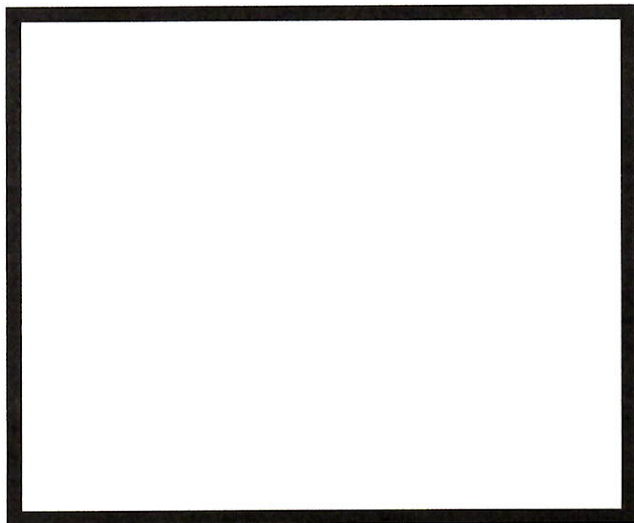
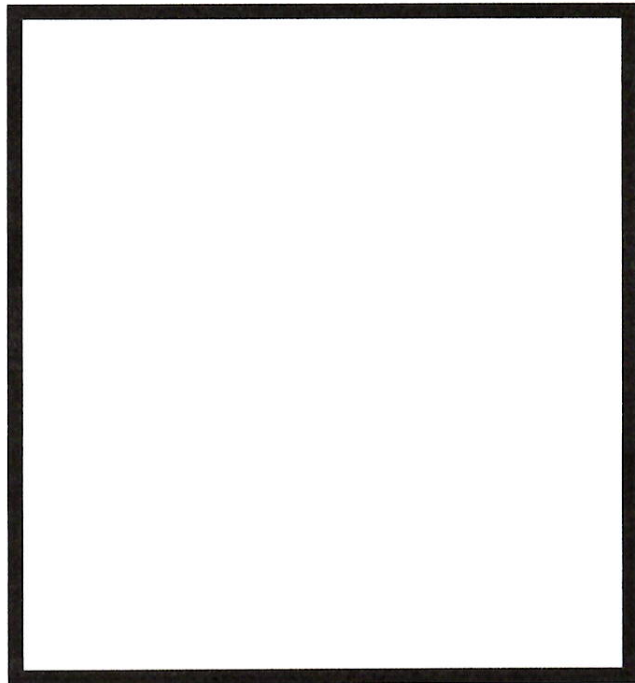


THE KLONDIKE

GOLD RUSH



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THE KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH

Gold Found in the Yukon!

The Klondike gold rush began in July of 1897. It started when two ships docked in San Francisco and Seattle. They were carrying miners who were returning from the Yukon with bags of gold. The stories of gold soon spread to the newspapers, and people everywhere were reading about the exciting discovery.

Soon, miners of all shapes and sizes were on their way to the gold fields. These miners were often called "Stampeder". Within six months, approximately 100,000 gold-seekers set off for the Yukon. However, only 30,000 managed to complete the difficult journey.

Wishful Thinking

Pamphlets were made available to the Stampeder, to help them on their way; most of these miners knew little or nothing about where they were going, or the difficult journey there were about to go on.

Many of the pamphlets given to the Stampeder contained little or no real information. They made outrageous claims of wealth to be had by everyone, and made it seem like everyone who went to the Yukon would strike it rich. Sadly, this was not the case.



Gold panning equipment.

Packing for the Trip

Stores soon discovered that they could make a lot of money by selling supplies to the miners. Outfitters sprang up almost overnight that were happy to sell the stampeders whatever they needed to get started. This included things like food, clothing, tools, camping and mining supplies, and transportation equipment.

In order to pass the border into Canada on their journey to the Yukon, the Northwest Mounted Police required all Stampeders to have one year's supply of goods. This was roughly one ton of goods per person. Towns such as Seattle made fortunes outfitting the miners.

Traveling to the Klondike

The easiest route to the Klondike was also the most expensive route. To get to the gold fields in the easiest way possible, miners needed to travel by boat upstream from the mouth of the Yukon in western Alaska.

The hardest way to get to the gold fields was often called the "All Canadian Route". This route took miners on a difficult journey from Edmonton and overland through the wilderness.

The most common route taken by the stampeders was by boat from the west coast of the United States to Alaska, over the Chilkoot or White

Passes to the Yukon River in Whitehorse, and then by boat 500 miles to Dawson City.

The Chilkoot Pass

The Chilkoot Pass trail was dangerous. It was very steep and hazardous. Because of this, the route was often called the "Golden Staircase". The route had 1,500 steps carved out of snow and ice; miners had to climb these to get to the top of the pass. The pass was much too steep for packhorses, so the Stampeders had to move their equipment piece by piece up the mountain. Many Stampeders gave up at this point, leaving their unneeded equipment on the side of the trail.



Stampeders on the Chilkoot Pass

The White Pass Trail

The White Pass trail was even more difficult to travel on. The trail was steep, narrow, and slick. Sadly, over 3,000 pack animals died on the trail. Because of this, it was often called the "dead horse trail".

The Last 500 Miles

The lucky (and very tired) miners who made it through the trails ended up at Bennett Lake. Here, miners had to travel by boat for 500 miles down the Yukon River, in order to land in the gold fields. The boat trip took 3 weeks. The miners had to survive many sets of rapids before making it to the Yukon. Many miners lost their lives or their possessions when their boats broke up in the rapids.

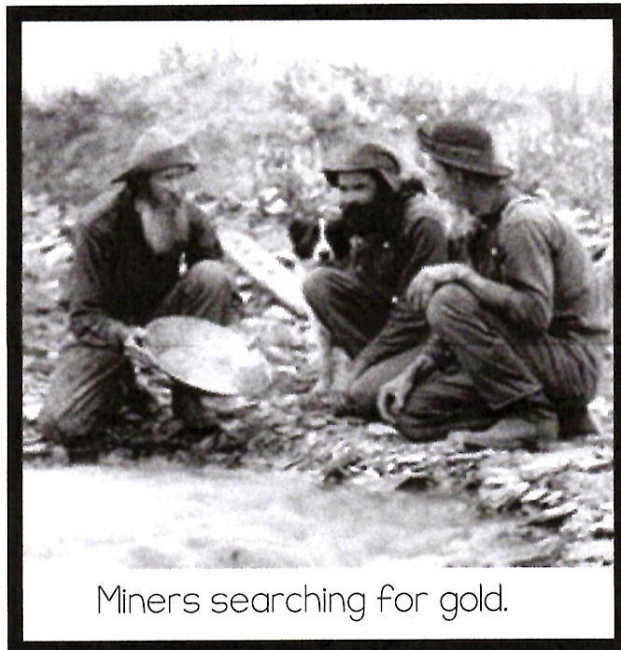
Sad News

Those who survived the long, hard trip were mostly met with sadness when they reached Dawson City, in the Yukon. Instead of gold and riches, they mostly discovered disappointment. Locals had already claimed all of the gold-bearing creeks. They found that the pamphlets promises of "gold for the taking" were really exaggerated. Because of this, many stampedeers went home. Others stayed and worked for other people on their claims, and others stayed to work in Dawson City.

Hard Work

The Stampedeers that stayed in the Yukon to try and find gold realized quickly that gold mining was very hard work. The pamphlets had promised that gold could be simply picked up off the ground, but this was not true at all. Most of the gold was not at the surface, but rather 10 or more feet below.

To reach the gold beneath the ground, the miners had to dig through the permafrost. The permafrost was a layer of permanently frozen ground. The ground had to be thawed before it could be dug. Then, the dirt had to be sluiced to separate it from the gold. All of the digging had to be done during the summer, as it was impossible to dig through the frozen ground in the cold Yukon winter. It was incredibly difficult work.



Miners searching for gold.

Klondike Gold Rush – Reading Comprehension

1. When did the Klondike Gold Rush begin?
2. What started the Klondike Gold Rush?
3. What were the miners often called?
4. Within 6 months, approximately how many miners set off for the Yukon? How many made it there?
5. Did the pamphlets given to the miners give them a lot of useful information and help?
6. What kinds of items did the miners need for their trip?

7. How much supplies did the Northwest Mounted Police require the Stampeders to have in order to cross the Canadian border?

 8. What was the easiest route to the Klondike?

 9. What was the most difficult route to the Klondike?

 10. What was the most common route to the Klondike?

 11. Describe the Chilkoot Pass.

 12. What was the White Pass often called? Why?
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13. When the Stampeders finally arrived in Yukon, did they find all of the riches the pamphlets had promised? Explain.

14. Describe (or draw) how the miners worked to find gold.