

**Routes to Riches**

READER DRAFT

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A ground squirrel robe nearly smothered northern Tlingits' newfound faith in the White Way.

Long-time trading ties with Interior Athabaskans, also called Stick or Wood Indians, funneled wealth to 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 fifty, around twelve hundred 2010 dollars. 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 walk west of Klukwan brought travelers to the top of Chilkat Pass, gateway through barrier coastal mountains into a vast, rolling terrain later known as the Yukon. 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.

Chilkats and Chilkoots exercised absolute control over their respective routes. In addition to paying tolls for trail use, travelers were required to hire local packers and guides. From tide's edge to the banks of the Yukon River four hundred miles north, Tlingits insisted on customer allegiance. Athabaskans, or "Gunana," were forbidden from commerce with anyone but their coastal trading partners, and discouraged from traveling over either pass into Tlingit country 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 economic value, Tlingit views endowed supernatural qualities to cash. Anglo trade introduced the new *aat.oow*, featherweight yet powerful. "The money has a spirit just like a human being," a 20<sup>th</sup> century elder remembered her 19<sup>th</sup> century 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. None were permitted to speak with whites except a man related to a Chilkat, but the Willards still welcomed the few Gunana who slunk into Haines Mission 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 to them the gospel of eternal life. 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, any competition in 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.” 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 his 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 the Gunana. 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 started Haines Mission a half year before, so their minds “never wavered” as they engaged in “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 Koh’klux drew for George Davidson in 1869 supplied information previously considered top-secret. 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 was out.

Rising non-Native penetration not only brought more wealth to the *kwaan*, it brought 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 literature of an oral culture. The 1880 census found a thousand residents remaining in the four main villages.

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 only other whites in the *kwaan*, the Willards.

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 from his autobiography, Young wrote about fighting a Stikine shaman “alone” with Sarah Dickinson as his voice when confronting angry villagers. No one was more qualified than Sarah to face the warlike northern Tlingit as their first Christian teacher.

Enabled by Mrs. Dickinson, 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, missionaries Louis and Tillie Paul arrived in Klukwan, 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-white 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 Krause 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 William Seward thirteen years before, Koh'klux proudly described for the geographers the year-round "commercial roads" owned and operated by Chilkat and Chilkoot tribes, denoting landmarks and distances by drawing chalk maps on the floor. His earlier invitation had attracted a few miners, he said, and he hoped more would come.

"We welcomed any person," Joe Hotch told a documentary film crew in Klukwan during the summer of 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 small 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 Gunana, whose first village was two days away, but long hours of punching snow and mincing over rotten ice convinced him to 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 crack the cartel they still considered inviolate. Prospectors carried

copies of a letter circulated by Chief Daanaawaak of Yandeistackye authorizing only Chilkoot commerce with Interior Indians. Out of necessity, 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” and one of Koh’klux’ younger 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 ruled.

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 judgement, cool and deliberate in times of danger, and possessed of great tact in dealing with Indians.” Though an accomplished leader and amicable confidant, 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’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 three of the party to Kusawa Lake, where Krause was forced to retreat a decade earlier. The explorers named it Lake Arkell, to honor their sponsor. To this day the lake is called Kusawa.

Intrigued by prospects of a river to the Pacific, Glave and Dalton slogged west through sixty miles of melting tundra swamp to reach the southern Tuchone, or Stick, 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 Tuchone 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 an 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 yearned for women, culture, and Africa. He would travel to New York for meetings with publishers, on to England to see his family, then 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 “Chilcat 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.

When I arrived in 1982, Deishu was still Haines, White Mountain was Mount Ripinsky, and locals knew Mount Jackson as Santa Claus Mountain despite its name on newer maps—Mount Villard. Klukwan never stopped being Klukwan.

Six maps unveiled for me the *kwaan*’s sphere of control.

