railroad to White Horse this summer, the company will have more than twice as much mileage in operation as it had last winter, and will therefore need a greater number of cars and work at the shops will be correspondingly increased.³

Blasting along Lake Bennett proved to be more time consuming and much more expensive than expected. Each mile along the lake cost \$250,000 to build, as compared to the \$10,000 to \$12,000 per mile north of the lake.⁴ Construction crews worked

What was originally budgeted to cost \$1 million had cost over \$10 million, at an average of \$90,579.71 per mile.



First train to Lake Bennett at the Summit of White Pass, 6 July 1899. Courtesy British Columbia Archives. Negative: C-05096

feverishly to complete the track and were invited to work as many hours as they wanted, potentially earning up to \$5.00 per day.⁵ Excitement gripped Skagway, Whitehorse and Bennett as news of progress along the grade spread. On July 28, Heney informed Hawkins that the rails would reach Carcross by late afternoon the next day, and Whitehorse residents were invited to take a complimentary ride to Carcross to celebrate the driving of the last spike. As the train approached, there was still about half a mile separating Carcross from the Whitehorse train. Crews closed that gap at about 6:00 p.m., and at last over 1,000 people – including invited guests and workers – watched as dignitaries took their turn with the last spike, President Graves being the last. The

railroad, 2 years and 2 months in the building, was 110.4 miles long. What was originally budgeted to cost \$1 million had cost over \$10 million, at an average of \$90,579.71 per mile. It had employed a total of 35,000 men at one time or another between June 1, 1898 and October 1, 1900. Only 35 of those men had perished during construction, most to illness. Hundreds of horses had been employed and because they received the best of care very few died during construction, a record President Graves was especially proud of:

I saw the horses being watered the next morning (July 30, 1900) and they were kicking and squealing on the





A dinner in honor of Heney was held aboard the sternwheeler Australian afloat on Bennett Lake on the evening of July 31. Employees of the railroad presented him with a gold watch and chain, and each of the engineers with a medal, in honor of completion of the work and in recognition of valuable services.

The golden spike ceremony at Bennett Lake, British Columbia. Courtesy British Columbia Archives. Negative: G-00188

shore of the Lake like three-year-olds in a pasture. They had come through a tremendous winter's work and for the last fortnight they had hardly had their harness off. There were over 100 of them, and not a sick one or one with a scratch on him amongst them.⁶

A dinner in honor of Heney was held aboard the sternwheeler *Australian* afloat on Lake Bennett on the evening of July 31. Employees of the railroad presented him with a gold watch and chain, and each of the engineers with a medal, in honor of completion of the work and in recognition of valuable services.⁷ By September 4, Heney had packed up and closed his Bennett office. He and Hislop left Skagway for Seattle on the *City of Seattle* on September 18.⁸ Hislop would soon return to Skagway as a railroad employee. But when the last spike was set, Heney's job was done and he set about finding another railroad to build.

NOTES

¹ Graves, S. J. On the White Pass Payroll, Paladin Press, New York, 1970, p. 79

² Graves, p. 71

³ *Daily Alaskan*, Friday, May 4, 1900

⁴ Minter, Roy, The White Pass: Gateway to the Klondike, University of Alaska Press 1985, p. 343

⁵ At 30 cents an hour, this represented over 16 hours of work per day. This was considered an excellent wage – laborers in factories in America's major cities averaged \$4 to \$6 per week. (Schlereth, Thomas J. Victorian America, HarperPerennial, New York, 1992, p. 52)

⁶ Graves, p. 74

⁷ John Hislop Diary, author's personal collection, p. 54

⁸ John Hislop Diary, author's personal collection, p. 55-56



Skagway Survives

And so just three years, almost to the day, after Robert Henderson encountered George Carmack here on the swampland at the Klondike's mouth, the great stampede ended as quickly as it had begun...

Pierre Berton, *The Klondike Fever*¹

Gold was discovered on a beach in the Bering Sea only five months after the White Pass & Yukon Route railroad crossed the summit of White Pass and a year before tracks reached all the way from Skagway to Whitehorse. The hordes of people who had actually made it all the way to the goldfields near Dawson bid a hasty retreat to the denuded hills of the Klondike and raced to a place called Nome, Alaska. History repeated itself—another tent city appeared overnight as men clambered over one another looking for gold. The streets of Dawson would have been deserted except for the few who had either made or purchased good claims and were occupied with the business of mining them.

Completion of the railroad from Whitehorse to Skagway, although a triumph in engineering, looked at first not to have been a business success. Without the anticipated number of stampedeers racing to the interior, it was feared the railroad would not succeed. The WP&YR faced difficult times ahead, and trouble for the railroad did not bode well for the little town of Skagway. But although demand for travel had dropped it had not stopped entirely. Tourism was one of the first ways in which Skagway and the White Pass survived. Mrs. M.L.D. Keiser, an Illinois society matron said:

I had travelled extensively, but always felt that I would not be satisfied until I visited the great river of Alaska. When the Klondike excitement came up I saw my opportunity...²

Some Klondike Gold Rush narrators claim the rushers themselves were tourists bent on adventure. It is doubtful that every one who climbed over the White Pass was “just looking,” but a few tourists did share the trail with serious prospectors. Excursionists included Mary Hitchcock and her companion Edith van Buren who took with them Great Danes, parrots, canaries, pigeons and a 40 x 70 foot tent. The Harriman Expedition, led by industrialist Edward Harriman in 1899, made the excursion from Skagway up to White Pass one of its stops on the Alaskan

adventure. Accompanying Harriman was his family and 125 of his closest friends, among them leading scientists and naturalists like John Muir. Many others became accidental tourists, like the wives and children of businessmen.

These “tourists” or “excursionists” were among a growing number of people with enough disposable income to embark on lengthy, expensive trips purely for pleasure. The more exotic the locale the better. Having traveled from their comfortable homes, the elite classes of the world admired the Taj Mahal, climbed onto the slopes of Mount Everest and rode elephants in Africa. Some, seeking a destination closer to home, went north on the Pacific Coast Steamship Company boats and voyaged from Seattle or San Francisco through the “Inside Passage” before the Klondike Gold Rush. These trips could cost as much as \$130.³ The temptation to travelers of exotic regions to see this northernmost part of America was too great. The trips were so popular that the Pacific Coast Steamship Company never needed to advertise. Word of mouth and the lure of scenic Alaska drew more customers than they could accommodate.⁴

Undoubtedly, the romanticized tales of the Klondike were part of what brought tourists to the region during the gold rush itself. Also perpetuating early tourism was the lack of reliable travel guides downplaying the rigors of the trails so that typical pleasure travelers were not armed with information that may keep them home:

The pass (White Pass) lies through a box canon surrounded by high granite peaks and is comparatively easy... White Pass could have been used as a mail route any month of the year...⁵

The voyager, be he excursionist or miner, thus finds an endless variety of things to admire, to wonder at and to ponder over. He will scarcely believe his senses...⁶

As early as 1898, Skagway residents recognized the need for organization when they formed the Chamber of Commerce.

Early travelers were often not impressed with Skagway. Colorado State Geologist T. A. Rickard was appalled at the blight Skagway created on this otherwise pristine land and called it "...the scrap-heap of creation."⁷ John Muir reportedly likened Skagway to "A nest of ants taken to a strange country and stirred up with a stick."⁸ As the gold rush waned, though, it became clear to Skagway's leaders that income derived from the rush would have to be replaced with something. Since tourism was the most logical replacement, the townspeople set about sprucing up the town to make it more presentable for guests. As early as 1898, Skagway residents recognized the need for organization when they formed the Chamber of Commerce. Skagway's first "Clean Up" Day was in 1899 and became an annual tradition. Skagway was the first city in Alaska to incorporate when it did so in 1900.⁹ Some residents wanted to look toward the future and regarded gold rush history a nuisance as it seemed to be the only reason people visited. So as tourism grew, Skagway advertised hiking trails, boat rides and other nearby, non-historic sites.¹⁰ Residents planted gardens of flowers and vegetables and the town became known as "Skagway, Garden City of Alaska."¹¹



Right: White Pass City as photographed by picknickers (1917). Courtesy Jeff Brady, Lynn Canal Publishing, Skagway

Life in early Skagway and the experience of its tourists were immortalized through a new technology developed in the late 1880s. The Kodak camera was designed to be portable and affordable for the non-professional photographer. The temptation of taking one's own photos and showing them off to friends was great. One Kodak camera included 100 photos and their processing for about \$25. The photographer sent the entire

camera back to the manufacturer and the factory returned the re-loaded camera and mounted copies of the successful photos.¹² Photography no longer belonged to the chemist, and tourism was transformed forever as everyday citizens became recorders of their own personal experiences. One such photographer was Mary Montgomery Brackett, daughter-in-law of George Brackett, who joined her husband in Skagway in February 1898 armed with a sense of adventure and a flair for photography.¹³ Her photos are some of the most descriptive of the gold rush experience, but she was in good company, as the *Skaguay News* reported on February 24, 1898:

Monday the 20th was a brilliant day in the annals of Alaskan history, as it witnessed the inauguration of passenger-train service from salt water at Skaguay to the summit of the great White Pass...The trip up was not a speedy one for the reason that every few miles the train was stopped in order that the dozen or fifteen kodaks aboard might be used.¹⁴

By 1914 talk of a "government built" highway to the Summit of the White Pass had begun.¹⁵ Two members of the Alaskan Road Commission were assigned to investigate its feasibility.¹⁶ A survey was conducted and an "unofficial promise" was given to the people of Skagway that some work would be done the following year. By May 1915, when there appeared to be no work in the offing, a group of business people signed a petition which was sent to Governor Strong: "This road is a long felt want, and the government ought to aid and assist us, otherwise we must dry up and decay."¹⁷ A similar plea in April 1922 from the Skagway Alpine Club received only lip service.¹⁸ In spite of encouraging political rhetoric, real discussion of a road was still a long way in the future. If survival of Skagway was their goal, the citizens would have to find ways to capitalize on the commerce already available to them – mineral mining in the interior along with railroad operations and occasional tourism.

