Wrangell-St. Elias

National Park & Preserve
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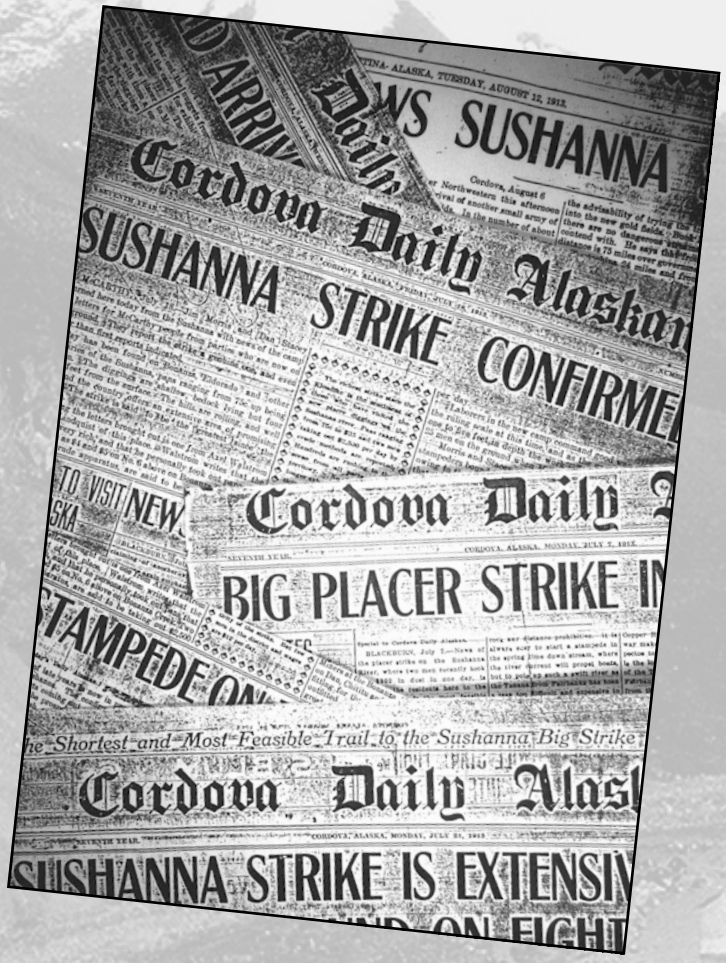
A History of the Chisana Mining District, Alaska 1890- 1990



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ALASKA FIELD AREA
RESOURCES REPORT NPS/AFARCR/CRR-96/29

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Revised and Expanded
2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Like all authors, I have accumulated many debts in completing this study. First and foremost, I would like to thank the management of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, who, in this time of declining revenues, delegated precious resources to this project. Special thanks go to Jon Jarvis, Russell Galipeau, Anne Worthington, Margie Steigerwald, Danny Rosenkrans, Mary Beth Cook, Jay Wells, and Jim Hannah for providing encouragement, time, and expertise. Invaluable assistance was also provided by some of the park's seasonal employees, including Steve Lang and Amy Gallaway, who let me participate in several archaeological surveys of the Chisana City townsite; Carol Feldman, who helped me understand and interpret the district's many mining-related landscape revisions; and Jeff Rasic who prepared the study's three accompanying maps. Other contributing Park Service employees included Logan Hovis, Frank Norris, Steve Peterson, Ann Kain, and Thetus Smith, all of the Alaska System Support Office, and Cathy Gilbert, of the Pacific Northwest System Support Office.

Several institutions provided access to key manuscript and photograph collections. These included the National Archives-Alaska Region and the Alaska Resources Library, both in Anchorage; the Rasmuson Library at the University of Alaska Fairbanks; the Alaska State Library and Archives in Juneau; the United States Geological Survey Photographic Library in Denver; the Tacoma (Washington) City Library; the Dawson City (Yukon Territory) Museum; and the Earth Sciences Information Centre, Earth Sciences Sector, Natural Resources Canada, in Ottawa.

No such study could be completed without the help of a few specially knowledgeable individuals. I would like to thank Bell Joe, Stuart Starbuck, Ray and Gloria McNutt, Glenn W. Despain, and Georgia Strunk for sharing some of their stories and insights about living and working in the Chisana district; Ivan Thorall, for providing access to his extensive collection of N. P. Nelson material; Thomas J. Merson, for providing a copy of Ruben Lindblom's unpublished narrative of the Chisana stampede; Candy Waugaman, for letting me peruse her extensive collection of Chisana photos; and Mark L. Rippy, for joining me in backpacking several of the district's most important trails.

PREFACE

Writing the history of a mining district is normally a rather straightforward process. Federal regulations stemming from the Mining Act of 1872 forced miners to document their claims in exhaustive detail. As these records are usually readily accessible, they provide an ideal basis for most studies.

The Chisana district, however, totally lacks such primary documentation. After its recording office closed in 1930, the district's papers were moved across the Wrangell Mountains to the community of Chitina. Due to that town's precipitous decline following the closure of the Copper River and Northwestern Railway in 1938, the records were subsequently transferred to Copper Center, where they were ultimately destroyed in a structural fire in July 1945.

Fortunately, other research options remained available. Both the United States Geological Survey and Alaska's Territorial Department of Mines occasionally visited the area and recorded key facts about ownership and production. The district's mining activity was also thoroughly covered in local newspapers, including the *Dawson Daily News*, Whitehorse *Weekly Star*, *McCarthy Weekly News*, *Chitina Leader*, and *Cordova Daily Alaskan*. Several oral and manuscript accounts were available as well.

This study is derived from those sources.

INTRODUCTION

Gold has always been an elusive mineral. This was especially true in Alaska, where persistent seekers followed its trail for decades. Beginning with a strike in the Silverbow Basin near Juneau in 1880, prospectors soon crossed the Coast Range and explored the upper reaches of the Yukon River. In 1886 they moved down the Yukon to the Fortymile River and, in 1893, on to Birch Creek, near Circle. Three years later, George Washington Carmack filed the first claims on Rabbit Creek, soon renamed Bonanza Creek, initiating the Yukon Territory's famed Klondike rush. Other stampedes followed, including ones to Nome in 1899 and 1900, Fairbanks in 1902 and 1903, and the Iditarod in 1909. In 1913 discoveries along the northern margin of Alaska's Wrangell Mountains provoked the territory's last important rush: to the remote headwaters of the Chisana River.[1]

Although a relatively minor producer by world standards, the Chisana district remains interesting for several reasons. It typifies, for example, the development of placer mining in Alaska, advancing through a number of discrete stages and employing a broad range of technology and equipment. It is also unusually well preserved. A scarcity of water and an abundance of steep terrain limited hydraulic mining and prevented dredging. Its remote location helped to reduce pilfering as well. As a result, this district retains extensive evidence of its early use.[2]

Its rush was also quite distinctive. Unlike the stampede to Livengood, which occurred the following year, this one was widely publicized and contained a clearly international component, including members from throughout the Pacific Northwest. It was also larger. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, which had a correspondent on the scene, estimated that over eight thousand people joined the Chisana rush. Even more conservative government sources guessed that over two thousand prospectors participated. The Livengood stampede, in contrast, only attracted a few hundred individuals.[3]

Two ingredients contributed to the unique character of the Chisana rush. One was its timing. In 1913 most of the world was still at peace. Had the strike occurred the following year, the First World War would undoubtedly have limited participation.

Transportation played an important part as well. The newly completed Copper River and Northwestern Railway and the vastly improved Valdez Trail greatly simplified the approach to the diggings. Unlike its predecessors, this strike occurred less than one hundred miles from the railhead.

To grasp the true nature of any stampede, however, it is first necessary to understand the needs and goals of the individuals who joined it. Historians, for example, have offered many explanations for the size and duration of the Klondike rush. Most have concentrated on the issues troubling American society during of the 1890s.[4]

The United States changed radically during the final decades of the nineteenth century. Although the nation successfully entered the modern age, it was a costly transition, fostering

the misdistribution of wealth, power, and prestige in a country that boasted egalitarian traditions.

The 1890s were a particularly trying time. The panic of 1893, for example, sharply curtailed industrial growth. It also caused thousands of bankruptcies and generated extensive unemployment. Serious differences now separated rural and urban constituencies, capital and labor, large and small manufacturers, and new immigrants from the older population.[5]

Farmers were probably the hardest hit. Once viewed as the standard-bearers of Jeffersonian democracy, they now received pathetic returns for their toil. They also enjoyed little protection from exploitation by the banks and railroads.[6]

Historian John Hicks, writing about the origins of the Populist insurgency of the 1890s, detailed the crux of the problem:

> In an earlier age the hard-pressed farmers and laborers might have fled to free farms in the seemingly limitless lands of the West, but now the era of free land had passed. Where, then, might they look for help?[7]

Prevented from achieving prosperity at home, some of these individuals undoubtedly sought out new opportunities in the Klondike.

The Chisana stampede, however, occurred nearly a generation later under vastly different conditions. The interclass conflict which characterized the 1890s had largely dissipated by 1900. Most Americans were far more prosperous, and the agricultural sector had done especially well. Farm prices, for example, increased by nearly 50 percent between 1900 and 1910. Despite the short-lived panic of 1907, industrial workers had also benefited. Unemployment levels had dropped and job opportunities appear to have grown. What then motivated this new generation of stampeders?[8]

Many participants, both in and out of Alaska, were aging veterans of the Klondike rush. Some, like George C. Hazelet, by then a successful businessman living in Cordova, may have seen this stampede as a last grand adventure.[9]

The majority of stampeders probably pursued more tangible objectives. Virtually all of the older Alaska-Yukon gold camps were now in decline. Most were also dominated by large industrial concerns, limiting the options available to individual miners. Although Alaska's gold production peaked in 1909, the day of the solitary prospector was ending.[10] In the Klondike it took outside investors more than ten years to capture control of the area.[11] The Morgan-Guggenheim Syndicate, however, dominated most of the Iditarod district after only two.[12]

Forced out of established diggings, prospectors sought new openings elsewhere. Some must have seen the Chisana area as their final opportunity to make a stake. That perception may also help explain the length of their stay there. All three discoverers and many early stampeders spent the remainder of their lives in the district, eking out small but consistent incomes while continuously searching for that one last strike.

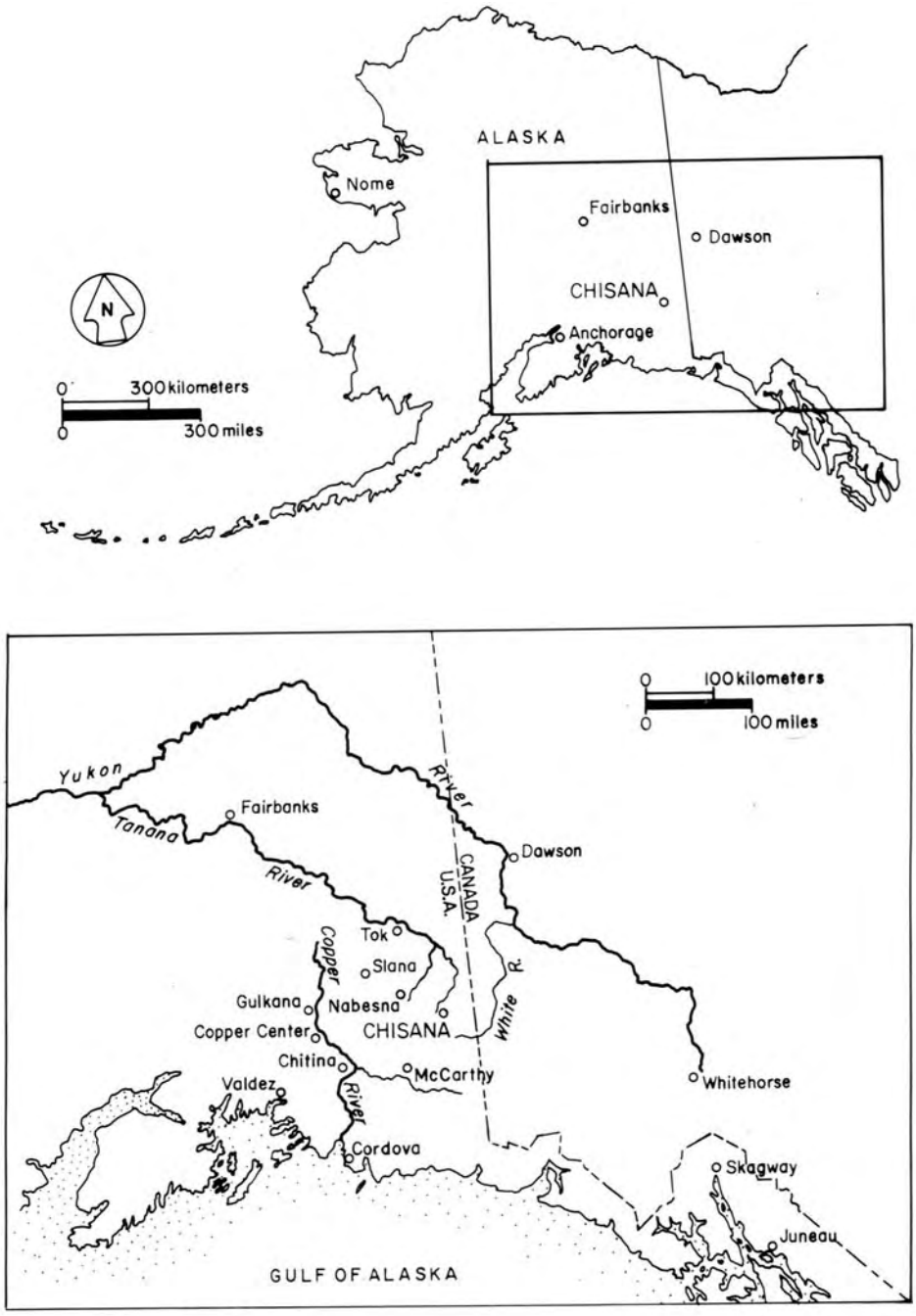

Figure 1: Alaska

CHAPTER ONE

EXPLORATION

Prior to the arrival of white invaders, indigenous peoples held virtually all of Alaska. The greater Chisana region, for example, was shared by three Athabascan groups.[1] The Ahtna ranged east from the community of Batzulnetas, often reaching the Nabesna River; the Southern Tutchone held the lower and middle reaches of the White River, occasionally ascending Beaver Creek; and the Upper Tanana controlled the territory surrounding the Chisana River. The Tanana people also established the first village in the vicinity. Situated on Cross Creek, just opposite the mouth of Notch Creek, it was only about six miles northwest of the future site of Chisana City.[2]

Americans first penetrated the region in 1891, when a three-man exploring party, consisting of Frederick Schwatka, Charles W. Hayes, and Mark Russell, traversed from the White to the Nizina River through Skolai Pass. While not discovering any gold, Hayes reported finding copper nuggets on Kletsan Creek, located near the head of the White River.[3]

Seven years passed before prospectors regularly entered the area. Henry Bratnober and Jack Dalton examined the upper White River country in 1898, including Kletson Creek.[4] Although they, like Hayes, found several small copper deposits, the area's remoteness discouraged any sustained investigation.[5]

United States Geological Survey (USGS) parties also began scrutinizing the area in 1898. William J. Peters and Alfred H. Brooks, for example, inspected Beaver, Snag, and Mirror Creeks, passing about forty miles north of the Chisana district.[6] The two returned to the region the following year, tracing the northern edge of the Wrangell Mountains between the White and Nabesna Rivers.[7] Oscar Rohn also visited in 1899, crossing the mountains via the Nizina and Chisana Glaciers.[8]

Two other USGS geologists made a more significant contribution. Frank C. Schrader and David C. Witherspoon purchased several locally obtained copper nuggets from the Upper Tanana residents of Cross Creek Village. Later, they also detected gold traces in a quartz sample collected a few miles farther east. Reports about their finds circulated, significantly boosting local exploration.[9]

The area's first meaningful mineral discovery occurred in 1903 when prospector Jack Horsfeld found gold on Beaver Creek, just west of the Canadian border. Yukon miners stampeded to the area, but most failed to locate workable ground and soon returned to Dawson City.[10]

Bratnober and Dalton explored the upper Tanana River region in 1903, using a pack-train to search for copper prospects. At the conclusion of their journey, however, Bratnober downplayed the district's mineral potential. His pessimistic forecast infuriated supporters of Valdez, which heavily depended on the mining trade. "This pot-bellied old reprobate," declared the *Valdez News*, "has some object in spreading these slanderous reports aside from the mere pleasure that some people take in lying."[11]

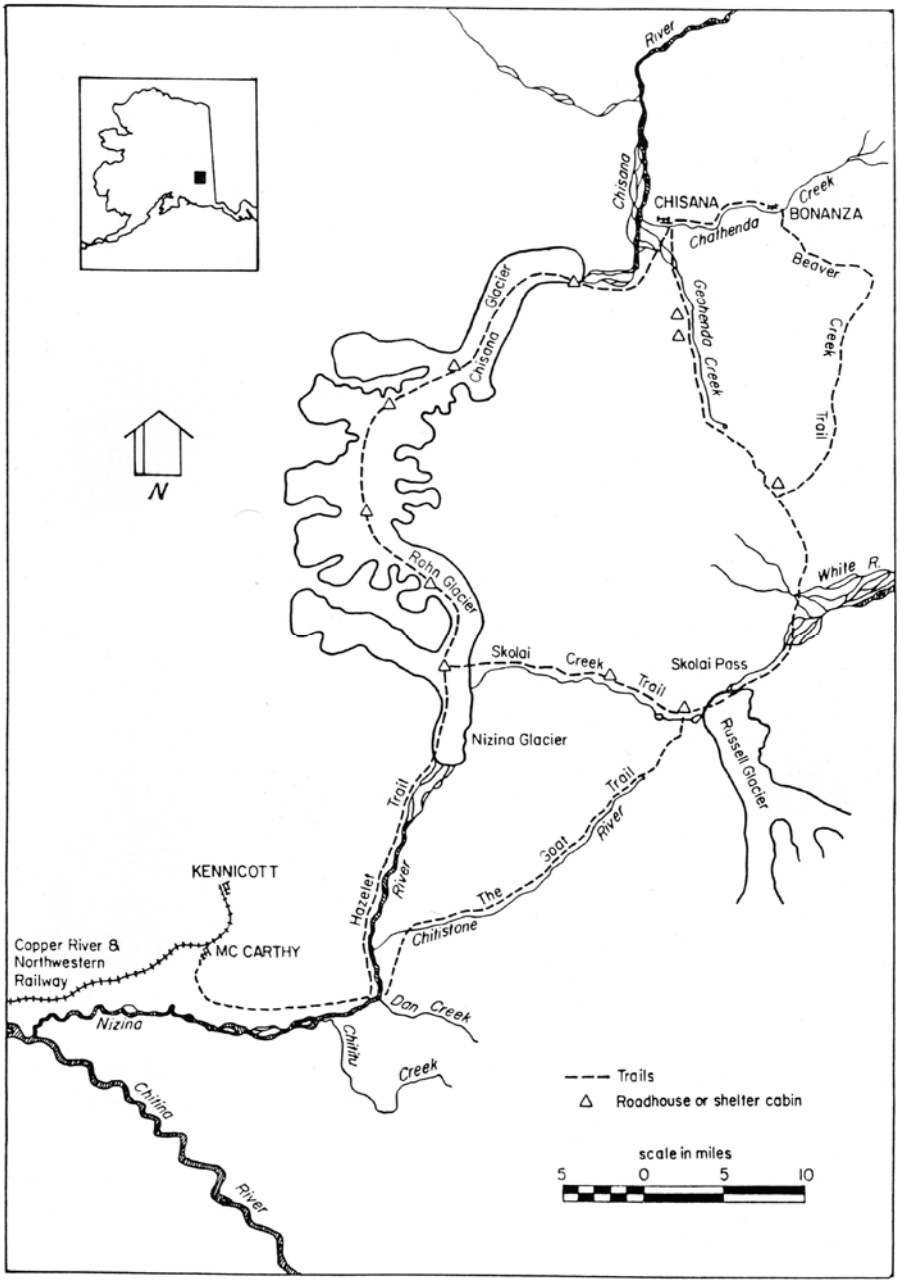

Figure 2: Chisana Region

The newspaper was apparently correct, as two years later Bratnober resumed his examination of the region. Building a 120-foot, gas-powered sternwheeler, which he christened *Ella* in honor of his wife, he journeyed up the Nabesna River and established winter quarters for a small group of affiliated prospectors, including George C. Wilson, James L. Galen, Draper C. "Bud" Sargent, and Carl F. Whitham. Although they located numerous copper prospects, Bratnober's crew discovered little gold. They did, however, find traces along Trail, Cooper, and Chavolda Creeks, all in or near the Chisana district.[12]

Figure 3: Local prospectors endured primitive conditions.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Exploration of the area continued, with several men examining lower Chathenda Creek the following year. Its prospects so impressed Aaron Johnson and his partners that they whipsawed lumber, built sluice boxes, and shoveled-in for a week. Their results, however, were disappointing. Only netting about $7.50 per day, the group soon abandoned its efforts.[13]

The USGS returned in 1908, when Fred H. Moffit, Adolf Knopf, and Stephen R. Capps surveyed the region. While failing to discover any important mineral deposits, the trio located several small quartz veins and expressed confidence that placer gold would eventually be found.[14]

Although credit for that discovery must be divided among at least half a dozen individuals, three were especially important. In 1912 William E. "Billy" James, Nels P. Nelson, and Fred W. Best began a detailed examination of the upper White River basin. Hardly "cheechakos," each had originally come north before the turn of the century and had

spent more than a decade fruitlessly exploring the Alaska-Yukon backcountry.[15]

Born in Bleken, Sweden, in March 1870, Nelson probably served in the military before coming to Alaska in the 1890s. Although he was prospecting in the Fortymile country when Carmack made his Klondike discovery in 1896, Nelson failed to join the initial wave of stampeders up the Yukon River and therefore missed his first and greatest opportunity to strike it rich.[16]

Best's history is better known. Born in the small industrial town of Stoneham, Massachusetts, in 1866, he was working as a mate on a cargo ship when his older brother convinced him to quit the sea and join the Klondike rush. Traveling to Forty Mile, a Canadian community located near Dawson City, Best tried prospecting, but generally supported himself by working for wages. Although he purchased the Cassiar Roadhouse in 1903, he soon gave up that business and spent the remainder of the decade hauling freight in the upper Yukon Basin.[17]

James, like Nelson, possessed extensive prospecting experience. A hard-rock miner in California before joining the Klondike stampede, he had subsequently worked in both the Fortymile and Fairbanks districts. He was also extremely familiar with the White River country, having visited it regularly since about 1908.[18] As Best reported to his parents:

> Billy has been in there before and has some good prospects and picked Nels and me to go back with him. . . . We have a fine outfit and a good boat and hope to have a successful trip. . . . There is no regular mail up there so you must not be worried if you do not hear from me very often, for I shall be in good company and now know how to survive in any kind of country.[19]

Late that summer the trio established a base camp near the mouth of Beaver Creek and began investigating the adjoining region. Although their primary route ascended that drainage only as far as Flat Creek, they established hunting and trapping trails in all directions. One, for example, reached Chathenda Creek, about ten miles farther west.[20]

While there, an Upper Tanana acquaintance, then known to the prospectors only as "Indian Joe," showed James a quartz prospect situated on the Chathenda's middle reaches. The lode intrigued the miner, but he was much more interested in the area's placer potential. Recognizing that it was too late in the season for any detailed examination, James conducted some preliminary panning and vowed to return to the area the following year.[21]

James and Nelson came back in the spring of 1913, accompanied this time by James's long-time companion, Matilda Wales.[22] Reaching Chathenda Creek on May 13, James concentrated on the lode. Nelson, however, decided to try his luck on a nearby tributary. Walking about a hundred yards upstream, he reached a low bench where he proceeded to remove some of the overburden and to test the underlying gravel. To his surprise, his first pan yielded a dollar's worth of gold. Staking a discovery claim, Nelson, in the tradition of placer miners everywhere, christened the stream "Bonanza" Creek.[23]

Shortly after making his strike, Nelson and Andrew M. "Andy" Taylor, a long time acquaintance who was also prospecting in the area, started for Dawson City to obtain additional materials and supplies. After they left, James and Wales traced the gold-bearing

gravels farther up Bonanza.[24] Sampling a western branch, the pair made an even bigger discovery. Wales later recounted her version of the find:

Figure 4: Billy James and Matilda Wales at their camp near the mouth of Little Eldorado Creek, 1913. Photo courtesy Fred Best Collection, Alaska State Library and Archives, Juneau

> When we got to a strange creek running into Bonanza, we followed it up and looked for the rim. At one place Billy spoke to me, saying, 'Let me have the pan; here's a little bedrock cropping out.' He took the pan, and to our surprise got five to ten dollars in bright gold. . . . We then prospected a little further up, and found gold and staked a discovery. The claims where we got the rich pans we staked as No. 1 and named the creek Little Eldorado.[25]

CHAPTER TWO

THE STAMPEDE

Upon reaching the Yukon River, Nelson and Taylor informed local residents about the Chisana strike. The Dawson City community reacted enthusiastically and by June 6 several parties were already preparing to leave for the diggings. Excitement waned, however, when no other prospectors arrived to confirm the pair's report.[1]

Nelson and Taylor required no further inducement. Finishing their business, they returned to Bonanza Creek heavily laden with food and equipment. They also brought several friends, including James and Nelson's former partner, Fred Best.[2]

The group's arrival was timely, as James and Wales had very nearly exhausted their supplies.

