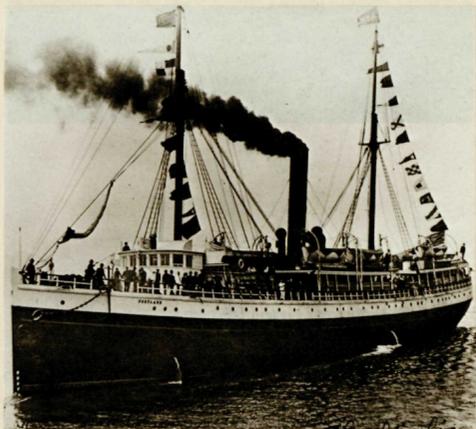


GOLD! GOLD!

"The steamer *Portland*, headed for Seattle out of St. Michael, Alaska, steamed down to Seattle this morning with a ton of gold aboard."



When this magic sentence appeared in the July 17, 1897, issue of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, it triggered one of the last — and one of the greatest — gold rushes in the history of North America.

Before noon that day every berth aboard the *Portland* had been sold for the return trip north, and telegraph wires were humming with details of the 68 miners who wrestled their suitcases, gunny sacks, pokes and jars of gold down the gangplank. When it was actually weighed, the gold weighed more than two tons. But it didn't matter by then; the stampede to the Klondike in northwestern Canada was on.

THE BIG FIND

The Klondike gold rush was eleven months old when the *Portland* arrived in Seattle. Prospectors had been dribbling into that vast wilderness of the Yukon River drainage for two decades, finding enough "colors" on the feeder streams to buy grub and tools. But the big strike eluded gold hunters until a trio — two Indians and a white man — stopped to rest beside a tiny stream called Rabbit Creek which emptied into the Klondike River. One of the Indians, Skookum Jim, bent over to get a drink and saw flecks of gold glistening on the bottom "caught between the rocks like cheese in a sandwich."

Skookum Jim, Tagish Charley and George Washington Carmack soon had a cartridge casing filled with coarse gold dust. Since Indians were not permitted to stake claims, Carmack staked the discovery claim for himself — twice the normal size — and claims for each of his companions. The date was August 16, 1896. They hurried back to the Yukon River a few miles away and paddled furiously downriver to file their claims at the settlement of Fortymile.

When other prospectors saw Carmack's gold, they threw their belongings into boats and headed upstream to make claims near the discovery. Immediately the town of Dawson was started at the confluence of the Yukon and Klondike Rivers. It was named in honor of the Canadian surveyor, George Dawson, who had traveled through the area a decade earlier.

By winter of 1896, all good river-bottom claims had been staked by prospectors in the area, and they spent the remainder of the winter and spring digging out their riches from the renamed Bonanza Creek. These men rode a paddlewheeler to St. Michael, Alaska, then boarded coastal steamers for home with gold piled around the cabins and passageways in any container they could find.

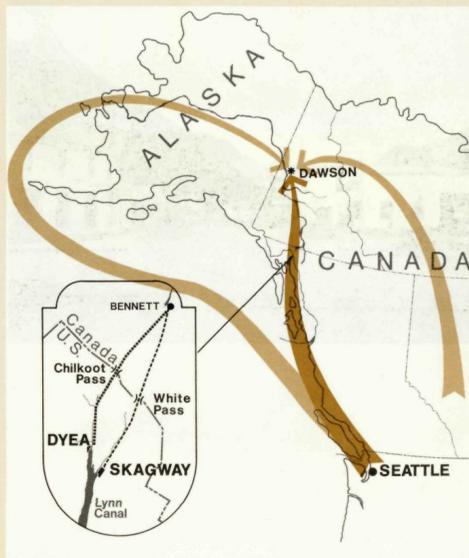
THE RUSH BEGINS



The United States was badly in need of an economic stimulus. The nation was still locked in the depression that followed the Panic of 1893, and efforts to end it had failed. Then came the gold rush.