Early Skagway promoter and one-man tourist bureau Martin Itjen led a two-hour tour of Skagway and surrounds via his "Skaguay Street Car Company."¹⁹ Itjen and his wife Lucille joined the rush in 1898, but finding no fortune through gold in Atlin, he returned to Skagway to run the Bay View Hotel. He later opened Skagway's first auto sales dealership. He had four streetcars, each fashioned from cars at his small Ford garage. One carried a stuffed bear cub on the front, the bear growling and pointing to

Facing page: Passenger train of the White Pass and Yukon Railway at Rocky Point, Alaska, ca. 1900. Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: UW 21525



Early Skagway promoter and one-man tourist bureau Martin Itjen led a two-hour tour of Skagway and surrounds via his "Skaguay Street Car Company."



Martin Itjen and Mae West. Courtesy Skagway Museum & Archives. PC: 93.02.091

*"...Mrs. Pullen was a fine, tall,
magnificently built woman..."*

Miss Cameron



Harriet Pullen in Pullen House. Courtesy Skagway Museum & Archives. PC: 93.01.402

the right or left as the car turned. As business grew, Itjen needed a larger car. He also created one with a bear on front and a life-sized effigy of Soapy Smith on the back, both operated electronically.²⁰ Over time, Soapy had become a legend and tourist attraction in his own right. Itjen purchased Soapy Smith's place in 1935 and turned it into a major stop on his tour. He installed another life-sized effigy of Soapy, this one standing at the bar with one foot on the rail, a schooner of beer in his left hand and a gun in his right. Itjen became a fixture to Skagway visitors, and he traveled to promote the town and his business ventures.²¹

Early visitors had a dubious choice of accommodations. Gone were the days when rooms were divided by sheets of canvas, but despite the improvements, local hotels were not as luxurious as

seasoned travelers were accustomed to. The Golden North was moved from its original location to Third Avenue and Broadway in 1908 to take advantage of the steadier railroad traffic after gold rush business waned. It became a home away from home for frequent railroad patrons, but apparently it didn't cut muster with Charlotte Cameron, a British tourist who arrived in 1919. "The Golden North: it belies its name," she wrote. "An Hotel Dewey is close by, but neither wears a prosperous air."²²

The turn-of-the-century excursionist was accustomed to the idea of the "destination" holiday whereby one traveled to a destination and all entertainment and relaxation needs were provided at that location.²³ Although Skagway was not up to these posh standards, Harriet Pullen did her best to provide Alaska's version. In 1901 Pullen rented and later purchased Captain Moore's mansion on Sixth Avenue east of Broadway. Mrs. Pullen, an enigmatic character who had joined the community during the gold rush, presented a colorful picture when she drove her wagon and team of horses to the wharf to greet visitors. Miss Cameron was one of her guests:

...Mrs. Pullen was a fine, tall, magnificently built woman, dressed in dark navy serge. She arranged for my luggage, pointed out to me my place in a very old omnibus or coach, then, after seeing to all, seated herself beside me, while a pair of old horses jogged us along with a great deal of clatter....²⁴

Pullen conducted tours of her farm at Dyea. She used the agricultural products from the farm for her hotel, including vegetables and fresh milk and cream, which always made a favorable impression on her guests.

An interesting excursion is across the inlet to Dyea, some 4 miles from Skagway. Here is Mrs. Pullen's ranch, with its fine herd of Jersey and Holstein cows, which provide the dairy of the hotel with fresh milk and butter. One of the pleasant and unique features of this hotel, such as I have never encountered before in my world travels, is that when you come down to breakfast there rests a pan of rich milk upon your table. You skim the cream yourself, for porridge or fruit, taking as much as you please. At the Pullen Ranch you are allowed to fish or shoot. It is a fine sporting centre for birds, and big game fairly abundant.²⁵

At the summit...the Royal Northwest Mounted Police and their handsome uniforms posed a memorable sight to women passengers...

Most memorable were her gold rush “museum” and captivating stories told by candlelight in her beautifully appointed parlor at the end of a hectic day of sightseeing.

One afternoon Mrs. Pullen asked me into her treasure-rooms. I had no idea I was to see such a wonderfully interesting collection; to hear her talk and describe the old days excelled any theatrical performance I have ever attended.²⁶

Requisite for any visitor to the region was a ride on the White Pass & Yukon Route railroad. Hailed as one of the engineering wonders of the world, the WP&YR gave riders access to “appalling scenery,” according to one early passenger:

Suspended, as it were, between earth and heaven and on the perpendicular sides of towering mountains, where nothing save the bleak winter winds ever formerly ventured, now stretches the iron bands over which in the short space of two hours there may be transported one hundred tons of freight from steamships to the summit...²⁷

A visitor later wrote:

It is impossible to give an idea of the wild grandeur and beauty of the views above, below and around us. New visions of harmony; of peaceful loveliness, of rugged defiance, of sublime majesty constantly pass before our wondering eyes. We say at each point: “Surely nothing can surpass this!” And while we are yet speaking, a glory bursts upon us that transcends them all. It is utterly vain to attempt any description of these scenes. They are beyond all feeble attempts of tongue or pen.²⁸

On sunny days Kodakers clambered out of the railroad cars to photograph the unparalleled view from Inspiration Point at Mile 17. Early excursionists snapped the view of the White Pass, Skagway, the Lynn Canal and mountains of the Chilkat Range.

There was one place high in the mountains where tourists would get off the train to view the deep ravines between the mountains and see where Skagway was

located at the end of Lynn canal. It was called Inspiration Point and one could see a distance of fifty miles.²⁹

After 1929, passengers could pay homage to the many horses that perished on the trail by reading the memorial plaque placed at Inspiration Point for its view over nefarious Dead Horse Gulch. The memorial was created by The Ladies of the Golden North, an organization led by the wife of Bert Hartshorn, a farrier in Log Cabin who was heartbroken by the stampede’s treatment of the animals.

Over this trail in 1898 there rode a woman (Mrs. Florence M. Hartshorn) and as she watched these horses fail and fall, there was born a desire to acknowledge the service these faithful animals had rendered the goldseekers.³⁰

To assuage the guilt of his own treatment of animals, “Packer Jack” Newman contributed \$50 to the fund. “I have to admit I was as bad as the rest. We were all mad—mad for gold, and we did things we lived to regret afterwards.”³¹ About 200 people attended the plaque’s dedication at Inspiration Point on August 24, 1929.^{32 33}

Hikers frequented White Pass City, especially when they could walk up on the parts of the Brackett Wagon Road still intact. Rickard noted in 1908 that the rainforest had already reclaimed most of the camps along the way, but that some remains still stood:

Not much remains of White Pass City; half a dozen log-cabins and the frames of a dozen unsubstantial structures bespeak the wreckage of a frontier settlement. The largest of the shaky buildings was a dance-hall; it is now invaded by alder bushes, and alongside the doorway the humble gooseberry grows confidently. The wreck of an old sled is wreathed in blossoms of elderberry. In front of what evidently was a store, a pair of scales and some bottles lie untidily. A dilapidated dwelling, with the sign “Hotel” hanging loosely, suggests the job of adventurers and harlots that gathered there not long ago.³⁴

The train also took passengers to drop-off spots so they could traverse what was left of White Pass City, now a tourist attraction:

Facing page: North-West Mounted Police standing next to American and British flags marking the boundary between Alaska and British Columbia, White Pass (April 9, 1899). Courtesy MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Negative: Hegg 540

We had been told the stories of the Klondike Gold Rush and were interested in finding the ruins of the old White Pass City at the foot of Dead Horse Gulch, the final ascent to the summit of the White Pass. Located in the valley below the railroad about five miles up the line from Clifton, the old "city" was surrounded by underbrush. We cautiously waded through grass as tall as us to find it.

Everything that had been left behind at White Pass City was intact enough to investigate. We found deteriorated mattresses and pans and other utensils hanging on the rusty nails. Racks for drying meat still stood in the tall grasses, and we found the ruins of what must have been a dance floor. Everything that could have been discarded to cut down on pack loads had been left behind and perhaps forgotten. Treacherous White Pass Summit was ahead.³⁵

At the summit, passengers disembarked and were questioned formally by Canadian Customs. This routine was a nuisance to most, but the Royal Northwest Mounted Police³⁶ and their handsome uniforms posed a memorable sight to women passengers who were not particularly annoyed by the delay.³⁷ It was also another opportunity to use the Kodak as the Canadian and American flags flew side by side, unfurled in the ever present summit wind.

