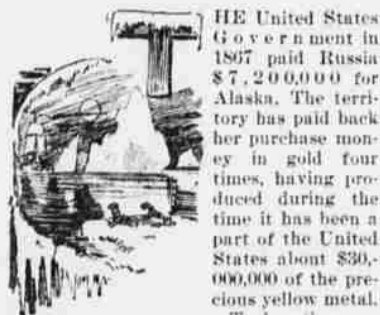


The KLONDYKE GOLD FIELDS IN ALASKA



THE United States Government in 1867 paid Russia \$7,200,000 for Alaska. The territory has paid back her purchase money in gold four times, having produced during the time it has been a part of the United States about \$30,000,000 of the precious yellow metal.

Today the eyes of the world are turned toward our frozen acquisition in the north, for within its borders has been discovered an Eldorado. The word Klondike, literally translated meaning Deer River, is on every tongue and is known as the designation for a gold-bearing district greater in area and richer in character than any the world has ever known, with the possible exception of California. Klondike is the new open sesame to Aladdin's cave; it supplants "Pike's Peak or bust" in the gold-seeker's vernacular. "The days of '97" may become as celebrated a phrase as "the days of '49," for the same fever that seized upon the people and dotted the Western prairies with emigrant trains bound for the Pacific coast



INDIAN RIVER.

is claiming victims by the thousands, all eager to brave the perils of the arctic circle and wrest a fortune from the frozen zone.

The reported gold discoveries of the present day in Alaska and the reported gold discoveries of '49 in California afford many parallels. To the average man the treasures of the coast State were seemingly as inaccessible as are the riches of the Yukon and its tributaries. One was more than 2,000 miles across a trackless desert and over snow-bound mountain passes, beset by savages, whose deadly attacks marked the trail with bleaching bones across the Western States; the other is nearly 7,000 miles by water,



STONE HOUSE AT THE FOOT OF CHILKOOT PASS.

through a rigorous climate, or almost 4,000 miles by land and water, with mountain passes to scale as dangerous as those of the Swiss Alps.

The fabulous tales of wealth sent out by the California pioneers were no less wonderful than those brought back by the men who braved the last cold season in the Klondike mineral belt, and in both cases those who returned brought back with them great nuggets of the precious stuff that left little or no doubt in the mind of the hearer. The California miner in the song who had so many nuggets that he was accustomed to "go a batful blind" finds his parallel in the Yukon miner who claims to have "washed out" \$212 in one panful of dirt—a process that requires ten or twelve minutes.

The Alaska and California gold fields are alike also in being placer mines. Placer mining is commonly called "poor man's mining," for the reason that it is done without machinery, while the implements required in the work are few and of small cost. A placer miner can get along very well with a pick, shovel and gold pan. If the dirt is not rich he can accomplish

better results by running it through a sluice box, but where the yield is in nuggets instead of fine gold he prefers to "pan" it.

The great Klondike strike was made last year, but nothing was known of it in the United States until June 15 of the present year, when a vessel called the Excelsior arrived in San Francisco laden with miners from the Klondike, who in turn were laden with gold. They told almost incredible tales of the richness of the newly discovered district, where fortunes had been accumulated in a few months. Experienced miners and "tenderfeet" seemed to have shared good fortune alike, and with some justice, too, for the credit of the discovery of the new gold fields is due to the inexperienced men. Another vessel brought to Seattle a second party of successful prospectors and a ton and a half of gold. These men had endured peril and undergone great hardships in accumulating the fortunes they brought, and they told a story that had a dark as well as a bright side. To follow their example means a risk of wealth, health and even life, but for those who are willing to take the chances the prospect they hold out is alluring.

The Klondike District.

The richest of the mines in the Alaska region seem to be in the Klondike, a few miles over the British border. They were discovered, as has been said, by a party of "tenderfeet," who, against the advice of the old timers in the district, wandered "over yonder in the Klondike" and struck it rich. From Klondike comes much of the gold and from Klondike seems to come all the excitement. A few "tenderfeet," going it blind, have stirred up the nation. Out of the region of their discovery has come, it is estimated, \$2,000,000 worth of gold during the present summer. Nearly all of that gold has found its way into the United States.

It is hard to tell where the Alaska gold fields are located except that in a general way the best of them are along the Yukon. There are a few "lode" mines near Juneau and along the southeast coast of the territory (the most accessible part of it), but the one is of low grade and mining is made profitable only by the most careful management.

The placer mines, from which prospectors are said to be lining their pockets with gold, occupy the prominent place in the popular mind. These are in the region remote from civilization, little known, and, on account of its uncertainties, dangerously alluring to the average man. This gold-producing country of the interior is in the vicinity of the Yukon near where that great river turns to the west in its course to the sea. Before the discoveries in the Klondike the most productive districts had been along Forty Mile Creek, partly in British and partly in American territory, and the Birch Creek district, all in American territory. Along all of the rivers in this region, tributaries to the Yukon, gold diggings exist and in many places pay the prospector well for his trouble.

Cook's Inlet is another place where the rumors of gold caused crowds of unpre-

pared men to flock, but the district has not exactly borne out the reputation given to it by early prospectors.