> For days we were on Little Eldorado eating the handful of rough food, with no sugar, no flour, no salt. We had wild meat and, as we chewed on it, we had visions of other good things which gold would buy.[3]

James, Nelson, Wales, Taylor, Best, and their Dawson friends staked most of the property on Bonanza, Big Eldorado, and Little Eldorado Creeks. A rival, however, obtained one of the richer claims. At the time of James's strike, Carl Whitham was also prospecting around the mouth of Bonanza. One of the earliest on the scene, he acquired the second claim on Little Eldorado.[4]

Little Eldorado Creek was well suited for hand-mining methods, as its gravel was less than six feet thick and one hundred feet wide. Classic "poor man's diggings," such deposits required a minimal expense of equipment and labor to produce paying quantities of gold.[5]

As was the case in many placer areas, its gold was quite distinctive. Coarse and dark, it possessed a peculiar bronze-like cast, which miners attributed to a slight coating of iron oxide. Most particles were flat, indicating that they had originated in narrow seams, and ranged in value from one to ten cents. Nuggets worth from one to two dollars, however, were common, and larger ones were also occasionally found. One viewed by visiting Canadian geologist DeLorme D. Cairnes, for example, weighed a full eight ounces.[6]

Billy James and N. P. Nelson began sluicing Little Eldorado No. 1 on July 4, 1913. Assisted by Andy Taylor and former Dawson City bartender Tommy Doyle, the pair recovered nearly two hundred ounces in just two days. By August 2 they had already garnered $9,000, or an average of about $300 per day.[7]

While less productive than Little Eldorado No. 1, several other claims also yielded significant quantities of gold. Bonanza No. 6, for example, produced some four- and five-dollar pans, and even samples taken from Bonanza No. 3 averaged more than a dollar.[8]

Figure 5: Billy James (second from left) shoveling-in on Little Eldorado No. 1, August 1913.
Photo courtesy D. D. Cairnes Collection,
Earth Sciences Sector, Natural Resources Canada, Ottawa

Figure 6: A typical stampeder on the trail to Chisana, 1913.
Note crosscut saw for whipsawing lumber.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Needing additional gear, Best returned to Dawson City about the middle of July. While there, he provided the local newspaper with a current description of the strike. Best related that both Bonanza and Little Eldorado were claimed "from end to end," and noted that when he left, stakers were also "planting poles on Coarse Money Gulch, Gold Run, Wilson, and other creeks in the immediate vicinity."[9]

Best's account electrified the Yukon, Alaska, and eventually much of the Pacific Northwest.[10] The *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, for example, proclaimed the strike as the richest since the Klondike, provoking defections which virtually emptied the Nizina gold camps and even briefly jeopardized the operation of Kennecott's copper complex.[11]

The *Dawson Daily News* confirmed the Cordova newspaper's story, adding that "at Blackburn and McCarthy none who could get away remained. . . . [T]his morning word came from Chitina that more than half the population of the town had left or would leave Monday for the Shushanna."[12]

Blackburn, McCarthy, and Chitina were not the only local communities affected. The find impacted Cordova as well.[13] The *Daily Alaskan* reported that public interest was intense and that scores of residents were preparing to go: "They are only awaiting further details as to the extent of the richness of the strike."[14] Many must have eventually left, for one witness claimed that after the departure of the northbound train, "you could fire a cannon down the main street . . . and not hit a soul."[15]

Figure 7: Most international stampeders passed through Cordova.
Photo from author's collection

When news of the discovery reached the outside world, it soon elicited a similar response. As in the case of the Klondike find, Seattle was particularly affected.

> Gossip of the Shushanna strike was to be heard on all sides yesterday in the hotels and resorts [where] Alaskans are wont to congregate. Plans for hasty embarkation were being made and staid gold hunters of former days, who had not felt the call of the north in years, did not attempt to conceal their interest and enthusiasm. The 'fever' was very much in evidence.[16]

The liner *Northwestern* was one of the first to leave for the north. Friends of the departing gold seekers thronged the dock and automobiles lined the pier for more than a block in each direction. The *Seattle Times* noted the excitement, reporting that the waterfront had not experienced such activity since the Klondike days.[17]

Figure 8: Many stampeders, like this group in Chitina, rode the train from Cordova to Blackburn before starting their overland trek. Photo courtesy Charlotte Hazelet Turtainen, Kirkland, Washington

Vancouver's boosters soon began a campaign to wrest some of the traffic away from Seattle. Their "Progress Club" initiated a "Chisana Day," and offered free maps to all interested stampeders. It also began a subscription drive to pay for advertising Canadian routes and promoting the benefits of local outfitting. By early August, their efforts seemed to have been at least partially successful. Ticket agents reported "a tremendous inquiry" and speculated that "several hundred northerners will leave this city and Victoria before the end of the month."[18]

Like their counterparts in Vancouver, Whitehorse residents also promoted the Chisana district. They, however, championed their own route into the region.

> From the head of the Tanana [River] it will be something like one hundred and twenty-five miles overland to the discovery. On the White River light draught

steamers can proceed about fourteen miles above the mouth of the Klutasin and to the mouth of [Beaver Creek]. On the latter it is said poling boats can be taken within ten miles of the scene of the strike.[19]

Fairbanks boosters, of course, disputed the superiority of this Yukon passage. "The [White] River at best is only navigable to the head of the Donjek," they cautioned, "and that point is 105 miles from the scene of the strike." While they admitted that Dawson City was closer to the strike than Fairbanks, they warned that goods shipped through Canada were subject to customs duty at the border. The Tanana River, in contrast, was an "all-American" route.[20]

Figure 9: Stampeders crossing Dan Creek on their way to the Chisana. Photo courtesy Lewis Levensaler Collection, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Most interior residents viewed the Tanana as the logical route to the diggings. Healy Lake trader William H. Newton, for example, claimed that from Tanana Crossing to the Chisana the water was "so slack that the wind will blow a boat upstream." Newton warned, however, that swift water between Fairbanks and Tanana Crossing could inhibit travel: "The best way then would be to mush to Tanana Crossing, build a boat there, and pole to the near field."[21]

W. H. Merritt also believed it would be relatively easy to ascend the Tanana.[22] Hoping to capture some of the stampeders' business, Merritt tried to establish a trading post on the

Chisana River. Although he chartered the 101-ton *Dusty Diamond* to transport his freight, he failed to get anywhere near the Chisana district.[23]

Large boats, however, continued trying to reach the goldfield. Most, including the *Tana*, the *Shushana*, the *White Seal*, the *Martha Clow*, the *Florence S.*, and the *Samson*, failed to reach even the Nabesna River.[24] The Northern Navigation Company's steamer *Reliance* got a little further, attaining the mouth of the Chisana and establishing the townsite of Reliance City.[25] Only a few smaller craft went up the Chisana River. The *Marathon* and the *Mabel* probably ascended the furthest, reaching a spot about six miles below the mouth of Scotty Creek where they founded Gasoline City.[26]

Prospectors approached the Chisana from every possible direction. Most were poorly equipped and many lacked a clear concept of where they were headed. Consequently, many failed to arrive, and of those who did, few remained for more than a few days.[27]

Figure 10: Some stampeders poled boats up Beaver Creek.
Photo courtesy D. D. Cairnes Collection, Earth Sciences Sector,
Natural Resources Canada, Ottawa

The experiences related by Gus Lepart and Tony Grisko were fairly typical of those approaching from the north. According to Lepart, he and Grisko

> left Dawson with three others on July 27, and took a boat to the mouth of the White, whence we poled to the Donjek. Three of the boys left us there, and we

> bought their outfit, and continued with five dogs. Grisko and I then poled up to near the canyon, and struck across country with each dog carrying thirty pounds and each man fifty pounds, with rifles and blankets on top. We cached goods on the river bank for our return, and, with the dogs, carried in enough on the one trip to keep us going for seven weeks that we were in the diggings, with the exception of about seventy-five dollars worth of grub which we bought at Chisana City. We got to Wilson Creek August 25.[28]

For those coming from the south, the route up the Chitistone River was fast, but particularly risky. George Hazelet, who traversed it in mid-July 1913, described this so-called "goat trail" as

> an extremely dangerous place for horses, . . . being simply a sheep trail widened to about two feet. The drop to the bottom is as much as two thousand feet in places and should horse or man lose his footing he could not stop till he reached the bottom.[29]

Ruben Lindblom, who passed that way with his brother Hugo about the same time as Hazelet, recorded another commonly encountered peril:

> Broke camp this morning intending to ford the river on foot as no parties with horses have shown up yet. We made our packs snug, tied our rifles to the packs so as to have our hands free, then cut a long pole and started abreast into the water . . . . The stream at this point was not very wide, about sixty yards or so. We had gotten half way over, with the water well above our waists when I went down, but the others kept their feet so I managed to get up again by holding onto the pole. The water was running swift, a great deal more so than it seemed to be when standing on the bank, and the gravel on the bottom was moving which made it well nigh impossible to keep ones feet from being washed from under him. We got straightened out once more . . . [but] had not taken but a few steps forward when we all seemed to go under at about the same time. I know I was under water some little distance before I saw daylight again but whenever I got partly straightened up the water would hit my pack and roll me over and over. But I kept kicking whenever my feet touched bottom and soon I stopped and found that I had ahold of Hugo and he was hanging onto me, both spitting out water and blowing like a porpoise. I glanced hurriedly down steam and saw Jacques with his arms around a block of ice which had stranded close to shore in shallow water. Mardi was just crawling out of the water on the opposite side of the river from the rest of us, and was so excited that he grabbed the hat off his head and threw it back into the water. Jacques and I lost our hats but Hugo saved his. We also lost a shovel. But we congratulated ourselves on getting thru with such a slight loss.[30]

Figure 11: Stampeders negotiating the treacherous "goat trail" through Chitistone Canyon.
Photo courtesy L. R. Zacharias Collection,
Alaska State Library and Archives, Juneau

Figure 12: The longer but safer trail up Skolai Creek.
Photo from author's collection

A government survey party, then employed in locating the international boundary between the United States and Canada, had the opportunity to observe many Chisana stampeders as they crossed Skolai Pass.

> About 75 percent . . . were very inadequately equipped for a trip of this description, and as they seemed to consider a government survey party a sort of general supply depot, it became the duty of the survey to provide meals for them, to sell them what

> provisions could be spared, and even to provide clothing and shoes, in addition to furnishing minute directions as to how to get to the diggings.[31]

On his return to Seattle, survey chief Thomas Riggs, Jr. noted that his party had met one man

> . . . going into the interior with a horse on which he had packed ten pounds of raisins, having been informed that raisins were unusually efficacious in sustaining life in that country. We found scores of persons who had absolutely no idea how to pack their horses and who were carrying in supplies that could not possibly sustain them.[32]

Canadian geologist Delorme D. Cairnes, who visited the Chisana district in late July, provided a similar account. He related meeting many stampeders "who had been three weeks on the way, wandering all over the country and living principally on gophers."[33]

> We met stampeders all through the woods while on our way back to Dawson. The men seemed to be unable to follow the trail up [Beaver Creek]. Forty miles this side of [the Chisana district], we met a man in a gulch who shouted over to us and asked if he had reached the 'diggins.' It seems a good many have absolutely no knowledge of traveling though a wild open country.[34]

Considering the above descriptions, it is not surprising that approximately a dozen stampeders perished trying to reach the goldfield. Most drowned crossing glacial torrents, but some undoubtedly died from exposure and a few may actually have starved to death.[35]

Even after reaching the diggings, provisions remained practically unprocurable. According to Ruben Lindblom, one party purchased

> . . . three pounds of flour for twenty dollars and had a hard time to get it at all, as the man who sold it would rather have kept the flour than part with it at any price, but merely did so to help the other fellow out who was entirely out of provisions.[36]

Neil Finnesand faced a similar situation. While the district's cheapest food cost $1.00 a pound, rice and sugar fetched $1.25 a cup.

> If a sack of flour was brought in, no one was allowed to buy a whole sack. They could just get two or three pounds. However, lots of meat was available–sheep and caribou–and the prospectors lived on that.[37]

Despite such hardships, several thousand stampeders reached the Chisana district between July and October 1913. Fletcher T. Hamshaw, for example, was one of the earliest arrivals. The well known mineral developer and his sixteen-man crew were prospecting for copper on the upper White River when they first heard news of the strike. An aggressive entrepreneur, Hamshaw used whatever means were necessary to acquire such potentially valuable ground, including employing members of his "former" crew to locate claims.[38]

Figure 13: Margaret and Fletcher Hamshaw in camp, 1913.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Local prospectors objected to the practice, arguing that Hamshaw was attempting to monopolize the area by evading the spirit, if not the letter, of the law. Hamshaw, however, denied any wrongdoing:

> When we left North Fork Island to go to the strike, all of my men were discharged and paid off, and all went to the diggings and staked for themselves, except my engineers, packers, and cooks. Anyone of these whose claims were purchased by me was paid for his claims the same as though I had bought them from any other person.[39]

Hamshaw initially staked the mouth of Bonanza Creek, but abandoned the site when he failed to locate any productive ground. Moving his outfit down Chathenda Creek, he next tried a bench claim where he was equally unsuccessful. Hamshaw also prospected Chavolda Creek, ground-sluicing near the mouth of Big Eldorado Creek.[40]

Most of Big Eldorado, however, was already taken. Billy James had located a discovery claim on the upper creek, while W. D. "Dud" McKinney and Anthony McGettigan had selected much of the rest. None of the three, however, actually mined Big Eldorado that first season. Leasing their claims to others, the trio worked more promising property on Bonanza Creek.[41]

By the middle of July, prospectors had selected virtually all available sites. Those arriving later either turned around at once, staked "wildcats," jumped someone else's claim, or continued into adjoining districts. Even those who obtained a favorable tract usually left immediately, returning later with a sufficiently large outfit to complete their assessments.[42]

George Hazelet and his two sons were typical late arrivals. Reaching Bonanza Creek on July 30, they found about 175 prospectors and signs of frenzied activity. Stakes were everywhere, not just along the creek but also far up the hillsides.[43] Hazelet puzzled over how to proceed. Before he had made a decision, however, one of his sons heard about some outlying property that was still available. Setting out late in the evening, the family visited the spot and eventually staked two wildcat claims on Chicken Creek, a tributary of Glacier Creek lying just over the divide from Little Eldorado.[44]

Figure 14: Members of the Hazelet party at Kennecott, August 1913.
The man at left is G. C. "Shorty" Gwin.
Photo courtesy Charlotte Hazelet Turtainen, Kirkland, Washington

They began their required assessment work after only a few days' rest. On August 10 they completed a forty-five-foot-long ditch on Chicken No. 4, which Hazelet had located by power-of-attorney for Cordova Judge John Y. Ostrander. Two days later they finished a similar trench on Chicken No. 3. Neither claim, however, ever yielded any gold.[45]

Ruben Lindblom also located a claim. Reaching Chathenda Creek on July 31, he and a frenchman named Jacques explored the surrounding countryside:

> We had gone perhaps a mile from camp keeping a lookout for signs of new mining or works of any kind, when we found a sort of sign . . . [marked] 'Diggings on

Johnson Creek.' We started up the mountain and soon struck a trail which showed fresh men tracks. Had gone a couple of miles when it commenced raining but we kept going, and after a while came to where some parties had located mining claims,

Figure 15: A well-dressed Chisana prospector, c. 1914.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

dated the same day we came to Johnson Creek. Found a number of claims located on a small creek which we followed about two miles where we each located a claim, numbers 4 and 5 above discovery claim. It rained incessantly so we were wet as could be before we were ready to hit back to camp which was some four or five miles from where we located our claims.[46]

The following day, Lindblom and his associates remained in camp

. . . too tired and footsore to go anywhere. A man came in about noon whom we had seen on the trail coming to the diggings. . . . This fellow reported having been on, and prospected the streams where rumor had it gold had been found in paying quantities, but he said the reported strike was a fake and he could not find any gold on but one claim, the first discovery on Little Eldorado, all of which did not tend to raise our spirits or encourage us any.[47]

Disheartened by such reports, on August 2 the group decided to return to McCarthy.

Have decided to hit the back trail to-morrow because our grub is very low and no chance to get any more in here. . . . We did not do any work on our locations, nor did

we record them so they are open for some one else to jump but fear no one will find much on them.[48]

While Lindblom's ground could legitimately be re-staked, recorded claims were supposed to be immune from seizure. Jealous prospectors, however, soon coveted those properties as well.

Predictably, one major dispute focused on James's holdings. On September 23, Dawson residents Hugh Brady and Henry Dubois sued the miner, claiming that an outdated grubstake agreement entitled them to a share of his discovery. Although they obtained an injunction that temporarily halted mining on his claims, the matter was ultimately settled out of court, and most of the property was returned to James.[49]

Frank Purdy, Fred Best's former partner in the Cassiar Roadhouse, occupied Dan Sutherland's fraction on Big Eldorado Creek and ignored all demands to leave.[50] Hoping to avoid violence, Sutherland, too, sought his recourse in the courts. A Cordova jury, however, inexplicably awarded the ground to Purdy. Sutherland appealed the decision and eventually prevailed, but it was January 1919 before he finally regained possession.[51]

Dud McKinney, seemingly less sophisticated than the others, employed a more traditional approach. When a claim jumper tried to take his property, he merely removed the offending party at gun-point.[52]

Figure 16: The first gold from the Chisana.
Photo courtesy Candy Waugaman, Fairbanks

CHAPTER THREE

THE BRIEF BOOM

The Chisana district's first recording office opened on July 22, 1913, in a tent at the mouth of Bonanza Creek, with Horatio E. Morgan serving as U.S. commissioner and recorder. Business at the office was brisk. By mid-August, Morgan had already registered about 250 claims.[1]

Unfortunately, problems quickly developed. Not only were new arrivals accused of jumping claims but there were also widespread complaints about Morgan's bookkeeping methods. The recorder tried to defend his actions. While he admitted that his books–a hotel register and accounts ledger–were crude, he claimed that they were scrupulously honest. Faced with growing criticism, however, Morgan soon resigned.[2]

Figure 17: Bonanza City, 1913.
Photo from author's collection

Meanwhile, George Hazelet was also busy. A consummate speculator, the Cordova businessman began seeking an appropriate location for a townsite. Hazelet selected two 160-acre parcels, "just below Johnson, east of Chisana and south of Wilson."[3] Named "Woodrow," this community became the site of the district's second recording office, managed by acting U.S. Commissioner J. J. Finnegan.[4]

Local prospectors soon objected to the location of Finnegan's office. By placing it in Woodrow, the commissioner forced them to walk nearly eight miles every time they wished to conduct business. Despite their complaints, however, Finnegan refused to move.[5]

On September 9, 1913, seventy-five miners met near the mouth of Chathenda Creek to address some of their common problems. Before the day ended, the group organized the Chathenda Mining District and established a new townsite, which they christened "Johnson City." They also removed Finnegan as acting commissioner and selected George E. "Ned" Hill as his temporary replacement.[6]

The district's first cold weather provoked an exodus of stampeders, with some bartering their entire outfits to finance their transportation home. Even James, Wales, and Nelson deserted the region. Having accumulated a hefty nest egg before shutting down for the season, the three headed south to enjoy a relaxing winter.[7]

Although mining activity dwindled, Johnson City continued to grow. By the middle of October, nearly all townsite lots had been staked and the village contained about two hundred cabins.[8] Among other amenities, it boasted two streets, two grocery stores, and the district's third recording office.[9] It also possessed a post office, run by former steamboat captain Theodore Kettleson. Despite the wishes of most local residents, however, postal officials insisted on redesignating the community "Chisana City."[10]

Figure 18: Tony Dimond (far right) was a miner before he studied law.
Photo courtesy Valdez Museum

Word soon reached the town that federal authorities had chosen Anthony J. "Tony" Dimond of Valdez as its new commissioner.[11] A former gold miner on Young Creek in the Nizina district, Dimond was widely known and believed to be scrupulously honest. The *Chitina Leader* applauded the selection, suggesting that it marked an end to the capricious

practices of the past: "There will be no juggling with records, no over charges and no connivance with big interests to the detriment of the hardy son of toil."[12]

Despite such support, Dimond was hesitant to accept the position. The post was a gamble because the commissioner had to depend on fees for his salary. If mining activity declined, the recording business would slow, and fee opportunities would diminish. "If the camp is good," Dimond told a friend, "I will make a lot of money, if it's a failure, I'll lose a thousand dollars, which it will cost me to get in there." In the end, however, Dimond agreed to go.[13]

During the fall of 1913, George Hazelet decided to increase Cordova's share of the market by creating a safer and more direct route to the diggings. That September he blazed a path across the Nizina and Chisana Glaciers. Designed to be utilized either winter or summer, his trail was short and possessed practically no grades over 12 percent.[14] Skagway boosters, who logically championed Canadian routes to the goldfield, questioned the viability of this glacier trail. They maintained that Hazelet was suffering from delusions, "produced no doubt by a sight of gold in the Chisana."[15]

Others appeared far more optimistic. Seattle resident and former Klondike stampeder T. G. Jones, for example, believed that Hazelet's route would be suitable for his specially made automobile, which he bragged could carry "about a ton of supplies" while retaining "ample power to run up hill." Although he transported his machine to McCarthy, a brush fire then raging along the trail a few miles to the south probably precluded any further progress.[16]

Figure 19: Summit Roadhouse on the Hazelet Trail, 1914.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Tony Dimond was one of the first to utilize Hazelet's trail, reaching Chisana City in late November. To his dismay, he found the district's records badly organized and food scarce. Writing to his friend and former partner Joseph H. Murray, he dismissed the area's prospects, speculating that if local miners found as much pay as the two of them had discovered on Young Creek, "they would go wild."[17]

Figure 20: Winter conditions on the Hazelet Trail were often extreme.
Photo courtesy Candy Waugaman, Fairbanks

December brought profound changes to Chisana City. Dimond assumed his office at the beginning of the month, becoming the area's fourth commissioner. As one of his first official duties, he officiated at the marriage of O. J. Wheatly to Berta Cochrane, the head of the local Red Cross hospital. Later, Frank Miller opened the town's first saloon, appropriately calling his establishment the "Miner's Home."[18] The growing community

Figure 21: Miner's Home Bar in Chisana City, c. March 1914.
Photo courtesy L. R. Zacharias Collection,
Alaska State Library and Archives, Juneau

now included about four hundred cabins and boasted four stores, two meat markets, two barber shops, two restaurants, a hotel, and a boarding house.[19]

Near the close of the year, the district's miners received some other exciting news. A financial consortium of pioneer Alaskans, including John J. "Jack" Price, Frank Manley, and E. J. Ives offered the widely reported sum of $500,000 to lease the property belonging to James, Wales, Nelson, and their silent partner, William A. "Billy" Johnson. The four accepted the syndicate's bid and transferred thirteen claims, including the richest one of all on Little Eldorado.[20]

The first year's production in the Chisana district was surprisingly low. Prospectors only recovered about 1,935 ounces of gold, worth approximately $40,000. Despite the low return, most prospectors still believed in the area's potential and predicted that the following summer would bring important new discoveries.[21]

Many operators, in fact, continued to work throughout the winter, thawing the frozen ground as they slowly progressed toward bedrock. Fred Best and various lessees mined on Bonanza Nos. 3, 3A, 7, 7A, 8, 8A, and 18.[22] James E. Hagen and his partners prospected Big Eldorado Creek, reportedly recovering some gravel that yielded thirty cents to the pan.[23]

Figure 22: Freighting portable steam boilers on Bonanza Creek, 1914.
Photo courtesy Candy Waugaman, Fairbanks, Alaska

Charles Bush and three colleagues even worked Gold Run, sinking drift holes at the mouth of Discovery Pup.[24]

Still expanding, Chisana City began to assume an air of permanence. Structures were more elaborate and some, like Sam Shucklin's clothing store, even sported glass windows. Many buildings were also larger. W. H. Simpson and Louie Belney, for example, constructed a two-story cabin, which they rented to the government. The biggest building in town, it was shared by Dimond, his assistant Tony McGettigan, and the newly appointed

deputy marshal, Frank H. Hoffman.[25] Chisana City was now a major Alaskan community, described by one newspaper as the "largest log cabin town in the world."[26]

Figure 23: Chisana City. Looking west down First Street.
Photo from author's collection

Figure 24: Chisana City. Sam Shucklin's clothing store at right.
Photo from author's collection

Figure 25: George Handy's pack train entering Chisana City.
Photo from author's collection

Figure 26: Cigar Store in Chisana City, c. 1914.
Photo courtesy L. R. Zacharias Collection,
Alaska State Library and Archives, Juneau

Figure 27: Shushanna Express Company office in Chisana City, c. 1914.
Photo from author's collection

Figure 28: Shushanna Cafe.
Photo courtesy L. R. Zacharias Collection,
Alaska State Library and Archives, Juneau

Seattle reporter Grace G. Bostwick spent that first winter at Chisana City. In March she related that

> the camp is fast assuming the airs and ways of a town. Men mostly shave now, where formerly they were rough and bearded. They are also more particular about their clothing. The most interesting period of the camp . . . the pioneer days . . . when one after another of the first cabins were built, when delicacies of any sort were absolutely unknown, and when magazines and books were prizes eagerly longed for are past. . . . There are by this time two bath tubs in the place, as there are brooms, tea kettles, and many other luxuries formerly unknown. It only remains for the eagerly anticipated strike to materialize, in which event the camp will become a bona fide town with great rapidity, even though it is said to be the most inaccessible camp yet started in Alaska.[27]

The camp at the mouth of Bonanza Creek was also beginning to look more like a town. Commonly called Bonanza City, it had grown throughout the winter, and by spring even included several women. Although still made up mostly of tents, it now possessed a few cabins, as well as four stores, two hotels, and a restaurant.[28]

Figure 29: Bonanza City at its zenith.
Photo courtesy Lewis V. Stanley Collection,
Alaska State Library and Archives, Juneau

The increasing activity, while welcomed by the miners, soon devastated the Native community of Cross Creek Village. Their subsistence opportunities, for example, substantially declined. Hungry prospectors rapidly depleted small game populations.

Cairnes, for example, claimed that many Chisana stampeders lived entirely on ptarmigan "for days or even weeks at a time."[29] Grant Reed confirmed Cairnes report, noting that one man with a willow stick could easily harvest a flour sack full of the birds.[30]

Figure 30: *Nach'etay Cheeg* (Cross Creek Village), c. 1914.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Big game populations also dwindled. As early as August 1913, George Hazelet warned that while game remained plentiful, it was "being rapidly driven back. . . . The game law should be rigidly enforced in that country at once."[31] Territorial officials however, seem to have ignored Hazelet's warning. By spring 1914, local prospectors had consumed about 2,000 Dall sheep, virtually eliminating them from the vicinity.[32]

Some of Cross Creek Village's twenty-five or so residents moved north or west to escape the unwelcome impact of the gold discovery. Others, attracted by the stores and promise of cash labor, abandoned their traditional locale and moved to Chisana City, where many worked as market hunters.[33]

At the beginning of 1914, Manley, Price, and Ives assigned their newly acquired property to Fletcher Hamshaw. Anticipating a busy summer, the operator moved eight steam boilers and a portable sawmill into the district. Crews soon set up the sawmill and began cutting the lumber necessary for large-scale sluicing operations.[34]

Hamshaw situated his main camp on the south side of Bonanza Creek at the mouth of Little Eldorado. Nearly a community of its own, it consisted of about sixteen tents, including offices, a mess hall, a commissary, and sleeping quarters. While somewhat isolated, both a trail and a telephone line linked the camp with Hamshaw's warehouse in Bonanza City.[35]

Figure 31: Fletcher Hamshaw's Camp on Bonanza No. 6, 1914.
Photo courtesy Stephen Capps Collection,
U. S. Geological Survey Photographic Library, Denver

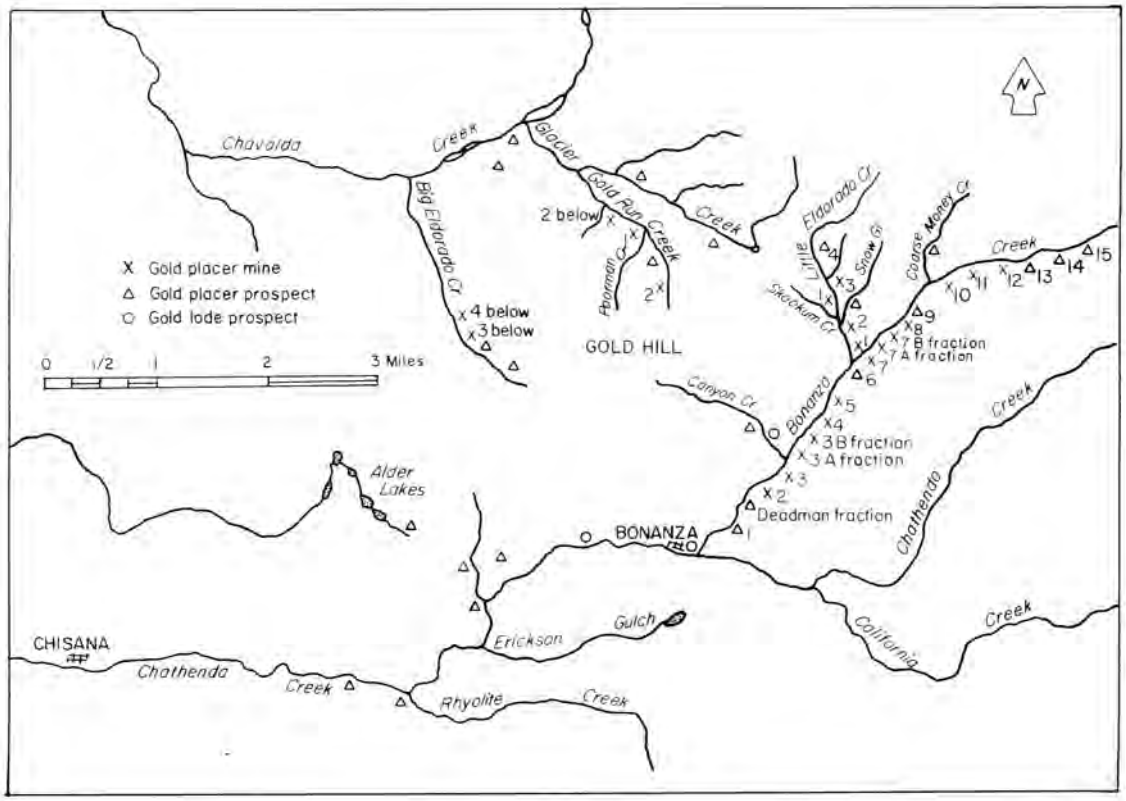

Figure 32: Mining claims in the Gold Hill area, 1914.

Figure 33: Mining near the top of Bonanza No. 5, 1914.
Note boomer dam in middle background.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Other Chisana operations were far less elaborate. Only one man, for example, worked the fraction lying above Bonanza No. 1.[36]

Bonanza No. 2 was a more typical example. Here, seven men mined for most of the season. In order to work the canyon floor, they diverted the creek first to one side and then the other, bringing water to their sluice boxes through a canvas hose. Although the operators recovered approximately $12,000 worth of gold, nuggets were rare. Even the largest was only valued at around four dollars.[37]

Ten men worked Bonanza No. 3. Beginning operations about six hundred feet below the claim's upper limit, they built a three-hundred-foot-long flume to carry the creek past their "open-cut." To recover the gold, they employed a dump box and about a hundred feet of sluice box equipped with pole riffles. The mining, however, was still done entirely by hand, utilizing a technique known as "shoveling-in."[38]

Fred Best and five employees worked Bonanza No. 3A Fraction. The group utilized a 120-foot flume to carry the stream past their cut, and employed a dozen, 12-foot sluice boxes to wash their paydirt. This claim produced much coarser gold than Bonanza No. 2. More than half was composed of nuggets valued in excess of $5.00, including one worth $61.80.[39]

Mining also resumed on Bonanza No. 3B Fraction, where Joe P. McClellan had recovered several thousand dollars worth of gold the previous summer.[40] Ten men constructed a 350-foot flume to divert the creek past their diggings and employed a set of sixteen sluice boxes to clean their gravel.[41]

Figure 34: Mining near lower end of Bonanza No. 7, July 1914.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Figure 35: Margraff's camp on Bonanza No. 10, 1914.
Photo from author's collection

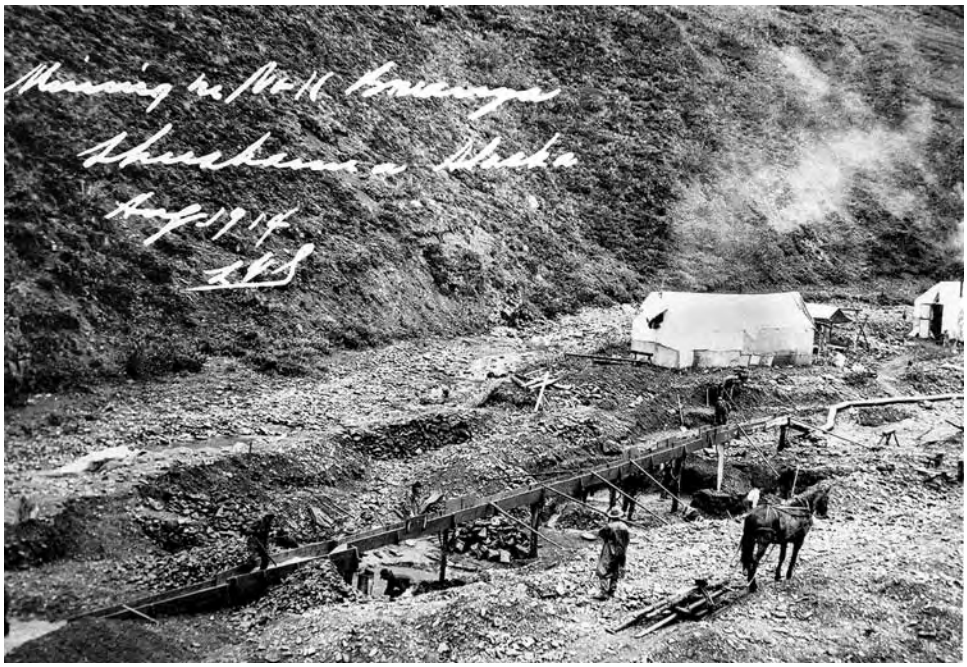

Figure 36: Mining on Bonanza No. 11, August 1914.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Hamshaw concentrated his efforts on Bonanza Nos. 4 and 5 and No. 1 on Little Eldorado, engaging a crew which sometimes approached one hundred men. Like most miners in the district, he generally ground-sluiced to remove the overburden, leaving the lower foot or two of gravel to be shoveled into the sluice boxes by hand. Hamshaw, however, employed a horse team and scraper to remove the tailings from the lower end of his line.[42]

The operator's efforts were quite successful. At Bonanza No. 4, for example, his crews excavated 974 linear feet of creek bottom, recovering about $21,100 on a $14,800 investment, or a net profit of around 42 percent. He also mined Bonanza No. 5, moving 5,620 cubic yards of gravel from 833 linear feet of the stream. This site, however, was less productive, returning only around $20,500 on his $15,500 investment.[43]

Fred Best operated Bonanza No. 7.[44] His men did not build a flume, but instead employed the method used on Bonanza No. 2: they alternately moved the creek from one side of its canyon to the other. Here, however, the miners constructed an automatic "boomer" dam to eliminate most the surface gravel before they began to shovel.[45] Best utilized similar techniques on No. 7A, an approximately five-hundred-foot-long fraction lying above Bonanza No. 7.[46]

Hamshaw worked Bonanza No. 8 for part of the summer, briefly employing sixteen men. By late July, however, they had encountered so little gold that the miner suspended further operations. Later in the season Jim Hagen mined the claim, but he only made about six hundred dollars.[47]

Lem Gates and Dud McKinney did far better on Bonanza No. 8 Fraction. Leasing the claim from Fred Best, they reportedly recovered six thousand dollars in gold. Further up Bonanza, the returns were more modest. On No. 9, for example, Henry Dubois made little more than wages.[48]

Two parties examined Bonanza No. 10. While a lessee explored the lower half, Carl Whitham worked the upper. Like Hamshaw's, his crew utilized a horse-drawn scraper to remove the surface gravel.[49]

Miners named McKay and Clinton prospected the lower end of claim No. 11, but found no productive ground. Dud McKinney and Lem Gates achieved better results on the other half. Late in the season they located a patch of bedrock which yielded six dollars to the square foot and reportedly recovered close to five thousand dollars.[50] Gates, however, never got to enjoy his newfound wealth. Following a prolonged illness, he died that August and was buried in Chisana City.[51]

Three men leased the lower portion of Bonanza No. 12 in 1914, using wheelbarrows to remove the overburden. Another three worked the property's upper half, where they located sufficient water to clean about 1,500 square feet of bedrock. Neither, however, found much gold.[52]

Of all the claims in the district, Little Eldorado No. 1 remained the most productive. Moving 9,220 cubic yards of gravel from 1,029 linear feet of the creek bottom, Fletcher Hamshaw recovered $51,952 worth of gold.[53]

Figure 37: Hamshaw's workings on Little Eldorado No. 1, 1914.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Carl Whitham spent the entire summer working Little Eldorado No. 2. Starting with about fifteen lengths of sluice box, his seven employees gradually added more as their mining progressed upstream. They also employed pressurized water to keep tailings from blocking the lower end of their line.[54]

Little Eldorado No. 3 yielded far less gold. Although Waggoner and Johnson operated the claim throughout the season, they only cleared about five thousand dollars.[55]

Charles Range, George Stone, and four associates leased Skookum Creek No. 1 from owner Bud Sargent. Beginning at its mouth, which lies on Little Eldorado No. 2, they worked their way upstream until, by the end of July, they had excavated 224 linear feet of

Figure 38: Skookum Creek Discovery, 1914.
Photo from author's collection

the creek bottom. The miners experienced difficulties, however, acquiring sufficient water with which to wash their gravel. Although they increased their supply by constructing a ditch to the head of Little Eldorado, they failed to muster sufficient head. Consequently, they had to accumulate water and to sluice only intermittently. Nevertheless, their efforts were successful. They recovered substantial gold, including many $10 and $20 nuggets and one worth $52.[56]

Several prospectors, including Whitehorse resident J. E. McGuire, examined Snow Gulch, another tributary of Little Eldorado. Although they found workable gravel in both the stream bed and on the benches, they had to delay their work. Until mining stopped on Little Eldorado No. 2, there was nowhere to dispose of the tailings.[57]

Miners working Big Eldorado Creek were at least moderately successful. The stream produced five thousand dollars in gold during the 1914 season, with one operator named Mike O'Malley recovering nearly half of that amount. Upper Discovery, part of the block held by Hamshaw, was leased by two men who seem to have only prospected the property.

Two others worked No. 1 Below, but it yielded little more than wages. More vigorous activity occurred on claim No. 3 Below. Here, ten men mined about 250 linear feet of creek bottom.[58]

No. 4 Below was also worked intensively. Two men ground-sluiced off about four feet of surface gravel before beginning to shovel-in. By the end of the summer, they had excavated six hundred linear feet. Their profits, however, were disappointing, with the operators reporting "only a fair return."[59]

Gold Run experienced a similar level of activity. Six men operated No. 2 Below, located just above its junction with Glacier Creek. Although they eventually worked about 150 linear feet of creek bottom, this claim barely paid its expenses.[60]

Figure 39: Mining on lower Gold Run about No. 2 Below.
Note use of sluice fork to catch larger stones.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Four men mined Gold Run No. 1 Above, where winter drift shafts had encountered an encouraging amount of gold. Unfortunately, Gold Run's water supply proved to be too meager for efficient mining. To alleviate this deficiency, its operators constructed a one-half-mile-long ditch to tap the upper part of Discovery Pup, and a dam with which to consolidate the resulting water. Their strategy succeeded and they eventually excavated about five hundred linear feet.[61]

No. 2 Above, located near the head of the Gold Run basin, got far less attention. Here, one man prospected the benches throughout the summer.[62]

Poorman Creek, Gold Run's largest tributary, also received some limited action on claim No. 1. As the stream was much too small to furnish an adequate head of water, its operators

built two dams to impound a sufficient supply. They also assembled nine, twelve-foot-long sluice box segments. Their efforts were in vain, however, as they recovered insufficient gold to justify further mining.[63]

Other creeks were also examined. Dawson resident William Steinberger, for example, reported finding good prospects on Canyon Creek during 1914. Prospectors claimed to have discovered pay on the benches of Coarse Money Creek as well. Those working Chathenda and Chavolda Creeks had far poorer luck. None recovered any appreciable quantity of gold.[64]

While most miners concentrated on mining surface placers, a few sunk shafts. Some were even rather extensive. One dug near the mouth of Dry Gulch by Anthony McGuire, for example, was ninety-six-feet deep. All, however, were wasted efforts.[65]

Figure 40: Prospectors steam-thawing gravel on Bonanza Creek.
Photo from author's collection

By mid-summer opinions regarding the promise of the Chisana district varied widely. Most acknowledged some of the region's drawbacks. The gold bearing area, for example, was relatively small:

> Exclusive of a few claims from which some gold was taken during prospecting operations, all the gravels which have been profitably mined can be included within a circle only five miles in diameter, with Gold Hill as its center. . . . In the whole district mining was actively carried on during the summer of 1914 on about twenty-one claims . . . .[66]

It was also a expensive place to mine. Labor was prohibitively high, generally costing around six dollars per day, plus board. Stephen R. Capps believed that conditions in the district justified the expense. He cautioned, however, that it would eventually curtail development, as "much ground can not now be worked that would yield a profit if the labor cost were less."[67]

Apparently agreeing with Capps, Hamshaw offered his workers only five dollars per day, to be paid by draft on a Seattle bank. On June 16, the 115-man Shushanna Miners Association rejected his proposal, insisting that they be paid in gold at the six-dollar rate. Faced with a strike, Hamshaw eventually acceded to the group's demands.[68]

Figure 41: Shushanna Miner's Association meeting in Bonanza City, June 16, 1914.
Photo courtesy Candy Waugaman, Fairbanks

Fred Best also experienced some labor problems on Bonanza No. 7. His, however, were far less serious than Hamshaw's. After complaining about their wages for nearly a week, Best's men cooled down and returned to work at their original rate of pay.[69]

The district weathered some other difficulties as well. As no timber grew near the mines, wood was in short supply. While the area now possessed two sawmills, lumber still cost between $125 and $150 per thousand board feet at the mill, and transportation charges were high. Even firewood brought forty dollars a cord when delivered to the mouth of Little Eldorado.[70]