Excursion groups were common in the 1920s and 1930s. Typical groups could consist of businesses, teachers, travel agencies and philanthropic organizations. In true Horatio Alger style, philanthropist George E. Buchanan encouraged young, underprivileged men to earn enough money for part of their passage to Skagway.³⁸ The Cleveland coal merchant led one or two tours per year to Alaska in the 1920s and 1930s.³⁹ One such group left its mark by painting "On to Alaska with Buchanan" on the canyon wall opposite Clifton station at Mile 8.⁴⁰

The White Pass & Yukon Route railroad depended upon excursion passengers during the summers, but its main source of revenue came from commercial freight. A modest but steady stream of passenger traffic flowed throughout the winter to Whitehorse with stage transfer to Dawson. Freight tonnage averaged 35,000 tons a year from 1898 to 1916. The WP&YR built



UNION JACK, AND STARS AND STRIPES ON THE WHITE PASS

...the town of Skagway and the White Pass & Yukon Railroad were “undesirable encroachments” upon what (Chief George M. Wright) felt should be pristine park land.

its 10.8-mile Pueblo spur just south of Whitehorse to provide freight service for copper mining which made up the majority of the tonnage between 1912 and 1917. By 1917, World War I drew men from the mines and the amount of tonnage declined about 45% from 1901 to 1917 causing net revenue to decline sharply. The population of the Yukon Territory fell from a high of more than 30,000 in 1898 to 8,000 in 1911 and 4,000 in 1921.⁴¹

To replace revenue lost from commercial freight, WP&YR promoted tourism and invested in attractive promotional literature. Most of the summer travelers arrived by steamship at Skagway. In 1917, the WP&YR built the 1041-ton steamer *Tutshi* for voyages on Taku Arm, the 286-ton motor vessel *Tarahme* for Atlin Lake, and the Atlin Inn at Atlin. All of these improvements helped to gentrify the wilds of the Klondike and provide the destination resort experience sought by many excursionists. WP&YR riverboats headed north to open the mysteries of the Klondike to visitors and in 1934, the railroad joined the burgeoning airline industry when it flew regular routes to Whitehorse, Dawson and Mayo.⁴² An average of 15,000 annual visitors between 1918 and 1942 enjoyed the White Pass and more distant destinations via the WP&YR excursion products.⁴³ This slow but steady passenger traffic helped sustain the railroad and Skagway through the 1930s, but the future for the both the railroad and the town looked grim.

It was during this relative down time that the citizens of Skagway first examined the idea of a national park. At the urging of E.A. Rasmuson, founder and president of the Bank of Alaska in Skagway, the Chamber of Commerce formed a three-person committee to investigate the possibility of a Chilcoot National Park.⁴⁴ In the fall of 1933 the committee wrote to Territorial Delegate Anthony J. Dimond asking him to broach the subject with authorities in Washington. Dimond corresponded with National Park Service Director Arno B. Cammerer whose initial response was negative. Although never having seen the area himself, Cammerer imagined the mountains surrounding Skagway were too similar to those of Glacier Bay National Monument.⁴⁵ Help came from other corners, though, and Rasmuson and other park enthusiasts were heartened when noted geographer Wallace Atwood took up their cause.⁴⁶ After finding no support from Cammerer, he wrote to Secretary of the Department of the Interior Harold L. Ickes on February 13, 1935. Ickes was more enthusiastic. He assigned Chief George M. Wright the duty of studying the idea. To Skagway's chagrin and Cammerer's delight,

Wright reported that the mountains in the area were nothing unique and that the town of Skagway and the White Pass & Yukon Railroad were “undesirable encroachments” upon what he felt should be pristine park land.⁴⁷ By 1936 the early efforts to create a national park had failed.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the United States joined the turmoil which already engulfed much of the world. Ironically, these events breathed new life into Skagway. Security on the Pacific Coast, including the United States' interests in Alaska, became a great concern. Airbases from Grande Prairie, Alberta, to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, would become part of the United States' North West Staging Route to Fairbanks, and on to the USSR. The military attempted to solve the problem of getting fuel and other supplies to these airfields by expediting construction of a highway connecting the Lower 48 with Alaska.⁴⁸ It would be built by American troops with American money through mostly Canadian territory in order to permit overland shipment of war material to Alaska and Northwest Canada.⁴⁹ Whitehorse, accessed by the WP&YR railroad, was the point of entry to the most important links to the interior.

Within a matter of weeks, the population of Skagway skyrocketed. The 375th Port Battalion, headed by Lt. Col. Frank Ahrens, and the 770th Railway Battalion, headed by Lt. Col. William Wilson, arrived in late 1942. Troops set about repairing the work-weary docks and railway which had been without much maintenance for 40 years. Troops were forced to live in tents and other makeshift lodgings as Skagway's existing infrastructure was too small to support such an influx of residents. In January 1943, the US Army Corps of Engineers arrived and began building barracks, Quonset huts, mess halls, office buildings, a fire station, a bakery and other service buildings.⁵⁰

The issue of getting fuel from strategic locations in the interior was addressed by the construction of the CANOL (Canadian Oil) pipeline. The work, which occurred simultaneously with that of the highway, encompassed development of the Norman Wells Oil Field in the Northwest Territories, four pipelines, and a refinery at Whitehorse.⁵¹ The CANOL pipeline was highly controversial because of its delinquent construction schedule and its exorbitant price tag. The need to provide oil to outside markets precipitated the installation of a four-inch pipeline paralleling the White Pass right-of-way between Skagway and Whitehorse in January 1943.⁵² In addition to the highway and the pipeline, a telecommunications

On October 1, 1942, the U.S. Army leased the railway and brought in 28 locomotives and a number of freight cars to handle the exponential increase in freight to the interior. Earlier in the year the WP&YR had run as few as two trains per week. But in 1943 demand in the peak of construction activity, as many as 17 trains left Skagway every day and hauled approximately 300,000 tons of freight.

system was also constructed along the WP&YR right of way. This system provided communication links between the refinery and road construction camps at Whitehorse and the shipping activities at Skagway. It was completed in February 1944 and reached over 3,000 miles. It allowed interior locations, including Skagway, to communicate with the outside world.⁵³

More than 40 years after its completion, Michael J. Heney's narrow gauge railroad through the White Pass was still the most efficient method of transporting materials to Alcan and CANOL construction camps. On October 1, 1942, the U.S. Army leased the railway and brought in 28 locomotives and a number of freight cars to handle the exponential increase in freight to the interior. Earlier in the year the WP&YR had run as few as two trains per week. But in 1943 demand in the peak of construction activity, as many as 17 trains left Skagway every day and hauled approximately 300,000 tons of freight.⁵⁴ This sudden and noisy increase in traffic prompted city leaders to move railroad activity from Skagway's main business street,⁵⁵ Broadway, to the east bluff — ironically, where Heney and Superintendent Whiting had originally wished to place them in 1898.



Skagway was placed under the Northwest Service Command on September 1, 1943. Colonel Ahrens was basically in command of the city, which created a delicate balancing act between civilians and military. One of the colonel's first acts was to designate the entire downtown area of Skagway as off-limits for the 770th Railway Battalion. This unpopular move was later adjusted to allow one company of the 770th to visit Skagway every weekend,

but military police were on the lookout for public displays of drunkenness.⁵⁶ All of Skagway was affected by the war in some way or other. Some beloved flowerbeds growing in vacant lots were torn up to make way for Army construction projects. Even the town's historic saloons were not immune — the Mascot Saloon Building was used by the Army as temporary headquarters until December 1943.⁵⁷ The Eagles Hall was taken over in May 1943 by the USO, which entertained until late 1944. The USO hosted many traveling entertainers, but eventually dances dwindled to a very few as there were too few women in town to make them enjoyable.⁵⁸

As the world drew a collective sigh of relief with the surrenders of Germany in May 1945 and of Japan in August 1945, Skagway was again forced to contemplate its future. War's end brought jubilation around the world, but the withdrawal of the U.S. Army left Skagway in dire circumstances. The Army cancelled the WP&YR lease and turned operations of the railroad back to its owners.⁵⁹ The military had made improvements, including new equipment and facilities, but the intensity of the wear and tear sustained by the railroad during wartime had left the WP&YR in need of major repairs. To make matters worse, business from mining and tourism returned to pre-war levels.⁶⁰

In 1954 the threat of losing an important historic jewel galvanized the community as residents rallied together to save the endangered Pullen Collection. Harriet Pullen had run her grand hotel until her death in 1947, and in its more than 40 years of operation she had collected an enormous treasure trove of gold rush artifacts. Pullen's granddaughter reopened the hotel in 1950 but the collection had already begun to deteriorate. Bruce Black, park naturalist at Glacier Bay National Monument (GLBA), visited the Pullen House and found the hotel in a state of disrepair — he was particularly concerned with the artifact collection. Since the NPS had no official role in the city, all he could do was urge the Territory of Alaska or some other entity to take possession of the collection and care for it properly. His pleas and those of many other concerned citizens were unheeded — the Pullen House closed for the last time in 1959 and the collection went to Lynnwood, Washington with its owner. Pullen's treasures were eventually sold piecemeal at auction, and the collection was lost to posterity.⁶¹

Meanwhile, Skagway and the WP&YR adapted to post-war realities, including the presence of a new road which could

U.S. Army vehicles on their way to the Interior on the WP&YR (1942). Courtesy Stan Cohen, Pictorial Histories Publishing Co.

