

Spring 2016

## Achieving Sourdough Status: The Diary, Photographs, and Letters of Samuel Baker Dunn, 1898-1899

Robert Nicholas Melatti  
*Old Dominion University*, Bobby.melatti@pavilionconcerts.com

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/history\\_etds](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/history_etds)



Part of the [Canadian History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Melatti, Robert N.. "Achieving Sourdough Status: The Diary, Photographs, and Letters of Samuel Baker Dunn, 1898-1899" (2016). Master of Arts (MA), Thesis, History, Old Dominion University, DOI: 10.25777/mrs2-2135

[https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/history\\_etds/3](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/history_etds/3)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the History at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@odu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@odu.edu).

ACHIEVING SOURDOUGH STATUS:  
THE DIARY, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND LETTERS OF  
SAMUEL BAKER DUNN, 1898-1899

by

Robert Nicholas Melatti  
B.A. May 2011, Old Dominion University

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

HISTORY

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY  
May 2016

Approved by:

Elizabeth Zaroni (Director)

Maura Hametz (Member)

Ingo Heidbrink (Member)

## ABSTRACT

### ACHIEVING SOURDOUGH STATUS: THE DIARY, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND LETTERS OF SAMUEL BAKER DUNN, 1898-1899

Robert Nicholas Melatti  
Old Dominion University, 2016  
Director: Dr. Elizabeth Zanoni

This thesis examines Samuel Baker Dunn and other prospectors from Montgomery County in Southwestern Iowa who participated in the Yukon Gold Rush of 1896-1899. The thesis explores three main research questions: 1) Why was there such an exodus of people to the Yukon from Montgomery County and the town of Villisca in particular? 2) How did Montgomery County citizens experience the Yukon Gold Rush and furthermore, what meaning did they attribute to the journey and the mining experience? How did they measure success? 3) What particular insights do letters, diaries, and photographs – and in particular Samuel Baker Dunn’s personal documents – provide historians interested in the Gold Rush? S.B. Dunn’s compendium represents a unique interrelated set of sources that include his daily diary, photographs, writings on the versos of the developed photographs and various letters to the editors of the three local Montgomery County newspapers. The thesis focuses on the many influences motivating Iowans and in particular, S.B. Dunn, to sell his business to raise the needed investment for the journey. Among the influences discussed are familial connections to a Gold Rush superstar, the Panic of 1893, meteorological factors such as drought, the value of gold both perceived and real, the influence of the Populist Movement and the power of the pioneer spirit that was particularly strong in Montgomery County. The thesis argues that to Samuel Baker Dunn and his Iowan companions “success” in the Yukon was less dependent on finding gold than it was on the feeling that they had survived over the challenges and experiences of the

journey by employing the pioneer spirit that had been, in part, responsible for pushing them from Iowa to the gold fields.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
AN EXAMINATION OF THE SOURCES .....	4
II. THE GOLD RUSH CAST OF CHARACTERS .....	16
III. IOWANS IN SEARCH OF THEIR ELUSIVE EL DORADO .....	33
POLITICAL CHANGES AND CHALLENGES .....	34
THE MINIMAL EFFECT OF POPULISM IN IOWA .....	40
METEOROLOGICAL FACTORS.....	45
INTRODUCTION OF YELLOW JOURNALISM.....	47
IV. FROM VILLISCA TO SEATTLE TO DAWSON CITY .....	50
TRAVERSING THE WHITE AND CHILCOOT PASSES .....	59
THE PALM SUNDAY AVALANCHE .....	70
FROM THE ENCAMPMENT ON LAKE BENNETT TO DAWSON, Y.T.....	76
V. THE ART OF EXTRACTION AND THE MINING CAMP EXPERIENCE .....	93
VI. CONCLUSION: IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR NEARLY FORTY YEARS LATER.....	108
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	115
APPENDIX.....	120
VITA.....	121

## LIST OF PLATES

Plate	Page
1. Iowa State Precipitation, 1890-1900.....	45
2. "Steamship Victorian," University of Washington Photograph .....	55
3. "The Human Chain," S.B. Dunn, Spring 1898.....	67
4. "Scene on the Summit of Chilcoot Pass," S.B. Dunn, 1898.....	69
5. "Avalanche Rescue Efforts," S.B. Dunn, April 3, 1898.....	72
6. "Avalanche Rescue Efforts," Verso, S.B. Dunn.....	74
7. "Camp at Lake Lindemann," S.B. Dunn, 1898.....	77
8. "Marsh Lake," S.B. Dunn, 1898.....	80
9. "White Horse Rapids," S.B. Dunn, June 1898 .....	85
10. "Dawson, Yukon Territory," S.B. Dunn, July 21, 1898.....	89
11. "Hand-Drawn Rendering of his Mine," Basil Austin, 1898.....	94
12. "No. 26 Eldorado," S.B. Dunn, 1899.....	97
13. "Boxing on a Floor of Gold," S.B. Dunn, 1898.....	102
14. "Stanley and Dunn Families," S.B. Dunn, Villisca, Iowa, 1897 .....	111
15. "Hand-Drawn Map of the Lake Bennett Region," S.B. Dunn, 1898.....	114

## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

In his diary, Samuel Baker Dunn, my great grandfather, recorded his impressions after having travelled some 3,000 miles by train, boat and mule from Villisca, Iowa to Dawson, Yukon Territory caught in the fever of the Gold Rush.

All along the river bank at Dawson, tents are going up like magic, Seen from the Yukon itself, it is a picturesque sight for despite the indescribable disorder, there is a certain pageantry about the mass of tents and newly built cabins and the throng of human bodies. Dawson is overcrowded and the overflow is spreading itself out over the adjacent country, mad in its insatiable lust for the precious metal that lies below the matted tundra. Day and night the rush goes on. From the Canadian side, a few came by way of Edmonton but the greater number are coming by way of Dyea and the Chilcoot Pass and Skagway and the White Pass. All down the 1800 miles of river patched up old tubs long since out of commission are being requisitioned to carry the heterogeneous community that is gathering from all parts of the world. In the streets of Dawson, well-bred professional men from eastern cities rub shoulders with the dregs of the world. Every saloon and dance hall is thronged. Never was such a stampede. Many are arriving without the financial backing that such an occasion necessitates and must starve in these barren valleys for Dawson is ill provided for such an unexpected influx and food is counted gold. After a time, no money can buy it. Faced with the prospect of famine, the authorities allow admission only to those who have a full year's supply of grub equal to three rounds a day for 365 days. But still they come, evading the authorities by a hundred devices, drunk with the lust for gold and high adventure. And in the end, thousands will go back, heart broken and penniless, cursing the very name of the country that lured them from comparative comfort.<sup>1</sup>

As one of some 30,000 men and women arriving in Dawson, the portal to the goldfields of the Klondike, Dunn's verso notation powerfully and poetically captured the emotions of inhabitants of Dawson hoping to strike it rich as gold prospectors. That he begins this entry with words like "magic" and "picturesque," and ends with words like "heartbroken" and "penniless," suggests expectations met and expectations unfilled, as the majority of the arrivals, "drunk with the lust for gold," returned home cold, hungry, and poor.

---

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Photograph, Dawson, Yukon Territory, July 21, 1898, verso

This thesis tells the story of the long, arduous, and emotion filled journey taken by S.B. Dunn and other miners from Dunn's hometown of Villisca, Iowa, and documented in Dunn's diary, photographs, and letters. The story begins not when Dunn and his travel companions left Montgomery County in southwestern Iowa for the Yukon in the winter of 1898 but rather earlier, in July of 1897 when the *Portland* steamed into Seattle from the Klondike on July 17, 1897. Aboard were sixty four miners and their gold that if weighed together, tipped the scales at nearly two tons.<sup>2</sup> With the arrival of the gold laden steamers, the stage was set for one of the largest human migrations in the history of the United States, the Yukon Gold Rush. One of the "Portland 64," William B. Stanley, had a unique connection to Montgomery County, Iowa; that connection would ultimately catapult Samuel Baker Dunn from his general store in a rural farming community to the gold fields of the Yukon shortly after the newly rich William Stanley's visit to Villisca.

Dunn, his three brothers and several other would-be prospectors formed two parties, accumulated their individual and collective financial assets, and set out on the adventure of a lifetime. This thesis employs a unique set of sources to explain the Klondike's particular attraction to residents of Southwestern Iowa such as Samuel Baker Dunn. First person accounts from Iowans and media sources local to the Midwest reveal a particular set of "push-pull" factors that influenced Iowans. These source materials allow me to explore the Yukon Gold Rush through the lens of the Montgomery County farmers and small business men who populated that area, to focus on the unique motivations and incentives underpinning their journey.

Professional and popular historians of the Klondike have assumed that all Americans experienced the Gold Rush in much the same way. Although Gold Rush historians Tappan

---

<sup>2</sup> C.G. Bush, "Riches of the Yukon Not Yet Told," *New York Herald*, July 24, 1897, 1.



Adney and Pierre Berton describe in great detail the effects of the gold discovery on the populations of the port cities where the first returning miners arrived, there is very little detailed reference to areas of the Midwest, the South and the Northeast. Historians point, for example, to sensational journalism, the poor state of the economy in general, and “Klondikitis,” gold fever, as the root causes of the mass migration north.<sup>3</sup> The literature, however, has failed to explore how conditions particular to certain regions, states and communities in the U.S. impinged on peoples’ decisions, expectations, and understandings of the Klondike Gold Rush. Important local nuances such as social and family networks, local and regional employment prospects and agricultural conditions affected these understandings as well. Most studies also focus on the fact that few people found their fortunes in gold and even fewer retained any part of whatever they did find. As this thesis demonstrates, success in the Yukon had as much to do with the journey as it did with the finds measured in ounces of gold.<sup>4</sup> The Dunn and Gourley parties provide an excellent example of these relative, rather than exclusively monetary values.

Why was there such an inordinate exodus of people to the Yukon from Montgomery County and Villisca in particular? 2) How did these Montgomery County citizens experience the Gold Rush and furthermore, what meaning did they attribute to the journey and the mining experience? How did they measure success? 3) What particular insights do letters, diaries, and photographs – and in particular the body of Dunn’s personal documents – provide historians interested in the Yukon Gold Rush? In an effort to examine these questions, I explore a number of issues that affected the decisions of Montgomery County residents in southwest Iowa to leave

---

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Berton, *Klondike Fever: The Life and Death of the Last Great Gold Rush* (New York, NY: Carroll and Graff Publishers, 1958), 102,106,126-127; Tappan Adney, *The Klondike Stampede* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1899), 1-9, 289.

<sup>4</sup> Roy Minter, *The White Pass: Gateway to the Klondike* (Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska, 1988); Berton, *Klondike Fever*; Tappan Adney, *The Klondike Stampede*, (Vancouver, B.C.: University of British Columbia Press, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> Steven Stowe, “Making Sense of Letters and Diaries,” *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the*

their home in search of fortune: national and regional political, economic, and social factors; personal and familial connections among Iowans leaving for the Yukon. Individuals from Villisca who participated in the Yukon rush were members of families established in southwest Iowa for two generations and thus family farms and communities were firmly entrenched in the fabric of their everyday lives. What impact did Villiscans' unique access to a Gold Rush superstar, William B. Stanley, have? What effect did the transition in journalistic style have on the decisions of citizens of Montgomery County in southwest Iowa to leave home in search of fortune? While doing research for this thesis, I encountered Villiscans today who were anxious to contribute their memories, keepsakes, and in some cases documents, related to relatives and friends who had participated in the Klondike Gold Rush. Villiscans had not relegated mementos from the Gold Rush era to the attic or discussed their stories as solely representative of a time past; rather, the stories these artifacts and documents embodied had become an important part of who they are today.

### An Examination of the Sources

This thesis draws on a unique set of sources – the diary, photographs and published and unpublished letters of Samuel Baker Dunn's journal to explore how Dunn and other Villiscans experienced the Yukon Gold Rush. Unlike most historians, who have access to and analyze a limited number of diary entries, or only one type of personal texts (diaries or letters for example), this thesis benefits from access to a diverse and sizeable suite of primary sources related to Iowan's participation in the Yukon Gold Rush, an ensemble that includes the *Dunn Diary*, letters written by Dunn to family and friends in Villisca, letters written by Dunn to local newspapers, as well as photographs taken by Dunn. The historical value of the *Dunn Diary* in fact is enhanced

by these additional sources, produced over a long nineteen month period, because together they tell a richer, more comprehensive story about Dunn and about the Villisca miners who made the trek North with him to the Klondike gold fields. Samuel Baker Dunn (hereafter S.B. Dunn) kept his handwritten journal, the *Dunn Diary*, for nineteen months beginning with his party's departure from Seattle, Washington in March of 1898 aboard the steamer *Victorian*. S.B. Dunn wrote his diary entries either at the end of the day or the beginning of the next to chronicle that day's particulars. The majority of the entries simply recounted the highlights of the day, lacking emotional flavor. He included charts that provide evidence of hours worked by each of the men in the party as well as listings of daily recorded temperatures. In addition, the diary contained a record of each man's draw against earnings, a ledger page that reflected the charges for photographic work S.B. Dunn provided the members of the group, their projected pro-rata shares of the gold dust they were to receive at the seasonal closing of the Stanley Worden mining operations at Eldorado #26, and finally, the distribution of profits earned by the investors in the stock company. While most entries, common to 19<sup>th</sup> century diary writing, were brief and factual, S.B. Dunn did include several expanded insights about events and experiences that he found particularly notable. In these entries, S.B. Dunn wrote with emotion and detail, as when he described tragedies or less serious subjects such as activities to pass the long hours of darkness. Besides the focus on particular events such as the 1898 Palm Sunday Avalanche and the departure to the Yukon from Seattle, Washington, Dunn also recorded the myriad health issues that plagued the party such as snow blindness and scurvy as well as colds and rheumatism. Dunn wrote not just about events but about issues and values such as morality, food and supplies, including gold, in conditions that he could have never fathomed before he arrived at the entrance to the Lynn Canal, the marine gateway to both the White and the Chilcoot passes. It is also

important to note that the diary was not static and unchanging but rather an ever evolving personal document whose style and content changed over time. Once the party arrived in Dawson, the diary entries for the most part became shorter, more factual and more like daily weather reports. He was clearly writing mainly for himself. Once the parties arrived to the mines, Dunn in many instances skipped days in his journal altogether evidencing, perhaps the established somewhat mundane routine of daily life in the mines. Although the diary reveals much about how Iowans travelling with Dunn experienced the journey to the Yukon, S.B. Dunn did not use his diary to write about the feelings or reactions of the individuals travelling and living together, and therefore the diary does not provide in-depth insight into individuals who accompanied Dunn on the voyage to the Yukon.

While sharing similarities as first person documents, S.B. Dunn's diary differs in some important respects from the other sources produced by Dunn and used in this thesis: letters and photographs. Unlike with the diary, Dunn wrote his letters and picture prose with far more emotion, revealing his feelings and the importance he attached to those retellings. With his letters and photographs, Dunn had more time to reflect on the events about which he wrote and photographed. Also as historians have noted, writers produce diaries and letters with different audiences in mind. As Steven Stowe has suggested:

Letters are written to a certain particular other; they implore a dialogue. Diaries are written for oneself or an imagined other; they play on the satisfactions of monologue. Letters are shaped by the contingencies of distance and time between writer and recipient; they become over time scattered in various places and must be 'collected' to form a single body of writing. Diaries are shaped by moments of inspiration but also by habit; they are woven together by a single voice and usually contained between covers.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Steven Stowe, "Making Sense of Letters and Diaries," *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web*, Published online July 2002. Accessed from the internet, September 1, 2015 at <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/letters/> , July 2002.

Other scholars have emphasized the similarities in these two types of personal texts. Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer Pierce, and Barbara Laslett explain the reasons why historians have used diaries and journal entries far less frequently in historical works than other forms of personal narratives such as oral histories and autobiographies. They point to what historian Liz Stanley referred to as “flies in amber quality” of diaries to describe the way diaries capture daily occurrence but lack the “temporal framing in a self-reflective and retrospective narrative stance.”<sup>6</sup> According to the authors, diary entries and letters, “do things with and to time: when the letter is read, the reader of course knows that time has passed and the ‘moment’ of its writing has gone.”<sup>7</sup> Letters and diary entries, they contend, are similar in nature to photographs because they capture the moment of when they were written or in the case of photographs, produced.

Describing the snapshot character of diaries and letters, Maynes, Pierce and Laslett note some of the limitations of analyzing diaries and letters. However, they also argue that diaries and letters provide a rare window into the everyday life of their writers and worldviews of ordinary people in the past. The *Dunn Diary* and letters to the editors of local Montgomery County newspapers by S.B. Dunn and N.P. Mayhew, another Villisca prospector who traveled to the Yukon, represented more than just moments in time but instead constituted conclusions based on a continuum of experiences, facts, and observations. The letters written to the editors as well as correspondence written by the miners to their families and friends while they were in the north, provide unique insights into the lives and times of the writers and the recipients. Furthermore, letters written and sent by miners in the Yukon to family in Iowa represent indispensable vehicles for considering how even “in the midst of social change,” miners remained connected to

---

<sup>6</sup> Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce, Barbara Laslett, *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell university Press, 2008), 82.

<sup>7</sup> Maynes, et al., *Telling Stories*, 82.

the small rural communities they left behind; such correspondence, therefore, helped maintain the strong fabric of family even while writers and recipients were separated by great distance.<sup>8</sup>

The Dunn and Gourley parties' adventures were well recorded in the local Iowan newspapers the *Sun*, a Red Oak local paper, the *Red Oak Express* and the *Villisca Review*. All contained articles and letters to the editors written by faraway miners who described the experiences and the fortunes of the travelers to the north. As a special correspondent to the *Villisca Review*, Dunn wrote many letters to the editor that were then published on the front page. These articles and letters described in great detail notable events and general reflections on the trip. Many of the published descriptions were taken straight from the *Dunn Diary* and expanded upon suggesting that Dunn did embellish his original stories, which were written so soon after the actual events took place.

The *Villisca Review* as well as the other two local Montgomery County newspapers featured not only the writings of Samuel Dunn but also other members of both the Dunn and Gourley parties. Samuel's brother Charles and his cousin, Robert Alexander Dunn, for example, contributed at least two letters to the compendium.<sup>9</sup> Comparing letters to the editor written by various individuals in the two parties reveals differences in perspectives and writing styles among the miners. N. Pratt Mayhew, on the one hand, who travelled with the Gourley party, tended to write with an air of sarcasm especially in his reporting on differences between American to Canadian norms regarding the politicizing of the services and charges. Samuel Dunn on the other hand added a modicum of humor to his reports. Several other travelers from

---

<sup>8</sup> Maynes, et al., *Telling Stories*, 83.

<sup>9</sup> A list of letters to the editors and other contributions made to the various publications can be found on page 135, Appendix One.

Montgomery County to the North reported their experiences to the *Red Oak Express*, as well.<sup>10</sup> Among the unpublished sources re-capping the journey was a compilation of letters written by Oren E. Jackson who hailed from Red Oak, Iowa.<sup>11</sup> Jackson departed Red Oak by train in late February of 1898 and like the Dunns and Gourleys he left for the Yukon from Seattle. His writing, unlike the Dunn diary, seems far more organized and conveys a lot of the detail not found in the Dunn diary. Although Jackson's destination was Nome, Alaska, his journey to Dawson mirrored Dunn's in many ways, and as such is another valuable source for understanding conditions facing the Iowan stampeders.

Miners' letters to the editors of local newspapers lacked the sensationalism rampant in many of the larger, nationally-circulated newspapers such as those owned by Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst and as such they offer a more realistic account. For example, nowhere did it appear in any of these posted letters to the *Villisca Review* that gold nuggets could be scooped up or accumulated in any other fashion save extraordinary hard work. These written snapshots from the Yukon gave readers back home a taste of what the sojourners were experiencing, although members of all the parties seemed to avoid the most graphic descriptions of the difficult conditions or incidents of the journey. Letter writers most likely tempered their descriptions to mitigate the worry that families back home certainly experienced. One notable exception to this was the Palm Sunday Avalanche of 1898. Iowan stampeders, including S.B. Dunn, recounted this disaster in very graphic details in their letters home and to the editors of newspapers for three reasons. First, it was widely reported in the press as news and could not be filtered nor downplayed. Second, it was a unique incident that could only have been written by

---

<sup>10</sup> "Facts about the Klondike: Otis Crawford a Red Oak Boy Writes to Relatives," *Red Oak Express*, February 4, 1898.

<sup>11</sup> Richard M. Cutter, a local Montgomery County resident, transcribed and annotated Jackson's collection of hand written letters.

survivors and so it may have been written from the perspective that the danger had passed, even though snow slides were a fact of life in the Yukon and Alaska. Lastly, the incident left such an impression on those who witnessed or survived the avalanche that they were compelled to share it as an emotional release.

S.B. Dunn's photographs provide additional material to explore the Dunn Party's experience. An amateur photographer, Dunn took his portable dark room along with his camera equipment to record the trip. Although new technology was available at the time and frequently used by the wealthier travelers and tourists, the standard in professionalism at the time remained the box camera. This camera required glass plates that through the exposure process, became glass negatives. Only ninety of the approximately six hundred original Dunn photographs survived. The photographs, for the most part, appear to be a fairly random following the journey and the mining adventures of the Dunn and Gourley parties. The scenes Dunn chose to photograph were rarely staged and thus reflected the goings on of everyday life at the mines and at William Stanley's Eldorado #25 and #26 in particular. Most were landscape photos that showed large swatches of rivers, encampments and rapids as well as "classic" scenes such as the "human Chain" that led to the summit of Chilcoot Pass. Unlike some nineteenth century professional photographers such as Timothy O'Sullivan whose work depicted western landscapes as dangerous and forbidding, Dunn's pictures did not focus on the difficult conditions or on the individual human challenges. However, Dunn's pictures are representative of not only the Klondike experience but also the late nineteenth century era's photographic norms in their focus on the enormity of the great outdoors and the beauty of nature.<sup>12</sup> Photography of the Gold Rush was quite commonplace and a perusal of the digital collections of the University of

---

<sup>12</sup> On O'Sullivan see Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, The Noonday Press, 1994), 129.



Washington revealed just how prolific photographic recording was.<sup>13</sup> Although the Dunn suite of photographs cannot be placed in the same artistic league as some of the more renowned professional photographers who recorded the Yukon Gold Rush such as E.A. Hegg, from Bellingham, Washington. Nine of Dunn's photographs are contained in the digital collections of Washington University.<sup>14</sup> Unique to the Dunn photograph collection are the writings on the versos of many of the pictures. Dunn wrote these descriptions in a more thoughtful style than many of the diary entries; he provided extensive descriptions of and reflections of events captured on camera, his interpretations of various scenes and episodes that they portrayed.

Those who view the photographs and read the verso descriptions are treated to moments in time that captured the essence of Dunn's journey. What he opted not to photograph and write about also spoke volumes about what S.B. Dunn felt was germane or acceptable. There are no pictures of dance hall girls or saloon scenes shot from inside the building; his few references to women, described cooks in the campsites, and he never photographed or described women in a more intimate light. Other Gold Rush photographers, E.A. Hegg in particular, shot many photographs of the dance hall experience including the girls. Historians of the Yukon such as Pierre Berton and Tappan Adney have also described the dance hall experience as well as the women who populated "Paradise Alley," Dawson's red light district. There are also no Dunn photos of stacks of gold or piles of gold dust, although because gold dust was the medium of exchange in the Yukon, Dunn did keep logs of the accumulated gold that each of the party members has accrued and drawn on. The only surviving photo of gold taken by S.B. Dunn depicted a caravan of mules carrying satchels of gold dust. Other photographers tended to make

---

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 244.

<sup>14</sup> Washington University Libraries, Digital Collection, accessed from the internet 3/04/12, <http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=S.B.Dunn&CISOFIELD=CISOSEARCHALL&CISOROOT=all&x=15&y=12>

gold – the successful mining of it, the insatiable desire for it, or the painful failure to find it – the focus of many of their photographs.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps S.B. Dunn’s omissions, revealed a selective sense of what he thought was *really* about. The subjects of his writings and photography reflected his personal values: the dignity of hard work, the value of sobriety, and the importance of dedication to family and community.

Together, these sources help to shed light on one of the most unusual human migrations in U.S. history. Berton wrote that as many as one million people planned to make the trek north and the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* reported that 100,000 would be prospectors actually purchased tickets on steamers heading to the gold fields, however, only about 30,000 actually made it to Dawson Y.T.<sup>16</sup> The National Park Service claims that between 20,000 and 30,000 spent an average of three months packing their outfits the thirty five miles from Lynn Canal to the lakes on the Canadian side of the summit of the Chilcoot Pass. By June of 1898 there were 18,000 people in Dawson and more than 5,000 working the diggings.<sup>17</sup> The Dunn sources – diary entries, letters to the editors, letters written home, and photographs with their versos – along with similar sources produced by other Iowans, provide perspectives for exploring how an international event affected and was affected by an adventurous group of farmers and business owners in the Midwest in the late nineteenth century. Rather than merely a snapshot therefore, together this suite of sources should be thought of as many frames of a motion picture; as the evidentiary legs of a metaphorical three-legged stool they tell a more complete story when viewed together in corroboration with each other, and as a continuum.

---

<sup>15</sup> See for example, Pierre Berton’s photographic essay, “The Klondike Quest,” in which he discusses Hegg’s Front Street photographs. Pierre Berton, *The Klondike Quest: A Photographic Essay / 1897-1899* (Toronto, Ontario: McClelland and Stewart, 1983), 130-131.

<sup>16</sup> Washington University Library, accessed on 02/8/2016 from <http://content.lib.washington.edu/extras/goldrush.html>

<sup>17</sup> National Park Service, accessed 02/08/2016 from [www.nps.gov/klgo/learn/goldrush.htm](http://www.nps.gov/klgo/learn/goldrush.htm)

A scholarly study of the Yukon Gold Rush is also critical because the most comprehensive accounts of the event are popular histories written by contemporary reporters or scholars with personal connections to the Gold Rush. *Harpers Weekly* and the *London Chronicle* dispatched journalist Tappan Adney to the Klondike as a writer. Adney used plain journalist style with little embellishment to tell his story of the Yukon Gold Rush, *The Klondike Stampede*, which was based on his observations, interpretations, and journals that were created during his time in the Yukon.<sup>18</sup> Adney listed no sources and it is assumed that his monograph was based on his observations, interpretations and journals that were created during his time in the Yukon.

Pierre Berton wrote another popular detailed account of the Yukon Gold Rush. Berton's father was a pioneer who moved to the Yukon in 1898 in search of gold and stayed; Berton was born in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory and later settled in Dawson City. At the age of thirty one he became the managing editor of *McCleans*, a Toronto magazine, and became an associate editor of the *Toronto Star* winning many awards for his journalistic prowess. He later became the chancellor of Yukon College and the author of fifty books and monographs. A local hero and superstar, Berton ranks number 31 in the Canadian Hall of Fame. In his epic monograph, *Klondike Fever*, Berton details the history of the Yukon region, the reasons for the mass migration, the routes that the stampedeers took, the gold sojourners found and did not find, the methodologies employed in efforts to extract the gold from where it lay, and the unique and unprecedented lifestyles adopted by men and women involved in Gold Rush. Berton used many of the same resource types that I used in the creation of my project including diaries, sources from U.S. and Canadian government archives, newspapers, pamphlets and magazines.<sup>19</sup> These exhaustive, well researched accounts of the Yukon Gold Rush by Berton and Adney provide

---

<sup>18</sup> Tappan Adney, *The Klondike Stampede* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1900)

<sup>19</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, Bibliography, 446-457.

critical context for my study. However as overviews, these works overlook differences in the motivations, experiences, and successes of the prospectors based on the backgrounds of the various sojourners.

In addition to Berton and Adney's monographs, this thesis builds on two scholarly works on the Yukon Gold Rush. Roy Minter's *The White Pass*, uses the records of railroad companies, British, Canadian, and U.S. government documents and oral histories to describe the construction of the White Pass and Yukon Railway from 1809 through 1900.<sup>20</sup> Much of the monograph is dedicated to examining the competition between Dyea and Skagway as portals to the Yukon interior during the Gold Rush. What makes it most germane for this project is the fact that, although the railway was not yet operational in the early spring of 1898 when the two parties from Villisca made their way north, the Dunn party chose the Chilcoot Pass at Skagway while the Gourley party opted for the White Pass via Dyea. Minter describes the respective advantages and disadvantages of the two routes, both of which begin at the Lynn Canal. Minter's bibliography reveals his reliance on unpublished material for much of his information and in particular, the records of various companies who participated in the railroad saga.

Similarly, Kathryn Morse's *The Nature of Gold: An Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush* uses a diverse set of sources related to the Yukon Gold Rush, including the special collections library at the University of Washington, to explore environmental problems caused by prospectors in their attempt to unearth the precious metal from the ancient underground creek beds. Her environmental focus is as much a political and economic history as she describes how the changing politics of gold, as well as how developing mercantile and

---

<sup>20</sup> Roy Minter, *The White Pass: Gateway to the Klondike* (Toronto, Ontario: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), Bibliography, 361-366.

transportation networks affected the local environment, animals and people who depended on the forests, mountains, rivers, plants, and animals unique to northwestern North America.

Through unique primary sources, the *Dunn Diary*, his letters, and photographs, buttressed by the writings of other Iowans who had joined Dunn in his journey north, a nuanced perspective of the Yukon Gold Rush emerges. While echoing in many ways the experiences of all prospectors, it reveals a unique Midwestern experience as seen through the individual and collective lenses of the Dunn Party.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GOLD RUSH CAST OF CHARACTERS

Chapter One lays the groundwork for explaining the reasons why Montgomery County was unique in producing such a large number of Yukon gold prospectors. It introduces members of the Dunn and Gourley clans and explores the relationship between the Dunn family and William M. Stanley, a Dunn family member by marriage. Stanley's superstar status had made him the focal point of a shared vision of the potential for wealth and the chance for escape from the harsh economic conditions in the Midwest during the 1890s. This chapter brings to the fore the histories of both Samuel Caldwell Dunn and William Stanley, brothers in law who formed the cornerstone of the family interrelationship and the adventure in the gold fields of the Yukon. It describes the pooling of funds and participants and focuses on the genesis of the decisions that moved dozens of people from relative comfort to a lifestyle that was unimaginable by anyone but William Stanley.

The sojourners to the Yukon from Montgomery County, Iowa were carried, metaphorically, down the stream of emotion by forces within and from without the small communities that comprised the county. Samuel Baker Dunn, at the time of the Gold Rush a partner in a food and provisions store *Atkinson & Dunn* located on the square in downtown Villisca, Iowa like most other citizens of the county, was of a family of farmers. The Dunns' land was part of the land patent granted to their father, Samuel Caldwell Dunn (hereafter S.C. Dunn) who had been part of the survey team, headed by his brother William, sent to map out three counties in southwest Iowa in the early 1850s.

The relationship between S.C. Dunn and Stanley began in 1858 when S.C. Dunn married Martha Jane Baker, one of fourteen children of Samuel and Rachel Davidson Baker. William Stanley married Martha's younger sister, Sarah Emily Catherine. This relationship between S.C. Dunn and Stanley, now brothers in law through marriage to sisters, was one of the keys to understanding the forces influencing those who considered the journey north from Montgomery County.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, S.C. Dunn, was invested with what has been referred to as the "pioneer spirit." William Stanley, on the other hand, was the poster child for success in achieving the riches of *Eldorado*. An in-depth look into their relationship helps to explain the "push-pull" migration of the men and women from Montgomery County to the Yukon in search of gold.

Samuel Caldwell Dunn was born in Guernsey County, Ohio June 23, 1822. He married Martha Jane Baker, daughter of Judge Samuel Baker October 2, 1859. They had five children of whom the four sons made the trek north to the Yukon.<sup>2</sup> At the mid-century S.C. Dunn saw the newly formed Republican Party as embodying a pioneer spirit and he threw his support behind the party when he cast his vote for presidential hopeful, John C. Fremont, the first Republican candidate. He went on to serve as a delegate to the Iowa state Republican Convention that would be instrumental in nominating Abraham Lincoln for president in 1860.<sup>3</sup> S.C. Dunn viewed himself as representing the powerful forces that pulled the pioneers across the states to the east and the south of Iowa. S.C. Dunn's son, S.B. Dunn, his brothers and others from Montgomery County were influenced by the pioneer spirit. Some of the best evidence of this is that S.B. Dunn clearly thought of his father and ancestors as the consummate pioneers; importantly, he saw his own Yukon travels as part of this familial legacy or in line with the family trait or character.

---

<sup>1</sup> Audrea Higgins, *Villisca Memories 1853-1976: A History of Villisca with Biographical Sketches*, December 1976. Compiled by Audrea Higgins for the Bicentennial of the United States of America – 1976, 140.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Caldwell Dunn died in his home in Villisca Iowa on March 6, 1905.

<sup>3</sup> Ralph D. Shipp, comp., *A Baker Genealogy and Allied Families, Dunn, Gourley, Russell* (Baltimore, MD: Gateway Press Inc., 1980), 149-150.

S.C. Dunn was in every sense of the word a pioneer as described by his contemporaries. A 1906 book on the history of Montgomery County by W.W. Merritt Sr., suggests, “No partition walls separated the pioneers. Though widely different in habits, intellect and moral culture, they met and mingled together. All class distinctions were done away with and party lines in church and state obliterated. Live and let live was their motto.”<sup>4</sup> This egalitarian spirit compounded with the continuing “pull” exerted by westward expansion, help explain the ability of the next generation of Dunns’ difficult decisions to leave their farms and businesses for the gold fields. Merritt featured S.C. Dunn in this volume with a photograph and a description that reads: “Came to this county in 1852. The first Clerk of District Court.”<sup>5</sup> Merritt notes that the Yukon Gold Rush was not the first time men from Montgomery County had left to find gold. Apparently Red Oak and Villisca lay in the path of the Pikes Peak gold rush in 1859 and many in the county provided provisions for those in transit. It was not merely the visions of gold but also the wish to evade the draft that pulled these prospectors west. During the Pikes Peak Gold Rush, some of the local residents of the county got caught up in the whirlwind excitement and left Montgomery County.<sup>6</sup> S.C. Dunn, however, was not counted in that number.

S.B. Dunn, through his writings and reflections, attempted to show that the pioneer spirit of the Dunn clan was generational. In a letter dated July 10, 1936 addressed to Jean Stevens, his granddaughter, S.B. Dunn traced the family’s pioneer spirit all the way back to the Revolutionary War when, according to his descriptions, his great grandfather served and fought at Ft. Henry, which is now Wheeling, West Virginia. Evoking the pioneer spirit that motivated so many of those who followed the sun across the continent in the 1800s, S.B. Dunn described

---

<sup>4</sup> W.W. Merritt Sr., *A History of the County of Montgomery from the Earliest Days to 1906* (Red Oak, Iowa: The Express Publishing Company, 1906), 37.

<sup>5</sup> Merritt, *A History of the County of Montgomery*, 48.

<sup>6</sup> Merritt, *A History of the County of Montgomery*, 47.



pioneers, like his father, “always moving on when a few neighbors began to settle near them with an undefinable longing for the vast unexplored places beyond the western horizon, until they at last came to that undefiled paradise - the beautiful Nodaway Valley in Iowa.”<sup>7</sup> S.C. Dunn, in the year 1851, purchased approximately 1600 acres of land along the Nodaway Valley and received the patents directly from the office of President Franklin Pierce.<sup>8</sup> He paid \$1.25 per acre to the Land Office.<sup>9</sup> In a letter dated April 25, 1939 to George W. Baker, S.B. Dunn discusses the patents or land deeds that he still had in his possession.<sup>10</sup>

In his writings about his father, S.B. Dunn underscored the fact that he was deeply involved in local politics as well as education characterizing him as one of Iowa’s foremost political and educational leaders. In 1855, the Jackson Township Jackson Township, which at that time included all of Montgomery County, elected William Dunn, the brother of S.C. Dunn, the School Board’s President and S.C. Dunn, Secretary. Both men held their offices through that decade as well as the next.<sup>11</sup> This commitment to the betterment of the Township validates the fact that the elder generation of the Dunn family was firmly entrenched in the day to day decision making process thus had to have been viewed as permanent residents of the county.

Just as the pioneer spirit influenced S.B. Dunn’s decision to make the trek north, perhaps to an even greater degree did the successes, both real and mythological, of William Stanley. S.B.

---

<sup>7</sup> Unpublished letter from S.B. Dunn to Jean Stevens, July 10, 1936. P-2, Melatti Collection.

<sup>8</sup> Copies of the original patents are included in accompanying photographic reproductions, Melatti Collection. They are in fact signed “Franklin Pierce” but the authenticity of the signature is unknown.

<sup>9</sup> S.B. Dunn, *Genealogy of the Thomas Dunn Family 1601-1940*, unpublished. However, portions of the genealogical work of S.B. Dunn was published in “Villisca Memoirs 1853-1976” as well as in “A Baker Family Genealogy and Allied Families, Dunn, Gourley and Russell” compiled by Ralph D. Shipp, Baltimore, MD: (Gateway Press Inc., 1980).

<sup>10</sup> Copy of a letter from S.B. Dunn to George W Baker written in Roseburg, Oregon April 25, 1939. Copy was given to Melatti in Villisca Iowa by a distant cousin Dirk Dunn. In this same letter Dunn bemoans the fact that he and his wife had “waited too long before beginning to collect the necessary data.” His later work, a fifty page volume on the pioneers, may be the compilation of all the data but there is no reference to that in the body of the work.

<sup>11</sup> Unpublished Writings of Samuel Baker Dunn, Melatti Collection.

Dunn's personal connections to Stanley especially motivated him to participate in the Gold Rush. Through his marriage, William Stanley became known as Uncle Billy to those of the Baker and Dunn clans. Much of the early history of Stanley is unknown. However, local sources and reports written in the *Villisca Review*, the local daily newspaper published in Villisca, Iowa, provided a sense of his struggle to find success in life. His acquaintance to Sarah Emily Baker was made when she was quite young, and he was a contractor on the "Q" roadway. He had the contract of excavating the Baker family's cut east of town and while overseeing the job became acquainted with the young Miss Baker who he later married.<sup>12</sup> A census report for 1880 places the 34 year old Stanley in Granite, Kansas, married to Sarah, and a blacksmith by listed trade. He identified himself as Canadian born.<sup>13</sup> Apparently he had tried his hand at mining on other occasions although it has been difficult to ascertain the exact locations and years. In an obituary appearing in the *Seattle Times* in June of 1936, his son Samuel Stanley is remembered: "Mr. Stanley was born in Woodinville Kansas. With his father William, he mined several years in the Black Hills of South Dakota."<sup>14</sup> However, it was not his experience prospecting the Black Hills Gold Rush (1874-1876) that made Stanley wealthy and famous, but rather this experience twenty years later in the Yukon. Indeed, the name William M. Stanley appeared in every monograph, journal article, newspaper and magazine article that dealt with the Alaska or Yukon Gold Rush. His name became synonymous with success but his success had been a long time coming. A description of William Stanley by the well-known Canadian journalist and non-fiction writer, Pierre Berton, offers a sense of the myth surrounding Stanley's "rags to riches" success story as a down and out prospector whose risky decision to search for gold led to his ultimate prosperity.

---

<sup>12</sup> *Villisca Review*, October 28, 1897, 4.

<sup>13</sup> United States Census, 1880 for William Stanley. Accessed from the internet 1/15/2012 "Free Family History and Genealogy Records" <https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/MF5F-D5D>

<sup>14</sup> *Seattle Times*, June 18, 1936, 26. Accessed through the internet 6/12/2012, [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)

William Stanley on board the creaking *Weare*, looked less like a prospector than any of his fellows, though he had made and lost three fortunes on previous Rocky Mountain stampedes. He was a Seattle bookseller, gray haired and lame, and fifteen months earlier he and his wife and seven children had been impoverished. As a last resort Stanley had decided to go to the Yukon and look for gold. He and one son, Sam, headed north on borrowed money.<sup>15</sup>

The answer to the question about the borrowed money can be found in the “Baker Family Genealogy” written in 1980 by Willie Dunn, the son of Harry F. Dunn, one of the four sons of S.C. Dunn who travelled to the Yukon. In the Genealogy, Willie writes of his “Uncle Bill’s” 1898 journey to the Yukon: “Uncle Bill Stanley of Seattle Washington left for Alaska first on monies borrowed from my grandfather, S.C. Dunn to make his fortune and he did just that, struck it rich.”<sup>16</sup> This is the only known reference to how Stanley financed his travels north, travels that would ultimately lead to riches. Families clearly relied on their members for assistance in raising funds for prospecting.

We learn more about William Stanley’s life and success as a gold miner from this 1897 memoir, in which he described his experiences and travels through Alaska, across the Chilcoot Pass and into the Yukon Territory. He mentions, Sixty Mile, Forty Mile,<sup>17</sup> Glacier and Birch creeks as well as Thron Duyck River (Klondike).<sup>18</sup> He remembered, “I was resolved that since there was gold in the far north I would have some of it, despite the snow, ice, blizzards and Mosquitos.”<sup>19</sup> He used dramatic language and imagery to describe his departure into the remote Arctic region, with references to the loss of civilization and the inherent dangers. “To be menaced by wild beasts and blizzards, climbing rocks and precipices where a single misstep might plunge one into a gorge hundreds of feet below; perhaps frozen to death, or worse still to

---

<sup>15</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 98.

<sup>16</sup> Ralph D. Shipp, compiler, “A Baker Family Genealogy,” 290.

<sup>17</sup> The names of these locations were generated by their distance from Ft. Reliance.

<sup>18</sup> William M. Stanley, *A Mile of Gold: Strange Adventures on the Yukon* (Chicago, IL: Laird and Lee Publishers, 1898), 10.

<sup>19</sup> Stanley, *A Mile of Gold*, 10.

die of starvation; shooting rapids where a missed stroke would prove fatal or a hidden rock might send me into an eternity.”<sup>20</sup> Although all the aforementioned hazards were indeed, possibilities, the enumeration of them in one sentence certainly functioned to give the reader a mental image of all the worst-case scenarios at the same time. He portrayed himself as fearless, a conquering hero, an *ubermensch* of sorts, steeped in the pioneer spirit of his ancestors. He was the incarnation of the popular depiction of masculine Manifest Destiny tropes. Stanley departed Seattle on the steamer *Al Ki on* March 8<sup>th</sup> 1896 with his son, Sam.<sup>21</sup> Aboard ship the Stanleys fell in with two other gold seekers who hailed from New York State, brothers Gage and Charles Worden. The Stanleys and the Wordens formed a “partnership” and agreed that they would pool their resources and try their hand at mining together.<sup>22</sup> As the memoir points out, miners relied on informal and/or spontaneous partnerships or other pragmatic arrangements designed to bolster the possibilities of success.

After many months working the sand bars in the rivers and creeks and finding little, the Stanleys and the Wordens were about to give up and return to the “outside.” Stanley described the arrival of a single Indian by canoe who told them of the success of one George McCormack (in some writings referred to as George Carmack) who was digging gold not far from where the party was camped. Stanley wrote of the Indian, “And then in the poetic language of the northern Indian, he relates the wonderful story of boundless wealth, the story that was ere long to set the civilized world agog and be the talk of the universe; causing thousands to leave comfortable homes and happy families to worship at the shrine of this golden god.”<sup>23</sup> Pierre Berton corroborated this account of the Indian’s information. He concurs that the party was at the end of

---

<sup>20</sup> Stanley, *A Mile of Gold*, 11.

<sup>21</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 98.

<sup>22</sup> Stanley, *A Mile of Gold*, 13-15.

<sup>23</sup> Stanley, *A Mile of Gold*, 81.

their resources when “an old Indian drifted by in a canoe to say that a white man had found much gold on the Klondike.”<sup>24</sup> Together with the Wordens, the Stanleys staked claims at Eldorado #25 and #26 as well as securing shares in other claims along the Klondike and its creeks.

Less than a year later, on July 17, 1897, the steamship *Portland* pulled into Seattle from St. Michaels, Alaska. Aboard, it was reported, were 68 miners from the Yukon who had brought back with them a ton of gold that later proved, in reality, to be nearly two tons of the precious metal. The *Seattle Post Intelligencer* credited this incident as the trigger that began what Pierre Berton described as one of the strangest mass movements in history, the Yukon Gold Rush, which would eventually attract some 100,000 prospectors.<sup>25</sup> The headlines that day in the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* heralded the *Portland*'s arrival. “Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold! Sixty eight Rich Men On the Steamer *Portland*. STACKS OF YELLOW METAL! Some have \$5,000.00, Many Have More, A Few Bring Out \$100,000.00 Each. The Steamer Carries \$700,000.”<sup>26</sup> Crowds estimated at 5000 were on hand for the arrival. Included in this special edition of the paper were a list of the miners and the approximate value of the gold that each was carrying. The special edition listed William M. Stanley as returning with between \$90,000 and \$112,000.00 in gold nuggets and dust, although other sources reported different amounts for Stanley. The National Park Service recounted that Stanley was in fact, a listed passenger on the *Portland* but had his gold value at a mere \$10,000.00. *The Chicago Record's Book for Gold Seekers*, listed nearly all the miners who arrived on the *Portland* and gave Stanley's on-board gold holdings at

---

<sup>24</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 98.

<sup>25</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 126. Berton refers to the stampede as one of the “strangest mass movements in history.” He qualifies this handle by his following description: “The great stampede was moving at express train speed by midwinter, its course illuminated by the various quirks and eccentricities, personal tragedies, follies, follies fortunes and excitements which mark any large exodus of people. All that winter and through most of the following summer, men and women by the tens of thousands crossed oceans and continents, moving by train, steamship, scow, horseback, oxcart, foot and raft to reach the magic land.”

<sup>26</sup> “HistoryLink.org-The Free Online Encyclopedia of Washington State History.” Accessed from the internet 1/15/2012. [http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file\\_id=687](http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=687) , 1.

\$112,000.00 which agrees with the amount printed by the *Seattle Post Intelligencer*.<sup>27</sup> Of all the returning travelers, only the Alaska Commercial Company and Clarence Berry were reported to be carrying a larger sum. Regardless of the exact amount of Stanley's gold, all sources agree that his claims were worth millions. Again, Pierre Berton commented on Stanley's good fortune in his 1959 account:

William Stanley, the old book seller said that 'the Klondike is no doubt the best place to make money there is in the world.' Stanley's story was quickly circulated. His wife in Anacortes, (Washington) had been living on wild blueberries and taking in laundry to keep her family together. When news reached her, she dropped the wet clothes, told her customers to fish their own out of the tub, and moved with her husband into a downtown hotel where she threw out her meager wardrobe and called in a dressmaker to design raiment more appropriate for the wife of a Klondike prince.<sup>28</sup>

Berton's account bolsters the mythological rags to riches story that certainly was Stanley's. However, one would have to take Berton's accounts with the proverbial "grain of salt." More than likely, Berton exaggerated the details of the story to stress that many of those miners who succeeded in finding gold experienced radical changes in their personalities. Readings from Adney as well as Berton relate many accounts of men and women who underwent a metamorphosis when their financial fortunes took a turn for the better. However, S.B. Dunn did not describe this phenomenon in his diary or his later reflections. Virtually all published authors, however, noted that the majority of the "Klondike Kings" ended up pretty much the same as they were when they began, broke. Many gambled away their fortunes and many were taken in by charlatans who swindled them out of their gains. Others lavished gold and what it could buy on dance hall girls succumbing to loneliness.

---

<sup>27</sup> *Klondike: The Chicago Record's Book For Gold Seekers*, (Chicago, IL: The Chicago Record Co., 1897) 183. It should be noted that *The Chicago Record* published from 1893-1901 and then merged with the *Chicago Tribune*.

<sup>28</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 184.

Apparently, great wealth had not eroded the character of this particular “Klondike King,” William Stanley. Many articles in the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* referenced those miners who disembarked the *Portland* carrying their bags and suitcases full of gold and not all those references were positive. However, Stanley apparently managed to keep his perspectives in line with his lifelong core values – hard work and a strong moral compass. An article published in the *Seattle Daily Times* relayed the story of an employee of Stanley’s Eldorado mine, Charles Ross, who, knowing that Stanley was leaving for the “outside,” asked that he deliver a bag of gold to a woman in Seattle who he alleged was keeping his children because his wife had abandoned the family. Stanley took the bag of gold and carried it with him on the *Portland*. Persons who travelled in and out of the Yukon often carried letters, special provisions and funds for others. References to this practice appear several times in the consulted sources. Ross had mailed the woman and told her to meet the steamer on its arrival in Seattle. Stanley waited but the woman failed to contact him. Certain that he had been deceived, he hired a private detective to find Ross’s wife and children and the search turned them up living in squalor in Seattle. She informed Stanley that two of her seven children had died whilst Ross was prospecting in the Yukon and that she had sent letter after letter informing him of the tragic losses but received no reply. Stanley gave her the bag of gold informing her that it would be “charged to her husband’s account.”<sup>29</sup> It was apparent that Ross had tried to deceive Stanley since Stanley would not have known his wife from any other woman who was supposed to meet him at the dock and in fact, that is exactly what happened. The woman who met Stanley at the dock was Ross’ girlfriend. Once again, Stanley’s strong core values – his determination to find the truth and commitment to family – were clearly demonstrated in this account. Money had not eroded his integrity. He

---

<sup>29</sup> *Seattle Daily Times*, August 11, 1897: 1, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/nb/image/v2:127D718D1E33F961>

revealed this first in his visit to Villisca in 1897 to spend time with family and then in his apparent encouragement to that same family to come and join him in the Yukon where he helped underwrite the trip for his relatives by providing them with well-paying work. Although Stanley had been launched into another galaxy of the economic universe, he remained at his very center, an individual with enduring values and morals.

Apparently, after their arrival on the *Portland*, these returning Argonauts found little if any peace. Reporters frequently hounded these men and few women. The *Seattle Daily Times* reported that the “Stanleys were very tired” and that “they had received all the newspaper fame they desired.”<sup>30</sup> An unidentified friend and neighbor of the Stanleys sent a letter to the editor which in summary, asked the paper to stop making mention of their every coming and going. She noted that his lifestyle had not changed one iota since his return with a “refrigerator full of gold.”<sup>31</sup> Not only did this letter writer vilify the *Seattle Daily Times* but went on to make a blanket statement that the newspapers of Seattle “have treated Mr. Stanley with great injustice.” The letter advised Stanley to tell other miners returning from the Yukon to keep their gold totals quiet and then, before the press has had a chance to cast them hyperbolically as imaginary princes of the north, consider relocating their families to “some locality where people can appreciate whole-souled, worthy people and do not take every possible occasion to malign and insult them.”<sup>32</sup>

Stanley’s phenomenal success was also not lost on Montgomery County’s *Villisca Review*, who listed Stanley’s worth at about three million dollars (which in 2015 would amount

---

<sup>30</sup> *Seattle Daily Times*, September 15, 1897: 5, Accessed March 3, 2015, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/nb/image/v2:127D718D1E33F961>

<sup>31</sup> Published letter to the editor, *Seattle Daily Times*, September 15, 1897, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Published letter to the editor, *Seattle Daily Times*, September 15, 1897, 5.



to slightly over 83 million).<sup>33</sup> But perhaps more importantly to Samuel Baker Dunn and other Villiscans who would follow Stanley's example, the paper announced the arrival of members of the Stanley family in Montgomery County. The *Villisca Review* described the entourage as Mr. and Mrs. William Stanley, son John and a daughter. They had apparently arrived the prior week and were visiting members of the Baker, Dunn and Poston families. The visit along with the deep ties between these families would help motivate a large group of Montgomery County residents to take the journey to the Yukon. Indeed, the personal histories of William Stanley and Samuel Caldwell Dunn, and their relationships to each other are critical to comprehending the push-pull forces that affected the decisions of members of the Dunn, Gourley and other Villiscan families to make drastic accommodations in their lives and the lives of their families in order to realize their adventure: a search for success in the gold fields of the Yukon.

Although Samuel Baker Dunn wrote prolifically about the history of Montgomery County and his father S.C. Dunn in particular, he left very little information about his own personal history and that of his three brothers who travelled with him. In part, as a result of his prioritization and personal focus, there is little information on the members of the two groups, the Dunn Party and the Gourley Party. His commitment to recording and preserving the county history and memorializing the "pioneer spirit" that possessed its early inhabitants do, however, paint an extraordinary broad-brush vista of the settlers to the Nodaway Valley. S.B. Dunn's obituary published in the *Villisca Review* on June 5<sup>th</sup> 1941, outlines his life's "mile markers." He was born on February 22, 1866 just north of Villisca. After his death in Roseburg, Oregon at the age of 74, he was survived by his wife Anna, children Hazel Stevens and Chauncey Dunn, and granddaughter Jean Stevens who was a student at University of California, Los Angeles. The

---

<sup>33</sup> *Villisca Review*, October 28, 1897, 1.

obituary mentioned his grocery business in Villisca and the adventure to the Yukon gold fields with his three brothers in 1898-99 and highlighted his relocations, first to Lake Park, Minnesota, then to Anacortes, Washington, and finally to his farm in Roseburg, Oregon.<sup>34</sup> Most of what is known about S.B. Dunn's life outside of Villisca is revealed by his writings in several publications as well as in private correspondence, journal entries, and comments written on the versos of many pictures that he took and developed.

