

Klondike Contraptions: Inventions in Transportation

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The history of the North American frontier in many ways is a history of transportation. Archer B. Hulbert, the author of the classic 1920 study *The Paths of Inland Commerce*, predicted that if the Great American Novel was ever written, its "plot would be woven around the theme of American transportation, for that has been the vital factor in the national development of the United States".¹ The sheer size of the continent, the vast mountains, deserts and plains inspired Americans and Canadians to develop new methods and explore new technologies to conquer distance, including the stagecoach, canal, steamboat, railroad, automobile and airplane.

When historian Seymour Dunbar published his multi-volume *History of Travel in America* in 1915, he concluded that the U.S. led the world in transportation innovations not chiefly because of "genius or inventive ability." Rather he thought this American advantage could be "traced to the extent and configuration of the country . . . and to a universal restlessness and desire for haste which for a long time has been characteristic of its people."²

Due to the severe climate, the rugged terrain, the long distances between settlements in the North, and the lack of both trails and reliable information, the problem of transportation in Alaska and the Yukon looms as large in the region's history and literature as in any part of North America. The isolation of Interior Alaska and the Yukon Valley from the outside world and the challenge of northern transportation is reflected in the regional slang that has come down from gold rush days when Yukon miners called crossing the mountain passes to the interior "going inside." To this day Alaskans and Yukoners leaving the North speak of "going outside." During the gold rush one writer commented that when miners "have made their pile, or for some reason or other have had enough of such an intolerable existence, they talk about coming 'out,' just as a convict might talk to going into or coming out of prison—a sufficiently close analogy, except that a convict has considerably the best of it in the matter of personal comfort."³

Heroic trail stories abound in the poetry of Robert Service, and the novels of Jack London and Rex Beach. Countless gold rush narratives published in the years after the Klondike stampede of 1897-1898 all described the hardships along the routes to the gold fields in great detail. In these books getting to the Klondike usually takes many more chapters than getting gold, perhaps a reflection of both the drama of the long journey and the total failure of many to find any treasure. The isolation of the Klondike in Northern Canada — some 2,000 miles north of San Francisco and about 600 miles from the Pacific Coast via the headwaters of the Yukon River — guaranteed that those who tried to get there would never forget the journey.

Klondike memoirs echo the complaints of a young Chicago lawyer who found himself on the Skagway trail in August 1897. He wrote, "Pen cannot describe nor imagination picture the condition and hardships we are now enduring. . . . If I live to be 100 years old what I have gone through and am now experiencing will live as a horrible nightmare and remembrance."⁴

A San Francisco man at the summit of Chilkoot Pass in 1897 voiced a similar complaint. "This is the hardest work I ever did. You cannot write it on paper," he scribbled anyway to his wife. ". . . Carrying a heavy woman, in a faint, up a flight of stairs, as I have done, is mere child's play compared to this."⁵

Pierre Berton's *The Klondike River*, published in 1958 and yet to be surpassed as a history of the stampede, depicts the steep climb over Chilkoot Pass into the Yukon basin as the high point of the rush, and portrays the arrival of the stampeders into the gold fields as comparatively anti-climatic. For Berton the chain of humanity on Chilkoot Pass is the true symbol of the Klondike, not the crowded dance halls of Dawson City. He dedicated the book, "To my father, who crossed his Chilkoot in 1898, and to my son, who has yet to cross his."⁶

Since so few of the estimated 50,000 Klondikers ever found gold, the rush may well have been, as Berton concludes, "one of the most useless mass movements in history."⁷ Yet in the determination of so many men to cover a vast distance as fast as possible, the rush was also an occasion for heroic individual effort, opportunism, scheming, and inventiveness. Stampeders heading northward utilized dogs, horses, goats, reindeer, and even homing pigeons for transportation and communication.⁸ But other adventurous souls dreamed of gas, steam and electric engines to transport them over the endless miles of ice and snow.

When news of the strike spread across the world in July 1897, the Klondike beckoned like the Pole, pulling northward anyone not securely

tied down. Though the Klondike discovery was made in Canada, a short distance east of the Alaska boundary line, most of the stampeders who rushed northward were Americans. The American press seized on the Klondike strike and boomed it relentlessly. One man predicted in January 1898 that perhaps as many as 300,000 people were on their way to the Klondike. Nearly every town in America had one or two men eager to enlist in the Klondike rush. "In the big cities the people are crazy over Klondike," he said. ". . . It is the same way in Ohio, in Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska — everywhere you go. Men are acting like crazed schoolboys. It affects all classes — doctors, farmers, clerks, labourers, bankers, even ministers. Many have but the faintest idea of where they are going or what they will do there; but the cry 'To the Klondike!' seems to deafen them to every argument."⁹

Certainly the economic depression of the 1890s, plus the avalanche of sensational Klondike news stories in 1897, helped to incite gold fever across the United States and Canada, just as the yellow press helped to spark the Spanish-American War hysteria six months later. For weeks in the summer of 1897 major newspapers in Seattle, Vancouver, San Francisco, Toronto, Chicago and New York, hoping to boost circulation and scoop the competition, plastered their front pages with Klondike news.

Newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, often credited with starting the Spanish-American War with his inflammatory articles about Spain, also played a major role in promotion of the Klondike boom. Hearst's *New York Journal* and *San Francisco Examiner* gave the Klondike front page treatment from the very beginning. Hearst hired Joaquin Miller, the flamboyant "Poet of the Sierras," to go to the gold fields and report on the new discoveries for the Hearst newspapers, even though another San Francisco newspaper charged that the name of Joaquin Miller was "synonymous with fantastic humbug and unveracity from one end of the state to the other. No one believes Joaquin except when he says he is thirsty."¹⁰

In their haste to get rich, the men and women who answered the Klondike challenge in 1897 considered all sorts of weird ideas and inventions designed to insure a quick and profitable trip to the promised land. "Many and queer are the schemes that have grown out of the Klondike craze," the *Chicago Tribune* reported in August 1897. "They recall the fabled days when magicians had the power to conjure up wonderful genii and set them to doing strange and uncanny things."

One Chicago businessman interviewed by the *Tribune* said if he repeated some of the Klondike plans he had heard,

... you would think some insane asylum had been thrown open, and the inmates turned loose. Some of the ideas are not bad in themselves, but are impracticable owing to the condition of the country. Others are simply the rankest form of lunacy, while others yet are downright swindles . . . As a rule, however, the irresponsible schemers are merely wild eyed cranks, who have an honest confidence in their own plans.¹¹

The editor of the *Boston Citizen* said his paper "made a list of 300 different Klondike schemes that are advertised east of Chicago and upon investigation 295 of them were found to be frauds."¹²

The fact that nearly 99 out of 100 Klondike schemes did not work does not detract from the ingenuity of those who thought them up. No less an authority than Nikola Tesla, the Yugoslavian immigrant and colleague of Thomas Edison whose work with alternating current harnessed the power of Niagara Falls and laid the foundation for the modern method of generating electricity, said he thought Klondikers could soon find gold with an X Ray machine. "It is a question of tubes and currents," Tesla said, "and at any moment we may find a way for producing rays that will penetrate stone walls and hills and mountains, not to speak of the earth itself. . ."¹³

The roster of Klondike inventions eagerly reported by the newspapers reads like a catalog from the workshop of a crew of crackpots: food pills, ice bicycles, bicycle skates, snow locomotives, snow trains, gasoline sleighs, steam ice boats, gold separators, gold dredges, frost extractors, electric sterilizers, germ warfare to kill mosquitoes, trained carrier pigeons to haul the mail, tunnelling gophers to dig for gold, balloons, airships, an elevated railroad and many more.¹⁴