In 1958 or early 1959, the National Park Service informed Skagway that it would be examined for historic significance as part of its National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings program.

potentially run the railroad out of business. The Alaska Highway (or "Alcan," which connected Alaska and Canada with the Lower 48) was not originally a threat to the railroad, as its first incarnation was little better than a bulldozed trail. WP&YR officials forged ahead with no competition. But as the road improved the WP&YR formed its own bus line operating under the British Yukon Navigation Company (the same company under which they operated riverboats). In order to compete, they also established a trucking line which operated between Dawson Creek and Whitehorse.⁶² Increased competition from air traffic also hurt WP&YR, as military airfields were improved and opened to commercial use. Having sold its aviation branch to Yukon Southern Air Transport in December 1941, the WP&YR was unable to compete in the aviation arena.⁶³ In an effort to provide management oversight of its multi-faceted operations, the White Pass and Yukon Corporation was created in 1951 under a charter granted by the Government of Canada. This charter incorporated the four operating companies of the WP&YR which were still owned by British shareholders of the White Pass and Yukon Railway Company.⁶⁴

In the 1950s modernization and progress changed the face of the WP&YR, Skagway and the Yukon Territory. Completion of an all-season road between Dawson and Whitehorse in 1955 made travel easier and safer. Modernization rang the death knell for the WP&YR's riverboats. An era of stylish tourism vanished on the upper Yukon River and Southern Lakes when the *Tarahne* and the *Tutshi* docked for good. In 1954 the WP&YR ordered its first General Electric diesel-electric locomotives and the era of the steam-powered locomotive began to wane. In late 1955, the WP&YR implemented the first ship-train-truck containerization system in the world. Products of interior mines like silver-lead-zinc concentrate and asbestos were moved by the railroad in these special 8 foot by 8 foot by 7 foot containers. Business increased and, once again, Skagway prospered with the renewed interest in the interior mining industry. The Anvil Mining Corporation forecast their lead/zinc/silver ore reserves would be mined for at least the next 20 years. Skagway's future looked bright when it was predicted that 400,000 to 500,000 tons of concentrate per year would be shipped via WP&YR.⁶⁵

Cyril Coyne, Skagway's mayor from 1957 to 1959, suggested that Skagway should be made an historic site or monument.⁶⁶ In 1958 or early 1959, the National Park Service informed Skagway that it would be examined for historic significance as part of its National

Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings program. Mayor Coyne was so encouraged by this news that he asked the NPS for financial assistance with private restoration efforts. Help came not in the form of money but in personnel when Regional Archeologist Paul J. Schumacher visited Skagway in June 1959. He met with Mayor Coyne and discussed preservation efforts of other communities. He also took photos of potentially significant buildings, including the McCabe College, Pullen House, Arctic Brotherhood Hall and the Moore Cabin.⁶⁷

The idea of a national park at Skagway was pigeonholed for two years as Alaska celebrated and adjusted to its new status as a state rather than a territory. The idea returned in July 1961 when Charles Snell of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings visited the Taiya Inlet. Contrary to the 1935 opinions of George M. Wright and Director Cammerer, Snell saw Skagway's history as an asset and believed it was the best example he had seen of a gold rush town.⁶⁸ He recommended it be nominated as a National Historic Landmark. The Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments recognized the historical significance of the Skagway Historical District and the White Pass, and in June, 1962, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall declared them eligible for the National Historic Landmark (NHL) designation.⁶⁹

By 1967 a briefing book had been prepared for Alaska Governor Walter J. Hickel, identifying the area as one the National Park Service wanted to examine more thoroughly. A team from the National Park Service Resource Planning department and the Alaska State Department of Natural Resources conducted an intensive field study of the historic community and its environs in April 1968.⁷⁰ The team had a first rate view of the White Pass as it rode the WP&YR from Skagway to Whitehorse, Canada, where it met with the James Smith, Commissioner of the Yukon Territory. Interviews with Alaska State officials in Juneau and Anchorage were also part of the research.

As part of this report preparation NPS historian Edwin Bearss was sent to the region. He reconnoitered Dyea, hiked the Chilkoot, explored the White Pass on foot and examined Skagway in August 1969.⁷¹ His exhaustive report is one of the best resources on the area, and his legendary hiking and exploration exploits are the envy of many a hiker reading the report.

In October 1969 the National Capital Parks and Urban Planning Director, Theodor Swem,⁷² a Chilkoot Trail hike veteran, presented the NPS plan to Walter J. Hickel, who was by then the Secretary of the Interior. Swem's presentation also included a slide show by someone who had hiked the trail. Ironically enough, the presenter was Secretary Hickel's personal secretary, Yvonne Esbenson. The Secretary was so inspired that he approved the plan on December 30, 1969 and announced the NPS was interested in development of a national historical park in Skagway and its environs to commemorate the gold rush era. His announcement was made at the same time Canada's Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Jean Chretien, announced that an international Klondike historical park would include sites in Alaska, British Columbia and the Yukon.⁷³

After that joint announcement, momentum began to build as both the United States and Canada started preparation of master park plans. Preparation included NPS visits to Skagway. Many Skagway citizens were in favor of the plan and had indeed been promoting it for some time. There were, however, those who were skeptical and afraid the presence of a national park would interfere with private ownership issues. Eventually, the NPS was able to negotiate and allay the initial fears of most residents. Governor William A. Egan sent a letter on February 2, 1971 giving his enthusiastic support to the establishment of a national gold rush park – it was the first official approval for a park proposal given by the government of the State of Alaska.

Meanwhile, Skagway and the WP&YR enjoyed prosperity. The Anvil Mining Corporation (changed to Cyprus Anvil Mining Corporation, Ltd. in 1974) was keeping the area thriving with its lead/zinc/silver ore products. The ore was trucked from Faro, Yukon Territory, to Whitehorse where it was loaded onto railroad cars, transported to Skagway, and transferred onto containerized ships and taken to Vancouver. In early 1973, Federal Industries Limited, a Canadian company dating back to 1929, bought 50.2% of the common shares of the White Pass and Yukon Corporation, and in 1976 it acquired the remaining shares.⁷⁴

Although there was community support for a national park, initial proposals in 1970 and 1971 were found to be too vague and were unacceptable to many area landowners. It took two years of political wrangling before Alaska's Congressional delegation was able to introduce the first bills establishing the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (KLGO). On April 17, 1973, Alaska

Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) introduced S. 1622. It was co-sponsored by Senator Henry Jackson (D-WA), Mike Gravel (D-AK) and Warren Magnuson (D-WA). The same day, Representative Don Young (R-AK) introduced an identical bill (H.R. 7121) in the House of Representatives.⁷⁵ It was co-sponsored by two representatives from Washington, Brock Adams and Joel Pritchard, both of whom represented the district involving Seattle's branch of the proposed park in Pioneer Square.

Despite the initial excitement caused by these introductions, progress on the park was delayed by politics. Work on Capital Hill in Washington D.C. came to a virtual standstill as the country dealt with Watergate break-in repercussions and the resignation of President Richard M. Nixon. It was two years before Rep. Don Young was able to introduce a new bill, H.R. 1194 for establishment of the park on January 15, 1975. Senator Ted Stevens did the same in the Senate several days later by introducing S. 98, so numbered to commemorate the "Days of '98."⁷⁶ These introductions gave way to more wrangling and compromises. It was a year and a half later that S. 98 made it to the desk of President Gerald Ford, who had already declared support of the park. On June 30, 1976, President Ford signed S. 98 into law (Public Law 94-323), and the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park was official.⁷⁷



A flurry of activity followed official authorization of the park, including the selection of a skeleton staff, the first of whom arrived in Skagway in early 1977.⁷⁸ One of the staff's first official duties was to plan the park's dedication, set in Skagway for Saturday, June 4, 1977. It was a gala affair attended by 94-year-old gold rush veteran Robert Sheldon, Senator Ted Stevens, Yukon Commissioner Dr. Art Pearson and Mike Miller and Jim

Moore House Museum, managed by KLGO.
Photograph by author

From October 1982 until the spring of 1988 the WP&YR equipment lay in storage and its personnel either left Skagway in search of jobs elsewhere or waited anxiously for better times to return.

Duncan of the Alaska State Legislature. Many of the townspeople were decked out in gold rush era attire.⁷⁹

Skagway was swept into a new enthusiasm. Most residents welcomed the park as a new tourist development, sure to bring an increase of tourism revenue.⁸⁰ NPS architects, historians and preservationists descended upon the tiny town and up the White Pass and Chilkoot Pass corridors.

Skagway's newfound optimism was dampened by a worldwide recession in early 1980s which caused a drop in metal prices. The Cyprus Anvil mine and mill in Faro, major sources of revenue for the WP&YR, shut down on June 4, 1982. The WP&YR lost its major source of business and was forced to suspend railway operations on October 8, 1982. This disastrous event was so unanticipated by the railway that it had no alternative but to cancel a recent order of four new locomotives which had been sorely needed to accommodate the previous rise in demand. From October 1982 until the spring of 1988 the WP&YR equipment lay in storage and its personnel either left Skagway in search of jobs elsewhere or waited anxiously for better times to return.⁸¹

In 1978, a highway from Carcross to Skagway had been completed through the White Pass, but was only open on a seasonal basis. In 1985 the Canadian Government worked out an agreement to keep it open for year-round hauling purposes. By 1988 the price of metal had finally risen high enough for production at Cyprus Anvil mine to resume, but they hired a trucking contractor to transport its products to the Skagway docks, instead of hiring the railroad as they had in the past.⁸²

Again the fortunes of Skagway and the WP&YR looked grim – and once again, violence in other parts of the world brought hope to the people in the quiet little community at the end of Lynn Canal. Visitors to Skagway had come in modest numbers in the early 1980s because American tourists were accustomed to taking long, luxurious cruises to exotic locations, especially Europe. But by the mid-1980s a rise in terrorism in foreign countries gave cause for alarm to Americans traveling abroad. The hijacking and subsequent murder of an American on TWA flight 727 in Beirut, Lebanon on June 14, 1985 and the hijacking of the *Achille Lauro* and subsequent murder of a disabled American passenger on October 8, 1985 received enormous press and caused particular concern.⁸³ Various hijacking incidents between 1985 and 1986 cost the lives of 410 passengers and assorted terrorist attacks

throughout 1985 in Europe and the Mediterranean area by Arab, Palestinian and French assailants resulted in 107 deaths and 438 injuries.⁸⁴ Europe, Americans feared, was no longer a safe place to play and they decided to vacation at home. The number of cruise passengers to Skagway increased from 54,000 in 1984 to 100,000 in 1986 and 119,000 in 1987.⁸⁵ Federal Industries was so encouraged by this rise in cruise passengers that, in the spring of 1988, the WP&YR opened the 20.4 mile stretch between Skagway and the summit of White Pass. The first train to run in almost six years left the Skagway depot on May 12, 1988. Thirty-six thousand excursionists enjoyed the WP&YR that year. As an added boost to the railroad's tourist potential, the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering recognized the WP&YR as an International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark in 1994, an honor bestowed on projects such as the Statue of Liberty and the Eiffel Tower.⁸⁶



In 1991, the Alaska Power and Telephone Company (APT) believed Skagway had matured to the point where it needed to seek permanent solutions to its energy problems. At that time, the town relied on hydroelectric energy in the summer and diesel fuel in the winter. Fed-up with the deficiencies of this plan, they revived the idea of a new, larger hydroelectric plant, claiming that a year-round facility would eliminate Skagway's dependence on diesel generated fuel in the winter.⁸⁷ APT proposed to construct an intake siphon and pump house at the south end of Goat Lake, along the White Pass about six miles from Skagway. The pipeline would carry water downslope to a substation and powerhouse that would be located somewhere between the railroad tracks and the Skagway River. The NPS expressed concern about the

Modern cruise ship docked at Skagway (2001).
Photograph by author

Mining brought people to Skagway a hundred years ago, and it's still bringing them there today.

possible impact the pipeline would have on remnants of the Brackett Wagon Road and other historic resources that would be encountered during construction. Despite these concerns, the plan was approved in May 1996 by the United States Forest Service and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Construction began in April 1996, and, as NPS officials feared, workers did uncover fragile remnants of the 100-year-old Brackett Wagon Road.⁸⁸ The plant began operation in December, 1997 and Skagway has relied upon the plant for power ever since.

Mining brought people to Skagway a hundred years ago, and it's still bringing them there today. The main industry in Skagway now is a mining of another kind – tourists. Visitors to Skagway in the 1980s must have told their neighbors, as the number of tourists has increased exponentially since. In 2001, almost 600,000 people came to Skagway through the “Inside Passage” on a cruise ship. The WP&YR carried 318,993 passengers over the Summit that year, far more than the 10,000 souls who struggled to cart their grubstake over the Summit during the gold rush over a hundred years ago.



WP&YR modern diesel-electric locomotive No. 100 pulls through Tunnel Mountain with summer tourist passengers (1999). Photograph by author

Just as terrorism helped the Alaska cruise ship industry prosper in the 1980s, recent events may affect the city negatively. The attacks on America on September 11, 2001 have caused concern that Americans will succumb to their fears and stay home. With so much uncertainty about the future, it is comforting to know that some things will not be changed by the arrival of terrorism to America. Although tourism to the White Pass may change with social and economic ebb and flow, the White Pass itself will not.

The winds will still howl at the summit where the Canadian and American flags will still fly side-by-side; the bones of animals driven to their death will still line the valley while the memories of thousands of broken hearts still hang in the air; tracks of the WP&YR will still rise from the shore to the sky and the Skagway River will continue to run to the sea, just as it did after glaciers receded over a million years ago.

On our very first visit here and, subsequently many, many times over, my father would tell me and numerous other people in Juneau and elsewhere, how he pictured to himself the future of this place. He never tired of predicting how roads would be built through here; of a little city built here; of steamers on the upper Yukon; and of large steamers, loaded with freight and passengers, docking at the waterfront.

Bernard Moore, 1904⁸⁹

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⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 163

⁸¹ Johnson, p. 74

⁸² Johnson, p. 76

⁸³“Targeting the Tourists,” Bruce Wallace, *Maclean’s*, September 4, 1995, Vol. 108 Issue 36, p. 20

⁸⁴ “An Attack on Civilization,” *Time Magazine*, July 1, 1985, Vol. 125 Issue 26, p. 8; “Saddam Hussein’s Unholiest Allies,” B. Duffy, *U.S. News & World Report*, January 28, 1991, Vol. 110 Issue 3, p. 42

⁸⁵ WP&YR marketing statistics

⁸⁶ Mulvihill, p. 22

⁸⁷ Norris, Legacy of the Gold Rush, p. 405

⁸⁸ These “fragile remnants” include cribbing used to support the Brackett Wagon Road and stretches where the road itself was still extant.

⁸⁹ Moore, Bernard. Skagway in Days Primeval, Lynn Canal Publishing, Skagway, AK, p. n

Epilogue

John Muir, conservationist:

While reporting on the great Klondike Gold Rush for the *San Francisco Examiner*, John Muir called the affair “A wild, discouraging mess.” His descriptions of the activity began and ended with the destruction of the valley’s natural resources rather than the human drama others reported.¹ A few years later in 1899, he returned to the region with the famed Harriman Expedition. He became enraged and sickened by the rampant slaughter of wildlife the Expedition conducted on the White Pass and throughout Alaska in the name of science. After the Rush, Muir continued his campaign for conservation throughout the United States. He personally took Teddy Roosevelt to Yosemite so that the president could see the need for conserving the wonders of the land. Muir founded the Sierra Club in 1892 and was instrumental in the establishment of national parks in Grand Canyon, Sequoia, Kings Canyon and Mount Rainier. Muir died on Christmas Eve, 1914. He is remembered unofficially as the “Father of the National Park System,” and his home in Martinez, California became a National Historic Site on August 31, 1964.²

Captain William Moore:

Contrary to some sensationalized versions of Skagway history, Captain Moore did not stand helplessly by and let intruders take over his land. He stayed in Skagway and continued to prosper as a businessman, especially with his work at Moore’s Wharf. In 1901 the court ruled in favor of the Moores, and awarded the Captain the right to 60 acres of land on which downtown Skagway had been built. Had he pushed his legal right and claimed this land, Moore could have devastated the community – but he settled with the business leaders for 25% of the land’s 1900 assessed value.³ Captain Moore eventually sold his beautiful mansion to Harriet Pullen and moved back to Victoria, British Columbia where he died a wealthy man in March, 1909.⁴ He was 87 years old. In 1928, one of Moore’s sons, William D. Moore, wrote of the Captain: “Father was not an educated man. Had he been so, his life would have read in a different way. He was headstrong and aggressive, full of ambition, never would give up.”⁵

Mont Hawthorne, stampeder:

Mont was one of the few stampeders who set out for the Klondike and found it. During his trip over the White Pass he

took the extra time needed to care for his horse, feeding and resting it properly. Hawthorne sold his horse in Bennett before going on to Dawson. Hawthorne staked a claim with several other men on Bonanza Creek. They actually did strike gold, netting \$900 each, but the winter’s harshness and the starvation and illness that came with it was more than Hawthorne wanted to live through again. He traveled on a sternwheeler to St. Michael, then continued on to Seattle. Hawthorne still had some wanderlust, though, and he hadn’t been home long before he headed back up north to work odd jobs in Alaska. By 1906, family matters brought him home to Oregon for good. He and his brother bought adjacent farms in the Hood River Valley in Oregon, where he raised nursery stock and planted an orchard. The notes of his Klondike journey collected dust in his attic for 35 years before his niece Martha Ferguson McKeown turned the mementos into one of the most entertaining first hand accounts of the gold rush, *The Trail Led North*.⁶

George A. Brackett, Brackett Wagon Road:

Brackett left Skagway in 1905, never to return. Although 69, he did not retire to a quiet life, rather, he continued civic works while remaining a dedicated patriarch to the Brackett brood. In 1910 he was honored by the Minneapolis Publicity Club, where the president of the club “...suggested that the popular expression of the day ‘Let George Do It’ should have originated in Minneapolis, for it was the common habit, when anything, big or little, was to be done to turn everything over to Mr. Brackett.”⁷ The Brackett Paper files from the Minnesota Historical Society are filled with letters to and from an aging George Brackett, all copied in his elegant cursive style. He communicated constantly with family, and remained very attached to Mollie Brackett, widow of his son Tom, who died at age 28. Money continued to plague the entrepreneur, as can be evidenced from reading letters in this collection. Brackett enjoyed good health until shortly before his death on May 16, 1921. Bold, front page letters on the evening edition of the *The Minneapolis Journal* spread the news. Although the saga of the Brackett Wagon Road is a big part of the White Pass story, so numerous were his contributions to Minneapolis that Alaska only rated a few sentences in several pages of obituary.

J. H. Brooks, White Pass packer:

Joseph H. Brooks was one of the most successful and notorious packers to travel the White Pass. Although he learned to treat animals well, he didn't have the same respect for the Bracketts or their wagon road. On February 3, 1898, Brooks led a group of packers and 30 loaded horses through Toll Gate 9, having broken it down with an axe. Two days later the rogues returned, broke the gate down again, and toasted (with whiskey provided by Brooks) to the ill health of the Brackett Wagon Road. Because of these actions, Brooks and his packer co-horts were embroiled in litigation with George Brackett for years to come.⁸ In 1934, the 73-year-old Brooks left his San Jose, California home for a nostalgic trip up the White Pass. Brooks made it as far as White Pass City before a heart attack claimed his life. Ironically, it was Edith Feero Larson, daughter of John Feero, a packer who had refused to work for the cantankerous Brooks, who completed and signed the death certificate a few days later. Brooks was buried in Skagway on July 17, 1934.⁹

WB Close, Close Brothers, Ltd. railroad financier:

WB continued as the head of Close Brothers until his death in 1923. In America, the White Pass & Yukon Route railroad and his farm mortgage business kept Close Brothers afloat, while business in England, until some time after the first world war, was made up of WB's personal friends among the landed gentry of England. He lived at a fashionable address in London, and it was rumored that WB's old friend, Edward VII, met his mistresses there. WB also built a country house, Huntercombe Manor at Nettlebed near Henley, Oxfordshire, where he could follow rowing events and entertain the crews. WB died at the home of his mistress, a young actress named Florence Desmond, on the Isle of Wight. His funeral was at Nettlebed. His coffin was loaded onto a farmcart and a large old horse pulling the cart was led to the parish church by WB's chauffeur. Today's Close Brothers, Ltd. offices are located in the City of London only a few blocks from the offices where WB decided to finance the White Pass & Yukon Route railroad over one hundred years ago.¹⁰

John Hislop, White Pass & Yukon Route surveyor:

By the time the railroad was complete, John Hislop had become a solid member of the Skagway community. He belonged to the Arctic Brotherhood and had been serving as the President of the Skagway City Council. He stayed on as a manager of the railroad, overseeing the general operation and construction of the 18A bridge. He was granted a one-year leave of absence and on

December 1, 1900 left Skagway on the *Cottage City*. With Mike Heney at his side as groomsman, Hislop married his long-time sweetheart, Mary Edith "Marnie" Young, in Minneapolis, Minnesota on January 23, 1901. A month later, Hislop ran to catch a train in Chicago but his coat got caught in a trestle and he was slammed under the tracks. This gentle man, who had travelled thousands of miles by train and had walked hundreds of miles up and down the White Pass without incident, was pronounced dead from his injuries at Englewood Union Hospital. He was 45 years old.¹¹

Mike Heney, White Pass & Yukon Route contractor:

After the last spike was driven in July, 1900, Heney was toasted by his peers at a celebratory dinner aboard the sternwheeler *Australian* which was docked at Bennett. "We have camped by mountain and river;" Samuel Graves recited to the red-faced Heney, and "we have slept and told yarns together; We have broken bread at his table, and roughed it in all sorts of weather; So let us drink to our brother, 'Good luck and a life in clover; Good health, and wealth and a loving wife and good rest when life is over.'"¹² Graves' wish for a long, healthy life were sadly not prophetic. Heney left Skagway shortly after the celebration in search of new projects. One such project was the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad, a 131-mile line running from Cordova to Chitina, with a spur to the Kennecott Mine, which he built for the Morgan-Guggenheim partnership (after selling them his right-of-way for the route!). Heney was delighted to bring a number of WP&YR veterans with him, including E.C. Hawkins and Dr. Fenton Whiting.¹³ In August 1909, Heney was aboard the *Ohio* when it struck a reef near the coast of British Columbia. Witnesses claim he helped passengers off the boat, then ran below deck to release his horses. As he did so, the boat began to sink quickly. Heney managed to get to the deck and swim ashore, but four passengers and all of his 35 horses drowned in the incident. Friends believe the pneumonia he contracted soon after contributed to his death a year later at the age of 46.¹⁴ Heney's legacy lives on in the White Pass & Yukon Route railroad, and as a National Park Service crew discovered in 1979, his legacy is also remembered in the White Pass Depot itself. While removing modern siding from the staircase wall, the crew was surprised to uncover graffiti engraved on the depot's original staircase wall. The sentiment "Heney Sucks" survived as a different kind of tribute to the man, and one which he may have enjoyed just as much as Samuel Graves' laudatory toast aboard the *Australian*.

Dandy, the pack horse:

Dandy was a small, roan pony who belonged to Mrs. McGuigan of Seattle when gold was discovered in the Klondike. He had a taste for flowers and a talent for breaking into her home. Exasperated with the pony's antics, she sold him for \$30 to William Loerpabel. After the sale she learned the pony was to be used as a pack animal on the notorious White Pass, and decided that she wasn't that mad at him, after all. She tearfully begged Loerpabel to allow her to buy him back, but horses were hard to come by and he refused. All of Loerpabel's horses died en route to the Klondike, except Dandy. "It never tore a pack off and never pulled a shoe," he was quoted as saying in *The Seattle Times*. Dandy "took everything as it came. He worked hard on the trail, refused to lose his footing or become frightened as other animals did when passing narrow places on the trail." At one point, two men were hired to dig Dandy out of a mud hole because he was too valuable to lose. When the Loerpabel party reached Lake Bennett, his owner did not have the heart to shoot Dandy, which was the fate that awaited many a faithful packhorse. So, Loerpabel gave the pony to a carpenter who was on his way back to Seattle. "There was great rejoicing in (Mrs. McGuigan's) family when Dandy was led into the family lot. Dandy shows that he has seen some very hard work. His hoofs and legs are cut to the bone in many places and very much swelled up. He looks as though he has not been curried since he left, for the hair of his once-smooth coat is standing in seven directions. Mike Powers' little boy is engaged today in making a tent out of potato sacks and Dandy is going to be the principal attraction of a Beacon Hill circus."¹⁵ Presumably, Dandy lived happily ever after, snacking on Mrs. McGuigan's flowers and enjoying frequent visits to her parlour.

NOTES

- ¹ Merrell, Bruce, "A Wild, Discouraging Mess: John Muir Reports from the Klondike Gold Rush," Alaska History, Vol. 7 Fall 1992, p. 36
- ² NPS website for John Muir National Historic Site, www.nps.gov/jomu/home.html
- ³ Spude, Robert L.S., Skagway, District of Alaska, 1884-1912. Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska Regional Office of the National Park Service, 1983, p. 31.
- ⁴ While the court found in favor of Captain Moore on January 24, 1901, the claim was apparently not recorded until June 1902 (Cooper, p. 16).
- ⁵ Andrews, Clarence L. "Biographical Sketch of Capt. William Moore," *Washington Historical Quarterly*, Volume 22, 1931, p. 41
- ⁶ McMeown, Martha Ferguson, The Trail Led North: Mont Hawthorne's Story, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1948
- ⁷ The Minneapolis Journal, "George A. Brackett, Pioneer Leader Dead"; May 17, 1921, front page.
- ⁸ Bearss, Edwin C., Proposed Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Historic Resource Study, Office of History and Historic Architecture, National Park Service, Eastern Service Center, Washington D.C., November 15, 1970, p. 233-235
- ⁹ "Standard Death Certificate, Territory of Alaska, Office of Territorial Registrar of Vital Statistics, U.S. Commissioner's Precinct of Skagway, Alaska, Registered No. 180, recorded 18 July 1934." KLGO archives
- ¹⁰ www.close-group.com-hist-15.htm; Vaizey, Wendy. A Brief History of Close Brothers, Close Brothers Group PLC, London, 1995
- ¹¹ John Hislop Diary, December 17, 1898 to February 19, 1901, KLGO archives; Minter, Roy, Gateway to the Klondike, University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks, AK, 1987, p. 360
- ¹² Graves, Samuel H. On the White Pass Payroll, Paladin Press., New York, 1908 p. 252
- ¹³ Minter, Roy, The White Pass: Gateway to the Klondike, University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks, Alaska, p. 359
- ¹⁴ Tower, Elizabeth A., Big Mike Heney: Irish Prince of the Iron Trails, author published, 1992, p. 45, 50
- ¹⁵ Evans, Elizabeth Wright, "The Horse That Went to the Gold Rush," True West, Nov.-Dec. 1963, Vol. 11, No.2, Whole No. 70, p. 39

Conclusion and Recommendations

While there is currently no official plan for treatment of the White Pass Unit of the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, such a plan is important to the preservation of its resources and collection of interpretive knowledge. For instance, there has long been talk of opening the trail to the public. This move would open up a whole new world of interpretation and illuminate a story yet untold about the plight of the stampedeers along the Trail of '97. However, much would need to be done to mitigate the damage that could be caused by creation of a trail and the consequent traffic that would be attracted to it before the public is invited to enjoy the White Pass on foot.

Investigations already recorded illustrate the need for timely research. For instance, in 1969, National Park Service historian Edwin Bearss reconnoitered the White Pass as a part of his general investigation of the Skagway, Chilkoot and White Pass area. His findings were documented in *The Proposed Klondike Gold Rush Historic Resource Study*, published in 1970. He took the White Pass & Yukon Route train to the summit where he started down the Brackett Sled Road toward Skagway.

Until the trail dropped below timberline, it was easy traveling. Once below the timberline, the trail was badly brushed over. In the canyon, rock slides had buried the trail at a number of points...Many bones from the thousands of horses and mules who died along the trail were seen, as well as other objects.... At White Pass City, the ruins of a number of structures were located and photographed....¹

Ten years after Bearss' reconnaissance, Caroline Carley, an archaeologist hired by the University of Washington, led a team to the White Pass area in 1979, three years after the Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park was authorized. By the time her team reached White Pass City, most of what Bearss documented was probably gone, as she discusses "foundations," rather than "ruins:"

As expected from historic photographs, the most important structural remains at White Pass City are numerous stone foundations, most of them probably for tents. In general, these foundations are more

distinct and substantial than those documented in Canyon City (Chilkoot Trail) and offer more potential information for interpretation....²

The author was part of a National Park Service group which hiked to White Pass City in 1999. Twenty years after Carley's report, we found that although the area of White Pass City was still obvious in the swampy land at the confluence of the White Pass Fork and Skagway Rivers, most of the evidence of the town had dissolved into the forest. No obvious comparisons between Carley's findings could be made with what we found, and it's safe to assume that much of what her team documented cannot be seen on a casual reconnaissance such as ours.

