

Routes to Riches

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A ground squirrel robe nearly smothered northern Tlingits' nascent trust in their newly-landed missionaries.

Long-time trading ties with Southern Tutchone and Interior Tlingit funneled wealth to Native residents of the upper Lynn Canal. Luxurious furs from the frigid north brought prices many times that of local pelts. For example, while the coastal red fox fur was worth \$1.75 in "San Francisco dollars" in 1883, a Yukon silver fox brought up to \$50 (about \$1200 in 2015). Several times a year, Tlingit expeditions traversed routes considered secret until local leaders revealed their existence to Russians and Americans in the mid-nineteenth century. A day's paddle to the upper Chilkat River brought travelers to a trail leading over through barrier coastal mountains into the vast, rolling subarctic Interior. On the eastern route, packers left Dyea at the terminus of Taiya Inlet and slogged a twenty-mile trail to a keyhole pass into lake country that drains into the Yukon River headwaters. The image of prospectors struggling up the "Golden Staircase" to Chilkoot Pass engraved the Klondike gold rush of '98 onto the license plates of cultural memory.

For centuries, Chilkats and Chilkoots sustained a trading cartel connected by their respective routes. From tide's edge to the banks of the Yukon River four hundred miles north, Tlingits insisted on customer allegiance. They discouraged Interior trading partners from commerce with anyone but themselves and expressly prohibited economic activity without invitation. The 1852 siege of Fort Selkirk and subsequent expulsion of Hudson's Bay Company demonstrated the market realities of the Chilkat/Chilkoot cartel.

Beyond its economic value, some Tlingits endowed cash with supernatural qualities. Anglo trade introduced the new *at.oow*, featherweight yet powerful. "The money has a spirit just like a human being," Klukwan elder Mildred Sparks remembered her father saying. "Money goes to a place where it's going to be well taken care of...the spirit of the money goes through the village. You have to be ready when it came by your

door.” News of American money in Deishu in winter 1881-82 spread to scattered bands of Interior Indians drawn to the coast by economic opportunity. Only one Chilkat relation was allowed to speak to the missionaries, but the Willards welcomed several of the so-called “Stick” Indians who they thought behaved like “hunted things.” Judged by the missionaries as more honest than their Chilkat/Chilkoot partners, Interior Indians were nonetheless treated like “beasts,” observed Mrs. Willard, who dutifully preached the gospel to them.

In early February 1882 Reverend Willard bought a ground squirrel robe from an Interior man which stirred up a “mob” of enraged Tlingits outside their door. For centuries, competition from Chilkat country drew threats or worse, so betrayal from their own “God’s-man” was unthinkable. Before breakfast the next morning, L’koot *sha'dehuni* Lunaat and an entourage of headmen crowded into the Willards’ house to discuss the offense. Prices were secret, Lunaat declared. The missionaries should speak the truth to him, but “tell everybody else a lie,” Mrs. Willard reported. Converted by Sheldon Jackson four years earlier, Lunaat had opened the *kwaan* to the new religion, and tribal members would hold him responsible for damages. He charged the Presbyterians with robbery: “The Sticks are our money; we and our fathers before us have gotten rich from them. They are only wild; they are not men; and now you have told them these things and taken away our riches.”

A sort of free market morality framed Reverend Willard’s response. First, he assured them, only truth passed his lips. He lied for no one. Also, while it was right for Tlingits to expect duty on sales by outsiders, it was wrong to prohibit Sticks from visiting the mission. The American Way opened markets to goods at competitive prices. It was right for consumers to seek the best deal, wrong to hamper their freedom to choose. Same with religion.

The headman was unmoved by the preacher’s logic, but the warning that Tlingits were “heaping up wrath against the day of wrath” visibly affected him. Carefully, Lunaat explained his position. He came from a high caste, as his grandfather before him, sustained by significant wealth from Interior people. When he converted in Port Simpson, Lunaat trusted the missionaries to confer the same benefits given the Tsimpsons, including a house for the headman. Instead of larding Tlingit households with American

wealth, however, the Willards preached against polygamy, shamanism, hooch, potlatches, and now the local trading monopoly. What was the advantage in that? That's the way Mrs. Willard told the story. Her husband stuck to his position. The Willards "expected discouragement and trials" when they began classes at Haines Mission a half year before, so they "never wavered" in their "legitimate warfare" for every inch of holy ground.

What the Willards didn't expect was the extent to which that ground was already owned.



The map that Chilkat headman Kaaláxch (Koh'klux) drew for George Davidson in 1869 supplied privileged information. The future of Koh'klux's people hung in his revelation of territorial boundaries, strategic village locations, and their route to riches. It was the greatest gift the chief could offer an outsider, a man he believed possessed the power to darken the sun. Fear of sparking a mining stampede kept the professor from publishing the map until 1902.

Sensitive to the limits of land he could claim for Jil'kaat, Koh'klux left the eastern portion of his map blank, where Taiya Inlet leads to the head of the trail owned by L'koot neighbors. Still, word got out.

The first white man on record to traverse either trade route was George Holt, an independent prospector from Sitka, when he hired three Tlingits led by Chilkoot Jack escorted him over the Chilkoot Pass in spring 1874. Upon his return to the coast, Holt announced a gold-strike and produced nuggets as proof. Several parties set sail immediately, but when they returned months later with empty pokes, the mood soured. Gold-rushers heard nothing about a discovery up north, but learned that Interior Natives had sold nuggets to a white man. The Native men claimed they found the gold in a Yukon River tributary called Tr'ondek, which white men pronounced Klondike. The word roused dozens of schemers in Sitka driven by their impatience and debt, but again they stalled. Before anyone got a straight story from Holt he was murdered in Sitka by men rumored to be Tlingit. Conspiracy theories sprouted in the fertile clan relationships between Sitka and Klukwan, in effect hindering would-be prospectors from heading to Chilkat Country. Best to wait for a military escort.

Four years later, miners returned to the seasonal village of Dyea, near the mouth of the Taiya River, a waterway that originates thirty miles north from the icy slopes of the Coast Range separating the maritime Pacific from the rest of a continent. As part of their domain, Chilkoot families occupied the site during salmon runs up the Taiya from June through October. Twenty miners accompanied Holt this time. Escorted by a U.S. gunboat, the men disembarked on the Taiya River delta, an expanse of intertidal meadow locked between sheer mountainsides.

Kaalaxch', who happened to be in Dyea visiting relatives, stepped forward to greet the visitors. An officer announced through an interpreter that the great Tyee wanted American lands open for all his people which meant plenty of work for cooperative Native packers. Rounds from a Gatling gun punctuated their sincerity. "Chief Hole-in-the-Face" assented. Although he may have alluded to protocols and boundaries, the big news was that the Chilkoot Pass was officially open for business.

Rising non-Native activity not only brought wealth to the *kwaan*, it delivered death. The same fires that razed the rest of Native America burned into Lynn Canal--small pox, tuberculosis, influenza. Whole families went up in smoke, and with them the traditions of an oral culture. Between initial white contact in the 1780s and the Mission in 1880, disease had reduced by two-thirds a population of over three thousand inhabitants.

Scientists arrived in December 1881 to document the remnants. The Geographical Society of Bremen sent Aurel and Arthur Krause to study the American indigenes "least (in) contact with whites," and draw up a report. The Krauses accepted an invitation from Northwest Trading Company of Portland, Oregon to spend a winter at its new post on Chilkoot Inlet.

A month before the brothers showed up, a man-of-war steamed into Portage Cove carrying a battalion of U.S. Marines. A messenger sent to Sitka relayed accounts of trouble over trader Dickinson's sale of molasses which, when used for hootch production, had ignited interclan warfare. Unlike the amicable diplomacy of Commander Beardslee who had smoked a pipe with Koh'klux two years earlier, Captain Henry Glass brought just two headmen aboard to hear his ultimatum: any threats to white residents would bring a blockade of the Chilkat River and attacks on all villages. A barrage of cannon-fire aimed across the fjord punctuated his sincerity. A monument erected near the mission site more than a century later commemorates the event with a tone of military finality.

Peace reigned in Deishu when the German geographers came ashore in late December. Warm greetings from the Dickinsons allayed the freezing gloom of sub-Arctic winter. A room in the trading post warehouse served as headquarters, a short walk from the Mission.

For the next four months, the geographer brothers kept elaborate notes describing the last old-time Tlingits. Their primary guide, translator, and mentor during months of extreme weather was Sarah Dickinson, the trader's Native wife whose skillful translation of her culture made possible the Krause brothers' systematic description of Tlingit social system. "In spite of her Christian education," Krause noted the ease with which Sarah participated in Native customs, especially as a contrast with her husband "who regarded everything Indian with contempt."

Though Tlingit, Sarah Dickinson was likely educated among Tsimpsons in Reverend William Duncan's Christian Metlakatla. Sarah was living in Wrangell with George Dickinson when Amanda McFarland enrolled in her the new boarding school for girls. Sarah's steadfast faith and high intelligence won praise from Presbyterian superintendent Sheldon Jackson who asked Sarah to be McFarland's interpreter, and later for Reverend S. Hall Young. In two dramatic scenes in his autobiography, Young wrote about fighting a Stikine shaman "alone" with Sarah Dickinson translating his message to angry villagers. No one was more qualified than Sarah to face the "warlike" northern Tlingit as their first Christian teacher.

Enabled by Mrs. Dickinson and her teenaged son, Billy, the Krauses and the Willards made several winter forays to Klukwan where they witnessed the treasures of a cultural stronghold, and signs of its decline. Professional differences aside, the scientists and missionaries held a common view that white men "cared very little for the manners of the Indian population" and so further fueled their "united corruption." Aurel Krause counted hooch stills in almost all the sixty-five houses in Klukwan. Alcohol was a staple at the *koo.eex*, or potlatches, loosening tongues and lengthening speeches. Already fractured by epidemics, hooch eroded spiritual and domestic traditions, and further disposed villagers to religion offered by whites who seemed invulnerable to disease and despair. Tlingit society was in rapid transformation, observed Krause, whose members

might be spared the fate of other American Indians if only by inherent traits he sardonically called a “foundation for progress”--greed, vanity, and distrust.

In the spring, Klukwan received its first missionaries, Louis and Tillie Paul, sent by Sheldon Jackson to establish a Presbyterian mission and school. The Tlingit couple’s bilingual proficiency drew robust participation in their church and school; being from high-caste clans added to their integrity. Like Sarah Dickinson, Tillie Paul was a McFarland graduate with refined manners and mastery of English who, like Sarah, became an interpreter for S. Hall Young. With half-Tlingit Louis as husband and minister, the newly-weds were exceptional models for those seeking the reformation of old Klukwan. Alcohol was the “root of all evil,” they preached, and an obstacle to eternal life.