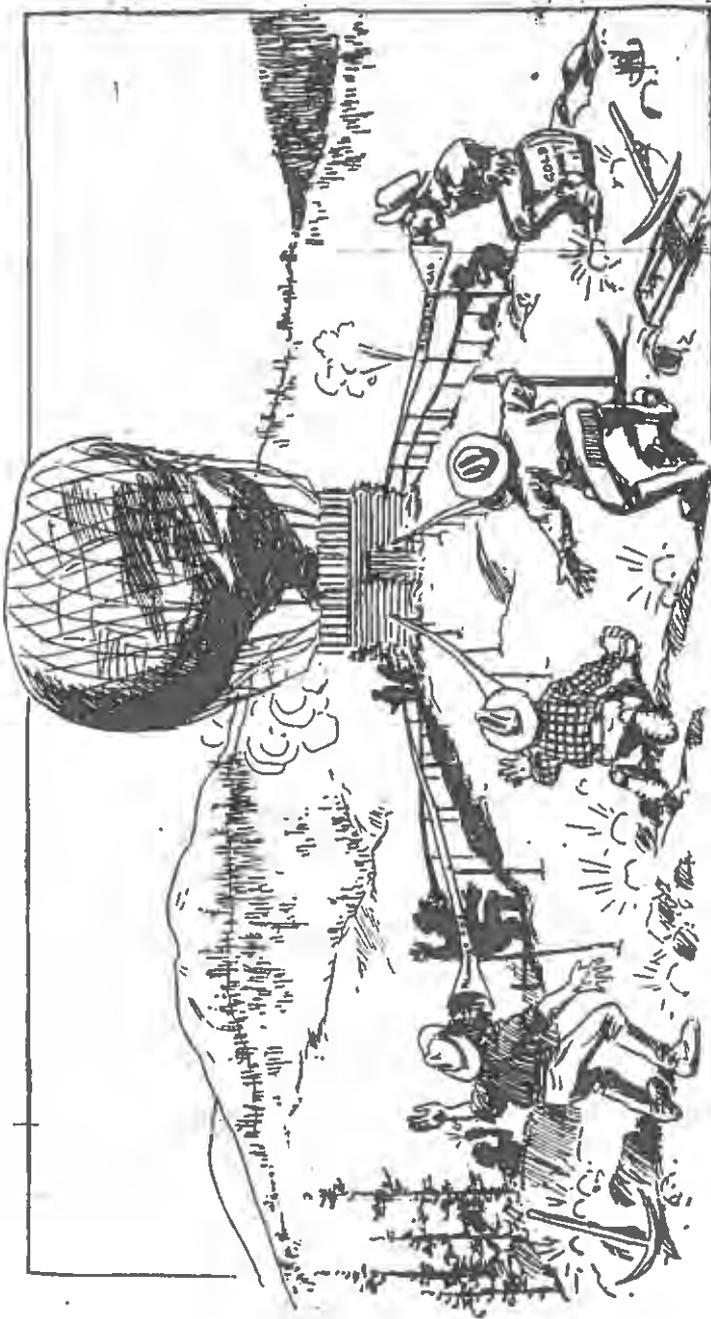
Many people recognized that solving the transportation problem held the key to riches in the Klondike. As one veteran miner returning from the north said, "The principal trouble there is the lack of transportation. How to get supplies in and how to get gold out are the puzzling questions."¹⁵ More gold could be made from hauling stampedees and supplies northward than from all the claims in the Yukon Valley. One Seattle steamboat man predicted in January 1898 that he would easily make a 1000% profit on the vessel he was building for the Klondike trade.¹⁶ The only certainty about northern transportation was the possibility of huge profits. Few of the stampedees who scanned newspaper accounts or read any one of dozens of hastily produced guidebooks could have had any conception of true conditions. The severe weather and

incredible isolation of the Yukon Valley was inconceivable to outsiders, who could not imagine what it would take to complete a journey across hundreds of miles of roadless wilderness. Without accurate information about the realities of northern transportation, the stampeder were easy prey to hucksters. Numerous imaginary trails and experimental vehicles all seemed plausible to those who did not know where they were going or how they would get there.

Hot air balloons and bicycles were two of the wildest ideas for Klondike travel. In Cincinnati, C. W. Vosmer purchased the huge balloon which had flown over the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 for \$7,000. Vosmer told the *San Francisco Examiner* in January 1898 that he and three experienced aeronauts from Cincinnati, Chicago and Pittsburgh planned to fly their 100-foot-diameter balloon, reportedly the largest bag of hot air ever inflated, from Cincinnati to San Francisco, and then north to Dawson City. "Just how long it will take to get there depends on the wind," he said modestly. The *Examiner* noted with admiration Vosmer's plan to attract advertising. "The aeronauts have in mind a scheme that will astonish people passed over, and please enterprising advertisers. This is to send down occasional showers of certain brands of soap, baking powder, stove polish and other things of value, but harmless even from a mile-on-the-air standpoint."¹⁷

Aeronauts from around the nation in 1897-1898 planned to darken the midnight sun in the Klondike sky with improbable airships. Dr. Rufus G. Wells in St. Louis proposed construction of a huge cigar-shaped, gas-filled bag, resembling a flying bowhead whale. Below the whale's body he proposed to hang an enormous basket, capable of carrying fifty men and their baggage, each of whom would pay \$300 for the privilege of a round trip ticket to the Klondike.¹⁸ In Kalamazoo, Michigan, Frank A. Corey, the local publisher of the city directory, hoped to attach a gigantic kite to his balloon which would sail through the sky like a Clipper Ship. Corey claimed his kite-sail would enable him "to tack against the wind and otherwise have perfect control of his ship."¹⁹

Less expensive than balloons were bicycles. Like their brothers in the air, wheelman also pictured the trip to the Klondike as an easy excursion. During the cycling fad of the 1890s, the ubiquitous bicycle appeared to be the symbol of the coming century, and it was only natural that the Klondike gold rush be the first in history where stampeder could conceivably pedal their way to the gold fields. George Shields left Detroit on his bicycle in early August 1897 after announcing he planned to "ride



Filling up balloonist Andree's ship with miners' hot air: "Klondike gas." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1887.

up the Canadian coast to Juneau," apparently unaware that there were no roads to Juneau.²⁰

One New York company, hoping to capitalize on the cycling craze, announced the creation of the four wheeled, freight-carrying Klondike Bicycle in the summer of 1897. The bike weighed fifty pounds, had solid rubber tires an inch-and-a-half thick, and a steel frame "wound with rawhide, shrunk on, to enable the miner to handle it with comfort in low temperatures."²¹

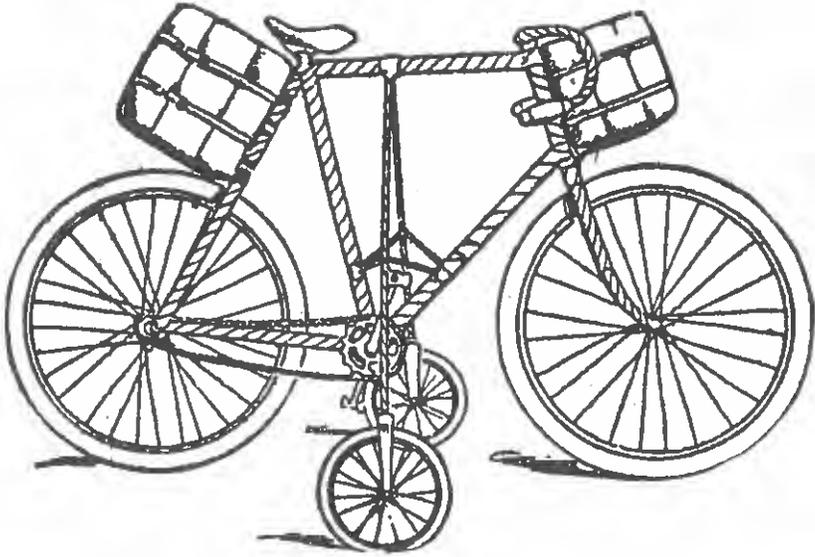
The Klondikers tried to make full use of modern technology. New gadgets were evident everywhere. On one ship departing Seattle a reporter observed: "The passengers compare notes and one will brag of some great device that he has and will wager that no one else on the boat can duplicate the outfit. One will say he has a pair of good old steel nickel plated club skates, another will brag of a fine pair of muckluks, somebody will trot out a straw hat..."²²

Limited knowledge combined with unlimited enthusiasm made a powerful mixture. The hopeful and the gullible, the innocent and the con-artist all took part in the Klondike transportation business. The *Chicago Tribune* stated in August 1897:

The magic work 'Klondike' seems to be ample indorsement (sic) in the estimation of the public for any kind of an Alaskan proposition, no matter how wild or ridiculous its scope. Railways running for hundreds of miles over wastes of ice and snow are minutely laid out on paper and their earning capacity soberly computed. . . . If some crazy man should propose the sawing of the flinty Alaskan ice into railway ties and telegraph poles for use in localities where timber is scarce it would cause no more than a passing spasm of surprise. Everything is possible in Alaska, according to the promoters.²³

The "Iron Horse," the marvel of 19th century transportation, had revolutionized North American travel and commerce, but by the 1890's experimental automobiles with internal combustion engines not confined to railroad tracks were beginning to make their mark. Seizing ideas from the new technology, inventors hastily sketched plans for numerous types of self-propelled "snow locomotives" and tracked vehicles to run to the Klondike.

In Seattle, the closest U.S. port to the Klondike and the jumping off place for most of the American stampeders, inventors unveiled a dazzling assortment of Klondike contraptions in the winter of 1897-1898; most of these were designed to run across frozen ground. One man designed a marvellous "snow and ice propeller," which he claimed would "revolutionize the transportation of men and stores into snow and ice coun-



The "Klondike Bicycle" was inspired by the world-wide bicycle craze of the 1890s. *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 1897.

tries." The model he displayed in the window of a Seattle drug store apparently looked somewhat like a huge mechanical caterpillar wearing ice skates. The design called for a 16-foot-long sled equipped with three cylindrical cranks, connected to several arms and 10 legs; at the foot of each leg or "kicker" was an adjustable snowshoe or skate — depending on the condition of the ice or snow. The key to the machine appears to have been its spring action system. "By the leverage used and the ratchet system perfected," the inventor claimed, "a man's strength is multiplied . . . fifteen times." A gasoline engine connected to the cranks would supposedly enable the machine to carry a crew of nine men at speeds of 40 to 60 miles per hour "on reasonable snow or ice." The vehicle would be stable, he said, because it "works on the center of gravity principle, making it almost impossible to turn over."²⁴

In North Seattle, Frank Adams, together with John and Nils Peterson, designed a unique mobile home to drive to the Klondike. "It is a

house set on tubes with spiral flanges," the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* explained. "The principle is the old one on which the screw is worked. The tubes revolve and the spirals catching in the snow or ice propel the entire structure." It is not clear that this machine would have done anything except screw itself into the ground, but the inventors maintained that it would not only cross rough ice, but could also be used as a boat in shallow water by digging its way through sand bars.²⁵

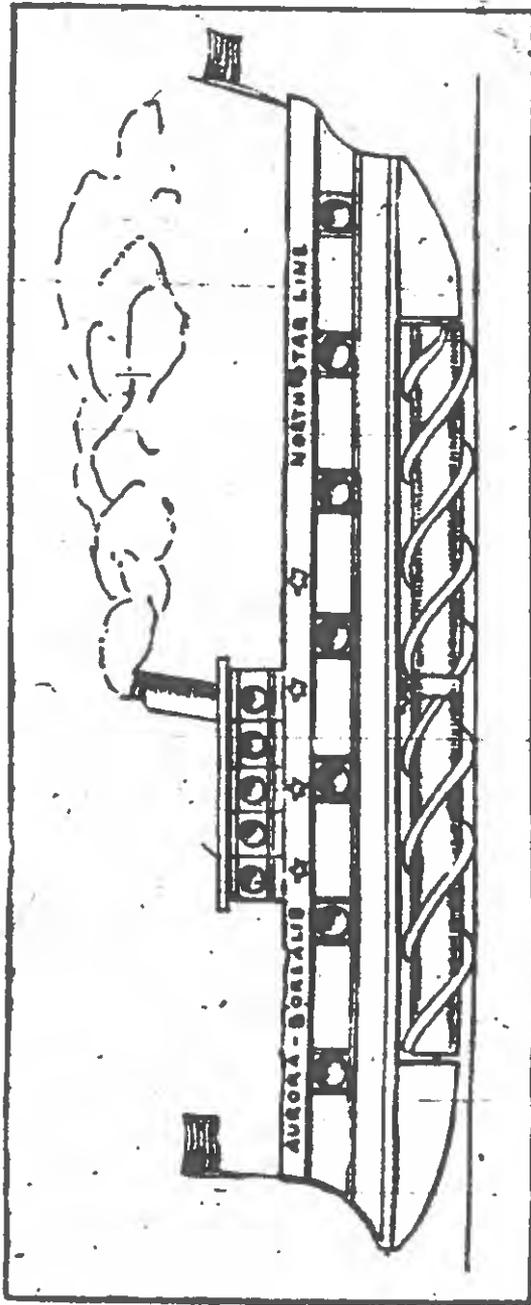
Another amphibious vehicle, designed like a caterpillar tractor and endorsed by the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, came from the Alaska Standard Traction and Transportation Company. M. P. Zindorf, the president of the firm, claimed his new engine could travel any terrain in any season. "The wide tracks and climbing movement pack down the road. It cannot be mired, as it is on its own track and is continually climbing forward on the track . . ." During the summer time Zindorf said the traction engine would be placed on a small boat.

The end with runners will be used as a bow when the engine is operated on the water. If a sand or gravel bar is encountered the freight will be taken to the rear of the boat, which will float the bow and the track fixed in place. Then the machine will go ahead as though on land.²⁶

From yet another Seattle workshop that winter emerged a combination steam-driven stern-wheeler, bobsled and movable house about thirty feet long, complete with an electric generator, sawmill and machine shop. The builder, Col. R. H. Ballinger, powered his sled by a four-foot-diameter revolving drum to which he attached "sharp spikes of steel" to propel the entire contraption along the ice. An amazed reporter for the *Seattle Times* said the machine "needs to be seen to be properly appreciated." The inventor also noted that in the remote possibility that "it doesn't succeed in pushing itself to Dawson," he would build an outside hull and attach a paddle wheel to the drum, allowing him to "steam down the river after the ice goes out in June."²⁷

Several unique designs for amphibious vehicles surfaced in Edmonton, the starting point of the longest and most impractical overland trail to the Klondike. A Texan named C. L. Smith started out from Edmonton with a horse drawn cart on which he had substituted old whisky barrels for wheels. The wooden drums on his all terrain vehicle proved not up to the task of rolling 1,500 miles across the northern Canadian wilderness. Three miles outside of Edmonton the kegs all collapsed, leaving "Barrel Smith" flat on the ground.²⁸

Klondikers passing through Seattle in early 1898 could admire E. J. Howard's gasoline-powered freight sled. Howard, a mechanic from



Three Seattle men built a "house set on tubes with spiral flanges," believing it could travel through water, ice, snowdrifts or sandbars. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, December 23, 1897.

Salem, Oregon, assisted by a professor who claimed to be “a noted expert on gasoline engines,” built a compact sled with a hoist engine. According to Howard the sleigh could winch itself to the Klondike 100 yards at a time by a steel cable attached to a stake, tree or other landmark. Unfortunately, four men were required to drive the machine — one to handle the engine and three to keep relaying and stretching the cable in front of the sled. D. N. Hukill, a miner from California, designed a sled that closely resembled Howard’s, except that instead of using men to drag the slack cable forward, a team of goats would do the dirty work.²⁹

At the headquarters of the Yukon International Steam Sled Company in Tacoma, a fleet of ten steam sleds with 35-horsepower boilers “made expressly for use in cold climates,” were under construction in December 1897. Company President George Roberts explained that the power wheel of each sled “is so adjusted that the heavier the load behind it, the harder will be the grip on the ice.”

With each steam sled hauling one trailer-load of freight and one trailer filled with passengers, Roberts said Yukon International would provide a reliable means of communication between Dyea and Dawson City. Roberts planned to have his lead sled plow a road for the others to follow in a long train. He also designed a cable sled to haul freight up Chilkoot Pass. A Seattle newspaper tried to describe it. “This sled is built on the toboggan style, of sheet iron, with its bottom hollow, through which live steam passes, softening the snow as it passes over it. (T)his, after freezing, will make . . . a hard, smooth roadbed.”³⁰

Numerous others also envisioned steam trains running on roadbeds of ice and snow. The Great Northern Mining and Transportation Company, no relation to James J. Hill’s Great Northern Railway, claimed in August 1897 that it had reached an agreement with the Pullman Palace Car Company to operate an electric sleigh service from the headwaters of the Yukon to Dawson City. According to a letter from William Forbush of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway, the Pullman company was constructing several special Arctic cars “furnished with upholstered berths and heated and lighted with electricity, so that the coldest weather will not trouble the traveller.” Forbush claimed the Pullman cars “will have a speed of from ten to sixty miles an hour, according to the condition of the river. On the first trip through it is proposed to take a number of men who will smooth over the rough places, and after the pilot becomes acquainted with the road a fast trip will be possible.”³¹

Thomas Nesom, an Indiana man described as “neither crank nor dreamer, but a gentleman of bright thought and busy brains, who is a willing slave to his passion for electrical experiment,” patented an

electrical elevated railroad which he thought would be perfectly suitable for crossing mountain passes in Alaska. "The cars are controlled by compound levers and hand ropes, and the end of each is made narrow to lessen the air resistance under great speed." According to Nesom's calculations, if "corporate capital will merely . . . supply the power and the line of rails," every man could therefore own his own railroad car "at a cost less than that of a bicycle."³²

The Klondike Transportation, Express and Commercial Company, organized under the laws of West Virginia, proposed to establish a regular train service by snow locomotive on the frozen Yukon River by December 1, 1897. E. B. Hertley, the secretary of the company, explained that "ice and snow locomotives have been thoroughly tested" in the logging regions of the northern U.S. and Canada. "The scheme," he said, "is to secure an absolute monopoly for transportation through the Klondike regions for eight months of the year while everything is frozen up." An ice locomotive pulling 200 tons of freight could travel over thin ice, he maintained, but even if the locomotive fell into the river both the engine and cars were designed to "keep to the surface."³³

James F. Coniff of Oconto, Wisconsin also thought the expertise of the logging industry in wintertime transportation offered the solution for northern transportation problems. Coniff outfitted a horse drawn logging sleigh with a 30-horsepower boiler, two small engines, and a set of bicycle chains for sprockets connected to two eight foot high driving wheels. "These two wheels are the most important factors in the ultimate success of the enterprise . . .," the *Chicago Tribune* reported. "They contain twenty-four wrought iron staves for spokes, and each of these is tipped with two pointed steel corks, which dig into the snow and ice as the wheels revolve."³⁴

The experience of the Chicago Steam Sleigh Company in Edmonton in January 1898 demonstrated the drawbacks of a logging camp snow locomotive. A spiked drum driven by a steam traction engine provided the motive power for the company's locomotive, which they named with great hope the "I Will." The company intended for the "I Will" to pull a train of three cars, but a more appropriate and obvious name would have been the "I Won't." A crowd gathered on a vacant lot in the city of Edmonton to watch the "I Will's" first test drive. The hissing boiler and the puffing black smoke could not obscure the fact that the slowly crawling "I Will" was mainly digging itself into the ground.³⁵

Despite repeated discouragements, efforts to adapt logging train technology for Klondike transportation continued. No public official took a greater interest in steam locomotives than U.S. Secretary of War

Russell A. Alger. Secretary Alger, the former governor of Michigan and commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, had earned his fortune in the logging business in Grand Rapids. He knew well the traction machines used to haul logs across the snow, and thought that a snow locomotive might be the answer to his prayers.

In the late summer and early fall of 1897 it appeared that the thousands of miners rushing to the Yukon might starve to death during the winter unless extra provisions could be rushed to Dawson city. That fear, which turned out to be groundless, eventually led Congress to appropriate \$200,000 to the War Department in December 1897 to transport relief supplies to the Yukon Valley. For months no one could determine the best method of sending the emergency provisions in the middle of winter. Alger discussed the question at a cabinet meeting with President William McKinley, and according to newspaper reports the dilemma was "anxiously discussed in the councils of the administration." Ultimately Secretary Alger approved the purchase of 500 head of reindeer from Lapland to be shipped to Alaska and driven overland to the Klondike.³⁶

The reindeer relief expedition proved to be a fiasco, as most of the reindeer died long before they reached Dawson.³⁷ The outcome could have possibly been worse, however, as apparently Secretary Alger briefly considered using steam locomotives to haul food supplies instead of reindeer.

When reports of the food shortage in Dawson began to circulate in the fall of 1897, a clerk in the U.S. Treasury Department who claimed he had invented an "ice train" for a trip to the North Pole several years earlier—and had even gone so far as to send a sketch and description of it to explorer Robert Peary—dusted off his plans and laid them before Secretary Alger. The clerk believed his steam engine with spiked wheels could travel up to 30 miles an hour on flat ice. Each engine could haul three passenger cars "very similar to the street cars used in St. Louis except that they would be built with an idea of greater warmth."³⁸

About the same time George T. Glover, inventor of a locomotive sled used to haul logs across the snow, contacted Alger and offered his services. Glover said a lightweight snow locomotive weighing approximately eight tons could run twelve miles an hour through deep snow. Alger realized that a few such machines carrying food on the frozen Yukon River might possibly prevent mass starvation in Dawson.

"The Secretary has already had some experience with this kind of locomotive," the *Chicago Tribune* stated, "so that the scheme is not so radical an experiment as it would at first thought seem to be. When

engaged in lumbering in the Northwest he tried the engine practically and found it was capable of pulling many tons of logs on sleds at a good speed, even as high as twelve miles an hour. The engine is boxed in like a freight car and the engineer and fireman thereby protected from the rigors of the winter."³⁹

Even after deciding to utilize reindeer for the War Department relief expedition, Alger continued to consider the possibility of also sending snow locomotives to ease the expected hardships in Dawson. A report in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* praised both the Secretary and the power of the steam locomotives in January 1898, urging that the War Department

plow a way over the Chilkoot pass by the irresistible force of steam operating immense snow-locomotives that are built to drive through the snow, scattering it right and left and leaving behind in their track a hard, level roadway, over which the rescuing parties can march as jubilantly as did the Israelites over the pathway that Moses opened for them through the waters of the Red Sea.⁴⁰



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ICE MOTOR LEAVING BENNETT FOR DAWSON MAR 16-99.

E. A. Hegg.

An "ice motor" train leaving Lake Bennett for Dawson on March 16, 1899. Photo by E. A. Hegg.

Secretary Alger eventually came to regret he ever had any contact with George Glover. The Snow and Ice Transportation Company, which owned the rights to Glover's patent, announced in late January 1898 that it was sending seven Glover locomotives and thirty-two cars carrying 200 tons of freight and 200 passengers over the ice to Dawson City. The Snow and Ice Company also claimed that the War Department agreed to pay the company twenty-five cents a pound to transmit government food supplies to Dawson City. Apparently that was wishful thinking. Shortly afterwards the police in Portland, Oregon arrested the company's general manager, Edward Rosenfeld, for forgery and fraud, accused of swindling hundreds of investors in the Snow and Ice Transportation Company.⁴¹

The dream of a magic snow locomotive or ice train to the Klondike melted in 1898 as surely as the plans of the Snow and Ice Transportation Company. Most of these inventions remain unsolved mysteries, comprehensible only by their creators, like the Swede interviewed in a Victoria newspaper, who said he had invented a machine that solved all the problems of northern transportation. He refused to discuss it in detail.

"No," he said, "I don't care to say just how I have managed to overcome all these difficulties, but I know that the man in Washington who is getting out my patent says it is unlike anything he ever saw before."⁴²

The transportation schemes that did not work, and the Klondike contraptions that never got off the drawing board are perhaps the most fitting monument of all for the gold rush of 1897-1898. Nothing captures so well the sheer insanity of the Klondike fever that swept the nation in 1897, or the immense faith of those early inventors in the real and imagined fruits of modern technology.

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NOTES

- ¹ Archer B. Hulbert, *The Paths of Inland Commerce* (New York: 1920) p. vii
- ² Seymour Dunbar, *A History of Travel in America* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968) p. 2.
- ³ T. C. Down, "The Rush to the Klondike," *Cornhill*, Vol. 77, January 1898, p. 31.
- ⁴ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 September 1897, p. 3.
- ⁵ *San Francisco Chronicle*, 29 August 1897, p. 14.
- ⁶ Pierre Bertron, *The Klondike Fever* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), p. v.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 433.
- ⁸ *San Francisco Chronicle*, 29 August 1897, p. 1; 5 September 1897, p. 14; 23 October 1897, p. 1; *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 2 December 1897, p. 5; *Seattle Daily Times*, 16 January 1898, p. 5; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 September 1897, p. 3.
- ⁹ *Seattle Daily Times*, 9 January 1898, p. 5.
- ¹⁰ *San Francisco Chronicle*, 7 October 1897, p. 6.
- ¹¹ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 August 1897, p. 26.
- ¹² *Seattle Daily Times*, 30 January 1898, p. 6.
- ¹³ *New York Journal*, 8 August 1897, p. 22.
- ¹⁴ For a sampling of inventions see: *New York Journal*, 8 August 1897, p. 22; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 August 1897, p. 26; 12 September 1897, p. 32; A. C. Harris, *Alaska and the Klondike Gold Fields* (Phila.: National Publishing Co., 1897), pp. 61-62; *Tacoma News*, 14 December 1897.
- ¹⁵ *New York Journal*, 1 August 1897.
- ¹⁶ *Seattle Daily Times*, 15 January 1898, p. 8.
- ¹⁷ *San Francisco Examiner*, 19 January 1898, p. 9.
- ¹⁸ *New York Journal*, 8 August 1897, p. 22.
- ¹⁹ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 August 1897, p. 2.
- ²⁰ *New York Journal*, 8 August 1897, p. 22.
- ²¹ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 August 1897, p. 2; Terrence M. Cole, ed., *Wheels on Ice: Bicycling in Alaska 1898-1908* (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing Co., 1985).
- ²² *Seattle Daily Times*, 13 January 1898, p. 8.
- ²³ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 August 1897, p. 26.
- ²⁴ *Seattle Daily Times*, 12 January 1898, p. 5.
- ²⁵ *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 23 December 1897.
- ²⁶ *Seattle Daily Times*, 21 December 1897, p. 8.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 November 1897, p. 5.
- ²⁸ J. G. MacGregor, *The Klondike Rush Through Edmonton 1897-1898* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1970), p. 81.
- ²⁹ *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 21 January 1898, p. 1, *Seattle Daily Times*, 25 December 1897, p. 5.
- ³⁰ *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 1 December 1897, p. 3.
- ³¹ *Seattle Daily Times*, 24 August 1897, p. 5, *Alaska Searchlights* (Juneau), 4 September 1897.
- ³² *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 12 September 1897, p. 32.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 28 August 1897, p. 7.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 19 September 1897, p. 38.
- ³⁵ MacGregor, *The Klondike Rush Through Edmonson*, p. 80.

- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12; *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 November 1897, p. 3; *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 14 December 1897, p. 1; Keith A. Murray, *Reindeer and Gold* (Bellingham: Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, Occasional Paper No. 24, 1988), pp. 11-13.
- ³⁷ Murray, *Reindeer and Gold*, pp. 66-67.
- ³⁸ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 September 1897, p. 3.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 19 September 1897, p. 12.
- ⁴⁰ *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 9 January 1898, p. 18.
- ⁴¹ *Seattle Daily Times*, 8 December 1897, p. 8; 28 January 1898, p. 1; 29 January 1898, p. 6; 24 February 1898, p. 8.
- ⁴² *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 8 October 1897, p. 8.