The example of the deterioration of the integrity of White Pass City can be used as a measuring tool regarding the rest of the Trail of '97. Time and the ravages of Mother Nature in a harsh environment have led to the loss of many important historic artifacts and interpretive tools. Likewise, development of the trail for use by people has destroyed or damaged many elements of the trail. For instance, it is well documented in gold rush era diaries that the Trail of '97 left the alluvial flat surface of the Skagway River to climb sharply up to Black Lake. However, construction of the Klondike highway, completed in 1978, split the lake in two parts. Any archaeological evidence of the trail was probably destroyed in the construction of the road. In addition, the level of the water was forced higher than the lake's historic level, likely submerging historic artifacts and the actual trail itself. Locating the original trail may not be possible without underwater archaeology, and even then the trail may not be extant due to blasting done while the road was under construction.

Clearly, it is imperative that archaeological investigations be conducted as soon as possible to avoid further deterioration of the trail and destruction of artifacts, both prehistoric and gold rush period. There is limited knowledge of prehistoric activity in the region, making this is an area which clearly needs more study. Regarding gold rush era sites, the area around White Pass City is especially important, but by no means is it the only place along the trail that deserves more attention. Realistically, it would be nearly impossible to study the entire trail as so much of it has been reclaimed by the valley. However, there are several areas

which deserve particular archaeological investigation and have the potential to enlighten our interpretation of the White Pass:

Liamsville

Further investigation of this area could help us determine the actual point at which the Trail of '97 left the riverbed, thus possibly opening up the trail for further study. It could also provide information on the White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad's original track which veered to the west of the riverbed, instead of following the easterly path it now uses. Trestle and bridge remains are easy to find in this area and can even be seen by passengers on the train.

Brackett Wagon Road

The Brackett Wagon Road can be seen from several places along the highway and the train. Construction of the Goat Lake Hydroelectric plant also revealed a spot along the Skagway River where the road can be easily found, including wooden cribbing. It is also imperative that investigation of the Brackett Wagon Road bridge which entered White Pass City after crossing the Skagway River be conducted before any new bridge for a modern hiking trail is considered. And while much of the Brackett Sled Road above White Pass City can be seen from the train and easily traversed for a few miles, it literally drops off into the canyon a few yards after the ruins of the railroad's American Shed. Investigation by an archaeological team could perhaps find areas where the trail existed, and help locate and document the position of Toll Gate 9, the last of the Brackett Wagon Road toll gates and the location of the toll gate wars.

Trail of '97

The point at which the White Pass Fork and a small creek converge near the Summit is called The Ford. Archaeologists may find evidence of the village that formed there during the gold rush. From here, the original Trail of '97 veered to the east, rather than the west as the Brackett Sled Road does. Archaeologists would no doubt glean valuable information by climbing up the hill as the stampedeers did and examining the artifacts that were scattered as they made their way to Canada. According to the report Frank Norris and Mark Bollinger submitted in 1986, many artifacts were found in this area.

Tunnel Mountain road and Foy Tram

To assist construction efforts, the White Pass & Yukon Route builders created two ways to access White Pass City. One was

Foy Tram, built steeply from Heney Station to directly down to White Pass City. The next was a switchback road built from just outside White Pass City up to the construction site at the Tunnel. The road was used to haul construction supplies from White Pass City to the tunnel itself by horse drawn wagons. In 1999, our reconnaissance party found the road many times, but use of the trail for our hike was impossible as it was overgrown with alders.

Porcupine Hill

Although there have been several unsuccessful attempts to find the Trail of '97 on Porcupine Hill, further investigation of this area should be conducted. This portion of the trail was by many historic accounts the worst point from Skagway to the Summit. Every type of terrain is described by diarists. It was steep, boggy, slippery, rocky and overgrown. It was here that many stampedeers lost their horses, their gear and their nerve. Porcupine Hill will be a difficult area to explore, but it must be, because of its importance to the White Pass story.

Additionally, little geological study has been conducted in the area. The variations in geology in the area would be a fascinating study, especially in the way formation of the earth has affected human habitation of the valley.

After more study is done and archaeological projects complete, many decisions will need to be made. For instance, the treatment of artifacts found as a result of further archaeological investigations will need to be addressed. It may be most useful to collect and record only a few of the most intact specimens found, and leave the rest to create integrity for the cultural landscape. Also, treatment of the original Trail of 1897 and the Brackett Wagon Road will need to be addressed. Extant fragments of the Brackett Wagon Road may become accessible to the public and a method of protection would be necessary. Additionally, should segments of the actual Trail of '97 be located, it may be a dangerous route, according to many accounts of stampedeers as recalled in their diaries, and may not be safe for hiking. Great care will need to be taken when planning the hiking route, with regard to safety of the hikers, preservation of the integrity of what remains of the original trail and the Brackett Wagon Road, as well as the integrity of the cultural experience enjoyed by hikers and passengers aboard the White Pass & Yukon Route Railway. The railroad prides itself on presenting an authentic "trip through history."³ Therefore, any construction of warming houses, overnight cabins

or restroom facilities along the valley should be done in coordination with the railroad. Ideally, any of these modern facilities should not be visible from the train's passenger cars. In areas where this is impossible, great care should be paid to building facilities as authentic to the gold rush era as possible.

NOTES

- ¹ Bearss, Edwin, The Proposed Klondike Gold Rush Historic Resource Study, National Park Service, Office of History and Historic Architecture, Washington D.C., November 15, 1970, p. 290
- ² Carley, Caroline, Inventory of Cultural Resources in Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Office of History and Archaeology, Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Washington, Reconnaissance Report No. 40, 1981, p. 238
- ³ WP&YR "Scenic Railway of the World," www.whitepassrailroad.com

Field Notes of Tracts No. 1, 2, and 3, of the

GEO. A. BRACKETT WAGON ROAD,

Dec. 3rd, 1898.

FIELD NOTES OF TRACT NO. 1,

Of the

GEO. A. BRACKETT WAGON ROAD.

The courses of this survey are referred to the field notes of the survey of the Geo. A. Brackett Wagon Road, dated December 3rd, 1898.

Beginning at corner No. 1, which is identical with station 69+13.6 of the survey of the Geo. A. Brackett Wagon Road, and from which a mound of stone 4 ft. base 2 ft. high bears east 50 ft. distant. Thence N. 45° 04' W, 651 ft. to corner No. 2, which is a pine post 4 inches square, 4 ft. high marked G. A. B., cor. No. 2, thence N 71° 18' E, 891.5 ft. to cor. No. 3, which falls on the line of said wagon road survey, and is identical with station 77+51.8, thence S 27° 11' W along said wagon road survey 838.3 ft. to the place of the beginning, said tract containing 5.96 acres and no more.

FIELD NOTES OF TRACT NO. 2

of the

GEO. A. BRACKETT WAGON ROAD.

The courses of this survey are referred to the field notes of the survey of the Geo. A. Brackett Wagon Road, dated Dec. 3rd, 1898.

From the initial point 50 ft. N 19° 53' W from S. W. corner which is cor. No. 1 to the center of the east end of wagon road bridge across east fork of Skaguay River as follows: N 60° 16' E, 326 ft., N 22° 52' W 71 ft. Beginning at cor. No. 1, which is a pine post 4 in. square 4 ft. long marked G. A. B. Cor. No. 1, thence N 70° 07' E, 549 ft. to cor. No. 2, which is a pine post 4 in. square, 4 ft long, marked G. A. B. Cor. No. 2, thence N 19° 53' W 100 ft. to Cor. No. 3, which is a pine post 4 in. square, 4 ft. long marked G.A.B.W.R. No. 3, thence S 70° 07' W. 549 ft. to cor. No. 4, which is a pine post 4 in. square 4 ft. long, marked G.A.B. Cor. No. 4, thence S 19° 53' E 100 ft. to place of beginning, said tract containing 1.26 acres and no more.

FIELD NOTES OF THE SURVEY OF

TRACT NO. 3, of the

GEO. A. BRACKETT WAGON ROAD.

The courses of this survey are referred to the field notes of the survey of the Geo. A. Brackett Wagon Road dated Dec. 3rd, 1898.

The initial point is a pine tree 8 in. diam. Marked G. A. B. W. R., S 63° E 40 ft from a point 50 ft. S. 3° 49' W from cor. No. 1 of said tract. Beginning at cor. No. 1 which is a pine post 4 in. square 4 ft. long marked G. A. B. Cor. No. 1, thence S 3° 40' E 400 ft. to cor. No. 2, which is a pine post 4 in. square 4 ft. long marked G. A. B. cor. No. 2, thence S 66 (86°?) 11' W 1397 ft. to cor. No. 3, which is a pine post 4 in. square 4 ft. long marked G. A. B. Cor. No. 3, thence N 3° 49' W 350 ft. intersects survey of wagon road at station 533+89 which point falls on a pine stump 2 ft diam. 2 ft. high hewn on four sides. At 400 (ft.) Cor. No. 4 which is a pine post 4 in. square 4 ft. long marked G. A. B. Cor. No. 4, thence N 86° 11' E 1397 ft. to place of beginning, said tract containing 12.83 acres and no more.

Copy of the Field Notes of the

Geo. A. Brackett Wagon Road

Dec. 3 1898

The courses of this survey are referred to the meridian used by engineers of the Pacific and Arctic Ry and are based upon Solar observations and other data. The notes of said observations having been lost by fire on the 17th of November 1898 cannot be produced and other observations cannot be conveniently or accurately obtained until later in the year.

