"Howling Dog Team, Alaska," postcard by E. H. Nowell in Nome in 1908. Note the heterogeneous makeup of the dog team—no two are alike. (Collection of the author)

The Canine Crucible of Labor, Love, Killing, and Kindness of the Gold Rush North

Christopher David Adkins

On October 15, 1897, two miles out from Dawson, Northwest Territories, just across the border from the District of Alaska, E. Hazard Wells had a visitor at his cabin—a dog.

Wells was a reporter for the Scripps-McRae newspaper outfit, travelling into the ongoing Klondike Gold Rush as an eyewitness for papers like the *Cincinnati Post*, and he had found himself in a seedy little place so infamous for prostitution it went by the name Bugtown or Lousetown.[1] Its reputation was impolitic enough that a week later Wells would be one of the men personally responsible for renaming the town something "trim" and "new"—Klondike City, for which he proudly made a fresh sign.[2]

Dawson itself had mushroomed into one of the cacophonous epicenters of the Klondike Gold Rush, with thousands braving unfathomable wintry misery in the fever to strike it rich. Lousetown, soon to be Klondike City, was one of the dubious settlements that had sprouted up around it.

Not just men had flooded Dawson, however. Great hundreds of dogs had been imported to the Far North to pull sleds, carry cargo, and endure any number of other odd tasks required of them as beasts of burden. Too often were they subject to cruelty and exploitation.

The dog that came to Wells' cabin was such a one. "A large, curly-haired dog with a black-and-white face," the dog was clearly hungry, so Wells gave him "a piece of raw mutton" which he enjoyed "with such gusto that I felt constrained to add to his enjoyment by contributing a quarter pound of stringy beef from my table." Wells was deeply moved:

> You should have seen the expression of astonishment on that dog's face! 'Well here is a benevolent

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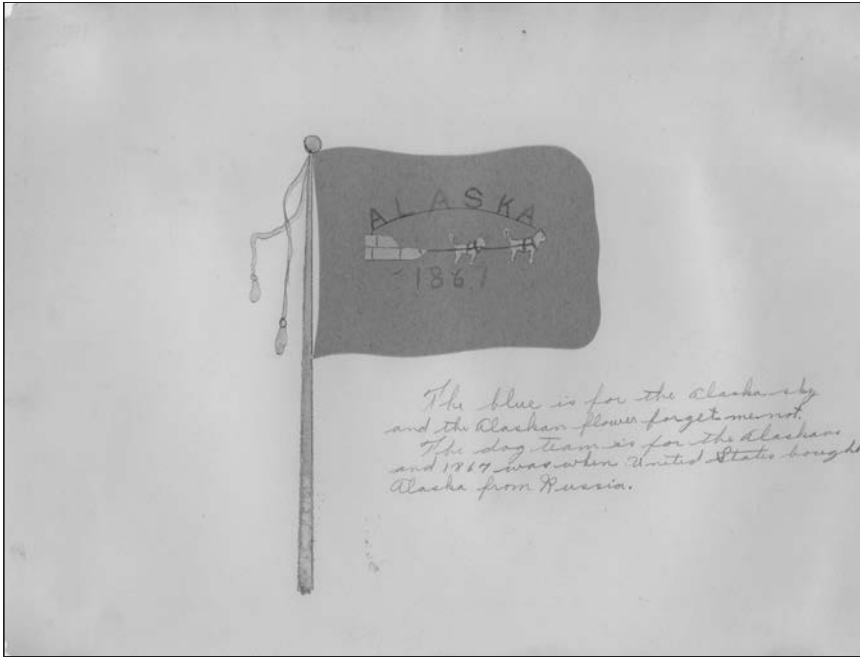
> man at last!' he seemed to say, and without more ado he promptly camped in front of my open cabin door…Poor fellow, I felt sorry for him. Brought to the Klondike from a land of plenty by a master who had now no food to spare, the dog was nearly famished, and as he went pleading from door to door he met with many a curse and a kick. I patted him gently on the head and he looked up in surprise. It was unexpected kindness. How quickly came the answering look of friendship and fealty from the dog's eyes. He was my devoted follower from that moment.[3]

Wells named the dog Fido. "Since then I have met him on the streets in Dawson and have received instant recognition among the crowds of men."[4]

Dogs like Fido—taken from far away to live and labor in a strange new place, then overworked, starved, and abused—were all too common a sight in the Yukon and Alaska at the end of the 19th century. Even the dogs that were native to the Far North, such as the Malamute, were subject to the whims and tempers of White settlers, too many of whom, rather like the dogs they imported, had no business dealing with the hardships of the Arctic. Dogs were made into engines of development and tools of empire, robbed of rest and empathy. Yet in the episode of Wells' kindness to Fido one sees, by itself, both a transformative moment and how other moments like it would place the sled dog central to Alaska life and an Alaskan identity which both Indigenous peoples and White settlers shared.

Without the dog, the sled, and the musher, much of Alaska never could have been developed—neither interconnected territorially nor connected outward to Canada, Russia, and the Lower Forty-Eight. It is the dog, therefore, that possesses such an outsize role in taking Alaska from sleepy colonial backwater to one of the stars stitched onto the American flag—so much so that one of Benny Benson's original designs for Alaska's own flag, submitted alongside his now-iconic Big Dipper banner, was a sled and sled dogs on a field of azure. Explaining the symbolism, Benson wrote that the shade of blue "is for the Alaska sky and the Alaskan flower forget-me-not" but the "dog team is for the Alaskans."[5]

This article focuses on the White settler side of the human-dog dynamic in Alaska and the Yukon during and immediately after the gold rush era. It demonstrates that in the midst of this period, itself a rapid-onset crisis of demographic and environmental upheaval, there was an inner crisis, a convulsion of violence



One of Benny Benson's designs for the Alaska Territorial flag depicted a dog team. (ASL-MS14-1, Alaska State Library, Juneau)

against animals, particularly dogs. But this inner crisis was quickly overcome—not only by civic organization and legalism, but by a recognition of the dog as having deeply moral and emotional, and not just economic, value.

To that end, this article builds on the work of Sherry Simpson[6] and Bathsheba Demuth,[7] both of whom consider the many facets of the human-dog relationship in the American Arctic at the end of the 19th century. Simpson theorizes that the widespread mistreatment of dogs was ameliorated with the formation of local governments during the embryonic stages of Alaska becoming a Territory; Demuth considers that dogs were always liminal creatures even by Indigenous peoples, and that a recognition of their value by the White settlers was brought on by how close man and beast became in both space and time. Simpson focuses almost exclusively on Dawson, however, only gesturing to Alaska, and she does not deeply examine how the dog was given an unusually vaunted place in Alaskan life *after* the initial crisis of violence had passed. Demuth "pulls together insights from three significant but usually distinct historiographies: those of borderlands, animals, and emotion,"[8] a broad approach that may be sharpened to more specific areas.

This article contributes to the field by reexamining and reinterpreting sources used by Simpson and Demuth, while also introducing and interrogating new ones. In advancing the arguments of these authors, this article seeks out the causes for the descent into, and the emergence out of, this dark episode within the broader history of the gold rushes. The article further examines how these events set the stage for the dog to become the most important animal in Alaska for the following half-century.

American Dog Labor Goes North

Mushing in Alaska is Indigenous in origin and has a rich tradition which has continued unbroken well into the present day.[9] It was borrowed, as much else, by the incoming White settlers. The sled dog's place in the Klondike Gold Rush was, at the outset, affected by a colonialist Western gaze.