Food also remained expensive. Fred Best noted that

> . . . with the storekeepers arriving daily and hoping to 'get rich quick,' prices which are already too high, are increasing. Flour–forty cents per pound; sugar–fifty cents per pound; beans–twenty-five cents; other things in proportion–no 'luxury items' included here![71]

Despite such obvious drawbacks, some individuals continued to promote the district. Harold H. Waller, a young mining engineer from Seattle, for example, assured newsmen that Chisana was far from being "a fizzle." Predicting that the season's production would reach $400,000, he described it as ". . . a sporting proposition."[72]

Figure 42: Typical miner's residence above Bonanza Creek, 1914.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

When the anticipated discoveries failed to materialize, many residents left the region. Some, like postmaster Theodore Kettleson, went to Fairbanks in route to the new diggings along the Tolovana River. Others moved to the Nizina district. A few even headed for the coast. Tony Dimond was one of the latter. Failing to make any money, Dimond resigned his position as commissioner and returned to Valdez.[73]

Both individuals, however, were soon replaced. The government appointed George R. Goshaw as postmaster and George E. Hill as commissioner. Hill, however, served only briefly before being succeeded by J. J. Finnegan.[74]

In August heavy rains disrupted mining activity throughout the region. Due to its more extensive development, Bonanza Creek was hardest hit. Flood waters destroyed one of Hamshaw's dams, and damaged flume sections or sluice boxes belonging to virtually every other outfit. Best, for example, reported that "it looked like a hurricane struck No. 7, with

flumes, sluice boxes, [and] lumber . . . scattered everywhere." Lacking sufficient time and materials to rebuild, many operators were forced to prematurely end their 1914 season.[75]

Figure 43: Flood waters swept lower Bonanza Creek in August 1914.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Despite such setbacks, 1914 was a very successful year. The area's miners recovered 12,094 ounces of gold, or about a quarter of a million dollars. Eagerly anticipating the coming season, around two hundred chose to winter in the district. Most stayed in Chisana City.[76]

One such resident was fifty-year-old Louis K. Schonborn, a well known Dawson City hotel operator during the Klondike rush. Reaching the Chisana district too late to locate a productive claim, Schonborn instead established a second-hand business, reselling outfits purchased from busted stampeders. While he located his first shop in Bonanza City, he soon moved eight miles down Chathenda Creek to the larger community of Chisana City.[77]

On December 26, 1914, Schonborn disappeared. When local authorities finally organized a search, they found his body in a vacant cabin about a quarter of a mile west of town. He had been shot twice and robbed, the district's only recorded murder.[78]

Area residents were predictably outraged. Puzzled by the fact that Schonborn had failed to lock his store, many believed that he had left with a friend or at least an acquaintance. Circumstantial evidence suggested that a popular prospector named Jimmy Kingston had committed the crime and he was quickly arrested. Deputy Marshal Frank Hoffman and George R. Goshaw transported Kingston to Valdez, where he was held until the Grand Jury

convened the following September. The Grand Jury, however, ultimately cleared Kingston, and Schonborn's murder was never solved.[79]

Figure 44: Louis Schonborn's store in Bonanza City.
Photo courtesy L. R. Zacharias Collection,
Alaska State Library and Archives, Juneau

Chisana City remained viable for another year. During the summer of 1915, it still contained at least eighteen businesses, including lodging houses, saloons, and stores. The turnover of federal officials, however, continued. Resigning as U.S. commissioner, J. J. Finnegan was replaced by Tony Dimond's former assistant, Tony McGettigan.[80]

As in previous years, most mining occurred on Bonanza Creek. Fred Best and Don L. Greene reported a fair return from their operation on No. 3; Joe McClellan, Robert W. Wiley, and a crew of five sluiced the upper end of No. 3 Fraction; Fletcher Hamshaw's twelve-man crew finished mining No. 4 and moved up to the lower end of No. 5; Max Altman and a nine man crew made several cuts on the lower end of No. 6; Edward "Shorty" Briggen, a miner named Hocker, and five employees mined No. 7; John Ludwig and his partner sluiced on No. 7 Fraction, which had been successfully worked by Andy Taylor the previous year; Jim Hagen and a man named Smedley mined No. 8; Robert M. Clark mined the lower end on No. 10; and James H. Murie worked eleven employees on upper No. 10.[81]

Billy James experienced a busy season. He and a crew of seven constructed a one-thousand-foot-long flume to transport water from Coarse Money Creek for hydraulic mining on Bonanza No. 9. Then he and N. P. Nelson began the process of extending the ditch, crossing from the right to the left limit of the creek at Bonanza No. 6 and continuing downstream all the way to Bonanza No. 4.[82]

Dud McKinney also enjoyed a productive year. Two laymen, named Huntley and Moore, leased the lower part of his No. 11 claim, while McKinney and his crew mined the

upper. Although his lessees experienced a disappointing season, McKinney found good pay, including some fifty-dollar pans. McKinney, however, suffered tragedy as well. On July 4, his old friend George Myers collapsed and died while visiting Bonanza No. 10. After the funeral, Myers was buried on the adjoining bench.[83]

Miners also worked claims further up Bonanza Creek. Alfred T. Wright and a miner named Anderson, for example, worked the upper end of No. 11 Fraction; George Bittner and a partner operated No. 12; James, Eagan, and Ryan examined No. 13; and John Nichols prospected Bonanza No. 17 for Chisana City clothing store owner Sam Shucklin.[84]

Little Eldorado Creek and its tributaries were mined just as intensively as Bonanza. Two of Hamshaw's laymen, Andy Johnson and a miner named McGovern, worked the upper left limit of No. 1; Carl Whitham and ten employees operated No. 2; William "Billy" McLennan and six men mined No. 3; Charles Range and George Stone worked Bud Sargent's claim at Skookum Creek No. 1; George Woodman and a partner named Deffinbaugh mined Skookum Creek No. 2; and W. E. Nelson examined Nos. 3 and 4 on Snow Gulch.[85]

Figure 45: Mining on upper Bonanza Creek at about No. 12, c. 1915.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Other area creeks received some attention. At least three miners worked parts of Big Eldorado Creek: Montgomery and Ketching sluiced No. 4 Below Upper Discovery while Richard Bell mined No. 3 Below. Eagan and company worked No. 1 on Coarse Money Creek; Louis McCallum, a miner named McNutt, and George Tweedale sluiced Shamrock Creek; Aaron Nelson prospected Canyon Creek; E. J. "Jack" Costello examined Lucky Pup; Bastell, Lewis, and Munsell mined No. 3 Below on Gold Run Creek; Dan Ryan sluiced Poorman Creek; and Wagner and Hill prospected Sargent Creek.[86]

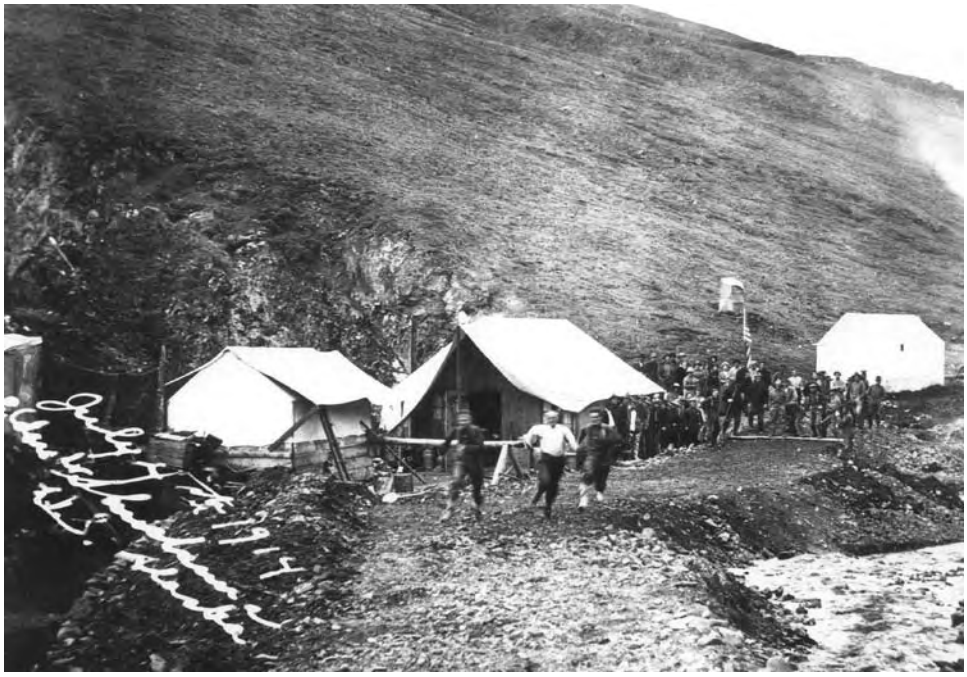

Figure 46: A Fourth of July footrace at Hamshaw's Camp, 1914.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Figure 47: Splitting firewood at Hamshaw's bunkhouse, July 1914.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Despite all this activity, by season's end it was clear that the Chisana was a declining district. Its gold production, for example, had fallen well below 1914 levels, with miners recovering only 7,740 ounces or about $160,000. Employment was also down. Chisana's seventeen active mines only fielded about 110 men. Having experienced a discouraging year, most miners left that fall, with only about fifty choosing to winter in Chisana City.[87]

These miners, however, remained committed to the district. Some contracted with freighter Sidney "Too Much" Johnston that October to reestablish the Hazelet trail. Billy James made the largest contribution, donating $500 cash and one man's labor, estimated to be worth an additional $300. The Alaska Road Commission supported the project as well, granting $500 toward the effort. Even McCarthy merchants participated, adding another $250. Anxious to see the job completed, James promised that any additional costs would be paid by "the people in the Shushanna."[88]

Figure 48: Sidney "Too Much" Johnston and his pack train preparing to leave Bonanza City for McCarthy, 1915. Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Some local residents would have been smart to leave. Fred Best's diary records the death of a friend in March 1916:

> Heard today that little Fritz, who went to North Fork [of the White River] with Carl [Whitham] and I, was found frozen to death over on North Fork Island. He was over there when I came in from hunting and got caught out and froze.[89]

Fritz's death was not the only excitement that spring. On April 10, Robert K. Hover's store in Bonanza City caught fire, but quick action by local residents managed to save it.[90] Billy James experienced some difficulties as well, losing one of his horses down a glacial crevasse.[91]

The district's miners received more welcome news the following month. Louis McCallum, Edward McMullen, George Tweedale, W. A. Biglow, L. McAllister, Tony McGettigan, and Fred Nelson reported making a new discovery on Foley Creek, a tributary of Notch Creek about twenty miles west of Chisana City. The men extracted over four feet of paydirt from the bottom of their ninety-foot shaft before striking water and being driven out. The strike generated a great deal of excitement, but Foley Creek proved to be another bust. Although prospectors blanketed the area with over a hundred claims, it never produced any significant amount of gold.[92]

That summer, the area's mining activity dwindled even further. Now it contained only twelve mines, employing a total of forty men. While approximately thirty-five others continued to prospect in the vicinity, conditions deteriorated. A draught, for example, seriously hampered their sluicing operations. Gold production consequently fell to just $40,000, a 75 percent decline.[93]

As in past years, most activity focused on Bonanza Creek. Having retrieved their claims from Fletcher Hamshaw, Billy James and N. P. Nelson attempted to increase their output by installing a thirty-five-ton hydraulic plant. It, unfortunately, remained unable to operate due to the lack of water.[94]

Other claims on Bonanza were also active: Andy Taylor and Joe McClellan reported a good cleanup from No. 3; Fred Best and Don Greene worked No. 7; Jim Murie and Jack Costello mined No. 10; Al Wright and a miner named McNutt operated No. 11; and Lewis V. Stanley prospected on the stream as well.[95]

Several miners worked property on Little Eldorado. Billy James and N. P. Nelson operated No. 1; Carl Whitham mined both No. 2 and No. 2 Fraction, as well as an adjoining claim on Snow Gulch, one of Little Eldorado's northern tributaries; and Joe McClellan and Charles Fogelberg worked a claim on Bug Gulch, another branch of Little Eldorado.[96]

A tributary of Glacier Creek also received some attention, with Ned Hill and a man named Jensey operating a claim on Sargent Creek.[97]

Miners excavated two deep pits during the previous winter, on Skookum and Gold Run Creeks. The one on Gold Run appears to have been at least partially successful, for in March, the reports of a strike precipitated a small rush from McCarthy, Dawson City, and Whitehorse. Oscar Erickson began digging near Dry Gulch as well, but with tragic results. That fall, his friends found him dead in his shaft.[98]

Like many of his fellow miners, Fred Best usually wintered in the district, passing his time by trapping and hunting. He also frequently visited Bonanza City, where he spent many pleasant evenings visiting friends and playing cards. Only once or twice a year did he bother to travel across the Wrangell Mountains to the more urban community of McCarthy, and such journeys were never easy:

> At dawn it was still snowing and blowing so hard that it was impossible to see more than a few yards ahead, but we started for the summit anyway. We all knew the trail, and knew there would be crevasses, some of them hundreds of feet deep, to cross. The men struggled on, the dogs worked valiantly, and we got over safely, so we kept going the thirty-five miles to town. I fell in one crack, but the dogs pulled

me out. It was a long, hard day, and we were all four tired out--but glad to get over the summit.[99]

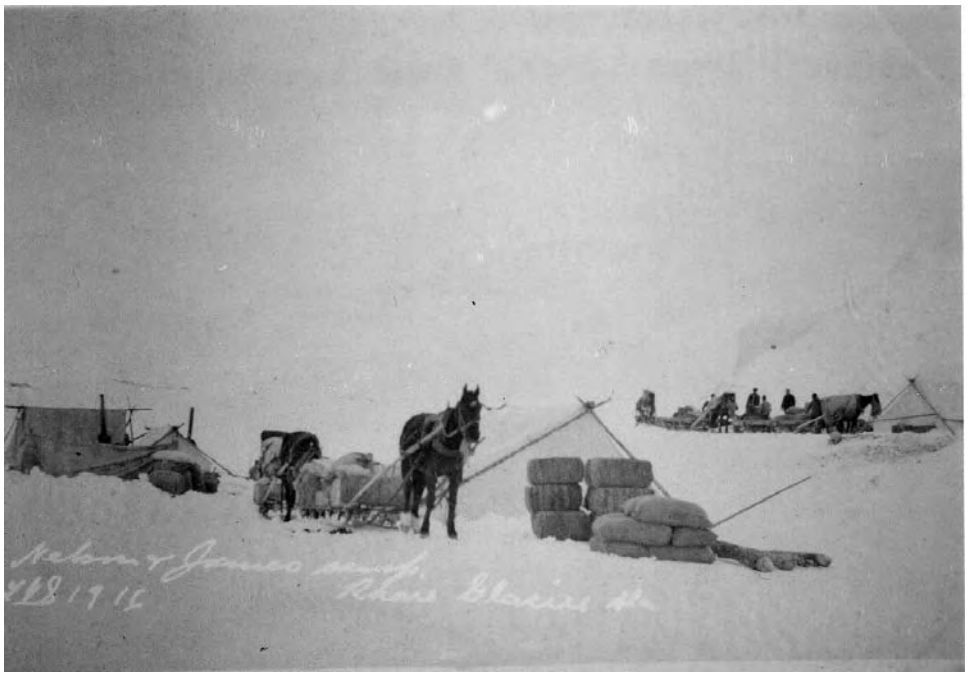

Figure 49: Nelson and James camp on Rohn Glacier, 1916.
Photo courtesy Candy Waugaman, Fairbanks

Best was not always quite so lucky. That November, for example, he barely survived a local jaunt.

> I started back to get the other sled. Snow deep. Could not get to it and started back. Got lost. Could not see my trail. Dark. Hitched myself up to dogs and late at night got to little tent all in. No grub or ax. I broke wood with my hands and kept fire going all night. The dogs saved me. About 9 feet of snow. I was all in and it was the narrowest I ever came to perishing. I laid down several times but would get up and stagger on behind the dogs. God bless them. It was a narrow call I tell you.[100]

The conditions during 1917 were very similar to the previous year, with both the population and mineral production continuing to decline. Eleven mines now employed forty-four men, producing 1,935 ounces, or about $40,000 in gold.[101]

Most of the mining activity occurred on Bonanza Creek. Andy Taylor and Joe McClellan mined No. 2; Tony McGettigan and Bob Hover worked No. 2 Bench; Fred Best and Don Greene mined Nos. 3 and 7; a partnership composed of Billy James, Matilda Wales, N. P. Nelson, and Billy Johnson operated Nos. 4, 5, 6, and 9; Dud McKinney worked No. 8; Ed McMullen and Nelson mined No. 10; and Al Wright worked Nos. 11 and 11 Fraction.[102]

Several other claims were also active. Billy James's syndicate operated Little Eldorado No. 1; Carl Whitham mined Little Eldorado No. 2; Bud Sargent and D. Percy Thornton

worked Skookum Creek; J. E. McCabe, E. R. Behling, and Blas Joseph “Joe” Davis operated Big Eldorado No. 3 Below; Shorty Briggen mined Big Eldorado No. 2 Below; James “Windy Jim” McDonald worked Gold Run No. 2; and Virgil and Lee Catching mined Gold Run No. 3.[103]

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LONG BUST

The First World War curtailed mining throughout Alaska, and the Chisana was no exception. Its output plummeted in 1918, with prospectors recovering only 726 ounces, or $15,000 worth of gold.[1]

A war-related boom swept the United States, attracting a considerable number of Alaska residents. The territory's population, in fact, declined by nearly 15 percent between 1910 and 1920. Moreover, an accompanying increase in the cost of labor, mining machinery, and supplies made working low grade placer deposits far less profitable.[2]

Several long-term residents left the district. Fred Best, for example, joined the navy, while Percy Thornton, Harry Boyden, and Carl Whitham all entered the army.[3]

Others remained. Writing to Best early that summer, Linnie Nelson mentioned seeing many prominent members of the Chisana community, including Andy Taylor, Jim Murie, Don Greene, Fred Nelson, Jack Carroll, Dud McKinney, Al Wright, and Charles Simons.[4]

As in previous years, most mining occurred on Bonanza Creek. James and Nelson, for example, divided their joint holdings, with the latter acquiring Bonanza No. 4. Although seemingly happy with the deal, it meant added work for Nelson, who was forced to build a new camp on the claim.[5]

Ketching and Carden also worked Bonanza Creek. Their operation, however, generated some genuine excitement. One day while they were laboring below their dam, its gate failed, causing a flood which caught the pair completely by surprise. Ketching quickly struggled out of the torrent, but Carden was swept far downstream and nearly drowned.[6]

While still low, production nearly doubled in 1919. Local miners increased their recovery to 1,306 ounces or about $27,000.[7] The district, however, soon resumed its long-term cycle of decline. In 1920 the Chisana's eight mines together employed only eighteen men. While failing to find any new deposits, these operators recovered an average of $2.08 for each cubic yard of gravel worked. Nevertheless, their total output fell to 968 ounces, or approximately $20,000.[8]

Despite the district's overall decline, some traffic still utilized Hazelet's old trail over the Nizina and Chisana Glaciers. In May 1920, for example, census taker George Walker employed that route in traveling from McCarthy to Chisana City. He experienced an especially harrowing trip. Encountering a fierce storm, Walker and companion Joe McClellan eventually lost the trail and were forced to bivouac.

With a snowshoe and a frying pan they dug out in the snow a hole big enough for both to get into the glacier. This they roofed over with snowshoes and canvas, but in spite of this precaution the hole kept filling up with drifting snow, and the men were constantly besieged

with a desire to sleep. After passing forty hours in this snowy tomb, they scrambled out to find the storm over and a bright sun shining.[9]

Upon reaching Chisana City, Walker found that the population had substantially declined. He reported only 148 residents in the vicinity, 105 of whom were Alaska Natives. The forty-three white residents included the U.S. commissioner, a merchant, a trader, a blacksmith, a cook, two trappers, three freighters, ten prospectors, seventeen placer miners, and six wives or children, recorded as being without occupation.[10]

Figure 50: Interior of typical shelter on Hazelet Trail.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Six mines still operated in 1921, employing a total of sixteen men. Most utilized fairly primitive technology. While many employed automatic dams to remove the overburden, all still hand-worked the underlying gravel. Despite such labor intensive methods, gold production increased slightly. Local miners recovered 1,113 ounces or about $23,000.[11]

Several claims experienced renewed activity that year. Pete Eikland and Jack Carroll, for example, purchased Bonanza No. 4 from N. P. Nelson, and Hans Running and John Swanson leased Bonanza No. 6 from Billy James and Percy Thornton. Both pairs worked open-cuts that summer and drift-mined the following winter.[12]

Big Eldorado Creek also received some attention. In about 1921, Red Stevens noticed that no recent assessment work had been done on Big Eldorado Nos. 3 and 4 Below Upper Discovery. After checking the recording books, he re-staked the property. According to Knut Peterson,

> . . . nobody paid much attention . . . until the next spring when it was noted that he had a big tent camp set up on #3. He had hired six men, all good workers, and he was ground sluicing to beat the band.[13]

Although Tony McGettigan and Dud McKinney insisted that Stevens had jumped their claims, the prospector was never arrested and the original owners eventually let the matter drop. No one knows for sure just how much gold Stevens ultimately took out of Big Eldorado Creek. It was rumored, however, that when he left the Chisana, he paid $100,000 in cash for a farm he purchased in Washington state.[14]

In 1922 only nine mines operated in the district. Employment, however, increased to twenty-five men. In total, these mines moved about 10,600 cubic yards of gravel during the course of the season, producing 1,403 ounces, or $29,000 worth of gold.[15]

There were few changes the following year: nine operations employed twenty-two men and recovered approximately $23,000. Billy James and Percy Thornton boasted the largest camp, employing six men on Little Eldorado No. 1 and Bonanza No. 6. Two other partnerships also worked Bonanza Creek that season. One consisted of Miles Atkinson and Pete Eikland and the other included Don Greene and Joe Davis. Tony McGettigan mined Bonanza Creek as well.[16]

Three other creeks received less attention: Carl Whitham continued to mine Little Eldorado No. 2; Shorty Briggen, Aaron Nelson and Jack O'Hara operated on Big Eldorado; and Dud McKinney and Jack Carroll worked property on Gold Run.[17]

Transportation remained the district's most enduring problem. In the summer, most supplies arrived via pack horse from McCarthy, a six-day trip of approximately eighty

Figure 51: A pack train crossing the Russell Glacier in Skolai Pass.
Stephen Capps Collection, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks

miles. Freighters changed twenty-five cents per pound to Chisana and usually required an additional nickel for delivery to the creeks. In the winter, cargo traveled by dogsled. Rates by this method, however, were somewhat lower, averaging about twenty cents per pound.[18] Bill Berry and Sid Johnston did much of the hauling, although neither carried the mail.[19] That important contract went to Harry Boyden.[20]

