

Skagway . . . some steps on the Gold Rush Trail

Walking Tour of the Historic District



Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park

With cries of "Gold! Gold in the Klondike!" there unfolded in the Yukon and Alaska an incredible historic adventure, whose theme of human endeavor in the face of adversity captured the imaginations of people the world over. This fascinating story of the Klondike gold rush of 1897-98 can still be traced from Seattle, to Skagway, through Dawson, and beyond to the beaches of Nome.

Skagway was a major gateway to the Klondike and today maintains a remarkable number of historic structures from the fabulous gold rush days. Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park commemorates this colorful era.

Through this guide we encourage you to take a trip back through time. Your ½ mile tour will give you a glimpse of Skagway's past. The guide text and map are keyed to nameplates on selected buildings within the Skagway Historic District. As you walk through town you will see many other buildings significant in Skagway's history and current preservation effort.

Cautions

Your walk will lead to active preservation projects. Be alert for hazards. Loose boards, ladders, and braces should be avoided. We encourage you to look around and into buildings, but for your safety, do not get too close to buildings under construction.

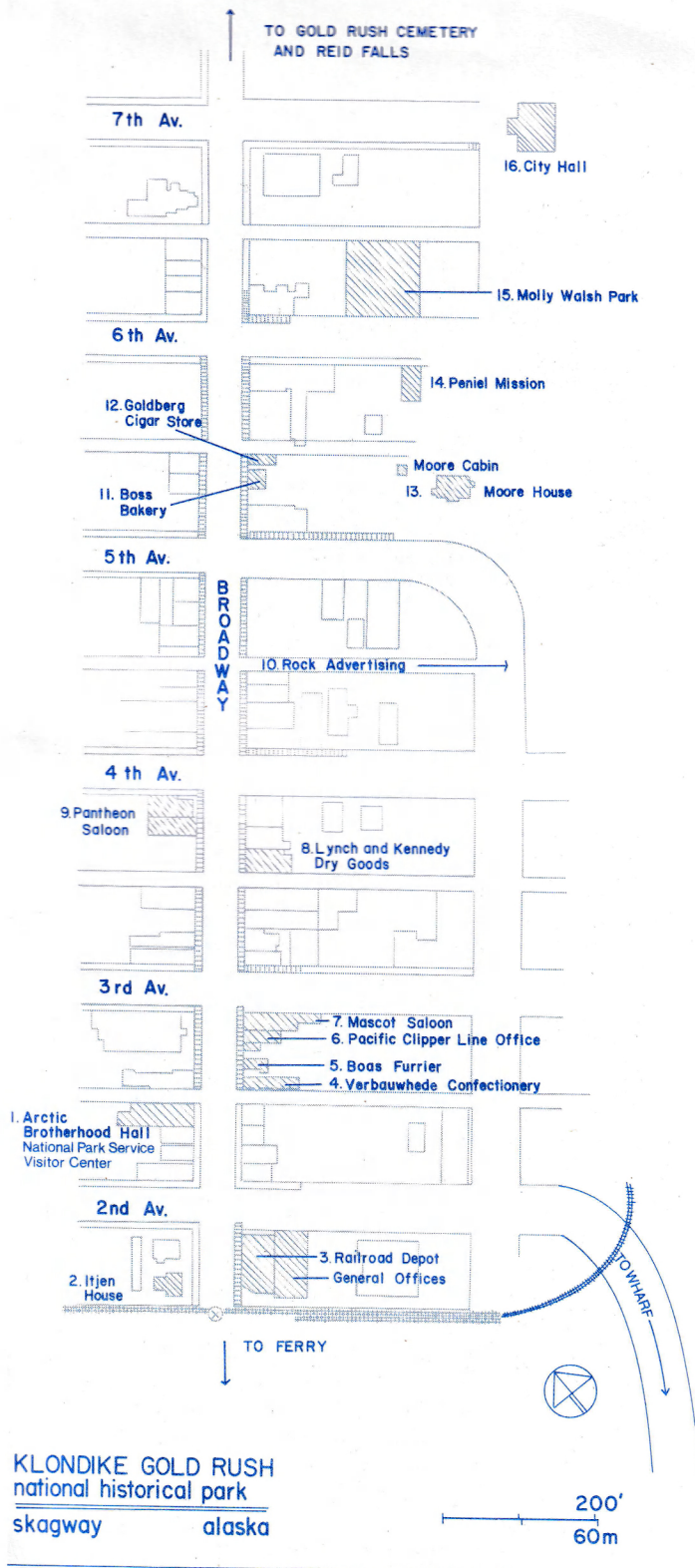
Remember, many of Skagway's buildings are privately owned. Respect the rights of their owners.