The Haines Borough differs from most Panhandle communities by its link with a transcontinental highway. Unlike island communities south of Haines, most residents live in highway enclaves connecting within to a Delaware-sized borough. In addition to Haines and Klukwan, the road links Klehini, Mount Bether Farm, Mosquito Lake, 33-Mile, Big Boulder, Dalton Cache. From the Border, a driver traverses a hundred miles of sparsely populated wilderness to join the Alaska Highway. A three hundred-fifty-mile loop takes you back to Skagway, separated from Haines by fifteen miles of seawater.

Two hundred dollars in 1983 made me thse sixth local owner of a ’65 Ford Fairlane that still rolled despite its worn tires and sagging frame. Chronic engine overheating assured predictable rest stops with downtime for maps spread across the still-warm hood.

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources quadrant shows the Chilkat Valley as a crooked green finger bordered by tight-knit topographic lines and glacial white. From its origin at Portage Cove, Haines Highway is a sinuous black line that follows the Grease Trail along the Chilkat and Klehini rivers. Most of the map’s northwest quarter is blank, indicating Canada. A second map, published by British Columbia’s Ministry of Natural Resources, describes the white space. On its bottom edge the highway climbs from the U.S.-Canada border northward fifteen miles through spruce-hemlock forest into meadows and ultimately the rock and tundra of Chilkat Pass, elevation 3493 feet. It continues through alpine for another twenty-five miles until BC ends at the top of the paper.

As it does on the first map, the road on the second stays close to the Grease Trail.

On the Interior side of the Pass, the road-line trends toward the high end of the treeless valleys that drain west to the Tatshinshini and Alsek rivers. Islands of aspen and black spruce mark a gradual decline toward the Yukon Territory boundary. Where the highway veers to the west shore of Dezadeash Lake, the Grease Trail vectors northeast to Kusawa Lake and tributaries of the Yukon river. A territorial tourist map lead me to the Alaska Highway at Haines Junction, east to Whitehorse, and south on the Klondike Highway back to Alaska near the Chilkoot Pass. Contemporary promoters call it the “Golden Circle.”

From Haines Junction to the Yukon capitol, drivers speed past rolling terrain not unlike the Palouse of eastern Washington or the Blackfoot of western Montana. Road warriors are more likely to see groups of reintroduced wood bison along the Alaska Highway than meet any of the few hundred southern Tutchone Athabaskans who, with northern Tutchone and Tagish bands, were once known as the Gunana. Today they are scattered mostly out of view of traffic, up roads seldom visited by vacationers. Some are related to people in Klukwan and Haines. In 1994, I listened to them recount ancestors' exploits at a gathering in Klukwan to commemorate the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Koh'klux' map. Joe Hotch spoke of the "special relationship" among partner tribes who forged centuries-old ties, and of the map's power to renew those relationships. Every face beamed as Hotch recounted the Fort Selkirk story when Chilkats routed out Hudson's Bay traders. As they saw it, Koh'klux showed his genius in the details of the map, which included more than a hundred Tlingit place names. Giving it to Davidson proved Koh'klux a "diplomat and revealer of mysteries." I kept a reproduction of the map with others folded in a gallon zip-loc in the glove compartment of my Fairlane.

Once past Whitehorse and ninety miles south on the Klondike Highway, the road squeezes into the U.S. at White Pass, elevation 3292 feet, at the northernmost tip of the Tongass National Forest. Passage through the rocky portals is denoted in solid green atop the Forest Service recreation map. At seventeen million acres, the Tongass is America's biggest national forest, encompassing every Tlingit *kwaan* in Southeast Alaska save one—Chilkat Indian Reservation. Klukwan's lands and the surrounding Haines State Forest comprise a crown of white space atop four feet of green and blue map-folds.

As the highway descends White Pass, stone titans on the right block the sky. A few tortured peaks away, Chilkoot Pass.

