

# HERE SNOW AND ICE AND FREEZING WINDS DARE SUMMER TO APPROACH



Muir Glacier, the Greatest Moving Body of Ice in the World

### Washington Boy in the Klondike Writes a Refreshing Letter to His Old Home Just At the Time When He Is Having Trouble To Keep From Being Frost-Bitten and His Friends in the National Capital Are Fleeing to Escape Being Broiled Alive--Mountains and Plains of Ice and a Zero Breeze

DAWSON CITY, Klondike District, B. C., July 3, 1902.

Editor Washington Times:

As I am an old Washington boy and an erstwhile member of the newspaper fraternity, I thought I would write to let you know something about the weather up here in the Klondike, for I suppose by the time this letter reaches you Washingtonians will be chafing at the worst of the summer's heat. I suppose down there in the National Capital the thermometer is hovering closely around the 100 mark, even in the shade, and Washingtonians are loudly lamenting the very credible supposition that they live in the hottest city on the face of the earth.

This presumably being the case, I thought it might possibly be of interest to let you know how the mercury runs up in this far out-of-the-way corner of the globe, and incidentally, a few things about this far-famed but little known territory, and the greatest rush for gold ever recorded in the annals of mankind.

Up here in Dawson, well—we wouldn't mind having just a little of Washington's humidity. That is, it would be very pleasant. What would you say to a snowstorm or a snowball battle on the Fourth of July, or in the month of August? Perhaps down there in "God's land" you cannot picture such a thing. Well, if you can't, all I have to say is for you to come up here and take a little look around the Klondike; maybe you would never breathe a word against a genuine, piping hot summer again. And then, again, maybe you would. It all depends upon the thickness of the clothing you bring up here with you and your susceptibility to cold.

What would you say to a delightful little blizzard, such as the National Capital was treated to in 1899, for an occasional morning, afternoon or evening meal, just as you would have a little midsummer shower down there? The very mention of such a thing to you folks who are probably sweltering may cause a sigh of wishfulness to escape from you. But don't for a moment think it is really as nice as it sounds. When you have to experience it, it is quite a different matter.

How would you like to be employed to dig ground that is frozen more or less solidly all the year around; work in swift-flowing mountain streams where waters are ice cold and chill one to the very marrow of his bones, or camp out night after night in an insignificant little dog tent in mountains whose summits and valleys are perennially hidden by tons upon tons of snow and ice? It hardly seems as pleasant upon second thought, does it? Perhaps, after all, you would prefer to live in nicely furnished homes in a beautiful city—even if you do have to sleep in the Arctic Circle, in the middle of the day, when Old Sol gets in his work and the temperature becomes delightful—if not positively hot sometimes. But this only occurs in some portions of Alaska. Where this moderation in the climate is felt there is a tremendous range in the rise and fall of the mercury. It is always cold at night—bitter cold. But shortly before noon it frequently begins to warm up and grows extremely pleasant for a few hours. I have known the thermometer as far north as Circle City, an enterprising little Alaskan mining town, which, by the way, claims the distinction of being the first town in the world to run suddenly up to nearly 120 degrees; only, however, to fall to arctic depths almost immediately.

On the whole, though, the climate in the interior of Alaska is, in truth, frightfully cold. The Japanese current warms the coast to such an extent that the winters there are seldom or never severe. I am writing this letter to be taken

out by the mail boat by way of Cape Nome. The little craft leaves here this evening, and it will be the last chance to start any mail for the outer world for nearly two weeks. Tomorrow is the Fourth, and the exuberant spirits of Dawson are going to have what they declare will be a "red hot, rip roaring" celebration. Although we are pretty thoroughly cut off from the rest of the globe and its people, we do manage to get things up here once in a while—including a small stock of cheap fireworks. I may say, however, that the principal features on the celebration program for tomorrow are "gun music" and a very general dispensation of "red eye."

Fourth of July only comes once a year, and the miners celebrate accordingly. This is Canadian soil, and consequently under allegiance to the King, but nevertheless its population comprises men from all parts of the globe, the larger part of them being Americans. The Stars and Stripes float on high along with the British flag, and the citizens are always only too happy to have such an excellent excuse for the recurrence of Independence Day for a general celebration. More good ammunition will be fired promiscuously into the air tomorrow than would be required to kill every wild beast on the North American continent, and enough "red eye" will be consumed to drown a regiment of Canadian guards.

But as to the country itself, I have traveled pretty much over the whole globe, and have seen many strange and beautiful lands, but I can safely say that somehow Alaska and the Klondike cannot be equaled. All that is strange

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Meanwhile Dyea, four miles distant, had been founded and was enjoying the same wave of prosperity. Another trail to the interior was opened from here, passing over Chilkoot Pass and joining the Skagway trail at the head of navigable water. Immediately an undying rivalry sprang up between the two towns, and each advertised its trail as being absolutely the safest and best route to the Klondike.

At Skagway the tourist of today may board the train of the White Pass and Yukon Railroad and begin the journey to the Klondike, a trip which, in many respects, has no equal in the world. For nearly the whole of its length the railroad follows the old Skagway trail, owing to the high rates of transportation, however, a great many gold hunters are compelled to pack in as in former days.

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A National Failing.

Kon River to Dawson. For picturesque-ness, the tourist merely intent upon seeing the country finds it hard to choose between the routes, but on the whole the former may be taken as the most interesting, as well as dangerous.

Skagway's importance lies in the fact that it is the starting point of the principal trail to the Klondike region and the interior of Alaska. The town may be said to have "grown in a night," for shortly after July 1, however, the telegraphic wires all over the world were pulsing with the news of the fabulous discoveries of gold in Alaska and the Klondike; when men were seized with the "gold fever" and left comfortable homes and high-salaried positions by the tens of thousands to pursue the phantom of wealth in this unknown land; when the whole civilized world was going mad, only six tents marked the site where now stands a city. Shortly after July 1, however, the steamer Queen, bearing the first of the "Klondikers," arrived. She was immediately followed by scores of other craft; every conceivable sort of boat—ranging from a crowd of men and their families to a large steamer—arrived to the land of gold and deposited its eager crew. By July 15 Skagway had been founded and contained about 400 tents

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Placer Diggings.



ledges. Across the canyon the walls rise less abruptly and are densely wooded. Gradually it grows colder. One by one, we unpack our wraps and slip them on. Narrower and narrower grows the pass. Steeper and steeper becomes the ascent. Slower and slower moves the train, until our progress is at merely a snail's pace. The stops become more frequent. Finally we pass above the timber line, and naught is visible around us save snow and ice. The cold grows greater, until we sit shivering and half frozen—yet ever alert to the grandeur of the scene. Ere long the sun ceases to shine—a dense mist hovers but a short distance over our heads.

But as we look we become aware that the crowning glory of the trip over the pass is soon to appear. The canyon, around the wall of which we have been skirting, is semi-circular, so that while we have been climbing steadily upward, we have also been working around to a point almost directly opposite to the opening where we entered. We are nearing the break and will soon be at the summit of White Pass—among the clouds. Crossing a lofty steel cantilever bridge, we reach the opposite side of the canyon, where we again join the pack trail. Suddenly we approach the black mouth of a tunnel. Just as we are

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The Skagway Trail.

which the track is laid that it seems as though the train were fairly clinging to the wall of rock for a foothold, like a thing of life. Leaning out from the platform, we gaze down into the yawning abyss which falls sheer away from our very feet to a depth of fully 3,000 feet. Far below can be seen the raging torrent coursing over its rocky bed.

Here, slightly below us, on another ledge, is the pack trail. With our eyes we trace its course as it winds downward along the face of the cliff. Farther away, where the wall is less abrupt, the trail is steeper and descends more directly. Then, in the dim distance, it reaches the bottom of the canyon and, winding in and out along the water's edge, passes, cut and in part among the trees in the valley. As far as it is visible, that same endless, straggling procession of gold hunters, toils slowly along, bound for the land of promise. Then we follow the track across the bridge, down and around the side of the canyon, as it grows smaller and smaller until, a faint black line, it, too, passes out into the valley beyond and is lost in the forest. Still striving to follow its course through the foliage, our gaze wanders farther and farther away until it finally rests upon a Lilliputian city nestled in the fair, green valley at the head of a narrow river-like body of water which loses itself in the distance among the majestic snow-crowned mountains.

The town is Skagway, twenty miles distant, and the body of water beyond it Pyramid Harbor. Far away in the valley the sun is bathing the town and its harbor in its cheerful radiance, while all about us rests an awful gloom that enhances the weird grandeur of our surroundings. From the depths of the canyon the roar of the boiling, swirling torrent rises faintly to our ears, like the thundering of the surf upon a distant rock shore. What a scene is this! How warm and beautiful the distant valley bathed in sunshine; how cold and grand the snow-crowned monarchs about us! How peaceful and serene the far away clear blue sky; how ominous the lowering clouds above our heads! How weird the shadows! How indescribably awful the deep, dark canyon, with its seething flood! What labor must man have expended to penetrate this place with a railroad! What tales could these silent walls relate of the tragedies enacted in this gloomy pass when four years ago thousands of poorly-clad, ill-fated men toiled and fought to ascend this pass, goaded onward by the lust for gold!

Finally, however, with a shrill, reverberating blast of the whistle the train again starts forward. Hardly have we resumed our places in the car when we plunge into the tunnel. Upon emerging from the dark hole we enter a snowshed of considerable length. But in a trice, too, is passed, and we find ourselves in the open. To our utter surprise we cannot see thirty feet either side of the track—a dense mist envelops us; we are in the clouds. At last we are at the summit of White Pass. Presently the train comes to an abrupt halt, and we are informed that a lengthy stop is to be made.

Alighting from the car, we glance curiously about us. We are on what appears to be an extensive plateau. A large log shack that serves for a station is before us, and looming dimly through the mist several other shacks and tents are visible. As rapidly as our numbed condition will permit, we hasten inside to thaw out by the huge old stove. What a picture we behold as we enter the room. Clustered about the "hot box" in various attitudes of more or less repose are several scores of men—gold hunters for the most part. They are a picturesque group—unshaven, clad in a motley assortment of garments—mostly stout boots, thick pants, red, blue or gray flannel shirts, short coats, and topped with warm fur caps. Many of them are highly intelligent looking men. Cracker boxes and benches near the fire form the seats, and every square inch of them is crowded. Later comers have to stand or sit on the floor around the walls. With the exception of those who have just arrived on the train, they have all climbed the pass and are on their way to Dawson. A string of packers is constantly arriving and departing.

When we have warmed ourselves sufficiently we go for a walk about the station. To our astonishment, when we open the door we find the mist has vanished and the sun is shining clear and cold. Not far from the station are two tall flag poles, one flying the Stars and Stripes and the other the English flag. This is the dividing line between Alaska and Canada. A short distance away is Summit Lake, a long, narrow body of water which forms the head of a chain of lakes and rivers that are navigable to small boats all the way to the Yukon, and thence to the Pacific Ocean.

So interested are we in the sights about us that we have not observed that the sun is no longer shining, and that the sky is clouded over. Our first inkling of the change is a sudden down-pour of rain. We turn and run to the station, which is quite a distance away. But even before we reach it the shower has ceased and in its place a furious snowstorm is raging. So binding is the sudden storm that we cannot see even

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At the Summit of Chilkoot Pass.

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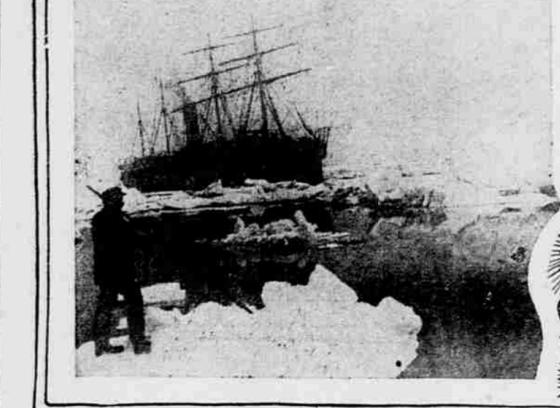
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Caught in the Bering Sea.



Yukon River in Winter. One of the Principal Sledge Trails to Dawson City.

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