From the data at hand the magnetic variation is 33° East of north.

I began at the intersection of First Avenue and State Street as shown by Ried's map of Skagway adopted by the Council of said village on March 8th 1898.

Thence? There? I ? as follows

Station	Course	Remarks
o	N 44° 20' E	Along center of State St
60+83.8		Center of P & ARy
61+23.8	N 27° 11' E	

61+30		Cross S bdy of tract of land occupied by P&ARy. Said bdy bears N 45° 18' W
69 + 13.6		Intersect S.W. Cor. Of Terminal grounds of Wagon Road S mound of stone 4 ft base 2 feet high bears East 50 feet dist
73 + 89.5		S.W. cor. Gate house bears East 17 feet dist.
77 + 51.8	N 37° 43' E	
80 + 60	N 22° 23' E	
84 + 40	N 48° 23' E	
87 + 40	N 17° 47' E	
90 + 75.6	N 12° 01' E	N.E. cor. of log cabin known as Camp No. 1 bears S 40° W 27.5 feet. dist.
94 + 73.4	N 35° 52' E	
96 + 05	N 79° 25' E	
98 + 55.4	N 35° 19' E	
105 + 63.5	N 38° 06' E	
115 + 34	N 28° 54' E	
117 + 33	N 23° 14' E	
122 + 66	N 37° 34' E	
127 + 90	N 42° 01' E	
130 + 93	N 17° 33' E	
131 + 54	N 10° 40' E	
133 + 33	N 27° 42' E	

137 + 45	N 51° 27' E	
139 + 40	N 27° 47' E	
142 + 62	N 19° 47' E	
147 + 46	N 2° 32' E	A hemlock tree 24" diam. Marked GA.B.W.R. bears S 38° 13' E 19 ft. dist. S.W. cor. of Log Cabin known as Camp #2 bears S 67° W 17 ft. dist.
148 + 95	N 2° 58' W	
150 + 23	N 38° 22' E	
151 + 27	N 53° 19' E	
153 + 72	N 40° 48' E	
159 + 80	N 50° 49' E	
163 + 64	N 55° 05' E	
170 + 23	N 57° 55' E	
175 + 15	N 39° 46' E	
181 + 13	N 47° 46' E	A hemlock tree 24" diam. Marked G.A. B.W.R. bears West 7 feet distant
183 + 45	N 16° 09' E	
185 + 41	N 42° 47' E	
190 + 30	N 16° 09' E	
193 + 93	N 22° 40' E	
198 + 83	N 47° 06' E	
200 + 84	N 0° 55' E	
204 + 43	N 34° 44' E	

207 + 70	N 63° 57' E
209 + 14	N 60° 16' E
212 + 40	N 22° 52' W
215 + 79	N 31° 45' E
217 + 49	N 26° 46' E
220 + 34	N 48° 03' E
222 + 71	N 25° 26' E
225 + 24	N 27° 08' E
229 + 38	N 75° 09' E
230 + 88	N 18° 31' E
236 + 27	N 64° 11' E
238 + 90	N 18° 53' E
240 + 76	N 77° 44' W
245 + 70	S 59° 58' W
247 + 15	N 12° 17' W
248 + 01	N 50° 29' W
249 + 60	N 45(48?)° 56' W
253 + 88	N 6° 41' E
256 + 05	N 0° 05' E

The center of East end of Wagon Road
bridge bears N 22° W 71 feet dist.
A hemlock tree 8 in diam marked
G.A.B.W.R. bears N 45° E 29 feet dist.
S.E. cor. of log cabin known as
Camp No. 3 bears East 28 feet dist.

A pine 10 in diam marked
G.A.B.W.R. bears N 30° W
23 feet distant

A pine 8 in diam. Marked
G.A.B.W.R. bears N 85° W 17 ft.
A pine 8 inches diam. Marked
G.A.B.W.R. bears S 10° E 7 feet dist.

259 + 40	N 4° 14' W
261 + 40	N 17° 07' E
270 + 10	N 24° 08' E
275 + 75	N 19° 28' E
280 + 05	N 49° 14' E
282 + 34	N 42° 00' E
289 + 40	N 34° 40' E
292 + 90	N 45° 47' E
296 + 15	N 40° 18' E
297 + 20	N 60° 45' E
299 + 55	N 34° 27' E
303 + 90	N 31° 47' E
307 + 90	N 47° 26' E
309 + 65	N 33° 44' E
311 + 40	N 16° 34' E
313 + 59	N 34° 38' E
321 + 15	N 46° 13' E
327 + 00	N 44° 23' E

A hemlock tree 6 in. diam.
marked G.A.B.W.R. bears S 50°
W 27 ft. distant. A pine stump 12
in diameter marked G.A.B.W.R.
bears S 70° E 27 ft. distant

334 + 15	N 50° 32' E
335 + 90	N 43° 55' E
345 + 80	N 41° 38' E
349 + 90	N 47° 16' E
351 + 93	N 39° 56' E
354 + 85	N 47° 37' E
356 + 33	N 41° 48' E
364 + 30	N 51° 14' E
368 + 90	N 23° 28' E
374 + 15	N 37° 16' E
385 + 50	N 27° 12' E
387 + 60	N 39° 15' E
393 + 77	N 33° 05' E
400 + 40	N 38° 20' E
406 + 10	N 19° 13' E
415 + 40	N 7° 48' E
421 + 63	N 34° 12' E
425 + 40	N 45° 07' E
430 + 20	N 23° 30' E
431 + 61	N 1° 06' W

A pine 10 in diam marked
 G.A.B.W.R. bears N 60° E 13
 ft dist. A pine 8 in. diameter marked
 GABWR bears S 46° W 11 ft. dist.

tack in stump

A pine 8 in. diam marked
 GABWR bears N 30° E 18 feet dist.
 A pine 7 in diam marked GABWR bears
 N 53° W 18' ft. dist.

432 + 61	N 1° 30' E	
434 + 05	N 16° 00' W	
436 + 46	N 30° 56' E	
440 + 90	N 5° 01' E	
444 + 40	N 35° 25' E	
452 + 40	N 20° 45' E	
457 + 05	N 6° 07' E	A pine 8 in. diam marked GABWR bears N 42° E 15 ft. dist. A pine 6 in diam. Marked GABWR bears S. 58° 24 feet dist.
461 + 40	N 25° 14' E	
471 + 40	N 18° 57' E	
480 + 80	N 13° 49' E	
486 + 10	N 1° 14' W	
490 + 70	N 16° 13' E	
498 + 40	N 28° 10' E	
503 + 60	N 50° 05' E	
505 + 95	N 46° 23' E	
511 + 40	N 60° 07' E	A large granite rock bears N 27° E 11 ft. distant. A tall granite rock bears S 35° W 17 feet
513 + 40	N 82° 04' E	
516 + 89	S 87° 21' E	
518 + 19	N 64° 58' E	
525 + 25	S 89° 37' E	

528 + 90	S 87° 06' E
533 + 89	N 86° 11' E
545 + 55	
547 + 86	N 44° 53' E
552 + 40	N 18° 33' E
556 + 12	N 15° 31' E
557 + 72	N 28° 31' E
559 + 62	N 10° 27' W
562 + 12	N 7° 37' E
566 + 82	
571 + 87	N 10° 18' W
575 + 77	N 6° 16' W
578 + 21	N 10° 31' E
583 + 87	N 6° 59' E
593 + 02	N 11° 56' E
609 + 87	N 2° 22' E
615 + 87	N 9° 30' E
625 + 72	N 23° 58' E
631 + 17	N 12° 52' E
640 + 12	N 22° 07' E

Center of Skagway River

A log cabin bears N 56° E 26 ft. dist.
 Cor. of log house bears N 89° E 42 ft dist.
 A pine 8 in diam marked GABWR bears
 S 63° E 40 ft dist.

S.W. cor. log cabin known as
 Camp no. 9, 5 feet Right

646 + 17	N 16° 13' E	A rock marked X bears N 36° E 22 ft. distant
		A rock marked X bears N 39° W 15 ft distant
658 + 44	N 14° 04' E	
660 + 17	N 12° 19' E	
663 + 87	N 22° 15' E	
676 + 67	N 12° 07' W	Cabin known as Camp 11 bears S 10° E 51 ft. distant. A pine 12 in. diam. marked GABWR bears S 76° E 32 ft. dist.
678 + 50	N 18° 59' E	
685 + 87	N 5° 27' E	
692 + 07	N 23° 35' E	
697 + 31	N 12° 21' E	
702 + 27	N 2° 39' W	
703 + 87	N 8° 39' E	
711 + 57	N 20° 57' E	
724 + 54	N 31° 36' E	Point of rock bears N 75° E 57 ft. dist. Rock bears N 83° W 7 ft dist.
725 + 87	N 24° 35' E	
736 + 87	N 4° 41' E	
751 + 37	N 8° 02' E	
765 + 67	N 0° 02' E	
766 + 90		Flag staff of North West Mounted Police bears West 43.25 ft distant

Additional notes:

Sta

510 + 90 cross to left of old trail not in use

519 + 40 cross to Right of old trail

528 + 50 cross to left of old trail

532 + 80 cross to Right of old trail

563 + 75 cross to Left of old trail

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I firmly believe that history is more interesting than anything we could possibly dream up. The history of the White Pass Unit of the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park is a perfect example - it features good guys, bad guys, death, naivete, broken hearts, abject cruelty, elation, irony. No Hollywood producer could ask for more.

Julie Johnson

