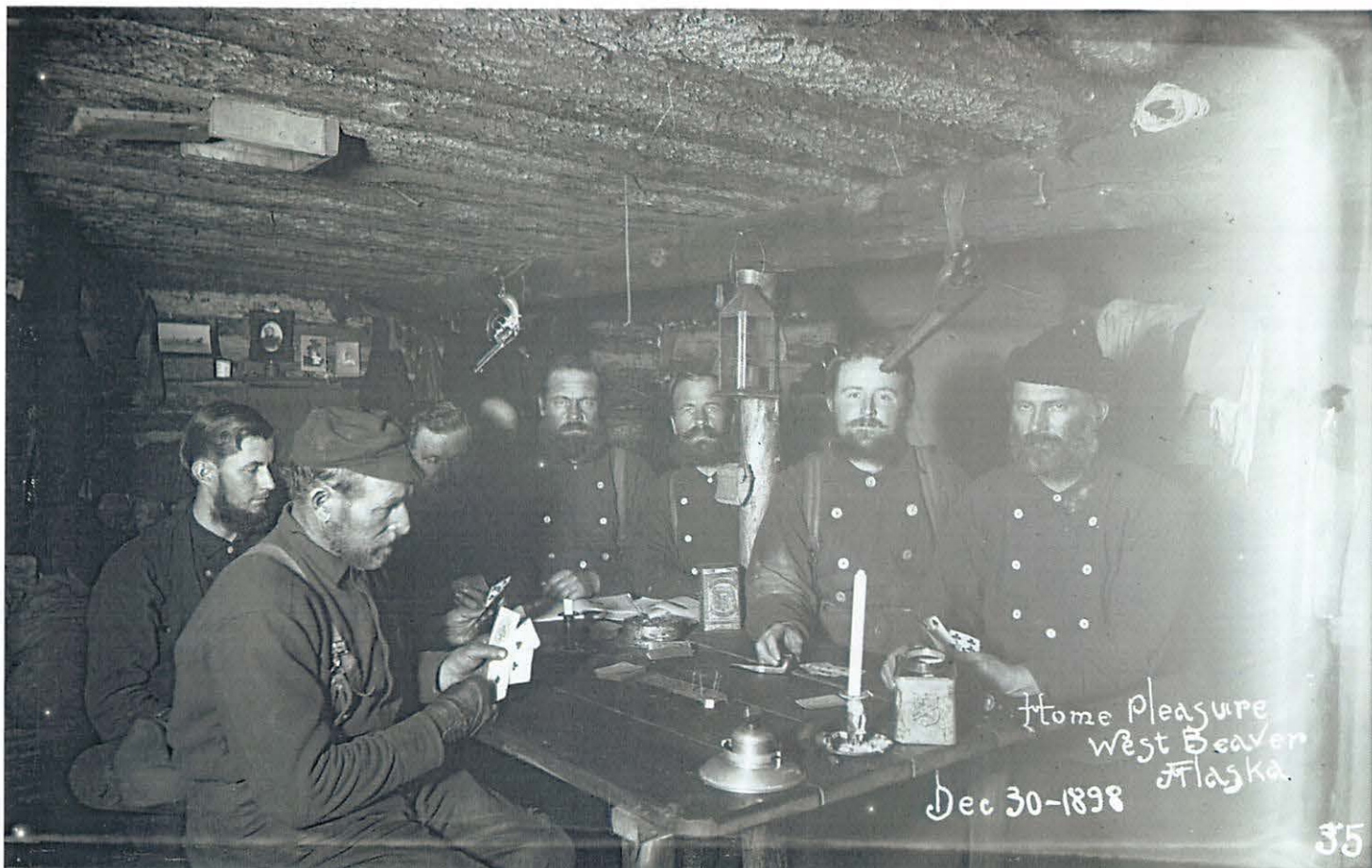




Koyukuk Gold Rush Documented in New Book



Anchorage Museum (B1989.24.114)

"Home Pleasure" — After building small cabins just before winter set in, the members of various mining syndicates passed their time playing cards when they were not outside cutting wood or launching prospecting expeditions. The photography by the gold-seeker and professional photographer Jasper Wyman shows members of his own group from Illinois, the Galesburg-Alaska Mining Company, in a cabin on the Alatna River, December 30, 1898.

Little Known Stampede

Residents of Interior Alaska (and employees of Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve) know that there is gold up north along the tributaries that flow out of the central Brooks Range and into the Koyukuk River, but few know the story of the rush for Koyukuk gold that started in 1898. At the same time that the Klondike was attracting hordes of gold-seekers, about two thousand people decided that the Koyukuk was a better bet, and the result was one of the most dramatic and little known stampedes in Alaska's history.

Book Project

In 2014 YUGA historian Chris Allan began a book project to document the arrival of nearly sixty steamboats on the Koyukuk and the creation of supply depots and tiny boomtowns with names like Bergman, Peavy, Soo

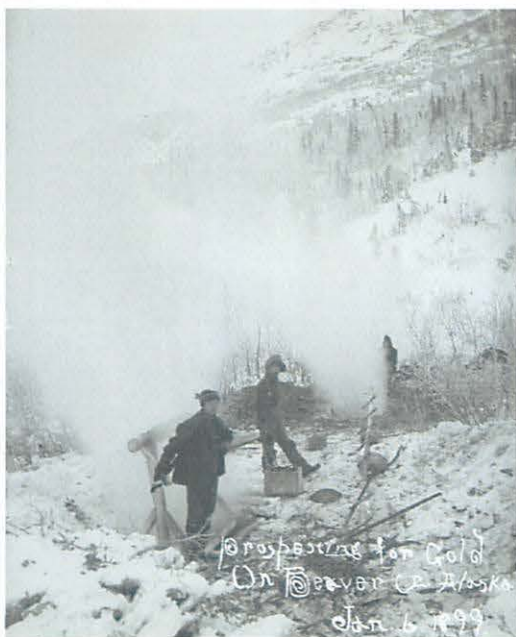
City, Jimtown, and Beaver City. As prospectors explored the Alatna, John and the North, Middle, and South Forks of the Koyukuk, they encountered serious obstacles like plunging temperatures, permanently frozen



ground, and the nutritional deficiency they called black leg fever. Black leg was scurvy and it weakened and killed as much as thirty percent of the men in the gold camps. The ones who gave up early and fled the region before winter set in were said to have "cold feet," and the mining camp of Coldfoot was born at the mouth of Slate Creek. This book

project will also reveal the origins of Bettles and Wiseman and, using a combination of historical photographs, journals, personal letters, and newspaper articles it will tell the full story of one of Alaska's Far North stampedes.

Winter Adventures



In the central Brooks Range the photographer Jasper Wyman and his partners dig a shaft through frozen ground using technique called "drift mining," January 8, 1899. To melt the earth they built wood-fires in the hole each day and then excavated the gravel and mud using a windlass and bucket. The work was difficult and dangerous, particularly when the temperature was far below zero. Courtesy of Anchorage Museum, Jasper N. Wyman Collections (B1989.24.123).



Members of the "Beaver Party" (from Beaver, Pennsylvania) on the hunt for caribou in the upper Koyukuk River region, 1898. The original caption to this photograph said the men were "temperate, hard workers, and faithful to the end of any kind of trip." Courtesy of Alaska State Library, Claude Hobart Collection (P425-6-3).

For more information on the Koyukuk gold rush and the book project, contact Chris Allan at (907) 455-0636 or email him at Chris_Allan@nps.gov.

Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve

