

## THE ORIGINAL YUKON GOLD DISCOVERERS

Historian and Judge Frederick F. Howay's final text for a 1926 plaque regarding the first gold discovery in the Yukon totally ignored the contributions of the First Nations people. It simply read: "Yukon Gold Discovery—to the memory of the indomitable prospectors and miners who, braving extreme dangers and untold hardships crossed the Chilcat and Chilkoot passes into the unexplored valley of the Yukon, and thus paved the way for the discovery of the rich gold fields with which the names of Robert H. Henderson and George W. Carmack are inseparably associated." Any discoveries made by First Nations braves—or Heaven forbid—a First Nations woman by the chauvinistic and opinionated judge was simply out of the question.

### HENDERSON'S GOLD SCALES

When the Canadian gold discoverer passed away, the scales were passed down to his son Grant. When Grant passed away the scales were willed to his son Chester.

Chester prospected in the Yukon with partner Frank Burkhard. When Chester passed away the scales went to Frank who passed them on to his daughter Sylvia. Sylvia runs 33 Claim, a gift shop located 33 claims below the Discovery Claim. These scales were made by Henry Troemner, a highly reputable scale maker, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

COURTESY SYLVIA BURKHARD,  
CLAIM 33 GIFT SHOP.



The following was taken from the "Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada" plaque erected at Carcross (originally Caribou Crossing), Yukon. "James 'Skookum' Jim Mason-Kèsh (meaning The Lone Wolf) - 'Skookum Jim', a Tagish of the Dakhtàwèdèclan and the Wolf moiety, found a nugget on Rabbit (Bonanza) Creek in August 1896 that began the Klondike Gold Rush and changed the history of the Yukon. He made the discovery while on a journey down the Yukon River to find his sister Kate and her husband George Washington Carmack. Renowned for his legendary exploits and physical abilities, 'Skookum' (strong) Jim believed his Frog Spirit had guided him to the gold. He became very rich but remained a generous man who never forgot his obligations to this community."

In later years there would be great controversy as to just who made the first discovery. The initial contenders were two whites, Robert Henry Henderson, a Canadian, and George Washington Carmack, an American, and two First Nations braves known as Kèish, meaning the lonewolf, or Skookum Jim (later James Mason) and Tagish Charley or Káa Goox (later Dawson Charley, relatives of Carmack's native wife Shaaw Tláa (later known as Kate).

Henderson, born in Gulf Shore, Nova Scotia, in 1857 left home at age 14 and signed aboard a sailing ship. He prospected in Australia, Africa and California before his wanderings took him to the Yukon and the Fortymile River at Ogilvie where he managed to wangle a grubstake out of Joseph F. Ladue. One of the first men to scale the challenging Chilkoot Pass, Ladue had been in the north for 14-years and although primarily a trader he had prospected for gold in the nearby rivers. He

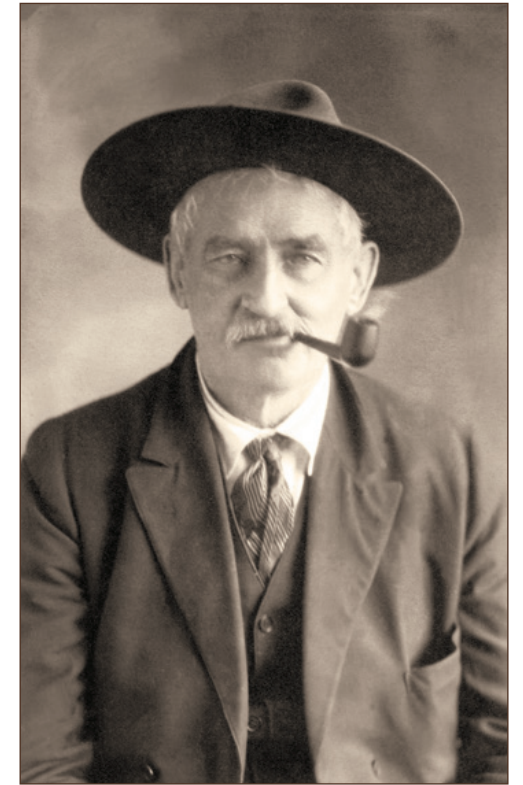
was one of the first men to search for gold in the Throandiuck (later Klondike) River.

Three years younger than Henderson, Carmack had been a sheep herder in California before joining the United States Navy. He left the sea life and ended up in the Yukon where he found a coal deposit south of Five Finger Rapids on the Yukon River. Here he set up a trading post that he called Carmack's Post (later Carmacks).

It was during this time that he met Han braves Kèish and Káa Goox. He gave Kèish and Káa Goox the English names Skookum Jim and Tagish Charley. Both First Nations men were from the Tagish Indian village located not far from where the annual migration of caribou crossed the Yukon River. This spot was first called Caribou Crossing but the name was later shortened to Carcross. The three men formed a partnership and to earn income agreed to pack Dominion of Canada land surveyor and afterwards Gold Commissioner of the Yukon Territories William M. Ogilvie's supplies over the Chilkoot Pass. It was during this time that Carmack learned that Skookum Jim had assisted steamboat captain William Moore ascent the Skagway River.

According to relatives at Carmacks, George's wife Kate had fished in a tributary of the Yukon River near its mouth and knew that the creek contained gold since the Han Nation had used the shinny stones for fish bait. As a result the couple abandoned Carmack's Post and set out by canoe down the Yukon River to Rabbit Creek. The pair was prospecting on the creek when located by her brother Skookum Jim and nephew Tagish Charley.

This story of the first major gold discovery on 17 August 1896 does not quite jive with Ogilvie's account: "At the mouth of the Klondike Robert Henderson saw George Washington Carmack, whose story has connected prominently with the discovery of gold on the Klondike. Henderson, in accordance with the unwritten miners' code, told Carmack of the discovery he had made on Gold Bottom Creek, and invited him to come up and stake. Carmack was then engaged in salmon fishing with his Indian friends and associates, the male members of whom were Skookum Jim and Tagish Charley. As Henderson tells the story, Carmack promised to take it in, and take his Indian associates with him, but to this Henderson strongly objected, saying he did not want his creek to be staked by a lot of natives, more especially natives from the upper river. Carmack seemed to be



**ROBERT HENRY HENDERSON (1857-1933)**

Was he the Canadian gold hunter who made the first gold discoveries to start the Yukon Gold Rush? This portrait was likely taken when he came 'Outside' of the Yukon to Vancouver Island in 1923 at age 66.

HISTORICAL PHOTO #005893 ROYAL BC MUSEUM & ARCHIVES  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHAW STUDIO, VICTORIA, BC

**FIVE DOGS OF ASSORTED BREEDS LIE ABOUT ALL HARNESSED UP WITH NOWHERE TO GO, PROBABLY FALL 1898.**

The six miners and one boy have posed for this photograph with dogs and sled in the late fall with an important component missing—snow. The walls of the log cabins are chinked with mud while the roofs are made of thatch that grows fireweed. Most of the men are wearing sealskin clothing. Empty tin cans litter the foreground.

Taken from 'The Miners Time-Life Books' - "A group of miners stands outside a log building at Fortymile

Post in Canada's Yukon Territory, while a dog team of assorted breeds naps in the sun. Here George W. Carmack, an American prospector, set off the last great gold rush in the 1890s by filing a claim stating that he and two Indian companions had found gold on a branch of the Klondike River." The 1976 edition makes no mention as to the identity of the First Nations braves.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL ARCHIVES HEGG578



**GEORGE WASHINGTON CARMACK  
(1860 - 1922)**

Was he the American gold hunter who made the first gold discoveries to start the Yukon Gold Rush or should the credit have gone to Skookum Jim (later James Mason), his First Nations wife's brother—or neither? According to Carmack's wife Kate, she found the first gold.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL COLLECTION #CUR1618  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ASAHIEL CURTIS



offended by the objection so they parted.

I have this story essentially the same from both Henderson and Carmack, the latter, of course, laying a little stress on the objection to the Indians. I have had long interviews with both Jim and Charley, and some of the others camped with them on the Klondike at that time, and reduced the purport of our talks to writing. As I have said, both Henderson and Carmack gave me the same story about Henderson having told Carmack of the new discovery, and the Indians assured me that they knew Bob, as they called Henderson, told George, as they called Carmack, of it and asked him to go and stake on it; that much, therefore, may be assumed without doubt. The stories told me by the Indians may be questioned, but they were very sincere in their tone and assertions when telling me. I took the precaution to interview them separately and afterwards get them all together and criticize and discuss the narrative of each.

Put in as concrete terms as I can frame it, Jim's story tells us that he, Charley, and George were, as we know, camped at the mouth of the Klondike fishing, but as a straight fish diet becomes monotonous in time, in order to procure some variety it was agreed they would get out some logs, take them down to Fortymile, and sell them to the saw-mill there. Much depended on Jim in this work, and he did a good deal of examination of the woods around the place to find the best and most convenient logs. This work took him some distance up a creek afterwards known as Bonanza. He informed me that he found some very good logs at various places, and in order to learn whether or not they could be floated down to the Yukon, he had to make a close examination of the creek bed. In doing this he said he found some colours of gold at various places in the gravel, and particularly at where claim sixty-six below discovery was afterwards located he found what he considered very fair prospects. He told the fishing camp of this find, but it did not arouse much interest. Jim, according to his own story, was anxious to further investigate, but as George was chief councilor in the camp and did not appear much interested in the matter it was allowed to drop temporarily.

About twenty days after Henderson called at the camp, George told him to get ready for a tramp to find Bob. The three men started up Bonanza on the quest, with (prospecting) tools...for a prolonged stay away from camp, and such provisions as their means afforded...

A short distance below where they afterwards made discovery, both Jim and Charley told me they, while panning during a rest, found a ten-cent pan...It was decided (among the trio) that if Gold Bottom

trails failed they would devote further attention to this place...

As they did not find any prospect approaching in value the ten-cent pan on Bonanza, they remained a very short time at Henderson's camp...Before they got down far (Bonanza) their provisions were entirely exhausted, and as they prospected on their way down, and Jim was hunting for meat, their progress was slow... Jim at last, when they were all too tired and weak to do further prospecting, got a moose...

Jim says he called on the others, whom he had left some distance away, to come to him. While waiting for them to come he looked in the sand of the creek where he had gone to get a drink, taking with him a bit of the moose. He found gold, he said, in greater quantities than he had ever seen before. When the others joined him the moose was cooked, and they had a feed. Then he showed them the gold in the sand. They remained two days at this place panning, and testing the gravel up and down the creek in the vicinity. After satisfying themselves that they had got the best spot, and decided to stake and record there, they got into a dispute as to who should stake discovery claim, Jim claiming it by right of discovery, and Carmack claiming it, Jim says, on the ground that an Indian would not be allowed to record it. Jim says the difficulty was finally settled by agreement that Carmack was to stake and to record discovery claim, and assign himself half of it, or a half interest in it to Jim..."

Meanwhile Henderson was panning a tributary of a small stream that emptied into the Klondike not far from where that river flowed into the Yukon River. He found colors and consequently called the stream Gold Bottom Creek and on his way back out to civilization told everyone he encountered about his good fortune. It was when returning from Ladue's trading post at Fortymile with more supplies that he ran into Carmack and his First Nations relatives. They talked and Henderson told Carmack about his discovery but made it explicitly clear that his tip did not include the First Nations men because he did not like the way they treated their women. Henderson refused to either sell or give some of his tobacco to Jim or Charley. Perhaps more out of curiosity than excitement Carmack and his companions decided to check things out on Gold Bottom Creek. According to legend, Carmack promised to send word back to Henderson should he make good finds to repay him for his kindness. The three men lingered a bit but then moved back to Rabbit Creek, another stream that they had already been sampling. Carmack claimed that he was the one that found the first nugget on Rabbit Creek—soon to



**TAGISH SHAAW TL'ÁA (LATER KNOWN AS KATE (MRS. GEORGE WASHINGTON) CARMACK**

**(UNKNOWN - 1920)**

According to her story, she took her husband to Rabbit Creek, a tributary of the Yukon River, and showed him where the First Nations located gold nuggets that they used for fish bait.

YUKON ARCHIVES 2000/37, #5

THEIR OWN YUKON PROJECT COLLECTION

**TAGISH KATE CARMACK'S STORY**

George Carmack's Indian Wife Tells Strange and Plaintive Story of Love, Marriage, and Desertion.

How She First Met and Loved Paleface George.

Betrayed her Brothers.

White Man Pressed Her Hand When She Show Him Gold - Yellow Hair Caused Trouble.

From Saturday's Daily San Francisco News

November 6, 1900 via Skagway, November 10, 1900

Mrs. Kate Carmack, the Indian wife of the Klondike Millionaire George Carmack is suing for divorce at Hollister, California, the case being one of very great interest on account of the great wealth of the husband who was the first



be renamed Bonanza Creek—on 17 August 1896 although his two companions stated otherwise claiming that it was Jim that made the initial discovery.

In any event, all three men instantly recognized the significance of the discovery and after a short celebration began panning in earnest. Another equally plausible story was that Kate Carmack, George's wife and Skookum Jim's sister, had made an earlier discovery. It didn't take long for Carmack to fill an expired shotgun casing with flakes of gold. The next day they began staking claims. As discoverer, Carmack was allowed two rim rock-to-rim rock claims of 500-feet each on both sides of the stream. The two other men staked one claim apiece. The two First Nations miners staked up river from Carmack's two claims. Jim's claim, immediately above Carmack's two claims, was called One Above, while Charley's, located downstream from Carmack's double claim, was called Two Below. They then set off to record them at Fortymile. Moving downstream, the party of three encountered four Nova Scotians recently from California and Carmack told them of their good fortune and urged them to stake their own claims on Rabbit Creek. At the mouth of the Klondike, Carmack saw two French-Canadians and gave them the same tip. All these men would soon become wealthy as a result. He failed to pass the tip to Henderson. The claims' recorder at Fortymile first mocked Carmack but then realized that the gold in the shotgun shell was of a color and texture never before seen in the north and that just maybe this was the beginning of a strike. Ladue recognized a possible opportunity of a lifetime and immediately staked out a town site at the junction of the Klondike and Yukon Rivers. He named the spot Dawson City in honor of George Mercer Dawson, the Canadian geologist, and then opened up a lumber mill for the anticipated building boom. Ladue then returned to the village of Ogilvie and floated his entire sawmill to Dawson City. Many of the early stakers sold their claims for a pittance before even thawing the ground and putting down shafts to bedrock.

George and Kate later moved to a ranch near Hollister, California,

**DAAKUXDA.EIT(MARY)ANDKÈISH(SKOOKUMJIM)MASONANDDAUGHTERSAAYNA.AAT(DAISY).**

Jim's fob, gold-studded chain and pocket watch were donated to the MacBride Museum in Whitehorse but were stolen in the 1990s.

HISTORICAL PHOTO #06547 ROYAL BC MUSEUM & ARCHIVES

white man to find gold in the Klondike. The prominence of the case caused the Examiner of this city to devote a full page to its details. The simple story told to the court by the deserted wife was as follows:

"White man, George Carmack, have break Tagish Kate's heart. I want white man's divorce because I am white man's wife. I pay white man for his love and he cheat me. My papoose and me he desert. I want white man's justice for me and my papoose. "One night at dance in frozen country I first met white George. He talk to me and press my hand. He tell me how he walk about all over big, frozen country many, many moons and he tell me how he never find so much as one little piece of great gold which make white man's heart glad.

"Then he press my hand some more and love came into my heart and I remember some things I hear my brother Skookum Jim and my brother Tagish Charley say. I think of what they tell me of a place where gold is as thick as the sand when one digs on the shore of the Meiozikaka, and I say: 'Whiteman, meet me by the river at midnight and I tell you something to make your heart glad and love will come to you for Tagish Kate.'

"White George he shake his head to show me he no believe Tagish Kate, but all same he came to river at midnight. I took him out in my canoe, away out in middle of river where no red man can hear and I whisper in white George's ear: 'I know spot where gold is thick like sand.'

"I tell paleface George he love me, me show him gold. He shake his head and say he no believe Tagish Kate.

"Then I tell him how my brothers, Skookum Jim and Tagish Charley, have found place where they get heap much gold, and I tell him how they go and bring me back necklace all made out of little gold stones. When I see paleface George's eye grow bright by light of moon and when he press my hand with his big strong hands I take one, two, three gold stones from under my dress and show them to him. George look at them and his eyes grow big. He swear he love Tagish Kate. I ask him if he make Tagish Kate his squaw? He say yes, yes many many times. He take me in his



**KAAGOOX (LATER KNOWN AS TAGISH CHARLEY AND THEN DAWSON CHARLEY)**

**(1866 - 1908)**

Attired in white men's clothing with a gold nugget collar pin, a watch chain with a gold nugget fob and a gaudy gold nugget ring, Dawson Charley poses for a full length portrait session in a studio in Seattle, Washington, at the turn of the 19th century

YUKON ARCHIVES 2000/37, #2

THEIR OWN YUKON PROJECT COLLECTION

and lived with George's sister, Rose Watson. George eventually left California after parting ways with his wife and former partners. He left Kate and Graphie with Rose and in 1900 married Marguerite Laimee in Olympia, Washington. Kate, left nearly destitute, began a difficult legal battle to prove that she was George's wife and entitled to alimony. She eventually dropped the case in the hopes of winning back her husband. When this attempt failed, she settled in Carcross, where her brother Skookum Jim looked after her. His daughter Graphie, now married to Marguerite's brother, and his sister Rose challenged Marguerite's appointment as the administratrix of Carmack's estate. The case was settled out of court.

Skookum Jim, after he returned to the Yukon, moved back to the Tagish Village, now called Cariboo Crossing (Carcross) with his wife and daughter Daisy and built the finest home in the village. Built with mill-sawed timber, the home consisted of a large living room, dining room, several bedrooms with a porch on the outside. According to James Albert Johnson's excellent book 'George Carmack Man of Mystery who set off the Klondike Gold Rush' Jim furnished his house ornately. "The chairs for his dining room table had mother of pearl inserts. His silverware was encrusted with gold nuggets taken from his Bonanza mine. On a trip to Vancouver, Jim had spent \$2,000 on a Persian rug with an ornate floral design. When the rug arrived and was laid out on the living-room floor, it was two feet wider than the room. Jim was ready to cut the rug, but his wife would not permit it, so he found a better solution: building an extension on the house."

Following Jim's example, Tagish Charley also built a new home at Carcross. He also bought the Carcross Hotel across the channel from his native village and hired a man to run it for him. Dawson Charley was celebrating the Christmas holiday in 1908 with friends and may have taken one too many drinks. In any event in the wee hours of December 26, while crossing the railway bridge at Carcross on his way home, he fell into the open water and was drowned. His body drifted under and ice and he was not found for several days. He was 42.

Johnson continues, "Skookum Jim fared better. During the fall and winter months, he lived at Carcross, where he wore caribou-skin clothing while hunting with his neighbours or participating in the Tagish ceremonial dances. When he returned to the Klondike each year for the spring cleanup, he walked the streets of Dawson wearing a tailor-made suit and a white shirt, a heavy nugget watch-chain draped across his vest and a large stickpin in his tie."

By this time Skookum Jim and Dawson Charley had sold a half-interest in their claims to a mining partner and left him to look after the day-to-day operations. The richest men in the village of Carcross, they were besieged by relatives and friends looking for loans and handouts and it didn't take long before their fortunes began to dwindle,

"Church officials in Whitehorse, aware of Jim's frailties as well as their concern for his wife and daughter, persuaded him to sign a series of wills, and to later establish a trust fund.

During the winter of 1915-16, Jim suffered a crippling bladder infection and was hospitalized in Juneau and Whitehorse. In April, using his legal name of James Mason, he signed a final will instructing his trustees to pay \$1,000 to his sister Kate, \$1,000 to Patsy Penderson, \$1,000 to cousin Caribou John and \$500 to a Tagish Jim. The trust fund that he set up for daughter Daisy education was to be known as the Skookum Jim Indian Fund. Aware that his health was failing rapidly, he then went home to Carcross to die. He died 11 July 1916 at age 60. A red granite monument marking his grave on the hilltop of the Carcross cemetery bears the name that George Carmack gave him: James Mason.

Kate passed away in March 1920 and was buried in an unmarked grave in the Carcross cemetery. When the influenza epidemic swept the Yukon, Kate became one of the casualties. The influenza turned into pneumonia and after a ten-day illness, she died. Her daughter Graphie left her Berkeley, California, home and returned to Carcross to pick up her mother's few belongings that included some family photographs and a nugget necklace that her husband George had given her.

In the Klondike News Vol. 1 No. 1 published in Dawson City on April 1, Carmack's full body portrait graces the front page. The cover indicates that the gold output for that year was \$40,000,000.

In 1900 Carmack came out of the Yukon for the last time and settled as a gentleman in Seattle. When Jim and Charley had visited Seattle, George greeted them wanting to square up accounts with the two First Nations braves. According to James Albert Johnson's account, "Carmack led his two partners to his Seattle attorney's office where the lawyer read aloud the documents transferring Carmack's Discovery Claim and No. 1 Below to Skookum Jim. Four years ago had lapsed since the three men had discovered the gold that was to make them all rich and had made the handshake to share and share alike their wealth. Carmack sold his two claims to Jim for a paltry \$20,000.

arms; he kiss me and say he love me. Tagish Kate believes and is happy, very, very happy. Then comes wedding and plenty much to eat.