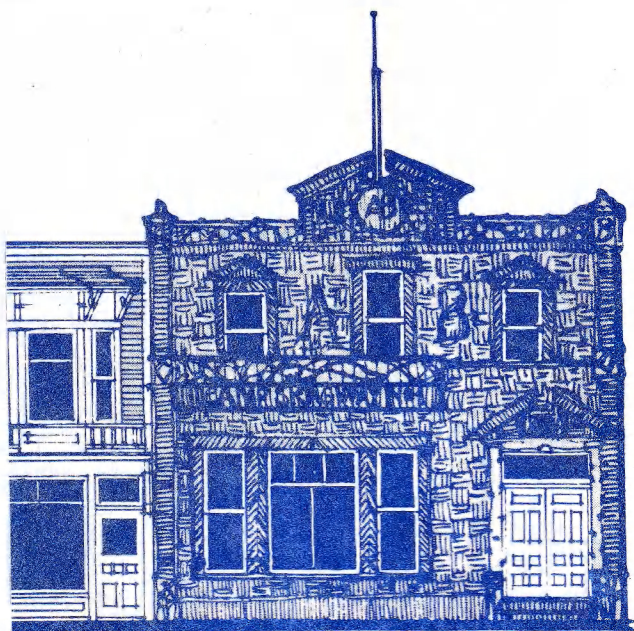
The Restoration Process

It may be easier to make history than to preserve it. The past is, at best, a riddle which must be carefully examined before it can be solved. Old maps, floor plans, photographs, diaries, artifacts, and buildings all provide clues. But even they continue to vanish under the effects of time, rot, fire, and neglect.

In Skagway, the past is in the process of being preserved. Within the Skagway Historic District, private, state, city, and National Park Service interests have joined together to retain the setting of Skagway's past. Both public and private funds assist the initial task of restoration. The restored town and its buildings will recreate many historic scenes of the gold-rush era. What you see today is the process of stabilization, to be followed by final restoration work. Buildings must be jacked up and leveled, rotting foundations replaced, roofs waterproofed, and siding and facades repaired.

The old railroad depot will become a visitor center when restoration is complete. Other spaces and buildings will be used for interpretive displays and community functions, or returned to private business.





1. Arctic Brotherhood Hall

This was the headquarters and first hall of the Fraternal Order of the Arctic Brotherhood. Typical of such orders in gold rush towns, the Arctic Brotherhood served social and benevolent functions for members removed from family and home. It was formed during the Klondike gold rush by "eleven men as true of heart and as hardy of brawn as ever came together for fun, fight, or footrace." Its secret chapters were called camps and the emblem was a gold pan full of nuggets, with the letters AB within it. The Arctic Brotherhood expanded during the gold-rush era and at its peak numbered 30 lodges or camps in the mining towns of Alaska, Yukon Territory, and British Columbia.