On the left side, the earth gives way to a steep canyon carved by a short, angry river draining into Taiya Inlet in the distance. On a rare, clear day, road travelers may see a train snaking up the canyon walls on the White Pass and Yukon Route, a narrow-gauge railroad built to haul ore from the Yukon mines to the closest port. In 2009, a half-million tourists rode it to the Pass and back to Skagway. At its ocean terminus, five or six cruise ships nuzzle at the docks of a gold rush town Tlingits knew as *skok'ouay*, or "place of bunched-up waves."

Wind turbulence and resource scarcity discouraged Chilkoots from establishing a permanent settlement at the mouth of the Skagway River, preferring the bigger 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 with 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 (75% 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 Yandeistackye 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.

Like numbers of dead Indians, 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 Yandeistackye, Haines Mission, Skagway, and Dyea.

Standing at James Klanott’s grave, I consider its contents. Is this the man who engaged in battles both rhetorical and physical to defend his people’s control of the Chilkoot? Century-old testimony raises the possibility that the remains below belong to Lunaat’s son. Known to be fluent in English and white ways, the young man probably survived the battle, took a Christian name, and lived into his nineties. It is not always easy to be sure of these things.

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 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 Yandeistackye. 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 Yandeistackye 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, Koh'klux'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 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 headed for the Pass. Since 1980, the U.S. National Parks System and Parks Canada have shared administration of the most famous trail of the north.

A century after the Testimony of the Ten Chiefs, hikers haul their own gear up to the Chilkoot Pass where they sign in at the summit guest register. My brother and I materialize in a dripping fog in mid-August 1999. Customs officials are nowhere to be seen.

Instead, a National Park Service ranger beckons us into her warm-up shack. She slides steaming cups of Russian tea into our cramped, cold hands and asks us the same question she asks everyone: How'd you like the Golden Staircase? Grateful for the warm tea and attention, we recount the highlights of our trip. Two days of tromping through mud and slippery roots brought us to Sheep Creek Camp at the back of the Dyea valley a thousand feet above sea level. Advertised as the "longest museum in the world," the well-worn rut traces a valley floor strewn with rusted and rotting goldrush debris. After Sheep Creek, historic litter increases with the angle of the trail, heaviest just below the final ascent to the 3535-foot Pass: cast-iron machine parts, steel cable, telegraph wire, broken dishes, shoes, belts, glass shards, tin cans. These are the artifacts of Klondike Goldrush National Historic Park, which forbids tampering with the trash.

The Staircase is a final thousand-foot pitch to the Pass over house-sized talus boulders. During winter, a snow-shield thirty to fifty feet deep makes possible the steps prospectors carved into sheer ice. We clambered over and around rain-slicked rocks imagining how much easier snow-steps might be for the man making thirty or forty trips.

More hikers enter the shack, receive their tea, and add their experiences to the conversation. By the time Ken and I strap on our loads, fifteen backpackers grip steaming cups, resting. Some recover from the climb with

long-distance stares through fogged windows; others chat about the trail in various accents and languages. At least half are German, one of whom excitedly speaks to me as I edge toward the door. For him the hike is a culmination of a life collecting books, maps, and brochures about the Chilkoot Trail. The trek is nearly as he imagined it.

Hand now clasping the doorknob, I ask why Germans are so interested in this place.

“Jack London is required high school reading.”

“No kidding.”

“Do you know the Krause brothers?” The bearded twenty-something extracts a worn copy of *Die Tlingit Indianer* from his pack. “They are almost national heroes.”

Sensing his renewed energy for conversation, I open the door.

“Tlingits used to own this trail, you know.” He chuckles ironically. “I hoped to meet one, but that was a fantasy. The only Alaskans we see are white guys like you.”

“Tlingits gave up,” I respond, “since we do our own packing.”

“Would they want to now?” he quickly returns.

I chuckle at the joke, but see he’s serious.

“If the price was right.” We exchange wry chuckles for different reasons.

Door swings open, brothers lean into a landscape scoured by wind, headed for the land of the Gunana.