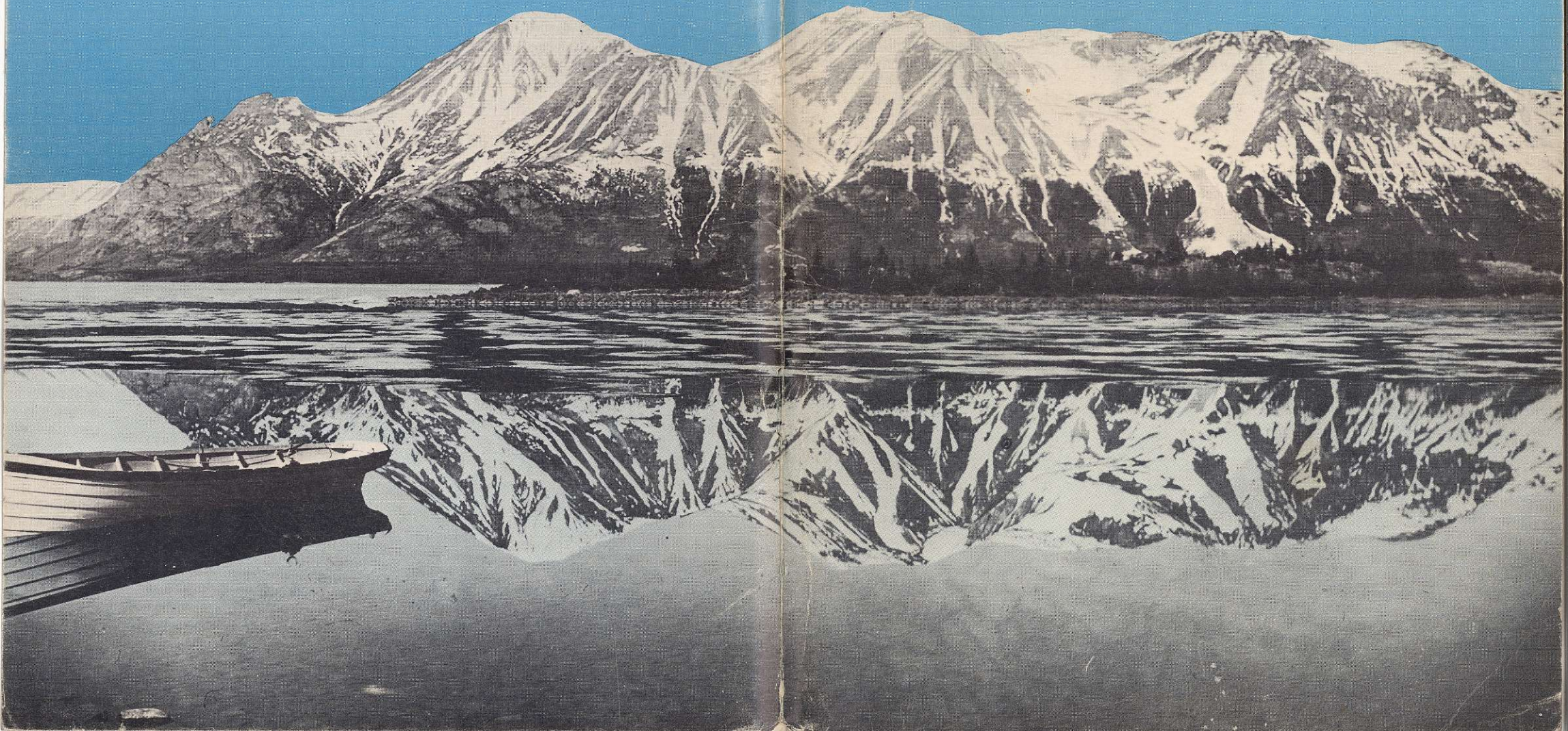

ATLIN

1898~1910

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ATLIN, 1898-1910: The Story of a Gold Boom

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**ATLIN, 1898-1910:
The Story of a Gold Boom**

Cover Photo: Atlin Mountain. (Courtesy Atlin Museum).

ATLIN, 1898-1910: THE STORY OF A GOLD BOOM*

There's gold, and it's haunting and haunting;
It's luring me on, as of old;
Yet it isn't the gold that I'm wanting,
So much as just finding the gold.
It's the great, big, broad land 'way up yonder,
It's the forests where silence has lease;
It's the beauty that thrills me with wonder,
It's the stillness that fills me with peace.¹

So Robert Service described the irrational impulse which drives prospectors into wildernesses in search of the precious yellow metal. Knight errant of a century that knows no romance, the prospector heads alone for the unknown interior. Driven by an insatiable desire to see what lies over the next hill, across the near-by creek, or around the approaching bend, he pushes on, always seeking, seldom finding. If he does discover a rich deposit, he rarely remains for long at the scene of his find to develop his claim. All too often he dies a lonely death on the trail. Only on his strong arms, his broad back, and his nimble wits can he rely. Minor accidents on the trail assume major proportions when the prospector finds himself far from any doctor or friend. A wrong turn, a mis-step, a sudden snow-storm, or a rock-slide can bring serious hardship, injury, or even death to him. He is frequently lost for weeks at a time. His precious supplies are often inadequate. He is exposed to all the dangers of forest fires, wild beasts, and the tricks of nature. Still he travels on. If he succeeds, for a short time he basks in the admiration of the mining world. Then, his brief moment of glory ended, he returns to his wilderness home. If he falters or fails in his quest, he can appeal to no one for sympathy. He belongs to no union. He cannot strike. He gets no special treatment from any benevolent

* The substance of this article was read before a meeting of the Victoria Section of the British Columbia Historical Association, October 18, 1951. The writer wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the assistance afforded him by three early residents of the Atlin district now living in Victoria, Mrs. H. W. Ebbs-Canavan, Mrs. Henry Esson Young, and Mr. Alfred Carmichael.

(1) Robert W. Service, "The Spell of the Yukon," in *Songs of a Sourdough*, Toronto, 1907, p. 31.

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group of law-makers or from charitable organizations. In his old age he is usually penniless, but, unlike his contemporary city dwellers, spurns the quiet life of easy retirement in a centre of civilization. He goes on to the end of his days, and frequently dies alone. Only some wild canyon or deep forest knows the secret of his death.

To such a man, and to many more like him, the Province of British Columbia owes much. There is scarcely an area in the Province in which the searchers for gold have not played an important part in the exploration, development, and settlement of the country. From the time of the Fraser River gold-rush of 1858 to the discovery of the Atlin fields in 1898, prospectors combed the Interior of the Mainland of present-day British Columbia, seeking the precious gold which would make their fortunes. Despite virtually impenetrable mountain ranges, impassable rivers, and heavy forests, the Argonauts pushed their way deeper and deeper into the Interior, constantly pioneering the way for a structure of civilization more permanent than any that they could hope to establish. Behind the prospectors were to come the road and railway builders, the merchants, the doctors, the teachers, the men of God, the farmers, the newspaper editors, and all the other types of men found in any community. To the prospectors, however, belong the honours attached to the discovery and exploration of many of the remote regions of the Interior of British Columbia.

In 1858 miners flocked to the banks of the Fraser and Thompson Rivers. From their arrival stemmed the formation of the Crown Colony of British Columbia. In the 1860's gold discoveries on the creeks of the Cariboo led to the construction of the Cariboo Road by the Royal Engineers. In the 1860's and 1870's the gold-seekers had penetrated to the Omineca district. In 1873 findings on Thibert, McDame, and Dease Creeks in the Cassiar district led more miners into the northern part of the Province. The vast Cassiar region, previously unknown to white men, slowly began to assume an identity as the prospectors worked north and west toward the remote boundaries of the Province. A knowledge of the patterns of the innumerable lakes, rivers, and mountains gradually emerged. The political boundaries, however, remained virtually unknown, and adequate surveys and geological explorations still seemed to lie in the future. The problems of transportation and communication, moreover, appeared to render unlikely any great development in the Northern Interior of British Columbia. Until 1885 and the completion of the first Canadian transcontinental railway, the

Canadian Pacific, British Columbia was absolutely devoid of railways. Between 1886 and 1900 Vancouver Island and the southern portion of the Province were covered with a fairly complex network of railways, but not a mile of trackage was built north of the main line of the Canadian Pacific. Without railways, settlement of a permanent nature seemed barred to Northern British Columbia. In the 1890's, however, events occurred in the Yukon which expedited the development of the Far North.

Gold had been discovered in various portions of Alaska and the Yukon prior to 1897, but it was in 1897-98 that strikes rich enough to attract large numbers of miners were made. Then it was that the hordes of gold-seekers began to pour into the Yukon and Alaska, and, along the route, to penetrate any area likely to have gold-bearing creeks. Many of these wanderers, after travelling to within short distances of their goal, were lured aside into discoveries easier to reach than the Yukon. The gold-rush to the Atlin Lake country in 1898 was one of the richest off-shoots of the rush to the Klondike.

It is difficult to say definitely who was the first white man ever to see Atlin Lake. Many prospectors and fur-traders might easily have penetrated to the Atlin region prior to the days of the gold-rush.² Dr. G. M. Dawson, a prominent member of the Geological Survey of Canada in the early days of that organization's existence, believed it possible for Michael Byrnes, an explorer for the unfortunate Collins Overland Telegraph scheme, to have penetrated to the most remote sources of the Lewes River in 1867.³ While Dawson himself examined portions

(2) Victoria *British Colonist*, June 8 and August 1, 1868.

(3) G. M. Dawson, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District, N.W.T., and Adjacent Northern Portion of British Columbia, 1887*, Montreal, 1888, pp. 168B-170B. In a letter to Colonel C. S. Bulkley, dated February 19, 1867, Edmund Conway, district engineer for the Collins Overland Telegraph party, said that between April and October, 1866, Michael Byrnes travelled 1,500 miles for the telegraph company, from Quesnel to Fort Fraser to Babine Portage, back to Quesnel, and then again to Fort Fraser. It is unlikely, therefore, that Byrnes was able to penetrate much farther north than Fort Fraser in 1866. On October 1, 1866, Conway placed Thomas Elwyn in charge of the explorations northward from Babine Portage, and instructed him to send several small parties toward the Skeena, Take [Taku?], and Chilkat Rivers, and also toward Dease House and the Yukon River. Bulkley's *Journal* makes no further mention of explorations by Byrnes or Elwyn in 1867. By 1867, also, the Collins Overland Telegraph scheme was over. It therefore seems improbable that Byrnes did much northern exploring in that or subsequent years. C. S. Bulkley, *Journal and Letters of Col. C. S. Bulkley, U.S. Army; Telegraph Trail Expedition, 1865-1867*, 1865-1867. Photostat in Archives

of the Yukon and Northern British Columbia in 1887, he explored neither Taku Arm of Tagish Lake nor Atlin Lake. From Indians, however, he concluded that a large river entered Taku Arm, from the east, about 20 miles up the arm, and that this river flowed from the west side of a very long lake which was almost parallel to Taku Arm. A Tagish Indian, said Dawson, had called this long lake "A-tlin." Into the southern end of this lake flowed several feeders, one of which Dawson thought Michael Byrnes had used to reach Atlin Lake in 1867.⁴ Dawson definitely stated that, contrary to contemporary belief, the main portion of the headwaters of the Lewes River came from Taku Arm and from this unexplored lake to the eastward.

In 1892 the Government of British Columbia decided to send a group of four men to track-survey the north-western portion of British Columbia, and chose N. B. Gauvreau, a Provincial land surveyor, to lead the party.⁵ Gauvreau was instructed first to track-survey that portion of British Columbia north of the Tahltan River to the 60th parallel of north latitude, and then to return by way of the Chilkoot and White Passes, surveying as he went. Gauvreau travelled by ship to Telegraph Creek, arriving there on May 28, 1892, and on June 1, with a pack-train, set out into the unknown land to the north of Telegraph Creek. In his later report, Gauvreau mentioned that, in 1891 and 1892, the Hudson's Bay Company had constructed a trail from the junction of the Tahltan and Stikine Rivers, 13 miles above Telegraph Creek, to its post at Egnell, near the junction of the Shesley and Hackett Rivers, and that the company had abandoned its original plan to continue the trail to Teslin Lake. Gauvreau apparently followed this trail along the Tahltan and Hackett Rivers to Egnell. After travelling northward to Teslin Lake, he eventually returned southward to the junction of the Inklin and Taku Rivers. Thence he ascended a tributary of the Taku River to Sloko Lake, crossed over to Pike Lake, and descended the Pike River to Atlin Lake. Bad weather and the lateness of the season prevented Gauvreau's party from

of B.C., pp. 161-162. Lieutenant Frederick Schwatka, United States Army, who explored the Yukon and Alaska extensively, believed that Byrnes had reached Lake "Takho" [Tagish Lake] ". . . or some lake very near it . . .," but that Byrnes was recalled when the telegraph scheme collapsed, and had apparently left no record of his travels. Frederick Schwatka, *A Summer in Alaska*, St. Louis, Missouri, 1893, pp. 117-119.

(4) Dawson, *op. cit.*, pp. 168B-169B.

(5) British Columbia, *Crown Land Surveys for the Year Ending 31st December, 1892*, Victoria [1893], p. 483.

track-surveying Atlin Lake, but the group did explore the lake sufficiently thoroughly to gain an accurate picture of its size and nature. Gauvreau made no mention of miners on the creeks of Atlin Lake, nor, apparently, did he, or any of his men, attempt to pan for gold. His contribution to Atlin's development as a mining camp was the supplying of the first accurate on-the-spot survey of the topography of the Atlin area.

Gold, the reason for Atlin's existence, was apparently discovered there long before the Atlin gold-rush took place. Some of the first people to arrive in Atlin in 1898 claim to have found the remains of primitive mining operations at least fifty years old.⁶ It is possible, therefore, that, prior to the acquisition of Alaska by the United States from Russia in 1867, Russian explorers had attempted a crude form of prospecting. American and Canadian prospectors also had probably investigated the country, but, failing to find pay-dirt or else running short of supplies, had had to leave the findings without adequately working them.

The most generally accepted and logical account of the practical discovery of the Atlin goldfields credits Fritz (Frederick) Miller with being the father of the camp.⁷ Born at Linden, Hanover, Germany, on April 24, 1874, Miller left Germany for America in 1891, and, in September of that year, joined his brother, George F. Miller, in Juneau, Alaska. Fritz Miller finished his formal education in Juneau between 1891 and 1894, and then, following his brother's example, became a prospector and miner. Between 1894 and 1897 he prospected in various parts of Alaska and the Yukon Territory, working at Circle City for three years, and then visiting Dawson and St. Michael before returning to Juneau, via Seattle, in 1897.

It is not definitely known why Miller went to the Atlin area in 1898 to look for gold. Atlin Lake was certainly well apart from the beaten path to the Klondike. From his actions, however, it seems logical to

(6) *Victoria British Colonist*, June 8 and August 1, 1868; *Atlin Claim*, March 26, 1904; T. J. Kelly, "North to the Sixtieth Parallel," *Shoulder Strap*, No. XX (December, 1949), p. 31; and E. O. S. Scholefield and F. W. Howay, *British Columbia from the Earliest Times to the Present*, Vancouver, 1914, Vol. II, p. 499.

(7) Source material for the biographical details of the life of the discoverer of Atlin is sketchy and contradictory. Fritz Miller apparently kept diaries regularly, but no trace of them has ever been found. The *Atlin Claim* of September 3, 1904, on the occasion of Miller's death, has a fairly lengthy biographical sketch, but contradicts itself in several instances. W. H. T. Olive, in his *Trail of '98: Memoirs, MS.*, Archives of B.C. [hereafter cited as *Olive Memoirs*], also contributes somewhat to the existing confusion about the discoverer of the Atlin goldfields.

assume that before he headed for Atlin Lake he knew of gold in paying quantities in the district. A diary which Miller kept has, unfortunately, been lost. Otherwise the reasons for Miller's choice of the Atlin country would probably be clear. From the various conflicting accounts of the discovery,⁸ however, it is possible to piece together a credible account of what probably happened.

A romantic story about the arrival in Juneau of a dying prospector with a sack of gold and a rough map of his discovery led George F. Miller, the brother of Fritz, to decide upon an investigation of the area north-east of Juneau. About 1896 he ventured alone into the area supposedly shown on the map, and found some traces of gold along a waterway—later known as Pine Creek—on the eastern shore of Atlin Lake. After having several accidents and dodging Indians, of whose intentions he was uncertain, he returned to Juneau, convinced that the area which he had explored had potentialities as a gold-producing region, but also determined not to endure again the nightmarish hardships of his journey. In 1897 he and his partner, Lockie McKinnon,⁹ another long-time prospector, built the Circle City Hotel in Juneau, and there George Miller was joined by his brother and Kenneth McLaren¹⁰ in the winter of 1897-98. In January, 1898, when Juneau was swarming with miners bound for the Klondike discoveries, George Miller told his brother, Fritz, and Fritz's partner, McLaren, about the possibilities of Pine Creek, and they decided to investigate further.

In January, 1898, in the depths of winter, Fritz Miller and McLaren set out by dog team, following the trail over the White Pass of the miners bound from Skagway for the Klondike.¹¹ North of Bennett, however,

(8) Olive, *Memoirs*, pp. 30-31, 261-262; *Vancouver Province*, August 15 and 27, 1898; *BC. Mining Record*, IV (December, 1898), p. 20; *Vancouver Sun*, magazine section, January 13, 1951, p. 9.

(9) McKinnon was born at Lake Ensley [Lake Ainslie?], Nova Scotia, in 1866, and, after mining in the Cassiar district in the 1880's, arrived in Alaska in 1887. He and George Miller worked in the Porcupine area in the early 1890's, and, after building the Circle City Hotel in Juneau in 1897, he continued to prospect while Miller operated the hotel. In 1912 McKinnon returned to Juneau, where he lived until his death in 1946. *Whitehorse Star*, May 3, 1946.

(10) Kenneth McLaren was born in Blue Mountain, Pictou, Nova Scotia, about 1866, and died in Atlin in May, 1931. He and Fritz Miller were buried side by side beneath a massive monument erected in their memory by the people of Atlin. *Whitehorse Star*, May 22, 1931.

(11) J. C. Gwillim, *Report on the Atlin Mining District, British Columbia*, Ottawa, 1901, p. 6B.

they left the Klondike trail, heading east over the ice by way of Tutshi Lake and River to the Taku Arm of Tagish Lake. After travelling along Taku Arm to Graham Inlet, they followed the inlet to its head, and crossed the narrow piece of land separating them from Atlin Lake. On February 10, 1898, they landed on the silent, frozen shores of Atlin Lake. The two men found shallow deposits on Pine Creek, as George Miller had told them that they would, and began work. They soon exhausted their supplies, and had to return to Juneau. In the summer of 1898, however, they returned and resumed their mining. On this trip they were accompanied by six other prospectors and miners. They finally staked their claims about 6 miles above the mouth of a creek flowing in a south-westerly direction into the east shore of Atlin Lake, about half-way up the lake. Because of the light growth of pine which grew along the creek, they named the waterway Pine Creek. The party found many small nuggets, and from each pan took gold-dust ranging in value from 60 cents to \$6. Miller subsequently told a newspaper reporter that he took over \$120 in gold from the ground on the first day on which he operated his sluice-boxes, July 3, 1898.¹² On July 3, also, the following statement was fastened to a stake post on Pine Creek:—

NOTICE

At a meeting of the Free Miners on Pine Creek held on the 3rd day of July 1898 Mr. Frederic [*sic*] Miller was appointed Free Miners recorder for That Creek. Any person therefore staking claims must record his claim with Mr. Miller within ten days of date of staking.

Mr. Miller has in his possession the rules and regulations regarding Placer Mining & will explain any of the rules and laws as therein laid down.

D'A. E. Strickland
Inspector.
Acting Gold Commissioner¹³

On July 25, 1898, Miller and McLaren officially staked their claims, and on July 30 they registered them before Captain D'Arcy E. Strickland, the officer commanding a detachment of the North West Mounted Police at Tagish Lake.¹⁴

The lack of adequate knowledge of the geography of the new gold-producing area immediately became apparent. Miller and McLaren, thinking that their discovery was in the Northwest Territories, staked

(12) Atlin *Claim*, June 17, 1899.

(13) British Columbia, Special Commission, 1899, Miscellaneous Exhibits and Shorthand Notes of Cases, *MS.*, Archives of B.C.

(14) *Ibid.* From the document recording the discovery claim.

under the Yukon placer-mining regulations and, when they recorded their discovery at Tagish Lake, secured discovery rights under the same mining laws. In 1898, unfortunately for the discoverers of Pine Creek, the mining regulations of the Northwest Territories and British Columbia differed. The Northwest Territories regulations allowed the first discoverers of gold on any creek to stake claims of 1,200 feet in length and any subsequent stakers to mark out claims of 250 feet.¹⁵ The mining laws of British Columbia, on the other hand, allowed a discovery claim of but 250 feet and other subsequent claims of 100 feet in length.¹⁶ From the first official staking in the Atlin area, therefore, difficulties were to arise which would seriously hamper subsequent development. Of the legal tangles, however, more will be said later.

Despite efforts by Miller and his group to keep secret the news of their discovery, reports of the finding of gold in the Atlin region soon spread. By July 31, officials of the Bennett Lake and Klondike Navigation Company had heard of Miller's discovery from Captain Strickland at Tagish Lake, and investigated. They found Miller's party on Pine Creek, bought a sample of gold from Miller, and sent it to Victoria for display purposes.¹⁷ The news of the discovery was thus known in the capital city by August 13. By August 5, Skagway was filled with rumours of the new goldfields. During August, 1898, the miners began to arrive at Atlin Lake, first in twos and threes and then by hundreds. Between August 5 and the end of the 1898 mining season, approximately 3,000 people visited the Atlin area.¹⁸ The rush to Atlin had begun.

The influx of 3,000 people into an area previously unmapped necessarily lifted the cloud of ignorance of the geography of the region. To most people, in 1898, Atlin Lake was an entirely strange name. There were no adequate maps of the area. Few white men had ever reached the Atlin Lake country, and the Indians in the region were not numerous. A forbidding terrain seemed to present a barrier to any travellers wishing to go east of Bennett Lake. The miners soon found, however, that a natural waterway led through the Coast Mountains which, at first glance, had seemed to bar any explorations. The original discoverers of Atlin

(15) Chapter 29, British Columbia, *Statutes . . . 1900*, Victoria, 1900, pp. 113-115; *Canada Gazette*, Ottawa, 1898, Vol. XXXI, p. xliii.

(16) Chapter 26, British Columbia, *Statutes . . . 1891*, Victoria, 1891, pp. 141-175.

(17) *Olive Memoirs*, p. 261.

(18) British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines for the Year Ending 31st December, 1898*, Victoria, 1899, p. 985.

used a combined water and land route, striking out westward across the ice and snow from Bennett Lake to reach the eastern shore of Atlin Lake. Subsequent gold-seekers, however, after reaching Skagway, at the head of Lynn Canal, followed the Skagway River Valley, went up over the summit of the White Pass, pushed on to Cariboo Crossing (now known as Carcross) at the northern end of Bennett Lake, turned eastward to Tagish Lake, and thence southward along Taku Arm to Golden Gate at the western end of Graham Inlet. From Golden Gate the miners sped eastward along Graham Inlet to the Atlin River. They ascended the turbulent Atlin River to Atlin Lake, and crossed the lake, usually in leaky skiffs, to the east shore, where the gold deposits were to be found. From the arrival of thousands of miners in the Lake Atlin area in September and October, 1898, dates our knowledge of the geography of the region.

Atlin Lake, in the north-west corner of British Columbia, is one of the largest lakes in the Province.¹⁹ The name "Atlin" comes from an Indian word "aht-lah" meaning "big water."²⁰ The lake covers an area of approximately 246 square miles, 66 miles long and from 2 to 5 miles wide. Into its northern tip, extending to the Yukon Territory, flows the Lubbock River, emptying Little Atlin Lake. Atlin Lake drains a basin of 4,402 square miles, and, in turn, is drained by the Atlin River, which flows into Graham Inlet on Taku Arm, part of the chain of waterways which forms the headwaters of the Lewes River. The lake itself and the region which it drains lies between the 59th and 60th parallels of latitude, and between the 132nd and 134th degrees of longitude. Within Atlin Lake are numerous islands, the largest of which are Teresa, Copper, and Sloko, all at the southern end of the lake.

The country surrounding Atlin Lake is mountainous: to the west loom the Boundary Ranges of the Coast Mountains; to the north and east lies the Teslin Plateau, part of the larger Yukon Plateau; while to the south is the Taku Plateau, a division of the Stikine Plateau. From the south-western tip of the lake almost to the sea-coast at Juneau sprawls the magnificent Llewellyn Glacier, one of the unknown beauty spots of British Columbia.

(19) The topography of the Atlin area is adequately described in British Columbia, Department of Lands and Forests, *Telegraph Creek and Atlin Land Recording Districts* (Land Series, Bulletin No. 23), Victoria, 1949, pp. 7-11.

(20) Chief Henry Taku Jack explains the meaning of the word in the Vancouver *Province*, March 25, 1948.

The climate of the district is not as severe in the winter-time as one might expect to find it in an area relatively far north. The temperature, nevertheless, often falls, and remains, well below zero for considerable periods. Atlin Lake freezes over in the winter, and is usually ice-bound from early in January until late in May or early in June. The transition from winter to summer is rapid. Summer lasts from early in June until early in October. The summer days are very long and are usually rainless. The average annual rainfall at Atlin is approximately 12 inches.²¹

In the summer-time the temperature is such that the local residents can, and do, grow all types of hardy garden produce. The forest growth is relatively light, but white spruce, Banksian pine, balsam, cottonwood, and white poplar are common. North and east of Atlin Lake wild fruit, particularly wild raspberries, black and red currants, gooseberries, and cranberries are abundant. Wild game also is plentiful. Fish, game birds, moose, caribou, black, brown, and grizzly bears, mountain-sheep, goats, lynx, all types of foxes, wolves, and many other fur-bearing animals dwell in the area.

In the early years of Atlin's development as a mining camp, gold production was hampered by several factors, among which were legal tangles and unwise legislation affecting gold-mining. The first difficulty which Atlin faced arose from the lack of knowledge of the exact geographic position of Atlin. Fritz Miller, Kenneth McLaren, and others, accepting the word of the North West Mounted Police officer at Tagish that Atlin Lake was in the Northwest Territories, had registered the original discovery claim and about forty subsequent claims on Pine Creek under Northwest Territories mining laws. When the area was found definitely to be within British Columbia, the mining laws of the Province were accordingly applied, and, since claims under Provincial and Territorial regulations varied in size, caused considerable confusion.

In the late summer and early fall of 1898 the creeks and rivers flowing into Atlin Lake swarmed with miners, real or self-styled. Before the year was out, every creek, gold-bearing or not, in the district had been prospected and staked. In the early summer of 1898, of course, there were no governmental officials on the spot to do all the necessary tasks required in any mining community. Bennett had a detachment of North West Mounted Police and an official of the British Columbia Government, Captain W. J. Rant, who acted in the dual capacity of

(21) British Columbia, Department of Lands and Forests, *Telegraph Creek and Atlin Land Recording Districts*, p. 9.

Magistrate and Gold Commissioner.²² At Tagish, also, Captain Strickland commanded another police post. Between the two communities there was not a single representative of any government, Provincial or Federal. From Bennett Lake, Captain Rant at first attempted to direct governmental administration in the Atlin region but, finding the task impossible at such a distance, appointed two Acting Mining Recorders, Norman W. F. Rant, his son, and John J. McKenna, a constable at Bennett Lake. The two men established their offices at Discovery camp on August 5, 1898,²³ and were soon swamped by clerical work. Shortly after their arrival, all the claims which Fritz Miller's party had staked under Territorial laws were "jumped" and restaked under Provincial mining regulations.²⁴ Rant and McKenna, unfortunately, complicated matters by recording these new applications for the claims previously registered. In fact, they allowed some claims to be staked and recorded three or four times.²⁵ In partial justification of these Mining Recorders at Bennett and Atlin, however, it must be said that, inexperienced, understaffed, and overworked as they were, they could not possibly cope with the deluge of applications for free miners' licences and recordings of claims. Rant and McKenna, lacking even proper recording books, could not tell the miners which creeks had or had not been staked.

On December 1, 1898, the Provincial Government fortunately appointed as Gold Commissioner a man who was capable of restoring order to the confusion existing in the community.²⁶ On December 29, 1898, Joseph Dee Graham arrived in Atlin, armed with the powers of Gold Commissioner for both the Atlin and Bennett Lake Mining Divisions. An ex-soldier in the British Army, a former member of both the Victoria City and Provincial police forces, and one-time Government Agent at Revelstoke, Graham²⁷ was an experienced and competent official, a man who knew how to give orders and ensure their execution.

(22) *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Police . . . of British Columbia for the Year Ending 31st October, 1897*, Victoria, 1898, p. 669.

(23) *B.C. Mining Record*, IV (December, 1898), p. 20.

(24) "Return of the Commission under the Provisions of the Bennett-Atlin Commission Act, 1899," in *British Columbia, Sessional Papers, 1899*, Victoria, 1900, p. 495.

(25) *B.C. Mining Record*, V (August, 1899), p. 12; *Victoria Colonist*, January 8, 1900; *British Columbia, Annual Report of the Minister of Mines . . . 1899*, p. 643.

(26) *Loc. cit.*

(27) *Revelstoke Kootenay Mail*, November 27, 1897; *Atlin News Miner*, June 29, 1940.

His commanding manner, which later helped to bring about his downfall, was at first a valuable asset to him. Under Graham's efficient dominating direction, order slowly emerged from chaos. He immediately enlarged the office staff, and set Norman Rant to work straightening out as best he could the tangled and confused applications for recording claims.²⁸

In June, 1899, the Provincial Government of Premier Charles Semlin aided Graham's work by appointing Justice P. Æ. Irving, a Judge of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, as a special commissioner to settle the disputes arising from the difficulties caused by the uncertainty as to the boundary between the Province and the Northwest Territories, and by the manner in which the Mining Recorders at Bennett and Atlin had conducted their offices prior to the arrival of Graham.²⁹ In the summer of 1899, Justice Irving held his investigations in Atlin. Virtually all work in the community ceased while the miners waited to hear his decisions. In Irving's primitive courtroom some of the leading lawyers of the Province appeared on behalf of the various participants in the legal battles. A future Premier of the Province, Richard McBride, Q.C., pleaded the case of Miller and McLaren, the discoverers of the camp. Mr. Justice Irving decided that all claims staked under Northwest Territories law could be restaked as claims of 100 feet under Provincial regulations.³⁰ Miller and McLaren's discovery rights were confirmed, and the two men were directed to restake their claims under Provincial law. By the passing of a special Statute³¹ in 1900, Miller and McLaren were ensured ownership of a claim 598 feet long and 1,000 feet wide. With the completion of Justice Irving's commission, the camp again hoped to return to serious mining.

In 1899 the Provincial Government further complicated Atlin's development by passing an amendment to the "Placer-mining Act." By this amendment, commonly known as the "Alien Exclusion Act,"³²

(28) British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines* . . . 1899, p. 643.

(29) Chapter 52, British Columbia, *Statutes* . . . 1899, Victoria, 1899, pp. 161-162.

(30) "Return of the Commission under the Provisions of the Bennett-Atlin Commission Act, 1899," in British Columbia, *Sessional Papers, 1899*, Victoria, 1900, p. 495.

(31) Chapter 29, British Columbia, *Statutes* . . . 1900, Victoria, 1900, pp. 113-115.

(32) Chapter 50, British Columbia, *Statutes* . . . 1899, Victoria, 1899, pp. 155-156.

Joseph Martin, the Attorney-General in the Semlin Government, barred any further issuings of free miners' licences to non-British subjects. Anyone not a British subject who had acquired a licence or claim prior to the passage of the Act, however, could retain his licence and claim. By this Act the Government hoped to retain the gold and trade of Atlin for Canadian subjects.³³ Unfortunately, since many of the miners in Atlin in 1899 were Americans, the amendment caused an uproar in the community. Atlin's American residents sent a protest to the President of the United States who, in turn, notified the Canadian Government.³⁴ In 1900, therefore, the Federal Government disallowed the amendment on the grounds that, by dealing with aliens, the Act invaded a legislative field which belonged to the Federal sphere.³⁵ The damage, however, had already been done. Many American miners, after enduring great hardships to reach Atlin, found, upon their arrival, that they were unable to acquire mining licences.³⁶ Many others who had planned to go to Atlin went elsewhere.³⁷ To acquire claims before the "Alien Exclusion Bill" became law, some of the American miners already in Atlin staked hurriedly and carelessly, often, unknowingly, applying for claims already granted.³⁸ With the disallowance of the "Alien Exclusion Act," however, the miners of Atlin could once again work their claims, knowing that they would not lose them because of any Act of the Provincial Legislature.

Atlin was not yet free of administrative problems. By 1900 the community had divided into two groups—placer-miners and hydraulic companies. The miners felt that they were being unfairly treated by the Provincial Government, which had granted hydraulic leases on several of the richer creeks, including Pine.³⁹ J. D. Graham adhered strictly to the regulations of the Provincial mining laws, and began to lose the respect and admiration of the placer-miners. Complaints against Graham's administration of his office reached Victoria, and, in self-protection, Graham asked the Government to hold an investiga-

(33) So stated the Speech from the Throne at the opening of the Legislature in 1899. *Victoria Colonist*, January 24, 1900.

(34) *Ibid.*, February 1, 1900.

(35) Scholefield and Howay, *British Columbia*, Vol. II, p. 505.

(36) *Victoria Colonist*, January 8, 1900.

(37) Dawson *Klondike Nugget*, March 15, 1899.

(38) British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines* . . . 1899, p. 644.

(39) *Victoria Colonist*, August 17, 1900.

tion.⁴⁰ The Government complied, sending Chief Justice A. J. McColl of the Supreme Court of British Columbia to examine the conduct of public business in the Bennett and Atlin Mining Divisions.⁴¹ In August, 1901, Chief Justice McColl held his hearings in Atlin, and returned to Victoria to prepare his report. In January, 1902, however, Justice McColl died, and since no copy of his report is known to be in existence, it is possible that he did not have an opportunity to present a copy to the Government.⁴² In 1902 a Select Committee of the Legislature further investigated Graham's activities.⁴³ As a result of these findings, Graham resigned in June, 1902, and was succeeded as Gold Commissioner by J. A. Fraser. Newspaper-men in Atlin, Victoria, and Vancouver agreed that Graham had most faithfully and competently discharged his duties in a trying position, and that he had been the victim of a vicious, mud-slinging campaign. The *Atlin Claim* paid a last tribute to the retiring officer, saying that he had been a good man for the office which he had held, and that he had done a good job.⁴⁴ At the time of Graham's resignation, the *Claim* also praised the government of Premier E. G. Prior for its choice of J. A. Fraser as the new Government Agent.⁴⁵ Fraser remained as Gold Commissioner for twenty years, finally being succeeded by C. L. Monroe in 1922. During Fraser's régime, he conducted his duties fairly and honestly, thus eliminating any further complaints against the officials of the Government.

When the Atlin goldfields were first discovered, a horde of inexperienced gold-seekers flocked to the area, staked claims wholesale, and then began a mad digging for gold. Many of these people knew

(40) Revelstoke *Kootenay Mail*, August 2, 1901.

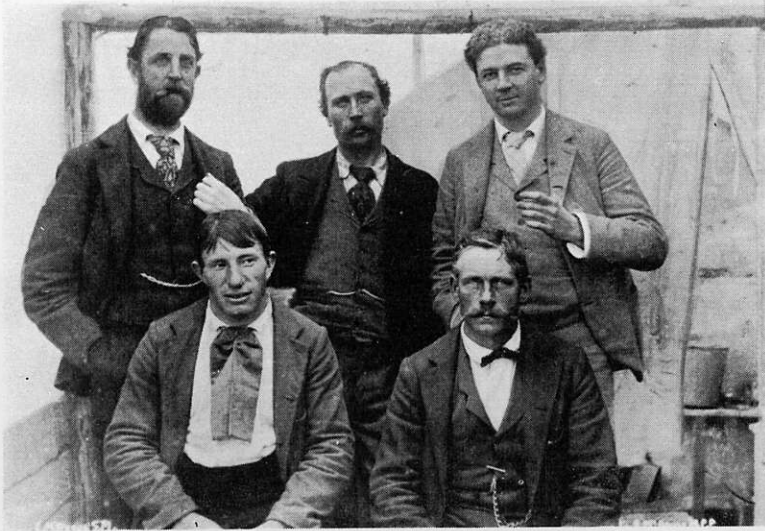
(41) *Victoria Colonist*, July 10, 1901; April 24, 1902.

(42) M. C. Holmes, *Royal Commissions and Commissions of Inquiry under the "Public Inquiries Act" in British Columbia, 1872-1942; a Checklist*, Victoria, 1945, p. 22.

(43) Revelstoke *Kootenay Mail*, June 6, 1902; *Victoria Colonist*, April 18, 19, 24, and May 7, 9, 1902.

(44) *Atlin Claim*, June 7, 1902; *Victoria Colonist*, July 25, 1902. After Graham left Atlin he travelled widely, trying mining in Death Valley and then living in France and England. He returned to British Columbia in 1906 and settled on Vancouver Island. He served Canada in World War I, even though he was then 60 years old, and after the war returned to Vancouver Island, where he lived until his death in 1940. *Atlin News Miner*, June 29, 1940; *Victoria Colonist*, May 11, 1940.

(45) *Atlin Claim*, June 7, 1902.



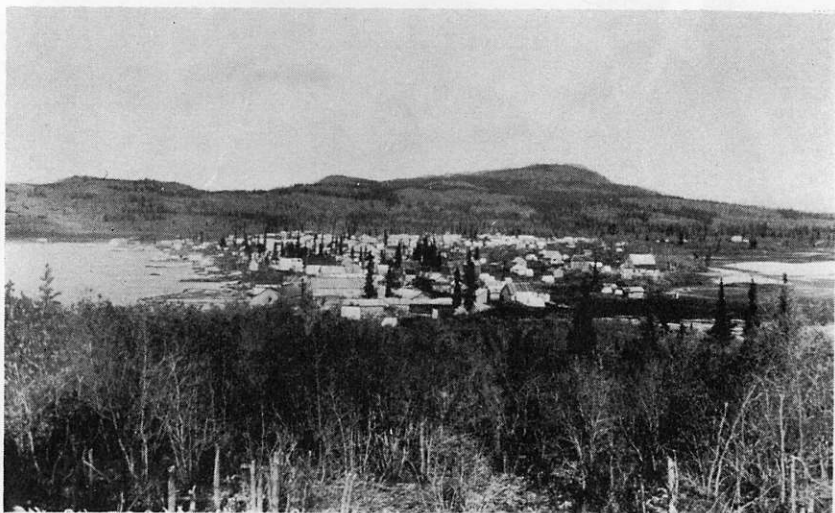
Miller and McLaren, discoverers of the Atlin goldfield, during the proceedings of the Irving Commission, 1899.

Front row, left to right: Fritz Miller and Kenneth McLaren.

Back row, left to right: E. M. N. Woods, Mining Recorder, Atlin; Lockie McKinnon, pioneer prospector; and Richard McBride, counsel for Miller and McLaren.



A miners' meeting to protest the size of the mineral claims, held on First Street, Atlin, April, 1899.



Atlin, October 6, 1899.



Atlin, 1900.

little or nothing of mining methods, and, after a brief period, abandoned their quest, either returning south or remaining in the camp as labourers working for experienced miners or big companies.⁴⁶ At first those miners who knew their business did well in Atlin. On many of the creeks, on Pine and Spruce in particular, they could extract enough gold by shallow workings to gain an adequate reward. As the first rich returns began petering out, however, the Atlin goldfields followed the pattern of all other gold-bearing areas. Deeper diggings, more costly heavy machinery, and high freight rates were among the factors which forced the free miners to abandon or sell out their claims. In place of the individual miners, the big companies, with their expensive hydraulic machinery, began to appear as a major factor in 1899 and 1900. In 1899 the Atlin Lake Mining Company installed the first hydraulic plant in the district on Birch Creek, and by 1901 there were also hydraulic operations on Pine, Boulder, Wright, and Spruce Creeks.⁴⁷ For a few years the placer and hydraulic methods operated side by side on many of the creeks around Atlin Lake. Gradually, however, Spruce Creek, Atlin's largest gold-producing stream, became the only major stronghold of the individual miner. As the free miners abandoned creek after creek as unprofitable, the hydraulic companies moved in and made these areas pay. At various times in Atlin's history, almost every major mining company in Canada, Great Britain, and the United States conducted hydraulic mining operations in the Atlin area.

The gradual acquisition of leases by the hydraulic companies did not come about without protests and struggles from the individual miners.⁴⁸ For example, the *Report of the Minister of Mines* for 1901, commenting upon the gradual transition of the Atlin camp from ordinary placer-mining to hydraulic methods, stated that the process would have been quicker and easier if some of the free miners owning worthless placer claims had not been holding these useless claims merely to embarrass the large companies and force them to "buy off" the placer-miners.⁴⁹ At the same time, the *Report* went on to say, the rights of legitimate individual miners should be protected and the holdings of

(46) British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines* . . . 1899, pp. 644-652.

(47) *Victoria Colonist*, November 14, 1902; *Atlin Claim*, September 2, 1899; December 22, 1900.

(48) *Ibid.*, May 9, 1903; *Vancouver Province*, July 7, 1902.

(49) British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines* . . . 1901, p. 933.

free miners should not be buried under hydraulic tailings. By 1903 the day of large numbers of individual placer-miners on the creeks of the Atlin fields was over. The *Atlin Claim* stated that it was sorry to see the end of the individual miners, and that it regretted that many of the pioneers were leaving the district.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, added the *Claim*, the working of deeper ground meant that hydraulic mining was in Atlin to stay, and only through hydraulicking—with all it implied—could the camp acquire the capital to work the goldfields properly.

In the summer of 1902 the hydraulic interests of Atlin formed the Atlin Mine Operators' Association to achieve a general reduction in costs of mining through lowering of the mineral tax, reducing freight charges, and curtailing the profits of the retailers.⁵¹ In January and February, 1903, the association met in Victoria, and succeeded in persuading other mining men of the Province to form the British Columbia Mining Association.⁵² A. C. Hirschfeld, the editor of the *Atlin Claim*, and R. D. Fetherstonhaugh, the director of the operations of both the Nimrod Syndicate and the Atlin Mining Company, were prominent in the formation of the new body, Hirschfeld broaching the matter to the Victoria and Vancouver Boards of Trade and Fetherstonhaugh directing the committee which drafted the rules of the new group. The British Columbia Mining Association adopted virtually the same objectives as the Atlin Mine Operators' Association, pledging itself to work for the elimination of all grievances of hydraulic and free miners, and to permit development of the vast mineral riches of the Province.⁵³

In 1903 a new type of mining operation—dredging—appeared in Atlin. The British American Dredging Company announced in May, 1903, that it planned to import a 600-ton dredging plant from Milwaukee. By May, 1904, the dredge was in operation on Gold Run. The company first built a dam, and then floated the dredge across it. The dredge took up the gravel, washed it, performed all the processes of "gold-getting," and then deposited the tailings behind. The British Columbia Dredging Company, a subsidiary of the British American,

(50) *Atlin Claim*, October 17, 1903.

(51) *Ibid.*, January 31, 1903.

(52) *Vancouver Province*, January 15, 1903; *B.C. Mining Exchange*, V (January, 1903), pp. 1-3, and V (February, 1903), pp. 1-2.

(53) *B.C. Mining Exchange*, V (May, 1903), p. 5, and V (June, 1903), p. 4; *Victoria Colonist*, November 4, 1903.

also had a dredge operating on Spruce Creek in 1904.⁵⁴ Dredging, unfortunately, proved an expensive failure in Atlin, and by 1908 had been abandoned.

In April, 1905, steam-shovels were introduced into Atlin's mining picture.⁵⁵ Steam-shovels offered the advantages of not requiring as much water as the hydraulic process, nor as much room for the dumping of the tailings. R. D. Fetherstonhaugh imported the first steam-shovel from Toledo, Ohio, to operate on Spruce Creek for the Northern Mines Company.⁵⁶ In 1906, also, the vast Guggenheim interests appeared in Atlin, forming the Atlin Consolidated Mining Company, and introducing a steam-shovel and electric dump-car system on Tar Flats.⁵⁷

Over the years the hydraulic method of mining proved the most profitable in Atlin, but quartz-mining was also tried. In 1899 some engineers working for the Yukon and White Pass Railway Company had located a promising quartz proposition on the east shore of Taku Arm, 10 miles south of Golden Gate and 25 miles from Atlin.⁵⁸ They formed the Engineer Mining Company, and started work. By 1906 these engineers had exhausted their funds in development work. In 1907 a group headed by Captain James Alexander took over the Engineer mine. For a few years thereafter the mine was idle, hampered by inheritance litigation, but in 1924 the mine resumed operation under the management of New York interests. The Engineer mine always seemed to be a good prospect which was going to start paying "next year." "Next year" never seemed to come. The ore samples appeared rich, and, consequently, thousands of dollars were spent in preparation, but always more money was needed before the mine could really start producing.

Other attempts at quartz-mining were made in Atlin. In 1900, for example, the Nimrod Syndicate introduced Atlin's first stamp-mill on its property at Munro Mountain, north-east of Atlin.⁵⁹ For the first five years of Atlin's history, however, the individual miners and the hydraulic companies dominated mining activities in the region. In 1904

(54) *Atlin Claim*, January 21, 1905.

(55) *Ibid.*, April 15, 1905.

(56) *B.C. Mining Exchange*, VII (April, 1905), p. 7.

(57) *Atlin Claim*, May 12 and August 11, 1906.

(58) British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines . . . 1914*, p. K 89.

(59) Vancouver *Province*, July 30, 1900; *Victoria Colonist*, April 3, 1900, and March 8, 1901; *Atlin Claim*, April 14, 1900.

several quartz propositions which previously had been worked only sufficiently to satisfy the annual assessment were given more serious attention. Among these were the "Beavis" ledge, owned by C. E. W. Johnston and H. Maluin, and the "Yellow Jacket" group on Pine Creek which in 1904 began operating a small stamp-mill to crush ore.⁶⁰

Quartz-mining did not become a major factor in Atlin's development until 1938. In 1929 and 1930 mining engineers had devoted considerable attention to the area around the junction of the Tulsequah and Taku Rivers, about 50 miles south of Atlin. In 1935 the Polaris-Taku Mining Company acquired quartz interests on Whitewater Creek, a tributary of the Tulsequah River, and in 1938 began producing.⁶¹ As a result, the 1938 production figures for the Atlin district showed a marked increase. In 1942, however, the Polaris-Taku mine closed down because of the war, and did not reopen until 1946. This mine has been the only major producer of lode gold in Atlin's history.

From 1880 onward, British Columbia had experienced a large influx of Oriental immigrants.⁶² In the 1880's the Canadian Pacific Railway Company had imported many Chinese for its railway-construction crews. In the 1890's Chinese and Japanese immigration reached proportions alarming to the white population of British Columbia. The Orientals, accustomed to lower living standards than the whites, were willing to work for lower wages. Large companies, therefore, found it profitable to hire Orientals rather than whites. In the 1890's and early 1900's the Provincial Government tried to limit Oriental immigration by various Statutes. In each case, however, the Federal Government was forced to intervene since it, and not the Provincial Government, had control of immigration matters. Feeling in British Columbia against Oriental immigrants, therefore, became bitter. Atlin inherited some of this bitterness when she experienced two "invasions" by Orientals. Oriental labour, in fact, caused the only serious labour-capital disputes in the history of the Atlin goldfields.

In 1898, when men were scarce in Atlin, miners could earn \$10 a day plus board. In 1899, after the influx of thousands of men, wages fell to 50 cents per hour, with the men boarding themselves. In 1900

(60) *Ibid.*, July 30 and October 22, 1904.

(61) British Columbia, Government Travel Bureau, *Stikine and Atlin Land Recording Districts* (Bulletin No. 23), Victoria, 1939, p. 3; British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines . . . 1937*, pp. B 40-41.

(62) For further details on Oriental immigration to British Columbia see C. J. Woodsworth, *Canada and the Orient*, Toronto, 1941, *passim*.

and 1901 wages paid by the various companies varied so much that the men finally decided to organize, and thus achieve a standard wage. In May, 1901, therefore, the men met in Discovery and agreed to form the Atlin District Miners' Union, and affiliate themselves with the Western Federation of Miners.⁶³ The group decided that \$5 for a ten-hour working-day was a reasonable wage. The Atlin *Claim* stated editorially that the action of the miners was a mistake.⁶⁴ The newspaper felt that all classes of the community should have been present at the meeting, and that all Atlin should have representation in any association representing the community. The miners thought otherwise, but, nevertheless, allowed the proposals for a union to lapse temporarily.

In 1902 R. D. Fetherstonhaugh decided that the difficulties which his company had experienced with white miners could best be overcome by the introduction of Oriental labour. He thus precipitated Atlin's first serious labour conflict. In March, Fetherstonhaugh announced that he was bringing in Japanese to work the property of the Atlin Mining Company on McKee Creek.⁶⁵ The citizens of Atlin heard of Fetherstonhaugh's intentions, and held a protest meeting on March 12. When the Japanese arrived, Fetherstonhaugh rushed them out to his property on McKee Creek. On March 28 about ninety miners organized themselves into an unarmed party, and marched out to McKee Creek to interview Fetherstonhaugh and his new employees.⁶⁶ The representatives of the miners told the mine manager and the Japanese that they would not stand for Oriental labour in the district, and that they would boycott any man or company who hired Orientals.⁶⁷ Fetherstonhaugh was powerless to resist, and agreed to send the Japanese out by the first boat. Only the Japanese cooks remained.

After the Japanese question had been settled to the satisfaction of the miners, John Kirkland suggested, in a letter to the *Claim*, that the labour element of the camp unite in a miners' union.⁶⁸ Strikes, said Kirkland, should be, and would be, avoided if both the miners and employers remembered that they both should have at heart the best

(63) Atlin *Claim*, May 18, 1901.

(64) *Ibid.*, May 25, 1901.

(65) *Ibid.*, March 15, 1902.

(66) "Return to an address to . . . the Lieutenant-Governor . . . relating to the introduction of Japanese into the Atlin district in . . . March, 1902," in British Columbia, *Sessional Papers, 1902*, Victoria, 1902, pp. 843-844.

(67) Atlin *Claim*, March 22 and 29, 1902.

(68) *Ibid.*, March 29, 1902.

interests of the camp. Lest any employer should again try to introduce cheap labour, however, the miners should once and for all display their opposition to such practices by forming a strong union. On June 2 the miners officially united in such a union, selecting Kirkland as president, J. Thompson as vice-president, and H. Brown as secretary.⁶⁹

For the rest of 1902 the labour scene in Atlin was peaceful. Work was plentiful; there was not an idle man in the camp; and the miners were earning from \$5 to \$6 per day.⁷⁰ In May, 1903, however, trouble arose on Pine Creek over the wages paid by the Pine Creek Power Company. A number of men went on strike and formed a new union. Miners on the other creeks were unsympathetic to the strikers, and the strike failed.⁷¹

Between 1903 and 1904 the effects of hydraulic operations had become apparent, and the number of free miners had dropped from 900 in 1903 to 600 in 1904.⁷² Even with the drop in the labour-supply, however, the unemployment picture in 1905 was so gloomy that Kirkland wrote to the *Claim* in March, stating: "The poor labourers of Atlin are out of work and starving. . . . We are fighting for what jobs there are like dogs over a bone. There are not jobs to go around us all now."⁷³

In 1907 Atlin had its second experience with Orientals. In April, J. M. Ruffner, the manager of the Pine Creek Power Company, introduced twenty-one Japanese to work the company's property.⁷⁴ In May the citizens of Atlin again protested the introduction of Orientals, and in June most of the Japanese left. As a result of Ruffner's experiment, the miners of Discovery formed the Miners' Protective Association to fight any further importation of Japanese.⁷⁵

In August, 1907, the first permanent union appeared in Atlin, when the representatives of the Western Federation of Miners opened a branch of that organization in the district. One of the major aims of the branch was the prevention of the introduction of any more Orientals into Atlin. By now the Atlin *Claim* had changed its editor and its views. On

(69) *Ibid.*, June 14, 1902.

(70) *Ibid.*, September 13, 1902.

(71) *Ibid.*, May 23, 1903; *B.C. Mining Exchange*, V (June, 1903), p. 5.

(72) British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines . . . 1905*, p. J 68.

(73) *Atlin Claim*, March 11, 1905.

(74) *Ibid.*, April 27, 1907.

(75) *Ibid.*, May 11, 1907.

August 31, 1907, it said, editorially: "We hope that all . . . the men in the camp . . . come forward and unite with this movement; . . . with a powerful organization behind us we need not fear any labour troubles. . . ."⁷⁶ In subsequent years Atlin had few strikes. Over the years, except for the early protest against the introduction of Orientals, Atlin's labour history, on the whole, has been serene.

From 1898 to the present day, Atlin's annual gold production has fluctuated widely, reflecting both local and world economic conditions. In 1898, the first year of recorded mineral production for the region, Atlin's placer-gold output was 3,750 ounces, valued at \$75,000.⁷⁷ The figure was low because of the short working season remaining after the news of the discovery reached the outside world in August. In 1899, when an estimated 4,000 miners were in Atlin, the output soared to 40,000 ounces, valued at \$800,000. That record of placer output has never since been exceeded. From 1900 to 1907 the production figures remained relatively stable, varying from 15,000 ounces in 1901 to 26,500 ounces in 1904. The average gold output for this eight-year period was about 21,000 ounces. Between 1898 and 1907, Pine, Spruce, Boulder, and McKee Creeks were the leading producers of placer gold.

In 1908 Atlin's gold production slumped sharply because of several factors, including the abandonment of dredging operations, the failure of the Atlin Consolidated Mining Company to operate as a result of difficulties with its steam-shovels, and development work which almost eliminated any production by the Pine Creek Power Company, another large producer of placer gold.⁷⁸

From 1898 to 1949 Atlin's total mineral production was valued at \$22,539,892.⁷⁹ Of this total, 667,714 ounces of placer gold accounted for \$15,394,502; 201,882 ounces of lode gold accounted for \$7,089,161; and small quantities of silver, copper, and lead accounted for the remaining \$56,000. To the placer-mining total, Spruce Creek contributed almost one-half of the output, and Pine, Boulder, Ruby,

(76) *Ibid.*, August 24, 1907.

(77) The annual gold production of the Atlin District between 1898 and 1930 is summarized in British Columbia, Department of Mines, *Placer-mining in British Columbia* . . . (Bulletin Series, No. 2, 1930), Victoria, 1930, p. 18.

(78) British Columbia, Department of Mines, *British Columbia, the Mineral Province of Canada* . . . 1909, Victoria, 1910, pp. 29-30.

(79) British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines* . . . 1949, p. A 25.

and McKee Creeks, in that order, were the other major producers of placer gold.⁸⁰

An interesting, if relatively unimportant, part of Atlin's gold-mining history is the discovery of large nuggets. Spruce Creek seems to have contributed most of the large nuggets recorded. In 1899 it offered one of 83 ounces, and in July, 1901, one of 36 ounces.⁸¹

One of the most glamorous aspects of Atlin's history is the story of the construction and operation of the White Pass and Yukon Railway. Before 1898 the idea of a railway up over the tortuous White Pass was considered a fantasy. The gold-seekers who entered the Yukon and Alaska in 1897 and early in 1898 via the Skagway and White Pass route had to follow a rough trail through the rugged valley of the Skagway River, across the summit of the White Pass, and through swampy country to Bennett Lake.⁸² From Bennett Lake to Dawson the Argonauts followed a water route, except for several portages past rough rapids. Prior to 1898 several transportation companies had organized and built rude facilities to aid, at a heavy price, the weary travellers. For example, the "Brackett" toll-road from Skagway to White Pass City, a distance of approximately 13 miles, was available to those who could pay \$20 for each ton of supplies that they had with them. Even with such aids, however, the Skagway River-White Pass route was a terrible ordeal. Hundreds of people either turned back at their first view of the pass or else died in their attempts to cross the divide. Nevertheless, it is estimated that, in 1898, 25,000 people crossed the White Pass and Chilcoot Pass routes on the way to Dawson.⁸³

Early in 1898 four men gathered in Skagway to discuss the possibilities of a railway from Skagway over the White Pass, skirting the east shores of Summit, Lindeman, and Bennett Lakes, to the Watson River, at the northern end of Bennett Lake. From there the projected railway was to run to an as yet unchosen point on the Lewes River. These four men were: Sir Thomas Tancrede, an English engineer representing the firm of Close Brothers of London, England; Samuel H.

(80) British Columbia, Department of Mines, *Placer Gold Production of British Columbia* (Bulletin No. 28), Victoria, 1950, pp. 17-20.

(81) *Atlin Claim*, July 15, 1899; July 13, 1901.

(82) S. H. Graves, *On the White Pass Pay-roll*, Chicago, 1908, p. 34. Graves was the president of the White Pass and Yukon Route during the turbulent days of the construction of the railway.

(83) W. D. MacBride, "Story of the White Pass Railroad," *Whitehorse Star*, March 8, 1946.

the first train reached Bennett, the end of the first section.⁸⁸ The second section, from the head of Bennett Lake to the foot of the White Horse Rapids, was completed on June 8, 1900, and the link from Bennett to Cariboo Crossing was finished on July 29, 1900.⁸⁹ It is interesting to note that J. H. Brownlee, one of the two surveyors of the Atlin town-site, laid out the site of Cariboo Crossing—now Carcross—for the company in September, 1899.⁹⁰

The construction of the White Pass and Yukon Railway was one of the really brilliant engineering feats of history. In 21 miles the railway rises from sea-level, at Skagway, to a summit of 2,865 feet, at White Pass. The highest point on the line is at Log Cabin, 2,916 feet above sea-level.⁹¹ At some points the track climbs at a gradient of 4 per cent. The construction costs from Skagway over the summit of the White Pass averaged \$100,00 per mile. The line, when completed, was about 110 miles long, 20 miles of it in Alaska, 32 in British Columbia, and 58 in the Yukon Territory. One estimate states that over 35,000 men, at one time or another between May, 1898, and October, 1900, helped to build the railway. The construction of the White Pass and Yukon Railway was a gigantic feat.

The White Pass and Yukon Railway Company did not limit its operations to a single enterprise. In July, 1898, the company had acquired control of the British Yukon Navigation Company, the British Columbia Yukon Railway Company, and the Pacific and Arctic Railway and Navigation Company. In May, 1901, the White Pass Company also assumed the operation of the facilities of the Canadian Development Company, thereby acquiring nine steamers, wharves, buildings, and a sizeable marine trade.⁹² In June, 1900, the White Pass Company took another step which brought it virtual control of the freight and passenger traffic to Atlin.

In February, 1899, a group of men from Victoria had obtained a charter from the British Columbia Legislature to build a tramway or railway, to be known as the Atlin Short Line Railway and Navigation Company, across the isthmus from Taku Arm, near the mouth of the

(88) London *Times*, December 19, 1899.

(89) Graves, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

(90) Atlin *Claim*, September 30, 1899.

(91) The engineering details of the railway may be found in *Whitehorse Star*, March 8, 1946.

(92) Canada, Department of Transport, *A Statutory History of the Steam and Electric Railways of Canada, 1836-1937*, Ottawa, 1938, p. 635.

Graves, the American representative of the same firm; E. C. Hawkins, an American engineer; and Michael J. Heney, an Irish-Canadian with considerable experience in railway construction.⁸⁴ From the meeting of these men sprang the White Pass and Yukon Railway.

Five surveying parties left Skagway in May, 1898, to find a feasible route through the rugged terrain between Skagway and Bennett Lake. The distance from Skagway to Summit was only 14 miles as the crow flies, but the selecting of a railway route was so difficult that when the surveyors were finished their work, they suggested a final route 20 miles long which utilized parts of all five surveyed lines to the summit of the White Pass.⁸⁵

The railway company had legal as well as physical difficulties to overcome. The proposed line would pass through American territory from Skagway to Summit Lake, through British Columbia from Summit Lake to the 60th parallel, and through the Northwest Territories from the 60th parallel to Whitehorse. The company, therefore, had to obtain three railway charters—one each from the United States, Canadian, and British Columbian Governments. The charters, moreover, involved no assistance from the three Governments to the company in the way of land or money subsidies.

In April, 1898, men, horses, and materials were landed at Skagway, and in May the construction of the line began. On July 21, 1898, the first train began operating over a completed section of track 4 miles long. This train was the first one ever to run in Alaska.⁸⁶ By August 7 there were 2,000 men working on the railway. On August 9 but 700 of these men were left, since, on August 8, the news of the Atlin strike had caused 1,300 of the workers to throw down their tools on the construction gangs and head for the new goldfield. Most of these men were in such a hurry that they did not bother to pick up their pay-cheques, although they took with them nearly every pick and shovel that the company owned. The rush of the workers to Atlin caused the railway considerable inconvenience, delaying completion of the line for several months. Not until October was the company able to refill its labour ranks. On February 22, 1899, the construction crews completed track-laying to the summit of the White Pass,⁸⁷ and on July 6, 1899,

(84) *Ibid.*, March 8, 1946.

(85) Graves, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

(86) *Whitehorse Star*, March 8, 1946.

(87) Graves, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

Atlin River, to Scotia Bay, on the west shore of Atlin Lake.⁹³ The new company also acquired powers to construct telegraph-lines, to utilize the Atlin River for electric power purposes, and to build wharves and other facilities for steamship services. On June 6, 1899, J. H. Brownlee, the company's president, officially opened the tramway.⁹⁴ In addition to the narrow-gauge railway, the company also constructed wharves at Taku and Scotia Bay. The John Irving Navigation Company temporarily acquired control of the Atlin Short Line Railway in the navigation season of 1899,⁹⁵ but Brownlee resumed the direction of the line in the fall of the same year.⁹⁶ During the summer of 1899 a wagon-road across the portage from Scotia Bay to Taku was used for hauling most of the freight.⁹⁷ In February, 1900, Captain John Irving planned to construct a second tramway across the peninsula in competition with the Brownlee concern,⁹⁸ and in March, 1900, began construction of the John Irving Tramway.⁹⁹ Protests from Brownlee's group, however, led to the temporary suspension of construction work on the Irving tramway,¹⁰⁰ and in June, 1900, the dispute between the two groups was settled by the intervention of a third company, the White Pass and Yukon Route, which bought the assets, steamers, wharves, and tramway of the Irving Navigation Company, and completed the railway.¹⁰¹ With the acquisition of the line from Taku to Scotia Bay, the White Pass and Yukon Route gained control of the transportation facilities of the Atlin area.

On July 18, 1900, the first "train" crossed from Taku to Lake Atlin.¹⁰² The line, when completed, was but 2¼ miles long, one of the shortest, if not the shortest, railways in Canada. The fare, one way, was \$2, one of the highest rates in the world. The passengers sat on their baggage during the journey. One of the engines used on the railway was known as the "Duchess." The "Duchess" had originally been used to haul coal from Wellington to Departure Bay on Vancouver

(93) Chapter 79, British Columbia, *Statutes . . . 1899*, Victoria, 1899, pp. 343-346.

(94) *Atlin Claim*, June 10, 1899.

(95) *Ibid.*, August 19, 1899.

(96) *Ibid.*, February 17, 1900.

(97) *Ibid.*, August 26, 1899.

(98) *Ibid.*, February 17, 1900.

(99) *Ibid.*, March 31 and April 7, 1900.

(100) *Ibid.*, May 5, 1900.

(101) *Ibid.*, June 23 and July 5, 1900.

(102) *Ibid.*, July 21, 1900.

Island, but was taken to Atlin in 1899 by Captain Irving. It is still in the Atlin area, a reminder of one of the past glories of the region.

Other railways for Atlin were projected in subsequent years, but none of them ever materialized. In 1899, for example, the Atlin Southern Railway Company proposed to build a line from Log Cabin, via Atlin, to Telegraph Creek.¹⁰³ Between 1900 and 1902 the Pacific Northern and Omineca Railway Company evolved plans to construct a railway from Kitimat Inlet, via Hazelton, to Atlin or Teslin Lakes.¹⁰⁴ In 1902 the Coast Yukon Railway Company schemed to build from Kitimat Inlet, via Hazelton, Teslin, and Atlin, to Dawson City.¹⁰⁵ The *Atlin Claim* repeatedly urged both the Provincial and Federal Governments to support these railway projects.¹⁰⁶ The *Claim* argued that an all-Canadian railway route to the Yukon was essential, and that any of the proposed routes would keep northern trade in the hands of Canadian business-men. The arguments of the *Claim*, however, were fruitless. The period between 1900 and 1915 was a booming one for railway construction in Canada, both the Grand Trunk Pacific and the Canadian Northern Railways being conceived and constructed in that period, but the major portion of the construction was on an east-west basis rather than to the northland. Not one of the railways which planned to originate from, or pass through, Atlin ever materialized. The only real railway which Atlin ever had was the White Pass and Yukon Route.

The high freight rates to Atlin were a serious handicap to mining operators: the White Pass and Yukon Route, in the first place, had been a very expensive line to build; in addition, the Company had to import all its coal for its engines from distant southern ports; moreover, goods shipped in or out of Atlin required excessive handling to reach the community, incoming goods, for example, going by boat to Skagway, by rail to Bennett, by boat to Taku, by tramway to Scotia Bay, and by boat again to Atlin; finally, as far as the Atlin trade was concerned, the railway company operated at a heavy loss for the six

(103) Chapter 80, British Columbia, *Statutes* . . . 1899, Victoria, 1899, pp. 347-356.

(104) Chapter 50, British Columbia, *Statutes* . . . 1900, Victoria, 1900, pp. 247-253; Chapter 90, Canada, *Statutes* . . . 1902, Ottawa, 1902, pp. 169-171.

(105) Chapter 58, British Columbia, *Statutes* . . . 1903-04, Victoria, 1904, pp. 387-391; Chapter 108, Canada, *Statutes* . . . 1903, Ottawa, 1903, pp. 115-116.

(106) *Atlin Claim*, November 30, 1901; November 21, 1903.

winter months, and, accordingly, had to make its profit in the short summer.¹⁰⁷ As a result, from the time of the completion of the White Pass and Yukon Route, Atlin waged a continual battle with the company for a reduction in freight rates. Not until the appearance of air transportation in the late 1930's, however, did Atlin's dependence upon the transportation company end. Shortly thereafter the company abandoned most of its services to the community.

The Yukon gold-rush, as it did in so many other ways, assisted in the provision of steamship services to the Atlin Argonauts. During the winter of 1897-98 various navigation companies had ships sailing from Bennett Lake to Dawson. The demand for steamers, scows, row-boats, and even canoes for transport to the various goldfields was so great that Bennett, soon to be a ghost town, had a tremendous ship-building boom between 1898 and 1900, when the completion of the White Pass and Yukon Railway ended Bennett's brief flurry as an important transportation point to the North. Between 1898 and 1900 Bennett was a booming city of white canvas, log cabins, slab palaces, and iron warehouses.¹⁰⁸ Ship-builders at Bennett, particularly Michael King, worked night and day to supply the demands for boats. In the spring of 1899, for example, there were five steamboats under construction on Bennett Lake and one on Atlin Lake. Ships' captains were working long hours—eight hours on duty and eight hours off for weeks at a time—to try to meet the demands for their services.¹⁰⁹

In the fall of 1898, when the news of the Atlin strike reached Bennett, the Bennett Lake and Klondike Navigation Company immediately began operating steamers from Bennett to Taku, at the mouth of the Atlin River. This Company's steamer *Flora* was the first ship ever to follow the water route from Bennett, along Tagishi Lake, down Taku Arm, and along Graham Inlet to the future Taku City.¹¹⁰ The company left the miners to make their own way across the portage to Atlin Lake, by boat across the lake, and by trail to the goldfields.¹¹¹ Fortunately, the country between Taku and Scotia Bay was fairly easy to cross. On the west side of Atlin Lake the miners built crude, leaky boats and, usually bailing frantically, crossed the lake. The Bennett Lake and Klondike Company operated the *Olive May* between Bennett

(107) *Victoria Colonist*, January 16, 1901.

(108) *Vancouver Province*, June 20, 1900.

(109) *Olive*, *Memoirs*, p. 264; *Atlin Claim*, May 6, 1900.

(110) *Vancouver Province*, August 20, 1898.

(111) *Olive*, *Memoirs*, p. 264.

and Atlin in the season of 1899.¹¹² In 1899, also, Captain John Irving built the *Gleaner* at Bennett and the *Scotia* at Taku. The *Gleaner* was launched on May 2, 1899, and Captain Irving himself commanded her on her first trip to Taku on May 6. The *Scotia*, a sternwheeler, was launched on June 7, 1899, and, under the command of Captain E. W. Spencer, made her maiden voyage across Atlin Lake on June 8.¹¹³ The *Scotia*, the first real ship to navigate the waters of Atlin Lake, was 80 feet long, had engines of 80 horse-power, could carry 70 tons of freight, and had twelve berths for passenger accommodation. She served for many years, and finally was beached on the lake-shore.¹¹⁴

The John Irving Navigation Company offered a regular steamer and railway service from Atlin to Bennett between June and October, 1899. Except for the ships of the Bennett Lake and Klondike Navigation Company, the Irving firm had a virtual monopoly of the transportation service from Bennett to Atlin, and charged what the people of Atlin believed to be excessive rates.¹¹⁵ In 1899 the company also controlled Atlin's two wharves, forcing other steamers, including the *Ruth* and the *William Ogilvie*, to land their freight and passengers on log-booms.¹¹⁶ In June, 1900, however, the White Pass and Yukon Route bought out Captain Irving's interests in Atlin,¹¹⁷ and for the next thirty-five years controlled the community's transportation facilities.

In November, 1899, the first wreck affecting Atlin occurred when the *Olive May*, the steamer owned by the Bennett Lake and Klondike Company, struck a rock near Tagish and sank.¹¹⁸ Thus, Atlin lost one of the ships serving her. When the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company's steamer *Islander* struck an iceberg and sank in Taku Inlet near Juneau, in August, 1901, Atlin was again affected. J. W. McFarlane, who had directed the taking of the decennial Federal census in the Atlin area in 1901, was on the ship, and although he saved himself, he lost his census returns. As a result, he had to return to Atlin to retake the census.¹¹⁹

(112) Atlin *Claim*, August 12, 1899.

(113) *Ibid.*, June 10, 1899.

(114) In 1942 the officers of the White Pass Company's boat *Norgold* were using the *Scotia* as their headquarters. *Atlin News Miner*, June 6, 1942.

(115) Atlin *Claim*, August 19 and September 9, 1899.

(116) *Ibid.*, September 9, 1899.

(117) *Ibid.*, June 23 and July 5, 1900.

(118) *Ibid.*, November 11, 1899.

(119) *Ibid.*, August 31, 1901.

In subsequent years several small vessels served the community. In October, 1904, a paddle steamer, the *Atlinto*, was launched near Discovery Wharf.¹²⁰ W. J. Smith designed and built the *Atlinto* for himself and J. D. Durie to undertake freighting and towing on the lakes around Atlin. For some time Smith also operated a sidewheeler, the *Lady of the Lake*.¹²¹

One of the transportation difficulties facing the Atlin community was the unnavigability of the Atlin River. The swift little river was not impassible, but usually was not sufficiently deep to carry even such relatively small ships as the *Gleaner*. The Atlin *Claim* and Atlin's members of the Federal Parliament tried, unsuccessfully, either to have the river deepened or to have canal locks installed,¹²² but nothing resulted. The expensive process of loading and unloading cargoes¹²³ at the tramway terminals at Taku and Scotia Bay remained for many years to raise the freight costs of the community. Only the introduction of the aeroplane ended Atlin's transportation difficulties.

For over fifty years, from 1898 to 1949, Atlin had no road connections with the outside world. For those travellers who went to Atlin in the early days, however, there were several alternative routes. J. C. Gwillim, who in 1899 and 1900 surveyed the Atlin Mining District for the Geological Survey of Canada, tells us that, prior to the arrival of white men in the region, the Taku Indians had portage-trails from Tagish to Little Atlin Lake and Teslin River, from Atlin Lake at the mouth of the Pike River to the upper waters of Taku River and thence to Teslin Lake, and from Surprise Lake to Gladys and Teslin Lakes.¹²⁴ The Indians rarely explored the surrounding country through which these trails passed. In fact, the trails themselves were not important highways of Indian travel.

In the fall of 1898 and 1899 the miners followed several overland routes to Atlin Lake. The "Fantail" route was a short winter trail for dog-sleds from Skagway over the White Pass to Log Cabin, southeasterly to Otter Lake, and thence across to Taku Arm and Atlin Lake. In 1898, at the close of navigation, the White Pass and Yukon Railway Company opened up a winter trail from Log Cabin, south of Bennett Lake, to Atlin, following virtually the same route as the existing "Fan-

(120) *Ibid.*, October 8, 1904.

(121) *Ibid.*, February 1, 1908.

(122) *Ibid.*, December 21, 1907.

(123) *Victoria Colonist*, January 16, 1901.

(124) Gwillim, *op. cit.*, p. 6B.

tail" trail.¹²⁵ To avoid the dangers of ice travel, the Provincial Government's Public Works Department in 1899 built a road from the west side of Atlin Lake, opposite Atlin townsite, to Golden Gate, 14 miles in distance.¹²⁶ A second route in common use in the early days was the "Tutshi" trail, from Log Cabin via Tutshi Lake to Atlin. It was 85 miles via the "Tutshi" trail, more northerly but safer than the shorter "Fantail" when the ice on the lakes was treacherous. Another route, the "Taku" or "Juneau" trail, led from the head of tide-water on Taku Inlet, 33 miles from Juneau, up the Taku River to the mouth of the Silver Salmon River, thence along the Silver Salmon, across a low divide to Pike Lake, and then via the Pike River to Atlin Lake.¹²⁷ The "Taku" route, rough and mountainous, was 115 miles long. A fourth approach was by way of the Telegraph-Teslin trail from Glenora to Teslin Lake, and thence across the ranges westward to Atlin Lake.¹²⁸

At certain times in the winter, travel by road or trail to Atlin was difficult. At other times, however, it was relatively easy. In April, 1900, for example, an automobile actually travelled over the ice and snow from Bennett to Atlin.¹²⁹ On April 9, E. J. De Lamare, of Paris, France, visiting Atlin on behalf of two French publications, *Figaro* and *Revue Klondike*, set out with his driver from Bennett for Atlin. Behind, in a sleigh, came De Lamare's secretary, carrying extra gasoline and parts. Since the ice was just starting to thaw, the burner on the bottom of the car was under water for a good part of the trip. At one point, when repairs had to be made to the under-side of the machine, the men had to cut a hole in the ice because the car could not safely be overturned. Many breakdowns occurred along the way, and several small parts were lost. The top speed reached by the automobile was about 16 miles per hour. When the car arrived at Atlin on April 14, it had to be completely overhauled. It was, of course, the first automobile ever to visit the community, and caused considerable excitement among the residents. Although De Lamare visited Atlin on subsequent occa-

(125) British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines . . . 1898*, p. 989.

(126) British Columbia, Lands and Works Department, *Report of the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works . . . 1899*, Victoria, 1900, p. 378.

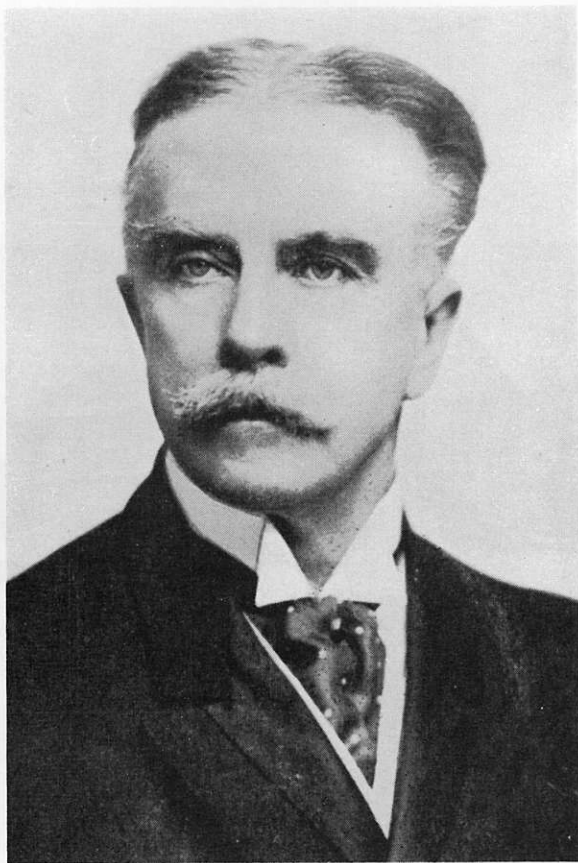
(127) British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines . . . 1898*, p. 990.

(128) Gwillim, *op. cit.*, p. 6B.

(129) *Atlin Claim*, April 21, 1900.



Provincial Police buildings and officials, Atlin, 1899.



Dr. Henry Esson Young, M.L.A., for
Atlin riding, 1903-16.

sions to inspect his considerable mining properties in the district, he thereafter used normal methods of transportation.

In the early days Atlin had several stage services. In 1900 three stages ran daily from Discovery City on Pine Creek to Surprise Lake, a distance of 8 miles.¹³⁰ In 1903 J. Brookes operated a twice-weekly service from Carcross to Atlin.¹³¹ The journey took two days and cost \$15 each way. The operators of the stage varied the route to meet weather conditions since there was no real road between the two points.

Although Atlin did not gain a highway link with the outside world until 1949, members of the community tried on many occasions to get the Provincial and Federal Governments to provide roads connecting the region with distant points. The *Atlin Claim* was constantly suggesting possible road construction from the district to link Atlin with points either on the sea-coast or on the White Pass and Yukon Route.¹³² In February, 1905, the citizens of Atlin met to discuss a proposed wagon-road extending from the already-constructed road between Atlin and McKee Creek to the south end of the lake, then south-eastward to the Taku River, and thence to the head of Taku Inlet.¹³³ A committee was appointed to collect \$500 to hire an engineer to inspect the suggested route. In the summer of 1905 William Brown, an engineer; Hugh Molyneaux, the Provincial superintendent of roads for the district; and Lee Garden conducted the road survey. They reported that the best route for such a wagon-road would be via the Silver Salmon and Taku River valleys to the head of Taku Inlet. The total distance of this route would be approximately 140 miles.¹³⁴ However, nothing ever resulted from this survey.

In December, 1907, the *Atlin Claim* suggested another possible road connection—north from Atlin along the east shore of the lake, around the northern end of Little Atlin Lake, there to join the existing wagon-road to Tagish.¹³⁵ Like the proposed road to Taku Inlet, however, the road to Tagish did not materialize. In 1908 the Provincial Government agreed to build a road from Atlin to the 60th parallel, providing

(130) British Columbia, Lands and Works Department, *Report of the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works . . . 1900*, p. 484.

(131) *Atlin Claim*, March 7, 1903.

(132) *Ibid.*, December 17, 1904; January 28, 1905; January 6, 1906; December 14, 1907.

(133) *Ibid.*, February 4, 1905.

(134) *Ibid.*, June 24, 1905; January 6, 1906.

(135) *Ibid.*, December 14, 1907.

the Dominion Government would extend the road through the Yukon to Carcross.¹³⁶ Again the plan fell through, and Atlin failed once more to solve its transportation difficulties.¹³⁷

In 1898 Atlin was an isolated city of tents. All communications with the outside world were slow and laborious. The community lacked even a telegraph system. Important events in the Northwest Territories and the rest of British Columbia, however, were soon to remedy this deficiency. In 1899 the Federal Government announced its plans to build the Ashcroft-Yukon telegraph-line, a comprehensive programme of telegraph construction which would connect the Northwest Territories and Northern British Columbia with the rest of Canada.¹³⁸ From Bennett, lines would be built to Dawson and Atlin, and from Atlin another line would be built southward to Quesnel. The transcontinental telegraph system would be linked to these new lines by an extension from Ashcroft to Quesnel. J. B. Charleson, superintendent of the Dominion telegraph system in the Northwest, was in charge of the northern construction work. Under his direction, the line from Dawson, via Bennett, to Atlin was completed on October 4, 1899, thus linking Atlin with Bennett, Dawson, Tagish, Skagway, and Whitehorse.¹³⁹ In March, 1900, Charleson returned to Atlin to begin the construction of the line from Atlin to Quesnel. Work also began from Ashcroft, the other end of the line. The task was difficult because of the density of the forests and the mountainous nature of the country through which the telegraph-line had to pass. On September 26, 1901, after two years of work, the telegraph-line from Ashcroft to the Yukon was completed.¹⁴⁰ A branch line, meanwhile, had been finished from Hazelton via the Skeena River to Port Simpson, at the Skeena's mouth, by June 14, 1901.¹⁴¹ Atlin became the repeating station for Dawson and other points west of Atlin, while Hazelton and Ashcroft, where the telegraph-

(136) *Ibid.*, March 7, 1908.

(137) Atlin's lack of a road connection with the outside world continued until 1949, when a link between Atlin and the Alaska Highway at Jake's Corners was completed jointly by the Provincial and Federal Governments. See *Vancouver Province*, February 10, 1944; *Whitehorse Star*, July 5, 1946; September 26, 1947; February 6, 1948; *Vancouver Sun*, August 8, 1949.

(138) *Atlin Claim*, July 29, 1899.

(139) *Ibid.*, October 7, 1899.

(140) *Ibid.*, September 28, 1901. The details of the cost and length of the telegraph-line may be found in Canada, House of Commons, *Official Report of Debates*, 1902, Ottawa, 1902, p. 4151.

(141) *Atlin Claim*, July 6, 1901.

line joined the national telegraph network, were the other repeating centres. Thus Atlin achieved telegraphic connections with the outside world.

Atlin was also provided with a telephone system early in her history. On August 3, 1899, George L. Rice announced that his firm, the Atlin Light and Power Company, proposed to construct a complete telephone service between Atlin and Discovery, on Pine Creek, and also to extend the line to Surprise Lake and to the various gold-producing creeks in the area.¹⁴² By the end of August, 1899, the telephone-line was in operation.¹⁴³

When Atlin first sprang to life on the lake-shore, she became a city of tents because of the lack of lumber for permanent buildings. Enterprising people, however, soon entered the logging and sawmilling industries to remedy the defect. In June, 1898, E. G. Tennant, travelling by boat from Dawson to the coast, had his boat capsized beneath him and, after two days of wandering in the bush, found Fritz Miller's camp on Pine Creek. He decided to remain in the area, and erected Atlin's first sawmill.¹⁴⁴ In 1899 the demand for lumber for office buildings, hotels, stores, residences, and, above all, for mining operations was so great that other mills soon appeared in Atlin.¹⁴⁵ George D. Sinclair, for example, was operating a sawmill by February, 1899.¹⁴⁶ Early in 1899, also, E. Rosselli and E. Ridd, both of whom previously had been connected with the Hastings Mill on Burrard Inlet, arrived in Atlin to take up sawmilling.¹⁴⁷ By April, 1899, Rosselli, the manager, had his Atlin Lake Lumber Company in operation. By January 15, 1900, the Atlin Lake Milling and Lumber Company, under the management of Captain W. S. Westcott, had joined the ranks of Atlin's producing mills.¹⁴⁸ On April 3, 1900, the Brown and Sinclair Mill at Surprise Lake also began turning out finished lumber.¹⁴⁹

Atlin's sawmills at first did an excellent business. From 1899 to 1901 a large amount of construction work was done in Atlin. By the spring of 1901, however, the building boom, except for supplies to the

(142) *Ibid.*, August 5, 1899.

(143) *Lake Bennett Sun*, August 12, 1899.

(144) *Atlin Claim*, April 6, 1901.

(145) *Revelstoke Kootenay Mail*, April 29, 1899.

(146) *Victoria Colonist*, February 18, 1899.

(147) *Atlin Claim*, April 29, 1899; December 22, 1906.

(148) *Ibid.*, December 9, 1899; April 19, 1902.

(149) *Ibid.*, April 14, 1900.

miners, had ended. The sales and prices of lumber dropped sharply. In March, 1901, therefore, the owners of the mills entered into a combine to maintain rates.¹⁵⁰ Prices of lumber, thereafter, soared to prohibitive levels, and caused considerable distress among the small mining operators. In April, 1902, however, the price agreement ended, and competition soon restored prices of finished lumber to normal levels.¹⁵¹

In the early days the fortunes of Atlin's sawmills followed the fortunes of the gold mines. When gold production began to fall off after 1907, and again following 1916, most of Atlin's mills closed.

In odd ways Atlin's geographic position often entered into the progress of her development. The long and bright summer days allowed the miners to work their holdings to the maximum, and permitted local residents to carry on such leisure activities as gardening, hunting, and fishing after work-hours. The winter nights, however, were equally as long as the summer days. In the middle of winter, Atlin's dark, snow-covered, icy streets were lighted only by the lights from residences, sometimes by a bright moon, or by the reflection from the snow. When the blessing of electricity came to Atlin, therefore, the people of Atlin rejoiced.

In May, 1903, P. F. Scharschmidt and G. H. Sproat, on behalf of their new venture, the British Columbia Power and Manufacturing Company, purchased the old plant of the Skagway Light and Power Company.¹⁵² The two men announced that they intended to move the plant to Atlin as soon as navigation opened, and to install the necessary machinery and fittings in the summer of 1903. Under the supervision of A. H. Hartshorn, the manager of the new firm, the light and power plant was installed in Atlin, and the electricity was successfully turned on for the first time on September 12, 1903.¹⁵³

In anticipation of the arrival of electricity in the community, the *Atlin Claim*, editorially, spoke of the many advantages which the power company would give Atlin.¹⁵⁴ Electricity, said the *Claim*, reduced the risk of fire, promoted cleanliness, and permitted greater comfort in homes and stores. Even more important, the editorial added, the building of the new plant showed outsiders that Atlin had faith in herself. The *Claim* went on to urge that immediate steps be taken to subsidize

(150) *Ibid.*, March 23, 1901.

(151) *Ibid.*, March 26 and April 26, 1902.

(152) *Ibid.*, May 16, 1903.

(153) *Ibid.*, September 19, 1903.

(154) *Ibid.*, September 5, 1903.

the company in some fashion in order that a system of street-lighting could be established in the town.

The new electric power company was more than a mere light and power plant for the community: it provided power to mills and mining operations; it carried a full line of engineering supplies and fittings; it provided the community with electrical engineering, blacksmithing, tin-smithing, and machinist services; and it also operated a steam laundry. The rates were surprisingly reasonable for the time, lower than those charged in Whitehorse and on a par with those of Skagway.¹⁵⁵

In November, 1904, the British Columbia Power and Manufacturing Company united with the Northern Lumber Company under the new firm-name of the Northern Power and Lumber Company.¹⁵⁶ In December the amalgamated firm moved to its new location. Without any interruption of service to the community, manager Hartshorn and electrician Harry Boardman directed the installation of a new power-house, a new wiring system, and enlarged street mains.¹⁵⁷ In the disastrous fire of May 29, 1905, the Northern Power and Lumber Company was the biggest sufferer. Everything owned by the company was completely destroyed. After the fire, F. T. Troughton, speaking for the firm, announced that the sawmill would be rebuilt, but that the power plant and the steam laundry would not be replaced.¹⁵⁸

A minor industry in the Atlin area which had a brief, but successful, life was a brickmaking company. In the summer of 1899, clay suitable for brickmaking was discovered near Atlin. W. H. T. Olive investigated the possibilities of a brickyard in Atlin, and turned out a few bricks as an experiment.¹⁵⁹ He decided to undertake the project of supplying bricks not only for local use, but also for shipment to Dawson. In May, 1900, he announced that he would shortly open a building and contracting establishment, and, in addition, would provide bricks.¹⁶⁰ By July, 1900, his plant was in full production. The sales of bricks in Atlin were large, but the expected market in Dawson failed to materialize. A lack of transportation facilities prevented any large shipments of brick from Atlin. By the spring of 1901, however, Atlin's building boom was over,

(155) *Ibid.*, October 31, 1903.

(156) *Ibid.*, November 12, 1904.

(157) *Ibid.*, December 3, 1904.

(158) *Ibid.*, June 3, 1905.

(159) Vancouver *Province*, July 5, 1900.

(160) Atlin *Claim*, May 26, 1900.

and so was Atlin's first brickmaking venture. Olive apparently closed his plant in July, 1901.¹⁶¹ For a brief period in 1904 Atlin again had a brickyard. In 1904, when the British Columbia Power and Manufacturing Company arranged an amalgamation with the Northern Power and Lumber Company, the company required a new site and building. Thomas Kirkland, an experienced brickmaker, was entrusted with the task of providing 20,000 bricks for the new building. Under his direction the Atlin Brick Yard on Discovery Road began operating its kiln on August 16, 1904.¹⁶² Kirkland's plant was successful in its first contract, but thereafter soon languished for lack of orders. After 1904 Atlin had no real need for a brickyard since she saw little new construction work.

The Atlin area has agricultural as well as mineral possibilities.¹⁶³ The latitude of the area ensures long summer days, ideal for growing hardy vegetables. In the many creek-valleys, also, there are rich sandy-loam and deep black-loam soils. There are also large stretches of open country suitable for grazing lands. A combination of circumstances, however, has prevented the exploitation of the farming resources of the region. The greatest difficulties, of course, have been Atlin's geographic and economic isolation. The few farmers in the region lacked adequate transportation facilities for shipping their produce to outside markets. In addition, the risk of summer frosts is a formidable factor for prospective farmers to consider.

In Atlin's early period, however, several farmers successfully produced crops and vegetables for local use. In 1899 H. M. Wooldridge, a farmer from Manitoba, had established himself at Ten Mile Ranch near Carcross, Yukon Territory.¹⁶⁴ He imported cattle, horses, mowing-machines, and hay-presses, and settled down to serious farming. He raised oats, hay, turnips, potatoes, carrots, and all types of garden truck. He prospered. In October, 1902, for example, he sold 70 tons of hay for \$70 a ton at the Atlin wharf. Wooldridge's success caused others to follow his example. R. Grierson tried market-gardening on Pine Creek in 1899 and 1900, and was reasonably successful.¹⁶⁵ Lee Garden, who

(161) In his advertisement in the *Atlin Claim*, June 29, 1901, Olive advertised bricks for sale. In the following issues he omitted bricks as one of his specialties.

(162) *Atlin Claim*, August 20, 1904.

(163) British Columbia, *Report of the Minister of Lands . . . for the Year Ending 31st December, 1913*, Victoria, 1914, pp. D 43-44.

(164) *Atlin Claim*, October 11, 1902; April 30, 1904.

(165) *Ibid.*, June 2, 1900.

started a ranch on Fourth of July Creek, was selling hay to local residents of Atlin by November, 1902.¹⁶⁶ By 1902, also, E. J. Hughes was operating a farm at Taku, and the Butler brothers had taken up land 6 miles below Hughes on Taku Arm.¹⁶⁷ The Butler brothers imported several thousand strawberry plants in 1905, and did a rushing business for several years selling the berries to the miners.¹⁶⁸ In the autumn of 1903 E. P. Queen established himself on a fine farming-site just north of Atlin townsite. In 1904 Queen had over 20 acres in cultivation.¹⁶⁹ His model farm was soon one of the scenic features of the Atlin area. He grew all types of hardy vegetables, oats, and hay, and found a ready market in Atlin for all that he could grow. When Atlin became a mining camp for big operators, however, the population declined, and farming suffered. Almost all of the long-term residents of Atlin, nevertheless, had private gardens, and had excellent results.

When the miners first began to arrive in the Atlin area in August, 1898, they pitched their tents indiscriminately along the creeks and began their feverish scrambling for claims and gold. With the miners came other men more interested in making money from the miners than by mining themselves. Among these non-miners were real-estate men who realized that if the boom were genuine, towns would soon spring up along the creeks. They, therefore, searched for likely spots to lay out townsites. In August, 1898, for example, three men—Arthur Sola, a speculator from Dawson; C. Little, a clerk in the Gold Commissioner's office at Bennett; and N. W. F. Rant, soon to be Acting Mining Recorder in Atlin—staked out and surveyed a townsite on the west shore of Atlin Lake opposite Pine Creek.¹⁷⁰ In the summer of 1898, also, speculators surveyed the Atlin townsite and laid it out in lots.¹⁷¹ In 1899 J. H. Brownlee and R. C. Lowry, Government surveyors who also helped to survey the boundary between British Columbia and the Northwest Territories in 1899, resurveyed the townsite for the Government.¹⁷² In May, 1899, these two men also surveyed Discovery (Pine City) on Pine Creek,

(166) *Ibid.*, November 15, 1902.

(167) *Ibid.*, October 11, 1902; April 30, 1904.

(168) *Ibid.*, June 10, 1905.

(169) *Ibid.*, April 30 and June 4, 1904.

(170) *Vancouver Province*, August 27, 1898.

(171) *British Columbia, Annual Report of the Minister of Mines . . . 1898*, p. 990.

(172) *Revelstoke, Kootenay Mail*, March 25, 1899.

near Miller's discovery claim.¹⁷³ In 1899 the Provincial Government cleared and graded the principal streets of Atlin and Discovery.¹⁷⁴ Along those streets, hotels, stores, and banks were erected, and between and around these buildings a city of tents sprang up. In May, 1899, the Federal Government completed work on its post-office in Atlin, and subsequently expanded the structure to house the telegraph offices for the Yukon telegraph-line. The only drawback to the new post-office was a complete lack of postage stamps.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the postal service could distribute incoming mail.

In February, 1899, the citizens of Atlin held a mass meeting to discuss the business affairs of Atlin, and appointed a temporary town council to look after necessary civic improvements.¹⁷⁶ On the committee were L. D. Kinney, Dr. J. F. Phillips, A. J. Sammons, A. A. Douglas, G. D. Sinclair, M. R. Jamieson, and Colonel A. Hughes. The committee tried to cope with several serious problems, including public health, a water-supply, fire protection, and improvements to the streets. This committee was the nearest approach to municipal institutions ever made by Atlin. The committee soon disintegrated, and in subsequent years the Atlin Board of Trade attended to all matters relating to the public welfare of the community.

Prior to 1900 most of the Atlin offices of the Provincial Government were housed in tents.¹⁷⁷ Only the town's lockup was a frame building. The Gold Commissioner and his staff, the Registrar, the Chief Constable, and the Magistrate worked under almost incredible conditions. The tents were floored with rough lumber and banked on the sides with earth and snow. Nevertheless, the Government's clerks did their best under such conditions and in weather ranging from 20 to 50 degrees below zero. In January, 1900, the citizens of Atlin met to petition the Provincial Government for better quarters for the Government offices.¹⁷⁸ The petitioners pointed out that the Bennett and Atlin divisions of the Cassiar district had a population of over 9,000, and that the total assessed value of property in the area was about \$295,000. The petition was sent to F. L. Carter-Cotton, Minister of Public Works in the Semlin Govern-

(173) *Atlin Claim*, May 6, 1899.

(174) British Columbia, Lands and Works Department, *Report of the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works . . . 1899*, pp. 379-380.

(175) *Atlin Claim*, May 13, 1899.

(176) *Victoria Colonist*, February 18, 1899.

(177) *Ibid.*, January 8, 1900.

(178) *Atlin Claim*, January 27, 1900.

ment, and to C. W. D. Clifford and Captain John Irving, the two representatives of the Cassiar electoral riding in the Provincial Legislature. The petition must have hastened the Government's plans for permanent offices in Atlin, for contractor David Main began construction work on a Government building in the summer of 1900, and had the structure completed by August. On August 15, 1900, the building was officially opened.¹⁷⁹ It was a two-story building, 46 by 45 feet in dimensions. On the first floor were offices for the Gold Commissioner and the Registrar, the Court-house, quarters for the district Magistrate, and the records office. The second floor was to be utilized as living accommodations for the staff.

When the Atlin goldfields were first discovered, the machinery for preserving the peace in the region was poor. On January 25, 1897, the Provincial Government sent Captain W. J. Rant as Gold Commissioner and Stipendiary Magistrate and two constables to Bennett Lake, then a thriving centre on the route to the Yukon discoveries, to act as the representative of law and order in British Columbia.¹⁸⁰ In August, 1897, a detachment of Provincial police was also sent to Tagish Lake, Northwest Territories, to assist the Federal authorities in establishing a Federal customs-house there, and to protect the customs officers in the discharge of their duties until representatives of the North West Mounted Police arrived. After the discovery of the Atlin goldfields, the Federal police officers maintained order in the area until they discovered that Atlin Lake was in British Columbia. Thereafter the officers of the Provincial police administered the district. The first detachments of Provincial police to maintain control in the Atlin area were stationed at Bennett and Log Cabin, a customs-clearing house for those who were entering the Klondike from the south.¹⁸¹ In March, 1899, Constable W. H. Vickers assumed direct charge of police matters in Atlin, taking up his post there, and in May he was joined by Constable Walter Owen, when Atlin became the central police post for the northern part of the Province.¹⁸²

(179) *Ibid.*, August 24, 1900; British Columbia, Lands and Works Department, *Report of the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works . . . 1900*, pp. 489-491.

(180) *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Police . . . of British Columbia for the Year Ending 31st, October, 1897*, p. 674.

(181) *Ibid.*, pp. 669, 673 .

(182) Both Vickers and Owen later became top-ranking officers in the Provincial police force, Vickers working on the headquarters staff in Victoria, until his death in 1929, and Owen holding the post of Inspector of Police for British Columbia as well as other high positions. In 1911 the Atlin police district, the central

One of Atlin's early problems was the lack of a resident Judge. Since 1899 the community had tried to secure the appointment of a Judge to solve legal questions which hampered mining development. Until 1905, however, Atlin was dependent upon a series of visiting Judges. In August, 1905, Judge F. McB. Young, brother of Dr. H. E. Young, arrived in Atlin as the area's first permanent Judge. Judge Young had been in Atlin in 1899, and seemed qualified to handle the problems peculiar to a mining community. Commenting upon Judge Young's appointment, the *Atlin Claim* said:—

The cause of the complaints regarding the administration of justice in the district . . . [will] now be a thing of the past, and the officials of the government who . . . [have] been carrying on the duties of the judge as well as their own . . . [will] now be able to devote all their attention to the special duties entrusted to them.¹⁸³

Atlin's population figures tell the story of Atlin's development almost as well as any other aspect of communal life. The population reached a peak in 1899, and ever since then has slowly declined. Before the close of the 1898 mining season, over 3,000 people visited Atlin.¹⁸⁴ Only a small percentage of these people spent the first winter in the community. In 1899 the population jumped considerably. The estimates of the number of people in the district in 1899 vary amazingly. Rev. F. L. Stephenson, writing in 1931, thought the figure to be about 22,000.¹⁸⁵ J. T. Wilkinson, a newspaper correspondent who visited Atlin in 1899 and 1900, estimated the total at approximately 8,000.¹⁸⁶ In an Atlin Board of Trade pamphlet advertising the district, the population figures for 1899 were given as 1,500 people in Atlin town and 4,500 more on the various creeks and in Pine City.¹⁸⁷ Judge F. W. Howay, usually a careful and accurate historian of British Columbia, estimated the population to be about 5,000.¹⁸⁸ Despite the discrepancies, however, a

police point for North-western British Columbia, was amalgamated with the Prince Rupert district, and Owen moved to Prince Rupert as Chief Constable. *Shoulder Strap*, No. 9 (Winter, 1942), pp. 67-68; *Revelstoke Kootenay Mail*, December 17, 1898; *Whitehorse Star*, May 10, 1929.

(183) *Atlin Claim*, August 12, 1905.

(184) British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines* . . . 1898, p. 990.

(185) *Vancouver Star*, August 29, 1931.

(186) *Vancouver Province*, July 30, 1900.

(187) Atlin District Board of Trade, *The Atlin Gold Fields*, n.p., n.d., Archives of B.C.

(188) Scholefield and Howay, *British Columbia*, Vol II, p. 499.

reasonable estimate of the population in 1899 is possible. There were 8,619 claims recorded in the Atlin district in 1899. Many of these, of course, were duplicate records because of the prevalent practice of claim-jumping, and many miners also recorded more than one claim. Before anyone could record a claim, he had to obtain a free miner's certificate, for which he paid \$5. Government records for 1899 show that officials in Atlin collected about \$19,000 in revenue from the issuing of certificates.¹⁸⁹ It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that there were almost 4,000 miners on the scene, and probably 1,000 other people. Judge Howay's statement, consequently, seems the most accurate estimate.

For the Provincial general election of 1900, the voters list of May of that year listed 675 qualified voters in the Bennett and Atlin Lake Polling Divisions.¹⁹⁰ Of these 675 names, 143 were listed for Bennett and 532 for Atlin. Many of the people in the district, however, were aliens, not qualified to vote. In 1900, also, females did not have the franchise, and, therefore, were not listed on voters rolls. In 1900, therefore, the population was probably between two and three thousand. The first flurry to Atlin was over, and the disappointed seekers for gold, who had thought to become rich overnight by picking up large nuggets lying in plain view on the banks of the creeks, had left Atlin. The Alien Exclusion Act of 1899 also had driven out many of the American miners. As Atlin gradually fell into the orbit of the big companies and as the free miners gradually found their operations unprofitable, Atlin's population steadily declined. In 1901 the decennial census showed 2,042 people in the Bennett and Atlin districts.¹⁹¹ These two census districts, however, included a vast stretch of territory. Moreover, the first census returns for Atlin for 1901 were lost in the wreck of the *Islander*, and the subsequent figures were gathered after most of the miners had arrived in Atlin for the summer season.¹⁹² In October, 1904, A. L. Belyea, K.C., estimated that Atlin's population in the working season of 1903-04 had been about 1,500, but that in the winter-time it had dropped to 750 people.¹⁹³ In

(189) British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines* . . . 1899, pp. 648-649.

(190) *Atlin Claim*, May 19, 1900.

(191) Canada, Census Office, *Fourth Census of Canada, 1901*, Ottawa, 1902, p. 26.

(192) *Atlin Claim*, August 31, 1901.

(193) *B.C. Mining Exchange*, VI (October, 1904), p. 6.

November, 1909, 343 voters were registered for the Provincial general election.¹⁹⁴

The first white woman ever to visit Atlin was probably Mrs. A. L. Short, who, in July, 1898, staked a claim with her husband on Pine Creek.¹⁹⁵ She was followed closely by Mrs. W. A. Turner, the wife of a dentist, who, in August, 1898, also staked a claim on Pine Creek.¹⁹⁶ Mrs. Turner died on April 5, 1899, and was buried in Atlin's cemetery.¹⁹⁷ The first girl to be born in Atlin was born on April 15, 1899, to a Mrs. Lowry at the Atlin House Hotel.¹⁹⁸ The parents named the child Atlintoo Marie. To express Atlin's pride in the first baby born in the community, H. B. Cameron, an auctioneer in Atlin, wrote a poem—more valuable for its historic record than for its literary merits—which the *Atlin Claim* printed:—

Hail! And Welcome, little sunbeam,
Fresh from Heaven's portals,
What put it in your little head
To come amongst us mortals?

Whatever the reasons for your coming,
If reasons ye have any,
You're now the Queen of Atlin fair,
And subjects you have many.

So welcome, little one, once again,
We'll stand by you, rather!
That girl's all right who surely has
All Atlin for godfather.¹⁹⁹

The first white boy born in Atlin was Francis Henning, born in a tent on June 7, 1899.²⁰⁰ He grew up in Atlin, and worked for Louis Schulz for many years. He became the president of the Atlin Board of Trade in 1940.²⁰¹

(194) British Columbia, *Voters Lists, 1909*, Victoria, 1909, p. Q 6. By 1924 Discovery (Pine City) was a ghost town. See British Columbia, *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines . . . 1924*, p. B 80.

(195) British Columbia, Special Commission, 1899, Miscellaneous Exhibits and Shorthand Notes of Cases, *MS.*, Archives of B.C.

(196) British Columbia, Special Commission, 1899, Pine Creek, N.W.T., Stakings, No. 40 below to No. 30 above, Petitions of Right, *MS.*, Archives of B.C.

(197) *Atlin Claim*, April 29, 1899.

(198) *Ibid.*, April 29, 1899.

(199) *Ibid.*, May 6, 1899.

(200) *Ibid.*, June 8, 1907.

(201) *Atlin News Miner*, March 18, 1939; August 17, 1940.

In November, 1899, the Atlin Public School opened for the first time.²⁰² Since there was no adequate building for school purposes, classes met in a large tent which had originally been used by the Mining Recorder for the district.²⁰³ One half of the school tent had a wooden floor; the other half was covered with sawdust. Two stoves, roaring furiously, tried to keep out the bitter cold of winter without setting fire to the flimsy walls. Despite the severe weather, the average daily attendance for the school-year of 1899-1900 was approximately fifteen.²⁰⁴ The Atlin School Board could not attract a qualified teacher in 1899, and, in desperation, finally persuaded H. M. Wells to assume charge of the one-room school at a salary of \$75 per month.²⁰⁵ Wells did a creditable job in his first attempt, and, for his efforts, was warmly congratulated by the local residents when his term expired in June, 1900.²⁰⁶ After his first teaching experience, however, he went prospecting on McKee Creek and could not be persuaded to reassume the teaching position. In September, 1900, Miss K. C. Smith, a qualified teacher, succeeded him.²⁰⁷

From the first classes in 1899 until August, 1902, the pupils of Atlin had no permanent school building. In the summer of 1902, however, the Provincial Government provided the money for a permanent structure,²⁰⁸ and in September, 1902, Miss E. I. Miller, Atlin's fourth teacher in four years, was the first instructor to hold classes in the new building.²⁰⁹

Over the years the Atlin Public School changed little from its original form. From its inception it was an assisted, one-room elementary and junior high school. The attendance varied little, the average being between fifteen and twenty pupils. Those pupils who sought high-school levels of education either took correspondence

(202) *Atlin Claim*, November 11 and 18, 1899.

(203) British Columbia, Lands and Works Department, *Report of the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works . . . 1900*, p. 491.

(204) *Atlin Claim*, June 30, 1900.

(205) *Ibid.*, September 30 and October 28, 1899; British Columbia, Department of Education, *Annual Report of the Public Schools of the Province of British Columbia, 1899-1900*, Victoria, 1901, p. XXXIX.

(206) *Atlin Claim*, June 30, 1900.

(207) British Columbia, Department of Education, *Annual Report of the Public Schools of the Province of British Columbia, 1900-1901*, p. XLI.

(208) *Atlin Claim*, August 30, 1902.

(209) British Columbia, Department of Education, *Annual Report of the Public Schools of the Province of British Columbia, 1902-1903*, p. XLVI.

courses from the Department of Education in Victoria or else went to other centres, notably Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, or Vancouver or Victoria. The Atlin Public School, however, served the district's purpose admirably, for at no time did the district have a large school-age population.

Shortly after the influx of the first gold-seekers in 1898, Atlin found itself obliged to care for many destitute, sick miners. The Provincial Government appointed Dr. A. S. Monro as the local Public Health Officer.²¹⁰ He established his hospital headquarters along the lake-front. In addition to the Provincial Government's hospital, Dr. Monro and Dr. F. M. Boyle opened the Atlin City General Hospital on May 1, 1899, and on May 10 added to their staff Miss E. Elliott, Atlin's first qualified nurse.²¹¹ Both of these hospitals, like most other Atlin enterprises in 1899, began their existences in tents. The Atlin City General Hospital was a private hospital, built entirely by private funds, and, therefore, was forced to admit only paying patients in order to support itself. The hospital operated by the Government attended to those people who were unable to pay for medical attention. In 1900 Atlin gained a third hospital, which soon supplanted the other two. On January 15, 1900, the first ground was broken for St. Andrew's Presbyterian Hospital,²¹² and by spring of the same year the hospital had been completed. The building, a permanent structure, was 24 by 36 feet in area, had nine beds, an operating-room, and nursing-quarters. Members of the community voluntarily did most of the work on the new hospital, but the Presbyterian Missionary Society of Toronto subscribed the greatest part of the money for the building and the salaries of the staff.²¹³ Until 1906, in fact, that body paid the salaries of two nurses and a housekeeper, and also contributed heavily to the general maintenance of the hospital. In 1902, for example, this religious group provided for the addition of a ladies' ward to the main building.²¹⁴

Although the institution was sectarian in its origin, it was absolutely a non-sectarian, charitable organization in its handling and treatment of patients. In 1902 the Provincial Government began the practice of granting money for the operation of the hospital and for the salary of

(210) *Atlin Claim*, May 6, 1899.

(211) *Ibid.*, April 29 and May 13, 1899.

(212) *Ibid.*, January 20, 1900.

(213) *Ibid.*, August 9, 1902.

(214) *Ibid.*, December 9, 1905.

the doctors.²¹⁵ In addition, the people of Atlin assisted the finances of St. Andrew's in every possible way. Dances, sports events, sales of hospital tickets, and other benefits enabled the hospital to maintain a satisfactory service to the public. Dr. H. E. Young, Atlin's member in the Provincial Legislature from 1903 to 1916, worked hard on behalf of the institution, gaining extra grants for the hospital, securing the appointments of resident physicians where possible, and in 1907 personally contributing a valuable set of surgical instruments.²¹⁶ Major C. W. A. Nevile, a resident of Atlin for almost forty-five years, also was prominent in the affairs of the hospital. Annually he contributed substantially to the funds of the institution, and he was secretary of the Hospital Board for many years.²¹⁷

A medical difficulty which Atlin, together with other pioneer communities, faced was the lack of trained medical practitioners. The doctors who were in Atlin believed it more profitable to mine than to practise medicine. The Government made appointment after appointment to the posts of Provincial Health Officer and resident physician for Atlin. The appointees would remain at their posts for a short time and then would either take up mining or return south. There was little financial profit in attending to a population as healthy as Atlin's proved to be. In addition, the Medical Act of British Columbia barred from medical practice anyone who had not passed the medical examinations of the Province.²¹⁸ Since most of the few doctors in Atlin in the early period were non-residents of British Columbia, they could not legally treat patients. Despite many handicaps, however, Atlin's population, probably because of the healthy climate, had few serious epidemics, and thrived.

The first man of God to enter Atlin was the Rev. F. L. Stephenson. He had come from England to Victoria in 1883, and in 1889 was ordained a minister of the Church of England. After a period of work among the Indians of Metlakatla and Fort Simpson, he headed north in 1898 to attend to the gold-seekers at Bennett Lake. He walked over the White Pass and arrived in Atlin early in 1899. He held his first services in old hospital tents, but in the spring of 1900, with the aid of the miners of the area, was able to build St. Martin's Church, the only Anglican church within hundreds of miles. He remained in Atlin

(215) *Ibid.*, October 24, 1902.

(216) *Ibid.*, November 27, 1903; August 31, 1907.

(217) *Whitehorse Star*, February 19, 1943.

(218) *Atlin Claim*, September 27, 1902.

until March, 1906, when he went overland to Fort George to take up new duties administering to another pioneer community opening up in the path of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway.²¹⁹ In 1908 the Rev. M. A. Jackson succeeded Mr. Stephenson in Atlin, and remained there until March, 1910.²²⁰ After a few months under the guidance of the Rev. E. P. Laycock, St. Martin's remained without a resident clergyman from 1910 until 1927, when the Rev. Roy Manwaring arrived.²²¹

The Presbyterian Church was also represented in Atlin's early history. The Rev. John Pringle, later famous for his Yukon exploits, arrived in Atlin from Glenora about January, 1899.²²² He remained in Atlin until September, 1901, when he went to Bonanza, Yukon Territory.²²³ During his stay in Atlin he was the driving force behind the erection of Atlin's first church, St. Andrew's Presbyterian. Mr. Pringle was apparently an ideal type of clergyman for the rough and ready miners of Atlin. After the departure of Mr. Pringle, a series of Presbyterian clergymen served in Atlin. The Rev. J. Russell stayed there until June, 1902, and was succeeded by the Rev. E. Turkington, who remained in Atlin until July, 1905. He was followed by the Rev. W. J. Kidd for a three-month period. Thereafter, Atlin had no permanent Presbyterian minister, but was dependent upon occasional visits from travelling clergymen. On May 23, 1914, St. Andrew's Church was destroyed in one of the most destructive fires in Atlin's history.²²⁴

A teaching and missionary order, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, played the leading role in the activity of the Roman Catholic Church in Atlin. Detailed information is unfortunately lacking, as there was no permanent resident priest until 1938.²²⁵ In the summer of 1899 Father Whelan conducted services in Atlin.²²⁶ It is possible that Father

(219) Mr. Stephenson served with distinction during World War I, being wounded in France, and, after the war, returned to British Columbia, where he continued his work until he retired in 1927. He died in January, 1941. *Vancouver Star*, August 26, 1931; *Victoria Colonist*, January 8, 1941; *North British Columbia News*, No. 124 (June, 1941), pp. 92-93.

(220) *Ibid.*, No. 18 (April, 1914), pp. 23-24.

(221) *Ibid.*, No. 70 (October, 1927), p. 261.

(222) *Atlin Claim*, January 7, 1899.

(223) *Ibid.*, September 21, 1901.

(224) *North British Columbia News*, No. 19 (July, 1914), p. 30.

(225) Much of the information of the activities of the Roman Catholic Church in Atlin was supplied by the Rev. Father G. Forbes, O.M.I., Vancouver, B.C., in a letter dated October 9, 1951, to Mrs. H. W. Ebbs-Canavan, Victoria, B.C., of which letter Mrs. Canavan kindly allowed a copy to be made.

(226) *Atlin Claim*, August 26 and September 2, 1899.

LeChesne may have visited Atlin in 1899, coming over from his mission post at Last Chance, Yukon Territory, and there is record of him having performed the rites of the Church in 1901.²²⁷ Father Corbeil may also have visited the community in 1899, although the first reference to him in the local newspaper does not occur until 1904.²²⁸ In addition, Father Morgan spent a month in Atlin in 1900.²²⁹ In 1905 Father Godfrey began to visit Atlin regularly.

All these priests administered not only to Atlin's white population, but also to the Indians in the neighbouring Indian village, the majority of whom were Catholics. In July, 1907, Father F. J. Allard, O.M.I., of Conrad City on Windy Arm, opened a religious school and home for the children of Atlin's Indian village.²³⁰ Without adequate funds, he maintained the school and establishment for some time, his sole financial support being voluntary financial contributions from the local residents. At the same time he administered to his white flock in the area. After Father Allard's tenure of office in Atlin, the town had many visiting priests, but the first really permanent one was Father Louis Delarue, O.M.I., who arrived in Atlin in the spring of 1938,²³¹

One of the first signs of a new, prosperous community is usually the appearance of a local newspaper. The Atlin district was no exception. In April, 1899, Harry Cowan and W. J. MacKay, two Vancouver newsmen,²³² established a weekly, the *Atlin Claim*. The first issue outlined the future policy of the paper:—

Take notice that we have this day located this newspaper as a paying proposition, to be known as The Atlin Claim, four pages, sixteen columns. Its general policy is to furnish such news as the publishers can gather from week to week. . . . It is our intention to serve the public to the best of our ability. We desire to fulfill the first duties of a newspaper and that [*sic*] is to supply the news. Too many papers think the first essential is to supply advice. . . . Our editorial columns will espouse all that makes for the good and welfare of the people of the district of Atlin. We are bound to no party or set of men, and will commend or censure as we feel occasion demands.²³³

During its existence the *Claim* tried to live up to its first declaration of principles. Cowan, the first editor and joint proprietor, remained with

(227) *Ibid.*, July 13, 1901.

(228) *Ibid.*, September 10, 1904.

(229) *Ibid.*, July 14 and August 11, 1900.

(230) *Ibid.*, July 27, August 24, and December 14, 1907; March 28, 1908.

(231) *Whitehorse Star*, June 17, 1938.

(232) *Vancouver Province*, April 1, 1899.

(233) *Atlin Claim*, April 29, 1899.

the newspaper until September, 1900, when he returned to Vancouver. MacKay suspended publication of the *Claim* on September 29, 1900, in order to have a vacation.²³⁴ When the newspaper resumed publication in December, 1900, it had a new owner, A. C. Hirschfeld, Atlin's photographer and a man prominent in commercial and mining circles in the community.²³⁵ Hirschfeld also made a declaration of future policy in his first issue, stating that the paper would be non-partisan and devoted to the mining and other interests of Atlin.

For a brief time in its early days the *Claim* had two local competitors, the *Bennett Sun* and the *Atlin Globe*. After the completion of the White Pass and Yukon Railway, Bennett was no longer an important construction centre for the railway-builders, and suffered a relapse. In August, 1900, therefore, the *Sun* ceased publication; the printing plant was moved to Whitehorse and was re-established there as the *Whitehorse Star*.²³⁶ The other rival of the *Claim*, the *Atlin Globe*, made its first appearance on August 30, 1899, under the direction of William Baillie.²³⁷ J. T. Bethune, the owner of the new venture, used the paper to support his interests as a candidate for the Cassiar district in the Provincial election of June, 1900.²³⁸ On April 10, 1900, the *Globe* ceased publication, and was sold by the Sheriff of Atlin for rent due on the premises occupied by the newspaper.²³⁹ R. Burde and J. T. Wilkinson acquired the plant, and transported it to Whitehorse to reopen it as the *Whitehorse Tribune*.²⁴⁰ After 1900 the *Claim* had no real competitors.

A. C. Hirschfeld had many interests in Atlin and Vancouver, and was, therefore, usually content to leave the management of the *Claim* to others. In the winter of 1902-03, for example, D. Todd Lees managed and edited the newspaper.²⁴¹ James Simpson did the same in the winter

(234) *Ibid.*, September 15 and 29, 1900.

(235) *Ibid.*, December 22, 1900.

(236) *Ibid.*, August 18, 1900.

(237) *Ibid.*, September 2, 1899. Baillie apparently had been linked with the Kamloops *Sentinel* during the Federal election of 1896, and, thereafter, going to Vancouver and then to Atlin, finally seems to have disappeared. Kamloops *Sentinel*, December 14, 1934.

(238) *Atlin Claim*, April 14, 1900.

(239) *Ibid.*, April 21, 1900.

(240) *Ibid.*, July 14, 1900.

(241) *Ibid.*, October 4, 1902; February 13, 1904; March 4, 1905. Lees later founded the *B.C. Lumberman*.

of 1904-05.²⁴² The newspaper was a profitable venture since it was the only one in the district. Under Hirschfeld's management it gave good service to the people of Atlin. For a short time in 1901 and 1902 it offered a telegraphic bulletin, in addition to the regular weekly edition, to the public.²⁴³ In 1903 the paper increased in size to an eight-page edition.²⁴⁴ In May, 1905, however, Hirschfeld sold his newspaper interests to W. Pollard Grant, a prominent Atlin lawyer.²⁴⁵ Grant, active in the political circles of the Liberal-Conservative Party, seemed to allow his political views to work against the prosperity of the paper. The number of subscriptions decreased, many of the merchants of Atlin withdrew their advertising support, and the paper had to suspend publication twice between October, 1907, and March, 1908.²⁴⁶ Grant finally disposed of the paper to Hubert Faulkner in March, 1908.²⁴⁷ Faulkner embarked upon a frantic, but unsuccessful, campaign to increase the circulation of the paper. Atlin's population, however, was now too small to support a newspaper, and in April, 1908, the last-known edition of the paper appeared.²⁴⁸

With the influx of miners in 1898 and 1899 to Atlin came the merchants, banks, and other commercial interests. By April, 1899, Atlin had representatives of three banks—the Merchants' Bank of Halifax, the first to arrive; the Canadian Bank of Commerce; and the Bank of British North America.²⁴⁹ In addition, the community had several hotels, grocery-stores, hardware-stores, a jeweller's, a pharmacy, a photography-shop, a barber-shop, several hand laundries, and various other small merchants. At first, in fact, Atlin had too many businesses for its population. When the economic basis of the community gradually changed from that of a placer-mining camp, offering opportunities to many individual miners, to that of a hydraulic-mining region, with the appearance

(242) *Ibid.*, October 8, 1904.

(243) *Ibid.*, October 26, 1901.

(244) *Ibid.*, February 21, 1903.

(245) *Ibid.*, May 6, 1905.

(246) *Ibid.*, October 26 and November 16, 1907.

(247) *Ibid.*, March 14, 1908.

(248) *Ibid.*, April 11, 1908. Atlin subsequently had two other newspapers: the *Atlin Nugget*, which appeared briefly between August 8 and October 24, 1936, when the plant was destroyed by fire (*Whitehorse Star*, August 14 and October 30, 1936); and the *Atlin News Miner*, which, between December 17, 1938, and January 30, 1943, was published by the *Whitehorse Star* for distribution in Atlin.

(249) *Atlin Claim*, May 13, 1899.

of a few large corporations, the number of merchants and financial institutions began to decline. In November, 1903, for example, two of Atlin's most prosperous general merchants, A. S. Cross and N. C. Wheeling, found it expedient to combine their interests and to form the Atlin Trading Company, with its main store in Atlin and several small branch stores on the various creeks. In April, 1907, also, the Canadian Bank of Commerce announced the withdrawal of its branch from Atlin because of a decrease in banking business.²⁵⁰

The merchants of Atlin provided one of the most vocal expressions of opinion on the needs and rights of the community. On February 27, 1900, the Atlin Board of Trade held its first meeting, and elected J. A. Fraser and J. St. Clair Blackett as first president and first vice-president respectively. Commenting upon the formation of the Atlin Board of Trade, the *Atlin Claim* said:—

Here we shall have a concensus of intelligent opinion on all matters concerning the community's welfare and steps taken to further it, instead of, as heretofore, depending on individual, and too often misdirected, effort.²⁵¹

Among the other officials prominent in the subsequent history of Atlin's Board of Trade were A. S. Cross, who succeeded Fraser as president in July, 1902; A. C. Hirschfeld, who became president in July, 1903; and Major C. W. A. Neville, who was president longer than anyone else, twenty-five years.²⁵² Among the achievements which the Board helped to accomplish were a permanent school building for Atlin and a school for Discovery; the substitution by the merchants of permanent buildings in place of tents, thus reducing the fire-hazard; the appointment of a night-watchman to patrol the town and to sound the alarm in case of fires; the appointment of a resident Judge for Atlin; appointments of Medical Health Officers and resident physicians for the community; better service by various officials of the Provincial Government in Atlin; improved sanitation for the town and protection of Atlin's water-supply from pollution; publication, in conjunction with the White Pass and Yukon Route, of a pamphlet advertising Atlin's possibilities; and the maintenance of Atlin's cemetery.²⁵³ Virtually the only aspect of Atlin's development in which the efforts of the Board of Trade were unsuccessful

(250) *Ibid.*, March 16, 1903.

(251) *Ibid.*, March 3, 1900.

(252) *Ibid.*, July 11, 1903; *Victoria Colonist*, July 25, 1902; *Whitehorse Star*, February 19, 1943.

(253) *Atlin Claim*, February 16, 1901; January 11, 1902; January 10, 1903; January 16, 1904.

was the long struggle with the White Pass and Yukon Route for lower freight rates. All through its existence, the Atlin Board of Trade has maintained a running fight with the company on this question.

All new communities live in constant dread of one evil—fire. Towns and villages which mushroom overnight into habitations of considerable size usually grow in a haphazard manner. Whole blocks of wooden buildings, lack of adequate water-supplies, no fire-fighting equipment, and reliance upon volunteer fire brigades often permit dangers to accumulate which are revealed only when a serious fire strikes the community. On a windy Sunday afternoon late in August, 1900, Atlin had her first fire,²⁵⁴ the lessons of which she never forgot. A fire began in the warehouse of the British America Corporation and, aided by some kegs of blasting-powder, which exploded, and a fierce wind, soon spread to the adjoining buildings. The cry of fire, hastily shouted through the streets of the town, summoned all Atlin to fight the blaze. From the dock the steamer *Scotia* quickly put her pumps to work. John Kirkland took charge of a volunteer fire brigade composed of the entire community, and, under his direction, the volunteers, after two hours of blazing destruction, eventually checked the fire. When the weary people of Atlin went to bed that night, the community had lost two hotels, a barber-shop, a photography-store, a restaurant, two general stores, a warehouse filled with goods, the building of the Board of Trade, an assay office, personal effects and homes, and forty cases of champagne belonging to E. J. De Lamare. The total loss was valued at \$42,000, none of which was covered by insurance.

The people of Atlin immediately began rebuilding, and also planned how to combat any such disasters in the future. The burning of the Kootenay Hotel on December 24, 1900,²⁵⁵ spurred Atlin's officials to hasten their plans. Through the efforts of C. W. D. Clifford and James Stables, Atlin's representatives in the Provincial Legislature, and J. D. Graham, Gold Commissioner, Atlin acquired a fire-engine in June, 1901.²⁵⁶ Public subscriptions and a grant from the Government paid for the machine. The engine had two pumps and two hoses, 1,000 feet in all. The Atlin Board of Trade established a town fire committee and appointed John Kirkland as the fire chief.²⁵⁷ He organized a fire brigade

(254) *Ibid.*, September 1, 1900.

(255) *Victoria Colonist*, January 8, 1901.

(256) *Atlin Claim*, April 20, May 25, and June 22, 1901.

(257) *Ibid.*, June 22, 1901.

and led in the construction of a fire-hall. The engine had its first real test on July 7, 1901,²⁵⁸ when it was used to overcome what could have been a serious fire.

Climate forced Atlin to take precautions to protect her new fire-engine. For example, in the winter-time the fire brigade had to install runners on the engine to enable the equipment to be moved over ice and snow.²⁵⁹ In addition, the town hired a night-watchman whose duties included keeping fires burning in the fire-hall to prevent the engine from freezing up. The Provincial Government contributed a portion of the expenses of this night-watchman.

The introduction of a fire-engine in Atlin also enabled the property-owners of the town to insure their buildings. Prior to the appearance of the fire-engine in June, 1901, insurance rates had been prohibitive because of the lack of protection against fire. After July, 1901, insurance premiums dropped sharply.²⁶⁰ In the neighbouring town of Discovery, however, rates remained high because Discovery had no fire-engine.

Atlin had her share of serious fires. On May 29, 1905, she again suffered a disastrous blaze.²⁶¹ The extensive holdings of the Northern Power and Lumber Company, including a saw and planing mill, a large quantity of timber ready for the mill, the town's only electric-lighting plant, a steam laundry, a blacksmith-shop, and office-quarters were destroyed. The damage totalled over \$40,000. The *Atlin Claim* reported that, since the fire occurred on a Monday afternoon, wash-day, the people of Atlin suffered considerable inconvenience through the burning of the laundry plant and all the washing for the week.

During the short summer season in the Atlin area the people were usually too busy taking advantage of every daylight hour to spend much time seeking recreation. In the long, dark winters, however, those people who remained in the community did not lack amusements. Organized entertainments and clubs were numerous in Atlin's early days. One of the first societies to open a branch in Atlin was the Arctic Brotherhood. This fabulous organization was born on the S.S. *City of Seattle* in February, 1899.²⁶² The ship was heading up Lynn

(258) *Ibid.*, July 13, 1901.

(259) *Ibid.*, November 9, 1901.

(260) *Ibid.*, October 29, 1904.

(261) *Ibid.*, June 3, 1905.

(262) *Ibid.*, October 29, 1899. See also J. N. Davidson, *The Arctic Brotherhood*, Seattle, 1909, *passim*.

Canal to Skagway, loaded with a merry crowd of men returning to the Klondike. To make the trip enjoyable, the master of the ship, Captain William A. Connell, decided to organize his passengers into a society of entertainers. The venture was so successful that the group of travellers met again in Skagway on March 6, 1899, to perpetuate the society. From this meeting sprang the Arctic Brotherhood, a purely fraternal and benevolent organization, with its motto of "Fidelity and Friendship," its watchword of "Mush On," and its insignia of a miniature prospector's pan filled with tiny gold nuggets. The only bar to membership was that stipulating that a member must have lived "north of 54." Even this rule was occasionally waived, as it was, for example, in August, 1909, in the case of the initiation of Lord Grey, the Governor-General of Canada; his aide, Viscount Lascelles; and Archdeacon H. A. Cody into Camp Dawson, No. 4, Arctic Brotherhood.²⁶³ The society had as its chief aim the benefit of northern miners and prospectors living either in the Yukon or Alaska. The Brotherhood built a "Grand Camp" in Skagway, and by June, 1899, had 800 members.²⁶⁴ In addition to its main body in Skagway, the Brotherhood established many branches in the north. J. D. Thagard was given the task of establishing a branch of the Brotherhood in Atlin.²⁶⁵ He gathered the existing Atlin members of the Brotherhood, and on the occasion of the visit of Arctic Chief Thomas W. Farnsworth to Atlin on June 6, 1899, initiated several more members. On June 17 the group again met and chose its officers. These included Arctic Chief J. J. McKenna; Vice-Arctic Chief D. Hastie; Arctic Recorder L. B. Reid; Keeper of Nuggets W. A. Spencer; Camp Cook Dr. Lambert; Arctic Guide J. J. Burns; and Trustees Dr. A. S. Monroe, Captain Langley, and Captain R. M. Caddel.²⁶⁶ Captain Johnson and F. M. Woodruff donated property and Captain John Irving the necessary lumber for a club-house. The society was in full operation by the end of the summer. A branch also was established at Discovery.²⁶⁷ Although the organization was primarily a social order, the Atlin branches of the Arctic Brotherhood, like all the other branches, did

(263) *Whitehorse Star*, July 15, 1938.

(264) *Atlin Claim*, June 10, 1899.

(265) Olive, *Memoirs*, p. 461.

(266) *Atlin Claim*, June 10, 17, and 24, 1899. See also Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

(267) *Ibid.*, pp. 95-99.

much for the local community, holding dances and entertainments to aid the hospital, the poor, and the unfortunate.

In the winter of 1902-03 the citizens of Atlin, mainly through the efforts of Mrs. E. M. N. Woods, organized an Operatic Society. On January 23, 1903, the group gave a creditable first performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*.²⁶⁸ The society then reorganized itself into the Atlin Musical and Dramatic Society, with Mrs. Woods as the first president, and Herbert Young, E. M. N. Woods, Mrs. J. St. Clair Blackett, and the Rev. F. L. Stephenson on the executive.²⁶⁹ With the proceeds from the Operatic Society's performances, the new organization purchased copies of other plays which it hoped to perform. In November, 1903, the Musical and Dramatic Society expanded its scope to include a literary and scientific branch. In addition, the group purchased a piano, stage properties, and lighting facilities, and engaged the office and dining-room of the Grand Hotel for its performances. The society put on several productions and entertainments in the winters of 1903-04 and 1904-05, but eventually disbanded in March, 1905.²⁷⁰

Another organization which was prominent in Atlin's social life in the early days was the Atlin Club. W. J. Robinson, active in the affairs of the British American Dredging Company, was the father of this project. In October, 1903, he induced a group of his associates in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston to subscribe \$100 each to the new enterprise. In addition, leading merchants of Atlin contributed to the project.²⁷¹ Robinson and his associates secured a beautiful site on the shore of Lake Atlin and let a contract to Letherday & Marcus, an Atlin construction firm. On October 16, 1903, construction began,²⁷² and the main building, 40 by 100 feet, was completed in the summer of 1904. In style the log-cabin structure was similar to the best club-houses of the Adirondacks in the State of New York. The interior was filled with books, pictures, banners, mineral displays, and photos donated by prominent business firms of Vancouver, Seattle, and Atlin. The building contained a library of 100 books and current magazines and newspapers, writing-rooms, dining-salons, a buffet, a

(268) *Atlin Claim*, January 17 and 24, 1903.

(269) *Ibid.*, January 31, 1903.

(270) *Ibid.*, November 14, 1903; February 25, 1905.

(271) *B.C. Mining Exchange*, VI (July, 1904), p. 14; VII (October, 1905), p. 6.

(272) *Vancouver Province*, November 3, 1903.

ladies' parlour, baths, a piano, dancing facilities, a bar, and rooms for billiards and cards. A French chef had charge of the kitchen. In addition, the organization sponsored gun, hunting, and fishing clubs. Future plans called for the construction of skating and curling rinks for winter-time amusement, and a lawn-tennis court for summer use. The club-owners, moreover, intended to build a bowling-alley and to buy a steam-launch for boating trips on the lake. The members also hoped eventually to build thirty cabins to rent to prospective tourists.²⁷³

On August 13, 1904, the inaugural dance was held at the Atlin Club. All Atlin attended, and the affair was a great success. The people of Atlin had seen nothing like this club since they had left civilization. They agreed with the *Atlin Claim's* announcement that the new building was "one of the most attractive, comfortable and best-equipped club houses north of Vancouver."²⁷⁴

The Atlin Club was the centre of social life in the winters of 1904-05 and 1905-06. Its membership was over 100, and on its membership rolls it proudly listed King Edward VII, Lord Roberts, Wilfrid Laurier, Prime Minister of Canada, and Richard McBride, Premier of British Columbia. It also claimed to be the most northerly club in the British Empire.²⁷⁵ In 1906 the Atlin Club, owned by its members, suddenly found that many of those members were leaving Atlin for good. By 1907 the club had been forced to disband, and a melancholy notice in the columns of the *Atlin Claim* on July 6, tells of the final fate of the club:—

For sale.—Atlin Club; including Building, Piano, Billiard Table, Bar Fixtures, Furniture, etc., as a whole or in separate lots. Apply to C. R. Bourne, Liquidator.²⁷⁶

Winter sports, including hockey, curling, and skating, were popular in Atlin from the inception of the community. Crude curling and skating rinks were fashioned out of the elements by the earliest of the pioneers. In December, 1901, Messrs. Dockrill and Olive opened the Atlin Skating Rink, with provisions for a lunch-counter and a ladies' dressing-room.²⁷⁷ In November, 1902, Messrs. Lewis and Ward built a new rink, this time complete with a ladies' section, with a drop shutter to enable the feminine population of Atlin to watch hockey and

(273) *B.C. Mining Exchange*, VI (July, 1904), p. 13.

(274) *Atlin Claim*, August 6 and 13, 1904.

(275) *B.C. Mining Exchange*, VII (October, 1905), p. 6.

(276) *Atlin Claim*, July 6, 1907.

(277) *Ibid.*, December 14, 1901.

curling matches in lady-like seclusion.²⁷⁸ Ice-boats, too, were fairly common on Atlin Lake both in the early and late periods of Atlin's development. On April 1, 1905, for example, the *Atlin Claim* mentioned a proposed race between three ice-boats—*The Flyer*, *Windbuck*, and *Third of December*.²⁷⁹

Atlin might have been isolated in the early days, but she was certainly not void of social activities. Those people who remained in the community through the long winters had many types of entertainment.

Atlin is a long way from the Federal and Provincial seats of government—Ottawa and Victoria—but it has always taken an active interest in political events. Since national affairs are conducted by Parliament at Ottawa, however, they have always seemed somewhat remote to Atlinites, and, except at election times, appeared to excite little comment from Atlin's newspapers or from Atlinites generally. Atlin first secured representation in Ottawa in the Federal general election of 1900, when George Ritchie Maxwell, a Liberal, defeated the Conservative candidate, James F. Garden, and thus secured the right to represent Burrard Electoral District, the riding which then included Atlin.²⁸⁰ Although his over-all majority was over 625, in the voting at Bennett Lake, Atlin, Surprise Lake, and Pine City, Maxwell led Garden by only 13 votes.²⁸¹ In 1903 the Federal Parliament passed a Redistribution Act, among the clauses of which was one creating the vast Comox-Atlin district, formerly part of the Burrard and Vancouver electoral ridings. Maxwell had died in November, 1902,²⁸² and in the general election of 1904 William Sloan, running as the Liberal candidate, was returned by acclamation.²⁸³

(278) *Ibid.*, November 8, 1902.

(279) *Ibid.*, April 1, 1905.

(280) *Canadian Parliamentary Guide*, 1901, Ottawa, 1901, p. 136.

(281) Revelstoke *Kootenay Mail*, December 28, 1900.

(282) Born in Scotland in 1857, Maxwell was educated at Glasgow University, and became a minister in the Presbyterian Church. In 1885 he came to Canada, and in 1890 arrived in Vancouver. He was first elected to the House of Commons in the general election of 1896 for Burrard riding. He died in November, 1902. *Canadian Parliamentary Guide*, 1901, p. 108; *Vancouver Province*, November 18, 1902.

(283) Sloan was born in Ontario in 1867, and came to British Columbia in 1887. In 1896 he went to the Yukon as a miner and did well on Eldorado Creek, one of the richest producers of gold in the entire Klondike gold-bearing regions. In 1900 he was unsuccessful as a Liberal candidate in the Federal riding of Vancouver. He was subsequently elected to the Provincial Legislature in the general election of 1916, becoming Minister of Mines in the governments of H. C. Brewster and John Oliver. He was re-elected in the general elections of 1920 and 1924.

Re-elected in the general election of 1908, he resigned his seat to make way for William Templeman, Minister of Mines and Inland Revenue in the Laurier Cabinet, who had been defeated in the Victoria riding. Templeman, who won the by-election by acclamation, was the first and only representative of the Atlin area ever to hold a portfolio in a Federal Cabinet.²⁸⁴

In the Provincial political field, Atlin inherited two ready-made politicians when it came into existence. In 1898 the enormous Cassiar district, which included all of North-western British Columbia, was represented by Captain John Irving and C. W. D. Clifford,²⁸⁵ who had been elected in the Provincial general election of August, 1898. Irving was a mariner who came from Portland, Oregon, via California, to British Columbia. From 1898 to 1900 he took a prominent part in Atlin's transportation affairs. Clifford, of English birth, took up mining and trading in Canada. In 1900, in the first Provincial election in which Atlin residents took part, the Cassiar riding re-elected Clifford, but rejected Captain Irving, in his place electing James Stables, a Scot.²⁸⁶

In 1902 the Provincial Government, through a Redistribution Act,²⁸⁷ readjusted Atlin's political boundaries. Atlin became a separate riding, with one member in Victoria.

Prior to 1903 British Columbia had no real party lines in its political life, the members of the Legislature supporting this or that Premier

He died in 1928. *Canadian Parliamentary Guide, 1928*, p. 387; *Vancouver Province*, March 2, 1928.

(284) William Templeman was elected by acclamation to the House of Commons in February, 1909. Born in Ontario in 1844, he came to Victoria in 1884 and entered the newspaper field, eventually becoming owner of the *Victoria Times*. Although he worked hard for the Liberal Party in British Columbia, he was unlucky in securing his own election. Defeated in the general elections of 1891 and 1896, he was able, through appointment to the Senate in 1897, to represent British Columbia in Ottawa. In 1902 he became a minister without portfolio in the Laurier Cabinet. In 1906 he was appointed Minister of Inland Revenue, and, resigning his seat in the Senate, won a by-election in Victoria riding. In 1907 he became the first Federal Minister of Mines upon the creation of that department. In the general election of 1911 he did not seek re-election in Comox-Atlin riding. He died in Victoria in November, 1914. *Canadian Parliamentary Guide, 1910*, p. 243; *Victoria Times*, July 5, 1951.

(285) *Canadian Parliamentary Guide, 1898-1899*, pp. 242-243; *Revelstoke Kootenay Mail*, June 22, 1900.

(286) *Canadian Parliamentary Guide, 1903*, p. 381; *Revelstoke Kootenay Mail*, June 22, 1900.

(287) Chapter 58, *British Columbia, Statutes . . . 1902*, Victoria, 1902, pp. 223-224.

through personal loyalties or whims. This lack of party lines and party discipline led to such fluctuations and instability of government between 1898 and 1903 that in the general election of 1903 Premier Richard McBride introduced party lines into Provincial politics, entering the lists as a Liberal-Conservative. In the first election fought on party lines in Atlin, Dr. Henry Esson Young, the Liberal-Conservative candidate, defeated John Kirkland, a Liberal.²⁸⁸

Dr. Young was one of the outstanding figures in Atlin's history. Born at English River, Quebec, in 1867, he had obtained degrees at Queen's University, Kingston, and McGill University, Montreal, before coming to Atlin in 1899 to try mining. In medicine and politics he was far more successful than he ever was in mining activities. His skill as a physician, his kindness, his sympathetic tact, and his wisdom soon secured the liking and respect of the rough mining community. He was re-elected in the Provincial general elections of 1907, 1909, and 1912. In February, 1907, Premier McBride recognized his supporter's ability by appointing Dr. Young to a Cabinet post as Provincial Secretary and Minister of Education. That post Dr. Young held until he retired from office with Premier McBride in December, 1915. In 1916 he withdrew from the Legislature and became Provincial Health Officer, which position he held until his death in October, 1939.²⁸⁹

The history of the Atlin area is similar to that of all mining communities—the first boom, the rush of thousands of miners, the making and losing of individual fortunes, the disappointments, the arrival of the big companies, the disappearance of the pioneers to other gold-rushes, and the gradual decline of the fortunes of the community. In addition, two world wars have hampered the region's development by curtailing the supply of labour, by making gold-mining a non-essential occupation, and by draining to other fields the capital necessary to finance the development of Atlin's mines. Coal deposits and other minerals, particularly tungsten, silver, and lead, have been discovered in the area, and, in some cases, attempts have been made to work these minerals as alternatives to gold-mining. So far, however, these efforts have been unsuccessful, and gold still remains, as it has been since 1898, the *raison d'être* of Atlin. Transportation problems have also hampered

(288) *Canadian Parliamentary Guide, 1905*, pp. 439-440; *Atlin Claim*, October 10, 1903.

(289) *Atlin News Miner*, October 28, 1939; *Victoria Colonist*, October 24, 1939.

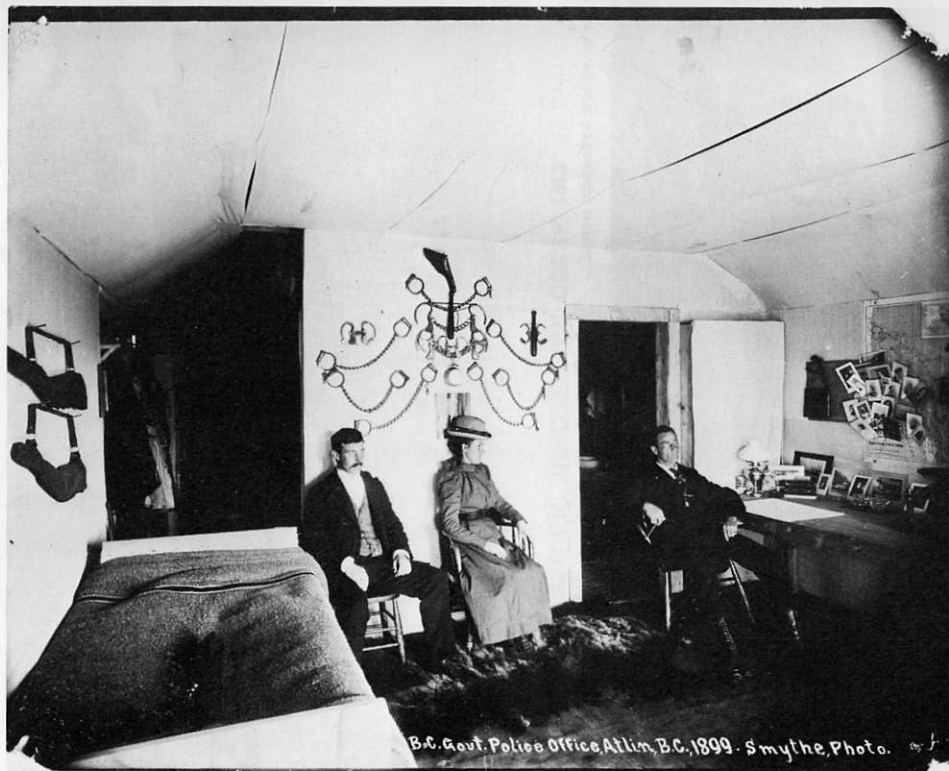
the community. The costs of shipping ore are almost prohibitive, making low-grade ores economically unsound. Lack of transportation, too, has meant that any agricultural possibilities possessed by the area are valueless since the local market would not absorb any large output and an outside market is not available. In fifty years Atlin has changed from a bustling mining town of 5,000 people to a sleepy hamlet of 150 permanent residents. There is hope for Atlin, though, if gold ever recovers the pre-eminent position that it occupied before World War I. Without gold, however, there is still the lure of the unknown which yet attracts men to the north country.

W. W. BILSLAND.

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES,
VICTORIA, B.C.

PICTORIAL SUPPLEMENT

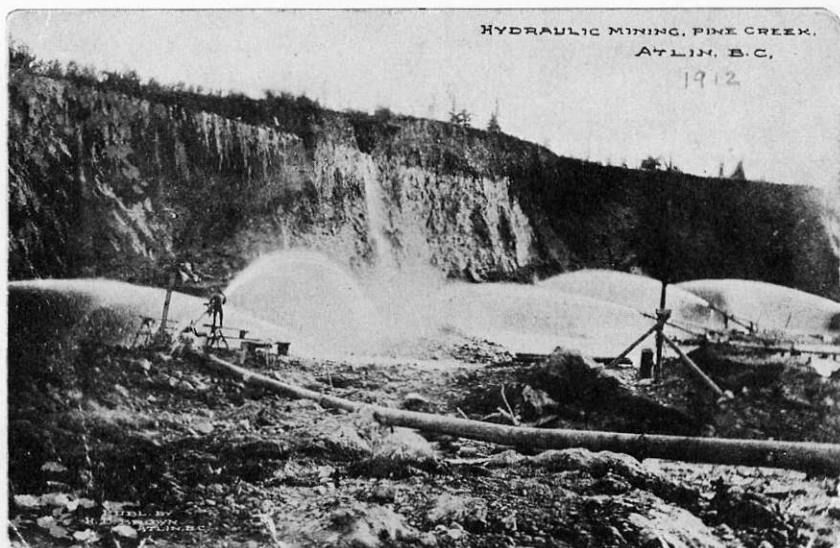
Compiled by
ATLIN CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE
as an addendum



B.C. Govt. Police Office, Atlin, B.C., 1899. Smythe, Photo.

PHOTO COURTESY NORAH SMITH

B.C. GOVERNMENT POLICE OFFICE, 1899



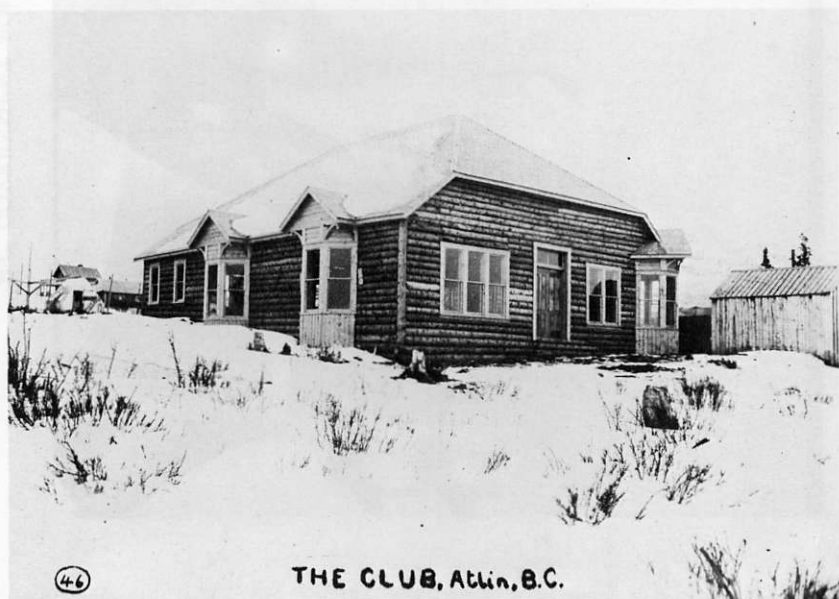
HYDRAULIC MINING, PINE CREEK.

ATLIN, B.C.

1912

PHOTO COURTESY ATLIN MUSEUM

HYDRAULIC MINING, PINE CREEK 1912



THE CLUB, Atlin, B.C.

PHOTO COURTESY PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES, VICTORIA, B.C.

THE ATLIN CLUB, 1903

Membership included King Edward VII, Lord Roberts, Wilfred Laurier,
Prime Minister of Canada and Richard McBride, Premier of British Columbia



PHOTO COURTESY PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES, VICTORIA, B.C.

GOVERNMENT BUILDING

Built 1900, contained offices for the Gold Commissioner and the Registrar, the Court House, Quarters for the District Magistrate and the Records Office with living quarters on the second floor.



PHOTO COURTESY PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES, VICTORIA, B.C.

DISCOVERY CLAIM — 1899



PHOTO COURTESY PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES, VICTORIA, B.C.

ATLIN CITY, AFTER MOST OF THE TOWN WAS DESTROYED BY FIRE

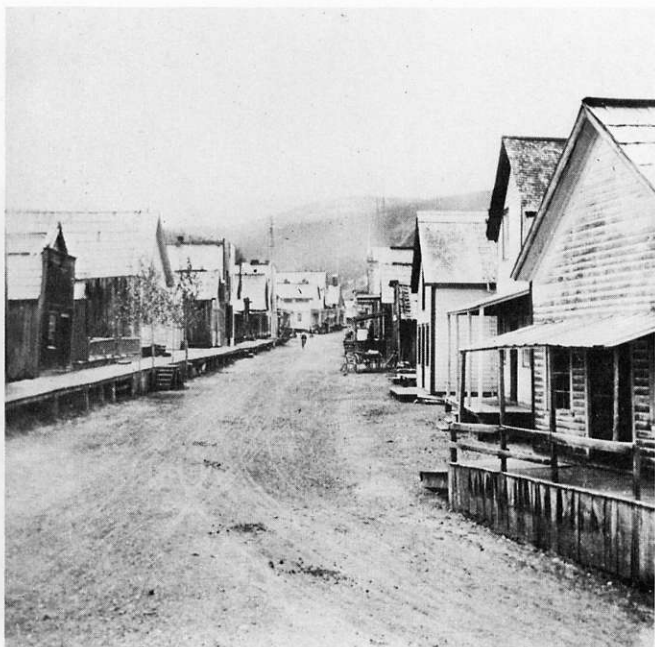


PHOTO COURTESY PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES, VICTORIA, B.C.

DISCOVERY CITY

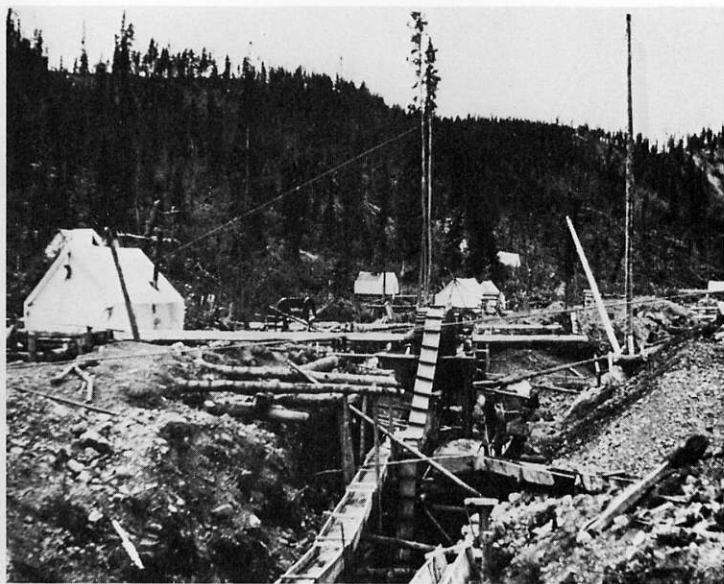


PHOTO COURTESY PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES, VICTORIA, B.C.

SPRUCE CREEK — 1900

China Pump Driven by Waterwheel

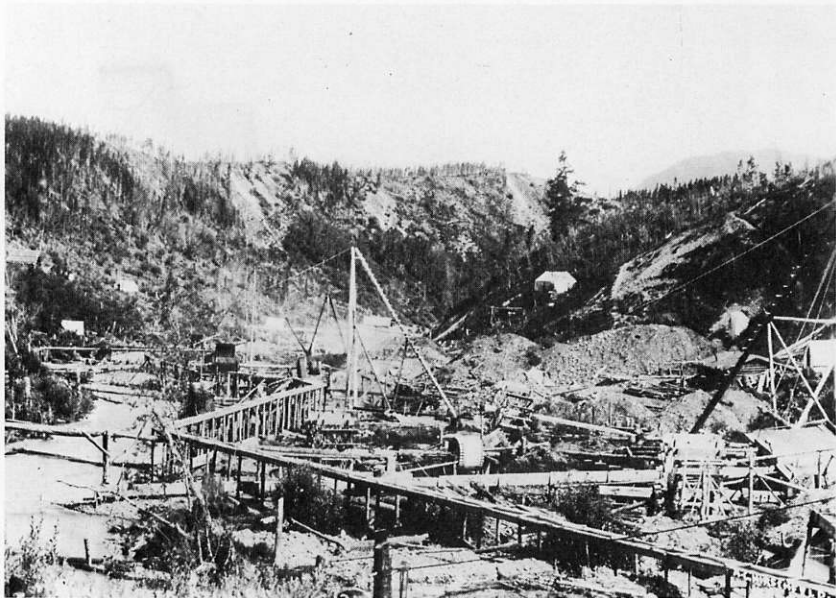


PHOTO COURTESY PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES, VICTORIA, B.C.

SPRUCE CREEK

A Gold Nugget weighing 83 ounces was taken from this creek in 1899



PHOTO COURTESY PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES, VICTORIA, B.C.

MINERS' CABIN AT McKEE CREEK



PHOTO COURTESY PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES, VICTORIA, B.C.

McKEE CREEK

Working on the Atlin Mining Co.'s Flume Line on McKee Creek



PHOTO COURTESY ATLIN MUSEUM

ATLIN SCHOOL — 1906

This School, built in 1902, was used until 1968



PHOTO COURTESY ATLIN MUSEUM

ST. ANDREW'S HOSPITAL

Davie Hall, with foot in sling, Mrs. Ames, Dr. Harrison



PHOTO COURTESY ATLIN MUSEUM

ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH

Left to right: Ed Robinson, Major Nevile, Bishop Stringer
and Captain Hawthorne



PHOTO COURTESY ATLIN MUSEUM

INDIAN CAMP

Chief Taku Jack standing at right with hand on hip.



PHOTO COURTESY ATLIN MUSEUM

ATLIN TOWNSITE, SHOWING BOATS IN FRONT OF TOWN



PHOTO COURTESY CANADIAN PACIFIC

THE DUCHESS — THE ENGINE ON THE 2¼ MILE RAILWAY FROM TAKU TO ATLIN LAKE