"Now is September and in frozen country we must wait, wait for summer before we can go and find gold. Then me tell my brothers, Skookum Jim and Tagish Charley, that my white chief George know where gold is. They very mad, but me no care. Me love paleface George, my chief.

"Then when summer came we make peace with Skookum Jim and Tagish Charley, and one day all start together to place where gold is. Long, long time to get there. One day we came to Rabbit creek and George he lay down and sleep. While he sleep I fill pan with sand and put it beside him. He wake up and see pan and wash out dirt and in it is gold all same like three dollars. George glad. He find heap much gold and love Tagish Kate and buy me heap nice clothes. For five years he love Tagish Kate and take her in his arms and kiss her. He love papoose and buy heap much nice things. White chief George happy. Tagish Kate happy, papoose happy, all happy.

#### KATE'S CAPE

This cape was made by Kate and is a mix of First Nations and European styles. The pattern of the cape is European in origin, however, the beading and felt along the fur hide is First Nations inspired. Kate probably made this cape after returning from the US in 1900 where she would have seen many capes in this style. The demi-length cape was a common overcoat for women at



**(SKOOKUM JIM) JAMES MASON AND DAWSON CHARLEY AT THEIR DISCOVERY CLAIM**

**ON SKOOKUM GULCH, PROBABLY 1899.**

Jim's fob, gold-studded chain and pocket watch were donated to the MacBride Museum in Whitehorse but were stolen in the 1990s.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL COLLECTION HEG735 PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC A. HEGG

**TRIBUTE TO A MINER**

In 2000 a monument was designed for the Klondyke Centennial Society by artist Halin de Repentigny that now sits in front of the Elijah Smith Building in Whitehorse.

It reads: "Dedicated to the Klondike Gold Miners past, present and future in recognition of their contributions to Dawson City and the Klondike Region. In 1886, gold was discovered on Rabbit Creek by Skookum Jim, George Carmack and Dawson Charley, on the advice of fellow prospector Robert Henderson. This event sparked the Great Klondike Gold Rush of 1898, and Dawson City and the Yukon Territory were



2159

SKOOKUM JIM, DISCOVERY CLAIM



**THREE OF THE ORIGINAL YUKON GOLD DISCOVERERS DIED IN CARCROSS AND NOW LIE BURIED IN THE CARCROSS CEMETERY**

Káa Goox, later named Dawson Charley, died in 1908. His uncle Keish, given the English name of 'Skookum' Jim or James Mason died in 1916 while his sister, Kate Carmack, the abandoned wife of George Washington Carmack, died in 1920. George W. Carmack died in 1922 and was buried in the Evergreen Washelli Memorial Park in Seattle, Washington.

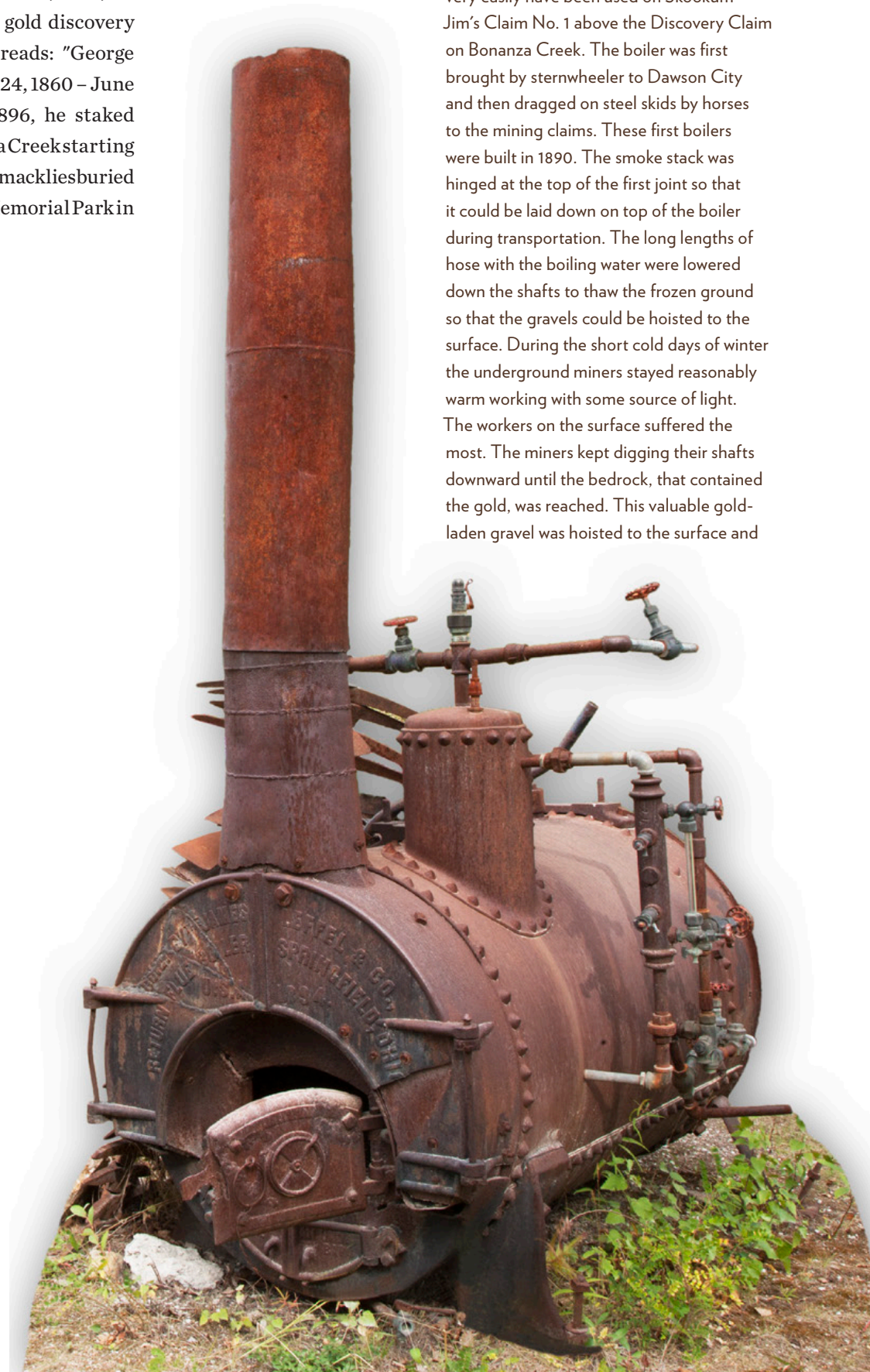
Always the promoter, Carmack bought into several business ventures in Seattle and California such as the Microbane Hair Grower—a guaranteed hair grower for bald heads. He was a member of the Seattle Lodge of the Yukon Order of Pioneers. A mason, Carmack became the Worshipful Master of St. John Lodge in Seattle in 1916. Carmack commissioned a Seattle jeweler to make a kelegraph key, embellished with 22 gold nuggets on a base of Alaskan marble, that was used by President William Howard Taft during the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in 1909.

A short time before he passed away, Carmack began to write the "true" story of the Bonanza Creek discovery. Unfortunately, his white wife edited the manuscript and cut out anything that made any mention of his First Nations wife.

The man named in honour of the first President of the United States, Carmack died in 1922. A monument was placed on his grave in Seattle on August 17, 1975, on the 79th anniversary of the gold discovery in the Yukon. The stone reads: "George Washington Carmack Sept. 24, 1860 – June 5, 1922 On August 17, 1896, he staked Discovery Claim on Bonanza Creek starting the Klondike Gold Rush." Carmack lies buried in the Evergreen Washelli Memorial Park in Seattle.

**THE JAMES LEFFEL & COMPANY BOILER**

This 10-horsepower steam portable engine was built in Springfield, Ohio, and could very easily have been used on Skookum Jim's Claim No. 1 above the Discovery Claim on Bonanza Creek. The boiler was first brought by sternwheeler to Dawson City and then dragged on steel skids by horses to the mining claims. These first boilers were built in 1890. The smoke stack was hinged at the top of the first joint so that it could be laid down on top of the boiler during transportation. The long lengths of hose with the boiling water were lowered down the shafts to thaw the frozen ground so that the gravels could be hoisted to the surface. During the short cold days of winter the underground miners stayed reasonably warm working with some source of light. The workers on the surface suffered the most. The miners kept digging their shafts downward until the bedrock, that contained the gold, was reached. This valuable gold-laden gravel was hoisted to the surface and