The district's decline continued in 1924, when eight mines produced $23,400 worth of gold.[21] By now, Chisana City was largely abandoned. According to Milton B. Medary, a member of a Smithsonian expedition which visited that summer, the town consisted of "452 log cabins in which one man lives alone."[22]

Six mines operated in 1925, producing $24,000 worth of gold. The following year, the district was down to only five. Gold production also fell, now barely reaching $18,000. Sid Johnston fielded the largest crew. His three employees worked Little Eldorado Creek, employing a small hydraulic plant on the adjoining benches.[23]

Two other creeks received more limited attention. Jack Carroll worked Gold Run and three other men operated claims on Bonanza: Pete Eikland mined No. 3; Tony McGettigan and Don Greene operated No. 5; and Aaron Nelson worked an unidentified claim, probably No. 4. Miles Atkinson, who had consistently worked Bonanza Creek in the past, did not return for the 1926 season.[24]

Figure 52: Summer freighters preferred the Skolai Trail.
Photo courtesy Stanley-Mason Collection, Tacoma Public Library

Local miners, who blamed much of the area's decline on its high transportation costs, began lobbying the Alaska Road Commission to improve their access. Most favored establishing a new trail via Gulkana, "the only safe and feasible way to get supplies into

camp." Sid Johnston was especially persistent, arguing that "if half the energy that was wasted [in building and maintaining the glacier trail] was used on the Gulkana route . . . we would be getting freight landed here at a reasonable rate." Genuine improvements, however, remained far in the future.[25]

Production continued to fall for the remainder of the decade. In 1927, for example, a few small camps recovered about $15,000 worth of gold.[26]

In 1928 about twelve men worked five separate claims, but were greatly hampered by a lack of water. Several operators attempted to alleviate the problem by constructing automatic dams, but none were completed in time to salvage the season. Miners hydraulicking on Bonanza Creek discovered a rich new channel, however, and as a result the district's total gold production rose to $16,000.[27]

Although the water supply increased in 1929, production plummeted to only $7,000. Miners now worked less accessible areas which had been passed over during the district's boom. Only five operations were even moderately active: Miles Atkinson, Aaron Nelson, and a partnership consisting of Tony McGettigan and Don Greene worked Bonanza Creek; Joe Davis mined Carl Whitham's ground on Little Eldorado; and Barney McKinney sluiced Gold Run.[28]

Chisana City experienced a more eventful year. Death took Charles Simons, the community's postmaster and sole remaining merchant, bringing genuine hardship to the region. Robert McKennan reported that local residents were forced "to trade at the posts on the Copper River," the nearest, that at the mouth of the Slana River, being about one hundred miles away.[29]

Figure 53: Charles Simons's store in Chisana City.
Photo courtesy L. R. Zacharias Collection,
Alaska State Library and Archives, Juneau

Fortunately, this problem was somewhat ameliorated by the addition of another travel option. In 1929 the Alaska Road Commission hired Gus Johnson to build an airstrip in Chisana City. Placed in an abandoned channel of Chathenda Creek, Johnson's 1,500-foot-long by 150-foot-wide strip was relatively level, possessing a grade of only 2 percent. Few pilots, however, risked using the strip, despite government claims that it was "comparatively safe to land on."[30]

The area's gold production continued to decline. In 1930 it amounted to only $5,800. Although some mining occurred on at least six properties, none reported any significant new discoveries.[31] Most of the district's gold came from Carl Whitham's claims on Little Eldorado, still leased by Joe Davis.[32] Billy James concentrated on Bonanza Creek, building an automatic dam on his Discovery claim. A persistent drought, however, limited its effectiveness.[33]

Barney McKinney worked Gold Run, employing a "boomer" dam on No. 1 Above Discovery. Although he eventually cleaned about 6,000 square feet of bedrock, he, like James, was hampered by a lack of water.[34]

Conditions worsened in 1931 with only about a dozen men continuing to mine. Production totaled about $3,000.[35] Billy James worked his Bonanza Discovery, still employing his automatic dam to ground-sluice. Sid Johnston reworked Bonanza No. 8, cleaning around 20,000 square feet. Tony McGettigan operated Bonanza No. 11. Installing a new splash-dam, he ground-sluiced about 4,000 square feet of bedrock. On Little Eldorado, Jack Carroll mined No. 1 and Joe Davis again operated No. 2. Louis McCallum even reported an encouraging lode discovery, finding three gold-bearing veins on the right limit of Alder Gulch.[36]

The next year brought some recovery. Chisana City finally began receiving regular airplane service and pioneer Alaska aviators like Bob Reeve flew several loads of passengers and supplies into the district. This improved transportation probably helped to rekindle interest in the area, doubling its gold production to about $7,000.[37]

Substantial changes occurred in 1933. The Alaska Road Commission built a road from the community of Gulkana to the Nabesna River, greatly facilitating local transportation.[38] As a result, twenty men mined in the district, the most in a decade.[39]

Tony McGettigan continued to operate on upper Bonanza Creek, and other creeks received some attention as well. Knut and Ulrich Peterson, for example, began working Big Eldorado Creek, and a new company opened a tract on Little Eldorado Creek which yielded especially heavy gold. One nugget, in fact, weighed seven ounces.[40]

In 1934 some seven camps operated in the district, together employing about twenty men. The government's increase in the price of gold from $20.67 to $35.00 per ounce and the improvements in transportation had created incentives that encouraged mining. These factors prompted operators to explore deposits which had previously been ignored. N. P. Nelson, for example, built an elaborate ditch and flume system to Bonanza No. 5, starting about a half mile below the confluence with Coarse Money Creek and extending downstream past the mouth of Little Eldorado Creek.[41]

The next year the number of active operations increased to ten and the Chisana gold production jumped to $21,000. N. P. Nelson continued to field the largest crew, engaging

six men for most of the season. Earl Hirst headed the second largest outfit, where four men were employed. Mining also continued on Little Eldorado, Big Eldorado, and Gold Run Creeks.[42]

The boom expanded in 1936. Although the district still only utilized about twenty men, total gold production jumped to $37,500. As usual, most attention focused on Bonanza Creek.[43]

Billy James, for example, employed two men on his Discovery claim. Although they cleaned an abundance of bedrock that season, their returns were poor.[44]

Earl Hirst and his crew had a more productive year. Locating an old creek channel on Bonanza No. 2, they used a giant to remove the overburden. By fall, Hirst had cleaned 3,000 square feet of bedrock, recovering an average of three dollars per foot.[44] Don Greene and two employees hydraulically mined the left bench of Bonanza No. 4. They cleaned 2,000 square feet of bedrock and pocketed one hundred ounces of gold.[46]

The Nelson Mining Company—co-owned by N. P. Nelson and Chitina merchant Otto A. Nelson, but operated by Nels—hydraulically mined Bonanza No. 6. Utilizing a giant to remove the overburden on the left limit, its six man crew cleaned 9,000 square feet of bedrock and reportedly recovered a substantial quantity of gold.

Other claims were equally active. Sid Johnston drift mined a bench on the left limit of Bonanza No. 9, though he only recovered a few ounces of gold. Tony McGettigan did better working Bonanza Nos. 11 and 12, which produced nearly twenty ounces in just ten days. Joe Davis continued operating both Little Eldorado No. 2 and the adjoining claim on Skookum Creek, though apparently his returns were substantially less.[47]

The Peterson brothers operated a "boomer" dam on Big Eldorado No. 1 Below Discovery, recovering forty-two ounces of gold. They also discovered a sulfide deposit, which they optimistically called the Monte Carlo Lode.[48]

As the 1930s ended, the Chisana's gold production slowly began to fall. In 1937 it equaled $30,000, and in 1938 it totaled $29,000. Otherwise, conditions remained much the same, with most operators concentrating on Bonanza Creek.[49]

Earl Hirst hydraulicked on Bonanza No. 2, working an old channel on the canyon's left limit. Don Greene mined a similar bench opposite Bonanza No. 3. An Upper Tanana Indian called "Chisana Joe" worked the fraction between claim Nos. 3 and 4. The Nelson Mining Company remained the largest operator in the drainage, employing five men on claim Nos. 5 and 6. Tony McGettigan operated on the creek as well, shoveling-in on Bonanza No. 12.[50]

Operators also worked three other creeks. An unidentified Native man–probably Jack John Justin–worked the upper portion of Little Eldorado, Joe Davis hydraulicked on Skookum Creek, and Al Wright ground-sluiced on Gold Run.[51]

The closure of the Copper River and Northwestern Railway in the fall of 1938 complicated operations in the Chisana district. That winter, however, Cordova Air contracted to deliver all the miners' freight. Both the terms and the service must have been satisfactory, for the parties continued the arrangement for several years.[52]

Gold production continued to decline. In 1939 it barely totaled $20,000 and in 1940 it fell even further, reaching only $14,000. Nelson remained the largest operator, though other miners worked Little Eldorado, Big Eldorado, and Gold Run Creeks.[53]

Figure 54: Nelson's workings on Bonanza No. 6, 1940.
Photo courtesy Wayland Collection,
U.S. Geological Survey Photographic Library, Denver

Figure 55: Nelson's bench workings on Bonanza No. 6, June 1940.
Photo courtesy of Wayland Collection,
U.S. Geological Survey Photographic Library, Denver

Figure 56: Earl Hirst's Workings at Bonanza No. 2, June 1940.
Photo courtesy Wayland Collection,
U.S. Geological Survey Photographic Library, Denver

Figure 57: Detail of Hirst's hydraulic pit, 1940.
Photo courtesy Wayland Collection,
U.S. Geological Survey Photographic Library, Denver

Earl Hirst still mined Bonanza No. 2, working an old channel located on the east side of the valley about twenty-five feet above the existing stream. To sluice at this location, Hirst diverted water from the upper end of the claim, transporting it to the site via an elaborate wooden flume.[54]

Don Greene worked Bonanza No. 3, operating on the east side of the canyon about one hundred feet above the creek. Greene obtained water from a gulch to the west of Bonanza, using an inverted siphon to bring it to his pit.[55]

The Nelson Mining Company conducted the district's most extensive placer operation on Bonanza No. 6. It employed hydraulic pressure to mine a low bench located approximately a hundred yards east of the stream, and roughly fifty feet above it.[56]

Several others miners also operated claims on Bonanza Creek in 1940. Tony McGettigan worked Bonanza No. 12 and a group of unidentified Native men mined Bonanza No. 3B Fraction and No. 4. Like everyone else in the district, both outfits were hindered by a lack of water.[57]

Other properties received more limited attention. Al Peterson and Charlie Hawkins prospected on Coarse Money Creek and Earl Hirst and Sam Gamblin even started a tunnel on their Eire group, a cluster of sixteen quartz lode claims located above Chathenda Creek.[58]

By now, Chisana City contained a substantial Native community, with several cabins grouped just northeast of the airstrip.[59] Its residents during this period included Chisana Joe, Jack John Justin, Charley Toby, Sherry Nickolai, Bessie Joe, Suzie Joe, and Martha Mark.[60] According to Holly Reckord, Chisana City's Natives remained extremely mobile:

Figure 58: Polly and Chisana Joe, c. 1935.
Photo courtesy Ivan Thorall, Chisana, Alaska

Using tents, they went hunting, trapping, or fishing during the times of each year when these activities were productive and undertook cash labor at Chisana during the summer. Thus they combined their traditional subsistence way of life with the new opportunities offered by mining activity.[61]

Gold production was stable in 1941, still totaling some $14,000.[62] That winter, however, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor forever altered Chisana mining.

It continued in 1942, but total production fell to $8,000. In October America's War Production Board issued Limitation Order L-208, which closed all but the smallest mines. Like most western states, Alaska fought the order. As a result, the federal government exempted some operations, including those in Alaska employing five or fewer men.[63]

Although legally allowed to mine, many owners shut down for the duration of the war. Most were simply too old to work their claims without the help of younger labor. Seventy-five-year-old Tony McGettigan was one exception. He continued operating Bonanza No. 12 until he disappeared one spring while hiking in from Chisana City. The probable victim of a bear attack, McGettigan's body was never located.[64]

By 1944 things were grim in the Chisana district. Due to the necessities of war, Cordova Air had discontinued its service, and local residents had not received a shipment for eight months. Although most were over sixty-five years old, they realized that they must soon attempt to hike the eighty or so miles back to civilization. Fortunately, only two days before they were due to start, Merle "Mudhole" Smith reached the community, bringing their long awaited food and supplies.[65]

Figure 59: A ski-equipped Cordova Airlines plane, like those flown by Mudhole Smith. Photo courtesy National Archives, Washington D.C.

Mining resumed in 1945, though on a scale far smaller than in the immediate pre-war years. Only five outfits operated in 1945 and 1946, four of them on Bonanza Creek. Louis E. "Lou" Anderton, the Bonanza Mining Company, and the partnership of Earl Hirst and Harry Sutherland utilized hydraulic methods, while N. P. Nelson shoveled-in. Nelson's return was especially meager. He reportedly recovered only three ounces in 1946.[66]

Davis performed his annual assessment work on Little Eldorado Nos. 2 and 2 Fraction, Snow Gulch No. 1, Skookum Creek No. 1, Blue Fox Claim on Skookum Creek, and two claims in Caribou Pass in 1946.[67] He also retained Gold Run Creek No. 1 and No. 1 Fraction.[68]

Although Billy James failed to complete his assessment work in 1945, he continued to control much of the district's most promising ground. In July 1946 he and his wife Agnes deeded their claims to the Nutzotin Placer Company, which they founded with the backing of Anchorage politician Almer J. Peterson. Reflecting their respective contributions, the new corporation selected Billy as president, Agnes as vice president, and Peterson as secretary.[69]

John Hodel mined Gold Run Creek in the late 1940s. Operating alone, he conducted that drainage's first reported hydraulic operation.[70] Al Wright held claims on Gold Run Creek as well, although he failed to work them in 1947.[71]

Both the Bonanza Mining Company and the Hirst/Sutherland partnership returned to Bonanza Creek in 1947.[71] Lou Anderton, however, moved on. Although he ran a hydraulic plant on Nugget and Thumb Creeks that summer, he seems to have devoted more effort to managing his Chisana City general store.[73]

Only one other miner worked in the district. Joe Davis resumed his hydraulic operation on Skookum Creek.[74]

CHAPTER FIVE

THE AFTERMATH

Starting in the late 1940s, hunting guides established headquarters in Chisana City, and its population slowly grew. Donald O. Spaulding, for example, was operating out of the community by 1947.[1] Despite the influx of new residents, one pioneer remained a full time resident. Occupying a small cabin at the southwest corner of the airstrip, N. P. Nelson ended the decade distributing the mail delivered by Cordova Air.[2]

Chisana Joe stayed in Chisana until his death in about 1952.[3] Nelson, Billy and Agnes James, Harry Sutherland, and Al Wright were reportedly still there the following year.[4]

N. P. Nelson finally left Alaska in the mid-1950s, although he visited briefly in 1959. When the 96-year-old Nelson finally died in the mid-1960s, friends Ivan Thorall and Iver Johnson arranged to have his body cremated and his ashes returned to the district. Fittingly, the pair buried them on a prominent point above upper Bonanza.[5]

Local residents submitted their first homestead applications at about this same time, roughly dividing the Chisana townsite between two groups. Billy James filed on the eastern half in 1955, but died in Anchorage in 1960 before acquiring title. In 1962 guide Kenneth L. Folger sought the same spot, but never completed the necessary paperwork. Paul Jovich applied in 1968. He completed the process, receiving patent to the 18.5-acre site in 1979. Most of this property now belongs to guide Raymond A. McNutt.[6]

In 1957 Lou Anderton filed on the western half of the townsite. Unfortunately, Anderton, like James, died before his paperwork was approved. Herbert H. "Bud" Hickathier staked the site in 1964, but he also suffered an untimely death.[7]

Two other residents also claimed local land. Elizabeth Hickathier filled on an 80-acre trade and manufacturing site about two miles west of the Chisana townsite in 1964; and Ivan Thorall applied for a 130-acre homestead south of Chathenda Creek in 1967. Those applications were ultimately approved.[8]

All of Gold Hill's original mining claims lapsed during the 1950s, but most were re-located during the following decade. Joe Layland was particularly active, staking Little Eldorado No. 2 for the Snowgulch Mining Venture, which consisted of Layland, Rupert Baird, Bert Bruhn, and Harold Wilkings, in 1963. Layland eventually prospected Bonanza Creek as well, claiming Nos. 1-6 in August 1969.

Bruhn returned his portion of the Snowgulch holdings to the company, and Don Dippel and Monte Allen acquired Baird's share in June 1970. As a result, by the time that Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST) was established in 1980, Wilkings, the Dippel/Allen partnership, and Gravest, Inc. (comprised of Layland's six heirs), each held a one-third interest in the property. Gravest also held the six Bonanza claims, which it had acquired following Layland's death in 1973.[9]

Ivan Thorall prospected on Gold Hill during the 1960s as well, locating the Tony M and the Shamrock claims on upper Bonanza Creek in 1970. In October 1973, he staked two additional Bonanza claims, which he called Lucky Discovery and One Below Discovery, just downstream.

When President Jimmy Carter established Wrangell-St. Elias National Monument in 1978, its northern boundary was located south of Gold Hill, but the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 moved it further north. As a result, Gold Hill was included within Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve. One of several miners

Figure 60: Aerial view of Chisana City, 1982.
The Chisana Airstrip (at center) runs roughly southeast (left) to northwest (right).
Photo from Historic Photo Collection,
Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, Copper Center

dramatically impacted by the change, Thorall described its effect on his operation.[10]

> As you probably already know, most of the ground here has been worked, intermittently, since 1913 and is not considered very valuable. One exception being a half mile or so of Gold Run Creek which has not been worked any may contain from three to five thousand ounces of placer gold. At my age, 68, it is too deep and costly a venture for me to play around with. The rest of my ground I had hoped to work to supplement my social security benefits. I had my Gold Run

> claims sold when all the withdrawals hit us and the deal fell through. I doubt now that I could give them away at any price but would like to hang on for another year or two just in case things change for the better. This was going to be my first year with more income than outgo.[11]

Recognizing that working the claims would violate National Park Service (NPS) regulations, and not mining them would violate state requirements, Thorall sought a legal way to retain his holdings. The NPS informed him that filing an annual Notice of Intention to Hold with both the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the state recorder's office would protect his interests, pending a definitive validity determination by the NPS.[12]

The NPS approved Dippel's plan to conduct mining operations during 1982 on Skookum Nos. 1-20, CCCU Nos. 1-83, Big El Nos. 1-46, Big El Nos. B1-B8, and Big El Nos. C1 and C9-C13 lode claims, and Rocky No. 1, Tony No. 1, Ole No. 1-5, and Jay Nos. 1-3 placer claims.[13]

WRST approved Dippel's operation again in 1983, allowing him to work on Skookum Nos. 1-20, Big El Nos. 1-46, Big El Nos. B1-B8, and Big El Nos. C1 and C9-C13 lode claims, and Rocky No. 1, Tony No. 1, Ole No. 1-5, Jay No. 1, Little El No. 1 and 2, Bench No. 1 and 2, Snow Gulch No. 1, and Skookum No. 1 placer claims. However, that November the BLM notified Dippel that he had failed to file the required duplicate copy of his "notice of intention to hold" his Skookum lode claims with the state in 1979. The bureau eventually deemed those claims abandoned and declared them void.[14]

Although three companies worked various Gold Hill properties under approved mining plans in 1984, all were still small-scale operations. James Moody, the husband of Layland's daughter Rose, mined the Gravest property on middle Bonanza Creek, Thorall worked his claims on upper Bonanza Creek, and Dippel divided his time between Big Eldorado, Gold Run, Little Eldorado, and Skookum Creeks.[15]

The NPS approved mining plans for the same three miners in 1985: Dippel on Little El Nos. 1 and 2, Bench Nos. 1 and 2, Snow Gulch No. 1, and Skookum No. 1 placer claims; Moody on Bonanza Nos. 1-6; and Thorall on upper Bonanza. Thorall, however, did not work his property that year and never submitted another plan.[16]

On July 24, 1985, District Court Judge James von der Heydt issued a preliminary injunction that barred the NPS from approving further mining plans until it completed an Environmental Impact Statement evaluating the cumulative effect of further mining. That December the court allowed certain operators to obtain relief from the injunction, providing their operations "did not contribute to any cumulative impact on park resources."[17]

Von de Heydt's injunction severely impinged on Chisana miners. Not only did it require them to submit more thorough plans, including environmental reports and reclamation plans, but forced the NPS to conduct exhaustive technical and environmental reviews before granting the operators permission to mine. Temporary approvals were no longer permitted.[18]

Many miners, like Ivan Thorall, were justifiably bitter.

> It now looks like this may be the third year in a row that for one reason or another I won't be allowed to mine and although I have already purchased a dredge and have it in shipment my loss this year will not be as heavy as the years past. I wish there was someone I could sue also. The Sierra Club seems to have the corner on that. . . . I will continue with my prospecting as it pollutes nothing and bothers nobody and will prove of value if and when all the lawsuits and legal maneuvers are over.[19]

Gravest sat out 1986, and Thorall sold One Below Discovery and Lucky Discovery to Glenn DeSpain that June. Only Dippel submitted a mining plan in 1986, hoping to continue working his claims on Big Eldorado, Little Eldorado, Gold Run, and Skookum Creeks, but it was rejected by the NPS.[20]

No local companies operated in 1987, but Gravest planned to resume mining in 1988. To further that end, it appointed Moody as its official representative and convinced Dippel to allow him to use their jointly-held Little Eldorado Creek mining camp.[21]

The NPS completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for Gravest's middle Bonanza claims in early 1988, and, after reviewing the document, the court allowed Moody to resume mining. WRST's environmental staff monitored his operation carefully in order to document his compliance and assist him in obtaining further relief from the injunction. Moody expanded his holdings that year as well, buying Dipple's Big Eldorado claims.[22]

Gold Hill received additional attention in 1989. Moody continued working his middle Bonanza claims under his existing plan, and also submitted separate plans for his newly-acquired Big Eldorado and Gold Run claims. Although neither of those was approved that season, the NPS drafted an EA that assessed Moody's maintenance plans for the all-terrain-vehicle trails connecting the Chicken Creek airstrip with the mining camp on Little Eldorado Creek and the Big Eldorado and Gold Run Creek placer claims. The NPS eventually allowed both the mining and the maintenance.[23]

Moody's middle Bonanza Creek operation received its third season of temporary relief from the injunction in 1990. Still monitoring the operation closely, WRST found that the miner had left trash at several historic sites, and notified him that it would deny further permits until he removed it. Moody subsequently complied.[24]

Mark Fales and Larry James initiated negotiations to acquire Moody's Big Eldorado Creek claims that summer, agreeing to abide by the terms of his existing plan. Moody and John Davenport, WRST's former mining engineer, submitted a plan to work Gravest's claims on lower Bonanza Creek, but it was rejected by the NPS.[25]

The park's minerals management staff again focused on Gold Hill in 1991. While Moody's middle Bonanza Creek operation received another season of relief from the injunction, the NPS reviewed and rejected his supplemental plan covering Bonanza Nos. 1, 2, and 3. It also rejected his 1989 plan to conduct similar operations on Gold Run Creek. Nevertheless, it did issue him a special use permit to access his claims in order to conduct maintenance activities.[26]

WRST staff met with Glenn DeSpain that summer as well, in order to help him prepare a plan for Bonanza Lucky Discovery and Below Discovery. Its dealings with DeSpain were complicated by his effort to take his claims to patent, an outcome considered unfavorable by the NPS.[27]

Fales and James finalized their purchase of the Big Eldorado claim block in 1992. The park issued them a permit to access their support camp, but refused to authorize any mining activities. Nevertheless, some unauthorized mining occurred, and the claimants were cited. The NPS finally approved their five-year plan in July. This involved conducting and writing an EA tiered to the Mining Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), the first mining operation to be permitted under the cumulative impacts methodology.[28]

WRST approved Moody's supplement to include the Bonanza No. 2 and 3 claims under his current mining plan in 1993, and the operator conducted suction dredge mining on Bonanza No. 3. The NPS closely monitored his operation that season, the final year for that plan, but Moody completed his required reclamation and WRST returned his performance bond in 1994.[29]

WRST staff located the corners on the Big El lode claims and began drafting a topographic map of the drainage. Ahtna, Inc., submitted an plan to explore the block, but that, too, was reviewed and rejected. Regional mining staff examining Dippel's claim records discovered a potential defect. Although the claimants provided evidence that supported their compliance with legal requirements and the regional solicitor indicated that they had followed the intent of the law, the Big El lode claims were eventually abandoned.