In the wake of the Stanley visit to Villisca in 1897, what the press coined as "Klondikitis"<sup>35</sup> seemed to have taken hold of the Dunn and Gourley clans. Berton describes this "disease," in his monograph, giving example after example of the outward manifestations of this ailment. Therefore, what was being experienced everywhere had certainly not bypassed Montgomery County. Certainly, the cause and effect of the Stanley family visit to Montgomery County in December of 1897 had to have been a major factor in influencing an inordinate number of local and regional people to try their hands as miners in the north. Stanley's success encouraged men and women in Villisca to make arrangements for others to work their farms and to care of their wives, husbands, and children in order to try their luck at an occupation that just a short time ago, they probably could not even have fathomed.

Shortly after Stanley's visit, meetings were held in virtually every kitchen in the county as families weighed the prospects of risking potentially everything in search of gold. *The Villisca Review* announced on January 13, 1897 that "a meeting will be held at the armory on Friday evening to organize a company to 'grubstake' a party from here on a prospecting tour in Alaska or the Klondike region. Everybody come!"<sup>36</sup> There is no follow up information concerning who attended the meeting or the name of the company that was formed. Grubstaking involved raising

---

<sup>34</sup> *Villisca Review*, June 5, 1941, 8.

<sup>35</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 115.

<sup>36</sup> *Villisca Review*, January 13, 1897, 5.

the funds needed to outfit and send a person or party north. In return, contributors who provided funds received half of any profits realized from that person's or party's good fortune. The value of said "grubstake" seemed to have been about one thousand dollars. This method of arm's length participation certainly allowed those unable to travel directly a chance to get in the game. An article in the *Villisca Review* dated September 30, 1897, read more like an advertisement to invest. The article discussed the fact that the Alaska Gold Mining and Development Company, formed in Omaha, Nebraska was advertising shares of capital stock with a par value of one dollar per share. In order to purchase there was a minimum of two hundred and fifty shares at ten cents per share. All in all there were 500,000 shares available. The solicitation continued, "The Company...will send a large number of experienced prospectors to the Klondike Gold Fields. Under the plan of operating proposed by this Company, it is believed those interested will realize enormous profits."<sup>37</sup>

S.B. Dunn was able to raise the needed cash to make the journey by selling his interest in a local business. The *Villisca Review* reported the sale of S.B. Dunn's ownership in *Atkinson & Dunn*, an upscale grocery located on the downtown square in Villisca. This sale allowed S.B. Dunn to fully fund his expenses needed to make the journey thus providing his own grubstake. The article stated, "Arthur Atkinson has bought out his partner, S.B. Dunn's interest in the grocery business and will hereafter be sole proprietor of the store."<sup>38</sup> The article went on to describe the store as having prospered under the ownership of the partners due to the fact that they were always well stocked and the offerings were excellent. The article concluded, "We are not aware of Mr. Dunn's intentions but presume he may yet become touched with the Klondyke

---

<sup>37</sup> "A Chance to Secure Alaska Gold," *Villisca Review*, 4.

<sup>38</sup> *Villisca Review*, November 11, 1897, 6.

fever.”<sup>39</sup> Since it had been widely reported that William Stanley had been visiting the Dunn family, the *Villisca Review* presumed that Dunn intended to make the journey north. Research did not indicate that any of the other travelers in both the Dunn and Gourley parties had sold their property in order to make the trip. Elaine Artlip, a local Montgomery County historian, relayed that virtually all of the travelers of the Dunn Party were farmers although little is known about who handled their acreage during their absence.<sup>40</sup> She noted that George Dunn rented J.L. Gouley’s farm which allowed Gourley to make the trip and John Moritz relocated onto R.A. Dunn’s farm which freed R.A. up to go as well.<sup>41</sup> Harry Dunn, one of the four Dunn brothers, travelled to Villisca from Ashburn, Missouri to depart with his siblings.<sup>42</sup>

Besides the Dunn clan, many other residents of Montgomery County prepared to make the journey north. There were two parties that organized in the winter of 1898 and departed for the Yukon in February of that year. The “Baker Genealogy” provided the genesis of the groups. After Stanley’s visit to Villisca, “Klondikitis” seemed to have affected two main groups from the Tenville – Villisca area. The members of the Gourley Party included Brothers Robert and John Gourley, Bob “R.A.” Dunn who was a cousin to the four Dunn brothers, Prat Mayhew, a “Dutchman” from Kansas named Mullen, and Bev Lucy.<sup>43</sup> The *Sun* made note that John Gouley’s Klondike outfit had been displayed in a local store window for several days and had “attracted much attention. The sleeping bag and the snow spectacles were especial objects of

---

<sup>39</sup> *Villisca Review*, November 11, 1897, 6.

<sup>40</sup> Elaine Artlip, a local Montgomery County historian has written many articles for the *Villisca Review*. These references come from an article titled “Gold!!” which was submitted by her daughter Linda Artlip Weinstein and subsequently published in the *Villisca Review Stanton Viking* on July 10, 2014. Besides the published article, a copy of the article in working form listed each of the editions of the *Villisca Review* where most of the information was gleaned. Elaine Artlip resides in Villisca, Iowa where she continues to conduct research about Montgomery County.

<sup>41</sup> *Villisca Review*, January 13, 1898, 10; *Villisca Review* January 20, 1898, 10.

<sup>42</sup> *Villisca Review*, January 27, 1898.

<sup>43</sup> Shipp, *A Baker Family Genealogy*, 37.

interest.”<sup>44</sup> On February 17, 1898, the *Review* reported that the Dunn party, who consisted of Harry, Samuel, Charles, and Robert Dunn along with Lum Higgins, the representative of the stock company, Town Poston, Henry Holland, James McMahon and Martin Nelson, were about to leave for Seattle.<sup>45</sup> The *Sun* and the *Red Oak Iowa Daily* also located in Montgomery County gave a bit more detail on the stock company. “There are 48 shares of stock of value of twenty five dollars each, making \$1,200.00. Mr. Higgins is to put in eighteen months prospecting.”<sup>46</sup> The parties departed just a few days apart. Several others from the county left in that time frame as well and it was likely that they too were affected by the Stanley visit. It is clear from the newspaper coverage that Stanley’s visit inspired many local Iowans and that they saw in Stanley’s reported 112 thousand dollars in gold cargo aboard the *Portland*, 112 thousand reasons for the possibility of their own potential success in the gold fields of the Yukon. On February 25, 1898, the *Red Oak Express*, another Montgomery County paper, reported “The first party of Red Oak Klondikers expect to leave for the Northwest next Monday, provided that all their supplies that have been ordered arrive before that time. The party will be headed by R.B. Hall, who will be accompanied by City Clerk, O.E. Jackson and John and Richard Davis of Lincoln Township.”<sup>47</sup> This statement implied that the Hall party was only the first of many to leave and indeed, subsequent articles in the *Sun* bore that out. In March of 1898, the *Sun* reported that four men from Elliott would depart soon as part of a group of about one hundred leaving from St. Louis, Missouri. This party like many others was formed by a consortium of investors and sent a representative, a Mr. Hobbs to Elliott, to make the necessary contacts with those going with the party. This particular party was headed to the Copper River gold fields in Alaska, an area

---

<sup>44</sup> “Was an Old Settler,” *Sun*, February 18, 1898, 1.

<sup>45</sup> “Away to the Klondike,” *Villisca Review*, February 17, 1898, 5.

<sup>46</sup> “Was an Old Settler,” *Sun*, February 18, 1898, 1

<sup>47</sup> “Off for the Klondike,” *Red Oak Express*, February 25, 1898, 2

showing promise.<sup>48</sup> O.E. Jackson of the Hall Party left many well written letters to his wife and children and since he was in the north at the same time as the two Villisca parties, his letters can certainly be used to validate reports emanating from the Villiscans.

Personal and familial connections of William Stanley, the “Klondike prince,” served as catalysts resulting in rash decisions, unrealistic expectations, and much family sacrifice in a quest to repeat Stanley’s successful endeavor in the Yukon. These connections, combined with Iowans’ belief that they had inherited a pioneer spirit, galvanized S.B. Dunn and others. And yet, personal relationships alone cannot explain why such an inordinately large number of Montgomery County residents left for the Yukon. Larger economic, political and environmental issues also lured Iowans of Montgomery County to the north.

---

<sup>48</sup> “Going to Alaska,” *Sun*, March 25, 1898, 1.

## CHAPTER III

## IOWANS IN SEARCH OF THEIR ELUSIVE EL DORADO

Besides the interpersonal relationships that existed or were formed between the various “cast” members, many other forces played on the psyches of those Iowans, most of them farmers, debating whether to make the journey north. The state of agriculture in the region, rainfall, crop prices and the price that the railroads charged to move the harvest to its final destination all affected Iowans’ decisions to join parties moving north. Another factor was the formation of a third political party, the Populists, who advocated for, among many things, unlimited coinage of silver. Tariffs aimed to protect domestic manufacturing and agriculture against foreign competition often had the opposite effect and eliminated competition and thus raising the prices for farm implements and machinery. The Panic of 1893, which led to mass unemployment, added proverbial “fuel to the fire.” There were also more subtle forces, which could not be easily identified but exerted pressure on the prospective travelers. The perceived closing of the frontier in about 1890 certainly played on the values of a male dominated society which gave great esteem to those men who had braved the westward trek in search of land and freedom and their own manhood. And then there was the ever increasing value of gold. After the Populists’ demise in 1896, and with it Populists’ hopes of bimetallism, the value of gold soared both in real as well as in perceived value. A shift toward sensationalism in journalism amplified this perceived value of gold; in their coverage of the Yukon Gold Rush, their newspapers often exaggerated stories about the tons of gold nuggets that could be picked up off the ground. These factors combined to push many Iowans into making the seemingly irrational decision to take that

leap of faith, against all odds, and become part of one of the most unusual migrations in the history of the United States.

In order to better understand the mindset of Iowans like S.B. Dunn and their decisions to join the Yukon Gold Rush, it is important to examine how late nineteenth century economic conditions and political influences affected the region where four states intersect: Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri and Iowa.

### Political Changes and Challenges

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the country faced on a period of economic instability and political reorientation. President Grover Cleveland's second four-year term beginning in 1893 started the worst depression in U.S. history. Almost like dominoes, the failure of the railroads led to the failure of the steel industry, and banks, and sent the employment rate plummeting. The Panic affected everyone regardless of geographic area or political leaning.

Successive administrations in the 1880s and 1890s employed tariffs as economic "valves" to control the flow of foreign goods into the U.S. These protective tariffs coupled with speculative investments compounded the difficulties experienced by the agrarian sector during the late nineteenth century. The McKinley Tariff of 1890, which raised the rates on many imported goods to between 39-50%, had the net effect of increasing consumer prices.<sup>1</sup> Tariffs levied by the U.S. were met with like or more severe duties imposed on American goods by countries forced to pay import duties to the U.S. Iowans expressed interest in and concern for these nationwide political and economic issues, especially the tariffs. The *Villisca Review*, which endorsed the Republican Party during the 1896 presidential election, published the Party's

---

<sup>1</sup> Douglas A. Irwin, "Higher Tariffs, Lower Revenues? Analyzing the Fiscal Aspects of the 'Great Tariff Debate of 1888'" *The Journal of Economic History* 58, No. 1 (March, 1998): 59-72.



platform on Thursday August 6, 1896. The paper's sub headline to the article read "A Masterly Declaration of Principles that Will Insure Victory." The platform supported economic protectionism through higher tariffs and condemned the current lower Democrat tariff as "sectional, injurious to the public credit and destructive to business enterprise."<sup>2</sup> The *Villisca Review* supported higher tariffs on imported industrial goods, even while the retaliatory tariffs on U.S. agricultural staples levied by foreign countries made it more difficult for many Midwestern farmers to sell their products abroad. As a result, from 1892-1896 the market prices of corn and beans fell by twenty percent. Speculation in land, railroads, stocks and other popping of investment bubbles served as catalyst for the economic downturn. Inflation caused by the unrealistic values wrought by speculators helped spark the 1893 panic, which in turn led to wholesale deflation, particularly in agriculture.

In the election of 1896, the issue that polarized voters, perhaps more than any other, was bimetallism. A great debate between proponents of bimetallism and those in support of the gold standard took place on the podiums of both Democrat and Republican conventions during the period leading up to the elections of 1896. William Jennings Bryan, the Democrat nominee, argued against the gold only standard for backing the nation's money supply. He was certain that the gold only standard would hamper potential gains for the working person.<sup>3</sup> Paper dollars guaranteed by gold alone, Bryan argued, limited the amount of money that was circulating in the nation's economy. He further argued that if the paper currency could be backed by a combination of silver and gold, the result would be that more dollars would flow and that the increased money supply would boost the economic fortunes of the middle classes. William McKinley, the Republican presidential candidate, and his "gold bugs" supporters, instead believed as John

---

<sup>2</sup> "Republican Platform" in *The Villisca Review*, supplement, August 6, 1896, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Morse, *The Nature of Gold*, 17.

Locke and Thomas Aquinas that the value of a coin was “determined by the intrinsic value of the metal.”<sup>4</sup> Of all the precious metals used in coinage, gold had always held its value and for the most part, every other medium of exchange was tied to its value, which was fixed and therefore immutable.

Furthermore, some economic theorists during the late nineteenth century argued that gold was the standard that had been selected by “nature” and that gold miners were, in fact, part of a natural cycle. When the economy necessitated an increase in the supply of gold, men were given the incentive to go into the gold fields and work to take it out of the ground. Some believed that God himself had deemed that gold was the divinely ordained standard for “His people.”

According to the late nineteenth century historian David Wells, these economists invoked the gold standard as “the triumphant product of Darwin’s laws of evolution applied to the economic realm.”<sup>5</sup> Republican supporters of the gold standard rationalized their stance by associating the gold standard with morality. Morse, quoted historian Irwin Unger, who declared that his research uncovered that “protestant preachers and writers led the attack against the heresy of paper money, inflation, and silver in Christian newspapers and from the pulpit.” She also noted that David Wells had argued bimetallism by declaring that it was “warfare against the beneficence of the Almighty.”<sup>6</sup> Conversely, the “Greenbackers,” supporters of bimetallism, believed that the value of any commodity was determined by the labor of human beings and therefore the mining of silver made it as worthy a candidate for backing currency as gold. Earlier, America had accepted bimetallism as the norm but, in 1890 Congress passed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act that required the government to buy up millions of ounces of silver. This had the net effect

---

<sup>4</sup> Morse, *The Nature of Gold*, 23.

<sup>5</sup> David A. Wells, *The Silver Question: The Dollar of the Father versus the Dollar of the Sons* (New York: G.P. Putman’s sons, 1877), 37.

<sup>6</sup> Morse, *The Nature of Gold*, 24-25.

of raising the price of that metal which in turn raised the price of gold because of the 16:1 ratio established by the Act.<sup>7</sup> At the end of the day, McKinley and the “gold bugs” were victorious and with the discovery of gold that followed only months after the election, it seemed almost providential that a new supply of the precious metal was going to fill the void left by the deletion of silver as a standard.

The Panic of 1893 and debates over the tariff and bimetallism during the election of 1896 evidence that the “Gay Nineties” did not necessarily live up to its happy name especially for the working class people. When the economic boom of the 1880s ended, the country was left with a large number of unemployed, disgruntled and frustrated workers. Among them were a group of unemployed men who under the leadership of Populist Jacob Coxey, marched to the nation’s capital in 1894 to demand relief. Coxey’s army as they were called had hoped that thousands more would have taken up the cause but only about four hundred marchers actually made it to Washington, DC. Coxey advocated for the amending of the Constitution to “affirm the right of everyone to have work,” the nationalization of the railways, the telegraph and of the mining industry, and an investigation into the possibility of nationalizing the trusts.”<sup>8</sup> His plea fell on deaf congressional ears and after Coxey was arrested for trespassing on the steps of the Capitol, his “Army of the Commonweal” disbanded.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Prior to the passage of the Sherman Silver Act of 1890, the country’s metal standard was based on the Coinage Act of 1873 which held that gold was the only metallic standard in the U.S. and thus placed the country on the, de facto, gold standard. This “Crime of ‘73” was supplanted by the Bland Allison Act of 1878 which compelled the government to buy between two and four million ounces of silver per month. President Rutherford B. Hayes, who had vetoed the bill, weakened the effect of the bill by buying the minimum amount specified by the Act. The Act was replaced by the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890 which was repealed by President Grover Cleveland in 1893 following the Panic of 1893. The Gold Standard Act of 1900 codified and legalized what had been in place since 1879. The thrust of the Act declared that the gold dollar would be the standard unit of value and all forms of money issued or coined, shall be maintained at a parity of value with this standard. See, Samuel Rezneck, “Depression of 1893-1897,” *Journal of Political Economy* 61, No. 4 (August 1953), 343-345.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Rezneck, “Unemployment, Unrest, and Relief in the United States during the Depression of 1893-97,” *Journal of Political Economy*, University of Chicago Press, 61, No. 4 (August 1953): 334.

<sup>9</sup> Rezneck, “Unemployment, Unrest, and Relief,” 334.

To the suffering unemployed such as those who marched on Washington in 1894, the promise of acquiring gold in the northwest seemed to offer a get rich quick scheme. Even as the reports of the discovery of gold along the creeks near Dawson in the Yukon began to trickle down from the north, other reports as late as early 1897 painted an economic picture of a country still recovering from the 1893 depression. Shortly after the election of the Republicans in 1896, the *Red Oak Express* explained away the unusual numbers of bank failures as a “weeding out of institutions that have been badly managed,” and assured its readers that “the condition of the country is growing better every day,” and “there is plenty of money to loan on good collateral.”<sup>10</sup> Noting that the number of business failures had been the highest since 1893, the *Villisca Review* posted the following observations under a sub-heading of “Statistics of Commercial Collapses in 1896”: “Besides the commercial failures, there were 195 bank failures during the year with liabilities closely approximating \$50,000,000.00.”<sup>11</sup> The article went on to report that in 1895 the number of bank failures had stood at 132. Economist Charles Hoffman observed that the Panic of 1893 was a major economic contraction that resulted in unprecedented unemployment, which at the height of the depression loomed at about twenty percent. He noted that by the middle of 1894 “156 railroad companies with about 2.5 billion in capitalization and representing about 30,000 miles were in the hands of receivers.”<sup>12</sup> This stunning fact showed that although the economy was improving, overall economic relief was not yet in sight. The Republican victories in the 1896 election boded well in the opinions of both the *Red Oak Express* and the *Villisca Review* and by casting the bank failures as the result of natural business survival the articles suggested that relief was inevitable, and the government was now in the hands of leaders who would, no

---

<sup>10</sup> “Causes of Bank Failures,” *Red Oak Express*, January 15, 1897.

<sup>11</sup> “Failures of a Year,” *Villisca Review*, April 3, 1897, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Hoffman, “The Depression of the Nineties,” *Journal of Economic History*, 16, No. 2 (June 1956): 138.

doubt, affect the needed changes for recovery. This prognostication of better times to come was not enough to dissuade many men who had already made up their minds to take the perceived road to riches. Kathryn Morse in her *The Nature of Gold: Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush*, described the economy of the 1890s depression era as “stagnant and a population desperate.”<sup>13</sup> She noted that because economic improvement was for the most part, unperceivable, the potential of real wealth, instant wealth, made subscribing to the Yukon “solution” the natural choice for so many. The lingering Panic of 1893, provided enough impetus to forsake a lifestyle of farming, banking or on-again off-again employment for the possibilities held out by the discovery of gold.

Since the election of President Lincoln, the Republican Party reigned in Montgomery County. The *Villisca Review* during the run-up to the election of 1896, posted candidates for various offices but only those who represented the Republican Party. As evidenced from a variety of local newspapers, Iowa was Republican country; no endorsements of Democrats were found in any of the three Montgomery County newspapers. Pre-election polls were virtually unknown, however, the *Review* posted this interesting “unofficial” poll: “Elwood Moore on his return from St. Paul last week gave us these straws to show how the wind was blowing: On the train to St. Paul a vote of presidential preferences was taken with the following result: McKinley 120, Bryan 28. The ladies also voted: McKinley 63, Bryan 7. On the southbound train the vote stood: McKinley 285, Bryan 34.”<sup>14</sup> Although Bryan garnered nationwide 6,370,897 votes to McKinley’s 7,105,144, in Iowa the margin of the Republican victory was greater: 289,293 to 223,741.<sup>15</sup> The vote in Montgomery County was not even close. McKinley received 2,927 (63%)

---

<sup>13</sup> Morse, *The Nature of Gold*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> The *Villisca Review*, September 10, 1896, 4.

<sup>15</sup> David Leip *Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections*, accessed 02/18/2016, <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/state.php?f=o&fips=19&year=1896>

to Bryan's 1,636.<sup>16</sup> The *Villisca Review* was chocked full of editorials and articles praising the victory and dismissing the "Demopop" losses as "false leaders rebuked" and heralding the "doom of silver."<sup>17</sup> Iowans had definitive ideas of the future of the country and they were obviously mirrored in the Republican Party platform. Aside from their own individual nuances, Iowans believed mightily in the value of gold as the only medium of exchange. The results of the election of 1896 represented another validation of the decision by many Iowans to take the leap of faith and travel north to the goldfields.

#### The Minimal Effect of Populism in Iowa

That Populism was embraced in Kansas and Nebraska but showed little strength in Iowa, is also important to understanding the diverse forces that influenced Iowans' decisions to migrate north.<sup>18</sup> Populism was strong in the states west of the Rockies, as well as in many Midwest states. A map indicating voting patterns in the 1892 election revealed that virtually all of the Populist voting block was located west of the Missouri River. To the South, those territories that bordered the Populist block did not have the vote. Oklahoma was a territory and shared its geography with Native American reservations and New Mexico and Arizona had not yet achieved statehood by 1892. Nebraska was a hot bed of Populism and its major metropolitan area Omaha was a mere seventy five miles from Montgomery County, Iowa. It made sense that Nebraska and Iowa would have shared the same political views since both states were agrarian, experienced the same weather patterns, grew the same crops and were populated by people who had travelled west during the expansion to the Plain States. Historian, Jeffery Ostler pointed out

---

<sup>16</sup> The *Villisca Review*, November 19, 1896, 9.

<sup>17</sup> The *Villisca Review*, November 19, 1896, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Jeffery Ostler, "Why the Populist Party was Strong in Kansas and Nebraska but Weak in Iowa," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 23, No. 4, (November, 1992): 452.

that in the election of 1892, James B. Weaver, a native Iowan and Populist presidential candidate, received only eight percent of the total vote in his home state and although he had a strong showing in the block located west of Iowa and north of Arizona and the Indian Territories in Oklahoma, he failed to receive any support in Iowa.

In an effort to combat low grain prices, high cost of rail transportation, a shrinking number of dollars available in circulation, and an apparent disregard for the working class by the Republicans, the Populists outlined their demands for change in 1892 and 1896. Both platforms demanded free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold at the present legal ratio of 16 to 1 and a graduated income tax. They also advocated for government owned and operated railroads, government acquisition of excess land currently held by railroads and alien speculators, and the land's distribution to actual settlers. In the absence of government owned railroads, Populists as well as Democrats advocated for an elected railroad commission in every state.

As Ostler explains, since most of the Populist leaning states were west of the Missouri River and therefore geographically closer to the western gateways to the goldfields, there may have been a greater proclivity to give mining in the north a chance but that decision had less to do with politics than geography. The mining of silver, gold, and other metals was not foreign to many of the western states. Nevada, Colorado and the Dakotas each had mining industries. In addition to the western states, much of the South as an agrarian region also embraced Populism but these states sent fewer men and women to the gold fields. The focus of much of the southern population was rebuilding farms and families as most of the population had been farming there for generations. Economic issues dominating the region were less about bimetallism and more

about tariffs and transportation regulation. It had only been a little more than a generation since the end of the Civil War.<sup>19</sup>

Joyce L. Alig cited the *Times Bulletin* in Van Wert, Ohio, which stated on February 11, 1898 some 10,000 men from Iowa were heading to the Klondike.<sup>20</sup> Other states in the Midwest - Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan - each reportedly sent half or less the number. That more than twice as many Iowans left than people from nearby states suggests that Iowans likely valued gold differently from those of other Midwest states. A look at the Populist versus Republican influences in Iowa casts some light on the situation. Most historians agreed that the Populist success was due to economic conditions and where those conditions were poor, Populism flourished. However, where farmers experienced fewer hardships, there was not the same need to embrace a third party for potential relief. While Iowan farmers did suffer the effects of the depressed economy, Ostler made the argument that unlike in other Midwestern states, in Iowa competing political parties provided the farmers a forum to advocate successfully for reform within the existing two party political system. Although a Republican stronghold, a strong challenge from the Democrat-Greenback coalition in the mid-1880s got the attention of the Iowan Republicans. Both Republicans and Democrat-Greenbacks endeavored to address the demands of the agrarian sector. These demands mirrored those of the Farmers' Alliance, which had gained strength. However, in states such as Kansas and Nebraska where the parties were complacent and less competitive, the Populist Party took on the persona of a possible new advocate for relief from high tariffs, high rail rates and the deflationary spiral especially as it pertained to the prices of crops.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Ostler, "Why the Populist Party was Strong in Kansas and Nebraska but Weak in Iowa," 454.

<sup>20</sup> Joyce L. Alig, "Old Gold Rush to Alaska Diaries of 1898-1900," *Passport to History Series, Book VIII*, Cartagena, Ohio (The Messenger Press, 2001), xv.

<sup>21</sup> Ostler, "Why the Populist Party was Strong in Kansas and Nebraska but Weak in Iowa," 453.



Given that the Republican Party in Iowa was more responsive to the concerns and needs of its farmers than the Republicans in other similar Mid-western states and by virtue of the fact that the Iowa Republicans were willing to work together with the Iowa Democrats to that same end, Populism held less appeal. As early as 1887, Iowans pressured their politicians to support elected railroad commissioners. Rather than support the Populist platform in Montgomery County, “the G.O.P. denounced those ‘traitors to the Republican party’ who had voted against the election of railroad commissioners in the previous legislature and demanded an elective commission ‘clothed with full power to fix maximum rates of freight charges.’”<sup>22</sup> Thus, Iowa Republican conservative candidates, fearing that the election of 1887 would tip the balance in favor of the Democrats and Populists, joined the Democrats and Populists and pledged to support railroad reform. In 1888, the legislature established an elected board of railroad commissioners with the power to limit transportation rates. In addition, legislation was passed that empowered and required the present board to reduce intrastate rates.<sup>23</sup> Even though this legislation did not meet the Iowa farmers’ expectations, they, nonetheless, felt as though their demands had been heard and that they had been vindicated through the democratic process.

