

Hidden reminders of Gold Rush Dyea

Dyea was a small trading post and native village before the gold rush began in July of 1897, but, in just a few months, its population shot up to an estimated 8,000 when it became a principal port city for the Klondike stampeders. Its prosperity proved to be short-lived. The town's poor harbor, the disastrous snow slide of April 3, 1898, and the construction of the White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad out of Skagway all contributed to the demise of the town. By 1903, the population had fallen to only 3. Since the rush, nature has reclaimed Dyea, providing an excellent example of forest succession at work.

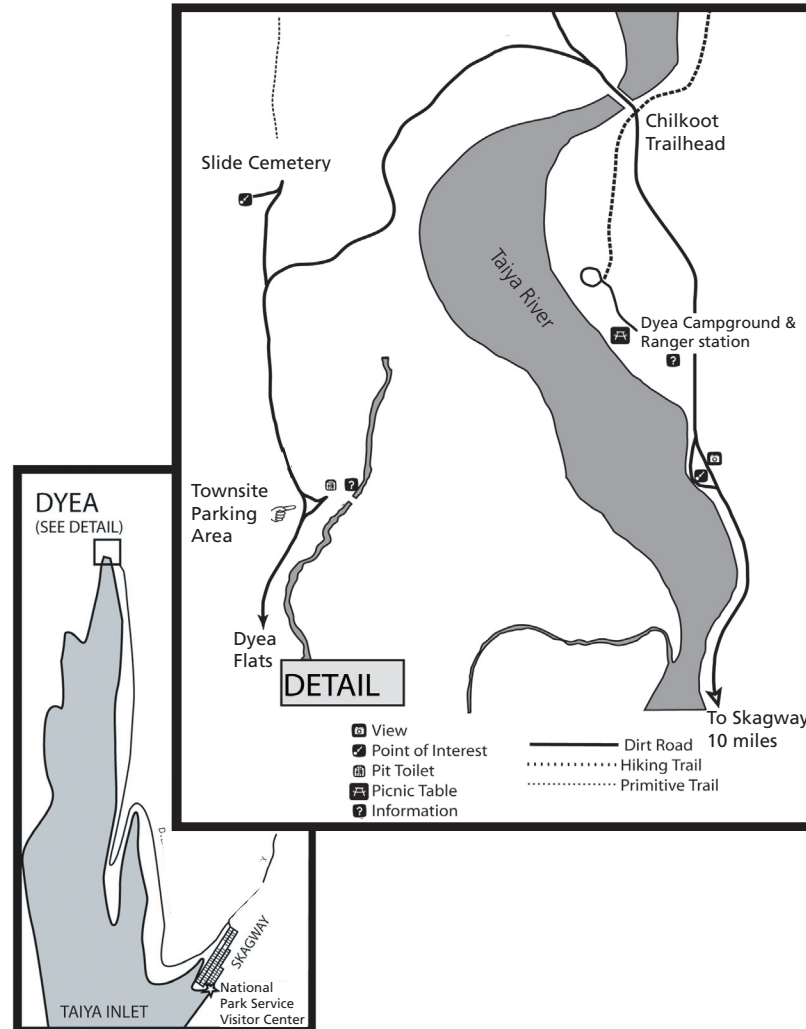
The National Park Service purchased this portion of Dyea in 1978. The park protects the natural and cultural resources here to ensure that this area is preserved for future generations.

Stampeders with their provisions on the Dyea flats during the gold rush (1898)



Getting to the Dyea Townsite

Take the Klondike Highway out of town until you see the sign for Dyea. Take a left onto the Dyea road and travel 9 miles to the Dyea area. Drive over the bridge and take your first left, following signs to Dyea Historic Site. Take two left turns to arrive in the parking area.



Klondike Gold Rush
National Historical Park



Dyea Townsite Self-Guided Walking Tour



Since 1978 the Chilkoot Trail and Dyea Townsite have been designated a
National Historic Landmark

**All remains are protected under federal and state laws.
Please do not touch or remove any artifacts or burn any historic wood.**

Walking Tour Stops

1) *Parking Lot Area at the Nelson Slough*

Once filled with up to 8,000 residents, the gold rush-era town of Dyea is mostly gone now. Only a few ruins remain—making the town all the more alluring as you search for its remnants. Follow the signs and use this map to guide you on your tour today. The complete tour is 8/10^{ths} of a mile.

2) *Nelson Slough Bridge*

The wet area beneath the bridge is a slough filled with water during high tides and rainy periods. During the gold rush, this was the west branch of the Taiya River. In the last ice age, this valley was covered by a glacier over 4,000 feet thick. One major effect the former ice mass has on the area today is known as isostatic or glacial rebound. The land is rising or rebounding in response to the removal of the weight of the glacier. The rate of this rebound, measuring 0.75 inches a year, is astonishingly rapid for geologic processes. This means the valley floor is 8 feet higher than it was 100 years ago, which translates to thousands of feet added to the coastline, given the shallowness of the Taiya Inlet.

3) *The Rowboat*

Look for a small path on the right leading through the trees for the well hidden ruins of a rowboat. This boat may have been left during the gold rush when high tide reached nearly this far.

4) *Vining and Wilkes Warehouse Ruin*

This warehouse was used to hold stampedeers' "ton of goods." All stampedeers were required to bring a year's supply of provisions to enter Canada; this ensured that they had what they needed to survive the harsh winter on the trail. Of course, this slowed down their journeys—but saved many of their lives. Being so close to the high-tide mark, this building was built on pilings. When you are surrounded by large trees and the water is a mile away, it's hard to believe that 100 years ago, this place was a tidal flat. This is an excellent example of isostatic rebound at work.

5) *The Meadow*

Follow the sign to the false front and continue until you notice the treeless meadow. The lower elevation is the result of the constantly moving Taiya River, which has washed away all

traces of the town. For more than 50 years the river has remained in one channel on the far side of the valley, so vegetation is beginning to grow in this meadow. Gulls, ravens, bald eagles, red squirrels, wildflowers, mushrooms, mosses, liverworts, lichens and even nesting crows make their homes in this area.

6) *Depressions in the Ground*

As you walk through the woods, you'll see numerous holes in the ground. What do you think they are? They could be privies (outhouses) or root cellars. Since this gold rush was so short-lived, some people took their buildings with them when they left. Other buildings were demolished and the lumber sold,

and the few remaining buildings were later used by homesteaders until they collapsed. This explains why there is little visible evidence that anyone lived here.

7) *Succession Area*

Even though the trees here are very large, this was a grassland during the gold rush. At that time, this area was too close to the water for a forest to establish itself. This forest is not yet mature. Looking around, you'll see Sitka spruce, hemlock, cottonwood, and lodgepole pine, but, when this forest reaches maturity, the dominant tree will be the shade-tolerant western hemlock. This series of changing plant life is called succession.

8) *A. M. Gregg Real Estate Office False Front*

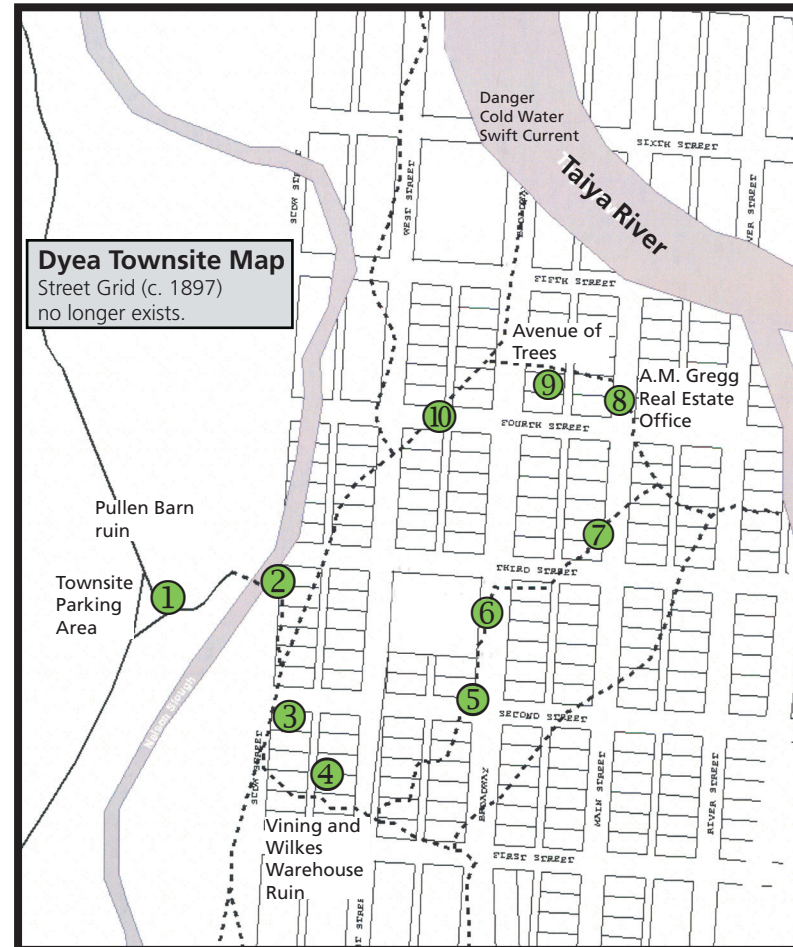
As you look at the only "standing" structure left in Dyea, you are on what was known as Main Street. The stumps in front of the building were trees planted during the gold rush. Most people who settled in Dyea thought they were here to stay, so they named streets, planted trees and built homes. They were surprised when the "rush" ended so early, and the boom town became a ghost town.

9) *The "Avenue of Trees"*

Behind the false front is a rectangle of large spruce trees that were planted between 1910 and 1922—probably as a windbreak for one of the three farms in Dyea at that time.

10) *Trail Back to the Parking Lot*

Turn left from the stairs and walk down the trail. Imagine Dyea as a bustling place with 150 businesses and up to 8,000 people. If things had been different, what might Dyea look like today?



**Thank you for visiting the
Dyea Townsite.
If you don't wish to take this
brochure home, please return it
for others to use.**