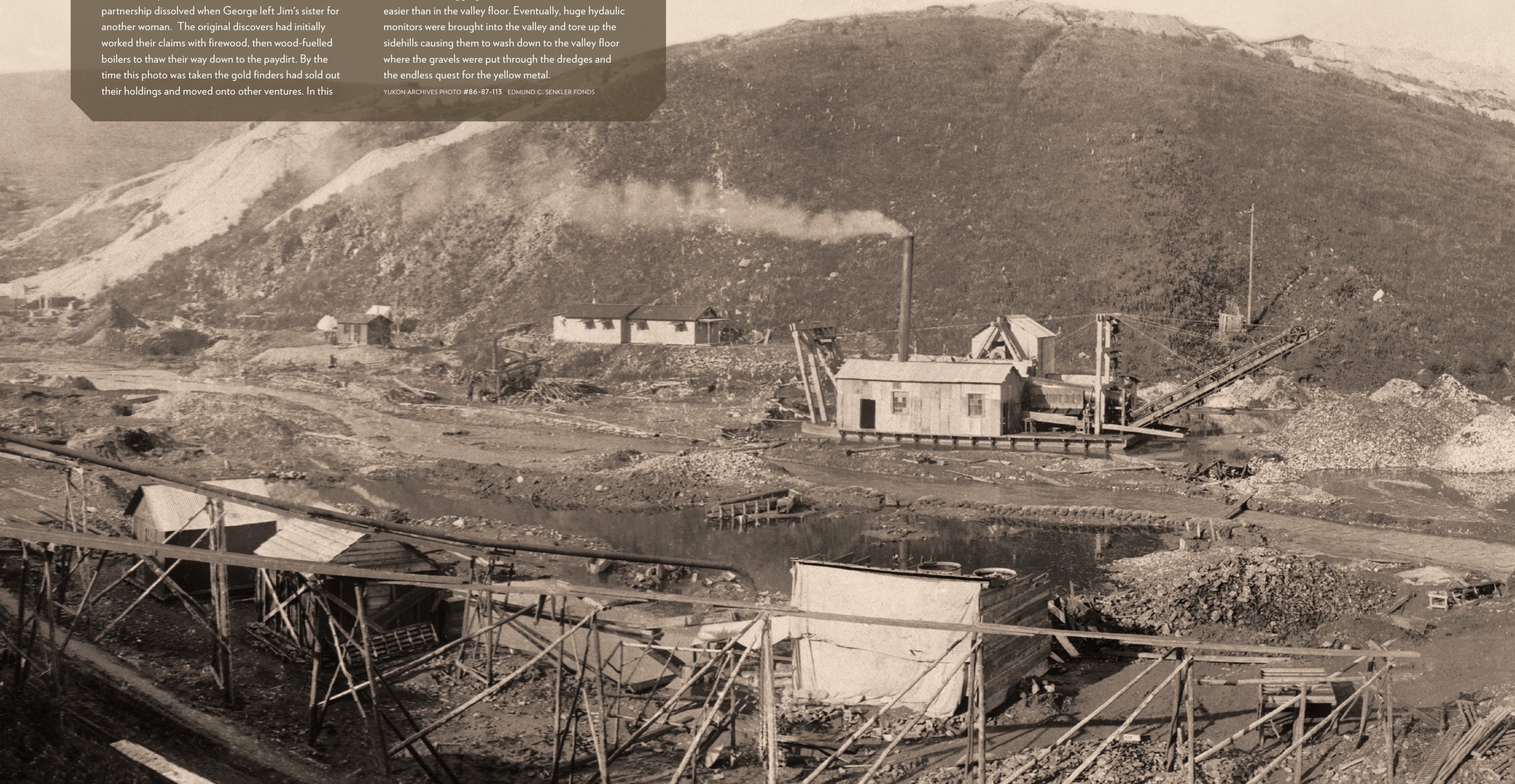


**THE LEWES RIVER MINING COMPANY DREDGE ON THE DISCOVERY CLAIM ON BONANZA CREEK, PROBABLY 1903.**

The site of George W. Carmack's—Skookum James Mason's and Dawson Charley's original four discovery claims on August 16th, 1896 on Rabbit (later) Bonanza Creek had changed dramatically in the five years since this photograph was taken. After four years of mining the Discovery Claims, the Carmack and First Nations partnership dissolved when George left Jim's sister for another woman. The original discoverers had initially worked their claims with firewood, then wood-fuelled boilers to thaw their way down to the paydirt. By the time this photo was taken the gold finders had sold out their holdings and moved onto other ventures. In this

photograph the first dredge is slowly working its way through the valley in a pond of its own creation. The photograph shows the benchlands that held ancient gold channels that were referred to as the 'White Channel'. Oddly, the benchlands were not frozen and made the digging of shafts down to the bedrock easier than in the valley floor. Eventually, huge hydraulic monitors were brought into the valley and tore up the sidehills causing them to wash down to the valley floor where the gravels were put through the dredges and the endless quest for the yellow metal.

YUKON ARCHIVES PHOTO #86-87-113 EDMUND C. SENKLER FONDS



## THE YUKON GOLD DIGGERS

### OPPOSITE

A view north up Eldorado Creek Yukon Territory in 1898 showing the many mining claims. The location was destined to be called Grank Forks at the juncton of Bonanza Creek, Upper Bonanza and Eldorado Creek. Belinda Mulroneys partially built two-storey log hotel, called the Magnet, appears to be partially built in the lower left-hand side while a second, smaller eatery complete with a large sign, appears on the hillside to the right centre of the photograph. French Gulch and French Hill are the mining activities on the sidehill at the top of the image. Note that the valley is almost devoid of any trees. Eldorado was the richest creek in the Klondike watershed.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL COLLECTION #HEG792  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC A. HEGG

"Buckets were made of whipsawn lumber, and if this was not available, of split shakes, square, but wider at the top than the bottom. A heavy rope was used for the bucket handle and windlass cable. In outlying places where rope could not be bought, caribou or moose hide was braided into a rope and used"—Walter R. Hamilton's 'The Yukon Story'. This bucket was found in the restored cabin of Jack London, the fiction writer who is best remembered as the author of 'The Call of the Wild' and 'White Fang'. These windlass buckets, used for bringing the paydirt to the surface by hand, were of the 1.5 cubic foot capacity while the self-dump buckets, made of metal, had approximately a 10 cubic



Early days of placer gold mining in the Yukon differed greatly from the milder climates of both California and British Columbia. In the far north the ground remained permanently frozen, not unlike concrete, from surface to bedrock in the deep narrow valley floors and had to be thawed in order to recover the gold. The methodology of extracting the gold from the frozen ground changed dramatically over the years.

For the first few years the miners' first challenges, except on some of the higher benches, were to thaw through the overburden and then through the gravel to bedrock. This was not unlike mining in the Cariboo except that the problem was the frozen ground. Walter R. Hamilton, the author of 'The Yukon Story' and a sourdough of Dawson City, summed it up best. "When a miner selected a place to sink a shaft, he cut wood, usually spruce growing along the valley, and started a fire covering a space of about four square feet. This fire was carefully replenished until his experience told him the thawing had reached that fire's limit. The ashes and thawed earth were then shoveled out and another fire started. This was repeated until the gravel and eventually bedrock were reached."

"If a man was prospecting alone, hoisting was slow and difficult as, when a bucket was filled he had to climb a ladder out of the shaft, hoist and empty the bucket and lower it back into the shaft and again descend to the bottom unless he was ingenious enough to devise a way of self-dumping clear of the shaft."

"If possible two or more men worked together, and a windlass was erected at the surface. Buckets were made of whipsawn lumber, and if this was not available, of split shakes, square, but wider at the top than the bottom. A heavy rope was used for the bucket handle and windlass cable. In outlying places where rope could not be bought, caribou or moose hide was braded into a rope and used."

"If panning proved that the gravel contained enough pay to warrant drifting (thawing and digging horizontally from the shaft) this was continued in any desired direction where a pay streak was sought or found." The drifts went out from the bottom of the shaft much like the spokes of a wheel. Sometimes, in paydirt that was 5 or more feet deep, the opening at the foot of the shaft was enlarged to where a man could stand up to shovel paydirt into the buckets.

"The frozen muck roof above the drift, unless the space was very



### THE KLONDIKE ROCKER

Pay-dirt was panned for testing and then placed in the tray at the head of the rocker that was operated by the left hand. The tin dipper in the right hand was used to constantly supply water to the mixtures. Slats of wood served as riffles lower down to catch the course gold and near the outlet was a tin sheet smeared with quick silver that attracted and held the very fine gold.

DAWSON CITY MUSEUM



wide and heat from the thawing fires effected it and created danger of falling, seldom needed timbering or shoring.”

“The gravel was hoisted to the surface and piled as a dump during the winter months. As the dump became large, a horizontal cable was used, and a block and tackle, and the buckets transferred to this and dumped where needed.”

When several miners worked together a barrel and winch were used at shafts that had been enlarged to a 3' by 6' rectangle and two men would operate the winch (one on each side) to being up the heavier and larger buckets filled with paydirt. With necessity being the mother of engenuity, miners soon came up with the idea of using a boulder in one of the buckets to offet the weight of the buckets of paydirt being brought to the surface. The system worked much like a counter-weight in an elevator. This system freed up one man—and when the bucket of paydirt and the bucket with the boulder weighed the same—resulted in an easy task for the lone man at the top of shaft on the windlass.

Joe Boyle and his group arrived in Dawson City in August of 1897 where Joe immediately went to work for Swiftwater Bill. A dispatch from Victoria announced the arrival there of the richest party that had yet come out of the Klondike District. “It is captained by Joe Boyle, the youngest son of Charley Boyle of Woodstock, Ontario, the trainer of Seagram’s racing stable. Boyle had struck it rich. He is partner in four of the richest claims on earth. Of the wealth of the party of twenty-five brought back, a low estimate is \$30,000 in dust and one million and a half in drafts and green backs”. The Klondike group owned beteen them at least \$12,000,000. Boyle and his party

“The first mining machinery to arrive in the Klondike were wood-fired boilers with iron pipes, one to two inches in diameter, with ‘header’ and ‘steam points’. The pipes were connected to the boiler and coupled so as to extend down the shaft from the tent boiler house, and when coupled were wrapped with rolls of woolen or hair fabric for insulation against the frost. These pipes were projected horizontally, from the bottom of the shaft, to the part of the frozen gravel wall where the thawing was being carried out. A cross pipe was coupled onto the end of this pipe, and the desired number of steel points were attached to this ‘header’ by rubber hose. Each point had a square pointed nose, with holes pointing backwards at its rear ‘shoulder’ so as to allow steam to escape into the frozen ground, and at the other end, beyond the hose coupling, a head that could be (gently) pounded with a mallet, to drive the ‘point’ into the frozen

gravelface. Onepersonwithheavyleather-lacedwoolenmittensheld the pipe while another gently pounded the head until the ‘point’ was worked into the gravel as it thawed sufficiently the ground around it.

“The steam was kept on during the night and the ground gradually thawed to a distance of four or five feet around each ‘point’. In the morning the steam was cut off and the equipment removed to permit the day’s operations.”

The men that worked at the bottom of the shaft

The 1902 Dawson City Golden Cleanup Edition described an elevator type shaft that was used in the gold fields. During the winter of 1900-1901 William Northrup, a New Yorker, began the operation of a second group of claims on American Gulch and Oro Fino Hill. The mine was operated through a 10-foot by 15-foot shaft that went 90 feet deep. The shaft was divided into two compartments each having a 10-foot by 7.5-foot separate elevator capable of carrying two wheelbarrows loaded with pay dirt to the surface. As one elevator ascended the other descended and the lift of ninety feet was made in fifteen seconds. The mine was equipped with a 35-horsepower boiler of the locomotive type and a double cylinder reversible hoisting engine. The mines record was the hoisting of 1,325 wheelbarrow loads of pay dirt in a ten-hour shift. From the mouth of the shaft the wheelbarrows were easily wheeled over bunkers that fed the pay dirt directly into sluice boxes. The water for the sluicing was obtained from Bonanza Creek where a pumping plant had been installed. A 40-horsepower boiler furnished steam to a .....

Page 12 – three gravity trams extend from the level of these tunnels a distance of about 300 feet down to the level of the sluice boxes near the foot of the hill.... Five thousand feet of steel tracks are laid in the tunnels and cross-cuts, and the immense cars of dirt brought down from the four tunnels go hurrying down the mountain side to be dumped into immense hoppers from which it is fed directly into the sluice boxes. No steam power was needed for propulsion anywhere in the mine since all the work was accomplished by zip lines by gravity. The mines on the hillsides often had to purchase dumping grounds for their tailings and debris in the gulches. The water



The above two nuggets, from the Barker claim, weighed 106 and 101.5 grams respectively.



The above nugget, from the Black Hills claim, weighed 31.3 grams.



A nugget from the Kirkland claim.

COURTESY KLONDIKE NUGGET AND IVORY SHOP LTD.  
DAWSON CITY, YUKON

**MINING CLAIM NO. 2 ABOVE BONANZA, YUKON TERRITORY CIRCA 1898.**

A tent town for the most exciting gold exploration in history takes place on Bonanza Creek. Initially miners lived in large tents with a sheet-iron stove with a telescoped stovepit. Use of lumber for sluices, cribbing, and fires for their stoves and shafts very quickly depleted the sidehills of any trees. The mining activity totally devastated the spawning beds that had been used by salmon since time immemorial.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL COLLECTION #HEG421 PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC A. HEGG



No 2 ABOVE BONANZA

E. Hegg.

**NO. 17 ELDORADO LOOKING UP FRENCH CREEK, PROBABLY 1898.**

A tent town for the most exciting gold exploration in history takes place on Bonanza Creek. Initially miners lived in large tents with a sheet-iron stove with a telescoped stovepit. Use of lumber for sluices, cribbing, and fires for their stoves and shafts very quickly depleted the sidehills of any trees. The mining activity totally devastated the spawning beds that had been used by salmon since time immemorial.

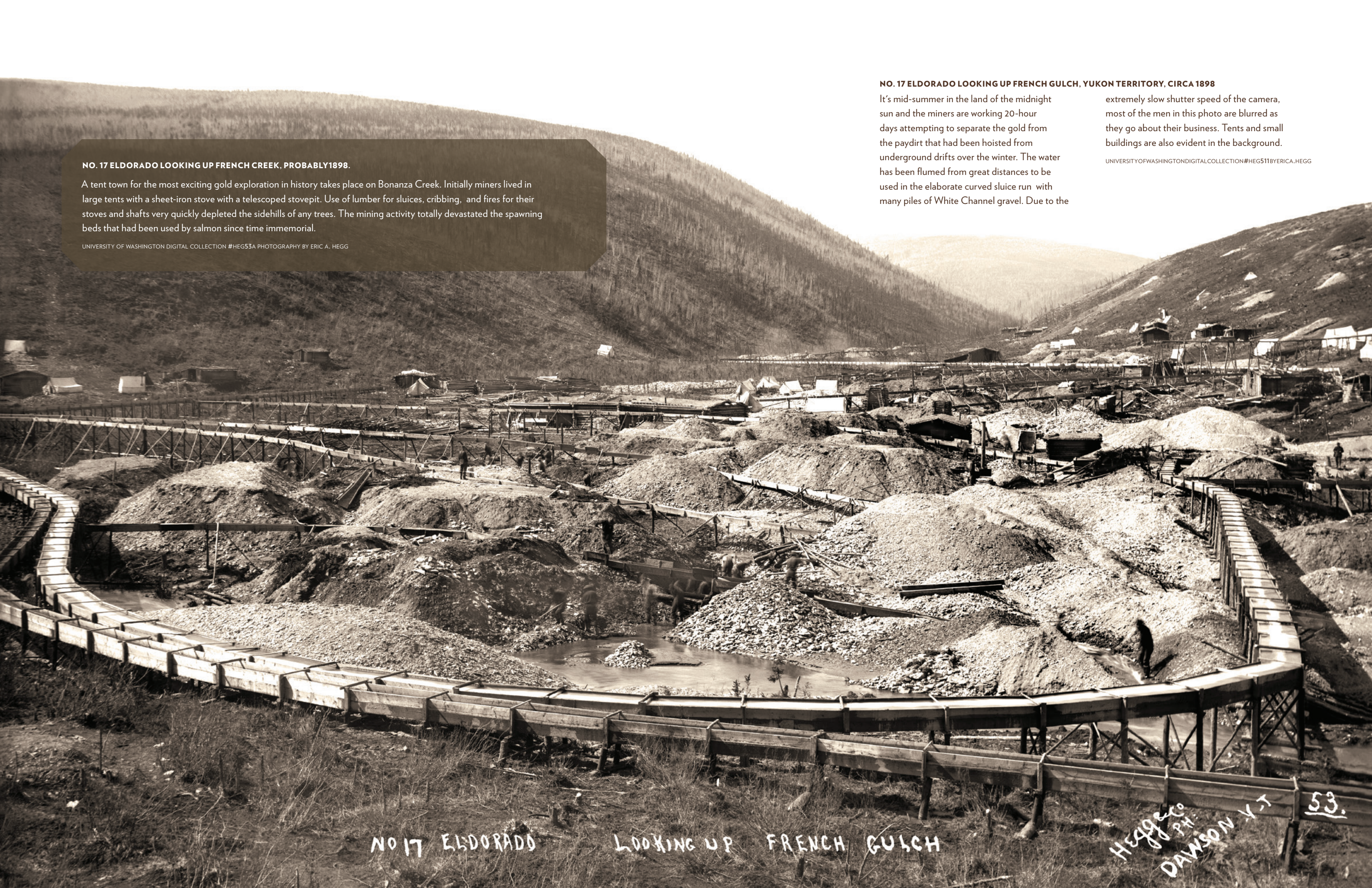
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL COLLECTION #HEG53A PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC A. HEGG

**NO. 17 ELDORADO LOOKING UP FRENCH GULCH, YUKON TERRITORY, CIRCA 1898**

It's mid-summer in the land of the midnight sun and the miners are working 20-hour days attempting to separate the gold from the paydirt that had been hoisted from underground drifts over the winter. The water has been flumed from great distances to be used in the elaborate curved sluice run with many piles of White Channel gravel. Due to the

extremely slow shutter speed of the camera, most of the men in this photo are blurred as they go about their business. Tents and small buildings are also evident in the background.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL COLLECTION #HEG511 BY ERICA. HEGG



NO 17 ELDORADO

LOOKING UP FRENCH GULCH

Hegge  
PH.  
DAWSON Y.T. 53.

## GRAND FORKS



**BELINDA MULROONEY, HOLDING THE STETSON, STANDS IN FRONT OF HER MAGNET ROADHOUSE WITH YUKON CHARACTERS, LIKELY 1897.**

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL COLLECTION #HEG794 PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC A. HEGG

Located smack-dab in the middle of the Yukon gold rush at the confluence of the Eldorado and Bonanza Creeks, Grand Forks had the one thing Dawson City lacked—location, location, location—as they say in real estate.

Entrepreneur Belinda Mulrooney operated the first roadhouse in Grand Forks called the Magnet in 1897 a full year before the first hordes of gold seekers began to pour into the area and transform the face of the Yukon Valley. Almost as if by magic, in 1898 buildings began to be built down the valley of Bonanza Creek while above on the nearby hillside inventive miners were scratching their way

down through the one-foot of moss and then 4 to 15-feet of frozen muck and gravel to reach the paydirt on the bedrock. Cheechako Hill, French Hill, Gold Hill and others all yielded much more gold than the valley below. Mulrooney quickly built a new roadhouse, called the Grand Forks Hotel, to provide drinking, eating and sleeping needs for the the weary miners.

By 1903 Grand Forks was incorporated with a population of over 3,000 citizens. The town's location resulted in its demise when the large dredges began taking large concessions in the Yukon Valley. By 1921, the dredges had reached the outskirts of Grand Forks and since there was gold to be recovered from beneath the buildings the residents had to move. The buildings were torn down and the ground turned upside down. Today, nothing remains of Grand Forks.

**MINERS WORK THE WHITE CHANNEL, ONE OF THE RICHEST GOLD DEPOSIT IN THE ENTIRE YUKON, ON A BENCHLAND HIGH ABOVE GRAND FORKS—SHOWN IN THE BOTTOM RIGHT. INGENIOUS MINERS USED ZIP LINES TO SEND TRAM CARS LADEN WITH DIRT CONTAINING GOLD TO THE VALLEY FLOOR FOR WASHING TO REMOVE THE SMALLER NUGGETS.**

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL COLLECTION #HEG767 PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC A. HEGG

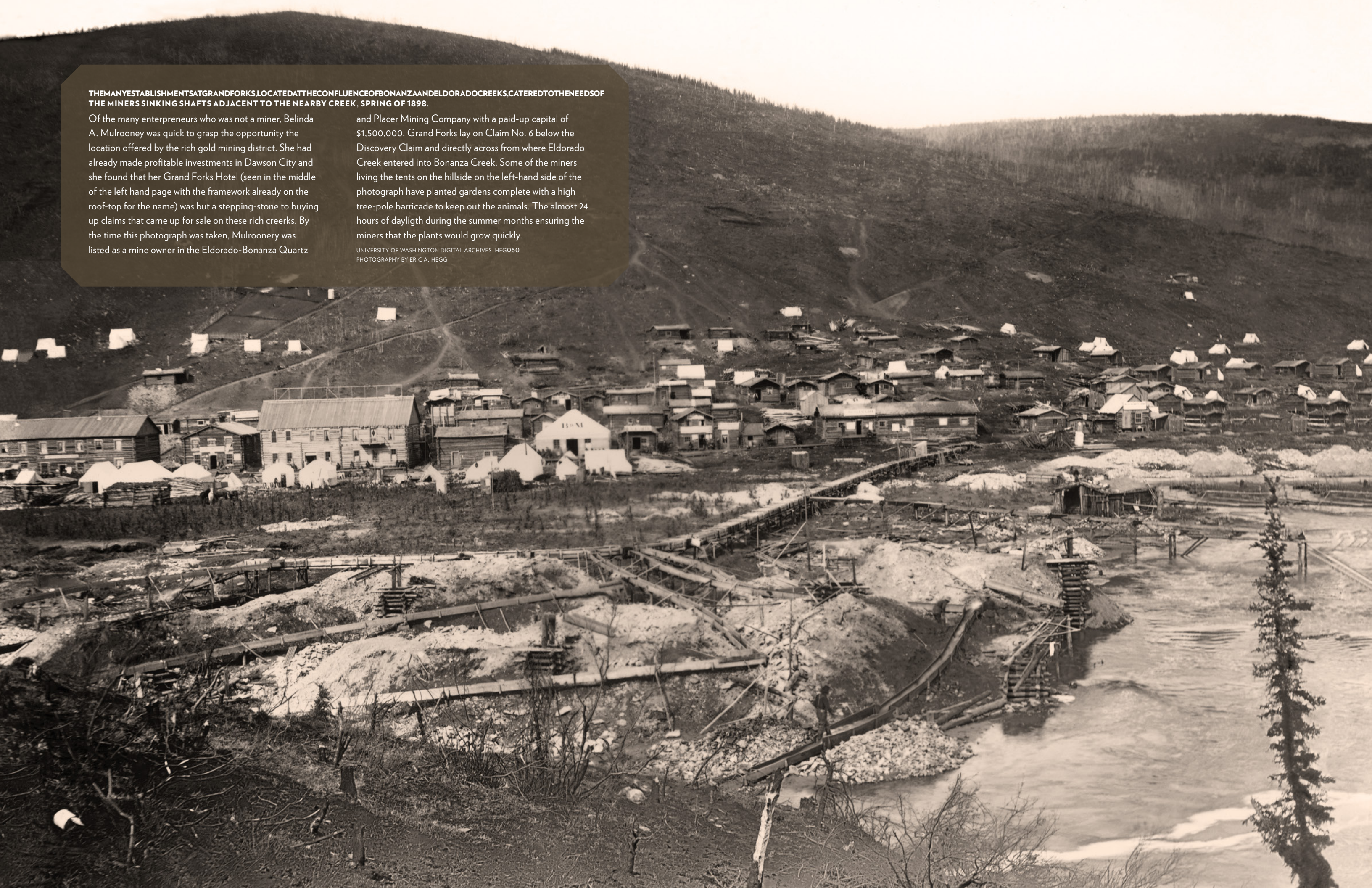


**THE MANY ESTABLISHMENTS AT GRAND FORKS, LOCATED AT THE CONFLUENCE OF BONANZA AND EL DORADO CREEKS, CATERED TO THE NEEDS OF THE MINERS SINKING SHAFTS ADJACENT TO THE NEARBY CREEK, SPRING OF 1898.**

Of the many entrepreneurs who was not a miner, Belinda A. Mulrooney was quick to grasp the opportunity the location offered by the rich gold mining district. She had already made profitable investments in Dawson City and she found that her Grand Forks Hotel (seen in the middle of the left hand page with the framework already on the roof-top for the name) was but a stepping-stone to buying up claims that came up for sale on these rich creeks. By the time this photograph was taken, Mulrooney was listed as a mine owner in the Eldorado-Bonanza Quartz

and Placer Mining Company with a paid-up capital of \$1,500,000. Grand Forks lay on Claim No. 6 below the Discovery Claim and directly across from where Eldorado Creek entered into Bonanza Creek. Some of the miners living the tents on the hillside on the left-hand side of the photograph have planted gardens complete with a high tree-pole barricade to keep out the animals. The almost 24 hours of daylight during the summer months ensuring the miners that the plants would grow quickly.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL ARCHIVES HEG060  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC A. HEGG



**SLUICING ON GOLD HILL WITH GRAND FORKS IN THE VALLEY BELOW, PROBABLY EARLY SUMMER 1899.**

The photograph was taken in early spring. The men are seen shoveling the pay dirt into the sluice boxes. They have worked during the winter, picking out the frozen pay dirt, fifty feet down a shaft. Now the warm weather has set in, thawing out the ground and they are working hard, as they have to depend on the melted snow from the mountain side for water to sluice with. In the background

Bonanza Creek is distinctly seen at the bottom of the mountain, giving a fine view of this noted creek. The snow is still clinging to the mountain side and the whole scene is one of animation and beauty.

YUKON ARCHIVES #89-68-52

SLUCEING ON GOLD HILL



BOGGED DOWN IN A DEEP RUT, A TEAMSTER POSITIONED HIMSELF IN READINESS TO ASSIST THE DRIVER AND TWO HORSES PULL A FREIGHT WAGON DURING A FLASH FLOOD IN FRONT OF THE WALTER M. WOODBURN DRUG STORE AT GRAND FORKS, 1901.

YUKON ARCHIVES PHOTO #89/68-19 WALTER M. WOODBURN FONDS



**SPORTS DAY CELEBRATIONS AT GRAND FORKS ON DOMINION DAY, 1902.**

Here strong men participate in the the track and field event of involving the "throwing"/"putting" (throwing in a pushing motion) a heavy spherical object—the shot—as far as possible. The mining town appears to be devoid of the fairer sex—not a woman to be seen. On the other hand the North West Mounted Police have made their presense know. One stands with a riding crop with is arms folded to the right of the "thrower" while a second stands at the landing spot for the shot (displaying his yellow strip on his pantleg). The British Union Jack is visibley displayed on the many buildings.

YUKON ARCHIVES PHOTO #89/68-13 PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLARKE KINSEY AND CLARENCE KINSEY

DOMINION DAY BONANZA, Y.T. 1902  
KINSEY & KINSEY PHOTO.

**SPORTS DAY CELEBRATIONS AT GRAND FORKS ON DOMINION DAY, 1902.**

Here 10 strongmen participate in a tug-o-war game of strength where the North West Mounted Police, dressed in boots and breeches, clearly outnumber the women at the gala event.

YUKON ARCHIVES PHOTO #89/68-13 PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLARKE KINSEY AND CLARENCE KINSEY



**DOMINION DAY BONANZA, Y.T. 1902**

**KINSEY & KINSEY. PHOTO.**

**THE KEITH & WILSON MINE ON FRENCH HILL, YUKON TERRITORY, 1898**

Gold was sometimes found on hillsides where creeks had once flowed. The man on the right stands at the windlass ready to crank up buckets of paydirt that get shovelled into the rocker being worked by the man on the left. Since there is only one bucket being lowered and raised—and one length of rope—the shaft is very likely quite shallow. With the deeper and larger more rectangular shafts, two buckets are used. The one farthest from the man on the crank is filled with a small boulder to offset the bucket with the paydirt—much like the counter weight in an elevator or dumb waiter. One deep 10' x 15' shaft was divided into two 7.5' x 10' platforms for the raising of two wheelbarrows at a time to the surface. The elevator was so efficient that the 90-foot trip from the bedrock to the surface

could be achieved in just ninety seconds.

Trees on both sides of French Gulch have been stripped bare to be used as cribbing for the shafts, fuel for the stoves in the tents, brush to be positioned in the shaft to help thaw the permafrost down to the bedrock—and as fuel for the boilers used for thawing. Bundles of brush can be seen stockpiled on the opposite hillside—the largest being neatly framed by the windlass. The tents in which the men live are just over the knoll and in the lower right-hand side of the photo. A white horse with a saddle is visible on the opposite hillside to be used to transport brush to the the claims on the valley floor. It would appear that the trees have been cut down all the way up to the Dome.



KEITH AND WILSON MINE ON FRENCH HILL

*Elleg's*



**FRENCH HILL, YUKON TERRITORY, 1898**

Gold was sometimes found on hillsides where creeks had once flowed. The man on the right stands at the windlass ready to crank up buckets of paydirt that get shovelled into the rocker being worked by the man on the left. Since there is only one bucket being lowered and raised—and one length of rope—the shaft is very likely quite shallow. The men live in tents just over the

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UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL COLLECTION #HEG495

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC A. HEGG

231.0  
W&S

FRENCH HILL

**THIS MAP OF THE KLONDIKE GOLD FIELDS WAS COMPILED BY JOSEPH DAVIS, A JUDGE FROM HELENA, MONTANA.**

Visible at the top right centre are the cities of Dawson City, named by Joseph Francis Ladue, in honor of George Mercer Dawson, head of the Geographical Survey of Canada. At the very start of the Yukon Gold Rush, Ladue obtained a grant to layout a 160 acre townsite. Klondike City, located across the Klondike River from Dawson City, was the ancestral fishing and hunting Moosehide First Nations village of the Han people prior to the coming of the miners. The white men took over their village and it originally took on the name of Lousetown because of the relocation of the prostitutes from Dawson City. The Moosehide First Nations moved their village 3-miles upriver to be away from the influence of the white miners.

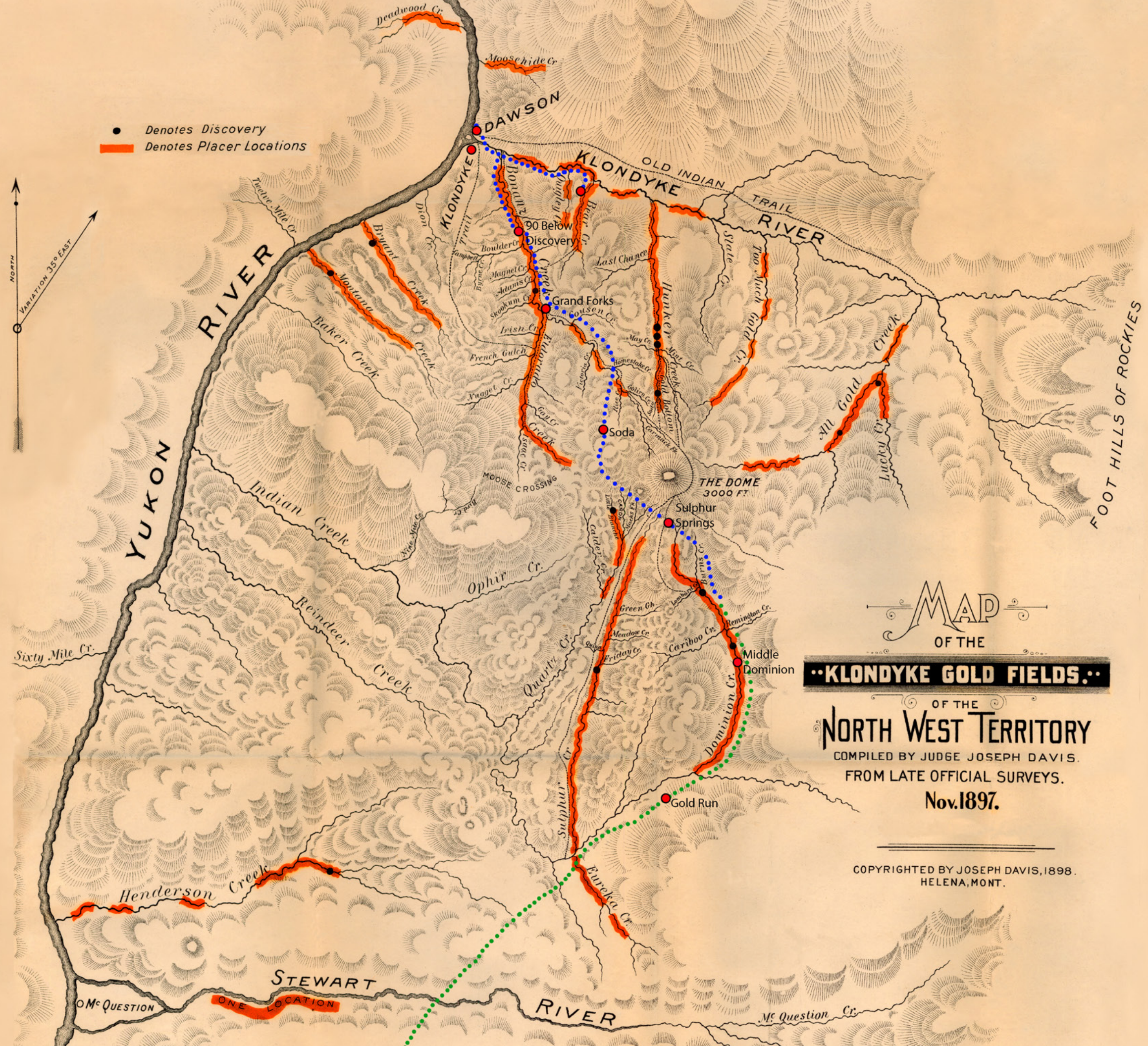
The black dot on Gold Bottom Creek—a tributary of Hunker Creek—marks the spot where Robert Henry Henderson, a Canadian from Nova Scotia, made a gold discovery.

The black dot on Bonanza Creek at the confluence of Skookum Creek marks the spot where George Washington Carmack and his First Nations brothers-in-law Skookum Jim—afterwards James Mason—and Tagish Charley—afterwards Dawson Charley—made the gold discovery that started the Yukon Gold Rush.

The blue dots show the route of the 31-mile Klondike Mines Railway that connected to 90 Below Discovery, Grand Forks, Soda and Sulphur Springs. An ambitious and expensive project, its builders had hoped to connect with the Vancouver, Westminster and Yukon Railway (green dots). As a result the towns of Middle Dominion and Gold Run never came to exist.

This map has been altered from the original because it contained too much information for a 2-page reproduction. As well, the route of the Klondike Mines Railway has been added. The blue (completed) and green (prosed) lines show the route of the railway. As well as transporting machinery into the gold camps, the railway hoped to extend the line to connect with the Canadian Pacific Railway line at Edmonton to bring tourists to see the mines. Like so many ambitious schemes around the turn of the century, the plan never materialized.

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA RARE BOOKS & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS MAPS  
G\_3521\_S5\_1897\_D38



MAP  
OF THE  
**KLONDIKE GOLD FIELDS**

OF THE  
**NORTH WEST TERRITORY**  
COMPILED BY JUDGE JOSEPH DAVIS.  
FROM LATE OFFICIAL SURVEYS.  
Nov. 1897.

COPYRIGHTED BY JOSEPH DAVIS, 1898.  
HELENA, MONT.

## WINTER & SUMMER MINING



A cold gold miner works at the windlass at 40 below Fahrenheit in the Yukon's valley floor in the winter of 1897-1898.

John A. Gould's book 'Frozen Gold A Treatise of early Klondike Mining Technology, Methods and History' writes about the unique way an early miner had of determining the number of buckets he handled in the course of a shift at the windlass. Alongside the shaft was a pegboard with two pegs and two or three rows of ten holes. In one of the rows each hole represented one bucket. In the other row of holes, each hole represented ten buckets. As each bucket was brought up, a counter peg was moved to record it on the pegboard. The miners also had a table of measurement to determine the number of cubic yards moved. The above photograph clearly shows a pegboard with the moved pegs.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL COLLECTION #MEE100  
WALTER E. MEED COLLECTION

The challenges of getting the gold from the ground was a never ending undertaking and the miners worked during the cold spells of winter when temperatures dipped to forty below Fahrenheit (and more) as well as the summer months with the hordes of mosquitos. Winter or summer, the goldfields were a beehive of activity.

During the winter of 1900-1901 William Northrup, an enterprising New Yorker, began the operation of claims on American Gulch and Oro Fino (fine gold in Spanish) Hill. The mine was operated through a 10-foot by 15-foot shaft that went 90 feet deep. The shaft was divided into two compartments each having a separate elevator capable of carrying two wheelbarrows loaded with pay dirt to the surface. As one elevator ascended the other descended and the lift of ninety feet was made in fifteen seconds. It worked like a dumb waiter. The mine was equipped with a 35-horsepower boiler of the locomotive type and a double cylinder reversible hoisting engine. The mines record was the hoisting of 1,325 wheelbarrow loads of pay dirt in a ten-hour shift. From the mouth of the shaft the wheelbarrows were easily wheeled over bunkers that fed the pay dirt directly into sluice boxes. The water for the sluicing was obtained from Bonanza Creek where a pumping plant had been installed. A 40-horsepower boiler furnished steam to a

Three gravity trams extend from the level of these tunnels a distance of about 300 feet down to the level of the sluice boxes near the foot of the hill....Five thousand feet of steel tracks are laid in the tunnels and cross-cuts, and the immense cars of dirt brought down from the four tunnels go hurrying down the mountain side to be dumped into immense hoppers from which it is fed directly into the sluice boxes. No steam power was needed for propulsion anywhere in the mine since all the work was accomplished by zip lines by gravity. The mines on the hillsides often had to purchase dumping grounds for their tailings and debris in the gulches. The water

Hydraulic Monitor for Mining – In hydraulic mining, water under great pressure was discharged through monitors against the gold-bearing hillside. The force of the water would wash away the hillside, flushing the silt and gravel through sluices where it could be separated and the gold recovered. Hydraulic mining could, and often did, completely ruin the landscape. This hydraulic monitor

was used for placer gold mining in the Klondike region after 1900.

Hydraulic mining used a powerful stream of water from a monitor, also known as a giant, directed at gold-bearing gravel or sand. The combined forces of high-pressure water and air bubbles that formed in the waterspout caused gravel to dislodge. Larger boulders were removed by human labour when possible. Water and loose sediment was diverted into sluice boxes in order to separate the gold from the sediment.

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MINERS WORK AT EXCAVATING A SHAFT TO REACH THE PAY DIRT AT BEDROCK. THE MUCK WAS PILLED AROUND THE SHAFT WHILE THE PAY DIRT WAS TAKEN AWAY IN A WHEELBARROW FOR SLUICING IN THE SPRING.

YUKON ARCHIVES #89-29-8



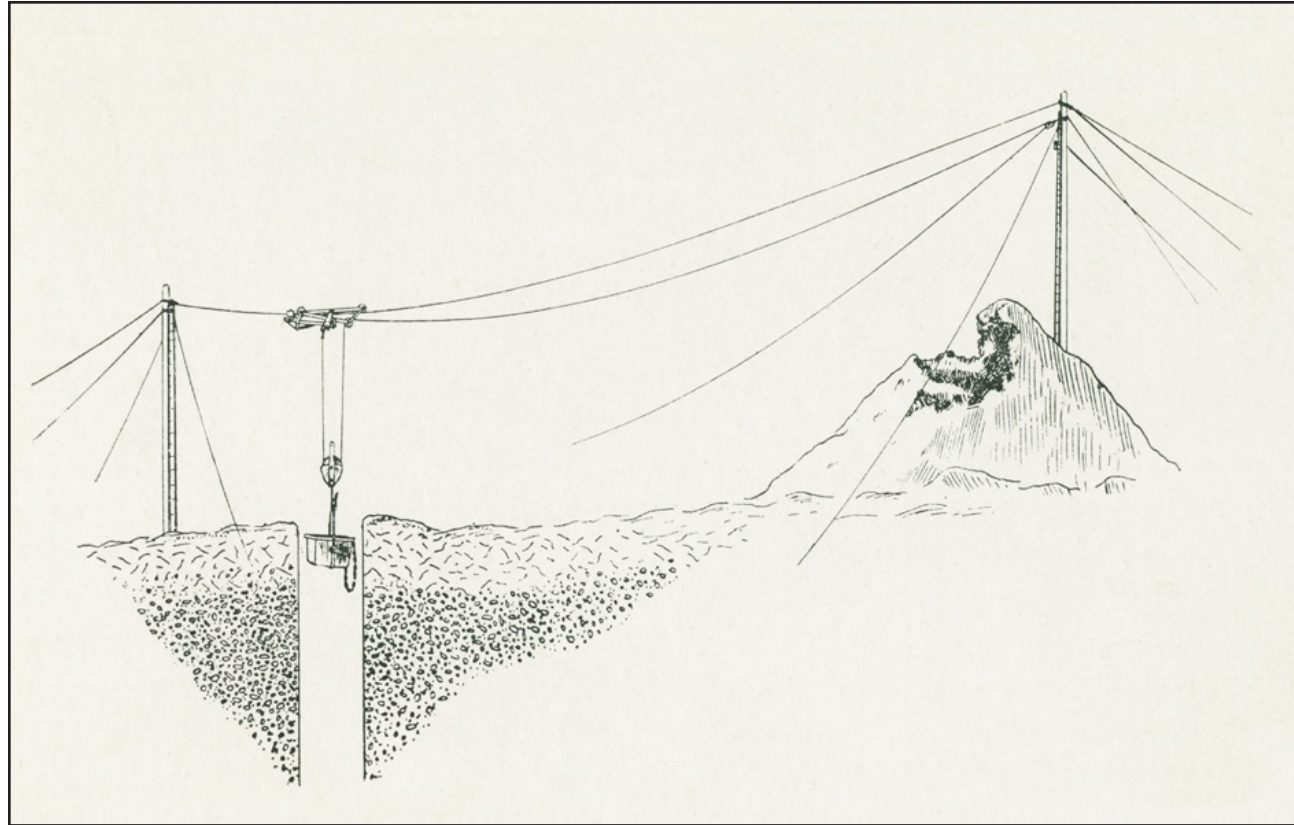
**WINTER MINING SHOWING THE DUMPS ON ELDORADO, 1898.**

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UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL COLLECTION #HEG039

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC A. HEGG



A drawing showing the removal of overburden (muck and dirt) in frozen ground with a self dumper. A 20 horsepower steam-powered hoist carried the self dumper up a shaft or out of a drift operation. These devices often created enormous conical piles of overburden before the gold-bearing pay dirt on the bedrock was reached. The pay dirt was hoisted to the surface and placed in separate piles for spring sluicing.

YUKON ARCHIVES PHOTO #82-403-F27-14  
MISCELLANEOUS II PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

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MINERS WORK THE LAST CHANCE CLAIM ON ELDORADO???BONANZA??? CREEK 40 FEET UNDERGROUND. THE MINERS HAVE MODIFIED A SHAFT INTO TWO COMPARTMENTS TO RAISE LOADS OF ORE ON WHEELBARROWS TO THE SURFACE. THIS REVOLUTIONARY INNOVATION ACCELERATED MINING ACTIVITY IN THE YUKON.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL COLLECTION #AWC1908



**NO. 18 ABOVE ON BONANZA CREEK**

Some miners took the option of bringing their paydirt down the hill to a place where water was more readily available. A wooden drum at the top of the mountain was part of a "gravity tram" mechanism that lowered a cable car with paydirt to the valley floor where it was stockpiled for sluicing during the summer months. The gold bearing gravels, once sluiced, was moved into dump piles by a man with a horse and scraper. This type of mining was prevalent at Cheechako Hill near the Discovery Claim.

YUKON ARCHIVES PHOTO #89-68-48 PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLARKE KINSEY & CLARENCE KINSEY PHOTOGRAPHERS

NO. 18 ABOVE BONANZA

KINSEY ARCHIVES PHOTO

**ON THE 4TH TIER ON GOLD HILL OPPOSITE NO. 5 BONANZA YUKON TERRITORY AROUND 1898**

These six clean shaven miners aided by candlelight, use steam points and pick axes to thaw the frozen ground in a deep underground horizontal drift at the height of the Yukon gold rush. A box for hauling the dirt to the surface and a rope ladder are visible directly behind the man with the gold pan. The man in the centre foreground proudly displays a couple of choice nuggets in his pan.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL COLLECTION #HEG3051 BY ERIC A. HEGG

Miners thawing frozen ground with steam in an underground gold mine lit by candlelight atop Gold Hill. jgfvadsfok;dafs;lmmladsf;lm,fads.,madsf.,



243. a.  
1125

ON 4<sup>th</sup> TIER, GOLD HILL, OPPO NO 5 BONANZA,

**UNDERGROUND 27 ELDORADO**

These twelve miners together with 2 young boys, aided by candlelight, pose in an underground horizontal drift at the height of the Yukon gold rush. Number 27 Eldorado was owned by Alexander McDonald, one of the most prosperous miners in the Yukon, who owned outright or had interests in numbers 14, 19, 22, 30, 34, 35 and 36 on Eldorado Creek. One of McDonald's first claims on Eldorado Creek yielded over 300 ounces a day by panning.

The shaft to bedrock didn't have to be cribbed because the frozen sides stayed as hard a granite year round. The miners worked by candlelight with steel hoses that brought down heated water from above to assist in the thawing of the permafrost cavity. The men worked by candlelight with picks

and shovels during the winter months. The chunks of pay-streak were placed in buckets and hauled to the surface by a windlass where it was stock piled for sluicing during the long days of summer. The gold nuggets were separated from the pay dirt during the 18 plus hours of daylight in June, July and August. The best pay-streak was usually near the bedrock at the bottom of the shaft. Permafrost, seen here on the ceiling, kept the workplace like the inside of an ice locker.

The two boys were not in the mine shaft for the sake of the photographer. They worked the tiny crevices chasing after the nuggets in the dark, the cold and in the stale air.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON DIGITAL COLLECTION #HEG091



326-a  
W&S UNDERGROUND, 27 ELDORADO.

E.A. Hoag

# YUKON ORDER OF PIONEERS

*From notes gleaned at the entrance to the cemetery.*

The Yukon Order of Pioneers was a fraternal order that was formed on the 1 December 1894 at the town of Forty Mile on the Yukon River at the mouth of the Forty Mile River. There had been several gatherings before this meeting, one in April of 1894, one in June 1894 and one in July 1894. By December the pioneers had drawn up a constitution and bylaws. The group elected Leroy Napolean 'Jack' McQuesten, nicknamed Father of the Yukon) as President. By this time gold had been discovered on such streams as Birch Creek and the Minook River, a tributary of the Yukon River in Alaska. In February 1895 the miners applied to form a charter to form a subordinate lodge at Circle City that was a new town that had grown up near the mouth of Birch Creek. This charter was issued on 14 February 1895.

Once gold was discovered on Bonanza Creek, a tributary of the Klondike in August of 1896, most of the miners from the gold fields of Alaska moved to the new town of Dawson City that had grown up at the junction of the Klondike and Yukon Rivers.

On 24 July 1897 a group of members of the Yukon Order of Pioneers got together in Dawson and formed a new lodge Y.O.O.P. They called it the Klondike Lodge and decided upon the word "Klondike/" as the password. Thomas W. O'Brien, a businessman at Forty Mile, Circle City and later Dawson City, was its first president. During the next three years there were two other lodges formed in Dawson. No. 3 Lodge was formed when a group of Dawson members went over to the community of Granville on Dominion Creek and initiated 30 men as members of the Yukon Order of Pioneers, Lodge No. 1. By 1912 many members of Y.O.O.P. had settled in Seattle, Washington. They submitted an application to the Grand Lodge to form a lodge in Seattle that was designated as No.2. By 1913 there were quite a few Past Presidents of the lodges living in Dawson City. They decided that it was time to form an official Grand Lodge as up until this time the lodge at Forty Mile had for a brief period served as the Grand Lodge before moving to Circle City. Shortly afterward Dawson City lodge acted as Grand Lodge with Tom O'Brien being elected as its first Grand President. Later a lodge was formed at Mayo as No. 3 and then another at Whitehorse as No. 4. In 1922 a lodge was formed in Vancouver as No. 5.

When gold was discovered on beaches in Nome, Alaska, many of the

original pioneers went there where they formed a Y.O.O.P. Lodge. In 1906 the Nome Lodge wanted a change in the constitution to allow anyone in Alaska at the required date to be allowed membership but Grand Lodge rejected the proposal. The Alaskans returned their charge and formed "Igloo No. 1" of the Alaska Pioneers. Fairbanks also had a Y.O.O.P. Lodge then in 1910 they too requested a change in the constitution that was refused. They returned their charter and formed Igloo No. 4 of the Alaska Pioneers.

The several lodges of the Yukon Order of Pioneers gradually died out until only Dawson City was left. The Dawson City Lodge kept the Yukon Order of Pioneers alive

over the years. In 1966 a lodge was formed in Whitehorse with No. 2 designate. These are now the only two lodges of the Yukon Order of Pioneers.

Many of the earliest Y.O.O.P are buried in the 8th Avenue Cemetery in Dawson City. The first burial was Frederick Washington Harte on 7 November 1897 (the second President of Grand Lodge in 1886); the last one was Walter H. Bigg on 13 August 1934. In 1935 the pioneers acquired property on one of the hills for a new cemetery above Dawson City.

## THE PLAQUE AT THE ENTRANCE INTO THE

Y.O.O.P Dawson City office reads:

To the pioneers who blazed the trails to the Klondike that led to the greatest gold stampede the world has known. May the souls of the members who have passed into the great beyond rest in peaceful sleep and for the members to follow ever be faithful to our motto, "Do unto others as you would be done by"



## PIPE SURROUNDS

Mostly silver in colour, these signify the location of Yukon Order of Pioneers locations in the Eighth Avenue Cemetery in Dawson City. Most of the wooden grave markers standing above the deceased pioneers are no longer legible due to time and the harshness of the climate. The large cemetery contains Catholic, Protestant, Jewish cemeteries as well as other fraternal orders that thrived in the Yukon at the turn of the century.

**DAWSON CITY FROM THE BASE OF THE MOOSHIDE SLIDE, AROUND 1910**

"In a world gripped by economic depression, news of the Klondike gold discovery was electrifying as 30,000 stamperders braved the journey to the cabins and tents of the new mining camp. Dawson sprang up overnight as the hub of the service and supply to the goldfields as a boomtown with wooden boardwalks, false-fronted dance halls, stores and warehouses. By 1898 Dawson City was the largest city in Western Canada and capital

of the newly created Yukon Territory. Fabulous wealth and isolation sparked a demand for luxuries—many of which were still uncommon in southern cities. Electricity, telephone service, luxury foods and high fashions imported from outside earned Dawson City the title "Paris of the North". The frenzy of the Klondike Gold Rush lasted 2 only years."

Essentially wilderness in 1896, by 1898 Dawson was

the largest city in Canada west of Winnipeg and only slightly smaller than Seattle or Portland. In this 1910 photograph, Dawson City was no longer the tent town of a decade earlier. The Yukon's capital had taken on a more permanent appearance. At the start of the gold rush, Joseph Ladue had staked a claim to 160 acres of boggy flats at the mouth of the Klondike to establish a townsite that he intended to name in his own honour. Instead, he was persuaded to name the place Dawson

City in honour of George Mercer Dawson, an early surveyor into the Yukon. Several sternwheelers are tied up along Front Street. There are several log booms tied up at water's edge in readiness to be turned into lumber at Ladue's sawmill. Real estate, lumber and gold made Ladue a very rich man as some of his lots on Front Street sold for as much as \$8000. Unfortunately, Ladue died in 1901 and was never able to enjoy much of his new found wealth.



**THE OPERA HOUSE IN DAWSON AFTER THE FIRE, 21 APRIL, 1899**

"Swift water" Bill Gates' and Jack Smith's best-known palace of pleasure—the Monte Carlo—remains open ready for business from thirsty and sex-starved prospectors. The original Monte Carlo was unglamorous. The Hoffman, adjacent to the opera house, very likely escaped the fire because of the sprinkler system on the roof's peak.

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**THE ARRIVAL OF THE SEATTLE NO. 1 AT DAWSON CITY**

Photographed at midnight with Moosehide Slide in the background, the steamship flies the American flag. As men ready themselves to disembark, others on shore gather waiting for the mail and news of home. Discarded tin cans lie strewn along the riverbank, 1898. Dawson was the largest city west of Winnipeg, Manitoba, and only slightly smaller than Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, Washington, when this photograph was taken in 1898.

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The miners of Dawson City were 90 percent Americans living under British rule. Here at the North West Mounted Police barracks, John 'Jack' Wallace Crawford, the legendary American buckskin poet, scout and showman, addresses a large assembly of mostly American gold miners during an American 4th of July celebration, 1899.

"Captain" Jack, as Crawford came to be known, earned his reputation as a scout for U.S. Brigadier General George Crook, America's most successful commander in the Indian Wars. One of the poet scout's most memorable accomplishments was his 350-mile ride on horseback in six days to get his own story published in the New York Herald of the great Sioux victory by the U.S. Army at Slim Buttes. Miners' cabins displaying gardens dot the hillsides behind the largest city west of Winnipeg and north of Seattle. The NWMP barrack clearly shows its fortlike structure.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC A. HEGG



FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION N.W.M.P. SQUARE DAWSON 99,

Eric A. Hegg  
Dawson



**A VIEW DOWN THE YUKON RIVER WITH DAWSON CITY, THE MOOSEHIDE SLIDE AND THE OGILVIE MOUNTAINS IN THE FAR LEFT-HAND BACKGROUND, 2013**

Dawson City was located at the confluence of the muddy waters of the Yukon and the clear waters of the Klondike Rivers. The Klondike Highway passes along Front Street and continues across the George Black Ferry over the Yukon River to hook up with the Top of the World Highway. On the sidehill above the town is

the trail to the Midnight Dome. The Dome Road, an alternate way to the Dome, is visible to the top right of the photograph.

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