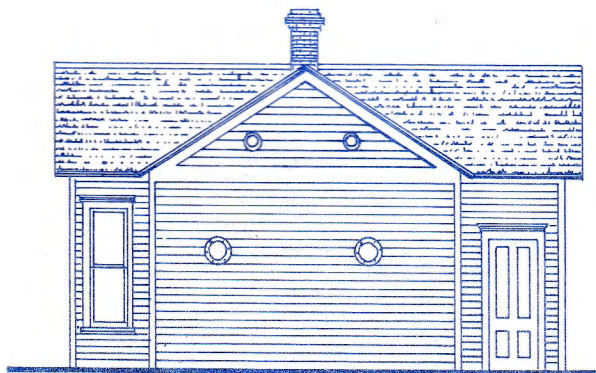
Started in 1899, the hall was completed in 1900 with a facade of over 20,000 pieces of driftwood collected from nearby tide-flats. To enhance this rustic Victorian architecture, an illuminated sign was installed in 1907. It contains the order's motto, "no boundary line here." The driftwood facade and the sign have survived unchanged since completion. The interior still appears much as it was except that original stick and driftwood furniture is now on display at the Skagway city museum.

In 1923 President Warren Harding became the last initiated member of Camp Skagway Number 1, Arctic Brotherhood.

Acquired later by the City of Skagway, the building now functions as a visitor center and public hall.

2. Martin Itjen House

This was the home of Skagway's premier tour operator, Martin Itjen. His house originally stood on piers beside the wharf. From that strategic location, Martin and his wife Lucy greeted passing tourists, sold them fruits, candies, and magazines, and booked rides on the famous Skagway "street car." Martin's street cars were fancifully remodeled Ford buses. The most picturesque car carried a bear cub on the front, the bear growling and pointing to the right or left as the car turned. A small manikan on the front was operated by a foot pedal. He nodded his head, waved a flag, rang a bell, and puffed exhaust smoke through a cigarette. The buses toured the streets of Skagway and visited the Gold Rush Cemetery and other Skagway attractions. Martin's tour was quite a show: he recited poetry, told stories, and related humorous anecdotes of Skagway during the gold rush.



Itjen came to Skagway during the Klondike gold rush. He divided his time between working for the White Pass & Yukon railroad and dashing off to mineral strikes. Failing in his mining ventures, he finally returned to Skagway to settle. He and his wife then operated a small hotel, express service, and coal delivery. Before long they became attuned to the summer tourist trade. To this day, no one has excelled Martin's tour of Skagway on the "Alaska Street Car."

3. Railroad Depot & General Office Building

This building more than any other symbolizes Skagway's will to live, to outlast boomtown impermanence and become a city.

Originally two separate buildings, the depot on the right opened in 1898 and the office building to the left was completed in 1900. As the railroad grew the two buildings were joined, creating additional office space and more room for baggage and freight.

The railroad depot was hurriedly constructed during the frantic 1898 gold-rush boom. Reflecting the shortage of materials, its builders used a patchwork of old packing crates and other second-hand lumber. From second-floor bay windows the dispatcher could see the tracks that once wrapped around the cut-away southwest corner and headed north on Broadway. The depot's long eaves, since clipped back, sheltered passengers from the rain. Wall paper and painted trim adorned the interior.

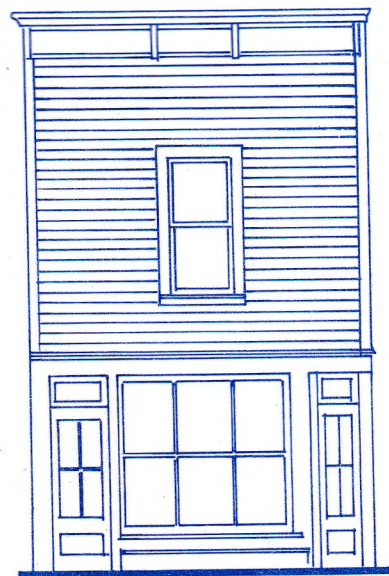
Unlike the depot, the later office building was carefully planned and has walls and ceilings of plaster on lath. Quality woodwork, stained and varnished, provided a handsome interior. The entire building was erected around a two story fireproof vault made of brick and steel over a stone foundation. Offices and baggage room completed the plan. There was no panic to build this structure — the railroad was here to stay.



When the railroad reached across White Pass to Bennett in July 1899, it dealt the final blow to Skagway's neighboring town, Dyea, gateway to the Chilkoot Trail. By the time the railroad was completed in 1900, the main gold rush traffic was over, but Skagway's future was assured. The White Pass & Yukon Route continued to carry travelers and materials to and from further mineral strikes in the Yukon and Alaska. It served the same function during the building of the Alcan highway during World War II, and even today remains a major transportation link from tidewater to Canada's interior.