Moody submitted a new suction-dredge mining plan for Bonanza Nos. 1-6 in September 1994. The NPS, however, required more information before allowing the operation, and only issued him a special use permit to access his support camp on Little Eldorado. WRST prepared an EA for Moody's new five-year Bonanza plan in 1995. Extended in 2000 and 2006, it remains valid.[30]

Glenn DeSpain continued his efforts to patent Lucky Discovery and Below Discovery in 1994. The miner filed a Notice of Application in early June, but before he could submit his final documents to the BLM, President Bill Clinton signed the 1995 Appropriations Act, which suspended processing of all such applications.[31]

Thorall sold his two remaining upper Bonanza placer claims, Shamrock and Tony M, to Carol Ann and Lloyd Webb in 1994. Not surprisingly, in 1996 the couple informed the park that they intended to submit an plan to conduct their own suction-dredge operation. As of late 2006, however, no plan has yet been submitted.[32]

Fales and James mined Big Eldorado Creek for a few days in 1993 under their approved five-year, suction-dredge plan, but the NPS reviewed and rejected their supplemental backhoe/trommel proposal due to missing information. As a result, the claimants postponed further mining until 1994, when the park finally approved it. Fales and James completed their first genuine work on their Big Eldorado placer claims that year, and continued sporadically through 1997. Monitoring the operation closely, WRST found that the miners adhered to all permit stipulations and that their work had no significant environmental effects.[33]

Fales began developing a new ten-year Big Eldorado Creek mining plan in 1997. Much more complex than his previous proposals, it addressed such topics as winter access, transportation of fuel and supplies, airstrip construction, operation of heavy equipment, and stream diversions. The NPS accepted the plan as complete in September 1998, and finished its analysis and permitting in late 2000. As of late 2006, however, Fales has not yet begun to mine.[34]

ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION

[1] David Wharton, *The Alaska Gold Rush* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 3-5; William R. Hunt, *North of 53°: The Wild Days of the Alaska-Yukon Mining Frontier 1870-1914* (New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, Inc., 1974), *passim*.

[2] Gold Hill alone retains over two hundred historically significant mining features. For a specific breakdown, see Geoffrey Bleakley, "Chisana Historic Mining Landscape," National Register Nomination, historic files, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, Copper Center, Alaska.

[3] Mark J. Kirchhoff, "Shushanna: Alaska's Last Great Rush," *Alaska Geographic* 16, no. 3 (1989): 68.

[4] See, for example, Pierre Berton, *The Klondike Fever. The Life and Death of the Last Great Gold Rush* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1958), 101-04.

[5] John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt. A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 322.

[6] Richard Hofstadter, ed., *The Progressive Movement, 1900-1915* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1963), 2.

[7] John D. Hicks, "Populist Origins," in Arthur Mann, ed., *The Progressive Era. Liberal Renaissance or Liberal Failure?* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 18.

[8] George E. Mowry, *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of Modern America* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), 3.

[9] Elizabeth A. Tower, "Hazelet's High Road to Chisana: Tapping a Gold Mine for Cordova," *Alaska History* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 2. Hazelet was widely recognized as the discoverer of gold in the Chistochina district. In 1905 he had helped organize the Copper River and Northwestern Railway. He had helped found Cordova in 1908, later serving as the community's first mayor. Evangeline Atwood and Robert N. DeArmond, *Who's Who in Alaska Politics* (Anchorage: Alaska Historical Commission, 1977), 42; Ed Ferrell, *Biographies of Alaska-Yukon Pioneers, 1850-1950* (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 1994), 134.

[10] Ernest Gruening, *The State of Alaska. A Definitive History of America's Northernmost Frontier* (New York: Random House, 1954), 208.

[11] Lewis Green, *The Gold Hustlers. Dredging the Klondike, 1898-1966* (Vancouver: Dacher Printing Ltd., 1994), 99.

[12] Hudson Stuck, *Voyages on the Yukon and Its Tributaries* (New York: Charles

Scribner's Sons, 1917), 383; Clarence C. Hulley, *Alaska, 1741-1953* (Portland: Binfords and Mort, Publishers, 1953), 282.

CHAPTER ONE

[1] The Upper Tanana word "Chisana" is usually translated as "red river." Donald J. Orth, *Dictionary of Alaska Place Names*, USGS Professional Paper 567 (Washington: GPO, 1971), 213. For the arguments over its pronunciation, see Appendix One.

[2] Fred John, "Mendaes Nenn' Shallows Lake Country," in James Kari, ed., *Tatl'ahwt'-aenn Nenn' The Headwaters People's Country* (Fairbanks: Alaska Native Language Center, 1986), 200-01; Jack John Justin, "Naabia Tl'aat Upper Nabesna River," in ibid, 208-11; Frederica de Laguna and Catharine McClellan, "Ahtna," in June Helm, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 6, Subarctic* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 641; Catharine McClellan, "Tutchone," in ibid, 494; Robert A. McKennan, "Tanana," in ibid, 564; Holly Reckord, *Where Raven Stood: Cultural Resources of the Ahtna Region*, Occasional Paper No. 35 (Fairbanks: Cooperative Park Studies Unit, 1983), 238-39.

[3] Charles W. Hayes, "An Expedition through the Yukon District," *National Geographic Magazine* 4 (May 1892): 143-45.

[4] S. E. Harrrison, "Great Copper Zone in Alaska," *Alaska-Yukon Magazine* 3, no. 4 (1907): 339; Ibid, "Alaskan Copper," *Alaska-Yukon Magazine* 4, no. 6 (1908): 452. It was Bratnober who later convinced the Guggenheim brothers to finance the Copper River and Northwestern Railway. Elizabeth A. Tower, ed., "Railroad Fever in Valdez, 1898-1907: An Account by George C. Hazelet," *Alaska History* 9, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 34.

[5] Stephen R. Capps, *The Chisana-White River District Alaska*, USGS Bulletin No. 630 (Washington: GPO, 1916), 90; Dalton's cabin still stood in August 1918, when it was visited by a big-game hunting party sponsored by the Colorado Museum of Natural History. J. A. McGuire, *In the Alaska-Yukon Gamelands* (Cincinnati: Stewart Kidd Company, 1921), 106. One of Alaska's foremost pathfinders, Dalton established a trading post in the Yukon Territory in 1894, eventually building his famous "Dalton Trail" over Chilkat Pass to connect it with the coast. In 1905 Dalton guided the surveyors locating the route for the Copper River and Northwestern Railway. Tower, "Railroad Fever in Valdez," 34.

[6] Alfred H. Brooks, "A Reconnaissance in the White and Tanana River Basins, Alaska, in 1898," in U.S. Geological Survey, *Twentieth Annual Report . . . 1898-1899, Part 7* (Washington: GPO, 1900), 433-34. For the details of Brooks's later career, see Allen Johnston, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. 3* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), 72-74.

[7] Alfred H. Brooks, "A Reconnaissance from Pyramid Harbor to Eagle City, Alaska, including a Description of the Copper Deposits of the Upper White and Tanana Rivers," in U.S. Geological Survey, *Twenty-first Annual Report . . . 1899-1900, Part 2* (Washington: GPO, 1900), 339.

[8] Oscar Rohn, "Report of Oscar Rohn on Exploration in Wrangell Mountain District," in

Capt. William R. Abercrombie, ed., *Alaska, 1899. Copper River Exploring Expedition* (Washington: GPO, 1900), 119-27.

[9] Walter C. Mendenhall and Frank C. Schrader, "Copper Deposits of the Mount Wrangell Region, Alaska," in S. F. Emmons and Charles W. Hayes, eds., *Contributions to Economic Geology, 1902*, USGS Bulletin No. 213 (Washington: GPO, 1903), 148; Walter C. Mendenhall and Frank C. Schrader, *The Mineral Resources of the Mount Wrangell District, Alaska*, USGS Professional Paper No. 15 (Washington: GPO, 1903), 45.

[10] Alfred H. Brooks, "Placer Mining in Alaska in 1903," in S. F. Emmons and Charles W. Hayes, eds., *Contributions to Economic Geology, 1903*, USGS Bulletin No. 225 (Washington: GPO, 1904), 58-59; Capps, *The Chisana-White River District, Alaska*, 22; *Valdez News*, September 12, 1903.

[11] *Valdez News*, June 20, 1903; October 3, 1903.

[12] *Dawson Daily News*, June 22, 1905; July 24, 1905; October 3, 1905; August 6, 1913; *Alaska Prospector*, August 10, 1905; *Fairbanks Times*, September 6, 1913; *Chitina Leader*, January 21, 1918.

[13] *Dawson Daily News*, August 6, 1913.

[14] Fred H. Moffit and Adolph Knopf, *Mineral Resources of the Nabesna-White River District, Alaska*, USGS Bulletin No. 417 (Washington: GPO, 1910), 62. Placer gold is found in alluvial gravel and extracted by removing the detrital material with running water.

[15] *Dawson Daily News*, July 29, 1913; *Anchorage Daily Times*, April 6, 1960; April 9, 1960. Experienced northerners called inexperienced newcomers "cheechakos," a term borrowed from Chinook jargon, the Pacific Northwest trade language.

[16] Ivan R. Thorall, personal communication with Geoffrey Bleakley, August 8, 1996, Chisana, Alaska, notes in author's files.

[17] Dorothy H. M. Prescott, "The Alaska Story of Fred W. Best, Vol. II," *passim*, Best Collection, Alaska State Library and Archives, Juneau, Alaska (hereafter cited ASL).

[18] *Anchorage Daily Times*, April 6, 1960; April 9, 1960.

[19] Fred W. Best to his parents, August 27, 1914, Best Collection, ASL.

[20] Fred Best diary, September 19-December 15, 1912, *passim*, Best Collection, ASL.

[21] Capps, *The Chisana-White River District*, 92. Some controversy surrounds Chisana Joe's true role in the Chisana discovery. Joe maintained that, in addition to the lode deposit, he showed James a small quantity of placer gold which he had earlier taken from Bonanza Creek. Several prospectors corroborated parts of Joe's story, confirming, for example, that Joe had shown them similar nuggets several months before the Chisana strike was made. James and Wales, however, denied Joe's claim, and provided the version of the story included here. N. P. Nelson claimed that all three were wrong. He insisted that it was Toby Charlie, and not Joe, who provided the crucial information to him and James. DeLorme D. Cairnes, *Upper White River District, Yukon*, Geological

Survey Memoir No. 50 (Ottawa: Canada Department of Mines, 1915), 128; N. P. Nelson, "Statement on the Chisana Discovery," autograph manuscript, Ivan Thorall Collection, Chisana, Alaska.

[22] Edward Erikson must have been one of the Dawson City residents who grubstaked James and Wales, as she used his power-of-attorney to stake No. 1 Chicken Creek on June 30, 1913. *Woodman v. Erikson*, case C74, R.G. 21, Alaska District Court Records, National Archives-Alaska Region, Anchorage, Alaska.

[23] N. P. Nelson, "Statement on the Chisana Discovery." According to Tappan Adney, the "pan" was the miner's basic measurement: two "shovelfuls" made one pan and 103 "pans" equaled one cubic yard of earth. Tappan Adney, *The Klondike Stampede of 1897-1898* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1900), 231.

[24] Capps, *The Chisana-White River District*, 92. Andy Taylor, sometimes called the "pathfinder of the White," had led International Boundary Commission parties when they surveyed the U.S.-Canadian border in 1912. In 1925 he also guided the first expedition to climb Mt. Logan, Canada's highest peak. "High Peaks of the Wrangell and Saint Elias," *Alaska Geographic* 8, no. 1 (1981): 103. For more on Taylor's mountaineering career, see Walter A. Wood, *A History of Mountaineering in the Saint Elias Mountains* (No city: Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition, [1967]).

[25] *Dawson Daily News*, October 9, 1913.

CHAPTER TWO

[1] *Dawson Daily News*, June 6, 1913.

[2] *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, July 27, 1913; Kirchhoff, "Shushanna," 49.

[3] *Dawson Daily News*, October 9, 1913.

[4] Ibid. In the late 1920s, Whitham shifted his attention to the west, where he developed a gold lode in the Nabesna district. That operation is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Kirk W. Stanley, "Nabesna Gold Mine Historic District," National Register Nomination, 1978, copy in WRST files; David and William Tewkesbury, *Tewkesbury's Who's Who in Alaska and Alaska Business Index, Vol. 1947 I* (Seattle: Tewkesbury Publishers, 1947), 87.

[5] Cairnes, *Upper White River District*, 131.

[6] In 1913 Chisana gold was worth approximately $16.40 per ounce. Ibid, 132.

[7] Ibid, 129; *Dawson Daily News*, July 28, 1913. Taylor apparently did not retain his Chisana riches: "He paid his debts, bought more supplies, then celebrated for a couple of days, and gave away, threw away and spent his share of the gold." "Andy Taylor–A Man of the Region," *Alaska Geographic* 8, no. 1 (1981): 107.

[8] *Chitina Leader*, July 22, 1913; *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 11, 1913.

[9] *Fairbanks Times*, July 20, 1913; Fred Best diary, July 17-20, 1913, Best Collection, ASL. Chisana residents renamed virtually all the streams in the vicinity, including Chavolda Creek. Miners called it "Wilson Creek," probably for pioneer prospector George Wilson.

[10] See, for example, John Bufvers, "Valdez Trail Days," Bufvers Collection, ASL.

[11] *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, July 18, 1913; *Chitina Leader*, July 22, 1913.

[12] *Dawson Daily News*, August 1, 1913. During the gold rush era, the Upper Tanana name "Chisana" was usually transliterated as either "Shushanna" or "Shushana."

[13] For a first-hand account, see Ruben Lindblom, "A Cheechaka's First Stampede," typed manuscript in historical files, WRST.

[14] *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, July 21, 1913.

[15] *Alaska Daily Dispatch*, August 5, 1913.

[16] *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, July 29, 1913.

[17] *Seattle Times*, August 7, 1913.

[18] *Vancouver Sun*, August 9, 1913.

[19] *Weekly Star* (Whitehorse), August 1, 1913.

[20] *Fairbanks Times*, July 26, 1913.

[21] Ibid, July 12, 1913. The first permanent trader on the upper Tanana River, Newton opened a store at Healy River in 1907. After moving part of his operations to Tanana Crossing in 1912, he established caches at both Tetlin and the mouth of the Nabesna River. William E. Simeone, *Rifles, Blankets, and Beads: Identity, History, and the Northern Athapaskan Potlatch* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 28.

[22] *Fairbanks Times*, July 12, 1913.

[23] Ibid, July 13, 1913; July 22, 1913; *Valdez Miner*, July 20, 1913; *Dawson Daily News*, July 30, 1913; August 6, 1913.

[24] Ibid; *Fairbanks Times*, September 2, 1913; September 12, 1913; September 25, 1913. For an exhaustive examination of early traffic on the Nabesna and Chisana Rivers, see Terrence M. Cole, *Historic Use of the Chisana and Nabesna Rivers, Alaska* (Anchorage: Alaska Department of Natural Resources, 1979).

[25] *Fairbanks Times*, August 15, 1913; August 28, 1913.

[26] Ibid, October 8, 1913; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, May 19, 1914. Hudson Stuck lists six boats that were wrecked while trying to ascend the Tanana River during the Chisana stampede: the *Koyukuk*, the *Dusty Diamond*, the *S. and S.*, the *Atlas*, the *Tetlin*, and the *Samson*. Stuck, *Voyages on the Yukon and Its Tributaries*, 306-07.

[27] *Dawson Daily News*, August 14, 1913; Cairnes, *Upper White River District*, 129.

[28] *Weekly Star* (Whitehorse), November 14, 1914.

[29] Hazelet diary, July 21-31, 1913, cited in Tower, "Hazelet's High Road to Chisana," 3.

[30] Ruben Lindblom, "A Cheechaka's First Stampede," 7-8. Several stampeders were less fortunate than the Lindbloms. Fairbanks resident Fred Tam, for example, drowned while trying to ford the Chitistone River on July 16. At least two others, James (or Jack) Sullivan and Dan Crowley drowned in the Nizina River during the same period. Lewis Green, *The Boundary Hunters. Surveying the 141st Meridian and the Alaska Panhandle* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982), 175; *Chitina Leader*, July 22, 1913; *Dawson Daily News*, October 23, 1913.

[31] International Boundary Commission, *Joint Report upon the Survey and Demarcation of the International Boundary between the United States and Canada* (Ottawa and Washington: GPO, 1918), 81-82.

[32] *Weekly Star* (Whitehorse), September 26, 1913. Riggs, a Princeton graduate who had previously participated in the Klondike gold rush, later served as governor of Alaska. Atwood and DeArmond, *Who's Who in Alaska Politics*, 84.

[33] *Weekly Star* (Whitehorse), August 22, 1913.

[34] *Dawson Daily News*, August 14, 1913.

[35] While Cairnes estimated that more than fifty stampeders perished during the Chisana rush, contemporary newspapers reveal far fewer casualties. Many, however, were probably never reported. Cairnes, *Upper White River District*, 130.

[36] Lindblom, "A Cheechaka's First Stampede," 15.

[37] Mary Barry, "The Recollections of Neil Finnesand," *Anchorage Today*, October 29, 1975, 10.

[38] *Dawson Daily News*, October 1, 1913; *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, October 8, 1913; *Weekly Star* (Whitehorse), June 6, 1913; September 26, 1913.

[39] *Dawson Daily News*, October 1, 1913.

[40] Ibid, August 13, 1913. Hamshaw was financed by prominent Salt Lake City capitalist R. H. Canning, Jr. Ibid, August 20, 1913. Ground-sluicing involves the excavation of gravels by running water which is not under hydraulic pressure. In effect, it is controlled and accelerated erosion. E. D. Gardner and C. H. Johnson, *Placer Mining in the Western United States, Part I, General Information, Hand-Shoveling, and Ground Sluicing*, U.S. Bureau of Mines Information Circular 6786, September 1934.

[41] *Dawson Daily News*, September 15, 1913; Rolfe Buzzell, "Big Eldorado Creek Drainage History," 2-3, typescript in historical files, WRST. Having arrived in the north prior to the Klondike rush, McKinney had led a miners' rebellion against Canada's attempts to regulate its portion of the Fortymile country in 1896. It was while working there in about 1900 that he had first become acquainted with Fred Best. Gates, *Gold at Fortymile Creek*, 113; Fred Best to Jack Best, January 19, 1901, Best Collection, ASL.

[42] Cairnes, *Upper White River District*, 129-30. A "wildcat" was a speculative claim located on unproven ground.

[43] Hazelet diary, July 30-31, 1913, cited in Tower, "High Road," 3.

[44] Hazelet diary, August 12 and 14, 1913, cited in Tower, "High Road," 6.

[45] Ibid. Ostrander, like Hazelet, was one of the founders of Cordova. Ferrell, *Biographies*, 243.

[46] Lindblom, "A Cheechaka's First Stampede," 14.

[47] Ibid, 15.

[48] Ibid.

[49] *Dawson Daily News*, September 24, 1913; October 9, 1913; *Chitina Leader*, April 14, 1914. In exchange for dropping their law suit, Dubois and Brady apparently received rights to work Bonanza No. 9, which, unfortunately for them, turned out to be relatively worthless.

[50] For more on Purdy, Best, and their operation of the Cassiar Roadhouse, see Fred Best to parents, June 30, 1903, Best Collection, ASL.

[51] Interestingly, the Cordova jury which initially found against Sutherland was chaired by famed Klondike and Copper River and Northwestern Railway photographer Eric A. Hegg. William R. Hunt, *Mountain Wilderness: Historic Resource Study for Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve* (Anchorage: National Park Service, 1991), 102; *Avalanch* (McCarthy), August 19, 1916. Similar cases included *C. H. Likaits v. W. E. James*, *J. W. Nickell and Frank H. Foster v. William A. Johnson*, *Frank H. Foster v. William A. Johnson*, and *C. H. Likaits v. William A. Johnson*. Cases C72, C76, C78, and C79, Cordova Civil Docket, 1910-1938, R.G. 21, Alaska District Court Records, National Archives-Alaska Region, Anchorage, Alaska. Sutherland served as a member of the territorial Senate from 1913-1921 and as Alaska's sole delegate to the U.S. Congress from 1921-1931. Atwood and DeArmond, *Who's Who in Alaskan Politics*, 97.

[52] *Dawson Daily News*, September 4, 1913.

CHAPTER THREE

[1] *Weekly Star* (Whitehorse), August 1, 1913; *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, August 11, 1913; August 20, 1913; *Alaska and Northwest Mining Journal* 3, no. 3 (September 1913): 56; *Dawson Daily News*, September 17, 1913.

[2] *Fairbanks Times*, September 29, 1913; *Dawson Daily News*, September 15, 1913; October 13, 1913. Contemporary newspapers reported other charges as well, including the mistaken belief that Morgan was not a citizen of the United States. *Weekly Star* (Whitehorse), September 19, 1913; September 26, 1913.

[3] Hazelet diary, August 12 and 14, 1913, quoted in Tower, "High Road," 6.

[4] *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, September 26, 1913. Although several contemporary

newspaper articles suggest that Hazelet situated Woodrow on Chavolda (Wilson) Creek at the mouth of Glacier Creek, a map produced by Fletcher Hamshaw places it across Chavolda from the mouth of Dry Gulch.

[5] Ibid; *Dawson Daily News*, October 11, 1913.

[6] *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, September 26, 1913. At least one structure may have already have been present. O. J. Wheatly claimed that he and his partner had built a cabin near the mouth of Chathenda Creek before prospecting the rest of the district. When they returned a month later, a town had developed around their site. *Alaska Weekly* (Seattle), October 7, 1955. Although frontier towns were often built on mining claims (like Kennecott) or homesteads (like McCarthy), most communities established during this period were situated on official town sites. In order to create a townsite, local inhabitants had to form a townsite association, which could then obtain the property from the public domain. There is no record that any such association was ever formed in the Chisana district. Robert L. Spude, "Historic Chisana Townsite Land Claims," 1, historic files, WRST.

[7] *Dawson Daily News*, October 23, 1913; Clarence Craig, "Post Office Ledger, Vol. II, 1908-1920," 2992, Dawson City Museum, Dawson City, Yukon Territory, Canada.

[8] *Fairbanks Times*, October 17, 1913; *Dawson Daily News*, October 20, 1913.

[9] *Fairbanks Times*, October 13, 1913.

[10] *Chitina Leader*, October 21, 1913.

[11] *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, September 18, 1913. Dimond later served as mayor of Valdez, a member of the territorial Senate, and from 1932 to 1945, as Alaska's sole delegate to the U.S. Congress. Atwood and DeArmond, *Who's Who in Alaska Politics*, 24; Tewkesbury, *Who's Who in Alaska*, 18.

[12] *Chitina Leader*, September 23, 1913.

[13] Anthony Dimond to George Reed, September 24, 1913, Donohoe-Ostrander-Dimond Collection, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, Alaska (hereafter cited UAF).

[14] *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, November 24, 1913. Hazelet knew about the passage over Nizina and Chisana Glaciers because one of his former mining partners, Arthur H. McNeer, had accompanied USGS cartographer Oscar Rohn over that route in 1899. McNeer had spent the winter of 1898-1899 prospecting with Hazelet in the Chistochina area and rejoined Hazelet in February 1900 to help develop the Chisna mine. Tower, "Hazelet's High Road to Chisana," 15, endnote 17.

[15] *Chitina Leader*, November 11, 1913.

[16] Ibid, September 9, 1913.

[17] Anthony Dimond to Joseph H. Murray, December 12, 1913, Dimond Collection, Personal File, 1904-1953, box 38, UAF.

[18] *Dawson Daily News*, January 1, 1914; January 26, 1914; *Fairbanks Times*, January 20, 1914; *Alaska Weekly* (Seattle), October 7, 1955. Before coming to Chisana, Miller operated the Miners' Home Hotel and Bar in Fairbanks. Hallock Bundy, *The Valdez-Fairbanks Trail* (Seattle: Alaska Publishing Company, 1910), 69.

[19] *Dawson Daily News*, December 10, 1913; December 13, 1913.

[20] *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, December 11, 1913; *Weekly Star* (Whitehorse), December 19, 1913. Price was one of the most successful mining men in Alaska, holding rich properties on both Cleary Creek, north of Fairbanks, and Glen Gulch, a tributary of Otter Creek in the Iditarod district. Ferrell, *Biographies*, 257-58. The other claims leased by the syndicate included Big Eldorado Discovery, Gold Run Discovery, Glacier Discovery, Bonanza Discovery, Bonanza No. 1 Below, Bonanza Nos. 1, 4, 5, 6, and 8 Above, Caribou Pass Discovery, and Caribou Pass No. 1. Capps, *The Chisana-White River District*, 104. Contemporary reports of the syndicate's offer were undoubtedly exaggerated. Later estimates suggest that James and Nelson leased the property for 50 percent of any recovered gold plus a single lump payment of $40,000, still a tidy sum in 1913. *Alaska and Northwest Mining Journal* 4, no. 2 (August 1914): 34.

[21] George C. Martin, "The Alaskan Mining Industry in 1918," in George C. Martin, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report of Progress of Investigations in 1918*, USGS Bulletin No. 712 (Washington: GPO, 1919), 43.

[22] Fred Best diary, October 5, 1913, through February 28, 1914, *passim*, Best Collection, ASL.

[23] *Fairbanks Times*, February 6, 1914.

[24] *Dawson Daily News*, May 20, 1914.

[25] Ibid, February 14, 1914; *Weekly Star* (Whitehorse), December 19, 1913; March 13, 1914; April 19, 1914. At the time of his appointment, Hoffman was mining in the Nizina district. Before that, he had served as chief of police in Valdez. *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, September 18, 1913; October 14, 1913.

[26] Ibid, February 24, 1914.

[27] *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 20, 1914.

[28] Fred Best diary, March 15, 1914, Best Collection, ASL; *Dawson Daily News*, June 8, 1914. Although usually called Bonanza City, some early residents referred to the community as Mouth-O-Bonanza. Ibid, June 3, 1914.

[29] Cairnes, *Upper White River District*, 31-32.

[30] *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, August 20, 1913.

[31] Ibid, August 28, 1913.

[32] Capps, *The Chisana-White River District*, 21.

[33] Reckord, *Where Raven Stood*, 238-39.

[34] Stephen R. Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White River District," in Alfred H. Brooks, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1914*, USGS Bulletin No. 622 (Washington: GPO, 1915), 211-12; *Dawson Daily News*, June 3, 1914; *Juneau Dispatch*, July 14, 1914.

[35] Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White River District," 211.

[36] Ibid, 208.

[37] Ibid, 209. *Alaska and Northwest Mining Journal* 4, no. 5 (November 1914): 116. Sources differ as to who operated this claim during the summer of 1914. The *Mining Journal* suggests that it was worked by a Johansen and company. The *Dawson Daily News*, however, maintains that Waggoner, McLennan, and Chisholm leased the property from Billy James. *Dawson Daily News*, July 13, 1914.

[38] Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White River District," 209-10. An "open-cut" placer mining operation is simply a surface working, open to the sky. "Shoveling-in" was a hand technique used in open-cuts. The gravel was normally loosened with a pick and then shoveled directly into the sluice box. Chester W. Purington, *Methods and Costs of Gravel and Placer Mining in Alaska*, USGS Bulletin 263 (Washington: GPO, 1905), 56-60; Norman L. Wimmler, *Placer-Mining Methods and Costs in Alaska*, Bureau of Mines Bulletin 259 (Washington: GPO, 1927), 91-92.

[39] Fred Best to parents, July 3, 1914, Best Collection, ASL; *Dawson Daily News*, July 13, 1914; Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White River District," 209-10.

[40] *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, August 28, 1913; *Dawson Daily News*, August 29, 1913; *Chitina Leader*, September 9, 1913.

[41] Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White River District," 210-11.

[42] Ibid, 211-12. Writing in 1905, Purington notes that "ground which can be worked by men shoveling into sluices can, under certain conditions, be worked satisfactorily by horse scraping, and at an expense of one-third of that necessary to shovel in." Purington, *Methods and Costs of Gravel and Placer Mining in Alaska*, 60.

[43] Capps, *The Chisana-White River District*, 105.

[44] *Chitina Leader*, February 6, 1914; *Dawson Daily News*, July 13, 1914. Best's journal contained a list of the equipment he utilized on Bonanza No. 7 in July 1914. This probably typical assortment included fourteen sections of sluice box, two dump boxes, two hundred feet of sixteen-inch hose, fourteen picks, eight shovels, a gold scale, a level, two double jacks, an anvil, a hammer, a forge, a crosscut saw, a sluice fork, a bit brace with bits, two planes, one hundred feet of fire hose with nozzle, a tent, three cords of wood, a dam, two stoves, a half case of dynamite with caps and fuse, and a wash tub. Fred Best diary, July 1914, "list of stuff on No. 7," Best Collection, ASL.

[45] Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White River District," 213-14. "Booming" is an important variant of ground-sluicing, practiced in areas possessing little water. The

stream to be worked is impounded behind a dam. On being released by either a hand-operated or an automatic gate, the water rushes down the cut, carrying most of the surface material with it. Wimmler, *Placer-Mining Methods and Costs in Alaska*, 90. For a more colorful explanation, see the *Valdez News*, February 15, 1902.

[46] *Dawson Daily News*, July 13, 1914; Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White River District," 214.

[47] Ibid, 214-15; *Alaska and Northwest Mining Journal* 4, no. 5 (November 1914): 116.

[48] *Dawson Daily News*, July 13, 1914; *Alaska and Northwest Mining Journal* 4, no. 5 (November 1914): 116; Michael R. Healy to Anthony Dimond, August 22, 1914, Donohoe-Ostrander-Dimond Collection, UAF.

[49] *Dawson Daily News*, July 13, 1914; Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White River District," 215.

[50] Ibid, 215-16; Capps, *The Chisana-White River District*, 108; Healy to Dimond, August 22, 1914; Donohoe to Dimond, September 1, 1914, Donohoe-Ostrander-Dimond Collection, UAF; *Alaska and Northwest Mining Journal* 4, no. 5 (November 1914): 116.

[51] Fred Best diary, August 30 and September 1, 1914, Best Collection, ASL; *Chitina Leader*, September 15, 1914.

[52] Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White River District," 216.

[53] Thomas J. Donohoe to Anthony Dimond, September 1, 1914, Donohoe-Ostrander-Dimond Collection, UAF; Capps, *The Chisana-White River District*, 105.

[54] Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White River District," 216-17.

[55] Ibid, 217; *Alaska and Northwest Mining Journal* 4, no. 5 (November 1914): 116.

[56] Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White River District," 217-18. *Chitina Leader*, September 8, 1914. Like many of those who rushed to the Chisana, Charles Range possessed extensive local experience. In 1903 he and four partners had worked an important claim on Dan Creek in the Nizina district. *Valdez News*, July 11, 1903.

[57] Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White River District," 222; *Weekly Star* (Whitehorse), September 12, 1913.

[58] *Alaska and Northwest Mining Journal* 4, no. 5 (November 1914): 113-21.

[59] Capps, *The Chisana-White River District*, 113.

[60] Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White River District," 218-19.

[61] Ibid, 219.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid, 219-20.

[64] *Dawson Daily News*, June 3, 1914; June 13, 1914; *Chitina Leader*, February 3, 1914; November 3, 1914; December 1, 1914; Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White

River District," 221.

[65] Ibid, 222-23; *Dawson Daily News*, June 9, 1914. McGuire claimed, however, to have encountered a narrow band of paydirt at forty-five feet. *Weekly Star* (Whitehorse), July 24, 1914.

[66] Capps, "Mineral Resources of the Chisana-White River District," 202.

[67] Ibid, 203.

[68] *Chitina Leader*, July 7, 1914; *Dawson Daily News*, July 28, 1914.

[69] Fred Best diary, July 1914, *passim*, Best Collection, ASL.

[70] *Dawson Daily News*, July 28, 1914.

[71] Fred Best to his parents, May 12, 1914, Best Collection, ASL.

[72] Quoted in Hunt, *Mountain Wilderness*, 99-100. Waller served in the Chisana district as Horatio E. Morgan's assistant recorder in 1913. *Dawson Daily News*, October 13, 1913.

[73] Ibid, July 23, 1914; *Chitina Leader*, September 22, 1914. After leaving Chisana, Kettleson served briefly as a member of the territorial House before moving to Sitka, where he ended his career as a prominent banker. Clara Kettleson, *The Golden Tread* (San Diego: North Star Press, 1984), *passim*; Atwood and DeArmond, *Who's Who in Alaska Politics*, 54-55; Tewkesbury, *Who's Who in Alaska*, 43-44.

[74] *Chitina Leader*, September 22, 1914. Before rushing to the Chisana, Goshaw had served as a deputy U.S. marshal, headquartered in Valdez. After leaving the district, he became a fur trader and a prominent resident of Alaska's Seward Peninsula. During the Second World War he was instrumental in organizing the Shishmaref Company of the Alaska Territorial Guard. Ibid, February 16, 1915; Tewkesbury, *Who's Who in Alaska*, 28.

[75] Thomas J. Donohoe to Anthony Dimond, September 1, 1914, Donohoe-Ostrander-Dimond Collection, UAF; Fred Best to parents, August 16, 1914, Best Collection, ASL.

[76] Martin, "The Alaskan Mining Industry in 1918," 43; *Chitina Leader*, September 22, 1914.

[77] *Cordova Daily Times*, January 5, 1915; February 2, 1915. Schonborn operated the Yukon Hotel, said to have been the first such establishment in Dawson City, from 1897 to 1901.

[78] Ibid, February 12, 1915. Unlike most residents, who were buried locally, Schonborn was ultimately interred in Puyallup, Washington. *Valdez Weekly Miner*, April 4, 1915.

[79] *Cordova Daily Times*, January 30, 1915; February 2, 1915; February 12, 1915; September 30, 1915; *Chitina Leader*, February 16, 1915; October 5, 1915.

[80] *Valdez Weekly Miner*, September 26, 1915; Spude, "Historic Chisana," 1; *Nome Daily News*, October 26, 1915. Finnegan was widely known in Alaska for an anti-conservation article he had publishing in *Alaska-Yukon Magazine* during the Ballinger-Pinchot

Controversy of 1910. During the First World War, he managed Alaska's military draft. *McCarthy Weekly News*, September 21, 1918.

[81] *Alaska and Northwest Mining Journal* 7, no. 3 (September 1915): 58; *Chitina Leader*, October 25, 1915. James Murie originally came to the district as a special correspondent to the *Vancouver World*.

[82] *Cordova Daily Times*, August 9, 1915. Hydraulic mining utilizes pressurized water to break up gravel and to wash it to the sluices. Charles F. Jackson and John B. Knaebel, *Small-Scale Placer-Mining Methods*, U.S. Bureau of Mines Information Circular 6611, sixth revision, May 1934, 13.

[83] *Cordova Daily Times*, August 10, 1915; *Chitina Leader*, August 17, 1915; *Alaska and Northwest Mining Journal* 7, no. 3 (September 1915): 58.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid; *Chitina Leader*, January 12, 1915.

[86] *Alaska and Northwest Mining Journal* 7, no. 3 (September 1915): 58.

[87] Martin, "The Alaskan Mining Industry in 1918," 43; Alfred H. Brooks, "The Alaskan Mining Industry in 1915," in Alfred H. Brooks, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1915*, USGS Bulletin No. 642 (Washington: GPO, 1916), 62; *Cordova Daily Alaskan*, August 31, 1915.

[88] *Chitina Leader*, October 19, 1915. Some confusion exists regarding the spelling of Johnston's name, which contemporary newspaper accounts invariably spelled "Johnson." However, official post office documents spell wife Luella's name "Johnston," and that is the way she signed a letter in the author's personal collection. Luella Johnston, autograph cover, Geoffrey Bleakley collection, Copper Center, Alaska. Sid Johnston received his nickname from his propensity to unload freight on the Nizina and Rohn Glaciers when the weight got to be "too much." Spude and Lappen, "Chisana Historic District," n.p.

Figure 61: Postal cover signed by Postmaster Luella Johnston.
Author's collection

[89] Fred Best diary, March 7, 1916, Best Collection, ASL.

[90] Ibid, April 10, 1916, Best Collection, ASL.

[91] Ibid, May 2, 1916, Best Collection, ASL.

[92] *Chitina Leader*, May 5, 1916.

[93] Alfred H. Brooks, "The Alaskan Mining Industry in 1916," in Alfred H. Brooks, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1916*, USGS Bulletin No. 662 (Washington: GPO, 1918), 55.

[94] *Chitina Leader*, October 19, 1915; March 7, 1916; Brooks, "The Alaskan Mining Industry in 1916," 55.

[95] *Chitina Leader*, October 3, 1916; William Maloney, *Report of William Maloney, Territorial Mine Inspector to the Governor of Alaska for the Year 1916* (Juneau: Territorial Department of Mines, 1917), 75. Although professional photographer Lewis Stanley never struck it rich, he left posterity a valuable legacy: the most emotionally evocative images of the Chisana district.

[96] Ibid; Harold H. Waller, survey map, "Placer Claims in the Shushana Gold Fields Alaska, 1916," copy in WRST files.

[97] Maloney, *Report of William Maloney*, 1916, 75.

[98] Brooks, "The Alaskan Mining Industry in 1916," 55; Fred Best diary, September 10-13, 1916, Best Collection, ASL; *Chitina Leader*, March 7, 1916; October 3, 1916; *Avalanch* (McCarthy), September 23, 1916.

[99] Prescott, "The Alaska Story, Vol. II," 56, Best Collection, ASL.

[100] Fred Best diary, November 15, 1916, Best Collection, ASL.

[101] George C. Martin, "The Mining Industry of Alaska in 1917," in George C. Martin, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1917*, USGS Bulletin No. 692 (Washington: GPO, 1919), 36.

[102] *Chitina Leader*, October 16, 1917; William Maloney, *Report of the Territorial Mine Inspector to the Governor of Alaska for the year 1917* (Juneau: Territorial Department of Mines, 1918), 43. Like the other miners in the Chisana, Billy Johnson had paid his dues. On his way to the Klondike in 1898, he was buried by a massive avalanche in Chilkoot Pass and barely survived. While working in Dawson as a driver for the Cascade Laundry Company, Johnson grubstaked James and Nelson, receiving in return a full partnership in their claims. *Dawson Daily News*, July 29, 1913.

[103] Ibid; *Chitina Leader*, October 16, 1917.

CHAPTER FOUR

[1] Martin, "The Alaskan Mining Industry in 1918," 43.

[2] Hulley, *Alaska, 1741-1953*, 315.

[3] Commissioned as an ensign, Best served as the executive officer of the *U.S.S. Dochra*, reaching the rank of lieutenant before receiving an honorable discharge at the conclusion of the war. He then returned to the sea, working in the merchant marine until he retired in 1935. He never returned to Alaska. Prescott, "The Alaska Story of Fred W. Best, Vol. II," 74-75, Best Collection, ASL. Stanley, "Nabesna Gold Mine Historic District," National Register Nomination, 1978.

[4] Mrs. N. P. Nelson to Fred Best, June 7, 1918, Best Collection, ASL.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Alfred H. Brooks, "The Alaskan Mining Industry in 1919," in Alfred H. Brooks, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1919*, USGS Bulletin No. 714 (Washington: GPO, 1921), 84.

[8] Alfred H. Brooks, "The Alaskan Mining Industry in 1920," in Alfred H. Brooks, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1920*, USGS Bulletin No. 722 (Washington: GPO, 1922), 50-51; Robert L. Spude and Michael Lappen, "Chisana Historic District," National Register Nomination, 1984, copy in historic files, WRST.

[9] *Nenana Daily News*, May 25, 1920.

[10] George E. Walker, "Residents of the Chisana District, March 24-27, 1920," Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920, Roll 2031, listing 670, 111-13. National Archives, Alaska Region, Anchorage, Alaska. Strangely, 40 percent of the white population, including

the commissioner, the trader, a freighter, a trapper, three prospectors, and nine placer miners, were born outside the United States, and only seventeen could trace their American roots back more than a single generation. For a more complete enumeration of Chisana's census, see Appendix.

[11] Alfred H. Brooks, "The Alaskan Mining Industry in 1921," in Alfred H. Brooks, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1921*, USGS Bulletin No. 739 (Washington: GPO, 1923), 34-35.

[12] *The Pathfinder* (October 1921): 6.

[13] Knut D. Peterson, *When Alaska Was Free* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Ashley Books, 1977), 112-15.

[14] Buzzell, "Big Eldorado Creek Drainage History," 4-5.

[15] Alfred H. Brooks, "The Alaskan Mining Industry in 1922," in Alfred H. Brooks, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1922*, USGS Bulletin No. 755 (Washington: GPO, 1924), 40.

[16] Alfred H. Brooks, "Alaska's Mineral Resources and Production, 1923," in Alfred H. Brooks, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1923*, USGS Bulletin No. 773 (Washington: GPO, 1925), 45; Norman L. Wimmler, "Placer Mining in Alaska in 1923," in Benjamin D. Stewart, ed., *Annual Report of the Territorial Mine Inspector to the Governor of Alaska, 1923* (Juneau: Territorial Department of Mines, 1924), 28.

[17] Ibid. Aaron E. Nelson served as Chisana's last commissioner, replacing Anthony McGettigan in 1921.

[18] Ibid.

[19] *Chitina Leader*, June 16, 1923.

[20] Ibid. Boyden possessed extensive knowledge of Skolai Pass, having freighted in this vicinity since 1914. George O. Young, *Alaskan-Yukon Trophies Won and Lost* (Huntington, West Virginia: Standard Publications, Inc., 1947), 90-94. Boyden left the region in 1918 to participate in World War I, but returned to Alaska at its conclusion. During the 1920s Boyden held a contract to haul the Chisana mail, and also began his long career as a hunting guide. During the Second World War, Boyden served as caretaker of Carl Whitham's Nabesna Mine. He remained in the vicinity, finally dying in 1970s at age 86. The Boyden Hills, located just north of Nabesna, were named in his honor.

[21] Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1924," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1924*, USGS Bulletin No. 783 (Washington: GPO, 1926), 13.

[22] Fittingly, Medary's guide on his excursion was Andy Taylor. Milton B. Medary, Jr., "A Hunting Trip in Alaska, Diary of Milton Bennett Medary, Jr., 1924," 14, UAF. Medary was undoubtedly referring to trader Charles A. Simons, who continued to supply the

district's few remaining miners until his death in 1929. *McCarthy Weekly News*, November 10, 1923; Robert McKennan, "Diary, September 1929-June 1930," Steffanson Collection, Dartmouth College,

[23] Fred H. Moffit, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1925 and Administrative Report," in Fred H. Moffit, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1925*, USGS Bulletin No. 792 (Washington: GPO, 1927), 17; Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry in Alaska in 1926," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigation in 1926*, USGS Bulletin No. 797 (Washington: GPO, 1929), 23; Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1927," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1927*, USGS Bulletin No. 810 (Washington: GPO, 1929), 24; Norman L. Wimmler, "Placer Mining in Alaska in 1926," U.S. Bureau of Mines Microfilm Records, roll 21, item 6, 33, ARL.

[24] Ibid.

[25] *McCarthy Weekly News*, January 3, 1925.

[26] Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1927," 24.

[27] Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1928," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1928*, USGS Bulletin No. 813 (Washington: GPO, 1930), 27, 34-35.

[28] Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1929," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1929*, USGS Bulletin No. 824 (Washington: GPO, 1932), 32, 39-40; Norman L. Wimmler, "Placer Mining in Alaska in 1929," Report to the Territorial Department of Mines, U.S. Bureau of Mines Microfilm Records, roll 22, item 1, ARL.

[29] Robert McKennan, *The Upper Tanana Indians*, Yale University Publications in Anthropology No. 55 (New Haven: Yale University Anthropology Department, 1959), 26.

[30] "Description of Chisana-Nabesna Landing Fields," Alaska Road Commission, Bureau of Public Roads-Project Correspondence, 1916-1950, RG 30, Box 33/10/05/14(4), SP1 Chisana, National Archives-Alaska Region, Anchorage, Alaska. During this same period, Gus Johnson also built a slightly smaller airstrip at Nabesna. R. J. Shepard to Alaska Road Commission, December 6, 1929, ibid.

[31] Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1930," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report of Progress of Investigations in 1930*, USGS Bulletin No. 836 (Washington: GPO, 1931), 32.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid, 40; Benjamin D. Stewart, *Report on Cooperation Between the Territory of Alaska and the United States in Making Mining Investigations and in the Inspection of Mines for the Biennium Ending March 31, 1931* (Juneau: Territorial Department of Mines, 1931), 67-68.

[34] Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1930," 41; Earl R. Pilgrim, "Placer Mines

Visited 1930," Report to the Territorial Department of Mines, U.S. Bureau of Mines Microfilm Records, roll 9, item 21, 2, ARL.

[35] Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1932," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1932*, USGS Bulletin No. 857 (Washington: GPO, 1934), 30.

[36] Benjamin D. Stewart, *Mining Investigations and Mine Inspection in Alaska, Including Assistance to Prospectors, Biennium Ending March 31, 1933*, (Juneau: Territorial Department of Mines, 1933), 94-95.

[37] Ibid, 94; Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1932," 30; Beth Day, *Glacier Pilot: The Story of Bob Reeve* (Sausalito, Calif.: Comstock Editions, Inc., 1986), 52-55.

[38] R. G. Wayland, "Gold Deposits Near Nabesna," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1940*, USGS Bulletin No. 933 (Washington: GPO, 1943), 177. Bell Joe, interview conducted by Geoffrey Bleakley, September 16, 1995, Chistochina, Alaska, audio tape in historic files, WRST.

[39] Stewart, *Mining Investigations . . . in Alaska, 1933*, 94; Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1933," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1933*, USGS Bulletin No. 864 (Washington: GPO, 1936), 42.

[40] Peterson, *When Alaska Was Free*, 90; Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1933," 42.

[41] Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1934," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1934*, USGS Bulletin No. 868 (Washington: GPO, 1937), 44; Peterson, *When Alaska Was Free*, 25.

[42] Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1935," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1935*, USGS Bulletin No. 880 (Washington: GPO, 1937), 47; Fred H. Moffit, "Recent Mineral Developments in the Copper River Region Alaska," in ibid, 105. Hirst was hardly a newcomer to the area, having traded in Chistochina since the early 1920s. See Milton Medary diary, September 1924, Medary Collection, UAF.

[43] Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1936," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1936*, USGS Bulletin No. 897 (Washington: GPO, 1938), 55.

[44] John C. Roehm, "Investigations: McCarthy, Nizina River, Bremner and Chisana Mining Districts," 13, Report to the Territorial Department of Mines, U.S. Bureau of Mines, roll 7, item 25, ARL.

[45] Ibid. A "giant" is large nozzle used for directing a stream of water under a hydraulic head. E. D. Gardner and C. H. Johnson, *Placer Mining in the Western United States, Part II, Hydraulicking, Treatment of Placer Concentrates, and Marketing of Gold*, U.S. Bureau of

Mines Information Circular 6787, October 1934, 24.

[46] Roehm, "Investigations," 13.

[47] Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1936," 55; Roehm, "Investigations," 13; John C. Roehm, "General Conditions Relative to Mining in the Chisana District, August 1936," U.S. Bureau of Mines Microfilm Records, roll 2, item 45, 1, ARL.

[48] Ibid; John C. Roehm, "Preliminary Report of Peterson's Lode Prospect, Big Eldorado Creek, Chisana Mining District, August 23, 1936," U.S. Bureau of Mines Microfilm Records, roll 2, item 39, ARL.

[49] Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1937," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1937*, USGS Bulletin No. 910 (Washington: GPO, 1939), 56; Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1938," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1938*, USGS Bulletin No. 917 (Washington: GPO, 1939), 55; William R. Hunt, *Golden Places: A History of Alaska-Yukon Mining with Particular Reference to Alaska's National Parks* (Anchorage: National Park Service, n.d.), 242.

[50] John C. Roehm, "Summary Report of Mining Investigations in the Nizina, Bremner, Chisana, Tiekel, Nabesna, and Prince William Sound Districts . . . August 22 to September 1, 1938," Report to the Territorial Department of Mines, U.S. Bureau of Mines Microfilm Records, roll 7, item 35, 4, ARL. Oral testimony suggests that "Chisana Joe" was the same "Indian Joe" who guided Billy James to the site of the original Chisana discovery.

[51] Roehm, "Summary Report," n.p. This "unidentified Native man" was probably Jack John Justin, who is known to have mined in the vicinity during this period. James Kari, ed., *Tatl'ahwt'aenn Nenn' The Headwaters People's Country* (Fairbanks: Alaska Native Language Center, 1985), 149.

[52] Lone E. Janson, *Mudhole Smith: Alaska Flier* (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing Company, 1981), 67.

[53] Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1939," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1939*, USGS Bulletin No. 926 (Washington: GPO, 1941), 53; Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1940," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1940*, USGS Bulletin No. 933 (Washington: GPO, 1942), 51; Hunt, *Golden Places*, 242.

[54] Fred H. Moffit, "Geology of the Nutzotin Mountains, Alaska," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report of Progress on Investigations in 1940*, USGS Bulletin No. 933 (Washington: GPO, 1943), 171.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid, 171-72; Fred H. Moffit, *Geology of the Eastern Part of the Alaska Range and Adjacent Area*, USGS Bulletin No. 989 (Washington: GPO, 1954), 200.

[57] Moffit, "Geology of the Nutzotin Mountains," 172-73.

[58] Ibid, 164-65, 172-73. In the late 1930s, Gamblin mined property further to the east near Horsfeld Creek. Janson, *Mudhole Smith*, 56.

[59] Reckord, *Where Raven Stood*, 236. Bell Joe interview, conducted by Geoffrey Bleakley, September 16, 1995, Chistochina, Alaska. Audio tape in historic files, WRST.

[60] Kari, *Tatl'ahwt'aenn Nenn'*, 149; Reckord, *Where Raven Stood*, 70.

[61] Ibid, 237.

[62] Philip S. Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1941 and 1942," in Philip S. Smith, et al., eds., *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report of Progress of Investigations in 1941 and 1942*, USGS Bulletin No. 943 (Washington: GPO, 1944), 11.

[63] Smith, "Mineral Industry of Alaska in 1941 and 1942," 11; Mary J. Barry, *A History of Mining on the Kenai Peninsula* (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing Company, 1976), 168.

[64] Peterson, *When Alaska Was Free*, 87, 90-91. Searchers, however, recovered one of McGettigan's boots, still containing the missing miner's foot.

[65] Janson, *Mudhole Smith*, 104.

[66] Benjamin D. Stewart, *Report of the Commissioner of Mines for the Biennium Ended December 31, 1946* (Juneau: Territorial Department of Mines, 1947), 37, 41-42; Bruce Thomas, "Report of Mining Investigations, September 1946," U.S. Bureau of Mines Microfilm Records, roll 8, item 40, 3, ARL. Nelson failed to perform his required assessment work in 1947, and appears never to have worked his claims again. At this point, however, Nelson still controlled Bonanza Creek No. 8, No. 8 Fraction, No. 9, and the Discovery Claim at the mouth of Coarse Money Creek. N. P. Nelson, Declaration of Intention to Hold, July 5, 1947, Record Book Vol. 13, Chitina Recording District, 1945-1948, 199, District Court Records, Third Division, Glennallen, Alaska.

[67] B. J. Davis, Proof of Annual Labor, February 24, 1947, Record Book Vol. 13, Chitina Recording District, 1945-1948, 159, District Court Records, Third Division, Glennallen, Alaska.

[68] B. J. Davis, Notice of Intention to Hold, February 24, 1947, ibid.

[69] Quitclaim deed, William E. James and Agnes T. James to the Nutzotin Mining Company, September 17, 1946, Record Book Vol. 13, Chitina Recording District, 1945-1948, 127-28, District Court Records, Third Division, Glennallen, Alaska. The claims transferred to the new corporation included Bonanza Creek Discovery, No. 1, Discovery Fraction, No. 4, No. 5, No. 5 Fraction, No. 5 Bench on Left Limit, and No. 6; Chathenda Creek No. 1 and No. 1 Above; Little Eldorado Creek No. 1 Fraction, Discovery Bench Nos. 1, 2, and 3 Left Limit, No. 3 Creek Claim, James Bench Right Limit joining No. 3 Little Eldorado, Gold Bug Bench Nos. 1, 2, and 3 Left Limit, No. 4 Creek Claim, and No. 5 Creek Claim; and Gold Run Creek Discovery and Discovery Annex. Billy had married Agnes in Seattle in 1926, following the untimely death of Matilda Wales. *McCarthy Weekly News*,

September 5, 1925; March 13, 1926; *Anchorage Daily Times*, April 9, 1960.

[70] Stewart, *Report of the Commissioner of Mines, 1946*, 41; Tewkesbury, *Who's Who in Alaska*, 248.

[71] Wright held Gold Run Creek Nos. 1 Above Discovery and 2 Above Discovery in 1947. Alfred T. Wright, Exemption from Assessment Work, June 21, 1947, Record Book Vol. 13, Chitina Recording District, 1945-1948, 189, District Court Records, Third Division, Glennallen, Alaska.

[72] Tewkesbury, *Who's Who in Alaska*, 247-48. B. J. Davis, Proof of Annual Labor, November 10, 1947, Record Book Vol. 13, Chitina Recording District, 1945-1948, 237, District Court Records, Third Division, Glennallen, Alaska.

[73] Tewkesbury, *Who's Who in Alaska*, 194, 247.

[74] Ibid, 247.

CHAPTER FIVE

[1] Tewkesbury, *Who's Who in Alaska*, 212.

[2] Stuart Starbuck, interview conducted by author, August 25, 1995, Skagway, Alaska, audio tape in historic files, WRST. Cordova Air Service serviced Chisana City every five days in 1953, charging its passengers $22.00 one way. M. W. Jasper, "Report of July 13, 1953," to Phil R. Holdsworth, Alaska Territorial Commissioner of Mines, U.S. Bureau of Mines Microfilm Records, ARL roll 9, item 12.

[3] Ivan R. Thorall, personal communication with author, Steve Lang, and Amy Gallaway, July 20, 1995, Chisana, Alaska, notes in author's files. Bell Joe, interview conducted by Geoffrey Bleakley, September 16, 1995, Chistochina, Alaska, audio tape in historic files, WRST.

[4] Ibid; Georgia Strunk, personal communication with author, March 15, 1996, Glennallen, Alaska, notes in author's files.

[5] Ivan R. Thorall, personal communication with author, August 8, 1996, Chisana, Alaska, notes in author's files.

[6] Spude, "Historic Chisana" attachment, "Chisana: History of the Townsite," 4.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Snow Gulch Mining Venture, "Articles of Association," May 17, 1965, Bonanza Creek-Moody Mining Plan 1988 & 1989 folder, Mining files, WRST; Manuscript claim chronology, c. 1982, Bonanza Creek Moody Correspondence Pre-1990 folder, Mining files, WRST; Mining Claim Location Notices, Bonanza Creek Nos. 1-6, November 23, 1969, Book X, Pages 212-16, Fairbanks Recording District, Bonanza Creek-Moody Mining Plan 1983-1987 folder, Mining files, WRST.

[10] John Cook to Ivan Thorall, March 18, 1981, Correspondence folder, Mining files, WRST.

[11] Ivan Thorall to John Cook, May 9, 1981, Correspondence folder, Mining files, WRST.

[12] Ibid; Howard Wagner to Ivan Thorall, May 21, 1981, Correspondence folder, Mining files, WRST.

[13] John Cook to Donald Dippel, August 4, 1982, Little Eldorado folder, Mining files, WRST.

[14] Robert Peterson to Donald Dippel, May 3, 1983, Little Eldorado folder, Mining files, WRST; Barbara Nather to Monte Allen and Donald Dippel, September 9, 1985, Little Eldorado folder, Mining files, WRST.

[15] Robert Peterson to Ivan Thorall, July 2, 1984, Correspondence folder, Mining files, WRST; Robert Peterson to Donald Dippel, April 9, 1984, Little Eldorado folder, Mining files, WRST.

[16] James Berens to Donald Dippel, April 3, 1985, Little Eldorado folder, Mining files, WRST; Michael Finley to James Moody, April 12, 1985, Bonanza Creek Moody Correspondence Pre-1990 folder, Mining files, WRST; Robert Peterson to Ivan Thorall, May 2, 1985, Correspondence folder, Mining files, WRST; Richard H. Martin to Chief, Minerals Management Division, ARO, August 24, 1989, Correspondence folder, Mining files, WRST.

[17] Richard Stenmark to Mining Operators, June 2, 1987, Little Eldorado folder, Mining files, WRST.

[18] Boyd Evison to Mining Operator/Claimant, October 30, 1985, Little Eldorado folder, Mining files, WRST.

[19] Ivan Thorall to Robert Peterson, May 13, 1985, Shamrock and Tony M folder, Mining files, WRST.

[20] Statutory Quitclaim Deed between Ivan Thorall and Glenn W. DeSpain, June 4, 1986, Book 483, Page 674, Fairbanks Recording District, Bonanza Creek-G. DeSpain folder, Mining files, WRST; Robert Peterson to Donald Dippel, March 31, 1986, Little Eldorado folder, Mining files, WRST.

[21] Josephine Puff, Gravest, Inc., to Superintendent, WRST, July 6, 1987, Bonanza Creek-Moody Mining Plan 1988 & 1989 folder, Mining files, WRST; Donald Dippel to Gravest, Inc., July 1987, Bonanza Creek-Moody Mining Plan 1988 & 1989 folder, Mining files, WRST.

[22] Richard Stenmark to James Moody, July 21, 1988, Bonanza Creek Moody Correspondence Pre-1990 folder, Mining files, WRST; Kit Mullen, "Monitoring and Compliance Report, Year End Operational Evaluation, Bonanza Number 4, 5 and 6 Placer Claims," December 1988, 1-2, Bonanza Creek Moody Correspondence Pre-1990 folder, Mining files, WRST.

[23] WRST, "Environmental Assessment: Access to Placer Claims on Big Eldorado Creek and Gold Run Creek and Access Route Maintenance to Chicken Creek Air Strip and Little Eldorado Creek Trail," 1989, 27, Bonanza Creek-Moody Mining Plan 1988 & 1989 folder, Mining files, WRST; Richard Martin, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1989," 5-6.

[24] Karen Wade, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1990," 8-9.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Karen Wade, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1991," 18-19.

[27] Patti Happe, "Environmental Specialist's Annual Report," November 29, 1991, 1, Annual Reports folder, Environmental files, WRST; Karen Wade, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1991," 9-10.

[28] Danny Rosenkrans, "Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve 1992 Minerals Management and Natural Resources Management Report," Annual Reports Geologist 91-94 folder, Mining files, WRST; Karen Wade, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1992," 5.

[29] Karen Wade, "Superintendent's Annual Report, 1993," 12-13, 37-38.

[30] Danny Rosenkrans, "1994 Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Resources Management Annual Report, Geologist's Physical Science Section," Annual Reports Geologist 91-94 folder, Mining files, WRST; Danny Rosenkrans to author, April 5, 2001, electronic message, History files, WRST.

[31] Evvie Punches to Glenn DeSpain and Melba Charles, April 25, 1995, One Below and Lucky Discovery (Bonanza) folder, Mining files, WRST.

[32] Danny Rosenkrans, "1994 Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Resources Management Annual Report, Geologist's Physical Science Section," Annual Reports Geologist 91-94 folder, Mining files, WRST; Danny Rosenkrans to Carol Ann and Lloyd Webb, July 3, 1996, Correspondence folder, Mining files, WRST; Danny Rosenkrans to author, April 5, 2001, electronic message, History files, WRST.

[33] WRST, "Environmental Assessment: The Ten Year Mining Plan of Operations, Big Eldorado Creek Claim Group, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, Alaska," n.d. [2000], 5-6, Mining files, WRST.

[34] Ibid, 5; Danny Rosenkrans, "Geologist's 2000 Annual Report, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, [January 2001], Mining files, WRST.

APPENDIX ONE

HISTORICAL NOTE ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF CHISANA

The following article appeared in the *Dawson Daily News* on August 20, 1913, shortly after the Chisana discovery:

CHIS-ANA IS THE WAY TO PRONOUNCE IT

ALL AUTHORITIES SAY THAT SUCH IS ORIGINAL INDIAN STYLE

SCIENTIFIC MEN AGREE

CANADIAN AND AMERICAN GEOLOGISTS STAND BY ONE SPELLING

The pronunciation of the name of the stream at the head of the Tanana after which the new placer district is called has been puzzling a good many. The name as it appears on all the official and geological maps of the United States government is Chisana, and the spelling is stoutly defended by all scientific men known to have been in the region. Dr. D. D. Cairnes, the Dominion geologist, who was in the new camp and returned here last week from the diggings, agrees thoroughly with the spelling adopted by the American geological corps, namely "Chisana," and says that the popular pronunciation will be found to be little, if any, interfered with if "Chisana" be divided into the proper syllables.

The Indians and others of the region, Fred Best, one of the first from the district explained, pronounce the name as though the division was after the letter a, making the name read as though "Chis" and "ana" were separate words, pronounced closely together.

The peculiarly fine shaded pronunciation of the natives is supposed not to have been grasped by all who heard the name pronounced by the aborigines or others acquainted with its true pronunciation, and the result was the corruption into the term "Shushana," which became common among the whites.

APPENDIX TWO

GLOSSARY

Adit: a horizontal passage driven from the surface for working or dewatering a mine.

Booming: a ground-sluicing variant usually employed in areas that lack a dependable flow of water. A dam is used to create an artificial reservoir. Once sufficient water has accumulated, the dam is opened, releasing a flash flood which quickly removes any surface gravel.

Crosscut: a cut intended to intersect a body of ore.

Drift: a horizontal passage which follows a vein underground.

Drift mining: a method of mining by means of drifts and shafts. The technique was often used during the winter to develop shallow stream deposits.

Flume: an inclined channel used to convey water to a mining operation. Usually supported by a trestle, most are made of wood.

Giant: the nozzle through which the pressurized water in an hydraulic mining operation is directed.

Ground-sluicing: a mining method which employs running water to remove the overburden. In effect, it is controlled and accelerated erosion.

Hydraulic mining: mining method which employs pressurized water to excavate gravel.

Layman: an individual who is leasing a claim, usually for a share of its production.

Lode: a mineral deposit that is still bound within its rock matrix.

Open-cut: a mining method in which the workings remain open to the surface.

Overburden: worthless surface material covering a body of valuable ore.

Placer mining: the extraction of minerals from alluvial gravel by removing the detrital material with running water.

Prospect: an unproven mineral property.

Riffles: ribs which are placed in the bottom of a sluice box at right angles to the current in order to trap any gold.

Rocker: a box-like, gold recovery device which is rocked back and forth like a child's cradle.

Shaft: a vertical or steeply inclined access passage from the surface into a mine.

Shoveling-in: a hand mining technique in which the gravel was usually loosened with a pick and shoveled directly into a sluice box.

Sluice box: a long, open-ended, slightly inclined box through which gold-bearing gravel is washed.

Tailings: the refuse material remaining after gravel is washed.

Test pit: a shallow excavation made to test the subsurface gravel.

Wing dam: a dam employed to force the water to undercut banks during the stripping operation.

APPENDIX THREE

DATES AND AMOUNTS OF SOME TYPICAL CLEANUPS ON BONANZA CREEK, 1914[1]

LOWER NO. 7

Jul 06	77.5 ozs
Jul 11	59
Jul 14	3
Jul 26	10.5
Aug 07	59.5
Aug 23	10.5
Aug 25	52
Aug 29	10.5
Sept -	8.5

BRYSON'S FRACTION

Jun 25	50 ozs
Jul 01	28
Jul 05	90.5
Jul 09	50.5
Jul 13	29
Jul 16	6.5
Jul 22	2.8
Aug 02	27.5
Aug 09	99
Aug 19	45.8

NO. 7A FRACTION

Jun 20	91 ozs
Jun 24	19
Jun 30	24.5
Jul 05	7.5
Jul 11	24.5
Jul 13	10.8
Jul 14	8.5
Jul 25	11.5
Jul 26	7.5
Jul 31	20.5
Aug 08	44.5
Aug 16	26
Aug 22	59
Aug 25	9.5
Aug 31	44
Sept 07	75.8

NO. 3B FRACTION

Jun 17	25.3 ozs
Jun 28	94.8
Jul 02	190
Jul 08	19.8
Jul 15	40.5
Jul 26	40.5
Jul 30	45.5
Aug 04	80
Aug 06	30.8
Aug 09	42.3
Aug 12	17.5
Aug 17	109
Aug 27	38
Aug 31	25
Sept 06	24.8
Sept -	96.8

[1] Fred Best, "Diary, 1914," Alaska State Library and Archives, Juneau, Alaska.

APPENDIX FOUR

CHISANA MINING DISTRICT: ANNUAL GOLD PRODUCTION, 1913-1942[1]

YEAR	NO. OF MINES	NO. OF EMPLOYEES	Total production
1913	not recorded	not recorded	$ 40,000.00
1914	22	325	250,000.00
1915	17	110	160,000.00
1916	12	40	40,000.00
1917	11	44	40,000.00
1918	[8]	[14]	15,000.00
1919	[10]	[24]	27,000.00
1920	8	18	20,000.00
1921	6	16	23,000.00
1922	9	25	29,000.00
1923	9	22	23,000.00
1924	8	[20]	23,400.00
1925	6	[18]	24,000.00
1926	5	[15]	18,000.00
1927	[5]	[15]	15,000.00
1928	5	12	16,000.00
1929	5	12	7,000.00
1930	6	12	5,800.00
1931	[6]	12	3,000.00
1932	[6]	[12]	7,000.00

1933	**[7]**	**20**	**16,000.00**
1934	**7**	**20**	**16,300.00**
1935	**10**	**[24]**	**21,000.00**
1936	**8**	**20**	**37,500.00**
1937	**[8]**	**20**	**30,000.00**
1938	**9**	**20**	**29,000.00**
1939	**[8]**	**20**	**20,000.00**
1940	**[8]**	**20**	**14,000.00**
1941	**[8]**	**[20]**	**14,000.00**
1942	**[4]**	**[8]**	**8,000.00**
TOTAL			**992,000.00**

[1] Bracketed figures are estimates. All others are drawn from USGS annual reports regarding mineral development in Alaska.

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