Missionaries gained ground with Chilkat converts during wintertime, observed Aurel Krause, but long absences on packing trips or fish camps were “a considerable hindrance in the civilizing process.” Also, enforced temperance was an issue with as much economic relevance as social. The hooch stills Krauss observed in Klukwan produced returns that ounce for ounce only eulachon oil approached, both prized among Interior trading partners. Predictably, some villagers’ reactions were downright hostile.

Among the northern Tlingits opposed to the church, Mrs. Willard saw an enemy in Koo-ta-wat, or the “Murderer.” She heard that the Klukwan sub-chief had killed before, and he “boasted” of a plan to gather white residents together for a massacre. Based on Mrs. Willard’s accounts, frightening white people is what Koo-ta-wat did best. Klukwan genealogy researcher David Strong chuckles at the man’s reputation. “The list of victims adds spice to his story,” he told me in summer 2009, “but that might have been the way people talked to build up his power.” Koo-ta-wat’s nickname “could just as easily have meant that he had a lot of money to kill.” Strong refers to a ceremony in the *koo.eex* when guests give money to clan hosts as a show of support during their grief. Slaves were once sacrificed to show one’s devotion to a mourning family, but when the U.S. government forbade bloodshed, Tlingits transitioned to blankets and furs, then dollars.

After months of “terrorizing” the Pauls over their school, Koo-ta-wat grabbed a handbell from a boy and declared that school was done. Louis Paul confronted him,

according to Mrs. Willard, and exacted a confession and even a spate of church attendance. When she saw the “Murderer” come to a service dressed “faultlessly” in a black suit and white shirt, Willard expressed her satisfaction that he had “turned himself.” His ongoing resistance to change, however, suggests something else. Steeped in a tradition of ostentatious display, the Tlingit man exchanged one power suit for another. High, starched collars and gold buttons conveyed to the missionaries the cut of his character, but veiled the threat within.

Before long, Koo-ta-wat revived intimidation tactics that may have helped “scare off” the Pauls, who returned to Wrangell in 1883. “Indian Tom’s” mutilation four years later drew a large force of white men whose Gatling gun flushed out the “Murderer,” later convicted in a Sitka courtroom and sentenced to federal prison.

A church in Klukwan, shifting attitudes, and the taming of the “wildest Chilkats” convinced the Krause brothers that Tlingit lands and people were on the verge of great transformation. As he had with George Davidson thirteen years before, Kaaláxch described to the geographers the year-round “commercial roads” owned and operated by Chilkat and Chilkoot tribes, denoting landmarks and distances in chalk maps on the floor. An earlier invitation from the sha’dehuni had attracted a few miners, the Krauses reported, and he hoped more would come.

“We welcomed any person,” Joe Hotch told a documentary film crew in Klukwan in summer 2009. “That was our mistake.” Leaders trusted white men to take the gold and hire a few locals, leaving money in their wake. Instead, they built towns and claimed the salmon as their own. “They just kept coming.”

After Aurel departed on a steamer in April, Arthur Krause made preparations to explore and map the two trails. On May 23, two teenaged boys paddled the German north from Dickinson’s trading post into steep-walled Taiya Inlet to Dyea, a seasonal L’koot village near the flat intertidal meadow where Taiya River spills into the sea. Over four days, the young guides led Krause on a faint path in a jungle of heavy underbrush and fallen trees “that hindered us considerably.” The pace slowed further as the scientist stopped to scribble notes about geography and vegetation. The twenty-mile crawl brought them to the base of a near-vertical slope at the back of the valley. To avoid soft snow on

the fifth morning they began climbing at 4:30 a.m., but often sank to their waists on the slog up to Chilkoot Pass.

Upon entering Canada at the Pass, Arthur hoped to reach the first village two days away, but terrible snow conditions forced a retreat. Along the way, Krause encountered small groups of miners building flatboats to navigate the high, headwater lakes into the Yukon River north to the Klondike goldfields. Although Chilkoot leadership sanctioned white traffic on the trail, Tlingits worried that miners would abuse the cartel they considered inviolate. Prospectors carried copies of a letter circulated by Chief Daanaawaak of Yandeistakye authorizing only Chilkoot commerce with Interior Indians. The letter stipulated if a miner needed leather for mending, “he should not pay more than ten cents in tobacco for a piece of tanned reindeer skin.” Krause noted in his journal that the “same trading jealousy” led to the burning of Fort Selkirk.

Back at Dickinson’s trading post the next week, Tlingits asked Krause if he encountered any Gunana and were “relieved” that he had not. Now that he had seen Chilkoot Pass, the geographer was eager to be the first white man to map the Grease Trail. After two weeks’ rest, Arthur walked twenty miles up Chilkat Valley to Klukwan where he stayed a night with the Pauls. The next morning, “Jelchtelch” (Yeil.xaax?) and one of Kaaláxch’ sons accompanied Krause in a canoe. The men paddled up the Klehini River westward a short distance until they landed, hefted packs, and proceeded up the shoulder of the closest mountain.

As he had on the Chilkoot trail, Krause kept a detailed account of the succession from forest to tundra, expanded this time by snowmelt in higher elevations that revealed a “resplendent” carpeted with saxifrage, primrose, and penstemon. His “constant botanizing” slowed their advance, drawing complaints from Jelchtelch that he was bored and wanted to return to Klukwan and the first salmon runs of the year.

The party met no one at Chilkat Pass, nor in the five days’ hike beyond. When the boy fell ill at the southern end of Kusawa Lake, Jelchtelch insisted on returning. A “gutzgakon”--stranger from far away--had never seen so much of the trail, he said, so should be satisfied with the knowledge. Arthur Krause determined to go it alone, but topography forced him to rejoin his guides, already hiking home.

Although they considered their knowledge incomplete, the Krause brothers' descriptions of Chilkat-Chilkoot treasures contributed more about the *kwaan* and its people than the world had ever known. Maps, lectures, collections, and articles revealed old secrets in new light. Publication of *Die Tlingit Indianer* in 1885 spurred interest among Europeans concerned over declining American indigenous culture. Old World opinions held that New World boomers squandered the luminescent Eden gilded by Romantics like landscape artist Albert Bierstadt and philosopher Johann Goethe. Aurel and Arthur Krause offered proof that in one corner of America, Indians still retained relative control of their land.

Chilkat control of the Grease Trail lasted only another decade until a white man from the Old World and one from the New breached the Pass together and publicized it to the masses.

Twenty-eight-year-old Edward J. Glave of London, England, came to Chilkat in 1890 riding on the success of memoirs published in *The Century* and *Harper's* magazines. In his boyhood, Glave wrote, he determined to "make my own way in the world, away from the beaten tracks of civilization." At nineteen the map-obsessed Londoner yearned to fill in the "blank spaces with places, names, and lines of location," so he exchanged his menial urbane existence for the uncharted center of Africa. Famed explorer Henry Morton Stanley hired Glave to hew an ivory station from the seemingly impenetrable "black forest" of the Central Congo. In Glave, the renowned explorer found a fearless lieutenant "who relishes a task for its bigness, and takes to it with fierce joy."

Glave returned to London in 1889 with his literary lode just as Polish sea captain Konrad Korzeniowski prepared to ship off for Africa in search of a story. At least four contemporary writers suggest that the man later known as Joseph Conrad modeled his questing young narrator Marlow after Glave. Scholars say it is likely Conrad read Glave's 1892 bestseller *In Savage Africa: Six Years of Adventure in Congo-land* which inspired the character traits and story line he needed for *Heart of Darkness*, published in 1902.

During a publicity tour in the States, Glave signed on to an expedition into another wilderness previously unseen by civilized man. Dedicated to luring its readers with literal cliff-hangers, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly* sent the journalist with a

small crew and a marginal budget to explore the lands beyond Chilkat Pass. On the day Glave stepped off the steamer in Pyramid Harbor on May 1, 1890, lifetimes of experience already draped his slight frame.

Among the five white men in the expedition, Jack Dalton was chosen for his solid frontier credentials. As packer-outfitter for Lieutenant Frederick Schwatka's 1885 expedition to Alaska, Dalton earned a reputation as a "practical pioneer and woodsman." Glave called him a "most desirable partner, having excellent judgment, cool and deliberate in times of danger, and possessed of great tact in dealing with Indians." Though an accomplished leader and amicable confident, Dalton shied away from the media. His later pioneer business ventures drew admirers, but their man shunned cameras, reporters, and the printed word. In articles written from this and the expedition of the following year, Glave portrayed Dalton as a man of action, always prepared to push ahead into the unknown, without comment.

In the first expedition, Glave portrayed Chilkat Tlingits as incorrigible denizens of an untamed sector. Through his lens, Chilkat artwork loomed as exotic and mystical as any he found in Africa. Upon examining the Whale House artifacts in Klukwan, Glave saw in the carved designs "nightmares in wood." Back in Klukwan's treasure houses a year later, Glave better understood the lineage of ancestors whose stories remained within each home. He marveled at the stately homes of "buccaneers and pirates" who "held court here with barbaric pomp, and terrorized the neighboring peoples." Glave romanticized the passing of a great era, lamenting that Chilkats were "fast relinquishing tribal customs and ceremonies, and taking but little interest in (their) ancestors." Only a generation earlier, Glave lamented, families held eating contests over the oily victuals that filled the 14-foot Woodworm feasting trough, "now embedded in moss and grass that grows between the floorboards."

Tensions in Klukwan surfaced over whether to guide the white men on their trail. Much of the village was at fish camp, which left the elderly and/or infirm to make decisions. Glave sensed that absent leaders would deny passage for the adventurers, but two dollars a day and grub prompted about twenty packers to sign up with the white men. Among them was Yen-da-yonk—Scundoo'o's brother and Selkirk's terror—now in his

mid-sixties. After two days' paddle up the Chilkat, villagers headed up a well-used trail bound northwest across the mountains to other river systems beyond the Chilkat.

The packers, Glave observed, gorged themselves “like boa constrictors,” then complained that white men walked too fast, clipping days off the standard packing distances. Still, Glave empathized with the Tlingits and forgave his detractors for “demanding big pay for services.” Even when disgruntled packers mutinied at the Chilkat pass summit, Glave agreed about the difficult trail conditions, and let them go. The only Tlingit guide to continue was Yen-da-yonk, who led the party northwest through sixty miles of melting tundra to reach the southern Tutchone village of Neskataheen. In writings of both expeditions, the Englishman contrasted “the most peaceful people I have ever met in my life” with the “morose, unsympathetic” Chilkats. The Sticks' fear of their trading partners peeved the African adventurer, who called them “weak-minded” to succumb to Tlingit controls.

Downriver from the village, Glave and Dalton met Shank, a Chilkat shaman who agreed to guide the men. He led them overland for five days to a camp on the banks of the Tatshenshini where they secured a cottonwood canoe and another Native man from a Tutchone encampment, and quickly drifted away on the muscular torrent. Somewhere near the river's confluence with the Alsek, the men passed the ruins of Nukva'ik, the trading outpost established by Klukwan at least five generations earlier as a halfway-house to Yakutat.