Strangely, another ship with Klondike miners aboard landed two days ahead of the *Portland's* arrival. It went to San Francisco and a crowd watched the miners disembark from the *Excelsior* in their patched and repatched clothes, none carrying less than \$5,000 and some with more than \$100,000 in gold. But the gold rush didn't start; the mood wasn't right until the *Portland's* arrival.

But when that magic message about the "ton of gold" from the Klondike went over the telegraph wires from Seattle, the stampede began. The mayor of Seattle resigned to organize one of the many ill-fated Klondike mining expeditions. Farmers, bank clerks, teachers, dentists, con-men, missionaries and prostitutes all packed and headed north. Most had no idea where the Klondike was or even what country it was in. No matter. Anything was better than staying home without hope of a job.



SKAGWAY

A few years before the gold rush, William Moore, a former steamboat captain, had gone north. Working for a surveyor, he discovered the White Pass route through the Coast Range, and decided a town should be built at the salt-water end of the route, where the Skagway River spilled into Lynn Canal. He filed a homestead claim, built a wharf and waited for the gold rush he was certain would come.

When it did, he and his son were pushed aside and ignored by the stampede. A tent and shack city grew overnight as the hordes arrived. During a visit by naturalist John Muir, he called Skagway "a nest of ants taken into a strange country and stirred up by a stick."



All that autumn of 1897 and into the winter, steamers continued disgorging cheechakos (tenderfeet), cattle, horses, tools, food and villains into Skagway. The town quickly grew to a peak of some 10,000 as stampedees tried to get their gear over the Coast Range and down to the Yukon River headwaters.

One of the new-arrivals was Jefferson Randolph (Soapy) Smith, a gambler, con-artist and bully who boasted he would be the boss of Skagway. He soon was. Soapy and his gang's activities earned Skagway the title of "the roughest place on earth." He controlled the businesses and legal system while trying to pass himself off as being kind to animals, kids and widows. But he pushed his luck, and when a returning prospector named Stewart was robbed by Soapy's gang, Stewart said so, loudly and often. Skagway, tired of Soapy by now, held a vigilante meeting to oust him. When he heard of it, Soapy marched down to the meeting carrying a rifle. Frank Reid, the town's surveyor, challenged Soapy with a pistol. They both fired. Soapy was killed instantly, but his shot hit Reid, who died a few days later. Reid was the hero, but Soapy is best remembered.

DYEA

Before the gold rush, the Chilkat branch of the Tlingit Indians controlled Chilkoot Pass and monopolized all trade between white traders and Indians of the interior. They also held exclusive rights as packers for prospectors headed over the pass. Matters quickly came to a showdown between the Indians and whites after the stampede began, and the United States Navy was called to keep the peace. Soon the monopoly was broken and the Indians ignored.



Chilkoot Pass received most of the publicity and became the most popular of the four major routes to the Klondike. Nearby White Pass was too swampy and had Soapy Smith at the trailhead; the "rich man's route" from Seattle by ship to St. Michael, Alaska, then by steamboat up the Yukon River was too expensive and took an entire season; and the all-Canadian route from Edmonton, Alberta, down the Mackenzie River and across a mountain range to the Yukon River was too brutal.

Dyea's energetic publicity campaign for business was successful and by the autumn of 1897, it was a boom town of tents and false-front buildings with a half-mile-long pier over the tide flats. By the spring of 1898, three aerial tramways were operating along the Chilkoot, one of which was eleven miles long.

But Dyea's days were numbered. From a peak of 3,500 more or less permanent residents in the summer of 1898, Dyea almost became a ghost town within a year. The gold rush was waning rapidly as people learned all the good claims were already taken, and the White Pass and Yukon Route narrow-gauge railroad was siphoning people away from the Chilkoot Trail. The railroad bought up the aerial tramways on Chilkoot Pass and dismantled them. Chilkoot was dead and Dyea died with it.