4. Frederick Verbauwheide Confectionary

Built after the main rush, in late 1899, this store took full advantage of its corner location near the depot. Here travelers could easily purchase the candies, fruits, nuts, cigars, and pastries they desired then rush onto the train. The location's popularity with tourists is reflected in a variety of later enterprises: curios, antiques, taxi, gun shop, gas station, and liquor store. The upstairs was furnished and rented to transient lodgers. When the various owners required additional space for this narrow



store, they responded by adding sheds and shacks purchased elsewhere. Look down the alley and count the times! This process of recycling, which extended to packing crate paneling and newsprint for wallpaper, was essential in Skagway's remote location.

5. Boas Tailor & Furrier Shop

This shop fits the stereo type appearance of a western boom-town false fronted building. Its use fits the same image — a small shop downstairs and the shopkeeper's residence upstairs. During the first decade after its construction the building was owned by four different merchants: a tailor & furrier, a restaurateur, a furniture maker, and a jeweler.

When in September 1899 the once booming Dyea faded into obscurity, Henry Boas packed up and shifted his business to Skagway. He operated a tailor



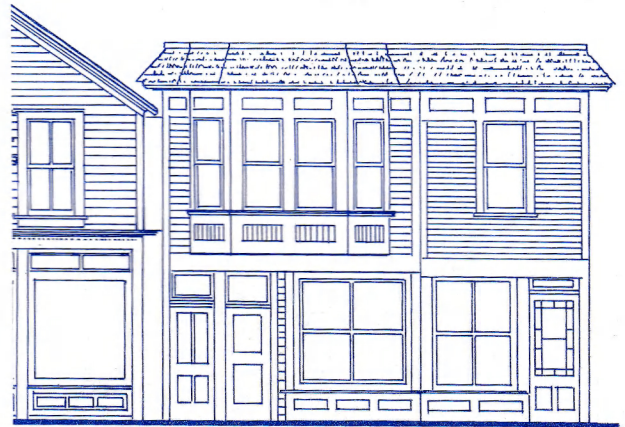
shop in this building and probably a laundry service as well. Later he formed a partnership and sold furs, too.

As Skagway travelers changed from stampeder to summer tourists, a curio shop replaced the furrier. And finally, when business waned in the late 1920's, the building was moved one block down Broadway to its present site nearer the depot.

6. Pacific Clipper Line Office

Named after the graceful sailing ships that carried Forty-niners to San Francisco, this building and several of its neighbors became the "steamboat row" of lower Broadway. Here, the gold rush compressed space much as it compressed time in the summer of '98. Within this one building you could purchase lumber or coal, buy a ticket to Seattle, book freight on to Dyea and the Chilkoot Tramways, or hire packers over the White Pass. You could also buy tickets for paddle wheelers on the Yukon River to Dawson and the gold fields.

Shipping prospered during the gold rush. Between August 1897 and January 1898, 20,000 prospectors came by boat to Skagway. Prices for tickets skyrocketed and ships with accommodations for 100 passengers carried five times that number. As passenger business waned after the main rush, the Pacific Clipper Line secured the contract to haul freight for the building of the railroad. Some 15,000 tons of material were shipped from Seattle for that purpose. In 1900 business slowed again. Books were sold in the ticket office, and by 1902 most of the tickets sold were outbound for Seward or Valdez. Although business continued to slow in Skagway, the Pacific Clipper Line was destined to become the Admiral Line, which later dominated Pacific Coast passenger shipping. This building was later sold and became a part of the Mascot Saloon.



7. Mascot Saloon

Although the District of Alaska was officially dry during the "Gay 90's," some 80 saloons and breweries sprang up in Skagway to quench the stampeder's thirst.

Besides supplying alcohol, the flourishing saloons served as gathering places for the miners. Here they could play pool, gamble, listen to music, and get direct reports via telegraph on sporting events in the states.