In all the immense country over which the placer mining extends it is estimated that up to last year there were 2,000 miners. The districts in which most of them worked were in a broad belt of gold producing rock, through which quartz veins carrying gold occur frequently. Through the gold-bearing rocks the streams have cut deep gullies and canyons, and in their beds the gold which was contained in the rock is concentrated. The mining of this country consists, therefore, in washing out the gravel of these beds.

To Reach the Gold Fields.

The best way to reach the Klondike district? One goes from Seattle by ocean steamer west and a little north, and passes through Dutch Harbor, at the extreme end of the Southwest Alaskan peninsula. From there the steamer turns north and continues on to St. Michael's Island, a little above the mouth of the Yukon, in Behring Sea. At that point passengers are transferred to the river steamers to begin the long journey up the

Yukon, which winds northward and eastward, and finally brings the traveler to Dawson City, now the principal town in the district, although sixty-five miles from the Klondike fields.

The cost of the trip from Chicago this way, as prospecting miners usually travel, is \$251.50. It is divided as follows: From Chicago to Seattle (second class), \$51.50; from Seattle to Dawson City, \$200. In time the trip costs thirty days—four from Chicago to Seattle, sixteen from Seattle to St. Michael's Island, and ten up the Yukon to Dawson City by the fast boat. The distance in general figures is 2,250 miles from Chicago to Seattle, 2,500 miles to St. Michael's Island and 1,800 miles up the Yukon to Dawson, a total of about 6,000 miles.

Alaska and Its Resources.

In the purchase of Alaska, the United States acquired a territory more than half a million square miles in extent, a part of it within the arctic circle and in the region of everlasting ice and snow, where, during part of the summer, there is continuous day and during the winter continuous, dreary night. The Alaskan coast line is greater than our Atlantic seaboard, but the entire population of whites, Eskimos and fierce Indians who are called the Apaches of the North, is not much more than that of a ward division in Chicago.

In acquiring the Alaskan territory, though the United States moved its center, figured in geographical mines, not in area or population, as far west as San Francisco. The country now extends from about the 65th degree of longitude up at the far east corner of Maine to the 123d degree up at the far northwest tip of the Alaskan mainland. This is taking no account of the little island of Attu, 1,000 miles out in the Pacific, beyond the Hawaiian group, which, since the purchase of Alaska, has really been our western land limit. The United States, therefore, may almost say with England that the sun never sets on its possessions.

Character of the Population.

The census enumeration of 1890, gave the population of the territory as 30,329, of whom 4,416 were whites, 82 blacks, 1,568 half-breed Indians and Eskimos, 13,735 natives not Eskimos (Indians), 2,125 Chinese and 8,400 Eskimos. The number of whites has probably been more than doubled since then, however, as the Alaskan gold fever set in in mild form three or four years ago. One would hardly think of going to Alaska for the social advantages of the place.

Neither could it be said that a reasonably constructed individual would go there for the climate. In winter the thermometer falls so low in places that no one will recognize it; that it goes down to 70 degrees and lower. During all this kind of winter up in the Yukon region little can be done but sit under a fire in a vain endeavor to keep warm, for darkness exists most of the time, and the life seems like that of a man uncomfortably seated at the bottom of a well.

FACTS ABOUT ALASKA.

- PURCHASED IN 1867 from Russia for \$7,200,000; purchase negotiated by William H. Seward.
- Area in square miles, 531,400.
- Population (census of 1890), 30,329, of whom but 4,416 were whites, 8,400 Eskimos and 13,735 Indians.
- Estimated present population, 40,000.
- Principal cities, Sitka (the capital), Juneau, Wrangell, Circle City.
- Principal rivers, the Yukon (more than 2,000 miles long), the Kuskokwim, the Colville and the Copper.
- Principal mountains, Mount Logan, altitude 19,500 feet; Mount St. Elias, 18,100; Mount Wrangell, 17,500 feet.
- Governor of the territory, James D. Brady; residence at Sitka.
- Principal products besides gold, furs, fish and lumber.
- Principal occupations of the people, hunting and fishing.
- Gold first discovered in 1879.
- Estimated product of gold to date, \$30,000,000.
- Product of gold in 1890, \$4,670,000.
- Klondike in English is Deer River. The river is so designated on the maps.
- Klondike gold fields partly in American and partly in British territory, and the product is disposed of in the United States.
- Scene of the present excitement is along the Upper Yukon and its tributaries.
- Distance from Chicago to the Klondike gold fields, via the Yukon, is about 6,500 miles; via Chilkoot Pass, about 4,000 miles.
- Time to make the trip by either route, thirty days.
- Cost of the trip, about \$300.
- Travel possible only in June, July and August.
- Climate in winter severe in the extreme; winter beginning in September.
- During June and July continuous daylight; during December and January continuous night.

During the summer season the days sometimes even a little bit hot, but for long. In that time, too, there is most continual day, for that end of earth (if it may be so called) is the that is pointed directly at the sun.

But as the summer brings warmth daylight it also brings mosquitoes, such mosquitoes! Creatures that bite and bite in such a way as to make a dreaded Jersey variety seem by comparison like the silvery, angelic, sweetly humming fancies of a peaceful dream. Travelers who return from the Yukon tell stories of how brave and hardy men, courageous enough to undertake a journey to that country, actually break down and sob in utter desperation and despair under the torment of these terrible pests. The ice and "magnificent distances" of the country, not the only drawbacks to its exploration or to journeying to the gold fields, mosquitoes must ever be remembered.

Of course, in the southern part of Alaska, where Juneau and Sitka are situated, the winters are not so rigorous. The weather is comparatively mild, and summer is said to be delightful. Juneau and Sitka are infinitesimal as compared with the whole country, and are not an index to what is furnished to their up and farther inland.

Industries of Alaska.

When travelers were asked as late as two or three years ago what were the principal pursuits in Alaska they replied, of course, that fishing and hunting furnished occupation for the greater part of the population. What else was to be expected from a population made up in the main of Eskimos and Indians? In the Sitka district there are magnificent forests and lumbering is an industry, but the barren, icy north the occupation of the Indian was to shoot and trap the bear, the fox, the otter and the other animals whose fur would bring a price on the markets of the world, to catch the seals and spear the whale and catch the other fish or game that could be turned into money. Salmon canning is the great industry of the Kadiak district, and has been for years.

Of late, however, the other industries of Alaska have sunk almost out of sight because of the new gold flurry. Mining, of course, is the industry of the white man. Virgin gold might have lain in plain sight in the rocks to a limitless extent and in all probability the Indians and the Eskimos would never have touched it. Furs

and furs are the standard of value with them. Gold fills no Eskimo stomachs and keeps no Eskimo body warm. But with the white man it was different. He came, he saw, he dug, and in the digging he found richness. Glittering gold greeted his eyes, and the fever of gold is upon us.

Working Placer Mines.

The Klondike mines are placers—the most easily worked mines of any, and requiring the least expenditure. The methods of washing out placer gold are known as "sluicing" and "panning." The former is employed where the yield is of ordinary value, while all old-timers prefer the latter in rich ground.

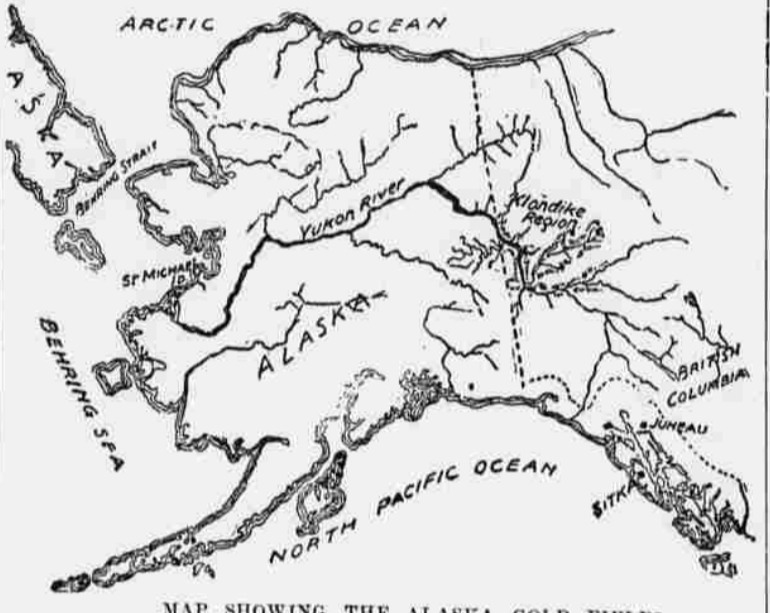
In sluicing the dirt is shoveled into the sluice box, through which water is rapidly running. The box is of varying length, and has holes bored in the bottom. These holes are filled with quicksilver; the dirt, gravel and small boulders are washed over the quicksilver, but the gold adheres to it. When a miner "cleans up," sometimes every night, sometimes once a week, the water is turned off and the sluice box holes are cleaned out.

In panning, the dirt is put into a gold pan—about the size of a small dishpan. This pan is made of copper. The miner squats beside a stream, dips water into the pan, oscillates it with a motion that can only be acquired by experience, and gradually sloughs out the water, dirt, gravel, etc., retaining the gold in the pan. Gold being the heaviest substance, it is of course the easiest to retain in the pan. If it be in the shape of nuggets, the miner picks them out of the pan with his fingers; if the gold be in small particles, fine gold or "flour" gold, he dries the pan in the sun and carefully brushes the deposit into a piece of buckskin or other material used for carrying the precious metal.

A pick, a shovel, a gold pan, water, and, of course, some gold are the only essentials of placer mining. Machinery is only necessary in placer mining where large areas of ground that yields only moderately are worked, and then only for hydraulic power in washing down the dirt.

Good News for Him.

"You are destined to marry riches," the seeress said, "but—"
"But what?"
"Death will claim you two years before the event."—Town Topics.



MAP SHOWING THE ALASKA GOLD FIELDS.



PROSPECTING IN ALASKA.