THE TRAILS

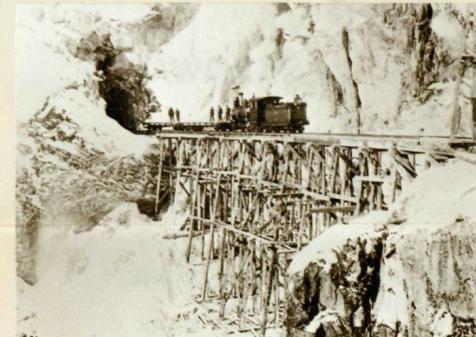
The greatest hardships faced by stampedees were not on the steamships headed north, in rough-and-tumble Skagway, in the river rapids nor out in the frozen gold fields. It was the trails that served up agony and misery. There were murders and suicides, outbreaks of spinal meningitis, deaths from hypothermia, avalanches and, some say, from heartbreak.



Chilkoot was the toughest on men because they had to pack roughly a ton of gear into Canada. The North West Mounted Police at the international boundary on the summits required that each person have 1,150 pounds of food — a year's supply — on which they charged duty. Add to this the other gear and the total averaged about a ton. Pack animals could not be used easily, and before the tramways, everything had to be carried on human backs, from cache to cache, sometimes involving a thousand-mile walk.

White Pass was the animal killer. The frantic men starved the pack horses, beat them and forced them over the rocky terrain until they dropped. More than 3,000 animals were killed, many dying at a place called Dead Horse Gulch.

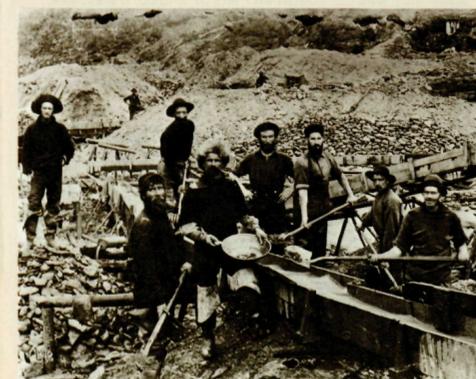
THE FIRST RAILROAD IN ALASKA



One of Captain Moore's dreams as he founded Skagway was to see a railroad built from tidewater over White Pass and to the interior of Canada. That dream was realized when a Canadian railroad builder joined with a British financier to build a railroad between Skagway and Whitehorse. Earlier in the stampede a toll road had been carved and blasted out of the mountains by George Brackett. The new railroad, the White Pass & Yukon Route, bought the toll road, enabling Brackett and his backers to realize a profit on the venture.

Construction of the narrow-gauge railroad began on May 27, 1898, and by July 21, a passenger train was making a four-mile run toward the pass. The construction was under incredibly tough conditions and mile after mile of solid granite was blasted. The weather was brutal, but work continued and the tracks crossed the summit in the summer of 1899, in spite of losing many workers to a new, smaller gold rush near Atlin, B.C.

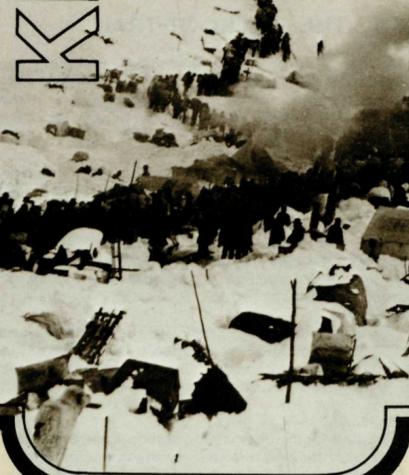
The track-laying crew coming south from Whitehorse met those working north from Skagway and on July 29, 1900, the "golden spike" was driven where they met at Carcross, Yukon.



Historic photographs have been provided through the courtesy of University of Washington Library, Special Collections and Seattle Historical Society.

KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH

NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK



ADMINISTRATION

The Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park was authorized by Congress June 30, 1976, and is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is P.O. Box 517, Skagway, Alaska 99840, is in immediate charge of the park.

As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. The responsibilities include fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

NATIONAL PARK UNITS



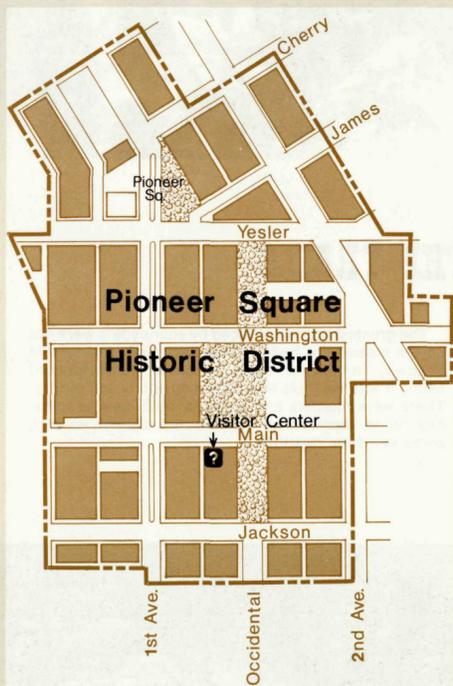
WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN THE KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Park experiences ranging from urban to small town to wilderness are offered as the park components follow the old "Trail of '98" from Seattle to Skagway to the Chilkoot and White Passes. In conjunction with the American portion of the Klondike story, the Canadian government has been preserving the historic town of Dawson. In this "City of Gold," numerous buildings have been restored to their turn-of-the-century appearance. Museums along the route tell the Klondike story, and restored riverboats at Carcross, Whitehorse and Dawson tell the paddlewheeler chapter of the Klondike's history. To appreciate the agony and the glory of the gold rush, one should follow the park's components from Seattle to the gold fields near Dawson.

1 SEATTLE

More stampedees left from Seattle than any other city. Here they bought their supplies, boarded ships and headed north to Skagway and Dyea. Pioneer Square has been partly restored to its 1890's appearance and has several distinctive shops, art galleries, restaurants, book stores and antique shops. The park's Seattle Visitor Center is located in the heart of this district, where you will find interpretative displays, films, information on special tours and other gold-rush events.

Nearby is the Seattle waterfront, a lively and interesting place to shop and stroll. The city's Waterfront Park, with its picnic areas, fountain and marine aquarium, was built between Piers 57 and 60. It was here that the *Portland* landed back in 1897 with the 68 prospectors who launched the Klondike gold rush.



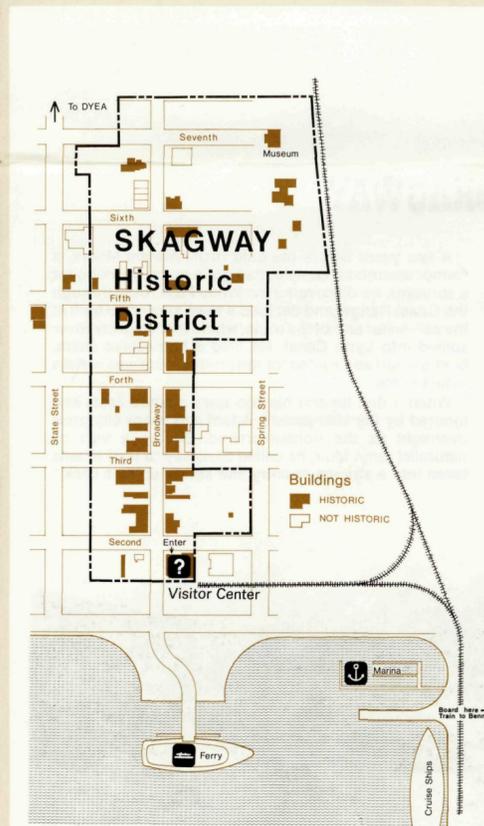
The Visitor Center is at 117 S. Main Street, Seattle, WA 98104, in the Pioneer Square historic district.

2 SKAGWAY

The next stop on the "Trail of '98" is Skagway, Alaska. Once a town approaching 10,000, the permanent population now is less than 1,000. Skagway's zoned historical district retains much of the gold rush charm with boardwalks, false-front buildings and dirt streets.

At the Skagway Visitor Center you will find historical displays and artifacts from the gold rush. Here you will also find information on hiking the Chilkoot Trail and things to see and do around the town; the Trail of '98 Museum, the Gold Rush Cemetery where Soapy Smith and Frank Reid were buried, day hikes into the mountains above town and a lively nightlife.

Tours are available on foot, by bus or chartered aircraft.



The town of Skagway can be reached by:
Air from Juneau, Haines and Whitehorse year-round.
Water routes from Seattle, Washington; and Prince Rupert, British Columbia, via the Alaska Marine Highway System, on which you can take your vehicle. Summer cruise ships operate from major West Coast seaports.

Railroad access to Skagway is via the White Pass & Yukon Route to Whitehorse. You may freight your vehicle between Whitehorse, on the Alaska Highway, and Skagway.

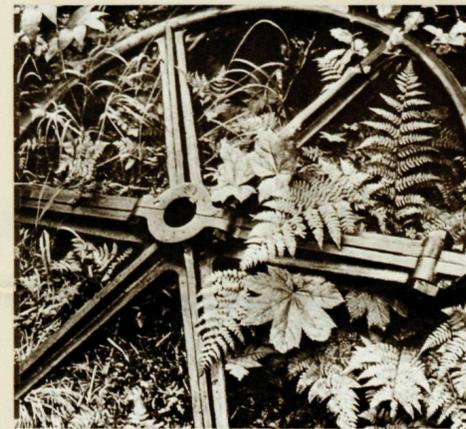
Highway access to Skagway will be available in 1978 when the automobile route is completed to Carcross, Yukon.

For further information, contact your travel agent or the City of Skagway, Box 415, Skagway, Alaska 99840.

3 DYEA



Dyea, the gateway to Chilkoot Pass, is about nine miles from Skagway on a dirt road. Most of the buildings were torn down after the gold rush for use in Skagway, for firewood, and a few were simply burned to clear land for agricultural use. All that remains now of the original townsite are some scattered remains of foundations and a half-mile row of piling stubs leading out to the saltwater. Back in the woods is the Slide Cemetery. Here more than sixty men and women are buried, victims of the Palm Sunday avalanche of 1898 on Chilkoot Pass.

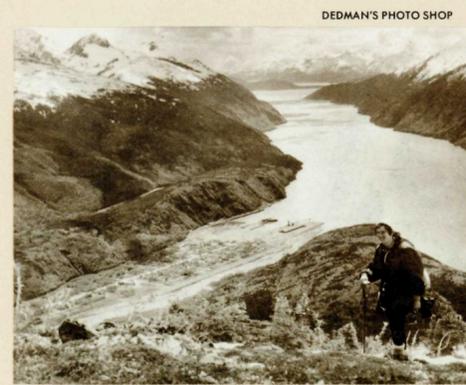


4 ROUTES OVER THE PASSES

The 53 km (33 mile) Chilkoot Trail is accessible only on foot and is the most challenging way to follow the route to the Yukon River headwaters. The trail begins at the bridge near Dyea and travels over the pass to Lake Bennett, where the stampedees spent the winter and spring of 1897-98, building boats and waiting for the ice to break up on the lakes and river. It is a difficult hike, and usually takes four days. If you plan to return by train to Skagway, you must purchase tickets before your trip.

There is a less strenuous method of following the overland portion of the route to the Klondike — a ride on the White Pass & Yukon Route train that runs daily between Skagway and Bennett. You will see magnificent scenery, and occasional wildlife, from the comfort of a coach car.

Automobile travel will be available in 1978 when the Skagway-Carcross Road is completed. This spur of the Alaska Highway system will enable visitors to drive over White Pass and stop at special turnouts above the White Pass Trail and see historical sites such as White Pass City and the infamous Dead Horse Gulch.



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Climate and Vegetation

While traveling over the passes between tidewater and Bennett, you will notice dramatic changes in climate, terrain and vegetation. Skagway is characterized by high winds, relatively low precipitation and moderate temperatures.

Below 3,000 feet lies the *Pacific Northwest Coastal Rain Forest* with dense stands of alder, cottonwood, aspen, western hemlock and Sitka spruce. Nearly all of this timber is second-growth because the hillsides were denuded of trees during the gold rush. Understory plants such as liverworts, ladyfern, devils club and salal flourish in the mild marine climate.