The canoeists hurtled between mountain fortresses to join the broad, gray Alsek onward sixty miles to Dry Bay, a notch in the Gulf of Alaska coast. Its inner shores protected a few Chilkat houses hunched together, like most Tlingit villages, on navigable water that sometimes thunders with salmon. From there, Shank led the white men on forty miles of beaches to Yakutat, and a ship.

According to Glave, theirs was the first “unguided” descent of the Tatshenshini to the sea. Although he credited Shank with “pluck and dash” throughout the journey, the myth-making journalist cast off the Native man's essential role with a “rhetoric of Native erasure” common in the age of empire. Among the several melodramatic illustrations in the series, one notable scene anchors six Tlingit porters to ice and rock as they pull Glave out of an icy crevasse. In gleaming tunic and pith helmet, the explorer dangles above the

jaws of doom, suspended on ropes held by his dusky companions. Student of Stanley, Glave understood the “discovery” of land to be a uniquely non-Native distinction. If not, what of the efforts of Columbus, Cook, or Lewis and Clark?

Glave’s maps in the *Leslie’s* articles offered the public its first glimpse into one of the last places on the continent to escape the cartographer’s pen. To a crew-members for whom assigning English names to geographical features was automatic, Glave argued that “substituting words of a foreign language is to destroy the natural guides.” In his narrative he used Native place names; his maps are dotted with names of sponsors.

After absorbing the landscape for a season, Glave was inclined to believe Jack Dalton’s speculation about the new, vast land of myriad resources. In 1891, horse packing into an unmapped mineral-rich wilderness was a idealized portrait of America’s waning frontier promise. Glave agreed to accompany Dalton with the first horses over the Grease Trail, seek gold in unknown streams, and publish accounts in *The Century*.

At the outset of his second trip, the reporter declared that the greatest impediment to development of the Interior was “defective transport” by Chilkats. Glave accused Native packers of demanding the “most exorbitant pay” while humiliating him with constant reminders about his “utter dependence upon them.” When Glave and Dalton offloaded four stocky horses at Pyramid Harbor in May 1891, Tlingit men “ridiculed” their outfit until it was apparent that the white men were determined to go the distance. Then the Chilkats declared that the outsiders would “greatly injure their interests by establishing a dangerous competition against their monopoly,” and threatened to physically block them. The horse packers ignored their protests. Verbal threats rang out as the outfit passed by, but no signs of violence. In Klukwan, Glave and Dalton hired Yen-da-yonk and two others, and pushed for Neskataheen.

When they reached the Tuchone outpost, a Chilkat shaman named Shauk (not Shank) warned villagers that whites came to “steal their land” and that they should not guide them further. Despite Glave’s and Dalton’s offers, no one signed on for the northwest trek. Dedicated to traveling light, the men traveled a month alone into the broad sub-arctic valleys until they found an Athabaskan family who fed them and told them where to find copper and other minerals.

Glave suffered “the blues very badly” during his four “dreary” months of wilderness travel through a land of maddening insects and little conversation. Two very different fates awaited Glave and Dalton when they sailed out of Pyramid Harbor in late October. Glave returned to New York for meetings with publishers, then onto England and back to the Congo. Once in “darkest Africa,” the writer reunited with Henry Stanley, with whom Glave sustained a close relationship until his death, at age 32, from a tropical disease.

Dalton returned to Chilkat the following spring intent on riding the crest of popular interest stirred by Glave’s articles. He wanted to punch a toll-road over Chilkat Pass.

“None of the maps of Alaska give any idea of the Chilkat country,” Carrie Willard wrote in memoirs published in 1884, a year before the Kraus brothers’ book. Her *Life in Alaska* contained a composite of the Krause maps that she rechristened “Chilkat Mission.” While the Germans identified place names in phonetic Tlingit, the American version reflected Sheldon Jackson’s campaign to “Presbyterianize” Alaska. Klukwan became Willard, Gei’sun was White Mountain, and the prominent peak across the fjord from Haines Mission (formerly known as Deishu) was named Mount Jackson.

Blustery winds and few fish discouraged Chilkoots from establishing a permanent settlement at the mouth of the Skagway River, preferring the healthy salmon runs and forested protection of Dyea at the head of the inlet. Years after its founder William Moore built the first house in Skagway in June 1888, his son J. Bernard Moore recalled no other habitation nearby, only a Tlingit family at Smuggler’s Cove, a sheltered harbor a short paddle away. Every other day, clan members checked two steel fish traps at the mouth of Skagway River, a glacial watershed containing just enough fish for one extended family.

In later times, a few L’koot people moved to Skagway to work on the train or join in the bustling tourist trade. But in the tribal mind, it was always a “white man’s town.” Built on a slice of exposed gravel at the intersection of a canyon and a fjord, Skagway became “home of the north wind,” according to brochures, tour guides, and tee shirts. Even during a national recession in summer 2009, a million people came to Skagway

(80% from cruise ships) to stroll the boardwalks of historic Broadway for a taste of a mythic frontier past.

For the Chilkat-Chilkoot monopolists of the 1880s, the smart money was on nearby Dyea. That Koh'klux' overtures had attracted white business to *Jil'kaat kwaan* was not lost on L'koot headman, Daanaawaak. His people owned a trail, too, with shorter, quicker access over the Coast Range to the Interior. Miners were welcome as long as they complied with a legal framework based on reciprocity and atonement. Tlingit law required that landowners assume full responsibility for guests and their property, so every injury required a payoff. To minimize legal entanglement and maximize economic return, Daanaawaak recommended that prospectors use local packers.

In May 1880, a military escort led by Lieutenant E.P. McClellan landed at Dyea with nineteen miners under veteran sourdough Edmund Bean. Prohibited from carrying liquor, the expedition carried a Gatling gun instead. At about \$10 per hundred pound load, a L'koot pack-train transported goods to the Pass. From there, freight transferred to Stick packers to the lakes of the upper Yukon. The Pass was open for business.

Despite assurances that miners would ignore Stick trading partners, by the following season the problem prompted Daanaawaak to print the letter of warning reported by Arthur Krause. His advice did nothing to slow the stream of fortune-seekers. By the mid-eighties about two hundred prospectors had crossed the Chilkoot. Bare-knuckled accounts of Frederick Schwatka's 1883 military expedition in the upper Yukon added exciting imagery in the popular press. Raging rivers and saw-toothed topography sustained a backdrop for a series of articles written in *The Century Magazine* of a land inhabited by "human pack-mule(s)" who "wholly monopolized this Alpine commerce." Nearly seventy packers escorted the seven white men up their June ascent of Chilkoot Pass, supplemented by Sticks to Lake Lindeman where they built a 15'X40' raft which carried them down the Yukon to the Bering Sea in September.

Schwatka's primary guide on the overland portion of the journey was Yen-da-yonk, son of Koh'klux and guide for other white explorers. The Yandeistakye man's knowledge of the land proved invaluable to the Americans' success, a Klukwan elder told me in spring 2009. When he got the crew as far as Fort Selkirk, Yen-da-yonk left the

expedition to return home on a month-long walk along the Grease Trail, completing his version of the “Golden Circle.” For the rest of his life he called himself Schwatki, or child of Schwatka. “He took the man’s name because he wasn’t paid,” one elder maintains. A relative of Yen-da-yonk’s disputes the story. He says that the famous guide assumed the name to honor the explorer, who repaid him and his brother the shaman with lifelong meal privileges at Fort Seward.

Increased business for local packers drew more Natives from throughout the region, driving up tensions between locals and outsiders. Not only were Stick Indians more polite and mild-mannered than Tlingits, their rates were lower. For Interior people as well as the swelling Tlingit competition, L’koot residents expected a percentage from outside packers.

Miners protested the cartel in a petition to the Navy, to which Lieutenant Commander Henry E. Nichols responded with a letter that still hangs on a wall in Raven House in Haines. The senior naval officer presented it to Daanaawaak and Lunaat on May 18, 1885, citing murderous threats to white men “who bring you wealth by your contracts to work with them.” If L’koot people interfered with white packers, they paid the penalty. “The White chief, who governs the whole country,” Nichols scolded, “is very angry with you for ill treatment of peaceable people passing through your country,” and promised that any breach would be “punished to the fullest extent of the law.”

On hearing these words, Daanaawaak surely considered the warships. Knowledge of bombardments in Kake, Wrangell, and Angoon sensitized him to his people’s proximity to cannon-fire. At the edge of a wide, intertidal meadow, Dyea was an easy target.

While the aging headman opened his arms to commerce and peace, his second-in-command injected a contentious air. The younger man who confronted Eugene and Carrie Willard over the squirrel robe began to assert his leadership. Increased non-Native attention meant more money for local Natives; it also provoked competition. In the decade ahead, Lunaat stayed firm on L’koot control of the Chilkoot Trail, but his defense came to resemble that of a man on a beach holding up his hands against a tsunami.

The presence of two trading posts on the Dyea Flats symbolized the double-edged sword hanging over Lunaat’s rising authority. Since building a post in Haines, George

Dickinson nurtured a lucrative relationship with his Chilkoot customers whose Interior furs brought good money in San Francisco. The lure of outfitting gold miners was at least as potent. Northwest Trading Company built its second post in Dyea where Dickinson brokered Lunaat's powerful packers who carried the one-ton minimum of supplies required to enter Canada. By 1880, John J. Healy and Edgar Wilson established a store near the village. Early in his relationship with Lunaat, Healy commissioned Chilkoot packers, but growing numbers of Interior Indians looking for work turned his attentions. Before long, Healy claimed to own the "road" through his improvements and pack-horse operation.

By spring of 1886, trail tensions prompted the Navy to station the *Pinta* on the Dyea waterfront "to prevent trouble between the miners," and keep Natives in their sights. Lunaat boiled over that summer as he negotiated packing rates with a group of Catholic priests sent to build missions in the Yukon. Father Charles John Seghers, Archbishop of British Columbia and Alaska, charged Lunaat with "levying tribute upon all who passed," which escalated into a heated exchange that became a legal incident when the headman slapped the bishop.

The divines sent two letters and a petition to territorial Governor A.P. Swineford, who responded by sailing to Dyea in a steamer with twelve armed men. Swineford called Lunaat aboard. When confronted, Lunaat affirmed the charges and was placed under arrest. Then the governor went ashore to have a talk with the villagers. L'koot people needed to know his intent to "deal justly and honestly" with them. Although Tlingits still inhabited the land, it no longer belonged to them "in a political sense," so they were not entitled to "pretensions of right to collect toll." After listening to villagers' promises of "future good behavior," the Governor accompanied Lunaat to Sitka. The headman was released for lack of evidence, but lengthy consultation—including advice from a Sitka headman—convinced the L'koot leader to cooperate. On his return to Dyea, Lunaat gave a speech that, according to Swineford, "warmly advocated the cultivation of friendly relations" with white men, reminding his people that they had "everything to gain and nothing to lose," by protecting those who passed through their lands.

Soaring profits proved incentive enough for Lunaat's endorsement of itinerant gold-seekers, five hundred of whom trekked over the Pass in 1887. Despite the

competition, packing rates climbed as Natives found more whites who were urgent and ill-prepared. On a May day in 1987, Chilkoot elder George Lewis told me that packers preferred to be paid in gold which, when they returned to the village, could be traded for an item with even higher trade value—eulachon oil.

Healy and Wilson's claim to the trail continued to trouble Lunaat, who expressed concerns in a statement to US Navy Lieutenant Alexander McCrackin. The trail "has always been in my tribe," Lunaat said in a formal statement. His people "fixed the road good so that miners would not get hurt," but Healy placed "sticks or logs" across it, and charged for removing obstacles. The white trader's horse trains packed goods over the Pass for a penny a pound. Moreover, Healy employed increasing numbers of Sticks as packers. Although Lunaat harbored "no objections to Stick, Chilcat, or any other Indian" on the trail, he protested Healy "monopolizing the trail." The headman vowed not to interfere with whites who chose to pack their own gear, but still felt responsible for their actions—"I hate to see them doing work they are not used to." When miners told him to "mind his own business," he disclosed, "it hurts my feelings."

After guiding the military party to the Pass and back, Lt. McCrackin found that Healy's trail work amounted to "comparatively nothing." His report also disputed rumors of Tlingit tolls. The officer acknowledged Chilkoot "ownership" of the trail, adding that the packers served a necessary transportation link whose "prices are not exorbitant." Lt. Commander J.S. Newell forwarded the report to the Secretary of the Navy in Washington with a cover letter urging resolution of the question "as Clanot is desirous to obtain an opinion."

Packers' wages were \$15.00 per hundred pounds in June 1888 when Tlingit job-hunters from Sitka landed at the Dyea waterfront. Bernard Moore heard versions of the conflict that followed from John Healy and a L'koot man named Kosko. Another variation suggests a fight between only two men, but Moore's is generally accepted. Sent by Kik.sadi *sha'dehuni*, Katlean, Sitka Jake brought "quite a number" of men to hire on with Healy. Lunaat confronted the Sitkans near Healy's store as they prepared to strap on their packs, demanding that they desist or pay him thirty percent on goods hauled over the Chilkoot summit. Sitka Jake refused, then ordered his men to shoulder their packs. As

the leader's sixteen-year-old son strapped on his hundred pounds, Lunaat approached the boy and slapped his face. Sitka Jake sprang upon the L'koot headman, and a knife fight ensued until kinsmen separated the injured men. Hand-to-hand skirmishes continued into the night until the headmen declared that the two sides would "force the issue" with battle the next morning.

Perhaps a hundred men lined up against each other in front of Healy's store. Though outnumbered by Chilkat-Chilkoot forces, Sitkans clashed in a bloody fracas that left many dead or wounded in each camp. Fighting tapered off as survivors observed their leaders in a mortal struggle. Healy watched from the doorway while his wife hid inside the post with Wilson and two other men. When Lunaat attempted to stagger inside, the trader barred him in fear of the Kik.sadis' threat to burn down the store. Sitka Jake may have also attempted to seek shelter with his benefactor, but was denied. The conflict dragged on until a Sitkan handed a rifle to his leader, who thrust the butt into Lunaat's skull. Immediately, the L'koot headman's son drove a dagger to the hilt into his father's assailant. Following the death of both leaders, L'koot men demanded a "large number of blankets" from Healy as compensation for Lunaat's demise. The trader countered their threats to burn the post with an all-night armed barricade.

On the morning of June 6, Edgar Wilson and a sailor escaped across the Dyea flats to a small schooner, and were soon skimming down the Canal toward Juneau. The sight prompted an exodus of canoes from Dyea; leaving behind the mortally wounded and their families. When Healy recounted the story to Moore a day or two later, he said he refrained from sending for reinforcements because the fight was between Natives, and better to "die out" on its own.

Casualty numbers are obscured in lore and speculation. Although Healy saw a few guns, more often daggers did the deed. He told Bernard Moore that blood flowed freely among combatants, especially Kik.sadi. Forged by an iron-clad sense of reckoning, passions erupted between foes in one of America's last and deadliest intertribal assaults, fought over wages. "Passion works against precision in numerical records," writes historian Patty Limerick, a problem exacerbated by the victims' race. Far from careful body counts, Native casualties were often ignored, like ecosystems, the price of doing business.

Historian Richard Slotkin writes extensively about the means by which violence perpetuated the myth of the frontier, and its role in fulfilling America's destiny. The spoils of Indian wars gave white men "the power to shape the richly endowed natural and human world according to (their) will." No such power was bestowed to the "victor" among warring Tlingits. Twelve years after Custer, the Packer War drew an immediate military response that hastened indigenous capitulation.

Victims' names sometimes change or are forgotten in the remaking of culture. Genealogy records cited by Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer show Lunaat living through the battle, and into old age as James Klanott. On his headstone at the Jones Point Cemetery in Haines are the dates December 12, 1859-August 2, 1962. Testimony submitted in 1899 for the Alaska Boundary Tribunal suggests otherwise. Skin-ya attributed Lunaat's death to his rise as sub-chief. He added that he was next in line behind seventy-five-year-old Daanaawaak as head chief of Yandeistakye, Haines Mission, Skagway, and Dyea.

When Wilson returned to Dyea with a U.S. marshal and twenty-two deputies, they saw "many little white flags" flying from poles placed around the village. A few women and children remained to assuage the dying and prepare the dead. Returning Native men promised compliance. Within days, the human pack trains resumed, including Sitkans who agreed to pay the L'koot a percentage on gear grunted to the Pass. As long as commerce flourished in Dyea, packers made concessions to the United States—steady work was better than war.

A.P. Swineford was hardly satisfied with concessions. In a letter dated October 1, 1888, the territorial governor reported to President Cleveland that thirteen Native villages from Kodiak to Metlakatla were cooperating with the territory, but one "so-called tribe" remained "very troublesome and annoying." The Chilkat-Chilkoot alliance controlled the region, he complained, and claimed "exclusive ownership" of the Chilkoot Trail. "They are a fierce and warlike people, more so than any of the other native clans of Alaska," who "extort exorbitant prices" from miners by shutting out the competition. The Packer War was a product of rising tensions. "As no white persons were injured, no complaints or arrests were made," continued Swineford, but he worried that the situation would worsen. "If there is any one point in the Territory where a military post should be

established and maintained it is among these Chilkats. A continuous show of force in that neighborhood would be sufficient to insure their good behavior in the future.”

Increased attention from outsiders followed the bloody incident at Dyea. Routine gunboat patrols accommodated the growing numbers arriving the area. From Skagway, William Moore touted an alternate trail up the White Pass that would in time become a railroad. Motherlode discovered in the Klondike in 1896 by Skookum Jim and George Carmacks shook a nation from its economic doldrums. In the next four years about 40,000 people landed in Dyea and Skagway, most of whom crossed the Chilkoot Pass during the winter of 1897-1898.

When he wrote about the Chilkoot Trail for the San Francisco *Examiner* in 1897, John Muir mentioned Native packers only as obstacles to progress by their “extortionate charges and tantalizing delays.” Instead, he extolled the “long trains of diggers” swarming over a trail that transformed “many a shiftless dawdler” into a man. He claimed to have walked the twenty torturous miles to the Chilkoot Pass in November without a pack, which one Muir scholar called an embellishment to “impress readers.” His journals never mention the hike, nor encounters with the Native people who once called him Glate Ankow. Another Californian, Jack London, proved his manhood by packing an entire grubstake over the Pass in fifty-pound loads. On his way to becoming the world’s best-selling author, London conveyed the extraordinary events in journal entries that detailed his sympathies for what one biographer called the “suffering of the native Aleuts under the brutal dominion of the invading settlers.”

Few, if any, Aleuts ever traversed the trail, but what looked like oppression to an avowed socialist felt like good business to the entrepreneurial northern Tlingit. Several hundred residents lived in a dozen log houses near Healy & Wilson's store, and as many as five hundred Tlingits occupied another village up the Dyea River where the trail turns steep. At the height of the Klondike gold rush, packers charged up to a dollar a pound.

With sky-high profits came liabilities—disease, cultural disintegration, and relinquishment of control. Breathtaking loss knocked the wind out of tribal leaders who resisted earlier incursions. The leadership gap in Lunaat’s absence forced his campaign back onto the aging shoulders of Daanaawaak, headman of Yandeistakye. Long forgotten was his 1881 letter warning miners against trade with Interior Indians. Host of John Muir

and Hall Young, the *sha'dehuni* had a reputation of welcoming whites to the *kwaan*—he identified a mission site in 1879, allowed Eugene Willard to survey 640 acres in 1884, and permitted a U.S. Army survey at Portage Cove in 1899 for Fort William Henry Seward. That same year, Daanaawaak joined nine other Chilkat-Chilkoot headmen who submitted statements in favor of United States jurisdiction in a boundary dispute with Canada.

Allegiance to Washington was a common theme throughout the testimony. Daanaawaak opened by establishing his place in a long line of Yandeistakye headmen, followed by short remarks tied into his acknowledgement of sixty years of recognizing “the Russians or the United States as the owners of this region.” Most of the headmen struck a similar tone, including Koo-ta-wat, once called “The Murderer” by Carrie Willard, who deferred to the greater power: “our fathers told us this was Russian country and we were Russians....we know now that we are Americans.” Each leader opened his statement by identifying his position in the *kwaan* hierarchy before acknowledging U.S. authority. Four complained about jurisdiction of the Chilkoot trail. Their ancestors built it to reach the Gunana, whose lives were interwoven with the northern Tlingit. Now Canadian customs agents forced traders to pay a thirty percent duty on goods. George Shotridge, Kaaláxch’s son, reported that he and Koo-ta-wat ignored the border guards’ demands a year earlier, but on a later trek were denied entrance into Canada until they made good on ten rifles traded for furs. Paying duty for use of a trail maintained so long by his people “makes us feel bad,” said Skin-ya, Lunaat’s successor. Yel-Hak (Yeil.xaax) and Yen-sheesh Johnson also claimed to “feel bad” about the restrictions.

More than frustration at the border, by 1899 competition from horse trains and trams not only hurt Native feelings but rendered their services obsolete.

A few Tlingit men found work on the new railroad that transported passengers and freight from the Skagway docks over White Pass and to the banks of the Yukon; most drifted back to Haines and Klukwan. In the following half-century, Chilkoot Trail received little attention. Dyea village disappeared in the crush of the boomtown of Dyea, which turned ghost town in a decade. When the gruntwork of packing was born again as a recreational pastime in the 1960s, rising numbers of backpackers toiled for the Pass. Since 1980, the U.S. National Parks System and Parks Canada have shared administration of the trail.

The original Tlingit village of Dyea is an archeological site long since devoured by Sitka spruce and roses.