The Mascot Saloon is the only simple gable roofed business structure left on Broadway. No false front was needed here. Word of mouth, free lunches, and a prime location brought in plenty of business. Although the saloon could not survive prohibition, it conveniently adapted to the changing times by becoming a drugstore in 1916.

8. Lynch & Kennedy Dry Goods

In an attempt to centralize the downtown area and capitalize on new gold strikes in 1908, several businesses and buildings like this one moved to their present locations along Broadway. A fine example of false-front architecture, Lynch & Kennedy reflected confidence and hoped-for stability in Skagway.

Originally constructed as a two-story army barracks, it housed the all black Company L, 24th Infantry. The barracks was a part of Camp Skagway, established after Camp Dyea burned to the ground in July 1899. Brought here to protect American territory during the gold rush, the troops departed in 1904 for the newly completed Fort William Seward at Haines.

The barracks was moved to its present location from 6th Avenue and a facade was constructed to match the adjoining structure. Inside, an open store



area was built with a flowing stairway leading upstairs. Partners Lynch & Kennedy were the first owners of the new store and sold men's attire and dry goods. Although several businesses opened here later, the building remained vacant for most of the last 30 years.

You are invited to walk to the back of this building down 4th Street, where you can see the architectural style of the old army barracks.

9. Pantheon Saloon

This building, constructed in increments over a period of 80 years, began simply as a hotel.

In August 1897 more than 6,000 stampeder arrived in Skagway — a warm, dry place to sleep foremost in their minds. Some solved the problem by sleeping under the saloon tables they patronized. Clerks slept in their shops. Others discovered the board and batten hotels that went up overnight to



meet the lodging need. These "hotels" contained tiers of bunks or cots that lined the walls and filled the rooms. Meals were served en masse.

The hotel was considerably remodeled in 1898 to serve as a hardware store. The new owner transformed the shack-like building into a sturdy structure and added the false front facing Broadway. He supplied many a stamper with the merchandise needed to get to the Klondike.

In 1903 the Pantheon Saloon opened here. Further modifications had increased the size of the building, and the interior was furnished as a first-class saloon. Attractions inside included slot machines, a mineral display, and a stereoptican machine for viewing pictures.

When the saloon closed because of prohibition, the building continued to undergo structural changes. Successive owners used the structure as museum, liquor store, restaurant, bakery, and curio shop. All of these merchants added to the unique structure you see today.

10. Rock Advertising

The clock and other paintings visible on the cliff east of here advertised Skagway's merchants. Time was of the essence, so gold-rush shopkeepers tried everything to attract business while it lasted. Elaborate signs, banners over the street, sandwich boards blocking the walkways, whole buildings turned billboard, and six newspapers all helped spread the word. Advertising technology may have changed since then, but the message remains the same.

11. Boss Bakery

This building was constructed in the fall of 1897 by the son of George Brackett, builder of the Brackett toll road to White Pass City. James Brackett operated a small trading post here until his expanding business forced a move to a larger structure.

Early in 1898 baker Stephen Baur bought Brackett's store and moved there from a canvas-covered



building across the street. Baur, "the Boss Baker," opened a restaurant specializing in fresh pastries and breads. He made minor repairs to the building and extended the false front. The bakery remained a successful enterprise through the gold rush and was later sold to another baker. The new owner initiated a complete remodeling. He extended the building, added a double-door entryway, larger display windows, and a false facade on the side that served as a billboard.

This building also served as a grocery store, a restaurant, a military mess hall during World War II, and a museum. It was last used as a curio shop before the move to its present location. Although it has seen many owners, the Boss Bakery still looks much as it did during the gold rush.



12. Goldberg Cigar Store & Confectionary

This little structure typifies gold-rush era businesses. There was nothing pretentious about Goldberg's Cigar Store — just four walls, a shop, and a residence in the back. Stores like this one were quickly assembled of wood and lined the streets at the start of the gold rush. Goldberg sold his cigars, candy, and tobacco from this shop and, like many other merchants, after making his money, followed the stampede elsewhere.

Unlike many structures in Skagway, this building never reopened as a store. It remained vacant or was used for storage until it was moved to this location in 1979.

13. The Cabin of Captain William Moore and the Home of J. Bernard "Ben" Moore

The log-cabin home of Captain William Moore was the first structure in Skagway. Constructed by Captain Moore, his son, Ben, and a Tlingit Indian, Nan-Suk, the cabin was essentially completed by November 1888. During the next 8 years, Captain Moore and his son rarely visited their cabin but instead worked in the canneries, sawmills, and mines of Southeast Alaska.

Captain Moore was a veteran of gold rushes. He had headed north on the heels of the Fortymile gold stampede after participating in gold rushes in California, Fraser River, and the Cassiar. This time he preceded the big rush. He claimed a homestead, built a cabin, and constructed a wharf to meet the ships that he hoped would bring the miners. His guess was right, and it would pay off. By the spring of 1897 Captain Moore and his family had moved into the cabin to await the impending rush. Captain Moore's Alaska and Northwest Trading Company provided a focal point for early Skagway business.

While the Klondike stampeders arrived, Ben Moore constructed a frame house just south of his father's cabin. This small beginning became the nucleus of the present Ben Moore house. Over the years, continued additions and remodeling created a sizeable home.

By 1906 Ben Moore and his family had moved away. The house was rented by a jeweler, Herman Kirmse, and later purchased by his wife Hazel. Continued remodeling changed the interior but the building still retains the basic configuration of the Moore house as it was in 1901.

14. Peniel Mission

The Peniel Mission, built in 1900, offered religious and humanitarian services to the stampeders. Between 1900 and 1910 the mission kept its doors open. Just a block from the heart of Skagway's saloons, gambling halls, and the red light district, the mission offered nightly meetings, Sunday services, shelter, and warmth. The mission also sponsored revival meetings and brought in foreign missionaries to lecture.

As Skagway declined, support for the mission dwindled. By 1911 the building fell into disuse. It was finally reoccupied in 1937 when it was remodeled as a doctor's office and residence. In 1947 it changed ownership again. Since then the interior has been altered to meet the needs of its several residents.

Today it serves as a National Park Service residence. Please do not disturb the occupants.

15. Molly Walsh Park

This is the only city-owned park in Skagway. Molly Walsh arrived early in the gold rush from the dance halls of Butte, Montana. During the winter of 1897 she helped establish the community's first church and then in March 1898 she departed for Log Cabin on the White Pass Trail. There she set up a grub-tent to feed fundless prospectors on their way to the gold fields.

Molly had many admirers among the trail packers. One of her most ardent suitors was headpacker, Jack Newman. She and Newman later parted over another packer, but he never forgot her. Molly married the other packer and eventually moved to Seattle. Jack Newman erected the statue in this park in her memory after she was murdered by her husband. Newman also erected a plaque in Seattle honoring his own wife.

Many women and men left their marks on Skagway and the Trail of '98; few were admired as much as Molly Walsh.

16. City Hall

Today's city hall was originally built in 1899 as McCabe Methodist College. Constructed as Alaska's first institution of higher education, it was also Skagway's first granite building. The school operated for only two terms. The structure was then sold to the federal government for use as a courthouse. District court convened here until the 1950's. The building presently houses the City of Skagway offices and the Days of '98 Museum during the summer months. You are invited to step inside and visit the museum.

You have now completed the Historic District Tour. We hope you enjoyed it and have a better understanding of Skagway's past. From here you may wish to go on to the Gold Rush Cemetery and Reid Falls or return back to town. The cemetery and Reid Falls are approximately 1½ miles from here. Follow the signs around the railroad shops at the end of State Street, using care in crossing the railroad tracks.

There's gold, and it's haunting and haunting;
It's luring me on as of old;
Yet it isn't the gold that I'm wanting
So much as just finding the gold.
It's the great, big, broad land 'way up yonder,
It's the forests where silence has lease;
It's the beauty that thrills me with wonder,
It's the stillness that fills me with peace.

from "The Spell of the Yukon"
by Robert Service



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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