The fact that Iowa managed to elect a railroad commission that addressed the farmers’ plight is an example of how different Iowa was from Kansas and Nebraska. Both Kansas and Nebraska had considered legislation that would have reduced the usury rates from twelve to ten percent but the GOP, which essentially represented a one party rule in these states, rejected the reduction. In Nebraska, legislation that would have given a farmer three years to redeem foreclosed property went down to defeat as well. In both Kansas and Nebraska, the Republican

---

<sup>22</sup> Ostler, “Why the Populist Party was Strong in Kansas and Nebraska but Weak in Iowa,” 464.

<sup>23</sup> Ostler, “Why the Populist Party was Strong in Kansas and Nebraska but Weak in Iowa,” 465.

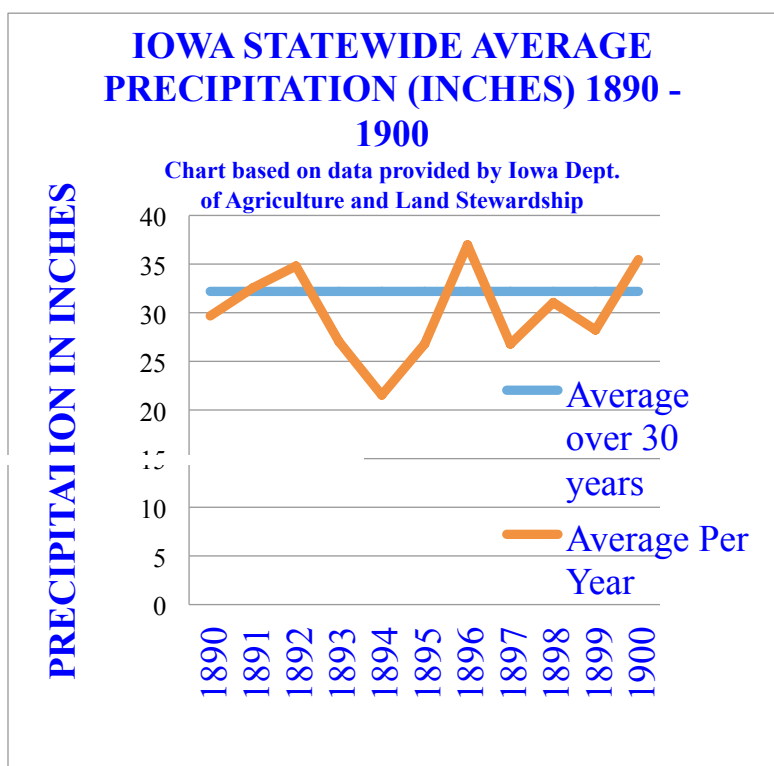
dominated legislatures seemed to have ignored the plight of their agrarian constituencies.<sup>24</sup> In Iowa the two parties in power, the Democrats and Republicans, chose to work together under pressure to assist the farmers. This fact, along with the advocacy of the Iowa Farmers Alliance, which remained nonpartisan, essentially removed conditions that would have popularized Populism. In his monograph *Prairie Populism*, Ostler notes, “In Iowa, the Des Moines Regency, ‘a powerful political clique of politicians and railroad men,’ dominated politics from 1870 to 1900.”<sup>25</sup> This rejection of bimetallism in favor of the gold standard preferred by Republicans increased for many Iowans the real as well as the perceived value of gold as a medium of exchange. As such, Iowans may have found the possibility of mining gold more alluring, perhaps increasing the appeal of making the trek north suggested by the large number of Iowans as compared to people from neighboring Midwestern agricultural states who participated in the Yukon Gold Rush.

---

<sup>24</sup> Ostler, “Why the Populist Party was Strong in Kansas and Nebraska but Weak in Iowa,” 474.

<sup>25</sup> Jeffery Ostler, *Prairie Populism: The Fate of Agrarian Radicalism in Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa 1880-1892*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 37.

## Meteorological Factors



*Plate 1: Iowa State Precipitation, 1890-1900.*

Although not nearly as severe as the “dustbowl” some quarter of a century later, the “Drought of 1894” certainly presented natural challenges to the agricultural wellbeing of Iowa. Iowa like most states kept excellent meteorological records dating back to 1873. Accurate measurements of precipitation and temperatures shed light on the dire situation. Harry Hillaker, Iowa state climatologist, examined charts and maps showing the severity of the drought.<sup>26</sup> “The droughts of 1886 and 1894 remain among the worst of record in Iowa,” Hillaker concluded. “Summer temperatures were not as high as some twentieth Century droughts, but the summer

<sup>26</sup> Hillaker, Harry, State Climatologist, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Personal email communication on Thursday, April 16, 2015.

and the growing season rainfall totals were the lowest of record.”<sup>27</sup> Although the chart indicates that the rainfall returned to normal in 1895, the devastation wrought by the drought had strong financial as well as psychological ramifications that certainly influenced some Iowans’ decision to seek another avenue to underwrite the security of their families. There was much discussion, some of it comical, of the drought in state newspapers and scientific literature published in 1894. One particular report of July 1894, discusses rain making and the viability of engaging men of that profession to try to coax precipitation from the skies over Iowa. The *Monthly Review* debunked any reports that might give credibility to the so-called rainmakers. The acting Bureau chief penned the following, “You ask an opinion in regard to the production of rain by artificial means, and I can assure you that the weather bureau has enough evidence on this subject to justify the conclusion that no rain whatever has thus far been produced or induced by so-called rainmakers.”<sup>28</sup> The *Monthly Review* cited several papers state-wide as the subject of man-made rain seemed to be a hot topic in the hot month of July that year. In an article published in the *Monthly Review*, meteorologist, J.R. Sage was quoted, “This is a peculiar season. As a matter of fact, all seasons are peculiar, in that no two are exactly alike. But this season has been so far off the ordinary run as to be unique and unprecedented in many respects...July, 1894, has become historic, breaking all previous records and making one of its own the driest month ever experienced in Iowa.”<sup>29</sup> The *Villisca Review* under the heading of “Number 10,” noted in a

---

<sup>27</sup> Hillaker, Harry, State Climatologist, Personal email communication, April 16, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> *Monthly Review of the Iowa Weather and Crop Service*, Des Moines: G.H. Ragsdale, State Printer Vol. v, Number 7 (July 1894) 2, accessed April 16, 2015 from <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cd/cd.html> The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) website contains copies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Weather Bureau’s Monthly Review of the weather and crop service reports from the late nineteenth century.

<sup>29</sup> J.R. Sage, “The Great Drouth” in *The Monthly Review*, v, Number 7 (July, 1894), 4-5. Accessed April 16, 2015 from <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cd/cd.html>

sarcastic reference to the rainmakers that this was certainly the time to establish a profitable business.<sup>30</sup>

Locally, the *Villisca Review* reported that in many parts of the state in 1894, the mercury had crossed the century mark. In Des Moines, the *Review* stated, “The heat here Wednesday was the greatest in ten years according to official records. Agricultural Iowa is in deplorable condition. Many farmers are unable to find feed for their cattle as the pastures are all bare and for water, they have to drive them ten to fifteen miles to reach the rivers as all the wells are dry. It has not rained in many parts of the state for six weeks. The corn crop is almost beyond redemption.”<sup>31</sup> Suffice to say that the poor state of agriculture in Iowa factored into the decisions of some farmers to abandon their land and join parties moving north in pursuit of gold. Although Samuel Baker Dunn did not farm, his father and at least two of his brothers along with the Gourleys supported their families by operating farms. As mentioned earlier, the graph indicated that by the growing season of the following year, 1895, the rainfall measurements were returning to normal levels but between the financial losses attributed to the drought of 1894 and the fact that the country as a whole stagnated in the throes of the Panic of 1893, farmers continued to seek relief and financial stability. Some would seek this by searching for gold.

#### Introduction of Yellow Journalism

Sensationalist journalism also played a role in encouraging Iowans to migrate north in search of gold. Before the 1890s, newspapers reported for the most part in a rational, factual and emotionless writing style. With the advent of “yellow journalism,” the reporting of several large metropolitan dailies became more steeped in emotive content, with large hyperbolic headlines

---

<sup>30</sup> “Number 10,” *Villisca Review*, July 26, 1894, 2.

<sup>31</sup> “Shrivels the Crops,” *Villisca Review*, August 2, 1894, 4.

and misleading content. All this was done in an effort to sell more papers by reporting the news in a fashion that would captivate the reader thus allowing that reader to digest the advertisements that certainly led to higher column or inch rates. Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and William Hearst's *New York Journal* were the principal combatants in these "Yellow Wars" of the mid-1890s. Bob Franklin, an expert on journalism, characterized both Pulitzer and Hearst as publishers who had discovered what he called, "an alternative public sphere." Both men believed that in the end, catering to the human emotions vis-à-vis headlines posted in larger font that trumpeted attention-grabbing stories would increase profits through advertising rates and result in greater readership. They recognized that most readers scanned the daily papers and seeking to hold their attention through sensationalism, became an art form through the employment of the "wow factor." Franklin described the intensification of this method of reporting: "Pulitzer used sensationalism because he believed it was the only way to reach the people on whose behalf he was struggling editorially. 'I want to talk to a nation,' he said, 'not a select committee.'"<sup>32</sup> Franklin argued that sensationalism replaced drama at the start of the "wars" and "also articulated a grass-roots based populist critique against established corporate and government elites."<sup>33</sup> Thus, this style of reporting boasted many supporters who often referred to it as "the journalism that acts."<sup>34</sup> J. Kingston Pierce, in a description of the importance of the Gold Rush, described the American press's role in promoting this momentous event. He wrote, "Not since the Civil War had the American press thrown as many resources at a single event as they did at the rush for riches in Canada's inhospitable Yukon region. And no wonder; this was the spectacle rampant with human optimism and daring, pathos and death – exactly the mix of

---

<sup>32</sup> Bob Franklin, *Key Concepts in Journalism Studies*, ed. Bob Franklin, Martin Hamer, Mark Hanna, Marie Kinsey and Jon E. Richardson (London: Sage Publications Limited, 2005), 280.

<sup>33</sup> Franklin, *Key Concepts in Journalism Studies*, 280.

<sup>34</sup> J Kingston Pierce, "Words of Gold" *Columbia Journal*, Issue 1 (1998): 6.

materials on which many newspapers then thrived.”<sup>35</sup> Indeed, when the *Portland* landed in Seattle in July of 1897, the headlines screamed about the “ton of gold” and the 68 now wealthy miners who were disembarking pulling their suitcases and satchels laden with the precious metal. “With that imperial dictum the Klondike Fever began” concluded Berton.<sup>36</sup>

As Iowans debated whether or not to make the journey to the gold fields, the aggregated impact of powerful forces set up, in many cases, the internal struggle that led them to decide to cast caution to the wind and take the leap of faith. Chapter Three uses the photographs and the diary entries of S.B. Dunn and letters and editorials to Montgomery County newspapers written by members of the Dunn and Gourley parties to examine, not only the journey itself, but to uncover the ever changing definition of success as experienced by the Montgomery County parties. For some members of the parties simply completing the journey to Dawson defined success while, for others, success required some interaction with gold itself.

---

<sup>35</sup> Pierce, “Words of Gold,” 6.

<sup>36</sup> Pierce, “Words of Gold,” 6.

## CHAPTER IV

### FROM VILLISCA TO SEATTLE TO DAWSON CITY

The examination of the “push-pull” factors discussed previously could be thought of as the prelude or overture to a Giuseppe Verdi grand opera. Ken Coates in his introduction to Tappan Adney’s *The Klondike Stampede*, captured the “operatic” storyline:

The Klondike Gold Rush at its height had all the elements of a great drama: the unalterable appeal of fabulous quantities of gold, there for the taking; the lure of the unknown; an exotic setting in the far northwest of North America, with its vicious climate and stunning topography; and a cast of quixotic characters - the risk takers, the dreamers who inhabited the mining frontier.....The Klondike had one additional element that added to its mystique: the site was all but accessible and so remained shrouded in mystery.<sup>1</sup>

By far, the greatest component of the dramatic adventure for many of the travelers north was the journey to the inaccessible Klondike described by Coates. After weeks of costly and difficult travel, it seems surprising that members of the Gourley party would abandon the Yukon only scant weeks after their arrival. What prompted them to desert their dream of riches or had they accomplished their major objective: completing the arduous and incredible journey? Was the experience of the adventurous journey itself their main goal? Pierre Berton wrote that during the winter of 1897-1898 about one million people made initial plans to leave their homes and travel north; however, he also noted that in reality, about 100,000 set out for the gold fields and no more than 50,000 completed the trek to the mining camps.<sup>2</sup> Upon reaching Dawson City, many prospectors had their pictures taken in their mackinaws and then returned to their homes. This chapter turns to the examination of the journey from the perspectives of the members of the Dunn and Gourley parties as they made their way across the Alaskan passes to the Canadian gold

---

<sup>1</sup> Ken Coates, introduction to *The Klondike Stampede*, by Tappan Adney (Vancouver, British Columbia: UBC Press, 1994), xvi.

<sup>2</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 127.



fields. Similar to war veterans and survivors of natural disasters, the Iowan prospectors shared bonding experiences that linked them together and to the history of the Gold Rush, for years and even generations after the event. The journey provided formal and informal occasions for remembrance including, for example, S.B. Dunn's later contributions in the 1930s and 40s to *Alaska Weekly's* section called "Sourdough Memories." The recorded experiences of the Dunn party and other Iowans indicated that the ultimate failure to strike it rich did not affect the belief that that they had conquered their personal "Mount Everest" by completing the journey itself. For Dunn and other miners from Villisca, "success" was less dependent on finding gold than it was on the feeling that they had survived and triumphed over the challenges and experiences of the journey by employing the pioneer spirit that had been, in part, responsible for pushing them from Iowa to the gold fields of the Yukon.

And so the adventure began, an adventure that Dunn himself as a *Villisca Review* correspondent would play a large role in constructing for his fellow prospectors and those who remained at home. The *Villisca Review* reported that on February 17, 1898:

This afternoon on No. 3 (Burlington Route train) the following gold hunters expect to start for the Northwest: Harry, Sam, Robert and Charles Dunn, Lum Higgins who represents the stock company, Town Posten, Henry Holland, James McMaden and Martin Nelson. They are all prepared to put in a year prospecting, some of them longer. We hope they will all strike it rich and come back safe and sound to spend their gold freely in Villisca. *The Review* will keep its readers informed of the experiences of the party by letters from Sam B. Dunn who will act as our special Klondike correspondent.<sup>3</sup>

A week later, the *Villisca Review* reported that the Gourley party also departed by train from Villisca. The members listed in that departure were: R.A. Dunn, a first cousin to the members of the Dunn party, Pratt Mayhew, Bev. Lucy, and John and Bob Gourley. The short sentence or two wished them well and a successful venture.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> "Away to the Klondike," *Villisca Review*, February 17, 1898, 2.

<sup>4</sup> "Arlington," *Villisca Review* February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1898, 3.

Each member of the Dunn and Gourley parties was responsible for paying his way to the Yukon. Grubstakes, or what it took to make the trip and purchase provisions, were estimated at just a bit over \$1,000.00, a substantial sum of money in the 1890s, especially in the wake of the worst recession in U.S. history. In order to finance their endeavors, the parties pooled resources, formed companies and sold shares in anticipation of potential returns. Much funding was garnered from people who did not wish to go, personally, but who wanted a small stake in the outcome of the venture. The *Sun*, noted on February 18, 1898 that a departure of a party of nine for the west coast was imminent and that the party contained four Dunns as well as Lum Higgins. Higgins was the representative of the stock company that had helped finance these nine on their adventure north. He represented forty eight shares of stock at twenty five dollars a share each making the total value of the stock company \$1,200.00.

The price of travel to Skagway, Alaska from Villisca, Iowa was a princely \$91.50 for first class and \$76.50 for second class travelers.<sup>5</sup> In the case of either party, there is little evidence to suggest that they purchased their respective provisions in Villisca although several advertisements appeared in the *Villisca Review* that offered dry goods, tinware and rifles in particular with references to the Klondike. There was a report that John Gourley's Klondike outfit was displayed in Weber's store window as well as his sleeping bag and snow spectacles, suggesting that it drew great public interest. R.A. Dunn posed for a picture, still in Villisca, wearing his Klondike outfit. Purchase of the bulk items such as dried food once they arrived in Seattle would have made better economic sense to save the freight costs from Villisca to the west coast.

---

<sup>5</sup> *Villisca Review*, January 27, 1898, 3.

Having secured financing, S.B. Dunn and his companions were ready to begin their journey. The Burlington train route mentioned in the *Villisca Review* report made the first major decision by the Dunn and Gourley parties about the journey an easy one. Unlike many prospectors headed to the Yukon who could have sailed to Alaska from many west coast cities including San Francisco, Tacoma, Victoria, and Vancouver, Iowans had at their advantage the Burlington Route that carried them directly from Villisca to Seattle. The Dunn and Gourley parties joined many other gold seekers in selecting Seattle, even though by the time of their departure from Villisca, the competition among transportation companies and outfitters in many west coast cities for the prospectors' dollars had grown intense. A nationwide campaign labeled Seattle as the only logical departure point because of the sheer volume of merchandise available and the location of the outfitters in the vicinity of the steamship docks. Indeed, Seattle advertised itself as the city that "outfitted nine tenths of the persons who had gone to the Yukon, is doing so today and can outfit all more satisfactorily and with less expense than can be done elsewhere."<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the railroad partnered with Seattle based steamship lines to provide prospective customers with both railroad passage to Seattle *and* steamship tickets from Seattle to Lynn Canal, Alaska. Because booking passage in Seattle on a steamship without a reservation was nearly impossible during the height of the Gold Rush the dual railroad-steamship deal attracted many prospectors from the Midwest. While Villisca's location on the Burlington Route made choosing Seattle an easy decision for the Iowan prospectors, arriving in Seattle presented a host of difficult, potentially economically ruinous decisions regarding outfitting, food and transportation. S.B. Dunn noticed that Seattle businesses took advantage of the naiveté of the many trusting travelers who passed through many "gauntlets" of duplicitousness. Many

---

<sup>6</sup> Chamber of Commerce, Seattle Washington, "Seattle" University of Washington Libraries, Manuscript Division, *Erastus Brainerd Scrapbook*, Vol. 1, 39.

merchants attempted to “mine the miners.” “The skinning process begins as soon as the Argonaut reaches Seattle and we have no idea where it will end,” S.B. Dunn wrote. “Outfitting is the only thing that is reasonable, transportation companies are robbing people worst of all. Fare to Dyea or Skagway is fifty dollars and we were not treated or fed half as well as an Iowa hog. The freight rates are extortionate averaging \$50.00 per ton. The freight on our four sleds was \$17.00, wharfage was \$12.20. They weigh thirty pounds each and cost \$3.50.”<sup>7</sup> He continued to give examples of what he perceived to be the unfair, exploitative rates charged by freight transportation and packing companies from Dyea to each point along the way to the Chilcoot Pass.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, “From Alaska, Special to the *Review*,” *Villisca Review*, April 1, 1898, 1.

<sup>8</sup> The packing industry is the portage of freight, luggage and animals, anything that can be carried by a human being for a fee. Locally it was Indians that acted as packers for those going over the passes. Tappan Adney described the packers as almost exclusively Native American and he noted that Dyea had become the nexus for the various indigenous tribes, who had come to cash in on the available opportunity to work. Adney described them in a stereotypical, prejudicial view which reflected the times. He described them as Tlingit, not very tall, large torsos, extremely strong with Mongolian eyes and large jaws and sporting stringy hair. He described the women as quite unattractive.



Property of MSCUA, University of Washington Libraries. Photo Coll 316

*Plate 2: "Steamship Victorian," University of Washington Photograph.*

The Dunn Diary and letters, as well as letters written by other Iowan prospectors, reveal a sense of confusion, fear, and awe as they travelled on steamship from Seattle to Skagway, Alaska. These small town farmers and small business operators confronted and recorded experiences far removed from their normal routines and expectations in the Midwest. The amount of space they devoted to noting in great detail experiences ranging from sea sickness to their encounters with Chinese and Native American culture discloses their worldview as provincial Iowans experiencing a chaotic, multicultural and commercial space for the first time.

Dunn wrote his first diary entry on March 12, 1898, the day the Dunn party left Seattle aboard the *Victorian* (see photo above).<sup>9</sup> The *Victorian* made stops in Tacoma, Washington and Victoria B.C. It is also no surprise that the roughness of the sea and the sickness it produced warranted comment by many landlocked Iowans on their journey up the west coast. Dunn noted in his diary that his brother Charley Dunn became seasick. On March 11, O.E. Jackson, writing to his family

---

<sup>9</sup> Photograph of the *Victorian*, property of University of Washington Libraries, Photo call 316.

in Red Oak aboard the *Al Ki*, also noted that the waters were choppy and that many travelers became seasick. Willis Gourley, whose father Bob Gourley whose father was one of the Villisca prospectors, also discussed seasickness as he related the story of his father to the *Villisca Review*. He remembered, “Most of them went steerage passage or in other words down in the hold of the ship. When they started getting seasick, it got to be a terrible mess. My uncle John swore that the vomit was shoe top deep. My father and the Dutchman could not stand it down there so they slept on a pile of cordwood.”<sup>10</sup>

While travelling on the *Victorian* to Alaska, Dunn and his companions also noted the many Chinese store signs, most likely because he had never before seen Chinese written characters. Similarly, S.B. Dunn described encounters with Native Americans and their “fine totem poles” of which he took a picture. He described the Indians as mostly barefoot and many eating “muck-muck.”<sup>11</sup> Other Midwestern travelers detailed the daily routine of life aboard the ship. O.E. Jackson aboard the *Al Ki* described, for example, the passengers that played the piano as a form of entertainment to pass time. He also discussed the meal routine: breakfast at 7:30 am; dinner at 11:00 am; and the last meal of the day at 5:00 pm. He also noted that there was little to do in between meals and that most folks just walked the deck. While there were many novel and exciting experiences for these Midwestern travelers such as Chinese shops and Native American sculpture, they, like prospectors from other parts of the country and world, clearly also experienced boredom and the tedium of daily routines on board ship.<sup>12</sup> Dunn also opted to list other steamers that the *Victorian* passed during its journey to Skagway. The large number of

---

<sup>10</sup> “Recollections of Willis Gourley,” *Villisca Review*, April 1, 1940.

<sup>11</sup> The proper word for “muck muck” was probably muktuk which is a traditional Inuit/Eskimo meal of whale skin and blubber. It is most often made from the skin of the bonehead whale. It would not have been in the vocabulary of S.B. Dunn to use “muck muck” as a derogatory term. See Online Etymology Dictionary, “muck (n.) to spread manure, cover with muck.” [www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com)

<sup>12</sup> O.E. Jackson, *Alaska Gold: Oren Ephram Jackson's Letters Home*, compiled by Richard M. Cutter, letter to family dated March 11, 1898.

steamers must have seemed like an anomaly for Dunn and the other Midwesterners who had spent their lives in places with no coastline or seaports. He noted that one of the six steamers travelling south that the *Victorian* passed was full of returning Klondikers which he described as “failures that were passing him in the opposite direction.”<sup>13</sup> That Dunn and members of his party continued on their way despite such discouraging visions of southbound steamers is further evidence that the experience of the journey itself, just as much as the gold they hoped to find, motivated the Midwestern prospectors.

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, the *Victorian* passed within sight of the Devils Thumb near Fort Wrangel and on the next day, entered Lynn Canal, the shallow inlet that touched both Dyea and Skagway. Around 7:00 A.M., they pulled up at the dock in Dyea located about two and one half miles from the town, proper. The parties spent their first hours and days finding accommodations, transporting their provisions and preparing to journey north toward the Chilcoot Pass. There were no wagons available at the dock so they carried their luggage to the Glacier Hotel where they were able to rent canvas bunks for the night for 25 cents each. They ate that evening at the restaurant by the same name and then went back to the dock to begin moving their freight to *terra firma*. The diary notes that it rained about one inch that evening which certainly added to the degree of difficulty in retrieving their possessions. The next day, they were able to get all of their baggage moved in the morning and all of the freight in the afternoon. On Sunday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, S.B. Dunn notes that they “did not observe the day in the Methodist style.”<sup>14</sup> While Sundays in Villisca had been relegated to church and family functions, conditions in Alaska and the Yukon forced the parties to deviate from the religious calendars that guided their life in Iowa. For 25 cents per hour they rented a cart and moved all their freight on to the banks of the Dyea

---

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entries March 12 to March 17, 1898.

<sup>14</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entry March 20, 1898.

River. By 11:30 that morning everything had been relocated and after lunch they moved again another two and one half miles upriver where they made their first camp and named it Camp Barton. S.B. Dunn notes that his brother C. A. Dunn, cooked that first dinner of mashed evaporated potatoes, fried bacon, bread and butter and raw onions. They paid Billy, the steward, 50 cents to bake the onions and after dinner, camped on the bank of the river on a gravel sand bar. The ground, it was reported, was frozen about three inches below the surface and it took a lot just to drive the tent pegs in. They loaded the sleds for the next day and turned in at 9:40.<sup>15</sup>

In his first letter to the editor of the *Villisca Review* published April 28, 1898, S.B. Dunn gave an account of the Dunn party's journey up until their arrival at Lynn Canal. As a special correspondent to the *Villisca Review*, S.B. Dunn gave readers far greater detail than he noted in the diary; indeed unlike the "snapshot" quality of the diary entries, his letters to the *Villisca Review* read more like chapters in a large novel about an adventurous journey. His letter highlighted the difficulties of transporting provisions. He described the effects of the tide on baggage and freight. Freight could only be unloaded when the tide was in and scows, flat boats that looked like small barges, carried the transfer of freight and outfits to the shore where the scow would then have to wait for low tide. As the tide ebbed and enough beach was revealed, wagons would again transfer the goods to higher ground. He noted that the freight from three or four steamers was piled up "promiscuously" and that each person or party had to then sort through the pile to retrieve their freight. S.B. Dunn also told his readers about the process of obtaining a "free miner's license" that would then allow the person the right to chop wood, build a boat as well as hunt and fish in Canadian territory.<sup>16</sup> He described the British as having a "little Klondike of their own" as not only did they collect the miner's license fees of ten dollars but also

---

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entries March 17<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup>, 1898.

<sup>16</sup> The license, per se, required a fee of ten dollars. The name of the license was Free Miners License.



an additional poll tax of \$2.50 once miners reached the summit. Finally he noted that everyone who came to Dyea was warned not to drink the river water as it was full of rotting carcasses of dogs, horses and oxen.<sup>17</sup> It is clear from the highlights of this of this letter that Dunn felt resentment toward the Canadian government, which he believed was exploiting miners and allowing unsanitary conditions to persist. The very same indictment of Canadian government is expressed in a letter written later by Villisca native and Gourley party member N.P. Mayhew. Both of these men expressed little appreciation of the great expenses accrued by Canada in its Herculean organizing efforts to protect travelers from their own ignorance.

As the Dunn and Gourley parties moved closer to perhaps the most difficult leg of their journey, the trip through the White and Chilcoot passes, the two main routes to the gold fields via Lynn Canal, S.B. Dunn's journal entries show that he clearly did not anticipate the physical and psychological trauma of making the passage from Alaska in the U.S. and the provinces of the Yukon Territory and British Columbia in Canada.

#### Traversing the White and Chilcoot Passes

The Dunn and Gourley parties travelled the same route from Villisca, Iowa all the way to Skagway, Alaska. As they approached the Boundary Ranges of the Coast Mountains, however, the two parties chose different passes: the Gourley Party opted to traverse the mountains to the Yukon interior through the White Pass, while the Dunn Party selected the Chilcoot Pass.

Although there do not appear to be any first-hand account that described crossing via White Pass, historians Roy Minter, Pierre Berton, Tappan Adney and Kathryn Morse provide graphic descriptions. Berton's account of the Yukon Gold Rush is particularly important for a

---

<sup>17</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, "From Alaska Special to the Review," *Villisca Review*, April 1, 1899, 1.

number of reasons. He was the son of a pioneer who moved along with his family to the Yukon in 1898 in search of gold and opted to stay, moving first to Whitehorse Y.T. but later to Dawson. Like many other writers of the period such as Adney and Jack London, Berton actually lived the miner's lifestyle and his reporting gives a clear representation of life in Dawson, steamer travel, and various mining methods that were typical for the region during the Gold Rush. Berton described White Pass as a route that snaked and switched-backed through bogs and mire. The sojourner had to traverse boulders and cliffs, cross the same river innumerable times, attempt to follow the canyon carved by the river and overcome an almost unimaginable series of encumbrances in what can only be described as an unbelievably dangerous trek for even the most savvy hiker. There was the passage over Devil's Hill, Porcupine Hill and Summit Hill, which all together, represented a one thousand foot climb. The path was a series of slippery slate cliffs and narrow passageways across the hills and mountains. Known as the Skagway Trail across the White Pass, it apparently had a strong psychological effect on those who chose this passage.

It seemed as though the White Pass had more than its share of potential dangers. Berton writes, "The men who travelled it were seized by a kind of delirium that drove them to the pit of brutality. Like drug addicts they understood their dementia but could not control it."<sup>18</sup>

Inexperience proved one of the challenges to miners on the White Pass. Adney notes that most prospectors had come from jobs that placed them behind desks and that they were not fit for the hard work required to move the outfits over the pass to the lakes beyond. Virtually none of the travelers had ever imagined the rigors of an adventure like this; many may have never attempted the journey had they not been beguiled by advertisements that beckoned them north and assured he them about this trip.

---

<sup>18</sup> Berton, *The Klondike Fever*, 152.

The pass seemed to be even more dangerous to horses than to prospector. Of the thousands of horses that began the trip very few completed it. Many fell from the cliffs or slipped and broke their legs on the boulders. North West Mounted Police shot injured and suffering horses. Adney noted that once the rains had cleared the snow from the pass, below the melted snow emerged a veritable cemetery of bleached bones, evidence of the literally thousands of horses that did not make it through the pass. “As many horses as have come in alive will bleach their bones by the pine trees and in the gulches – for none will come out.”<sup>19</sup>

Little evidence of the Gourley Party’s trek across the White Pass remains save some letters to the *Villisca Review* and a short recap published in the paper in 1973 written by local Montgomery County historian, Linda Artlip Weinstein. Once they arrived in Skagway, Alaska, they first had to make arrangements to assemble all their provisions. The Canadian government demanded that each traveler carry a year’s supply of food, weighing about one ton, including the mandatory four, one hundred pound sacks of flour. This mandate was a direct result of the stampeders who had crossed the border in 1897 without enough food. The results were in many cases catastrophic, again, because those travelers had no experience as outdoorsmen and thus foraging for food became difficult. What little food was available to them after the freeze up of the Yukon River became expensive and scarce. Once prospectors headed for the White Pass had their provisions lined up, they loaded them onto sleds that could haul about six hundred pounds each trip. They cached their provisions at a point in route to the summit of the pass by creating a shuttle of sorts. They moved everything from point to point until all of it was over the pass summit. Local Montgomery County historian Elaine Artlip wrote, “To get over the White Pass they had to carry their provisions on their backs up one hundred eighty steps that were cut out of

---

<sup>19</sup> Adney, *The Klondike Stampede*, 83.

ice. A good number of the gold seekers slipped on the ice stairs and fell to their deaths but not the boys from Villisca.”<sup>20</sup>

The Dunn Party and the party containing O.E. Jackson opted instead for the Chilcoot Pass. Dunn’s diary revealed that between March 21<sup>st</sup> and April 2<sup>nd</sup>, the party began to shuttle their outfits toward Sheep Camp, an expansive area at the base of the climb to the summit. Even before they reached the pass, the party faced challenges due mostly to weather. Even though the temperatures dropped significantly below freezing after sunset, the sheer volume of people, dogs, horses and sleds, made the pathways slushy and hard to traverse. They cached in Canyon City, Finnegan’s Point and finally at Sheep Camp. S.B. Dunn describes the group as having become very “limb weary,” because the trail was getting bare in spots from evaporation making sledding nearly impossible in places.. He reported that it snowed and rained and often the snow would melt as fast as it fell and their feet were wet all the time. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of March two of the groups ran into each other below Sheep Camp. The group contained members of the Stanley and Worden Party who had departed Seattle a bit prior to the Dunn Party.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the difficulties of weather and fatigue, as they had experienced aboard the steamer, the parties tried to maintain some semblance of normalcy and conviviality. S.B. Dunn noted that it was Harry Dunn’s thirty-fifth birthday and that the birthday dinner consisted of beans, pork, dried peaches and a birthday cake for supper.<sup>22</sup> Celebrating holidays and birthdays allowed the miners to relax and reflect on home and the mile-markers of life that gave existence meaning. Receiving and sending mail also kept members of the parties connected to their lives and families back in Iowa, while at the same time evoking in some a desire to return home.

---

<sup>20</sup> Linda Artlip Weinstein, “In Review,” *Villisca Review Stanton Viking*, Vol. 137, No. 28, Thursday, July 10, 2014, 2-3. *The Villisca Review Stanton Viking* is a community newspaper.

<sup>21</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entry March 27, 1898.

<sup>22</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entry March 30, 1898.

Mail was a common theme in the letters, diaries and memoirs of most miners. California prospector, Jeremiah Lynch, for example, described the excitement when mail arrived at Dawson in 1898. “At high noon, twenty one days after we left St. Michaels, we tied up at the only wharf in Dawson, with 10,000 people on the banks loudly cheering our arrival, for we brought the mail and we were the second boat that year arriving from civilization.”<sup>23</sup> In some cases receiving it produced a sense of homesickness. Prospector Basil Austin noted his party, travelling on the Copper River, had received their first mail delivery since leaving Detroit, Michigan many weeks prior. Upon receipt, “five more men sold out and left together for Valdez.”<sup>24</sup> Photographer E.A. Hegg, photographed men waiting in long lines at the post office to retrieve mail. One picture in particular, “Waiting for the Mail at Dawson City Post Office,” pictured hundreds of men as well as a few women and children awaiting the arrival of the mail in Dawson City. They all faced the camera with looks of expectation.<sup>25</sup>

Given the ever increasing human, animal and mechanical resources required to move thousands of tons of freight from Lynn Canal over both passes, it is no wonder that several individuals, companies and international conglomerates developed businesses and new technologies to cash in on the increasing business in moving miners’ provisions. The Dunn Party itself encountered these businesses and inventions. On April 2<sup>nd</sup> the Dunn Party hired a driver with six mules to haul their outfits to the scales, a location just below the final ascent over the Chilcoot Pass. The Scales earned their name because there everything was weighted for a second

---

<sup>23</sup> Jeremiah Lynch, *Three Years in the Klondike*, ed. Dale L. Morgan (Chicago, IL: The Lakeside Press, R. R. Donnelley and Sons Company, 1967) 27.

<sup>24</sup> Basil Austin, *The Diary of a Ninety-eighter* (Mount Pleasant, MI: John Cumming) 27. Valdez was another gateway to the gold fields. It is located about 250 miles northwest of Lynn Canal and is accessed through Prince William Sound. To get to the lakes at the headwaters of the Yukon, one was required to cross the glacier which made the journey nearly impossible. See Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 211-118.

<sup>25</sup> Pierre Berton, *The Klondike Quest: A Photographic Essay 1897-1899* (Toronto, Ontario: McClelland and Stewart, 1983), 228. Photo credit: National Film Board/Colin Low, Montreal; see also Ethel Anderson Becker, *Klondike '98* (Portland, Oregon: Metropolitan Press, 1949).

time and where the packers, those men and women engaged in moving outfits from point to point, charged one dollar a pound to carry goods over the summit. It was not possible to take horses, mules or donkeys over the pass.<sup>26</sup> On April 9<sup>th</sup>, S.B. Dunn went to the Scales and hauled up goods on the Peterson Trail. Peterson was one of the inventors of a hoist system that operated much as a modern day chair lift at a ski resort. It consisted of a continuous rope strung through a series of pulleys attached to towers. Some of the trams used animal power and others incorporated counterweights combined with human horsepower in order to move the goods up the forty- five degree angle to the summit. William M. Stanley described the operation of the Peterson Hoist in his monograph. The price to haul a load to the summit was four bits or fifty cents. In addition to Peterson there were two other tram hoists that were far more sophisticated. The hoists helped those decide to choose Dyea over Skagway as a beginning destination thus the Chilcoot Pass over the White Pass as the point of crossing, but as an article published by the National Park Service noted once the White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad was finished, the pendulum swung in favor of Skagway as the point of crossing into Canada.<sup>27</sup>

By the time they reached the Scales, members of the Dunn Party, like almost all prospectors who had made it that far, were physically and mentally exhausted. S.B. Dunn noted that on Easter Sunday, April 10, he stayed encamped all day below the Scales. There is no mention of an Easter Dinner or any food out of the ordinary, important considering the Dunn family were Methodist and faith was a key factor in their make-up. The possibility of bypassing Easter celebration hints at their state of exhaustion and their need to rest. S.B. Dunn's trip back to Dyea with his brother added to this fatigue.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 249.

<sup>27</sup> Frank Norris, *Chilcoot Tramways*, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, accessed from the internet on January 15, 2012, [www.nps.gov/klgo/historyculture/chilcoottramways.htm](http://www.nps.gov/klgo/historyculture/chilcoottramways.htm)

<sup>28</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entries April 13-18, 1898.

During that week, Harry Dunn, who suffered from rheumatism, decided that it would be better if he returned to Seattle and then Villisca. As they returned from escorting Harry Dunn back to Dyea, S.B. Dunn and his companions met at least one hundred people heading home from Sheep Camp “as fast as they could walk.”<sup>29</sup> For the first time the Dunn Diary comments on the many travelers who were opting to give up and go home because of “snow blindness” an eye condition caused by the reflection of the sun off the snow on the ground. Dunn met a Swede along the route who told him he had “broke down in his eyes and had to go home.”<sup>30</sup> On April 8<sup>th</sup>, Dunn noted that it was extremely bright and that many of those on the Chilcoot had become sunburnt and many also suffered from snow blindness. S.B. Dunn himself, as well as his brother Charles became afflicted with the condition and had to be confined to bed in camp. Snow blindness became an almost universal problem affecting all miners, one discussed in many diaries and letters. The memoir of prospector Basil Austin provides insight into the toil snow blindness took on miners. The first symptom was a loss of level. The trail view would be manipulated to appear as though there was a high ridge or a gully when in fact the road was quite flat. The eyes, he said, would run and burn in the evening while they remained in the tent. Some travelers had brought colored glasses but because of the extreme cold they would steam up and were rendered fairly useless. Through experimentation some men came up with a goggle-like apparatus that had been carved out of cottonwood and fit across the bridge of the nose. Inside the goggles were painted black and small holes about one quarter inch were carved out of the front of the goggles so that only a little light was able to get in but provided the wearer the opportunity

---

<sup>29</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entry April 18.

<sup>30</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entry April 18.

to at least see without doing more harm to the eyes. By placing a string around the back of the head the goggles were held in place.<sup>31</sup>

Exhausted, cold and suffering from snow blindness, after returning from Dyea to drop off his brother, S.B. Dunn and his party prepared to complete the “Human Chain,” the last leg of the Alaskan portion of the journey to the summit of the pass. Every person who opted for the Chilcoot Pass route from Dyea and who kept a diary or took a photograph identified the single experience of marching up this steep slope – one person in front of the other – as one of the iconographic moments that defined the trip to the gold fields. The large number of photographs of the “Human Chain” evidence the crossing as a mental metaphor for the unimaginable hardships that defined so much of the Yukon Gold Rush human experience. Berton captured it well: “Caught in the instant of a lens opening, each man, bent almost double under the weight of his burden, yet still straining upwards toward the skies, seems to be frozen in an attitude of supplication. It is a spectacle that at one glance, mirrors all the terror, all the hardships, and all the yearning of ’98.”<sup>32</sup>

Of all the photographs taken by S.B. Dunn, his image of the Human Chain taken sometime between April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 15<sup>th</sup>, best captured the pain and suffering of prospectors traversing the Chilcoot trail. On the verso of this picture, S.B. Dunn, in so many words, told the readers that this point represented a metaphorical fork in the road for the sojourners. He noted “Fights arose frequently, the nerves of everyone seemed frazzled and rarely did anyone speak. Scores of parties split up here and divided their outfits. Many men who had been life-long friends became bitter enemies. It was snowing heavily most of the time on this side of the

---

<sup>31</sup> Basil Austin, *The Diary of a Ninety-eighter*, ed. John Cumming (Mt Pleasant, MI: Printed by John Cumming, 1968), 28-29.

<sup>32</sup> Pierre Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 244.



pass.”<sup>33</sup> The photograph shows that while by the spring of 1898 there were three trams that could assist in pulling the gear up to the top of the pass, most of the potential prospectors were forced to carry at least part if not all of their loads on their backs up this forty five degree angle. The time it took to develop the photograph gave Dunn time to ponder the experience and articulate it on the verso of the photo. His commentary on his own work captured the emotional drama of the passage.



*Plate 3: “The Human Chain,” S.B. Dunn, Spring, 1898.*<sup>34</sup>

Dunn recorded his experience as part of the “Human Chain” not only through photography but also in his diary. His entries while less reflective than the verso of the photo,

---

<sup>33</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn Photograph, “Human Chain – Verso.”

<sup>34</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn Photograph, “The Human Chain” Spring 1898. During research in Montgomery County, Iowa, at least two of the Dunn clan’s descendants had either the same picture taken by S.B. Dunn or they eagerly showed me a similar view by another photographer. I became clear that to three generations of Dunn families, it was not so much the gold but the hardship, represented in large part by the photograph, that remained etched in the memories of those who made the journey.

depict the passage as a profoundly hazardous journey. On April 20<sup>th</sup> he and his brother Charles, Town and Lum carried a total of thirty -one packs of at least fifty pounds each up to the summit. He noted that the packers were demanding one cent per pound for the same distance.<sup>35</sup> In an updated entry Dunn provided an emotional description of how he registered the experience as both a participant in and a viewer of the “Human Chain” or “Golden Staircase,” a name coined by stampedeers to describe the final ascent to the gold.

A snowstorm was raging on the summit of the Chilcoot and the snow was drifting and covering the thousands of caches to a depth of ten to forty feet. I stood on the summit of the nearly perpendicular ascent we called ‘The Scales.’ Steps had been cut in the icy steep and above these; men were straining each with a huge pack on his back. They could only go single file. It was the famous ‘Human Chain.’ At regular distances, platforms had been cut beside the trail where the exhausted ones might leave the ranks and rest, but if a worn out climber reeled and crawled into one of the shelters, quickly the line closed up and no one would give him a glance. Many of them had staffs and all were bent double under their burdens. They did not speak. Their lips were grimly sealed; their eyes fixed and stern. They bowed their heads to thwart the buffeting of the storms winds but every way they turned it seemed to meet them. The snow lay thick upon their shoulders and covered their breasts. On their heads the spiked icicles glistened. As they moved up step by step it seemed that their feet were made of lead so heavily did they lift them. The resting places by the trail were never empty.<sup>36</sup>

The experience proved especially difficult for prospectorers because the majority had little or no experience in such extreme weather conditions. The burdensome snow, the iced over stairs, and the wintery winds described by S.B. Dunn represented conditions very much novel to many Midwesterners. As Pierre Berton wrote of the “Human Chain,” “To any alpinist, even an amateur one, the ascent of the pass would have been child’s play, for it was in no sense a difficult nor an arduous climb. But the men of ’98 were not mountaineers. Poorly attired in heavy furs and wools, rather than in light hooded parkas which were far more practical, the novices sweated and

---

<sup>35</sup> Samuel B. Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entry April 20, 1898.

<sup>36</sup> Samuel B. Dunn, *Dunn Diary, Chilcoot Pass*, undated entry.

froze alternatively.”<sup>37</sup> After reaching the Summit, the Dunn Party regrouped and began the long descent down to Crater Lake.

Dunn’s photograph below showing the large number of outfits cached at the summit of the Chilcoot Pass gives an idea of the magnitude of the movement of provisions and humanity.<sup>38</sup> This was the point in the trip where they crossed from the United States into Canada. The photo depicts the flags of both countries in the background. According to the writings on the verso, the Dunn Party paid about forty dollars in customs fees at the crossing. He noted that it took three minutes to go down the hill but an hour to get back up. They performed this shuttling of provisions many times because each man could only carry a limited number of pounds on his back each trip.<sup>39</sup>



*Plate 4: “Scene on the Summit of the Chilcoot Pass,” S.B. Dunn, 1898.*

<sup>37</sup> Pierre Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 250.

<sup>38</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn Photo, “Scene on the summit of Chilcoot Pass.”

<sup>39</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn Photograph, “Scene on the Summit of Chilcoot Pass,” 1898, Verso.

From Crater Lake, they began the trek to Lake Lindemann, the terminus of both the White and the Chilcoot passes, but storms forced them to abandon the thought of taking the provisions down.<sup>40</sup> As Dunn reported, they, in fact, stayed in Jack Stanley's tent at Lindemann. Jack was one of the William Stanley's seven children, several of whom rotated in and out of the Yukon in order to maintain a "Stanley" presence at his Eldorado #25 and #26 mines. This was the beginning of many interactions between the groups which included the Dunn and Gourley parties as well as the returning Stanley party. For those who chose the Chilcoot or the White Pass as their preferred route, the frozen condition of the lake itself halted for the most part, any further advance toward Dawson. As they had in the past, the Dunn Party tried to replicate the familiarities of home, in spite of conditions. On April 26<sup>th</sup>, Dunn describes the campsite in detail and how they used crates and boxes that were part of their outfits to create a rustic working kitchen with tables and chairs and cupboards. He described the chairs that were made of logs as "short on upholstery."<sup>41</sup> The fact that S.B. Dunn chose to include detailed descriptions of campsites suggests that any, even crude, replications of home lifted spirits regardless of the less than comfortable ad-hoc living quarters.

### The Palm Sunday Avalanche

Like the successful traverse of the Chilcoot Pass, the Dunn Party's survival of the Palm Sunday Avalanche disaster on April 3, 1898 was a defining moment in their Gold Rush experience, one that allowed them to feel a sense of accomplishment that had less to do with money and more to do with survival and adventure. Neither Adney nor Berton offered first-hand reports on the avalanche. However, the Palm Sunday Avalanche event made headlines all over

---

<sup>40</sup> See page 120 of this thesis for Samuel Baker Dunn hand drawn map depicting the Chilcoot Pass and Lake details.

<sup>41</sup> Samuel B. Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entry April 26<sup>th</sup> 1898.

the world and became the model for sensationalism in journalism. The newspapers had a field day reporting the disaster to their readers. Page one of the *Seattle Times* crowed, “CHILCOOT! Its Horrors Grow With Each Passing Hour. THE AVALANCHE; Swept With Sudden Fury Down the Trail. HARVEST OF DEATH; Found to be Much Larger than Was Thought. MANY FROM SEATTLE”<sup>42</sup> Fourteen of the dead were from Seattle followed by seven from Tacoma. Lafe Spray, a correspondent for the *Seattle Times* at Sheep Camp at the time of the avalanche, captured the emotion of the moment. However, his article did not meet the expectation created by the startling, sensationalized headlines. A blinding snowstorm made communication from the affected area to those at Sheep Camp slow. A couple of smaller slides began around 3:00 A.M and although people camped in harm’s way began evacuating, there was not enough time to react to the danger and the snow buried many. About three hundred men mustered with their shovels and began to dig out the bodies of those covered by as much as forty feet of snow. Spray reported that initially a few of the buried were found alive but as evening approached, rescue transformed into recovery as hope for survivors evaporated. Sam Wall reporting for the *San Francisco Call* in an article titled “DEATHS GRIM HARVEST IN DYEY CANYON,” estimated the number of dead at one hundred.<sup>43</sup> Wall described a two hundred foot rope used as part of the evacuation process, which allowed as many as one hundred people to hold fast and escape the inevitable. Wall credits the rope and the evacuation leadership with potentially saving many from what he described as the “white mantled graveyard on the trail to Dawson.”<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> *The Seattle Times*, April 11, 1898, 1, accessed from the internet, April 22, 2015 from <http://nl.newspaper.com/nl-search/we/Archives>.

<sup>43</sup> “Death’s Grim Harvest in Dyea Canyon,” *San Francisco Call*, April 11, 1898, 1, accessed from internet on March 27, 2015 from [www.newspapers.com/image/81000428](http://www.newspapers.com/image/81000428).

<sup>44</sup> Sam Wall, “Death’s Grim Harvest,” *San Francisco Call*, 1.



*Plate 5: "Avalanche Rescue Efforts," S.B. Dunn, April 3, 1898.*

Dunn and his party came very close to numbering among the Avalanche's victims. On the verso of one of his pictures, Dunn made several notations about the Avalanche which he claimed took sixty three lives. The party had been packing for days back and forth from their base at Sheep Camp to Stone House, an area under a huge overhanging rock formation that was a natural resting place between Sheep Camp and the Scales. While making the trip early the morning of the slide, the Dunn party was warned by Indians that they needed to go back as it was dangerous. Exhausted from working without a day off for weeks, they decided to take the advice. Dunn remarks that it probably saved their lives. He wrote, "For a short time after that we heard the terrifying roar of the snow slide."<sup>45</sup> In his diary description of the incident, S.B. Dunn noted the times of the slides as well the numbers of bodies smothered by the snow that were uncovered each day. He described the make-shift morgue at Sheep Camp where rough wooden boxes served as coffins. His diary gives a sense of total chaos amidst the sadness. There were so many

---

<sup>45</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Photograph "Chilcoot Trail Along the Stone House: Klondike Trail, 1898."

outfits and items belonging to everyone who had cached their provisions near the slide that it would not be until the spring thaw before all that had been buried in the avalanche would be revealed.

The avalanche left a deep impression on S.B. Dunn. He devoted many diary entries to the disaster, both during and after the event, and he photographed the scene as well. Even later in life, S.B. Dunn reminisced about the snow slide in his writings both in personal correspondence and in his articles that appeared in “Sourdough Memories” in the *Alaska Weekly*.

The above photograph by S.B. Dunn of the rescue scene depicts men in the process of digging bodies out of the snow. In the time it took to develop the negatives and print the pictures, S.B. Dunn had an opportunity to better organize his thoughts and feelings about the incident. In a separate, undated entry after April 29<sup>th</sup>, S.B. Dunn described his first real experience with photography on the journey. He revealed that he had tried to snap pictures of the rows of bodies that had been dug out after the slide and arranged in the snow but he had met with tremendous resistance from “hard cases” who may have been the Northwest Mounted Police although S.B. Dunn never identified them nor were they identified in the nine page letter to his daughter, Hazel Stevens. However, on the verso of the picture, S.B. Dunn referred to a committee appointed to stop all from passing who were not offering to dig.<sup>46</sup> He managed a few shots but while developing them, his dark room may have collapsed because he noted that the photos were all fogged up and useless.<sup>47</sup> Many of the writings on the backs of photographs gave greater insight into what Dunn and other miners had experienced at that time.

---

<sup>46</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Photograph of men digging for bodies after the Palm Sunday Avalanche, 1898, verso.

<sup>47</sup> Samuel B. Dunn, “Dunn Diary”, follows entry on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1898 – undated.

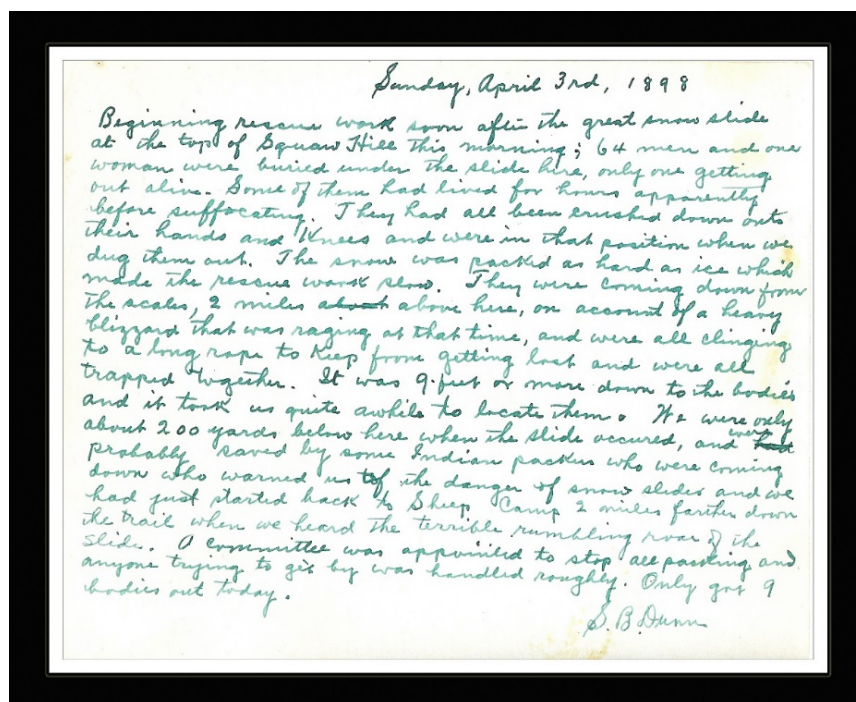


Plate 6: "Avalanche Rescue Efforts," Verso, S.B. Dunn.

As the image of the verso (Plate 6) shows, Dunn's thoughts on the obverse of each photograph, in which he recorded his impressions of the events he captured on camera, are just as important as the actual photographs to understanding the journey from Dunn's perspective. Dunn inscribed the verso sometime after he took the pictures which allowed him to convey the emotion he felt at the time of the catastrophic occurrence. This description of work done to rescue any survivors on the day of the snow slide gave a brilliant example of how S.B. Dunn fleshed out his thoughts about the details of the event. He credits the Native American packers "who warned us of the danger of snow slides" while noting that "we had just started back to Sheep Camp two miles further down the trail when we heard the terrible rumbling roar of the



slides.”<sup>48</sup> His description is in lockstep with the reports that appeared in the next week or so in the various newspaper accounts of the avalanche.<sup>49</sup>

With so many travelers from Montgomery County either already at the mines or in transit to them, the *Villisca Review* reported on the Palm Sunday Avalanche. On April 14<sup>th</sup> the *Villisca Review* reported that many had been buried alive while on the Chilcoot Trail. It estimated the fatalities at about one hundred and identified them as coming from nearly every state in the Union, although there is no mention in the article of any of the county’s sojourners fate. Many were crushed where they camped. The article noted, “Not a few were spared a walking death, being crushed where they slept with no forewarning of the disaster that was to overwhelm them.....Men and women who were overwhelmed may have realized what happened but they had no possible opportunity to escape.”<sup>50</sup>

As seen through the eyes of S.B. Dunn, the travel from Villisca to Skagway, the traversing of the passes, and the survival of the avalanche represented key moments in this journey north. Neither S.B. Dunn nor any of his fellow sojourners, mentioned that each step toward Dawson brought them that much closer to the ultimate goal – gold and riches. Certainly there must have been talk of that prospect but, in his diary, S.B. Dunn never reflected on *that* aspect of the adventure. Quite the contrary, he focused on the challenges; snow blindness, cold, the duplicities of merchants, the desperation of those selling out and going home, and natural disasters such as the Avalanche. Experiencing and completing the journey itself proved at that moment in time, more important than the prospect of riches for S.B. Dunn and many of his companions. This adventurous journey would continue as the Dunn and Gourley Parties engaged

---

<sup>48</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Verso of the Photograph of the rescue-recovery efforts after the Palm Sunday Avalanche on the Chilcoot Trail.

<sup>49</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Verso of the Photograph of the rescue-recovery efforts after the Palm Sunday Avalanche on the Chilcoot Trail.

<sup>50</sup> “Many Buried Alive: Death Rides Avalanche in Chilcoot Pass,” *Villisca Review*, April 14, 1898, 3.

in boatbuilding, riding the rapids of the Yukon River, and experiencing a reality that they could not have possibly imagined in their land-locked county in Iowa.

From the Encampment on Lake Bennett to Dawson, Y.T.

From the time the Dunn Party departed the beaches of Lynn Canal, S.B. Dunn did not mention gold once in his diary or letters to the editor. The focus on the members of the party was on making each major stopover along the route; Sheep Camp, the Scales, the Chilcoot Pass, the Summit and the descent to the lakes, a temporary destination. None of the Iowan prospectors, including S.B. Dunn, cast those who quit the trail before arriving at the lakes in a less than honorable light. However, author and traveler A.C. Harris, made this observation about those who either turned back or gave up the trail early in the journey. Harris wrote, "It is remarkable to note the difference in the personnel of men. Only the better, more substantial element is able to cope with the hardships and reach this far. It would seem that the less persevering, or what might more properly termed the lazier classes, are to be found scattered along the trail between Dyea and Sheep Camp bemoaning and bewailing the hardships they are undergoing."<sup>51</sup>

During the months of June and July of 1898, while the parties prepared to tackle the lakes and the Yukon River from their encampment at Lake Bennett, there are no dated entries in the *Dunn Diary*. However, many of the pictures in the Dunn suite reflect the highlights of that time period, a period punctuated by boat building, running rapids and allowing the wind and the river's current to do most of the hard work as the party made its way to Dawson. There were letters from other Montgomery County travelers to the gold fields that also helped to fill in the blanks.

---

<sup>51</sup> A.C. Harris, *Alaska and the Klondike Gold Fields*, No Publisher noted, 1897. 469.



*Plate 7: "Camp at Lake Lindemann," S.B. Dunn, 1898.*

Tappan Adney identified the principal industry at Lakes Lindemann and Bennett as boatbuilding. Both Adney and Berton gave quite detailed explanations of the rigor involved in the boatbuilding phase of the journey. The construction began, according to Adney, when a party sent two men ahead to prepare for the building task. They constructed what was called a saw pit, which was in reality, not a pit at all but an elevated platform that was about ten feet high. A log was laid on the platform and one man on top and one on the bottom worked together using a whip saw to cut the green wood into boards. The wood used was spruce, although sometimes pine, and the finished board was no more than nine to ten inches wide, planed at the edges. Upon completion of the initial construction, builders filled and caulked the seams with oakum and then pitched the crafts. Due to its greenness, the limber would usually shrink even before it was placed in the water and Adney described the boats as leaking like sieves. This certainly placed a

high premium on nails and pitch.<sup>52</sup> Although some chose to build their boats on Lake Lindemann, most of the sojourners continued their journey until they reached the larger lake in the chain, Lake Bennett, and because of its size it was able to accommodate more people, their many tons of gear, and their boatbuilding efforts. Building one's boat on Bennett also placed the stamper closer to the head of the pack of those who would travel the river once the ice broke. Berton described the imagined aerial view this way: "By the spring, more than thirty thousand men were strung out for sixty miles from Lindemann to Tagish, hard at work, building a fleet of more than seven thousand boats."<sup>53</sup> Bennett had become a virtual tent city and there were different tents that supplied everything that persons in the temporary encampment needed. Tent saloons, tents for hot baths, tent cafés and bakeries, tent post offices, tent casinos and tent chapels. There were also tents for mining agents and for real estate endeavors. The boatbuilding industry fostered the growth of small sawmills and the entire tent city, according to eyewitnesses, had taken on the look of a rustic center of industry. Berton describes the sounds of the city: "As spring swept closer, the rumble of avalanches mingled with the screech of saw mills, the crash of toppling timber, the rasp of the saw and plane, the pounding of the mallets, the incessant tap-tapping of thousands of hammers, the shrill of embittered partners, the neighing of horses the bleating of goats and the howling of malamutes."<sup>54</sup> From the time of their arrival until they sailed for Dawson, this cacophony of noises must have been, for the Dunns and Gourleys, the background music of their lives.

Perhaps one of the more remarkable segments of nearly everyone's journey via the lakes was this construction process. It is interesting to observe in part because most prospectors camped along the banks of the lakes certainly had no experience with boatbuilding. This was

---

<sup>52</sup> Adney, *The Klondike Stampede*, 119-120.

<sup>53</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 269.

<sup>54</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 270.

particularly true of the Iowa farmers and business owners travelling with S.B. Dunn. Most miners fabricated saw pits and made their own lumber out of the trees that lined the rivers and that fed the lakes; others purchased factory made lumber in either Seattle, Dyea, Skagway or other ports of departure, although the cost and labor of transporting lumber across the mountain passes made this impossible for most.<sup>55</sup> S.B. Dunn notes on the verso of a photo of Lake Lindemann that the party was headed to camp to build their boats.<sup>56</sup> The photo reveals a lack of trees, the raw material needed to build boats. Most if not all of the usable lumber along Lake Lindemann had been harvested already by prospectors who had arrived earlier. However, a certain calmness and order prevails in the assembly of tents and boatbuilding scaffolds that populate the photo. This is in stark contrast to the chaotic scenes in S.B. Dunn's photograph depicting the scene at the summit (page 74) where outfits and provisions are seemingly strewn everywhere occupying even the smallest available space. Lake Lindemann was their first real stop after crossing Chilcoot Pass, which was about nine miles from the summit. They were able to rig up a sail on their sleds and use wind power to get to Lake Bennett where they made camp and began the construction.<sup>57</sup> Most campers opted for Lake Bennett because the two large lakes were connected by a smaller deep stream that was in essence a series of rapids. In a letter to his family dated April 26, 1898, fellow Iowan prospector O.E. Jackson stated that he and his party were camped on a river that flowed into Lake Bennett. From this camp he constructed his boat. Like the Dunn Party, Jackson sledged his provisions from Lindemann to Bennett. He described the great difficulty in pulling a sled with three to six hundred pounds of provisions aboard. Even in late April, the lakes and the Yukon were still frozen and one could move outfits by sled more

---

<sup>55</sup> Adney, *Klondike Stampede*, 119-120.

<sup>56</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Photograph "Camp at Lake Lindemann," 1898, Verso.

<sup>57</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn Photo "Camp at Lake Lindemann," 1898, Verso.

easily than to pack them from place to place. The lakes and the rivers were and remained the interstates of the region regardless of season.

Not only did the geography change as one travelled from the coast into the interior but the relative value of provisions and animals varied with the terrain, their availability and the advance of technology that replaced the packers and certainly the horses and mules with railroads and tramways. Since animals could not easily cross Chilcoot Pass most were left between the Scales and the final three quarters of a mile ascent to the summit. Once the horses or mules carried the provisions over the passes to their summits, pragmatism determined whether the animal moved with the party or was abandoned and left to fend for itself. After the prospectors constructed scows and boats along the lakes, there was really no need nor the wherewithal to accommodate the larger animals thus they were rendered having transported animals across either pass to the lakes.



*Plate 8: "Marsh Lake," S.B. Dunn, 1898.*

The particular timing of the Dunn and Gourley Parties' journey is important for understanding the values they attached to surviving the journey itself. By late spring of 1899, newer trams and the White Pass and Yukon Railway had replaced the need for animals and had alleviated much of the agony of traversing the passes. The Gourleys and the Dunns had entered Canada via arduous and dangerous traversing of mountain passes but those who left in the summer of 1899 had the option of simply taking the train from Skagway to Whitehorse at the very head of the Yukon River. In addition, by 1899, travel from the lakes to Dawson, Y.T. was available by steamer, which for all intents and purposes replaced the flotilla of handcrafted boats and scows that had been one of the hallmarks of the 1898 migration from the passes to Dawson and the gold fields.

Dunn did not describe their experience building boats in his diary or on the versos of his photographs. The Dunn pictorial suite, however, proves that the party constructed at least two scows. Dunn took a picture of scow number 1035, *The Hazel*, which he named after his daughter. The verso is inscribed "One of our scows, sailing down Marsh Lake toward Fifty Mile River....,"<sup>58</sup> confirming that there was more than one. Being on the lake presented other new experiences and challenges. Dunn noted for example that the mosquitos were extremely thick. "A decillions of them with red hot proboscises as capable and as large as a sand point to a driver well; and they could and did use them," he wrote on the verso.<sup>59</sup> Fortunately S.B. Dunn also encountered less vexing creatures on the lake. Just after the picture had been taken a squall came up and blew some large fish, which he identified as pike, out of the lake and into adjacent pools of water. They took batons and knocked them out and put them in the scow for cooking later on. Indeed, fishing in general must have been relatively novel to the landlocked Midwesterners. In

---

<sup>58</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn Photograph, "Marsh Lake, 1898," photo and verso.

<sup>59</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn Photograph, "Marsh Lake, 1898," verso.

one entry from June of 1898, S.B. Dunn described a fishing attempt while camping on a small river and made mention that no one in the party had any bait or flies. “Lum said he had read in a book somewhere that you can catch fish on all sorts of things. It’s the way that you throw them in the water that matters. The man that wrote it, has caught ‘em on radishes, onions and ears of corn. He’s lying said Charley (C.A. Dunn) sternly. ‘Even if I saw a fish eating off an ear of corn I wouldn’t believe him.’ We made some flies out of duck feathers and caught a nice lot of graylings. They are beautiful and anyway, we didn’t try the onions!”<sup>60</sup> Clearly, lack of resources, combined with inexperience produced often comical experimentation in the Dunn Party’s attempts at procuring dinner.

In late May of 1898, the ice cracked in the lakes and the flotilla prepared for the next leg of the journey. Kathryn Morse noted the crowd’s excitement as the flotilla got underway. She quoted a traveler, “It is a great sight to see miles of boats, masts with flags up, tied along the shore, some places three or four deep.”<sup>61</sup> It did not take long for the “smashed scores of hastily built scows” to be tested by the canyons, rapids, rocks, headwinds and crosswinds.<sup>62</sup> By estimates, these boats carried about thirty million pounds of solid food of which the majority was dehydrated. Due to the fact that all these mostly homemade boats and scows departed the lakes at the same time. Berton offered a graphic description of the flotilla’s departure:

...the most bizarre fleet to ever navigate fresh water. Here went twenty scows crammed with oxen, horses and dogs, one man rafts made of three logs hastily bound together, light Peterborough canoes packed over the passes on men’s shoulders, and strange oblong vessels that looked, and sometimes were, floating packing boxes. Here were slim bateau brought in sections from the Outside and canoes made of hollow logs with sticks for oarlocks and paddles hand whittled from tree trunks. Here were skiffs and cockleshells, outriggers and junks, catamarans and kayaks, arks and skiffs, catboats and wherries. Here were boats with wedge bottoms and boats with flat bottoms and boats with curved bottoms; boats shaped like triangles and boats shaped like circles; boats that looked like

---

<sup>60</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, June 1898.

<sup>61</sup> Kathryn Morse, *The Nature of Gold*, 55.

<sup>62</sup> Kathryn Morse, *The Nature of Gold*, 56.



coffins and boats that were coffins. Here were enormous rafts with hay and horses aboard propelled by mighty sweeps and here were others built from a single log with only a mackinaw coat for a sail. Here was a craft modeled after a Mississippi side-wheeler with two side wheels operated with hand cranks twisting and turning awkwardly in a zigzag motion down the lake.<sup>63</sup>

At Tagish Lake the Royal Canadian Mounted Police issued serial numbers for and inspected all scows and boats in the flotilla. Mounties counted about 7,200 boats that passed through their inspection station by the middle of June of 1898. Many of the Iowan prospectors commented on this process for friends and families back home, expressing frustration and disgust at various corrupt officials. Fellow Montgomery County resident R.B. Hall who travelled with O.E. Jackson wrote to the *Sun*, another Montgomery County publication in June of 1898. “There are several hundred boats here waiting for inspection. We reached here about 9:00 last evening and will get away about 9 o’clock this morning, we being fortunate in getting ahead of some that had been here for three days. It may be out of place to say how we worked it, but even in this out of the way country, tipping is not unknown and if applied at the proper time and place can accomplish wonders.”<sup>64</sup> Hall was not the only Iowan to write about monetary incentives that greased the skids at the inspection station. O.E. Jackson told his family that the Customs Inspectors at Lake Tagish only required a mere two dollars to speed up the Customs process. Jackson recalled that “the Inspector came on our boat, sat down in the middle and wrote out our clearance papers in less than two minutes and some of the boats they made unload and went through everything, which would have cost us \$50.00 more in duty had they invoiced us. We sugared them \$2.00 worth and went through just the same. See?”<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 277.

<sup>64</sup> R.B. Hall, “They Have a Swift Boat: R.B. Hall and his Party of Klondikers Making Good Time,” *Sun*, Red Oak Iowa, June 10, 1898.

<sup>65</sup> O.E. Jackson, Letter to his wife and children dated June 1, 1898 written from Lake Tagish, N.W.T.

N. Pratt Mayhew, who departed Villisca with the Gourley Party, offered the most vociferous denunciation of the bribes paid to Canadian officials for licenses, inspections and services. Mayhew noted that Canadian law required the miners to take out a new ten dollar license or tax every year which would not only allow them to mine but cut wood and hunt and fish in Canada. Mayhew went on to assert that the officials received lists of workers from the mine owners and were therefore able to track license expirations. Mayhew viewed the Free Miners License as a “poll tax.” “One man sells by the loss of a ten dollar note and a woman who refuses to pay goes to jail for thirty days and is fined one hundred dollars.”<sup>66</sup> It was apparent that Mayhew spoke for many who chose to be silent about these undeclared rules of commerce. In fact, the bribery and fraud he witnessed gave him an opportunity to compare the U.S. favorably to Canada for his readers in Villisca.<sup>67</sup> He insisted that dealing with government officials in the U.S. was far more honest. A number claimed that hard work by American prospectors, almost exclusively, had developed the Yukon Territory even though the Crown profited mightily from it. He was particularly incensed about corruption concerning the staking of gold claims. His final rant was a blatant accusation of foul play on the part of the Gold Commissioner Fawcett. On or about July 1 of 1898, Fawcett declared that all the claims staked on Dominion Creek would be cancelled on approximately July 11<sup>th</sup> of that year and that they would need to be re-staked around that time. Mayhew reported that around 4:00 a.m. on the July 9th, about one hundred soldiers left Dawson and rode the approximately forty miles to Dominion Creek to make sure that there was order during this exercise. By 6:00 p.m. that evening, all of the soldiers and mounted police had themselves staked claims on top of the existing ones and posted notices that “Notice # 17” (which replaced Notice # 16 dated July 11) stated, “ All claims are on Dominion

---

<sup>66</sup> N. Pratt Mayhew, “From the Yukon,” *Villisca Review*, June 15, 1899, 1.

<sup>67</sup> N. Pratt Mayhew, “From the Yukon,” *Villisca Review*, June 15, 1899, 2.

are open for location on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1898.”<sup>68</sup> In all the letters written by members of the Dunn and Gourley Parties the three local papers, Mayhew was the only one to identify the bribery and corruption as rampant. In an effort to protect Americans who represented about eighty percent of Dawson’s population, an American owned newspaper, the *Klondike Nugget*, reserved its editorial column to decry the abuse and corruption of the government and the Gold Commissioner’s office. The editorial column helped to exert enough pressure on the Ottawa government to have Fawcett relieved of his position. Pierre Berton also condemned the bribery, ineptitude and corruption of the Mining Recorder’s Office, although he cast the Mounties as men of impeccable integrity and finesse. He noted that there was a “five dollar door” for those who chose not to wait in lines to record their claims, a wait that could amount to as long as three days.<sup>69</sup>



Plate 9: "White Horse Rapids," S.B. Dunn, June 1898.

---

<sup>68</sup> N. Pratt Mayhew, "From the Yukon," *Villisca Review*, June 15, 1899, 2.

<sup>69</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 324-329.

Dawson was the next stop on the miners' journey after leaving Lake Bennett. And while many like the Dunn Party chose to begin their journey at Lake Bennett, thus bypassing the rapids that connected that lake to Lindemann, they faced many other challenges to navigation. The first was at Miles Canyon which needed to be forded before reaching the Yukon River. Dunn described the scene before Miles Canyon on the verso of a photograph he took. He noted that his party stopped at a Northwest Mounted Police post just before the rapids to "trim" the scows before engaging the three sets of rapids, the Miles Rapids, Squaw Rapids and White Horse Rapids. Dunn described these rapids as the most dangerous four miles between the Chilcoot Pass and Dawson. He noted again that at this juncture many of the stampedeers lost their nerve and turned and went back and so the attrition continued.<sup>70</sup> After clearing this first set, the boaters faced gorges that had protruding rocks and whirlpools that were followed by two additional rapids. As the boaters approached the rapids at White Horse, the river width shrank drastically from about three hundred feet to not much more than about forty. By the time the boaters reached the White Horse Rapids, most unloaded their freight and animals and packed and escorted them along the banks of the river to the bottom of the rapids and they often employed the services of a pilot who knew the waterway well. Dunn noted on the verso of the picture depicted on page 97, that most of the scows were taken through the rapids empty.<sup>71</sup> This allowed for less draft and reduced the chances that the boat would be ripped apart by the point of a submerged rock. On the verso of a picture looking toward Miles Canyon, Dunn discussed the fact that along with their scows, the party had a small rowboat.<sup>72</sup> They unloaded the boat and let it go through the Canyon and the rapids and that it swirled around in the whirlpool for several

---

<sup>70</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Photograph, "Docking on the Right Hand of the River Before Miles Canyon," June 1898 – verso.

<sup>71</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Photograph, "White Horse Rapids," June, 1898.

<sup>72</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Photograph, "The Crater at Miles Canyon Looking Up the River," June, 1898.

hours before being ejected and finally ending up along the banks just after White Horse Rapids. The pilot fee, according to Morse was between twenty and forty dollars for the passage. If at this point in the journey, the sojourner was found without a boat or an outfit, survival could have been jeopardized. Looking at the results of less successful attempts to navigate the rapids, Morse described the scene, “Scores of splintered crafts and acres of groceries and provisions spread out on canvas and blankets, drying out with scows turned up for repairs, convinced three quarters of the miners to hire experienced pilots, Indian and white, to take their empty boats through while they portaged their freight around by pack and on tramways. . . . Losing one’s outfit is about equal to losing one’s life in this country.”<sup>73</sup> Some sections of the river between the rapids and Dawson had current speeds as high as twelve miles per hour which required the crew to remain alert as there were rocks and high places that could rip the boat apart.

Finally the two parties reached Dawson City, the final gateway to the gold fields of the Klondike. O.E. Jackson produced a quite comprehensive retrospective for his family on June 14, 1898 after arriving in Dawson City, Y.T. “Well this has been the greatest trip I have ever took or ever expect to take unless I should take the same one again, and if I should, there will be others with me.”<sup>74</sup> It was apparent by the underlined *others* that he might have preferred different traveling partners. He wrote this letter six days after arriving in Dawson which gave him time to reflect on the highlights of his trip and on first impressions of this boom town. He had arrived with the first part of the flotilla on June 8<sup>th</sup> in Dawson to conclude a water adventure that had taken about ten days to accomplish. He summarized the mass migration of miners from the lakes to Dawson, a migration that he himself had been part of. “For the next two or three weeks, the water- borne stampedeers rode the swift Yukon down through the rapids, the murderous Miles

---

<sup>73</sup> Morse, *The Nature of Gold*, 56.

<sup>74</sup> O.E. Jackson, Letter to his Family written from Dawson City Y.T., June 14, 1898.

Canyon and at last rounded a bend and saw Dawson City and Klondike City on the right bank divided by the magical Klondike River.”<sup>75</sup> And yet despite his positive tone, the letter ended on a sad note. He declared the stampede to the gold fields as over and he described the journey as having been “an exercise in futility.” All of the really good claims, he declared, were taken and staked long before they had arrived. “Only the businessmen among them made any money. Those looking for gold returned home empty handed. For the rest of their lives perhaps defensively, they insisted the trip was worth it. If nothing else, it gave them a sense of accomplishment.”<sup>76</sup> Others echoed these very sentiments perhaps in an effort to rationalize their time and expenditures, and to amplify the success in reaching this destination.

In the fall of 1896, construction had begun in Dawson City. By April 1897, the population had increased to around 1500; by Summer of the same year the population grew to 3500. During the Spring and Summer of 1898, 23,000 potential miners reached Dawson City, almost all by boat. Dawson had become the largest Canadian city west of Winnipeg. At its zenith, its population was only slightly less than Seattle, Tacoma or Portland and far larger than Victoria or Vancouver in British Columbia. During the Summer of 1899, gold was discovered in Nome, Alaska and the prospectors began turning west. Already by the fall of 1899 the population of Dawson had plummeted to about 8,000 and by 1900, the population stood at 5400.<sup>77</sup> The rush was essentially over.

However, for the members of the Dunn and Gourley parties who arrived in the summer of 1898 Dawson City was a city full of unprecedented energy and chaos. In a letter, prospector T.T. Barbour described his thoughts as the city came into view. “You never saw such sights as we did coming down the river. The crazy people. At the mouth of the river coming into the Yukon, there

---

<sup>75</sup> O.E. Jackson, Letter dated June 14, 1898.

<sup>76</sup> O.E. Jackson, Letter dated June 14, 1898.

<sup>77</sup> John Gould, “History of Growing Pains,” accessed 2/19/2016. [www.CityofDawson.com](http://www.CityofDawson.com).

were thousands camped. ....tents for miles on each side of the mouth of every stream... For miles up and down the river and up the mountain sides across the river was a mass of tents. We had to land two miles above the town.”<sup>78</sup>

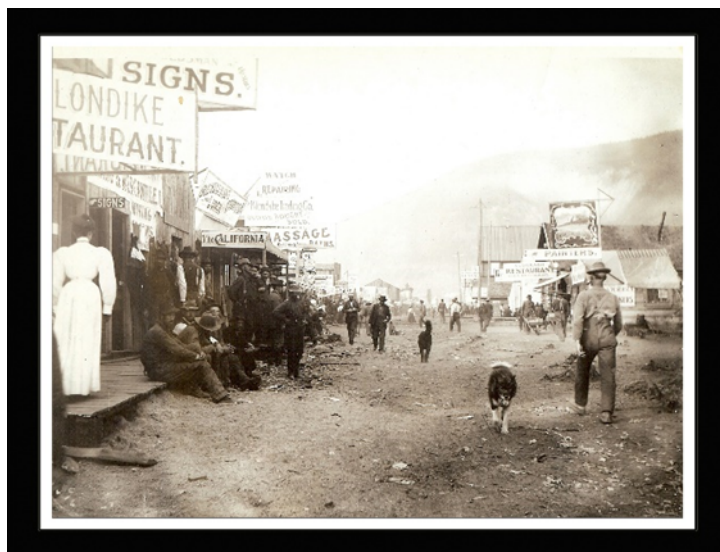


Plate 10: “Dawson, Yukon Territory,” S.B. Dunn, July 21, 1898.

S.B. Dunn also provided his first impressions of Dawson City. On the verso of the photograph (above) titled *Dawson Y.T., July 21, 1898*, he analyzed the many segments of the crazy people described by Barbour. Dunn first conveyed his amazement at how many and how fast the tents were going up, so fast, in fact, that to an observer it felt like changes were taking place on a very slow motion film strip.<sup>79</sup> The photo shows signs for businesses offering various services and goods and a boardwalk that helped keep the mud out of the restaurants, bars, massage parlors, hotels, and distributors of provisions. The boardwalk invariably also provided a place to sit for many of the idle men who might have been pondering whether to stay or score

<sup>78</sup> T.T. Barbour, letter to unknown recipient, 26 June, 1898; reprinted in *Alton (Iowa) Democrat*; from John Clark Hunt, ed., “The Adventures of the Iowa Goldseekers,” *Alaska Journal* 3 (Winter 1973): 2-11.

<sup>79</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Photograph, “Dawson Y.T.,” July 21, 1898.”

their very presence in Dawson a success. The only animals on the streets were dogs, which now had far greater value than horses, oxen, and mules. The photo depicting a typical street scene bedecked with myriad signs, strolling man, and a few dogs, turned on S.B. Dunn's emotional spigot. On the verso, S.B. Dunn described the continued "rush" of people from all over the world hoping to find gold. "Never was there such a stampede," he recorded. Most arrived ill prepared with only "a lust for gold and high adventure." He concluded sadly: "and in the end, thousands will go back heart broken and penniless, cursing the very name of the country that lured them from comparative comfort."<sup>80</sup> While he was describing Dawson's inhabitants more generally, he was also describing himself, his brothers, the Gourley Party and virtually all those who had succumbed to *Klondikitis* and left their homes. By reaching Dawson, S.B. Dunn and others found success in the "high adventure" that the journey had promised to deliver. They justified their success not in ounces, but in the fact that they had met the challenge of the unimaginable trek to the frozen Yukon.

For the most part, S.B. Dunn did not make many references to women in the diary or as subject matter in the pictures. There were some women in the Stanley mining camp at Eldorado #24 and #25 but two of them were the wives of William and Sam Stanley, the mine owners. While it was true that many women made the journey and worked in some cases, beside their husbands, tending to the cabins and the laundry, a large percentage of them were single, lured by the prospects of finding and marrying a successful miner. It is difficult to assess whether S.B. Dunn's few references to women in his diary signaled anything other than the fact that there were few in the Gourley Party. Prospector Jeremiah Lynch like so many diarists and Gold Rush authors cast the roles of women in a less than favorable light stating; "Of good women there are

---

<sup>80</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Photograph, "Dawson Y.T.," July 21, 1898, verso.



few; of bad women, plenty.”<sup>81</sup> Recent works by women and gender historians such as Frances Backhouse and Melanie J. Mayer contextualize the roles of women and give a far more accurate view of what they meant to the entire Gold Rush episode.<sup>82</sup>

S.B. Dunn noted that on August 2, 1898, members of the Gourley Party began returning home to Villisca. On September 11, 1898, the *Villisca Review* reported, “Several of the Klondike pilgrims returned home during the past week. Robert Gourley, Bev Lucy, John L. Gourley and Henry Holland, the latter on Tuesday evening.”<sup>83</sup> In total, members of the Gourley Party they remained in the Yukon for less than two months. R.A. Dunn, part of the Gourley party, declared that he had “no use for this country after I get some money out of it. I get pretty homesick sometimes.”<sup>84</sup> R.A. Dunn’s return was reported by the *Villisca Review* on October 6, 1898 with this notation: “Robert Dunn arrived last Friday from Klondike looking bright and hearty after a trip of twenty three days from Dawson. He is well satisfied to get home and to bring back as much as he took with him and a little more. A more fortunate result than thousands will reach after a longer search in the frozen land.”<sup>85</sup> These reports closed the chapter that described the journey from Seattle to Dawson City. The return home of the Gourleys and members of their party described the reality of so many of those who had made the incredible trek; after arriving in Dawson City they basically turned around and went back rationalizing that it had all been worth the adventure. The Gourleys did work for a short time at the Warden-Stanley Mine which probably allowed them to return financially stable, their dignity intact. When John Gourley was eighty eight years old in 1940, he gave an interview to the *Villisca Review* that reported “At

---

<sup>81</sup> Jeremiah Lynch, *Three Years in the Klondike*, ed. Dale L. Morgan (Chicago: R.R. Donnelly and Sons Company, the Lakeside Press, 1967), 59.

<sup>82</sup> Frances Backhouse, *Women of the Klondike* (Vancouver, B.C.: White Caps Books, 1995). See also Melanie J. Mayer, *Klondike Women: True Tales of the 1897-1898 Gold Rush* (Shallow Press, Ohio University Press, 1989).

<sup>83</sup> The *Villisca Review*, September 11, 1898.

<sup>84</sup> Robert A. Dunn, “From the Gold Lands,” *Villisca Review*, August 4, 1898.

<sup>85</sup> The *Villisca Review*, October 6, 1898.

Dawson City, the men went to work at the Stanley mine, drawing \$1.50 per hour. John (Gourley) said he cleaned the troughs twice a day and saw so much gold its weight would cause the pans to buckle. After tiring of the work, Gourley and Dunn (R.A.) left to prospect.”<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> The *Villisca Review*, April 1, 1940.

## CHAPTER V

## THE ART OF EXTRACTION AND THE MINING CAMP EXPERIENCE

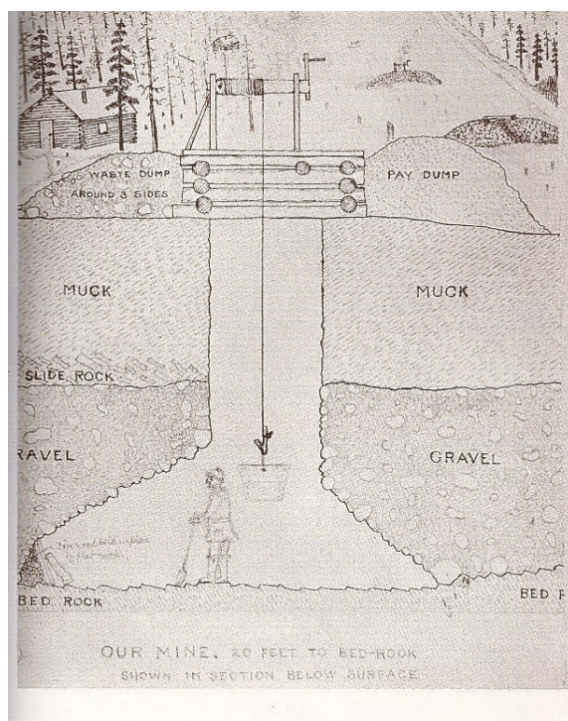
The aim of the adventure, at its onset, certainly was to mine gold. Whether members of the Dunn and Gourley parties worked the placer mines along Eldorado Creek or endeavored to discover new sources, mining and prospecting for gold was the central reason for all the sacrifices both in the Yukon and in Montgomery County and the capital investments by the miners and others. The prospects of making life-changing discoveries or finding high paying work on the creeks lured the Iowans to throw caution to the wind and embark for the Yukon Territory.

Unlike so many who believed what the exaggerated newspaper reports had heralded, that large gold nuggets could simply be picked up off the ground, the parties from Villisca had not bought into the hyperbole of these claims. Berton noted that a seventeen year old boy, Paul T. Mizony, in a letter home wrote, “Hundreds...expected all that they would have to do was to pick up nuggets above the ground and some even though they grew on bushes.”<sup>1</sup> The members of the Dunn and Gourley parties, of course, had been given the advantage of sitting across from one of the most successful miners along Bonanza Creek while still in the relative comfort of their Villisca homes, and they knew what the conditions portended. All of them had been offered work by the Stanley-Worden Mine located on Eldorado Creek in the Yukon Territory at fifteen dollars a day, considered good wages at the time. However, a simple calculation reveals that S.B. Dunn would have needed to work the first seven hundred hours at \$1.50 per hour before he paid for his grubstake. That could amount to about twenty weeks. The question then is how much

---

<sup>1</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 182.

would S.B. Dunn have made had he chose to retain his business in Villisca for that same twenty weeks? Since he was keenly aware of the fact that he was going to work in “Uncle Billy’s mine,” the possibility of monetary gain seems to pale in comparison to the success he experienced by completing the journey and surviving the winter. There were prospectors who choose to pan for gold in the streams, creeks, and along the rivers but the real potential for a strike often times lay between sixteen and one hundred feet below the surface. This was known as placer mining and was the type of gold mining that took place at Eldorado #25 and #26 where members of both the Dunn and Gourley Parties were employed.



*Plate 11: “Hand-Drawn Rendering of his Mine,” Basil Austin, 1898.*

Mining commenced once the miner arrived at a creek or stream and staked and registered the claim. After, the usual test for surface dust and nuggets took the form of panning, which was seasonal and the seasons were marked by extremes. The challenge to the miners was to endeavor

to fit mining's basic components into these periods of light and dark, as well as relative warmth and extreme cold that represented the natural cycles of the Yukon. Then the miner selected the spot to begin to remove all the layers that lay between the surface and the gold. In a hand drawn rendering of his mine, prospector Basil Austin demonstrated the function of the stereotypical placer mine.<sup>2</sup> The "miner" character at the bottom is drifting, a term used to describe the way in which the miner followed the old creek beds underground once the mine shaft had hit bedrock. Kathryn Morse who looked at placer mining through a lens of "ecological disassembling" described the process: "First they fought their way through layers of moss and other vegetation, surface muck, permanently frozen earth, and underground soil and rock to find the buried, gold bearing gravels. Second, they hauled those gravels to the surface by bucket and windlass, and piled them up in giant 'dumps.' Third in the wash-up, they ran water through sluices and rockers to wash away dirt and gravel and separate out the gold. The first two tasks were winter work; the third had to wait for spring and summer when the creeks flowed free."<sup>3</sup>

Dunn's diary entry for August 8, 1898 showed that the Dunn party had moved from Dawson City to Eldorado #25 which was owned by William Stanley and his partner, Charles Worden. The first order of business was to chop one hundred cords of wood which paid \$7.00 per cord. Dunn noted that they had begun to clear the ground in order to dump on #26, which was also owned by Stanley-Worden. By September 22 the work of sinking the shafts for drifting had begun. "Ground frozen from top down; have to pick it up until we reach gravel which is about 8-12 feet. Water bothersome in the holes on upper #26. Picking is very hard work in the

---

<sup>2</sup> Austin, *Diary of a Ninety Eighter*, 175.

<sup>3</sup> Morse, *The Nature of Gold: An Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush*, 93.

frozen ground and it's frozen much harder than Iowa soil freezes."<sup>4</sup> He described a hole on French Hill, a nearby mining site, which had been sunk one hundred four feet and still had not hit bedrock. He described the ground at #26 as too soft to make any headway due to burning during the first week of August. Burning involved building a wood fire at the top of the hole and then once the ground under the fire was soft, the fire was removed and then re-started at the new solid level. This was a long process.

Iowan N.P. Mayhew's January 1899 letter to the *Villisca Review* gave a quite involved description of placer mining on the Eldorado. He reminded the readers that the last time he had seen the sun shine in the valley was about November 6<sup>th</sup> and did not expect to see it again until February 10<sup>th</sup>. The normal workday was from 8:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. with an hour off for dinner. He described the preparation of the mine site, which occurred in the fall. The site was smoothed, leveled and all debris removed. Then the holes were marked off at about fifty feet apart or whatever the valley's geography would allow. That distance allowed for plenty of room for the pay-dirt as well as providing each miner with about the same distance to drift once the bedrock was reached. After the holes were marked off, the removal process began. The average hole was about three feet by seven feet.

---

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entries September 22-29, 1898.



*Plate 12: "No. 26 Eldorado," S.B. Dunn, 1899.*

The S.B. Dunn photo (Plate 12), “No. 26 Eldorado,” depicts the process of removing the gold from the bottom of the mine shafts and then separating the gold from the dumps of dirt. Note the height of the windlass, the crank that was used to lift the buckets of dirt from the mine shafts, at the right of the picture.<sup>5</sup> “The muck is picked and shoveled out and the gravel thawed with wood fires and taken to a depth of ten feet. Then small logs, longer than the hole are laid at the edge and a crib is built up, and a windlass with rope, hook and buckets is put in readiness to be worked by the top man who hoists the dirt and makes a dump of waste until pay-dirt, that gravel and dirt just above the bedrock, is struck and then he makes a dump of ‘pay’.”<sup>6</sup> He added that the top man was also responsible for chopping both green and dry wood for the fires. The fires were set before the end of the work day and left to smolder all night. At 8:00 the next

---

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Photograph, “No. 26 Eldorado,” 1899 The photograph depicts wooden flumes, dumps of dirt and muck from the bottom of the shafts, and windlasses which are all components of the placer mining process.

<sup>6</sup> N.P. Mayhew, Letter to the Editor, “Mining on the Eldorado,” No. 26 Eldorado, Yukon Territory, Canada, January 15, 1899, *Villisca Review*, March 2, 1899.

morning, the removal of the muck in the hole took place and the process was repeated until bedrock was reached. Then the men who drifted connected the holes allowing ventilation to occur. A veritable spider web of drift connections were made at the bedrock depth which in the case of Eldorado #26 was about 16 to 23 feet from the surface. The top man continues to haul the waste and then the pay-dirt, which created large piles of both at the surface. This meant that the top man had to continually raise the lever of the windlass by adding more small logs to the crib. Some of the cribs reached a height of fifteen feet or more. Water was a danger to those drifting in the holes but the permafrost prevented that from taking place until the weather began to warm. Without the frozen ground, Mayhew noted, this mining operation would have been impossible. Once the days became too warm for drifting the process of sluicing and rocking would begin. “Day and night, the dirt and rocks are shoveled into the sluice boxes and the gold is caught in the riffles to be cleaned, blowed, weighed and sacked.”<sup>7</sup> Sluicing required tremendous amounts of water to service the flumes so this process was dependent on the snow melting in order to fill Eldorado Creek.

In *The Nature of Gold*, Kathryn Morse discusses how place-mining camps like “No. 26 Eldorado” captured by S.B. Dunn, affected the environment. Place mining, she notes, destroyed these biologically diverse locations. She points out specifically that changing the nature of the streams in order to divert the water to flumes and sluices made it impossible for the salmon, grayling, whitefish that had inhabited those streams to spawn, feed, and migrate. She reported that the result was the disappearance of many of the species of fish in those waters. She noted that “when gold miners looked at the torn up, muddied landscape they left behind, however, they

---

<sup>7</sup> N.P. Mayhew, Letter to the Editor, “Mining on the Eldorado,” No. 26 Eldorado, Yukon Territory, Canada, January 15, 1899, *Villisca Review*, March 2, 1899.



looked through the lens of their culture; instead of degradation, they saw riches, one of the most productive landscapes in the world.”<sup>8</sup>

While the *Dunn Diary*, photographs, and letters provide a first-hand account of the mining process, they also reveal what everyday life was like for these prospectors from the Midwest now settled in the Stanley-Worden camp. These miners lived in near total darkness, twenty four hours a day, and suffered an average temperature of -40 degrees.<sup>9</sup> What got them through these grueling, monotonous, exhausting days? How did they pass their time? Once the party settled in the Stanley-Worden camp, the focus of S.B. Dunn’s diary shifted somewhat. Unlike the first months of entries, which boasted more complete details of the experiences, there were shorter, less involved entries after October 1, 1898. Instead, S.B. Dunn placed more emphasis on the number of letters received by the members of the Dunn Party as well as weather related statistics. And yet, the diary, letters, and photographs by S.B. Dunn and other Iowan prospectors still provide some glance into daily life at the mining camp. Receiving and sending letters was a critical part of everyday life for the miners. Dunn kept meticulous records in his diary of how many letters each in the party received. It is clear from the S.B. Dunn suite that miners were starved for information from home. On October 6, 1898 the *Villisca Review* published S.B. Dunn’s letter in which he asked C.K. Kennedy of Villisca (the recipient of the published letter), to please send him a copy of the *Villisca Review*, noting that he had not seen a copy since departing Villisca. Newspapers from home were worth more than gold and many diaries reported that newspapers were read, word for word, including the advertisements. In the letter he also claimed that there was about forty tons of mail in Dawson that arrived via St.

---

<sup>8</sup> Morse, *The Nature of Gold*, 112.

<sup>9</sup> On January 29<sup>th</sup> of 1899, S.B. Dunn observed that the sun shone for the first time since November albeit for only a short time. There was little if any light for months and it could have been assumed that there was a psychological effect of “light deprivation.”

Michaels but that none of it would be distributed much before the spring because of Canadian postal inefficiencies. These inefficiencies and the slow pace of mail represented a major frustration for Dunn and his fellow prospectors. The Dunn Diary entry for March 11, 1899 stated, “We get an even sixty letters (5 of us) from home today. Cost us \$10.00. SBD-15, RJD-12, CAD-11.”<sup>10</sup> S.B. Dunn and members of the party went to great lengths to retrieve mail. Dunn stated in his letter of October 6, 1898 that in Dawson, “I waited in line two days to get mail – without my dinner both days too. This is about the experience of everybody. Only one thing in the country is worse than the Canadian postal system and that’s the trails.”<sup>11</sup> Fellow prospector N.P. Mayhew also discussed mail, noting that the police brought in about four hundred pounds of mail twice a month and took about the same amount out. This mail service, however, depended on the river and thus between November and May, most mail service halted until the thaw. Mayhew declared that he had not received a letter since August of the previous year and that he was aware that there were 2,800 pounds of letters and 60 tons of parcels and papers waiting to be delivered.<sup>12</sup> Without any other form of communication available, the mail was critical to maintaining some semblance of participation, albeit vicarious, in hometown affairs. Family members died or were born and oftentimes months passed before the miners found out due to the huge delivery gaps caused by the frozen rivers.

During the long months away from Montgomery County, miners gave meaning to their lives through several diversions, activities written about by S.B. Dunn and other Iowan prospectors. S.B. Dunn often expanded diary entries to document special holiday occasions such as Thanksgiving because he was settled and not travelling and had time to record these “rituals.”

---

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entry March 11, 1899.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, “From the Alaska Diggings” *Villisca Review*, October 6, 1898.

<sup>12</sup> N.P. Mayhew, Letters to the Editor, “Mining on the Eldorado,” No. 26 Eldorado, Yukon Territory, Canada, January 15, 1899, *Villisca Review*, March 2, 1899.

In his December 24, 1898 entry, for example, S.B. Dunn elaborated on food procured, served, and enjoyed during Christmas Eve festivities:

December 24<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Eve: Boss gets a chicken that looks like a raven, dressed, price \$10.00. The vendor has \$200.00 worth of them carrying them on his back. George Worden and S.B. Dunn hide the chicken and the boys on #25 and #26 accuse William Jennings of taking same. We offer \$10.00 if he will return it as the boss refuses to dole out the Christmas gift, a bottle of Canadian rye, until it is returned. We all get our rye and Christmas money. All the Irish go to Forbs to celebrate high mass at midnight. Donnelly started home and went up Bonanza to #35 before he got sober enough to know where he was. Bill of fare for Christmas Eve: bread, butter potatoes, wienerwurst, beefsteak sausage, sauerkraut, gravy, peaches dried, apple pie, ginger snaps, cake and cream and coffee. Tomato soup canned.<sup>13</sup>

The mixture of playfulness, religious culture, and the descriptions of the available food for the meal separated the entries such as the one above from the mundane, daily record keeping so prevalent in the majority of S.B. Dunn's entries once he had reached the mining camp.

Similarly, S.B. Dunn relayed humorous episodes or stories of sporting competition between individuals and groups. These entries and photographs remind us that life for the miners was not only about gold discovered (or not discovered), wages earned, and food consumed, but it was about building a sense of community and adventure. One of the favorite pastimes, he noted, was swapping yarns or telling tales. S.B. Dunn describes the story tellers as members of the "Alaska Liars Club" and includes samples of some of the tall tales told:

Present members in good standing of the Alaska Liars Club: William Jennings, George Worden, H.C. Horstman, Mayhew, and Pat Donnelly, the unapproachable. Someone has been telling about a man who sat up in a chair and watched surgeons amputate his leg. Pat D. gives one of his pachyderm sucks at his old stumpy pipe and says, 'No doubt but he can do it. I knew a fellow that lived in Tacoma; this happened on 'J' Street. Jim Welch he knew the very spot. There were a lot of hoboes trying to jump a morning freight train. One of them fell and the wheels of the car cut his leg off here, indicating above the knee. And sure that feller jumped up and ran back and picked up his leg and jumped on the caboose as it came by. The club gave him a horse laugh but Pat insisted that 'he seen him do it.'<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entry December 24, 1898.

<sup>14</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entry April 26, 1899.



*Plate 13: "Boxing on a Floor of Gold," S.B. Dunn, 1898.*

Telling stories like these provided the miners a source of entertainment and a sense of camaraderie. At other times, diversions took the form of competitions. In S.B. Dunn's photograph, "Boxing on a Floor of Gold," he captured a boxing match between J.L. Stanley and Pat McNamee, with George Worden, one of Eldorado #25's owners, as referee.<sup>15</sup> The photo earned its title because the sparring session took place on a very rich dump of pay dirt. Dunn reported that the dump yielded amounts of gold up to \$1,000.00 to the pan and that when he reported to work the next morning, he picked up several thousand dollars' worth of nuggets on his way in. The photo provides more than insight into forms of amusement and recreation. In the background of the photo is a series of flumes and dumps. The landscape had been completely altered and no longer resembled a river or creek valley. In his discussions of the Bonanza Creek goldfields, Tappan Adney captured the essence of this metamorphosis shown in S.B. Dunn's

---

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Photograph, "Boxing on a Floor of Gold," description taken from photo verso.

photo. He writes upon returning to Bonanza in 1898 after mining had begun, “Dams of cribwork filled with stones, flumes and sluice boxes lay across our path; heaps of ‘tailings’ glistened in the sunlight beside yawning holes with windlasses tumbled in; cabins were deserted – the whole creek, wherever work has been done, was ripped and gutted. Nothing but flood and fire is so ruthless as the miner.”<sup>16</sup>

Boxing was not the only form of contest that kept the miners occupied during the long and frigid months in the Yukon. In his very last diary entry posted on June 9, 1899, S.B. Dunn related his story of a mock trial between the fire department and the “Firm” which is assumed to be the Stanley-Worden mine owners over a pretend fire in one of the cabins. He described how every crew member of #25 Eldorado was assigned a role to play in the imaginary courtroom and trial. S.B. Dunn was cast first as a member of the fire department but later became a witness for the plaintiff. He concluded his vignette:

After summing up the case by Longton (council for the defense) and Thomas Ford (council for the plaintiff) who said Longton done the best he could, the judge instructs the jury. “That if they find the fire company set the cabins on fire to make an honest living, to decide in favor of the fire department.” Jury retired to the kitchen and, after eating everything in sight, agreed on a verdict and were brought before the court by the bailiff. The foreman read the verdict in favor of the fire department. The judge said, “Seein’ as how it was a pretty close case,” he decided that bit sides set up a bottle of whiskey to the crowd. Court adjourned after the judge had drank two more bottles.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps acting out these imagined scenarios helped the miners to retain their sanity during extended periods of darkness and bitter cold or in the case of a June 9<sup>th</sup> entry, helped to add a modicum of levity to the difficult task of the “clean up.” If one compared this type of diversion to that of the gambling tables, prostitutes, and dance halls, make believe at the mines seemed a far safer, less costly way to take a temporary siesta from the day to day hard labor of the gold fields.

---

<sup>16</sup> Adney, *Klondike Stampede*, 404.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entry June 9, 1899.

Music was also an integral part of the mining camp's recreational bill of fare. On January 29, 1899, S.B. Dunn reported on excellent music provided by "#26 Orchestra," whose name derived from #26 Eldorado mine. "Serenade consisting of two violins, two mandolins, banjo, and guitar."<sup>18</sup> S.B. Dunn noted that beside the miners, there were Marguerite and Irene, two women who worked for Stanley-Worden, as well as several visiting mine owners and other guests. Music and dancing were very much a part of the lifestyle in the gold fields. Certainly it was a foundational element of life in Dawson City. Charles Dunn, brother of Samuel Dunn, in a letter dated March 6, 1899, to the *Villisca Review* described his plans for St. Patrick's Day merriment. "Tomorrow is St. Patrick's Day and we are all Irish. There will be no work in the mines. I help play at the Forks for a dance. I wish I had my clarinet in here. You ought to see the one I am using. It only has thirteen keys and some of them are broken off. We get from \$25.00 to \$40.00 a piece for playing an evening. Six of us play."<sup>19</sup> Whether the entertainment centered on a planned event like this dance or a "stag dance" which was far less formal and was usually accompanied by heavy drinking, music and dancing served as a centerpiece of daily life in mining communities.

Perhaps most importantly, S.B. Dunn and his companions understood the unlikelihood of returning home to Villisca rich, and they articulated this to family and friends back home. In one letter S.B. Dunn noted that all the large mine owners except Worden and Stanley reduced the typical fifteen dollar a day pay rate to five dollars.<sup>20</sup> He declared that other than Bonanza and Eldorado Creeks, no other paying claims had been discovered although there seemed to be some promise of a pay streak at Dominion Creek where many men were working for the five dollar a

---

<sup>18</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, *Dunn Diary*, entry January 29, 1899.

<sup>19</sup> Charles A. Dunn, Letter to the Editor, "From Sub Zero Land. A Klondyker Reports the Weather" March 6, 1899, *Villisca Review*.

<sup>20</sup> A.C. Harris, *Alaska and the Klondike Gold Fields*, Place of Publication unknown, 1897. 41.

day wage. He closed his letter by advising anyone who had the thought of coming north, to “stay in Iowa.”<sup>21</sup> Similarly, N.P. Mayhew disabused the *Villisca Review* readers of the notion that gold was plentiful and instead insisted that most miners were returning home penniless. In a letter written in late August 1898, he claimed that the 40,000 reported people in Dawson was really about half that number, because miners only stayed a few days and moved on once they realized that there was no gold to be found. He described the payment of \$25,000.00 by the Stanley-Worden mines as the negotiated royalty to the Canadian government that in theory amounted to ten percent of what they took out of the ground. “Don’t think that this is so easy money,” he wrote. “Only four men own it [the Stanley–Worden mines] all and 4,000 men are broke almost to the point of suffering as the gold goes by. About forty claims are very rich and perhaps one hundred more pay. Very many lose money for men who work them. Don’t believe that gold is plenty; it is only abundant in a very small territory.”<sup>22</sup> He described what he referred to as “wildcat claim dealers” who took advantage of the *Cheechakos*, a term to describe newly arrived prospectors by selling them worthless claims. Mayhew wrote of the difficulties in striking it rich for all except the wealthy or extremely lucky. In a September 22, 1898, Mayhew stated that claims with any real value sold in private sales, rather than in the daily public auctions. He mentioned that Worden (which Worden was not identified) sold his claim that was part of the Stanley-Worden mining endeavor for \$150,000.00 and “went back to the real world.”<sup>23</sup>

Rumors of gold strikes, rather than actual gold strikes, became the topic of discussion among the *Villisca* miners like Mayhew. Newspapers, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* in particular, he claimed, reported total fabrications of gold discoveries at certain less well known locations. He cautioned that the papers may not have been to blame and the fault may have been with the

---

<sup>21</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, “From the Alaska Diggings,” *Villisca Review*, October 6, 1898.

<sup>22</sup> N.P. Mayhew, Letter to the Editor, “Not All Gold That Glitters,” *Villisca Review*, September 22, 1898.

<sup>23</sup> Mayhew, Letter to the Editor, “Not All Gold That Glitters.”

transportation companies.<sup>24</sup> Klondike culture necessitated that the miner who made the gold strike had a moral obligation to tell other miners where the strike occurred. According to Adney and Berton, many of these claims of riches originated in the bars and dance halls of Dawson City. Even if it was assumed that the genesis of the claim was truthful, the telling and retelling provided an opportunity for embellishment if not confusion. Many of these “stampedes” occurred at night so that some miners might stake their respective claims before sun up and then file them the next day. R.A. Dunn, a first cousin to the Dunn brothers and travelled with the Gourley Party, stated in a letter to the *Villisca Review* that he had staked a claim about two miles from Dawson at the intersection of the Yukon and the Klondike rivers. “They found gold there about two weeks ago and there was a stampede at 12:00 o’clock at night and a number of claims staked. So it may turn out alright.”<sup>25</sup> In this same letter, he boasted that on May 23<sup>rd</sup> he had gone to work on the Worden-Stanley mine and had already earned two hundred and sixty four dollars. Even though he had staked a claim, he took the sure bet and worked for wages. S.B. Dunn reported that on January 10, 1899, that “Sam Stanley and Tom Cannon went to Dawson to go on a stampede down the Yukon with Nigger Jim. About 1,000 people followed them and after going thirty-five miles down the river, they stopped and camped hoping the rest would go back. Stay there two or three days and many freeze their hands and feet and many of them are amputated.”<sup>26</sup> Almost all of the stampedes instigated by rumors, based sometimes on fact and other times on fiction, ended the same way: no gold. But for those who chose to pursue their dreams of success

---

<sup>24</sup> Mayhew, Letter to the Editor, “Not All Gold That Glitters.”

<sup>25</sup> Robert Alexander Dunn, Letter to the Editor, “From the Gold Lands,” *The Villisca Review*, August 4, 1898.

<sup>26</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, diary entry *Dunn Diary*, January 10, 1899. Berton explained how Jim Daugherty got the nick name Nigger Jim. He described Jim as a member of the Klondike aristocracy and a blond giant of a man. He earned the name, not from his color but from a soft Missouri accent and the fact that enjoyed singing spirituals and playing the banjo. Berton’s references to the Nigger Jim Stampede, as it became known, matches exactly the dates and some details found in the *Dunn Diary*. Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 394-396.



in the Klondike, the stampedes seemed to have kept the faith alive with some members of the mining community.

These miners worked long days in a frigid dark environment; they survived by establishing community, by creating routines and diversions, and by fixating on news from loved ones at home. Significantly, S.B. Dunn as well as the other Iowans never focused on the *possession* of gold but rather in their descriptions of the mining process they emphasized instead the enormous work it took to coax gold out of the ancient river beds many feet below. The Eldorado camps represented a key point in the journey that involved having difficult discussions in Villisca, identifying the sources of their grubstakes, travelling to Seattle, Washington, boarding a steamers for Lynn Canal, crossing the summit of the Chilcoot Pass, building boats, fording the rivers and rapids, landing in Dawson Y.T., making the final trek to the goldfields, working the claims, and finally returning home to join their fellow Iowans in Montgomery County. The *Dunn Diary*, letters, and photographs documenting this journey show that the experience of surviving this adventure proved meaningful to the Dunn and Gourley parties lending credence to the belief that the adventure itself, may have rivalled the discovery of gold as the primary motivation behind the trek.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION: IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR NEARLY FORTY YEARS LATER

Given S.B. Dunn's penchant for meticulous detailed reporting in his diary and in his letters to the *Villisca Review* suggest it is likely that he intended to use the diary as a basis for future writings. The fact that years later during the 1930s, he recounted in great detail many of his stories in columns for the *Alaska Weekly* suggests that he drew on information in his original diaries and letters to write these retrospectives. The later writings suggest that the experience of the Yukon Gold Rush remained a critical part of Dunn's self-understanding.

S.B. Dunn returned from the Yukon and shortly thereafter moved to Minnesota. After several years there he pressed on to Anacortes, Washington and eventually settled in Roseburg Oregon where he purchased a ranch which he named "Dunnrovin." However, he remained a part of the dwindling "sourdough" community of Yukon miners until his death in 1941.<sup>1</sup> He attended reunions with men and women who had shared his experiences in Dawson, Nome, Skagway and Dyea. Robert Stevens, S.B. Dunn's son in law, saved a copy of a publication titled *Alaska-Yukon Gold Book* which was later discovered in his wife's possessions after her death in 1991. It, like so many other publications, gave an in-depth description of the events of the years of the Yukon and Alaska gold rushes. *The Seattle Post Intelligencer* was involved in its publication. The book listed every known sourdough still living in 1929 and their location. It included S.B. Dunn who is recorded as hailing from Roseburg, Oregon.<sup>2</sup> Years later, in the 1930s, S.B. Dunn wrote many

---

<sup>1</sup> W.R. Hamilton, *The Yukon Story* (Vancouver, B.C.: Mitchell Press Limited, 1964), 85. Hamilton describes sourdough as fermented flour and water mixture carried in sealed containers for use as a leavening agent for making bread. The term became applicable to Yukon old timers, who had been in the country long enough to see the ice form in the fall and break up in the spring.

<sup>2</sup> Sourdough Stampede Association Inc., *Alaska-Yukon Gold Book*, ed. Fred Atwood (Seattle, Washington: Sourdough Stamped Association, 1930), 112.

articles for the *Alaska Weekly* that featured a column called *Sourdough Memories*.<sup>3</sup> The column memorialized the Yukon prospectors through memoirs, stories, poems, and obituaries.<sup>4</sup>

S.B. Dunn authored some thirty-five *Alaska Weekly* articles over a period of three years, 1934-1936. These articles underscored the importance of the participant's view of the Gold Rush through a positive lens. Even though the decision to go was difficult, the journey, arduous, and the results for the most part abysmal, "Sourdough Memories" and the articles from the *Alaska Weekly* disclose the impact of the Yukon experiences on S.B. Dunn's thinking and writing in the years following the events of 1898-99. Virtually all the articles and references were written between 1934 through 1936, some forty five years after the actual event. The fact that he wrote prolifically about his gold rush experiences and sought out the company of those who had lived those same experiences proved the importance of that episode on the rest of his life. Aside from retelling the devastating Palm Sunday Avalanche of 1898, in the "Sourdough Memories," S.B. Dunn chose to write mainly about the lighter, positive side of the adventure. His longest contribution to the publication appeared in four editions that retold the story of the June 9, 1899 mock trial. The story was fleshed out and cleaned up, so to speak, but it was true to the diary entry written some forty years before. Memoirs from other miners published in the *Alaska Weekly* echoed S.B. Dunn's in their positive, lighthearted tone. Most stories were silly, sophomoric in nature, boastful, and exaggerated.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the memoirs, S.B. Dunn also authored a series of two or three sentence vignettes that appeared in the *Alaska Weekly* on a regular basis. The central character in these short stories was a fellow named *Porkeypine Ike*, a

---

<sup>3</sup> Hazel Stevens, his daughter, carefully cut out the articles either authored by him or that made references to him during the period of the Yukon Gold Rush.

<sup>4</sup> See for example "Oldtimer Went North Before Gold Rush Days to Klondike," *Alaska Weekly*, Friday, December 21, 1934.

<sup>5</sup> See for example: John Slater, "Sourdough Memories, 'Another Swift Water Bill' Story," *Alaska Weekly*, Friday, November 1, 1935. Slater, "Sourdough Memories, What Imagination Will Sometimes Do," *Alaska Weekly*, February 8, 1935.

former prospector now residing in Seattle, Washington. While the stories were fictional and fun, S.B. Dunn took the name *Porkeypine Ike* from Porcupine Hill, a hill located in the White Pass between Skagway and the border with Canada, the winding treacherous pass that members of the Gourley Party had traversed on their way to the Yukon gold fields. Pierre Berton described Porcupine Hill as “a roller coaster where the wretched animals must pick their way between ten foot boulders.”<sup>6</sup> Perhaps S.B. Dunn created Ike to cast doubt on the validity of the decisions to cross the passes in 1897 and 1898 and to buttress that point, he couched Ike as a buffoon.

The “Sourdough Memories” and Porkeypine Ike stories provide S.B. Dunn with a tool for making sense of his great adventure to the Yukon and to understand his journey within the larger context of his life. By retelling the details of his experience and journey, to other prospectors, his readers, and his family members, Dunn justified his risky decision forty years previous, to sell his business and begin the perilous trek. The overwhelmingly positive tone of these memories and fictionalized stories reminded him and his readers that even though he did not leave the Yukon rich, he successfully completed the journey and survived the mining experience.

---

<sup>6</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 153.



Plate 14: “Stanley and Dunn Families,” S.B. Dunn, Villisca, Iowa, 1897.<sup>7</sup>

This thesis has attempted to understand what the Dunns, Gourleys and others hoped to accomplish and how they measured success as in the Yukon Gold Rush. At the beginning of the journey, most understood that members of the parties would work at “Uncle Billy’s” Eldorado mines. This meant working for wages at fifteen dollars a day plus meals. It took at least one thousand dollars to purchase provisions and to travel to the gold fields. Some did some prospecting but references contained in the *Dunn Diary* shows that most remained employed at the Stanley mines. There is scant mention of gold finds by individuals in Dunn’s writings and when he did write about gold it was only to give examples of the rate of exchange i.e. a quart of milk cost one ounce of gold. Apparently none of the Iowans got rich from their northward treks.

---

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Photo taken spring 1897. Standing left to right: Harvey Shiffler, Lum Higgins, S.B. Dunn, Bill Jennings, C.A. Dunn. Standing left to right: Sam Stanley, Laura Stanley, William B Stanley and Sarah Stanley. The photo was taken during a visit from the Stanley’s after they landed in Seattle aboard the Portland in July of 1897. It was during this visit that “Klondike Fever” took hold in Montgomery County and prompted the Dunns and the Gourleys to decide to go north.

Of the extended Dunn family, William Stanley, seemed to be the only miner to find success. Of the Dunn brothers, only Charles returned to the Yukon and it was rumored that he struck pay dirt but there was nothing to substantiate that claim. Four members of the Gourley Party returned in September of 1898 only five months after their departure from Villisca. Considering the fact that they arrived in Dawson around June 3<sup>rd</sup> of that year, they spent very little time actually mining or prospecting since they would have had to depart in August to be home by September.

Returning home to Villisca none the richer, did the Dunn and Gourley Parties consider the trip a success? Looking through the lens of Dunn's writings, success equated to making it to Dawson, surviving the winter, and earning the title "sourdough." In his comments to the *Villisca Review*, John Gourley summed up this reality when he noted that all he had gained in the Yukon was the experience itself. If we measure success not only by the amount of gold found but by the experience of surviving the adventurous trip, then successful they most certainly were. To members of the Dunn and Gouley Parties, the experience brought meaning to their lives. Perhaps the key to the thesis lies in the fact that the trek allowed them to see themselves as carrying on the legacy of their pioneering western moving relatives and it provided an outlet for a group of mainly young male farmers, somewhat frustrated economically during the economically perilous 1890s. For S.B. Dunn, as seen in the "Sourdough Memories," the experience continued to create a sense of identity some forty years after the Gold Rush. Berton perhaps best captured the importance of the journey and experience itself to the thousands of people who made the trip. Berton recounts, "In this sense as in so many others, the stampeded resembled a great war. It was impossible to emerge from it unchanged, and those who survived it were never quite the same again. It brutalized some and ennobled others, but the majority neither sank to the depths nor rose to the heights; instead their characters were tempered in the hot flame of an experience that

was as much emotional as it was physical.”<sup>8</sup> Perhaps success can be measured in the life altering experience that only those who completed the journey could begin to understand.

---

<sup>8</sup> Berton, *Klondike Fever*, 430.

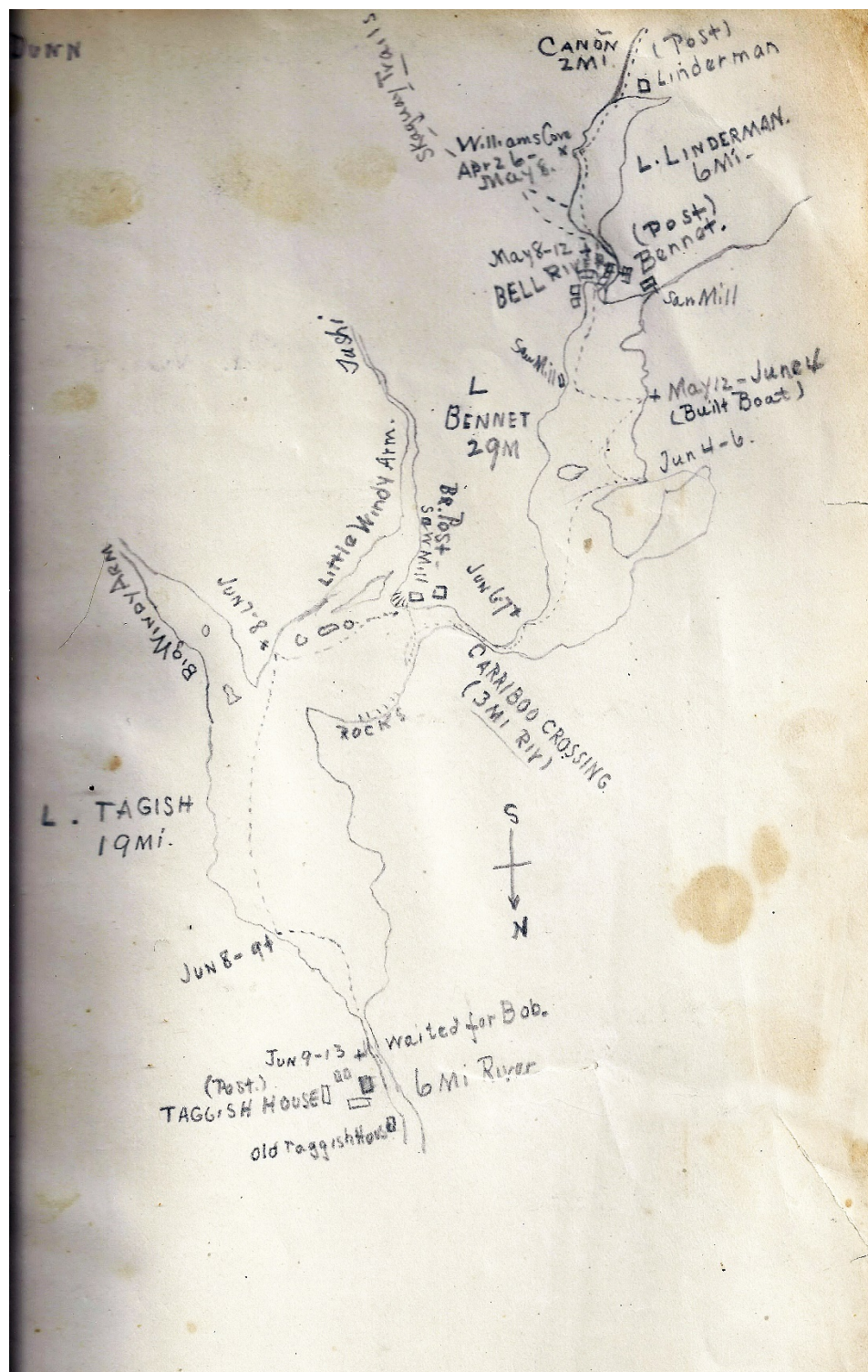


Plate 15: "Hand-Drawn Map of the Lake Bennett Region, S.B. Dunn, 1898."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Baker Dunn, Hand Drawn Map of Lake Area after Crossing the Summit of Chilcoot Pass



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

## MANUSCRIPT SOURCES/LETTERS/PHOTOGRAPHS

"The Beautiful Nodaway Valley in Iowa." Samuel Baker Dunn to Jean Norton Stevens. July 10, 1936.

Dunn, Samuel Baker. "Dunn Photograph Suite 1898-1899." MS, Melatti.

Dunn, Samuel Baker. *The Dunn Diary 1898-1899*. MS, Melatti.

Dunn, Samuel Baker. "Genealogy of the Thomas Dunn Family 1601-1940." TS.  
Some portions published in "Villisca Memoirs 1853-1976" as well as in "A Baker Family Genealogy and Allied Families, Dunn, Gourley and Russell" compiled by Ralph Shipp

Dunn, Samuel Baker. "Samuel Caldwell Dunn: Pioneer." MS, Melatti.

Jackson, Oren Ephram. "Alaska Gold: Oren Ephram Jackson's Letters Home." Iowa. TS,  
Villisca, Iowa Library, Villisca. Compiled by Richard M. Cutter.

"Waited Too Long." Samuel Baker Dunn to George W. Baker. April 25, 1939. Roseburg, Oregon.

## PERIODICALS

*Alaska Weekly*, (Seattle Washington)

*El Paso Herald* (El Paso, Texas)

*The New York Herald* (New York, New York)

*The Red Oak Express* (Red Oak, Iowa)

*The San Francisco Call* (San Francisco, California)

*The San Francisco Chronicle* (San Francisco, California)

*The Seattle Daily Times* (Seattle, Washington)

*The Seattle Post Intelligencer* (Seattle Washington)

*The Seattle Times* (Seattle, Washington)

*The Sun* (Montgomery County, Iowa)

*The Villisca Review*, (Villisca, Iowa)

*The Villisca Review and Stanton Viking*, (Villisca, Iowa)

## SECONDARY SOURCES

Adney, Tappan. *The Klondike Stampede*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994.

*The Alaska-Yukon Gold Book; a Roster of the Progressive Men and Women Who Were the Argonauts of the Klondike Gold Stampede and Those Who Are Identified with the Pioneer Days and Subsequent Development of Alaska and the Yukon Territory*. Seattle: Sourdough Stampede Association, 1930.

Alig, Joyce L. *Old Gold Rush to Alaska Diaries of 1898-1900: A True Story of Ohioans and Their Alaska Gold Prospecting in the Yukon, Koyukuk, Tanana & Chena Rivers' Wilderness from Their Original, Unpublished Diaries, Letters & Photographs, Told within the Context of Alaskan Heritage*. Mercer County, OH: Joyce L. Alig?, 2001.

Backhouse, Frances. *Women of the Klondike*. Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1995.

Becker, Ethel Anderson. *Klondike '98: Hegg's Album of the L898 Alaska Gold Rush*. Portland, Or.: Metropolitan Press, 1958.

Berton, Pierre. *The Klondike Fever: The Life and Death of the Last Great Gold Rush*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958.

Berton, Pierre. *The Klondike Quest: A Photographic Essay, 1897-1899*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1983.

Conger, Horace S., Carolyn Jean. Holeski, and Marlene Conger. Holeski. *In Search of Gold: The Alaska Journals of Horace S. Conger, 1898-1899*. Anchorage, AK: Alaska Geographic Society, 1983.

Denison, Merrill. *Klondike Mike, an Alaskan Odyssey*. New York: W. Morrow &, 1943.

Franklin, Bob. *Key Concepts in Journalism Studies*. London: SAGE, 2005.

Fraser, J. D. *The Gold Fever; Or, Two Years in Alaska*. Honolulu, 1923.

Hamilton, Walter R. *The Yukon Story; a Sourdough's Record of Goldrush Days and Yukon Progress from Earliest times to the Present Day*. Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1964.

Harris, A. C. *Alaska and the Klondike Goldfields*. Place of Publication Not Identified: Sylvanite, 2013.

- Higgins, Andrea. *Villisca Memories, 1853-1976: A History of Villisca, Iowa, with Biographical Sketches*. Place of Publication Not Identified: Publisher Not Identified, 1976.
- Hoffmann, Charles. "The Depression of the Nineties." *The Journal of Economic History* 16, no. 2 (June 01, 1956): 137-64. Accessed February 06, 2016.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/2114113?ref=search-gateway:8b8dcf12d2e1febfa831f563959981b7>.
- Hunt, John Clark, ed. "The Adventures of the Iowa Goldseekers." *Alaska Journal* 3, Winter 1973. Accessed February 18, 2013.
- Irwin, Douglas. "Higher Tariffs, Lower Revenues? Analyzing the Fiscal Aspects of the "Great Tariff Debate of 1888"" *The Journal of Economic History* 58, no. 1 (March 1998). Accessed November 11, 2014. doi:10.3386/w6239.
- Klondike; the Chicago Record's Book for Gold Seekers*. Chicago: Chicago Record, 1897.
- Lynch, Jeremiah, and Dale L. Morgan. *Three Years in the Klondike*. Chicago: R.R. Donnelley & Sons, 1967.
- Mayer, Melanie J. *Klondike Women: True Tales of the 1897-98 Gold Rush*. Athens, OH: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 1989.
- Maynes, Mary Jo., Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara Laslett. *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.
- Medill, Robert Bell. *Klondike Diary; True Diary Kept by Robert B. Medill on His Trip to the Klondike, 1897-1898*. Portland, Or.: Beattie, 1949.
- Merritt, William Wallace. *A History of the County of Montgomery from the Earliest Days to 1906*. Red Oak, Ia.: Express Pub., 1906.
- Mills, Thora McIlroy. *The Church and the Klondike Gold Rush*. Toronto, Canada: United Church of Canada. Committee on Archives, 1978.
- Minter, Roy. *The White Pass: Gateway to the Klondike*. Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press, 1987.
- Moore, J. Bernard. *Skagway in Days Primeval*. New York: Vantage Press, 1968.
- Morse, Kathryn Taylor. *The Nature of Gold: An Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003.
- Ostler, Jeffrey. *Prairie Populism: The Fate of Agrarian Radicalism in Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa, 1880-1892*. Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1993.

Ostler, Jeffrey. "Why the Populist Party Was Strong in Kansas and Nebraska but Weak in Iowa." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1992): 451. Accessed May 29, 2012. doi:10.2307/970302.

Pierce, J. Kingston. "Words of Gold." *Columbia Journal* 12, no. 1 (1998). Accessed December 11, 2014.

Poynter, Margaret. *Gold Rush!: The Yukon Stampede of 1898*. New York: Atheneum, 1979.

Rezneck, Samuel. "Unemployment, Unrest, and Relief in the United States during the Depression of 1893-97." *Journal of Political Economy* 61, no. 4 (1953): 324-45. Accessed October 21, 2011. doi:10.1086/257393.

Sage, J. R. "The Great Drouth." *The Monthly Review*, July 1894, V, no. 7 (July 1894): 4-5. Accessed April 16, 2015. <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cd/cd.html>.

Shipp, Ralph D. *A Baker Family Genealogy: Pioneers of North Carolina, Kentucky, Indiana, Missouri, and Iowa and Allied Families, Dunn, Gourley, Russell*. Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1980.

Stanley, William M. *A Mile of Gold Strange Adventures on the Yukon*. Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1898.

Trachtenberg, Alan. *Reading American Photography: From Mathew Brady to Walker Evans*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1990.

Trelawney-Ansell, Edward Clarence. *I Followed Gold*. New York: L. Furman, 1939.

Wells, David A. *The Silver Question: The Dollar of the Father versus the Dollar of the Sons*. New York: G.P.utmans Sons, 1877.

#### WEBSITES/EMAILS

Hillaker, Harry. "Iowa Statewide Average Precipitation 1873-2015." E-mail message to author. April 16, 2015.  
Harry Hillaker is the Iowa State Climatologist

"Home." The Library of Congress. Accessed February 06, 2016.  
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/elect>.

Norris, Frank. "Chilcoot Tramways." National Park Service - Home. Accessed January 15, 2012.  
<http://www.nps.gov/klgo/historyculture/chilcoottramways.htm>.

"Seattle University of Washington Libraries." Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. Accessed February 06, 2016. <http://www.seattlechamber.com/>. Manuscript Division, Erastus Brainerd Scrapbook Vol. 1

Stowe, Steven. "Making Sense of Letters and Diaries." History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web. July 2002. Accessed September 01, 2015.

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/letters/>.

United States. National Park Service. "National Park Service." National Parks Service. January 15, 2016. Accessed January 29, 2016. <http://www.nps.gov/index.htm>.

University of Washington Libraries Digital Collections, Accessed March 04, 2012.

<http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/results.php?CISOOP1=S.B.+Dunn&CISIFIELD=CISOSEARCHALL&CISOROOT=all&x=15&y=12>.

## APPENDIX

CONTRIBUTIONS TO MONTGOMERY COUNTY NEWSPAPERS BY  
DUNN AND GOURLEY PARTY MEMBERS:

Contributions by Samuel Baker Dunn to *The Villisca Review* include: *The Villisca Review*, October 6, 1898. "From the Alaska Diggings: Some Inside Facts for the Outside World – Slow Postal clerks, Wages, Prices, Prospects, etc;" *The Villisca Review*, August 4, 1898;" *The Villisca Review*, April 28, 1898. "From Alaska;" *The Villisca Review*, May 11, 1899. "An Alaska Letter: The Boundary Line – Delayed Mail – Milk and Gold Nuggets, No. 26, Eldorado, Dawson City, Y.T., March 26, 1899;" *The Villisca Review*, July 6, 1899. "Big Time at Dawson: Dawson City, Yukon T.Y., May 20, 1899;" *The Villisca Review*, April 21, 1898. "From Alaska." *The Villisca Review*, August 4, 1898. "From the Gold Lands: Eldorado Creek, N.W.TY, June 13, 1898;" *The Villisca Review*, April 27, 1899. "From Sub-Zero Land: A Klondyker Reports the Weather."

Contributions by N. Pratt Mayhew to the *Villisca Review* include: *The Villisca Review*, November 3, 1898. "From Alaska;" *The Villisca Review*, October 13, 1898. "Mayhew's Klondike Notes: Eldorado #26, N.W. T.Y.;" *The Villisca Review*, July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1898. "From Alaska;" *The Villisca Review*, July 21, 1899. "In the Queen's Realm: No. 26 Eldorado, Yukon T.Y. Canada, June 21, 1899;" *The Villisca Review*, July 6, 1899. "From a Yukoner No. 26 Eldorado, Yukon T.Y., Canada June 5' 1899;" *The Villisca Review*, March 2, 1899. "From the Frozen Clime: No. 26 Eldorado, Yukon T.Y., Canada, January 15, 1899;" *The Villisca Review*, January 4, 1900. "From the North End of the U.S.: No. 26 Eldorado, Yukon TY, November 12, 1899;" *The Villisca Review*, June 15, 1898. "From the Yukon: The Canadian Way of doing Things;" *The Villisca Review*, November 24, 1898. "From the Frosty Country: Dawson City, N.W.T.Y. October 2, 1898;" *The Villisca Review*, June 15, 1899. "From the Yukon;" *The Villisca Review*, May 4, 1899. "Latest from Klondyke: Dawson City, Yukon T.Y., March 30, 1899;" (Of note: Juxtaposed to the article was a letter from Major Moore which described his conditions in San Roque, Cavite, P.I. to a General Ellis.) *The Villisca Review*, September 8, 1898. "From the Gold Hunters: Stewart River, at the Clear Water, July 1, 1898."

## VITA

Robert Nicholas Melatti

Old Dominion University, History Department

Norfolk, Virginia

Mr. Melatti graduated from Brooklyn Technical High School in 1965. He graduated Summa Cum Laude from Tidewater Community College in 2001 with a Liberal Arts degree. He continued his education at Old Dominion University and in 2011 graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History with an Education minor. He is completing his Master of Arts Degree in History. Mr. Melatti is employed by Integrated Management Group LLC and administers the *Beachevents* entertainment programs as the Program Director in fulfillment of a contract with the City of Virginia Beach, VA. He resides in Virginia Beach with his wife, Eva and granddaughter Cali Melatti. He is actively involved with city leadership and currently serves on the Resort Advisory Commission as the Commission's representative to the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce.