

## Chapter 2:

# Skagway After the Gold Rush

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### *Skagway's Economy, 1900-1960*

Because it served as the critical transfer point for most passengers and freight going into or out of the upper Yukon River valley, Skagway's permanence was assured during the years which followed the Klondike gold rush. Like Dawson, however, it waned in significance as the gold rush ran its course. From a peak of 8,000 or more in the spring of 1898, Skagway's population dropped to slightly over 3,000 in April 1900. The number of local residents continued to fall until 1910, when census takers tallied fewer than a thousand souls. [1]

As Skagway emerged from the fervor of the gold rush, its frontier character began to diminish. Clubs, churches, schools, families and other signs of civilized society sprang forth. The coming of the railroad, moreover, encouraged the development of a relatively steady work force. With the passing of the gold rush went a large number of the local supply stores, saloons, hotels and restaurants. The businesses that remained were dependent, directly or indirectly, on railroad revenues. [2]

Dyea, meanwhile, proceeded to slip into oblivion. Its population, like that of Skagway, dropped sharply after the spring of 1898; unlike Skagway, Dyea had no economic base to rely on once the gold rush was over. The town's two newspapers, the Dyea Trail and the Dyea Press, hung on for several months after the main wave of stampeders had headed north. But they, along with most of the other businesses, eventually died and their proprietors headed off to Dawson, Skagway or Puget Sound. [3] So dramatic was the dropoff in business that a visitor in early 1899 noted that Dyea was "the deserted city." Even so, the lingering tramway trade allowed the town to boast some 250 residents as late as March 1900. [4] By the following February, however, the tramways were gone and the town's population had dwindled to 71. Two years later only two or three residents inhabited the site. If useless for other purposes, the land underneath Dyea was sufficiently fertile to be used as farmland, and many of the old buildings were torn down to make way for rows of cabbages, turnips and potatoes. [5]

As Skagway emerged from the flurry of the gold rush period, its appearance began to change. The rough frontier architecture of the gold rush was slowly replaced with more substantial buildings, larger and more elegant than their predecessors. Businesses made a concerted effort to throw off their frontier appearance, and false fronts, double recessed doors and elaborate lathework became commonplace on commercial buildings. The appearance of the town's residences improved as well, and intermittent campaigns encouraged the dismantling of the many vacant shacks left by the stampeders. [6]

The location of the business district also changed during the post-gold rush period. From 1897 to 1899, the primary business streets had been Fourth Avenue, Fifth Avenue, Sixth Avenue and Broadway Street. Little development took place below Fourth Avenue, because occasional high tides required that the more substantial buildings be erected on pilings. [7] With the completion of the railroad, however, businesses began to recognize the importance of being located on Broadway, particularly on lower Broadway near the railroad station. Over the next fifteen years,

therefore, the town witnessed a gradual migration of buildings from the side streets to Broadway and the withering away of off-Broadway businesses. As a result of that process, many of the principal buildings located along Broadway today have been moved from elsewhere; notable examples are the Red Onion Saloon, the Golden North Hotel, the Pack Train Saloon, and the Eagles' Hall. With rare exceptions, no new buildings were erected on Broadway after 1904. By 1915, the town's realignment was complete. During the past 70 years, a few buildings have burned or been demolished, and several others have been constructed, but even so, the Broadway business district of 1915 largely resembles that seen by today's visitors. [8]

With its combination of history, natural beauty and frontier architecture, Skagway quickly became an important stopping point for Alaska's tourists. Southeastern Alaska was a popular area for excursion ships as early as the mid-1880s, and when the gold rush exploded into prominence the ships that plied the Inside Passage route merely added an extra day onto their itinerary in order to see the new, bustling town. [9] The first known tourists arrived in Skagway in July 1898, when they joined local residents in celebrating the first train to operate on the new White Pass line. By the following year, the Chamber of Commerce was urging local residents to prepare for the upcoming tourist season, and the first Skagway Clean-up Day was scheduled to beautify the streets and yards. [10]

With only a single excursion boat plying the waters of southeast Alaska, Skagway tourism remained at a low level during the 1900-1910 period. Just before World War I, however, the number of ships (and tourists) steadily increased, and Skagway developed a number of attractions to lure the summer trade. Beginning in 1906, promotional pamphlets extolled the town's many flower gardens, and tourists were seen visiting the grave of "Soapy" Smith as early as 1908. During the same period, tourists began chartering trains to the top of White Pass, and by the eve of World War I the day-long excursion to Bennett had become a popular excursion. [11]

To extend the time that tourists spent in the north country, the WP&YR began issuing elaborate brochures that invited tourists to visit the Canadian interior. The publication of these booklets commenced shortly after the gold rush subsided. As an effusive 1913 brochure intoned, "to go to Skagway and not see the interior is like going to the threshold of a fairyland and foregoing all the interest and enchantment to be enjoyed within the magic region." [12] The most common destinations were Whitehorse, Dawson, Atlin, and Ben-My-Chree, the latter being a homestead at the south end of Tagish Lake. By the advent of World War I, tourism was an important secondary industry; as local tour guide Martin Itjen told visitors to the Skagway railroad yards, "all the people in this town who do not work the tourists work here." [13]

The fortunes of the WP&YR were closely tied to the status of the Yukon economy and, to a lesser extent, to the number of tourists streaming north. The rate of gold production in the Dawson area stayed high through World War I, and the seasonal movement of prospectors, miners and transportation personnel were key to the success of the line. But the sinking of the Princess Sophia in October 1918 cost 353 lives, many of whom worked for the railroad or for Yukon mines, and business recovered slowly thereafter. In the 1920s gold production dropped off, but was replaced in part by the movement of silver from the mines at Elsa and Mayo. Increased tourism also helped fill in the void from the old-time prospecting trade. [14]

The early 1930s proved difficult for everyone. Both mineral production and tourism dropped off, so the railroad fell back to offering two trains per week between Skagway and Whitehorse.

The railroad did not significantly reduce its personnel, but wages were reduced and some administrative personnel were forced to mortgage their homes or skip paychecks in efforts to economize. The middle and late 1930s brought increased tourism to Skagway, and they also brought additional sailings of Canadian Pacific and Canadian National ships. As a result, railroad passenger traffic ballooned. Freight tonnage, however, remained anemic. Tonnage in 1940 remained less than that recorded in the late 1920s. [15]

The coming of World War II brought drastic changes, both to the railroad and to Skagway. Tourism, a highly visible if minor element in the local economy, stopped altogether. More important to the town was the U.S. Army's decision to build the Alcan Highway from Dawson Creek, B.C. to Fairbanks, Alaska. The construction which followed that decision turned Skagway into a major supply point, inasmuch as the railroad was the only logical access route to the proposed highway right-of-way aside from the terminus points. The Army further decided to build a major pipeline connecting Skagway with the Norman Wells oil fields, which were located along the Mackenzie River in the Northwest Territories, 500 miles northeast of Skagway. To implement these projects, the Army sent some 5,000 troops to Skagway. Some troops took over the operation of the WP&YR, and the newly-designated Military Railway Service often ran up to twelve trains per day over the line. Others constructed two barge unloading docks, transferred highway construction materials from ships to the railroad, or engaged in pipeline work. Both the highway and pipeline were completed by the end of 1943. Troops remained, however, until early 1946. [16]

The war years had a major impact on Skagway's architectural composition. Between 1908 and the day of Pearl Harbor attack, only two new residential or business buildings had been constructed. (The National Bank of Alaska office was built in 1916, while the Presbyterian manse, across the street from the church, was constructed by parishioners in the summer of 1941.) The town's stable population and the surfeit of gold rush-era buildings were largely responsible for the lack of new construction, but the refusal of the National Bank of Alaska (the town's only bank) to provide home loans to Skagway residents also played a role. But with the coming of the soldiers, scores of quonset huts and ex-Civilian Conservation Corps wooden barracks were built on whatever vacant lots could be secured. After the war, the military authorities dismantled and removed most of the quonset huts. The various barrack buildings, however, were given to Skagway-area veterans and remained in town. For decades afterwards, barracks remained an important visual element of the townscape; even today, the majority of Skagway's buildings date from either the 1897-1908 period or the 1942-1945 period. [17]

The end of the war left Skagway with more than just a surplus of barracks buildings. It also left the railroad with a large number of relatively new engines, yard buildings and freight cars (although many were in poor shape after the rugged use sustained during the war). Another change brought about by the war was the removal of trains from Broadway. The tracks located adjacent to the eastern bluff, which had existed since the gold rush period, became a passenger route for the first time. In order to access the depot, new tracks were built from the east bluff to the station's south side. The new tracks were used, and the Broadway tracks were effectively abandoned, in 1944. Removal of the Broadway tracks, however, did not take place until several years later. [18]

The sustained prosperity following World War II helped the line recover its battered equipment and roadbed, and assured as well its long term profitability. The construction of the Alcan Highway, and other wartime developments, left the Yukon with over twice its prewar

population. In Whitehorse alone, the population shot up from 300 to a peak of 5,000. The 1952 relocation of the territorial capital from Dawson City was a significant factor in the population increase. The development of extensive ore bodies over the next twenty years--Clinton Creek, Cassiar, Keno Hill, Watson Lake, and others--further brightened the economic picture in the Yukon, in northern British Columbia, and in Skagway. [19]

Tourism was another factor contributing to the economy, in Alaska as well as the Yukon. By the late 1940s, more tourists than ever before were traveling to Alaska and the Yukon. The Alcan Highway provided a new access route to the interior. Tourists hoping to visit southeastern Alaska found the going more difficult because the Alaska Steamship Company stopped carrying passenger traffic in the fall of 1954, in large part because the unionization of longshoremen raised port costs. But the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National ships, continued bringing tourists and residents to the area. (The Jones Act normally restricted foreign vessels from carrying passengers between two U.S. ports; the lack of competition, however, allowed the CPR and CNR to circumvent Jones Act stipulations.) Skagway continued to be served by the Prince George of the CNR, the Princess Louise of the CPR, and other Canadian-registry ships. [20] Two Alaska Cruise Line ships, the Glacier Queen and the Yukon Star, began serving Skagway in the summer of 1957. The only other ship which regularly served the port was the M/V Chilkoot, a small, privately operated ferry which began operating between Skagway, Haines, and Juneau in 1949. The owner of the Chilkoot sold out to the territory in 1951. The Chilkoot ran until 1957, when it was replaced by the M/V Chilkat. [21]

### ***Post-Gold Rush Use of Dyea and the Chilkoot Trail***

As noted above, Skagway remained active after the gold rush because of the successful construction of the White Pass and Yukon Route railroad. Dyea, however, declined quickly after its April 1898 peak, and by 1903 the primary land use at the lower end of the Taiya River valley was agriculture. For the first time in hundreds of years, the valley was no longer a commercial transportation corridor. For the next sixty years, the Chilkoot Trail corridor existed in name only; the existing pathway fell into disuse and it remained in an unmaintained state. Access to the trail remained elusive as well; no road connected Skagway with Dyea, and small boats found it treacherous to travel by water between the gold rush-era town and its deserted rival.

Many people, however, traveled up and down the Taiya River valley during the first six decades of the twentieth century. In 1906, for example, an international survey team ascended the valley to the U.S.-Canada frontier in order to erect boundary monuments. They found the trail passable, although bridges along the route had been washed away. After that, local residents made many trips over the route. Between 1910 and 1925, Skagway resident George Rapuzzi made four sojourns over the trail, one of them being a 1924 trip with a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film crew. At that time, the wagon road between Dyea and Canyon City was still easily visible; Rapuzzi himself cleared the road in order to ease the carriage of film supplies to Sheep Camp. Another Chilkoot hiker during the period was Florence Clothier, who ascended the pass in 1928. She spent four days on the U.S. side of the trail, and spent the intervening nights in abandoned cabins at Finnegan's Point, Canyon City, and Sheep Camp, respectively. [22]

During the 1930s, the Dyea area became a popular picnic area with local residents, who boated to the area. On the Chilkoot Trail, parties of individual hikers were supplemented by those that accompanied Right Reverend G. Edgar Gallant, the longtime priest and superintendent of

Skagway's new (1931) St. Pius X Mission. Gallant led several groups of students over the pass during the decade. In 1940 the Civilian Conservation Corps spent some time in the Dyea area; participants refurbished both the Dyea (Native) Cemetery and the Slide Cemetery, repainting the headboards at both cemeteries. Some may also have climbed over the nearby Chilkoot. Shortly afterward, the coming of World War II brought a large number of soldiers to Skagway. Some of them sought out the Dyea as a picnicking and hunting area. Others doubtless wanted to ascend Chilkoot Pass. How many made the trip, however, is unknown. [23]

Homesteaders had lived in the Dyea area, on an intermittent basis, since the gold rush period. The lack of access, however, prevented all but the most self-sufficient from living there. By 1932, nine families were homesteading there, and in October of that year they petitioned the government to construct a road to the valley from Skagway. [24] Officials from the Forest Service, the Bureau of Public Roads, and the Alaska Road Commission all denied the petitioners' request; the ARC did, however, provide sufficient funds to allow for the clearing of a hiking trail which connected Skagway with the Taiya River. [25] Three years later, the Skagway Chamber of Commerce again suggested the construction of a road to Dyea, but the road commission curtly replied that it had no funds to spare for "tourist roads." [26]

The road project finally got off the ground in 1940. Ernest Gruening, who had been appointed Alaska's governor in 1939, recommended the idea to the Territorial Road Board, and in May 1940, ARC engineers were dispatched to the area for a preliminary survey. [27] By August, an engineer had estimated that the entire 8.5 mile road, from Skagway to Dyea, would cost \$257,500. Meanwhile, the ARC, having been given \$27,000 for Dyea Road work, made plans for the summer construction season. Work proceeded slowly due to a lack of equipment, but by mid-September local foreman J. Ludwig Frolander and his crew had completed 2.3 miles of gravel road. Dyea Road, by now, extended all the way from its turnoff from the main road to its intersection with the Skagway Alpine Club's AB Mountain Trail. [28]

After the 1940 season, work continued on the Dyea Road project. By the following April, the Army had made it known that it was proposing to construct an airfield on the Dyea flats, because it was the only place in the Skagway area where a facility fitting the Army's needs could be built. Perhaps as a result, Gruening insisted that \$25,000 be allotted that year for the project. [29] Frolander, supplemented by the U.S. Army 18th Engineers, completed only a half mile of road that year because "practically every foot is heavy rock work with no choice for evading it." By the end of the 1942 season, the road had been extended to the head of Long Bay. [30]

Thereafter, road construction continued in small increments. Half-mile sections of road were completed in 1943 and 1944; a mile was completed in 1945, and 0.6 miles of new road was finished in 1946. [31] By the fall of 1946, the road had been completed far enough that the four Dyea homesteading families--those of Wesley Patterson, Kenneth Lamoreaux, Alfred Nelson, and Malcolm Moe--began to use the road to go to and from Skagway. But because the road had not yet reached the flats, all four homesteaders could drive to their homesteads only at low tide or over the ice. [32] That problem, however, was soon overcome. In 1947, the ARC extended the road another 0.3 miles, and the following April the agency erected the 200-foot steel bridge over the Taiya River. That same year, the road was completed all the way to West Creek. Ceremonies dedicating the new bridge took place on September 2, 1948. Governor Ernest Gruening, whose efforts were largely responsible for the completion of both the road and bridge, attended the dedication ceremony. [33]



The completion of the road stimulated new homesteading in the Dyea area and opened up a new recreational area for Skagway residents. [34] It also promised to increase the number of Chilkoot Trail hikers. In anticipation of new hikers, the Territory of Alaska hired four Skagway-area residents to rough out a recreational trail from Dyea to the top of Chilkoot Pass. (That trail used the present-day "Saintly Hill" which is the bane of so many Chilkoot hikers. The trail in that area, however, had probably been created by Dyea resident Al Nelson a decade earlier.) It is not known how successful the trail clearing effort was in stimulating trail use. Several local residents, however, took advantage of it. Wes Patterson, for example, hiked the trail a total of seven times during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The names of others who crossed during that period are inscribed on the walls of the so-called "trappers' cabin" at the south end of Lindeman Lake. [35]

The postwar period also witnessed a series of logging operations in the lower Taiya River valley. The White Pass and Yukon Route needed a source of lumber for wharf pilings, bridge timbers, and switch ties. In response, local resident Edward A. Hosford formed the Skagway Lumber Company. In 1946 or 1947, he and Wes Patterson built a cabin three miles upriver from Dyea. The construction of a mill, and the removal of lumber, began shortly after the completion of the Taiya River bridge. Timber cutting operations continued on a year-round basis until 1956. Hosford soon bulldozed a road from Dyea north to Finnegan's Point. During his eight or nine years of operation, he removed most of the mature spruce forest between Finnegan's Point and the mouth of West Creek. [36] Later, during the early 1960s, Hosford contracted with Mrs. Mark R. Noyd, the owner of the Pullen and Matthews homesteads, and logged most of the Taiya River valley south of West Creek. (He avoided the Dyea townsite, however, because the area contained few trees of commercial size.) Finally, in the late 1960s, Hosford contracted with the State of Alaska to log spruce in the West Creek drainage. [37]

The completion of Dyea Road, and its de facto extension to Finnegan's Point, rekindled the idea of an airport on Dyea flats. Skagway citizens, at this time, were demanding a longer runway in order to accommodate a new generation of Alaska Coastal Airline craft. A few bureaucrats apparently preferred a Dyea location, but the Skagway City Council, in September 1949, voted down the idea, opting instead to locate the new airfield in Skagway. Soon afterward, construction work began at the present airport site west of Alaska Street. [38]

The existence of a road to Dyea also stimulated local boosters to consider new highway routes. In the fall of 1949, for example, the Skagway Chamber of Commerce began to push for a road from Skagway to Haines. Both the Skagway Chamber and the Haines Common Council passed resolutions supporting such a construction effort. [39] A year later, the Skagway Common Council passed a similar resolution, requesting the Alaska Road Commission to construct a road from Dyea to the Alaska Highway. But John R. Noyes, Alaska's Commissioner of Roads, denied the various requests. He noted that he had flown over the area in a search for possible connecting roads but concluded that a road to Haines would be too expensive for the ARC's limited budget. A road via Canada, moreover, would be impossible for political reasons. [40]

The Chamber of Commerce, undaunted, next suggested that the road from Dyea be extended to Burro Creek. (This recreational area, which had once sported a popular dance pavilion, was on the west side of Taiya Inlet; it was two miles southwest of Skagway and five miles south of the Dyea road terminus.) The ARC, however, refused to back the idea, because the benefits of the road would be entirely local. [41]

During the summer of 1952, the Aluminum Company of America announced its intention to build a smelter in the Dyea area (see below), and on the heels of that announcement local boosters were given renewed hope that a road would be extended beyond Dyea. Those hopes, however, slowly faded, and by January 1953 the promise of additional road funds in relation to the proposed aluminum plant had been retracted. [42]

### ***Highway Construction in the Skagway River Valley***

As noted above, Skagway residents began to lobby for a road to Dyea in the early 1930s. Fifteen years later, their efforts finally paid off. Their efforts to construct a road to Carcross and Whitehorse began even earlier and proved far more frustrating.

Local citizens first became interested in the construction of a road over White Pass shortly after the Klondike gold rush had run its course. In 1905, citizens met to plan a road that would go up the Skagway Valley to White Pass, then on to Whitehorse. Contacts were made with Col. Wilds P. Richardson of the Alaska Road Commission, C. V. X. Molyneaux of the Road Commission in northern British Columbia, and Robert Lowe of Whitehorse. All three were initially enthusiastic about the plan, but Richardson lost interest and the plan was dropped. [43]

In 1912 or 1913, local citizens again contacted Richardson, who by now was a major in the ARC. Richardson promised that he would build the road, so a survey was effected and in 1914 a construction gang built a road three miles up the west side of the valley. Road work stopped just beyond Milepost 4 of the railroad. (Until 1938, the railroad crossed over the Skagway River near the White Pass shops, ascended the valley for three miles, then crossed the valley again near the site of Boulder station.) Somewhat later, local resident Charles Nye extended the road for another quarter mile; he did so in hopes that he might more easily develop a hydroelectric site on the Skagway River just above the confluence of the Porcupine River. [44]

Local residents underwent another round of frustration in the early 1920s. Several of them contacted officials from the Bureau of Public Roads about the proposed road. The BPR responded by conducting another survey, and with the help of Delegate Dan Sutherland, the Department of Agriculture allotted \$95,000 for the project, a sum deemed sufficient to construct the road up to Clifton Station, and perhaps as far as Glacier Station. The appropriation, however, was inexplicably diverted to other projects, and no construction work took place as a result. [45]

Beginning in 1923, local townspeople also began to petition for the construction of a road up the Skagway River's east fork to "S" Glacier. Alaska Road Commission representatives surveyed the route, but nothing became of the plans. [46] The \$100,000 road might never have left the drawing board but for E. W. Rasmuson, the Skagway banker, and Mayor W. J. Mulvihill. In July 1933, they met with various ARC officials on the road project. A month later, they informed the ARC that 70 men were living in town with no means of sustenance, and unless they were provided work they would soon be a burden on the town. Given that ultimatum, Governor John Troy approved the expenditure of \$25,000, sufficient to hire a 73-man crew for two months. By October 1 the project was underway, and by mid-December visitors could drive almost all the way to the East Fork railway bridge by using the old Brackett Wagon Road in combination with the newly-constructed right-of-way. [47]

Given the funding levels of the fall of 1933, the Denver Glacier road would have been completed in a few short years. But no new appropriations came, and by 1937 the project had been abandoned. The southern end of the project--that portion which had once been the Brackett Wagon Road--was converted to railroad right-of-way in 1938. The remaining right-of-way has, over the years, melded back into the surrounding forest, although today's springtime visitor can still see it from the Klondike Highway. [48]

The idea of a road up the Skagway Valley lay moribund during the 1940s. On the Canadian side of the pass, however, the war brought new road construction efforts. In conjunction with Alcan Highway supply efforts, an all-season road was built from Carcross to Whitehorse and from Carcross east to Jake's Corner. In addition, the decade brought renewed activity to the old Venus Mine site, 13 miles south of Carcross along Tagish Lake's Windy Arm. The mine was supplied by a road which paralleled the lake shore. [49]

During the early 1950s, the Skagway Chamber of Commerce began to push for a series of new roads out of the Skagway area. In 1949 and 1950, as noted above, the Chamber had lobbied for a road to Haines, and later for a road to the Alaska Highway. Those were followed, in January 1951, by a call for a road to Burro Creek. Therefore, it came as no surprise to the ARC, or to others in the territory, that the Skagway Common Council in March requested the territory's assistance and funds to construct a highway to Carcross. Skagway's interest was passed down to Juneau where the House Committee on Judiciary and Federal Relations sponsored House Memorial 51, which urged

that the appropriate agencies of the government of the United States immediately begin surveys for a highway designed to connect Skagway, Alaska with the Alaska Highway via Carcross and Whitehorse; that construction be commenced at the earliest feasible date and that negotiations be instituted with the appropriate Canadian officials for the survey and construction of the portions of said highway lying within Canada. [50]

The memorial, which was stimulated by activities surrounding the proposed Yukon-Taiya hydroelectric project, was rushed through the Alaska House. It passed unanimously and was signed by Governor Gruening on March 19. The proposed route was to ascend the west bank of the Skagway River to a crossing of the river and railroad near the Glacier station house; it would then ascend the Skagway River valley and cross over Warm Pass before continuing on to Carcross. The route was remarkable in that it diverged significantly from the Brackett Wagon Road or other gold rush-era routes; it also bore little resemblance to the route which was constructed during the 1970s. [51]

Few outside Skagway, however, were interested in constructing such a road. Edward P. Chester, an assistant to Governor Gruening, took the recently-passed memorial to a transportation meeting in Vancouver, B.C. Chester presented the memorial to E. C. Carson, British Columbia's Minister for Public Works. Carson was polite but firm. As Chester noted, "He appreciated my views; but that he could not see any immediate prospect for such a road." [52]

Alaskans refused to get discouraged by Carson's lack of interest. In early June, the Skagway Common Council passed a resolution calling for the Warm Pass road; the resolution cited ten reasons justifying its construction. The resolution, however, ran into a solid wall of opposition from both U.S. and Canadian interests. E. L. Bartlett, Alaska's delegate to Congress, responded



that such a road would need the approval of both the ARC and the military. But military sponsorship would be unlikely because of the existence of both the White Pass railroad and the Haines Road. [53] Joseph Flakne, from the Interior Department's Alaska Branch, noted that "It is unlikely ... that U.S. funds can be made available until Canada agreed to build the section of the route which will come under its jurisdiction," and John F. Walker, who was British Columbia's Minister of Mines, told a Skagway resident that "to be quite frank, this Department is more interested in other access routes through the Alaska Panhandle than the one from Skagway to Whitehorse." It was also suspected that the White Pass and Yukon Route opposed the proposed road. [54]

Despite the overwhelming odds, Alaskans continued to show their support for the Warm Pass road. Delegate Bartlett argued in a letter to Interior Secretary Oscar L. Chapman that "a compelling and valid case can be made for the construction of such a road," and spoke to the Alaska Air Command regarding the proposed road's military merits. In addition, sufficient pressure was exerted that the Alaska Road Commission, in July 1951, undertook a preliminary reconnaissance of the proposed route. The reconnaissance revealed that a road over White Pass was more feasible than the proposed Warm Pass route. [55]

Efforts to build the road continued on into the spring of 1952. Skagway residents orchestrated a letter-writing campaign to Territorial officials, trying to convince them of the road's value, both as a tourist corridor and a conduit for freight. Governor Gruening and ARC officials sympathized with their plight, but could do nothing. The road, they claimed, cost more than the meager Territorial road budget would allow, and without the assistance of the British Columbia government, further progress was impossible. Canadians, given a preference, favored the route between Juneau and Atlin more than the Skagway-Carcross road, but by June 1952 the provincial government had made it clear that it was not ready to expend funds on any northern roads during the foreseeable future. [56]

In August 1952, the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA) announced its intention to build a smelter in the Taiya River valley, and the giddiness that surrounded that announcement caused territorial officials to reconsider their plans for a Skagway-Carcross road. On September 6, Governor Gruening told Interior Secretary Chapman that he considered the plant's construction "the most important event in the history of Alaska." He also noted that "we consider [the road] project highly desirable, and when the Canadians definitely agree to construct their part of the road, concerning which I anticipate no difficulty, funds for our portion of the road will be duly requested by the Alaska Road Commission." [57]

As summer wore into fall, caution regarding the ALCOA plant began to set in because of Canada's reluctance to provide water rights. Momentum for the road, however, was off dead center, and in 1953 the Alaska Road Commission began a two-year reconnaissance of the proposed Skagway-Carcross road. Construction also took place. During the summer of 1953, the Territorial Highway Engineer kicked in \$6,000 to extend the road north from Skagway. The following year, another \$6,000 was provided for new road construction, and in 1955 sufficient new road money was allotted to allow the road to be extended to Black Lake. [58]

By 1957, prospects for a Skagway-Carcross road had improved, perhaps because new mines had spurred economic development in the Yukon. British Columbia's Minister of Highways, P. A. Gagliari, announced that the province would cooperate with Alaska in the construction of such a road, and soon afterwards, the Yukon's Member of Parliament, Erik Neilsen, declared his

support for the road. All that was needed, it appeared, was the cooperation of the Alaska territorial government. To secure that cooperation, a petition was sent to Governor Mike Stepovich in May 1958 which was intended "to secure the badly needed highway between Skagway and Carcross ... to help the economy and the defense of Alaska and adjacent Canada." But no further movements took place on the subject that year. Action to bring about new road construction would have to await a new decade (see Chapter 4). [[59](#)]

### ***The Yukon-Taiya Project***

One of the most long-running development chapters, and a source of enormous frustration to Skagway and other Alaska development interests, was the Yukon-Taiya hydroelectric project. The project was launched in the mid-1940s and peaked in a fervor of interest in the fall of 1952. By 1957, however, the project had been all but abandoned. Since that time, there have been numerous attempts to resurrect interest in it, and some in the Skagway area are still convinced that the project may yet be built.

In the postwar years, the various agencies and bureaus in the Department of the Interior embarked upon a program of identifying and classifying Alaskan resources preparatory to devising a comprehensive development plan for the territory. The Bureau of Reclamation was one of the agencies involved.

In November 1946, R. C. Johnson, an engineer with the bureau, concluded that an unusually large hydroelectric power potential could be developed by diverting the headwaters of the Yukon River in Canada to the Alaska coast at Lynn Canal. Initially, it was called the Tagish-Lynn project; the name was later changed to the Yukon-Taiya project, named after Taiya Inlet, the northern extension of Lynn Canal.

The proposed project would be huge. It would involve the construction of a 30-foot dam on the Yukon River at Miles Canyon, located a few miles upstream from Whitehorse. (A wild river, at that time, still flowed through the canyon; Whitehorse Dam, which created Schwatka Lake, was not constructed until 1957-58.) The proposed dam would create an enormous lake, over 300,000 acres in extent--an amalgam of Marsh, Tagish, Atlin, Little Atlin, Bennett, and Lindeman lakes. The proposed lake would be between 2,200 and 2,215 feet above sea level. As part of the plan, the level of Bennett Lake would rise 50 feet; Lindeman Lake would rise 40 to 45 feet. The new lake would flood the villages of Carcross and Tagish, 30 miles of the White Pass and Yukon Railroad, most of the Carcross-Tagish road, portions of the Alaska Highway, and many other man-made features. [[60](#)]

Impacts would be felt on the U.S. side of the border as well. Yukon-Taiya project water would be diverted from the southern end of Lindeman Lake into a 40-foot wide, 13.5-mile long tunnel which would divert water under Chilkoot Pass to a series of penstocks and a powerhouse. From there, another 7.7-mile tunnel would carry the water through another series of penstocks to a second powerhouse. The first powerhouse would be at an elevation of 1,100 feet; the second located near the confluence of the Taiya and Nourse rivers, at 250 feet above sea level. The first powerhouse would be located at or near the ghost town of Sheep Camp; the second located at or near the site of Canyon City. Large volumes of spoil rock would be created at the southern end of both tunnels, and the Taiya River below Canyon City would absorb twice its usual peak flow rate. [[61](#)]

More detailed studies soon followed Johnson's investigation. That November, the Bureau of Reclamation sent two officials to the site and reported the results of their investigation in Report on the Potential Hydroelectric Power of Southeastern Alaska and the Yukon Territory. Based on their findings, the Bureau of Land Management, in January 1948, withdrew the entire Taiya River valley--46,592 acres in all--from all appropriation under the land laws. Three months later, the BLM withdrew approximately 5,000 acres in the upper Taiya River valley--a mile-wide, sinuous corridor between the Taiya-Nourse junction and Chilkoot Pass--after classifying it as a power site. [62]

In the summer of 1947, the Aluminum Company of America became interested in the project. Using private capital, the company hoped to harness the huge project water flow in conjunction with an aluminum reduction plant which would be built at Dyea, near the mouth of the Taiya River. Company officials visited the site of the proposed plant and became convinced that the project perfectly fit company plans. In October, therefore, company officials contacted officials in Canada's Department of Mines and Resources. After discussing the matter with them, ALCOA executives decided to submit a formal proposal to the Dominion Minister of Mines and Resources as well as to the appropriate British Columbian authorities. [63]

In order to streamline the permitting process, and to make a case for the project, ALCOA officials, in March 1948, met in Ottawa with the Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources and his staff. Company officials told them that Congressional approval of the project should come first; after that, the company would make an effort to have Dominion, provincial, and American authorities simultaneously announce the project. At that time, the company would make a formal request to reserve project lands as a water withdrawal. ALCOA, however, soon ran into difficulties with the U.S. Justice Department, and they made no attempt that year to gain Congressional sanction for the project. Meanwhile, company officials went to Skagway and began purchasing both property and waterfront rights. [64]

Through 1948, ALCOA had developed its plans in relative secrecy, working only with selected officials from various executive departments. In early 1949, however, the U.S. Senate caught wind of the project. Assistant Interior Secretary William Warne outlined ALCOA's plans to several senators, who leaked the news to the press. Soon afterwards, on February 22, the Dominion went through with its plans to withdraw from disposal all lands surrounding Marsh, Tagish, Bennett, and Atlin lakes that were less than 2,215 feet above sea level. British Columbia lands officials made a similar withdrawal. [65]

In May, ALCOA officials traveled to Washington, D.C., where they briefed Alaska governor Ernest Gruening and Under Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman on the project. They announced their proposal to construct a power plant which would generate 400,000 kwh, sufficient to manufacture 400 million pounds of aluminum annually, employing 4,000 workers and supporting a town of 20,000 inhabitants. The construction of such a plant would mean that bauxite, the raw material from which aluminum was derived, would be shipped to Skagway from many distant points. It also meant that the plant would generate far more power than it would need, and would pave the way for the development of a large iron-titanium deposit in the Klukwan area, just 55 miles from the plant site. Company officials, at this time, were hopeful but realistic. The project was still in its preliminary stages, and the company needed time before making a final decision on the economic feasibility of the project. [66]

That same month, however, murky clouds began to loom on the horizon. British Columbia

officials took a closer look at ALCOA's scheme and decided not to grant the company any special concessions because the province would "not benefit economically in any way from the contemplated development." Canadian officials had stressed all along that maximum benefits had to accrue to Canada from any diversion of Yukon waters to the United States. This insistence presented another obvious point of contention, one which, at this point, was not disputed by ALCOA representatives. [67]

ALCOA officials learned that other aluminum plants were also being planned in northwestern North America. The Reynolds Metals Company of Virginia and the Aluminum Company of Canada (ALCAN), both of which were competitors of ALCOA, had conducted surveys along the British Columbia coast and selected two potential sites. By May 1949, ALCAN officials had made a preliminary decision to build an aluminum plant in British Columbia, and provincial officials recognized that the proposed ALCOA plant "would compete directly within the protection of the American tariff on aluminum" with the ALCAN plant. Soon afterward, provincial officials passed those concerns on to their counterparts in Ottawa. C. K. LeCapelain, of the Lands Division in Canada's Department of Resources and Development, noted that sometime in 1950 the federal government "began to get unsympathetic to this project," in part because of American obstruction of the Kitimat proposal. [68]

In January 1951, the province and ALCAN moved closer to the construction of an aluminum plant at Kitimat, largely because U.S. defense officials had made it known that they hoped to purchase "a large quantity of aluminum" from the plant. At about the same time, a Congressional committee reported that U.S. policy favored the expansion of existing aluminum plants rather than the creation of new ones. The two actions brought howls of protest from Alaska legislators, because both actions promised to defer if not derail efforts to build the Yukon-Taiya project. On January 25, 1951, the legislature passed House Memorial 1, which requested Federal officials to "re-examine immediately the situation with respect to the Taiya Project...to the end that this large development shall take place on American soil." A month later, on February 23, it passed House Memorial 28, which asked "that the recent decision against the Alaska aluminum project be reviewed, immediately, looking more closely to [its] merits." [69]

The legislature's protests fell on deaf ears. By the fall of 1952, project construction at Kitimat was well underway. Throughout this period, ALCAN officials played a significant role in lobbying against the Yukon-Taiya proposal. The company continued to influence both the British Columbia and Dominion governments in order to protect its investment from ALCOA competition. [70]

Meanwhile, the two nations cooperated in a series of studies investigating the economic, geologic, and hydrologic aspects of the proposed project. The economic study was carried out during the summer and fall of 1950 and involved a two-week field reconnaissance of the affected area. It and other projects, however, were halted on March 31, 1951 at the behest of the Canadian government. And on March 31, 1951, the Canadian government informed Ottawa's U.S. Ambassador that it "could not take any further steps in a joint investigation of the Yukon River Power Diversion project until the possibility of using these waters in Canada has been explored." The Americans, it appeared, had failed to present a convincing case demonstrating the advantages of the development to Canada. Meanwhile, various Canadian agencies continued making studies on their own. [71]

ALCOA, undeterred, continued its efforts to develop the project. During the summer of 1951,

Richard K. Mellon, a substantial stakeholder in several of the largest manufacturing and refining companies in the country, visited Alaska and, accompanied by Alaska Development Board general manager George Sundborg, visited Dyea, Whitehorse, and other project sites. Mellon, along with senior ALCOA officials, were confident that obstacles to development could be overcome. The Kitimat plant, in particular, was not a problem because of the ever-increasing market for aluminum. In April 1952, ALCOA officially decided to develop the Yukon-Taiya project. [72]

As ALCOA officials saw it, four obstacles to development remained. First, the project had to be sold to official Washington as a high-priority Alaska request, as "a large and economically sound hydroelectric development in...Alaska which everybody wants to develop...." Second, the U.S. State Department had to work out a water-rights agreement, both with the Dominion and British Columbian governments. Third, the company needed to obtain land for its power plants, manufacturing facilities, townsite, and docks, because the April 1948 power-site withdrawal was not applicable to such uses. Fourth, the Federal Power Commission needed to grant the company a permit of sufficiently long duration that would allow it to amortize its development costs. [73]

Alaskan officials knew that they would need the full weight of the United States to bear in overcoming those obstacles. In June 1952, therefore, both Governor Ernest Gruening and Delegate E. L. Bartlett asked President Harry S. Truman to intervene. Bartlett was perplexed to hear Truman's opinion, that the Yukon-Taiya project should not be turned over to private interests. [74]

Despite Truman's negative response, ALCOA officials decided to publicly announce their support for the project. On August 23, 1952, ALCOA official Leon E. Hickman addressed the delegates to the All-Alaska Chamber of Commerce, at their meeting in Mount McKinley National Park, and told them that the company was "ready, without reservation, to proceed with the construction of a large aluminum-smelting project in Alaska, just as soon as the necessary land can be purchased and the required governmental approvals can be obtained." [75]

Euphoria reigned in Alaska as a result of Hickman's announcement. Alaska newspapers, and even the New York Times, ran lengthy articles on the project. In Skagway, property prices had "risen sharply in the last 30 days after mysterious buyers appeared and were interested in purchasing or optioning almost everything in town," according to an Anchorage Daily Times report. [76] Future prospects looked so positive that a Juneau newspaperman, Elmer A. Friend, moved to Skagway. The first issue of his Skagway Alaskan rolled off the presses on August 28, 1952.

Two months later, on October 21, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management withdrew approximately 7,400 acres of land in the area immediately surrounding Skagway from all forms of appropriation. That parcel, which adjoined the land reserved in the Taiya River valley in January 1948, stretched from Sturgill's Landing up to the mouth of the Skagway River's East Fork, and from Upper Dewey Lake west to Smugglers Cove. [77] Government officials felt it necessary to withdraw the land in order to discourage speculative land claims.

The optimism felt in Alaska, however, was not reflected in Canada. Much work remained before construction could begin, and in particular, no solid progress had been made in convincing either British Columbia or the Canadian government to back the project. In mid-



November, more bad news followed when it was revealed that a Canadian company had proposed another major hydroelectric project on the Alsek River, in Canadian waters between Glacier Bay and Yakutat Bay. As a result, the Minister of Canada's Department of Resources and Development, Robert H. Winters, informed ALCOA in early December that his department had recommended against the Yukon-Taiya project because his agency was responsible for making certain that the maximum benefit from any power development accrued to Canada. [78] By January 1953, the Engineering News-Record was reporting that "Canada has slammed the door conclusively in the face of the Aluminum Company of America's plans for development of hydro power in Alaska."

Seemingly against all odds, ALCOA continued to press its case. In early 1953, the company briefly considered seeking the assistance of the U.S. State Department in its efforts, but no request was ever made. In January 1954, company officials visited British Columbia premier W. A. C. Bennett and lobbied him on the proposal, but he was noncommittal and reiterated that the needs of his province came first. [79] During the spring and early summer, newspapers in Victoria and Vancouver speculated that ALCOA still might be able to construct its project as part of a plan that would also result in another hydroelectric project being built on the Taku River, in Canada, by Quebec Metallurgical Industries (QMI), a Canadian metallurgical company. But in early August, the provincial government granted a conditional water license to QMI's parent company--not to ALCOA. [80]

In 1956, the Honourable J. Aubrey Simmons, Yukon Territory's Member of Parliament, wrote U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and proposed that there be negotiations with the United States to provide an access corridor to the sea through southeastern Alaska for the Yukon Territory and northern British Columbia. When asked his opinion of the proposal, Alaska delegate E. L. Bartlett suggested that the U.S. grant such a corridor under a long-term lease arrangement in return for the joint development of the Yukon-Taiya project. Dulles, however, did not react favorably to Bartlett's proposal. Neither did Alaska Governor B. Frank Heintzleman, and the matter was dropped. [81]

On March 1, 1957, ALCOA abandoned all plans for the Yukon-Taiya project. The political situation remained untenable, and the economic advantages of an aluminum smelter at Dyea had diminished so much since the early 1950s that the company could now no longer justify the project even if the Canadians were cooperative. [82]

It should be noted, parenthetically, that the project's failure did not prevent the construction of hydroelectric facilities in the upper Yukon basin. In 1957-58, soon after ALCOA bailed out of the Yukon-Taiya project, the Northern Canada Power Commission constructed Whitehorse Dam, just a mile south of Whitehorse. The waters behind the dam formed Schwatka Lake, which inundated Miles Canyon and the Whitehorse Rapids. The power generated by the dam is used primarily in Whitehorse and vicinity. [83]

### ***NPS Activities in the Skagway Area, 1933-1960***

Prior to the Congressional passage of the statehood bill in 1958, the National Park Service had a minimal presence in Alaska. Only four NPS units existed in the territory. Sitka National Monument was established in 1910 to protect a series of totem poles and a Russian-Tlingit battle site. Congress authorized Mount McKinley National Park in 1917 to protect the

continent's highest peak and the excellent gamelands to its north. Katmai National Monument was established in 1918 to protect the volcanic landscape created by the June 1912 eruption near Mount Katmai, and in 1925, President Calvin Coolidge proclaimed Glacier Bay National Monument to protect the glacial landscape north of Icy Strait. (In 1916, Woodrow Wilson authorized Old Kasaan National Monument on the shores of Prince of Wales Island. But the monument was never staffed, and its resources slowly deteriorated. The monument was deauthorized in 1955.)

No NPS unit was authorized in the Skagway area until 1976. Plans to establish a presence, however, date to the 1930s. Three events brought the NPS into the area prior to the 1960s. First, in the 1930s, Skagway residents urged the establishment of a "Chilcoot National Park." During the mid-1950s, the NPS was asked to play a role in the preservation of the well-known Pullen House antiquities collection. Later that decade, the NPS began to become interested in Skagway's historical and architectural resources.

As historian Edwin Bearss has noted, the initial attempt to create a national park unit in the Skagway area was the result of the efforts of Elmer A. Rasmuson, the president of the National Bank of Alaska and a Skagway resident. In the fall of 1933, Rasmuson met with Governor John W. Troy and discussed a possible NPS area that would include the "region around Skagway to the Border north of town," Dyea, and the old Chilkoot Trail. The Skagway Chamber of Commerce responded to Rasmuson's idea by forming a three-member committee to promote the park proposal. [84]

In the fall of 1934, the committee wrote to Anthony Dimond, Alaska's delegate to Congress, and asked him to present the park idea to the appropriate Washington authorities. Dimond presented the idea to Arno B. Cammerer. The NPS Director admitted that he was unfamiliar with the area, but worried that its values might be too similar to Glacier Bay National Monument to qualify for inclusion in the system. [85]

Thereafter, the fate of the park was entrusted to Wallace Atwood. He resided in Worcester, Massachusetts and was a geography professor as well as the president of Clark University. In January 1935, Atwood made a presentation to the National Park Service Educational Advisory Board and noted that "the mountains about Skagway could compare favorably with many of our great National Parks...and that it would be a very appropriate and fortunate place for the establishment of a National Park." Because the area was adjacent to the British Columbia border, Atwood hoped that the boundaries might extend beyond the frontier by creating an international park, similar to the Glacier-Waterton Lakes parks which were located along the border between Montana and Alberta. To that end, he secured the support of V. I. Hahn, president of the White Pass and Yukon Route and a man with considerable influence in Ottawa. [86]

Cammerer remained cool to the idea of a "Chilcoot National Park," so Atwood presented the idea to his superior, Interior Secretary Harold L. Ickes. Atwood, ironically, ignored the area's historic resources; instead, he urged that a park be created on the basis of the area's scenic and scientific resources, and because of its accessibility to tourists. [87]

Ickes became an advocate of the project largely on the basis of Atwood's enthusiasm for it, and implored Cammerer to study the idea further. Cammerer referred the idea to two associates, asking them to "see whether we can't make a monument out of it." The project eventually

landed on the desk of George M. Wright, a wildlife specialist who had little sympathy for historical or cultural areas. On February 28, 1935, he reported that the proposed monument had several drawbacks: it was too close to Glacier Bay National Monument, its scenic values were not as great as those in other parts of Southeastern Alaska, and both the City of Skagway and the White Pass and Yukon Route were "undesirable encroachments" into the proposed park. The following month, the NPS Educational Advisory Board met again and formed a committee to mull over Wright's conclusions. Nothing came of that effort, however, and the park idea was dropped for another two decades. [88]

The next time NPS was called upon to look into the Skagway area was in an advisory capacity regarding a well-known museum collection. The Pullen House, one of Alaska's great hotels, had been operated since the gold rush by Harriet Pullen, who arrived in Skagway during the early days of the gold rush. She opened the Pullen House in 1901 and had continued to operate it until her death in August 1947. Over the years, Pullen amassed a treasure trove of archeological and ethnographic objects. These objects were displayed in the lobby of her hotel, and guests from around the world both admired them and contributed to her holdings. Following her death, however, the hotel closed. By the early 1950s it reopened, under the supervision of Mary (Mrs. Max) Kopansky, Pullen's granddaughter. The museum collection, however, was neglected and began to deteriorate. [89]

The fame of the Pullen Collection was not lost on authorities at both the federal and territorial levels. In particular, NPS officials Aubrey Neasham and John Hussey called attention to the collection's importance and to the necessity to preserve it if at all possible. [90] Perhaps based on their recommendations, Bruce W. Black, the park naturalist at Glacier Bay National Monument, visited Skagway in early 1954 and reported on the condition of the Pullen House and its collection. Black noted that the Pullen House, though still an active hotel, was in a "pitiful state of disrepair." Moreover, the relics there were in danger; they were not being protected from possible fire damage, and many of the items in the collection were neither identified nor recorded. He urged the Territory, or some other interested party, to acquire the Pullen House property, rehabilitate the structure, and convert it into a museum. In the meantime, he hoped that the museum specimens could be catalogued and saved from possible fire damage. He requested the agency's regional historian, stationed in San Francisco, to look into it. [91]

For the next several months, Black's report landed on the desks of several prominent bureaucrats, all of whom sympathized with the worsening plight of the Pullen collection. None, however, were in a position to help. The report wound its way from Black to Sitka-Glacier Bay Superintendent Henry G. Schmidt. It was then forwarded to the Director of Region Four, Lawrence C. Merriam, who sent a copy to NPS Director Conrad L. Wirth. Merriam regretted that the NPS, lacking a park unit in Skagway, was in no position to assume custody over its "relics." Under the Historic Sites Act of 1935, however, it did have an obligation to discuss the matter with the proper Territorial authorities. [92]

On March 2, 1954, NPS's Chief Historian, Herbert E. Kahler, met with George W. Rogers, an economist in the office of Governor B. Frank Heintzleman, and with Maurice W. Goding, the administrator of the federal Office of Territories. At the meeting, Kahler learned that Heintzleman was unenthusiastic about purchasing the collection, and Kopansky was apparently unwilling to either donate the collection or sell it on a piecemeal basis. He also heard that the White Pass and Yukon Route, which was "contemplating" the construction of a new hotel in Skagway, had no interest in acquiring the Pullen House collection. Lacking funds from either

federal or territorial sources, officials could only hope that the city might construct a building in which the artifacts might be kept. [93]

The city, as it turned out, built no structures intended for the preservation of the Pullen House artifacts. Therefore, when the Pullen House closed for the last time in 1959, owner Mary Kopansky asked officials of the newly-proclaimed state of Alaska to purchase the artifacts. However, she found no interest. Kopansky, therefore, built a fireproof building near her home in Lynnwood, Washington, and moved the collection there. [94]

During the same period, NPS officials gave their first indication of interest in Skagway's historical and architectural resources. On June 19, 1953, NPS Director Conrad Wirth issued a memorandum calling for an investigation into new NPS units. John A. Hussey, the Regional Historian for Region Four, responded in November and offered various suggestions for new historical areas in the western states. Of Alaskan sites, he noted that two excellent candidates for national historical sites were the site of the American flag raising and St. Michael's Cathedral, both of which were located in Sitka. He also noted that "A western mining settlement not connected with the California Gold Rush would also be a desirable unit of the National Park System. Skagway, Alaska, and Virginia City, Nevada, are possible candidates; but preservation problems at towns of such size would be a deterring factor." [95]

Three months after Hussey's letter, Skagway was again brought to the attention of NPS officials because of Bruce Black's report on the Pullen House collection. Regional Director Lawrence C. Merriam regretfully noted that the agency was in no position to preserve any of the town's buildings; he believed, however, "that an investigation might reveal them to be of more than local significance." He hoped that Alaska authorities might "incorporate the historic section of the town into a historical park as California has done at Columbia." (Columbia State Historical Park, which was located in an 1850s gold rush town in the state's Mother Lode country, had been established in 1945.) [96] George L. Collins, a recreation planner in NPS's Region Four office and an old Alaska hand, noted that

There is no question in the minds of the experts with whom we have discussed the matter of the historical importance of Skagway.... It is considered one of the key places of the Northland for interpretation to the public of critically significant Alaska and Canadian history.

But neither the Alaska legislature nor the NPS hierarchy were willing, at that time, to take steps to preserve Skagway's resources. [97]

During the next few years, the Skagway citizens became aware of the advantages of a federal presence. Cyril A. Coyne, who served as Skagway's mayor from 1954 to 1956 and again from 1957 to 1959, suggested the establishment of a historic site or monument both to Governor Heintzleman and to officials in NPS's Region Four office in San Francisco. Through correspondence and discussion, Coyne hoped to enlighten both territorial and federal officials with the town's historical values and with the necessity to preserve them. [98]

In late 1958 or early 1959, the NPS announced to Skagway officials that as part of its National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, it would finally study the town's history to determine its eligibility as a national monument or historic site. Coyne responded by visiting NPS Director Wirth and asking if the agency could provide immediate financial assistance to preserve the

town's historic structures, to display them to the public, and to set up a historical museum where gold rush artifacts could be displayed and interpreted. Wirth did not approve any of Coyne's various requests. He recognized, however, that Coyne was well known by other Interior Department officials; perhaps for that reason, Wirth noted in an internal memorandum that "I hope that we can help him out in some way." [99]

Washington officials forwarded the letter to Lawrence Merriam, the Region Four Director in San Francisco. Shortly afterward, Merriam wrote a sobering note to Mayor Coyne. He noted that

you are...well aware of our enthusiasm for the historical remains in Skagway and of our sympathy with your efforts to preserve them. Unfortunately, the participation of the Federal Government in such preservation efforts, particularly financial participation, is not brought about by good intentions. The establishment of a National Monument or National Historic Site is generally a long and complicated process, and national recognition is accorded only to sites which are judged...to be of outstanding national significance.

He repeated to Coyne that the agency was unable to participate financially in any restoration plan, noting that "the greater part of the historical preservation work in the United States must remain the responsibility of State and local governments." The NPS was certainly willing to provide technical assistance on building preservation or museum displays, but given its Congressional mandate and staff levels, it could do no more. [100]

Several months later, Regional Archeologist Paul J. F. Schumacher visited Alaska. As part of that trip, he spent June 4 and 5, 1959 in Skagway. While there, he met Cy Coyne and discussed various methods by which other communities had undertaken historic building preservation efforts. He also photographed several of the town's most prominent historical buildings, including McCabe College, Pullen House, Arctic Brotherhood Hall, the Moore Cabin, and Soapy Smith's Parlor. Schumacher noted that "Most of the minor structures of the turn of the century period have now vanished. However, there remain about 20 public buildings of historical and architectural interest," of which "possibly 5 or 6 are of primary importance as far as the city and state are concerned." NPS officials looked forward to a Skagway visit by a historian from the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings; only then would the agency be in a position to make recommendations concerning the town's historical significance. [101]







(top) Martin Itjen, the owner and operator of the famed "Skaguay Street-Car," was well-known to Alaska tourists between the two world wars. (bottom) During World War II, the U.S. Army and its contractors invaded Skaguay. It operated the WP&YR railroad and the docks, and it built barracks and other buildings on scattered vacant lots throughout town. This photo, taken on Memorial Day 1943, looks east along Third Avenue from the roof of the Golden North Hotel. (KLGO SC #772 (top); KLGO SC #1216 (bottom))



(top) In 1948, Edward Hosford began logging the timber in the valley north of Dyea. He abandoned the area in 1956. In late September 1971, when this photo was taken, the main buildings in the logging camp were still largely intact. (bottom) Harriet Pullen in the yard of the Pullen House. During the 1920s, tourism to Skagway grew significantly, and the Pullen House became one of the best known hostelries in the territory. By the 1950s, both the hotel and her museum collection were being recognized as valuable historical assets. *(Theodore R. Merrell photo, KLGO PC (top); KLGO SC #766 (bottom))*

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[<<< Previous](#)

[<<< Contents >>>](#)

[Next >>>](#)

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