As you approach the 3,000-foot level near the summits of Chilkoot and White Passes, the climate becomes subarctic. Temperatures may dive to -50° in the winter. This *Alpine Tundra Zone* can receive up to 200 inches of snowfall per year. Plant life consists mainly of mosses, lichen, heaths, dwarf shrubs and low-growing willows.

On the descent from the passes into Canada, you will notice further changes resulting from the rain barrier created by the Coast Range. This drier climate, the *Boreal Forest Zone*, creates a region of less dense forest consisting mainly of alpine fir, lodgepole pine and spruce. Cottonwood and aspen grow in the wetter areas.

Wildlife

Mountain goat, black bear and moose inhabit the park area. The harsh environment also supports smaller mammals such as marmot, wolverine, porcupine and squirrels. Grizzly (brown bear) and wolves exist here but are seldom seen.

HIKING THE CHILKOOT TRAIL

You must be properly outfitted before embarking on a hike over the Chilkoot Trail. Weather conditions may change rapidly from hour to hour, especially in the summit area. You must be prepared for cold temperatures, snow or rain, fog and travel through swampy areas and snow fields.

Proper equipment includes warm clothing (preferably wool), sturdy rain gear (not plastic), a tent with waterproof fly, campstove and adequate fuel (there is no wood in the summit area and campfires are not allowed at all on the Canadian portion), good hiking boots, adequate food plus emergency rations and first-aid kit. Current trail information is available from the Visitor Center in Skagway or the Parks Canada office in Whitehorse.

Hiking the trail north from Dyea is recommended because it is the historic route. Also, travelling the trail in reverse is not recommended because descending the steep summit scree, the "Golden Stairs" of gold rush days is dangerous.

Especially:
* Be alert for symptoms of hypothermia — a lowering of the body temperature that results in uncontrollable shivering, disorientation, weariness, and possibly death.

* Never feed wild animals. It is not good for them and endangers you.

* Bear, moose and other wild animals may be encountered along the trails and all are potentially dangerous. Make noise when you hike, announcing your presence, since animals are most dangerous when startled or cornered.

* Never approach a potentially dangerous animal. They may think you mean harm. Photograph them from a safe distance with a telephoto lens.

* Keep your campsite and equipment clean. Food should be sealed in containers and hung from trees so that animals will not be attracted by food odors.

* Don't mix pets and wildlife. Pets must be leashed or under physical restraint. You are advised not to take them on the Chilkoot Trail. It is a difficult hike. It can damage their feet and interfere with other hikers' enjoyment.

PROTECT YOUR PARK

Protect the park by respecting it. Do not deface, destroy or remove any artifacts, plants, flowers, rocks, interpretative signs or trail markers. Please observe the pack-it-in, pack-it-out regulations. Do not throw your garbage away or bury it. Keep each area clean so others may enjoy their visits also.

INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS

* Customs and Immigration laws require that anyone travelling to Carcross or beyond must report to Canadian Customs in Whitehorse. Anyone proceeding to Skagway from Canada must report to U.S. Customs and Immigration authorities in Skagway.

* Hand guns are prohibited by law in Canada and must be left with the Skagway Police Department or Royal Canadian Mounted Police at Carcross or Whitehorse. In the United States, firearms must be broken down and encased when travelling within the park.

* Hunting is not permitted in the park.
* All artifacts from the Klondike gold rush are considered to be of international historic significance. These artifacts are protected by federal, territorial, provincial and state laws. Park visitors are cautioned not to remove or damage any items. If these artifacts are removed from their present locations, their historic value is lost. Severe penalties are provided for violation of these regulations.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The United States National Park Service and Parks Canada, along with provincial, state and local agencies, have cooperated in researching and planning the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park. Enjoy your visit.

Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park is more than a place; it is the spirit of thousands of frenzied men and women rushing to the gold fields in the Klondike. As you travel in the footsteps of the stampedees, remember Skagway is also a living community. Please respect the privacy of its residents as you explore.