This outlook may be first framed historically amidst an ongoing cultural shift in how animals were viewed, with a turn toward compassion and kindness.[10] One could argue the roots of this shift were already ancient,[11] even for those animals that were still necessary for performing labor.[12] This movement, such as it was, targeted dogs specifically, for dogs used as heavy labor in the United States was not altogether new. In New York City, dogs turned machinery in places such as cideries and butter churns, and in other cities people hitched them to large carts used by ragpickers gathering scraps of cloth to resell.[13] This had been inherited from the British, who had their own shift in morals and values affecting the dog earlier in the nineteenth century.[14]

By the 1890s, just before the gold rushes, dogs used in American labor had all but vanished: well could Tappan Adney opine that "In the streets of a modern city dogs, particularly if driven in teams, would be sadly out of place…Except in children's play, civilization is ceasing to have use for the true working dog."[15]

The cessation of using dogs as beasts of burden coincided with traditional agricultural practices in both Europe and the United States giving way to more intensive food-yielding practices, in tandem with denser and denser urbanization.[16] Many animals, which for millennia would be well adjacent to, and in many cases actually live with, their human owners vanished from the public eye.[17] Machinery increasingly replaced animals for physical labor. Livestock of every sort, previously as common in cities as the very people that lived there, were increasingly segregated to farms, fields, and other isolated places, well away from human interaction, making the average urbanite less and less aware of them. Philadelphia, for instance, banned cows, sheep, and pigs from

highways and parks in 1855, and ultimately forbade pig ownership altogether "in the most central, urban wards of the city."[18] Such ordinances were repeated across the country.

Mechanization meant that food could be procured cheaply and easily, a welcome mark of progress away from the days of laboriously raising livestock, which was dirty and smelly. This, in turn, liberated vast swathes of time for many living in urban areas, while also erasing the need for these same animals to share space with humans; this was one of the factors behind the emergence of the so-called leisure class—captured at the time by Thorstein Veblen's eponymous book on the topic—which would commodify "the ideal of the middle-class home removed from a rustic, subsistence past."[19] Yet the dog was one of the few animals that kept its close proximity to humans and was one of the most very few which, at the close of the nineteenth century, was still able to share a domicile with its human partner.

Understanding the transformation of attitudes to animals and their uses in Europe and the United States is one of the keys to understanding the crisis that took place, morally and economically, during the turbulence of the gold rushes and the dramatic ubiquity that the dog would come to possess in Alaska, such that, as geographer Albert Hulse Brooks wrote, the dog became "to Alaska what the yak is to India or the llama to Peru."[20]

There is some evidence that knowledge of gold in Alaska was deliberately suppressed by the Russian Empire.[21] But such a thing could not be secret for long. Shortly after the Purchase Treaty of 1867, prospectors travelled in a slow drip to seek their fortune. Gold strikes in the Southeast panhandle in the 1880s led to the founding of Douglas and Juneau, the eventual Alaska capital.[22]

The wealth of Alaska and the Yukon would become increasingly well-known, until the fateful summer of 1897, when news of immense riches in Bonanza Creek set off the Klondike Gold Rush. The Nome (1899) and Fairbanks (1901) gold rushes soon followed. Combined, Naske and Slotnik note, these events "doubled the territory's population between 1890 and 1900."[23] By one estimate, the Klondike Gold Rush alone was responsible for the emigration of 34,000 people to Alaska[24]—compared to a population of only 4,300 White Alaskans in 1890.[25]

With the massive influx of people came an equally enormous need for hard labor beyond the ability of humans. Horses were the first and most obvious choice for hauling heavy loads and the like, and for a time there was a run on them in Seattle.[26] They proved woefully inadequate almost immediately, however, something that those with experience already knew. In March 1897, just before the Klondike Gold Rush began, when the steamer *Al-Ki*

sailed from Port Townsend to the Yukon with thirty packhorses, it was noted that "old miners who repeatedly made the trip were of the opinion that horses cannot be of any service."[27]

Transporting the horses was the first issue. By the time many horses arrived in the North, they were in very poor shape, half-starved and weak. "With their drooping heads and listless tails, they are pictures of misery," Adney reported. "Yet they are being brought to pack over the hardest kind of trail."[28] The trail in question was the vital White Pass, from Skagway to Bennett, sometimes called the Skagway Trail. Here, horses died in appalling numbers from disease, climatic shock, and the effects of the neglect they experienced during their importation from Seattle and Vancouver. Even when horses were able to adapt, they were often abused to the point of being worked to death by impatient and greedy owners.[29]

White Pass soon became known as Dead Horse Trail. Only four months after the rush began, Andrew Hardwick of Pullman, Washington, wrote back to his local newspaper: "There is perhaps a dead horse for every 30 rods of trail. If the dead horses were laid head to tail they would extend three miles."[30] The stench of dead flesh was miasmic and rank. "The Desert of Sahara with its lines of skeletons can boast of no such exhibition of carcasses," recalled the geologist Angelo Heilprin.[31] Horses were regularly euthanized where they stood. Stampeder Robert B. Medill shuddered to recall, "Around Sheep Camp…between and below, one could hear one to several shots, fired occasionally during the day, ending the miseries of poor horses."[32] Jack London, who used his experience during the Klondike to pen his most celebrated works,[33] left a particularly vivid picture of horses struggling and dying. As for the people that drove the horses to this fate, London would later have one of his characters lament, "Their hearts turned to stone—those which did not break—and they became beasts, the men on the Dead Horse Trail."[34]

The plight of horses did not end in the White Pass, and losses continued even after arrival in Dawson. By one estimate their life expectancy was no more than two or three years.[35] Rumors became rife amongst stampeders of horses actually choosing to end their own suffering.[36] Traveller Margaret "Peggy" Clark Shand claimed to actually see a horse throw itself to suicide rather than endure any more mistreatment: "The desperate creature could stand no more—she faced the cliff and deliberately jumped! I knew she killed herself. I don't care what anyone will say—I knew. I was a witness. The horse, of her own will, leaped into space."[37]

With no horses and no other options, stampeders found themselves having to move on foot, which made for slow and uneven

progress. Medill, for instance, recalled that although he and his brother "made good time" traversing the Dyea Canyon, it still took "Ten days in that awful canyon to come nine miles."[38] If gold was to be mined in Alaska, more efficient means of transportation would have to be found.

One occasionally finds successful, or at least temporarily successful, attempts to tame moose.[39] There are some instances of tame bear.[40] In the mid-1890s there was an especially convoluted scheme hatched by the missionary Sheldon Jackson, and U.S. Army Captain Michael A. Healy, to import Finnish reindeer transcontinentally from Lappland. Although ostensibly to provide a new source of meat, it was also thought that reindeer could provide transportation as well, under the misguided belief that reindeer "are superior to dogs in every respect, especially in supplying themselves with food, and superior to horses when long distances are to be covered rapidly."[41] Before the reindeer even arrived in the Yukon, however, the Army had grown weary of the experiment, and it was cancelled, but the reindeer arrived on schedule anyway; they quickly proved to be, unsurprisingly, unfit for the job they were meant to do. Workers refused to use them in place of dogs.[42] So the reindeer were shipped back to Seattle,

Black bear harnessed to a sled. The names of the men are unknown, as are the location and date of the photograph. Efforts to domesticate bears in this manner were not uncommon in gold rush-era Alaska, but they were rarely successful. (Cook Inlet Historical Society, AMRC-b62-1-1361, Anchorage Museum)

where some of them promptly died from eating alfalfa grass.[43] The rest were gawked at in Woodland Park by curious Seattle-ites.[44] Historians have summed up the whole scheme as having "elements of a gigantic, grotesque practical joke" and "a famous fiasco" which "served to enliven many a lonely Alaskan campfire."[45]

The abortive reindeer scheme did have two oddly lasting bits of legacy, however. First, one of the Sámi hired to herd the reindeer, immigrating with his wife and children, decided to settle in Nome and stake claims there. His name was familiar to some, having had been part of Fridtjof Nansen's 1888 expedition which traversed the interior of Greenland. But he would have remained an obscure figure were it not for his surname – Samuel Balto.[46] This is the second bit of legacy: during his time in Nome, Balto was in the same circles as another veteran of the reindeer importation scheme, Jafet Lindeberg, one of the Three Lucky Swedes who set off the Nome Gold Rush.[47] Lindeberg convinced a friend of his in Norway named Leonhard Seppala to emigrate to Alaska. Seppala would gain fame years later as the hero of the Nome Serum Run. Acquainted with Samuel Balto, Seppala would name his most famous dog after him.[48]

In the event, attempts to try something *other* than dogs are only truly notable because of their eccentricity and novelty. It was implicitly known *at the time* there was "an absence of all animal transportation except dogs in the winter,"[49] that dogs had been used for centuries beforehand in other snowy parts of the United States,[50] and had provided the means for the first European and, later, American explorations of the region.

Why did it take such time to make dogs the chief mode of transportation and burden? The answer is largely a matter of poor information, bad faith, and even worse assumptions: the result of, as Brooks puts it, "authorities, who relied on the advice of self-styled Alaskan experts whose sole knowledge of the Territory [sic] had been gained from the deck of an ocean steamer."[51] Experienced sourdoughs already knew that horses and mules – or reindeer – would not last in such terribly harsh conditions, and mushing had been the traditional means of conveyance in the North for centuries. In fact, when news of the massive quantities of gold at Bonanza Creek reached Circle City, Alaska, in the winter of 1896, several prospectors took dogsleds to make the journey east.[52] On a practical level, not only were these dogs bred for cold weather, they were also carnivores – cheaper to feed than horses.[53] They were usually given salmon, a plentiful resource caught fresh or easily dried from the rivers and streams.[54] Arising from the

equine carnage and reindeer farce, it would be dogs that provided the tools to build empire in the frozen wilderness.[55]

As it became clear dogs were best suited for life in the North, shops began to offer them for sale alongside other dry goods.[56] Dogs were advertised as basic necessities like so much other wares: an entire page in several issues of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* was dedicated to "Alaska-Klondike Wants," where dogs figured prominently.[57] The same newspaper regularly advertised dogs in the same columns as other basics such as clothing and tarpaulins.[58] The very market principles that would usually affect horses or other beasts of burden became affixed to dogs instead, and demand for them could scarcely be met.[59]

Two cities on the West Coast emerged as commercial hubs for the Klondike Gold Rush and, later, to Alaska more generally: San Francisco and Seattle,[60] the latter in particular.[61] Seattle had been hit hard by the Panic of 1893, and its growth had been painfully stunted.[62] However, thanks to the aggressive marketing of the city by *Seattle Press* newsman Erastus Brainerd,[63] "Of the vast number of Eastern people who will come West next year en route to Alaska," as ran an article from the *Seattle Daily Times*, "it is calculated that 75 or 80 per cent will come to Seattle."[64]

As Seattle became a humming center for travel and merchandise for Americans from all over the continent on their way to Alaska and the Yukon, it also became a hazardous place to be a dog. It was reported in November of 1897 that "During the past twenty-five or thirty days about fifteen cases of stolen dogs have been reported to the police."[65] For the first years of the Klondike Gold Rush, "Traders rounded up or stole every dog in sight" regardless of breed.[66] One stampeder, William "Bill" Hiscock, writing in his diary in April of 1898, saw "every breed except poodles and greyhounds. There were collies, retrievers, spaniels, great danes, mastiffs, New Foundlands [*sic*]."[67]

Perhaps the most spectacular incident related to the demand for dogs in Seattle was the brawl that erupted at the Yukon Dog Yard, a very large lot "in the old brickyard near the South School."[68] The Seattle-Yukon Dog Company, run by former mayor Frank D. Black, had imported around two-hundred dogs out of the pounds of Chicago, Saint Paul, "and other Eastern cities," and kept them at night chained in a long shed. Several were known to have died shortly in the transport westward, and still others died out of despondence. So utterly raucous was this menagerie that residents of Beacon Hill made regular complaints of the noise. On November 8, 1897, a massive fight broke amongst the dogs, all two-hundred of them battling each other, in a scene which beggared description: "snarling, biting, fighting" and "doing their

"Puppies which will someday pull dog sleds" reads the original caption of this photograph (circa 1900-1923), which is in the collection of famed Alaska photographers Frank Carpenter and his daughter, Frances Carpenter. (Carpenter Collection, LOT 11453-1, no. 18, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington DC)

best to annihilate each other."[69] The entire mishap almost certainly led to the introduction, ten days later, of "An ordinance providing for the prevention of cruelty to animals and providing a penalty for violation thereof."[70] Overall, the sheer scope of animal death as a result of the demand brought on by the Klondike Gold Rush, of which Washington State was a nexus, helped ensure a Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act was signed into law on March 18, 1901.[71]

In other West Coast ports, a black market developed. "It was said at the time that no dog larger than a spaniel was considered safe on the streets," historian Lorna Coppinger put it.[72] By January 1898, dognapping had become a serious problem in California. In San Francisco, dognappers stole dogs and then resold them for $5 to $10 to "parties who were going to the Klondike."[73] A similar crime was prosecuted in Sacramento.[74]

In Alaska and the Yukon, dogs were subject to a kind of price inflation that could ruin an unwary buyer.[75] "The price of dogs jumped almost out of sight," wrote one prospector, William B. Haskell, who repeated a story told to him of "a dog sold for twenty ounces of gold dust, and, as in trade an ounce is worth seventeen dollars, the dog sold for three hundred and forty dollars."[76] History would repeat itself when news of the Iditarod gold strike reached Fairbanks in 1909, and the once-full pound – designed

to deal with the municipal overabundance of dogs – was quickly emptied, resulting in widespread dog thievery and outrageous premiums on dogs offered for sale.[77]

A good dog, however, paid for itself many times over. In both camp and community, virtually every task was accomplished with dogs. Sis Laraux Troseth recounted how her family's dogs hauled blocks of ice and logs of wood, and hunted in a team for the family's food, in addition to providing transportation by dogsled to the next town.[78] Dogs would be employed to track down those gone missing in the wilderness.[79] Simpson gives an exhaustive list:

> They pulled wheeled water barrels, hauled sledges stacked with logs and firewood, carted earth in underground mines. They towed boats along riverbanks, lugged packs laden with gold or provisions, even transported coffins in sled hearses. Teams delivered mail, supplies, newspapers, shop goods, and visitors to surrounding creeks and distant towns.[80]

Dogs were harnessed to sleds in a straight, two-by-two formation, with a shallow and padded collar slipped over the dog's head, making the weight of the pull focus on the dog's shoulders.[81] Numerous variations existed, depending on the needs of the driver, the load being hauled, and the terrain being crossed.[82]

The dogs were driven by what are now known as *mushers*, but which were historically called *dog-punchers*. The word *musher* is the noun form of the verb *mush*, itself a corruption of the French *marche*, which was evidently copied from the *couriers du bois* and *voyageurs* of Nouvelle France, whom were the first Europeans to adopt sleds in North America.[83] *Musher,* as mentioned, is fairly recent as a descriptor, supplanting the earlier *dog-puncher*,[84] which was itself a play on *cow-puncher*, referring to men who drove cattle in the nineteenth century – more or less synonymous with *vaquero* or indeed *cowboy*. This phrase may have been popularized outside of the cattle-driving areas of the West by writer Owen Wister in his prototypical Western essay "The Evolution of the Cow-Puncher," for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in September 1895.[85] The term was a proud self-appellation, hence the title of Arthur Treadwell Walden's important memoir on the topic, derived from his career hauling freight with a dog team.[86]

The most important dog on the team was the *lead dog*, which knew how to maintain morale and order with his fellow-dogs.[87] Crucial to Indigenous knowledge and training of their sled dogs

– which was passed on to the White settlers – was the lead dog's memory of trails and locations, or intuition about storms or other dangers. A musher would often trust the lead dog's judgment over their own. As one Yup'ik elder, George Pleasant, put it many years later, "*Atulallni qimugtem ayuquciilngaitellinia wangkuta alarcukengramteggu*," that is, "A dog will evidently know the trail it had taken in the past although we think that it's wrong."[88]

The breeds that did – and still do – the majority of mushing were Malamutes and huskies; they routinely commanded a higher price for sale.[89] Other breeds which were already adaptive to cold climates did find some successful use, such as the Saint Bernard and the Newfoundland, from Canada.[90] These dogs interbred to create astonishingly large specimens of 125 pounds (56.69 kilograms) or more,[91] with unique and opaquely indistinct phenotypes.[92] This was probably how Scotty Allan's much-admired Baldy of Nome, who was lop-eared and bob-tailed,[93] rather than possessed of the familiar erect, pointed ears and long, plumed tail of Arctic dogs, came to be. Photographs of dog teams at the time reveal a surprising diversity in how individual dogs looked.

It has been estimated that, on average, a single dog was expected to pull a sled of 300 pounds worth of supplies;[94] mail carriers pulled packages weighing 250 pounds or more and had to cross enormous distances besides.[95] Dogs would sometimes carry sacks of other materials on their backs.[96] In Valdez, Charles Anson Margeson wrote that "Frequently we would see a man and his dog hitched in the harness together, the dog walking along beside his master, and, where the road was good, pulling the entire load."[97] The essentialness of dog teams saw them proliferate in such numbers that by 1901 a network of trails had been mapped specifically for them – among them the now-famous Iditarod Trail that ran from Seward to Nome, constructed in 1907.[98] Here, horses and mules were actively discouraged in favor of dogs, because the former could ruin these vital dog trails with their hooves.[99]

Blood on the Ice: Cruelty and Violence, 1897-1899

Essential as the dog was, and as deeply rooted as the dog-human relationship was to White settlers, accounts of abuse, violence, and death are appallingly common in the annals of the Klondike Gold Rush. This constitutes a separate, inner crisis to the vortex of upheaval that was already occurring at the time.

For too many dogs, the problems began before they even reached Alaska itself, as Wells mentions in passing when he first met Fido at his cabin: transported dogs died in dismaying numbers during shipment and in even greater figures on overland

Captioned "An Indian's dog loaded for summer travel," this undated photograph is part of the collection of Episcopal missionary Frederick Blount Drane, who served at Nenana and Fort Yukon in the 1910s and 1920s. (Drane Family Collection, UAF-1991-46-458, Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks)

journeys.[100] The aforementioned disregard for breed or build of the imported dog proved to be almost as disastrous as the first wave of horses. As before, the vast majority of imported dogs – with exceptions already noted – were unable to withstand the harsh climate, or were worked and abused to death by their owners.

Warmer weather, which meant the end of prospecting season,[101] was dangerous for a dog's survival in the camp. Springtime temperatures would turn snow and ice into unstable slush during the day, which would freeze again come nightfall. One prospector, Bill Ballou, noted that the warmer weather would make "a great deal of water on the ice…in some places two feet deep through which the poor dogs have to swim."[102] It was noted that Malamutes, native to Alaska, instinctively knew to gnaw the ice from between their paw-pads and carefully groom them until dry with their tongues once they emerged from snowmelt; non-native breeds lacked this instinct, and would often have their feet freeze, which meant certain death.[103]

Come summer, times for dogs would be ruthlessly lean. With no flow of gold, prospectors would run low on money, and hence, could often ill-afford to feed their dogs.[104] Dogs that had been worked hard all year, many often close to starvation, were shot and then replaced as any other good from the arrival of steamers from the south. Typical was the recollection of Arthur Treadwell

Walden, during his time working as a mail freighter in Alaska and the Yukon, of the summer of 1900, when famine had struck the Dawson area, affecting dogs with starvation, and humans with the dreaded scurvy:

> During the famine the dogs had fared the worst, and had lived on boiled green hides and everything that is inedible for human beings. It had been the custom in Circle City for the white men to shoot all but their very best dogs when sledding broke up, rather than let them go through summers of starvation and suffering as the Indians did. The dogs were replaced by later boats which brought fresh dogs from the mouth of the river, where there was plenty of seal and salmon during the summer.[105]

Because dogs were considered expendable, in towns like Chisana dogs were killed rather than having to be boarded through the summer in Valdez.[106] This kind of mass euthanasia was not practiced all the time, however, and there are accounts of dogs simply being abandoned en masse. They starved by the hundreds or died pitiably by consuming rancid or harmful food. Still another prospector, Robert Hunter Fitzhugh, recalled seeing "dead dogs of all nations and tongues" swept away on the ice floes when the Yukon thawed come spring, their stomachs punctured with salmon bones they had eaten in desperation.[107]

Stories of inhumane cruelty inflicted by humans are common amongst eyewitnesses. Lilian Agnes Oliver, writing from Sheep Camp on the Skagway Trail in June of 1898, was horrified by the stampeders with whom she traveled: "Nowhere on earth is man's selfishness displayed more than on the trail here…Their tired dogs, also carrying perhaps a 50lb. pack, they kick if one stops to rest."[108] Medill, in the same area as Oliver, remembered being "breathless from sympathy" to see a team of dogs having to pull a heavily laden sled without rest, their musher cracking the whip above them to mush them, despite having "found themselves almost defeated, they got down on their bellies, stuck all claws into the hard snow, and began to whine like their hearts would break."[109] Particularly unstinting is the account of Eli Gage, son of Lyman Gage, Secretary of the Treasury, who had ventured to the Klondike and wrote a series of articles in 1897 for the *Chicago Record*, which were then compiled into a handbook for would-be prospectors:

> I suppose that it is the most abused animal that comes under the white man's lash[…]. I have seen white men beat their dogs so unmercifully that one had to interfere. A heavy whip or a big stick satisfies the driver for a time, but when on much of a trip a chain seems to fit their needs better. When a dog is beaten over the body and head with a chain it is pretty brutal, and many a dog has had ribs and legs broken and eyes knocked out.[110]

Despite Gage's assertion that "one had to interfere" when witnessing abuse, it often did little to help the situation or would actually make things worse. Prospector Basil Austin, when he reached Timber Camp, north of Valdez, wrote of a particularly nasty group that his partner, Nels Seaver, unkindly nicknamed the "Lion Tamers," as their three dogs were ill-suited for sled work, and so were constantly being lashed and yelled at. "We strenuously objected on one occasion when they were being maltreated," Austin recorded – but it was to no avail: "They shot the poor dogs while we were eating supper. While we were sorry for them, we felt they were better off than to be further subject to such damnable treatment."[111] Oliver would lament: "How my heart ached for these noble beasts; and to protect them was but to bring down abuse on my own head."[112]

The dashed dreams of many prospectors brought despair and anguish to themselves, and to their dogs. Stories of pathetic suicides, or men driven mad by the grief of losing everything in their ill-fated quests to strike it rich, abound in accounts of each of the gold rushes.[113] Oliver remembered seeing "a man, a raving maniac, whistling for imaginary dogs…making the mountains echo and re-echo with his awful cry." She was told that men like him – hopeless and insane – were a common occurrence.[114] This kind of abject despair was too often taken out on animals; as it had been with the horses, so it was now with dogs. Walden was of the opinion that such abuse was not done "by the so-called rougher element who knew something about handling animals. The worst men were those who in former life were supposed to be of the better class. These men lost their heads completely." Indeed, Walden personally witnessed so many acts of abuse that he could not record them all. "It is no use harrowing the reader…it would mean almost endless repetition." Particularly awful was seeing one man break down and deliberately drown his own dogs – "pushed them all down a water-hole under the ice" – after beating

them senseless. This left the man without anywhere to go, effectively trapping himself. "Then he sat down and cried."[115]

Inevitably the question becomes *why* men "lost their heads" commonly enough to be remarked upon – and spoken out against – by so many. Because of the frequency and nature of dog abuse, one begins to suspect there was something systemic – a common denominator which linked these kinds of cruelties together, something which would buck the trend of animal welfare which had prevailed, up until then, in the nineteenth century. Why else would so many men behave so outrageously against the very animals upon which their livelihood, if not survival, depended – enough that nearly every memoirist of the Klondike Gold Rush would write of it?

Desperate times and environment indisputably tend to bring out the worst in many, regardless of era or location, but the Klondike Gold Rush is especially replete with almost unbelievable stories of cruelty and tragedy – man against man, and man against beast. For years afterward it was known as a time of abject selfishness.[116] As Scotty Allan remembered, "Hardships suffered by those bound north were made far worse than they should have been by the hysteria and inexperience of the crowd."[117] The word *fever* is invariably, to the point of cliché, used to describe what transpired in 1897. Yet even those at the time thought that the metaphor – a kind of fiery delirium – was thought to be apt enough to describe a symptom of a broader disease: *klondicitis*, the desire to strike it rich in the Klondike and, later, Alaska generally that reached obsessive and irrational levels.[118] "I must admit I was as brutal as the rest," reflected stampeder Jack Newman decades later, "but

Stereograph of the Keystone View Company entitled, "Malamut [sic] Indian Camp," 1899. (LC-DIG-stereo-1s49593, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington DC)

we were all mad – mad for gold, and we did things that we lived to regret."[119]

Alaska and the Yukon are particularly unforgiving, and both require survival and outdoorsman skills that many men simply did not have, something that had been ominously predicted by experienced sourdoughs from the very beginning.[120] Sled dogs would be an altogether new animal for many, if not most, men heading north, even those with experience involving pack animals like mules and horses. Like horses, dogs can be stubborn, refuse to listen or act, and even be mean-spirited – often was the negative comparison made between Malamutes and more familiar breeds for this reason. They were, and often still are, thought to be cleverer and more puckish than an Outside dog,[121] their behavior easily humiliating or enraging even seasoned mushers. Writing some years later, Robert Marshall, in his landmark study *Arctic Village*, summarized the daily frustrations many mushers had: "It is a tedious nuisance to have to hitch them into the harness every morning, and frequently an agony to unhitch them with numb fingers at night time. They often play out just when you yourself are feeling most tired."[122]

Hudson Stuck would later reflect that "Not every dog is fit to be partner with a man; nor every man I think, fit to be partner with a dog."[123] Some of the abuse could, then, have been enraged agitation from simply being inept at dogs and dog-handling – in not so many words it was *the abuser's own fault* the dogs acted the way they did. While in no way excusing the dogs' mistreatment, this goes some way to explain why, as Walden observed, ostensibly normal people acted so barbarously.

This barbarism, in turn, would then regularly go unpunished – as with much other crime.[124] With little to no actual official judicial presence, the self-policing of most mining camps and communities was lax at best – consider how Wells' *Lousetown* got its name. Heretofore prospectors had lived in relative cooperation with one another, sharing information and keeping strict unspoken rules against theft and employing collective decision-making to settle disputes.[125] The Klondike Gold Rush had completely upended this communalism, now replaced with what Walden denounced as the " 'Mind your own business' " pseudo-law of the trails, an unfortunate result of "when enormous crowds of men, coming from all parts of the world, stream through a country in which there is practically no law or organization of any kind."[126] Allan noted that "None trusted those around him. The slightest move or word would often start a fight."[127]

Another clue may lie in the broader psychology of late nineteenth century masculinity. As historian Scott A. Sandage writes,

the men who braved the Arctic cold to make their fortune in the Klondike, on the Seward Peninsula, and then in the heart of Alaska itself at Fairbanks, all did so saturated with grandiose attitudes around success and failure in a capitalist society devoid of safeguards and safety nets: "Ninety-five percent" of the desperate, diseased, and half-mad settlers of Valdez observed by Abercrombie and others in 1898 "had joined the gold rush in the hope that they might be one of the lucky men to strike it rich."[128] Luck being the ultimate factor to success in Alaska and the Yukon is snidely repeated in accounts of prospectors at the time – but it was this, or nothing, the alternative being a doomed failure. And it was failure which "was the lost horizon of American manhood."[129] The very word *prospector* indicated some intangible hope for the yet-to-be, hence *prospect*: "A prospect was a ticket to strive, a chance to grab hold of one's future…Nothing seemed more precious to those on the make, nor more indicative of manly identity."[130] To fail was to be less of a man, and to be less of a man was, to many, a psychological break too profound to endure – as the accounts of suicides, madness, and hopelessness would attest.

There is still an additional factor to consider – that of sound and environment. Some contemporary accounts of the Old West remark on the eerie quiet of the Prairies and other parts of the vast lands west of the Mississippi, and indeed they prefigure notably in the literary works of Willa Cather and Laura Ingalls Wilder.[131] This lack of noise has been recently given an explicit link to the peculiar phenomenon of *prairie madness*, which included erratic behavior, nervous breakdowns, and depression living in such harsh isolation.[132] Alaska also had vast stretches of uninhabited land, and is written about by several authors as being preternaturally quiet.[133] One is reminded of the poet Robert W. Service and his famous turn-of-phrase about the Northern forests "where silence has lease."[134] The wintertime combined this unearthly quiet with the almost perpetual twilit gloom of the polar night,[135] which the onetime State Geologist of Colorado, Thomas Arthur Rickard, described as "a picture worthy of Gustave Doré…The snow, the moss, and the fog muffled every foot-fall, deadened every sound. It looked like Hell—but it was freezing."[136]

But where the quiet was terrible, the opposite could be even worse. A part of the natural environment was, of course, the Arctic dog, which does not bark, but rather yelps or howls, and which as part of their closeness to a more lupine nature engages in communal howling, a behavior known, then and since, as the *Malamute Chorus*. It was sometimes given the verb form *Malamuting*.[137]

This was for many at the time, and indeed still today, looked upon by owners with fondness, one of the idiosyncrasies of liv-

ing with these animals. The chronicler Carrie M. McClain, now famous for the museum which bears her name, considered the "Malemute Chorus" to be one of "the two most memorable things about Nome" – the other being gold mining.[138] Nellie Neal Lawing – better known as Alaska Nellie – considered these dogs to have a special "musical talent," and recorded the sound of their howls "in range from Low G to High C."[139] Troseth remembered when, come twilight, "One dog would start a lonely howl, then others, and soon all the village dogs chimed in…It made us feel as though they were bidding us all goodnight and happy dreams."[140]

Experienced mushers and townsfolk could and would get used to the din to the point it was hardly noticeable,[141] which eventually was taken to be a mark of a true Sourdough.[142] In fact, the artist Ted Lambert wrote that "Old hands at dog-teaming actually claimed they had insomnia when the dogs were not howling a dirge."[143]

But the Malamute Chorus too often drove newcomers to distraction – and worse. The scholar is spoiled for firsthand accounts of how awful many Cheechakoes found it. The missionary Loyal Lincoln Wirt compared it to a human cry.[144] Adney wrote that it was louder than a steamboat whistle.[145] The American-Australian journalist Frank Coffee recalled it making "the night hideous."[146] The naturalist Henry Bannister, in the days when "the Esquimaux Dog" was still thought of in some quarters to be a separate species, made the connection between *prairie madness* and being driven equally mad by howling sled dogs absolutely explicit:

> Those who have had experiences of wolves and coyotes on the plains, can form but a faint idea of what it is to have two or three dozen Esquimaux dogs howling in concert within a few feet of one's head. The noise will go through two or three log partitions, and then be altogether trying to human nerves.[147]

S. Hall Young, the missionary who ventured into Glacier Bay with John Muir, although admiring the "many malamute dogs at Nome, great, beautiful, wolf-like beasts" was so bothered by the noise he had the wife of the owner of the cabin he was staying at pay the dog's master to shoot it. [148] There is at least one recorded incident of a mass-poisoning of dogs in Dawson "done by cheechakoes who do not know or appreciate the value of a dog in this country, and who find their slumbers disturbed by nightly malamuting."[149]

Dog team and two men, circa 1912-1914. The driving of dogs in pairs was an Indigenous innovation adopted by many white settlers and explorers including Roald Amundsen. (Pedersen Postcard Album, UAF-1998-53-6, Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks)

Clearly, living with dogs presented challenges that many embraced fully – but these same challenges failed others, and fueled an inner crisis of violence, cruelty, and abuse. Those who could not handle Alaska and the Yukon could not handle its dogs; those who could, understood just how categorically crucial they were for living and working. "The key to a dog's heart is kindness," ran a 1907 editorial from Wrangell. "He will always meet you half way or more."[150] A truism, to be sure, but not nearly as *true* anywhere else, as in Alaska and the Yukon.

Ultimately, Scotty Allan perhaps puts it best: "Most dogs are… regular mirrors of their master's moods."[151] Any dog owner would anecdotally agree. Frustration begat frustration, and sorrow begat sorrow. Yet compassion would also beget compassion.

A New World For Dogs and Their People: 1900-1906

It is important to note that in most recorded instances of dog abuse, there are riders of scolding and sympathy—even Gage's account, notable for being so visceral, mentions how he wished to "interfere" with the dog abusers he saw. The backgrounds of those who witnessed, and deplored, these acts of barbarity are as diverse as any given stampeder community. Additionally, and contemporary to those seeing such viciousness, were those who

genuinely seemed to value, or even love, the animals they journeyed and worked with.

The very isolation and murk of the Far North that caused some men to become murderous helped others to see dogs as vital not just for labor but friendship. Robert Marshall noted that "As for companionship to lonely men, far from the nearest human being, there is nothing like them in all the world."[152] One stampeder, John Ver Mehr, recalled how his dog, Chief, not only saved his life, but his sanity, and wrote frankly of this relationship: "When I cooked a meal I dished out the same for him as for me…when we got to the cabin, I sat outside for a while on some wood I had piled up there by the door, and I put my arm around Chief's neck, and the two of us just sat there, wondering what was coming."[153] The same circumstances that led some men to "lose their heads" also led many to adapt their lives to the dogs they trekked with. The traveller Addison M. Powell described men who would "hit the trail and try for another raise" for gold rather than sell their own dog.[154]

On the Valdez Glacier, Margeson wrote of an incident where a prospector lost three dogs to a snowslide, but found his fourth one alive only after the efforts of men digging for hours under the snow.[155] A certain Mrs. Delander, also of Valdez, became a local sensation – "possesses what is commonly known as 'grit' in sufficient quantities" – when she personally rescued one of her dogs that had been left behind from the Third Bench of the Valdez Glacier in the dead of night: "She found the dog but he was not able to walk, so she placed him on the sled and brought him to town."[156] When dogs went missing with no neighbor to suspect or blame their owners offered rewards for their finding and return,[157] as had been the norm for communities in the Outside.

Even Soapy Smith, perhaps the most notoriously rough of the many rough men which defined the Klondike Gold Rush, personally started an "Adopt A Dog" program specifically for those dogs which, as mentioned, had been stolen from Pacific port cities but "were utterly useless for the work at hand and were abandoned to their fate, which in most cases was death by cold and starvation on the trails." To set a good example, Smith adopted six such stray dogs himself.[158]

That a dictatorial gangster and conman like Soapy Smith would wish to foster kindness to dogs in his own community speaks to something peculiar which begins to emerge: a relationship between the desire to stop dog abuse, and the desire to establish law and order. This would proliferate amongst the many fledgling communities that had been born during the gold rushes.[159] Wild Alaskan mining camps metamorphosed into familiar, if

Reliable
Dog Remedies
DON'T
Let YOUR Dog Rot With Mange!
USE
Hudgin's Mange Cure!
A Distemper Specific!
Hudgin's
Distemper Capsules
For Young Puppies!
Hudgin's Worm Cure!
Use HUDGIN'S Canker and Eye-
Wash Remedies.
For sale at HUDGIN'S
MINER'S STORE.

Newspaper advertisement for a mange cure sold at Hudgin's drug store in Rampart. (*Alaska Forum* [Rampart], May 16, 1901)

remote, American places, with desires for a common peace. Civic organizations made confrontations to stop abuse more effective. Margeson wrote that in Valdez, cruelty to dogs was so brutal that "it was no uncommon thing to see a dog drop dead in harness beside the trail." In response, "a committee was sent to wait upon them; and they were ordered to stop beating them, or they would be dealt with by indignant miners. This seemed to have the desired effect, for from this time on the poor dogs fared better."[160] The aforementioned dog poisoning case in Dawson not only sparked talk of forming a kennel club – another civic organization – but included a categorical warning for the at-large culprit: "The prospective members of the club are sour dough [*sic*] dog men, and have blood in their eyes, and promise to make it interesting for anyone they can catch poisoning dogs."[161]

In 1900 Juneau approved ordinances for dog licensing.[162] Two years later, so did the town of Douglas, indeed as one of its first

acts of civic legislation; it enforced a tax at $2 a male dog and $3 for a female, "and all dogs running at large in the city must wear a collar and a tag."[163] Collaring prevented theft and dogs becoming strays.

Particularly instructive is the feud that erupted between Skagway residents Ed Quinn, J.A. "Mormon Joe" Moore, and Moore's wife. Unfolding over the course of the latter half of the year 1900, and dominating community newspaper headlines at the time, the resulting legal reforms that took place afterward were precisely the sort of remedies Alaskan communities desired to end the cycles of violence and disorder which Stuck and Allan had so bemoaned years before.

The feud began when Moore's wife had poisoned two of Quinn's dogs with strychnine for troubling her chickens.[164] Quinn had then shot one of Moore's dogs after Quinn, enraged, pulled a gun on Moore himself, and was sent to prison, having to pay $250 in bonds, despite "a general feeling of sympathy."[165] He was eventually acquitted by a jury.[166] Although Moore's wife (who goes unnamed throughout the newspaper coverage, save for "Mrs. J.A. Moore")[167] was also released after a writ of *habeas corpus*,[168] she appears not to have been the only one who used poison to murder dogs, as there was a rash of such incidents that autumn – up to twenty, enough that "The fear is expressed that trouble of a far more serious nature will yet result" amongst the populace.[169]

Senseless deaths of the dogs aside, it is easy to see how such a furious disagreement could have turned tragic, without proper laws and litigation. As a result that December, the "Common Council of the City of Skagway" passed Ordinance No. 9, which expressly defined what constituted misdemeanors within town limits, with certain sections in it drafted almost certainly with the express purpose of preventing another Quinn-Moore feud: printed for public edification in *The Daily Alaskan*, provisions were made to curtail both gun violence and "Frightening," "Leaving… Unfastened," and most importantly "Injuring," animals.[170]

Along with new legal reforms, the coalescence of law-abiding communities allowed professional veterinary care to appear as well. When a veterinarian came to town, his services would be announced in the local newspaper, as would a human doctor.[171] Certainly there was a ready-made market for providing remedies and so-called *cures* for common dog ailments, such that in many newspapers there are advertisements for dog care products, with treatments for mange being particularly popular.[172] "DON'T Let YOUR Dog Rot With Mange!"[173] trumpeted an ad for Hudgin's Mange Cure which appeared several times in *The Alaska Forum* from Rampart on the Yukon River, which also sold "Reliable Dog

Remedies" such as "Distemper Capsules For Young Puppies" and a "Worm Cure."[174] Another advertisement by Kelly & Co., in *The Nome Nugget*, appeals directly to a sense of decency in a dog's owner, by disguising its product as a "positive cure for nervous trouble." The remainder of the ad runs, "It surely makes you nervous to see your dog constantly scratching and biting himself. He has the mange. A few applications of our Mange Cure with relieve the dog and restore your nerves."[175]

Eventually attempts to protect dogs extended to protecting dogs *from other dogs*. In 1915, a law was passed by the Territorial Legislature allowing anyone at any time to shoot a dog deemed overly vicious or "mad," which is to say rabid; it also included a section deeming it legal to do the same for any dog which "habitually annoys" domesticated animals belonging to someone else, but included an odd legal protection for the dog as well: "the owner or keeper of such a dog…shall be notified and given reasonable opportunity to restrain such dog before it shall become lawful to kill it under the provisions of this section."[176]

A legal recourse for a troublesome canine may seem peculiar, but by that time the dog in Alaska had become invaluable – monetarily as well as morally. Reporting on another dog poisoner in Juneau, an anonymous item in the *Daily Alaskan* made a similar case:

> If the miscreant is apprehended a piece of rope would be the proper punishment. Dog poisoning in any community is a crime, but in a country like Alaska, where the dogs taking off is likely to deprive their owners of fuel and provisions, no punishment is too severe to be meted out.[177]

While dogs were still technically property, it was clear by the plethora of legal protections under both local and territorial law—not to say fiery denouncements against injury and violence—it had assumed a unique importance not truly seen anywhere else in the United States.[178]

Benevolence At Last

For millennia, the dog in Alaska had been a categorically essential figure for living and working, but its true value was both tested, and rewarded, in the White settler project under the aegis of the United States. Dogs were now even more irreplaceably important not only to the economy of the land, but to the

lives of everyday Alaskans. Just as law replaced lawlessness and improved the lives of new Alaskans, so too did care and comfort improve the lives of the sled dog – with the result that both could work better in their environment.

In 1901 Tappan Adney noted with approval that, barring extreme necessity, "The good dog-puncher is sparing of blows and everything that will rattle or discourage his dog."[179] By 1919, William B. Stephenson would speak of how "The old rule of feeding an exhausted and over-worked team 'buckskin soup' no longer goes in Alaska. Very few drivers now have the temerity to abuse a dog. It has been proved beyond doubt that better results come from kindness and care than can possibly be obtained by neglect or brutal treatment."[180] Esther Birdsall Darling wrote near-contemporaneously to Stephenson of how the community of Candle—integral to the All Alaska Sweepstakes dog derby—showed "kindness to the dogs that *appeals to all true Alaskans*."[181]

But it should come as no surprise that the sled dog in Alaska would become so celebrated. In a few short years, it had shown its worth as the central engine in developing American Alaska—in turning *Seward's Folly* into his great legacy. Mushers—not railroads, nor horses, nor the airplane as yet to be widespread—provided the lifelines that allowed the almost unfathomably vast land of Alaska to cohere and interconnect.[182] The genius of Indigenous technology had become totally central to the White settler existence in Alaska—the sled dog included.[183]

By the first decade of the 20th century, the new communities of Alaska were well-settled by White Americans and European and Canadian immigrants, and the gold rush stampedes, with their chaotic lawlessness and brutality, faded like a receding nightmare. The reign of the dog seemed, at the time, infinite.

E. Hazard Wells would take his leave of Alaska on January 25, 1898, arriving in Seattle six days later.[184] Touring the United States as an expert on Alaska and the Yukon, he would eventually resettle his family in Seattle, where he had departed for, and arrived from, the singular place which changed his life so much.[185]

And as for Fido, he is not mentioned again—but one can always hope.

NOTES

1. Lael Morgan, *Good Time Girls of the Alaska-Yukon Gold Rush* (Fairbanks: Epicenter Press, 1998), 107. Tappan Adney noted it had once been "the seat of the local Indians, or *Trochutin*, as they call themselves," indicating they were a Hän people. See Tappan Adney, *The Klondike Stampede* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1900),

177. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* calls it "Louse Town," with a space, in an article describing the environs of Dawson. See "Where Money Has No Value," *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, November 11, 1897.

2. E. Hazard Wells, *Magnificence and Misery* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1984), 98-99.

3. Ibid., 96-97.

4. Ibid., 97. Wells does mention another Fido (December 20, 1897), but he was a "little dog of the short-haired Indian type" and "a tail that wagged sixty beats to the minute" so by this description he is not the same Fido that appeared at his cabin (Ibid., 165).

5. "Alaska flag design by Benny Benson, Seward," American Legion Designs by School Children for Alaska's Flag, 1927, Alaska State Library, Historical Collections, ASL-MS14-1, vilda.alaska.edu/digital/collection/cdmg21/id/4586 [accessed April 20, 2023].

6. Sherry Simpson, "Dogs Is Dogs: Savagery and Civilization in the Gold Rush Era," in *The Big Wild Soul of Terrence Cole*, Frank Soos and Mary F. Ehrlander, eds., (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2019), 59-73.

7. Bathsheba Demuth, "Labors of Love: People, Dogs, and Affect in North American Arctic Borderlands, 1700–1900," *Journal of American History* 108, Issue 2 (September 2021), 270-95.

8. Ibid., 270.

9. Ernest S. Busch, Jr., *Social Life in Northwest Alaska* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2006), 283-93; Audrey Loftus and David Paul, *According to Papa* (Fairbanks: St. Matthew's Episcopal Guild, 1957), 12-13.

10. Simpson, "Dogs Is Dogs," 59.

11. Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 101-09.

12. Susan J. Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 114-16.

13. Andrew A. Robichaud, *Animal City: The Domestication of America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019). 166-67.

14. Stanley Coren, *The Pawprints of History* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 143-56.

15. Adney, "The Sledge Dogs of the North," *Outing* 38 (April 1901), 129.

16. For an overview of the shift away from agrarianism to industrialization in the United States, see Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 21-94; Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009).

17. Robichaud, *Animal City*, 3.

18. Katherine C. Grier, *Pets in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 213.

19. Frederick L. Brown, *The City is More Than Human* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 166.

20. Alfred Hulse Brooks, *Blazing Alaska's Trails* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1953), 402.

21. Frank A. Golder, "Mining in Alaska Before 1867," in *Alaska and Its History*, Morgan Sherwood, ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), 150-51.

22. Keith Wheeler, *The Alaskans* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1977), 77-78; Claus-M. Naske and Herman E. Slotnick, *Alaska: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 113.

23. Naske and Slotnick, *Alaska: A History*, 406.

24. James R. Shortridge, "The Alaskan Agricultural Empire: An American Agrarian Vision, 1898–1929," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 69, No. 4 (October 1978), 145.

25. *Report on Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census* (1890), 967. Alaska is listed last in the Eleventh Census, in an appendix with Indian Territory and the Indian Reservations.

26. "Horse Mart Established," *Seattle Daily Times*, July 23, 1897, 8; "Equine Market is Empty," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 1, 1897, 5.

27. "On the Way To Alaska," *Aberdeen Herald* (Washington), March 18, 1897.

28. Adney, *The Klondike Stampede*, 18.

29. Scotty Allan, *Gold, Men, and Dogs* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Press, 1931), 58-62; Angelo Heilprin, *Alaska and the Klondike: A Journey to the New Eldorado* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1899), 10.

30. Andrew Hardwick, "On the Skaguay Trail," *Pullman Herald* (Washington), November 20, 1897.

31. Heilprin, *Alaska and the Klondike*, 9-10.

32. Robert B. Medill, *Klondike Diary: True Account of the Klondike Rush of 1897–1898* (Portland, Oregon: Beattie and Company, 1949), 36. The reader should note Sheep Camp is on the Dyea Trail, not the White Pass.

33. Richard Grant, "Jack London In the Wild," *Smithsonian* 50, No. 7 (November 2019), 80.

34. Jack London, "Which Make Men Remember," in *The God of His Fathers* (New York: Doubleday Page & Co., 1914), 79-80.

35. Robert C. Kirk, *Twelve Months in the Klondike* (London: William Heinemann, 1899), 209.

36. Adney, *The Klondike Stampede*, 83; Allan, *Gold, Men, and Dogs*, 55. Both accounts are ambiguously worded as to whether if, like Shand, they actually personally saw them or only heard about them. Pierre Berton repeats the Adney version as though the latter was an actual eyewitness. See Berton, *The Klondike Fever* (New York: Basic Books, 1958), 155-56. What Shand and others actually saw, or believed, is inherently colored by an anthropocentric viewpoint as the horses could not communicate their intentions. This does not mean to detract from the tragedy of the situation, even if scientific study into actual non-human self-termination is inconclusive. For overviews on the subject, see Edmund Ramsden and Duncan Wilson, "The Suicidal Animal: Science and the Nature of Self-Destruction," *Past & Present*, No. 224 (August 2014), 201-42; Antonio Preti, "Suicide Among Animals: A Review of Evidence," *Psychological Reports* 101, Issue 3 (December 2007), 831-48.

37. Margaret Clark Shand and Ora M. Shand, *The Summit and Beyond* (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1959), 44-47.

38. Medill, *Klondike Diary*, 39.

39. "Moose in harness, Skaguay," J. Bernard Moore Family Papers, Album #1, UAF-1976-35-18, Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, University of Alaska Fairbanks, vilda.alaska.edu/digital/collection/cdmg11/id/2677 [accessed April 30, 2023].

40. One notable attempt to domesticate a bear was by Skagway saloon operator Pat Renwick, which he used for four years until 1902, when it became too big to control, and had to be shot. See Karl Gurcke, "Southeast in Sepia: Carnation the Moose and Other Animals of the Gold Rush," *Juneau Empire*, May 2, 2018.

41. W.R. Abercrombie, *Compilation of Narratives of Explorations in Alaska* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 526; Wells, *Magnificence and Misery*, 223-28.

42. Kirk, *Twelve Months in the Klondike*, 208.

43. Abercrombie, *Compilation of Narratives*, 501.

44. Wells, *Magnificence and Misery*, 225.

45. Morgan Sherwood, *Exploration of Alaska 1865-1900* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1992), 155, 156-57; Brooks, *Blazing Alaska's Trails*, 345. For a detailed account of the events, see Keith A. Murray, *Reindeer and Gold* (Bellingham, Washington: Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, 1988), 23-76.

46. A small creek still bears his name outside of Nome, which flows into the Snake River.

47. Murray, *Reindeer and Gold*, 190-95, 208-10.

48. Elizabeth Ricker, *Seppala: Alaskan Dog Driver* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1930), 72-74, Gay Salisbury and Laney Salisbury, *The Cruelest Miles* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 218.

49. Abercrombie, *Compilation of Narratives*, 526.

50. Nancy L. Woolworth, "The Grand Portage Mission: 1731–1965," *Minnesota History* 39, No. 8 (Winter 1965), 309.

51. Brooks, *Blazing Alaska's Trails*, 344.

52. Pierre Berton, *Klondike: The Last Great Gold Rush 1896-1899* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2001), 82-85.

53. Robert Marshall reported one man being able to feed his dogs for $36.85 a month in roughly 1930 U.S. dollars and contrasts that with $3,000 a year for a team of horses. See Robert Marshall, *Arctic Village* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1993), 121.

54. Kathryn Morse, *The Nature of Gold: An Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 78.

55. Simpson, "Dogs Is Dogs," 68.

56. Berton, *The Klondike Fever*, 305.

57. There are no fewer than sixty examples of the "Alaska-Klondike Wants" section of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* from 1897 to 1899.

58. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, December 26, 1899, 11.

59. Morse, *The Nature of Gold*, 76.

60. Ibid., 167-85.

61. Thomas W. Prosch, "City of Seattle," *Alaskan Magazine* 1, No. 1 (March 1900), 37-39.

62. Clarence B. Bagley, *History of Seattle* (Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1916), 121.

63. Nard Jones, *Seattle* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1972), 150.

64. "Portland To Seattle," *Seattle Daily Times*, November 9, 1897.

65. "Dog Stealing is Profitable," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, November 11, 1897, 5.

66. Morse, *The Nature of Gold*, 76.

67. William Hiscock, *A Kiwi in the Klondike* (Waiuku, New Zealand: S.M. Hull, 1993), 16.

68. The "old brickyard" in question was located at Rainier Avenue and Lane Street, and belonged to Puget Sound Brick, Tile, and Terra Cotta, later the Builders Brick Company.

69. "At the Yukon Dog Yard," *Seattle Daily Times*, November 9, 1897. Despite this, the yard was still being used two weeks later, when a "carload" of dogs from Chicago dropped off a sizable population of dogs that were "rapidly being broken for harness." See "Another Carload of Dogs," *Seattle Daily Times*, November 24, 1897.

70. "The Humane Society Meeting," *Seattle Daily Times*, December 7, 1897; "City Notices," *Seattle-Post Intelligencer*, December 23, 1897; "An ordinance providing for the prevention of cruelty to animals and providing a penalty for violation thereof," clerk.seattle.gov/search/ordinances/4712 [accessed April 30, 2023].

71. "An Act for the more effectual prevention of cruelty to animals," Chapter CXLVI. (H. B. No. 51.1) cited in *Session Laws of the State of Washington Seventh Session*, 302-07; Brown, *The City is More Than Human*, 116-17.

72. Lorna Coppinger, *The World of Sled Dogs* (New York: Howell Book House, 1977), 42.

73. "The Traffic in Dogs," *San Francisco Call*, January 29, 1898.

74. "Would Have the Dog," *Record-Union*, (Sacramento), January 22, 1898.

75. Adney, "The Sledge Dogs of the North," 134.

76. William B. Haskell, *Two Years in the Klondike and Alaskan Gold-Fields* (Hartford, Connecticut: Hartford Publishing Company, 1898), 286.

77. Salisbury and Salisbury, *The Cruelest Miles*, 20; Simpson, "Dogs Is Dogs," 69.

78. Sis Laraux Troseth, "Alaska Husky Dogs," *Prairie Schooner* 74, No. 1 (Spring 2000), 103.

79. Loyal Lincoln Wirt, *Alaskan Adventures* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1937), 36; "Hunter Lost For Many Days," *Yukon Valley News*, December 14, 1904.

80. Simpson, "Dogs Is Dogs," 68.

81. Roald Amundsen, *The South Pole: An Account of the Norwegian Antarctic Expedition in the Fram, 1910-1912* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001), 86. This Alaskan Indigenous-derived technology was recognized by Amundsen and others as being the most efficient way to travel by Antarctic explorers.

82. For an overview, see the works of Raymond Thompson, *viz.*, *Cart and Sled Dog Training* (Lynnwood, Washington: Raymond Thompson Company, 1987), 14-20; *Sled & Harness Styles* (Lynnwood, Washington: Raymond Thompson Company, 1973), 17.

83. Robert O. Bowen, *An Alaskan Dictionary* (Spenard, Alaska: Nooshnik Press, 1965), 22. Edward Sanford Harrison terms the word an "Alaskan barbarism," as though it was idiosyncratic to Alaska only. See Edward Sanford Harrison, *Nome and Seward Peninsula: History, Description, Biographies and Stories* (Seattle: The Metropolitan Press, 1905), 46.

84. F.S. Pettyjohn, "Early Day Sled Dogs," in *Racing Alaskan Sled Dogs*, Bill Vaudrin, ed. (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing, 1976), 11.

85. John Jennings, *The Cowboy Legend: Owen Wister's Virginian and the Canadian-American Frontier* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2015), 290-93.

86. Arthur Treadwell Walden, *A Dog-Puncher on the Yukon* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1928), 32.

87. Olaf Swenson, *Northwest of the World* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1944), 182.

88. "Lead dogs are very smart / Qimugtet ciulistet usvitupiartu," in Ann Fienup-Riordan, ed., *Erinaput Unguvaniartut: So Our Voices Will Live*, tr. Alice Rearden (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press and Alaska Native Language Center, 2017), 192-93. Pleasant's Yup'ik name was *Arnariaq*.

89. Wells, *Magnificence and Misery*, 208.

90. For instance, five Saint Bernards "well-broken for harness" were offered for sale in several issues of the *Daily Alaskan* in Skagway (March 7, 8, 12, 15, 18, 1904). Wells mentions that one of the teams that got him out of Dawson and into Skagway years earlier (December 20, 1897) had two Newfoundlands on it (Wells, *Magnificence and Misery*, 165-166). See also Hudson Stuck, *Ten Thousand Miles With a Dog Sled* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), 392; Adney, "The Sledge Dogs of the North," 134.

91. Salisbury and Salisbury, *The Cruelest Miles*, 20.

92. Stuck, *Ten Thousand Miles With a Dog Sled*, 392-93; Adney, *The Klondike Stampede*, 209; Demuth, "Labors of Love," 285.

93. Esther Birdsall Darling, *Baldy of Nome* (San Francisco: A.M. Robertson, 1913), 47. Other than this, neither Darling nor Allan imparted any hint about Baldy's ancestry, and it remains unknown.

94. Morse, *The Nature of Gold*, 40.

95. William S. Schneider, *On Time Delivery: The Dog Team Mail Carriers* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2012), 5.

96. Heilprin, *Alaska and the Klondike*, 136.

97. Charles Anson Margeson, *Experiences of Gold Hunters in Alaska* (self-published, 1899), 78.

98. Salisbury and Salisbury, *The Cruelest Miles*, 239. Parts of the Iditarod Trail (e.g., over Rainy Pass) were nonetheless still treacherous because of "deep snows and drifting," See Schneider, *On Time Delivery*, 62.

99. Stuck, *Ten Thousand Miles With a Dog Sled*, 149-50.

100. Simpson, "Dogs Is Dogs," 64-65.

101. Morse, *The Nature of Gold*, 98.

102. Ibid., 40.

103. Wheeler, *The Alaskans*, 76-77.

104. Morse, *The Nature of Gold*, 77.

105. Walden, *A Dog-Puncher on the Yukon*, 85-86.

106. Simpson, "Dogs Is Dogs," 69.

107. Robert Hunter Fitzhugh, letter to his mother, November 12, 1899, Robert Hunter Fitzhugh Collection, Box 2, Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

108. Lilian Agnes Oliver, "My Klondike Mission," *The Wide World Magazine* 3 (April-September 1899), 47-48.

109. Medill, *Klondike Diary*, 119.

110. Eli Gage, "Eli Gage's Yukon Journey," in *Klondike: The Chicago Record's Book for Goldseekers* (Chicago: Chicago Record Co., 1897), 328-31.

111. Basil Austin, *The Diary of a Ninety-Eighter* (Mount Pleasant, Michigan: John Cumming, 1968), 43.

112. Oliver, "My Klondike Mission," 48.

113. See, for example, Allan, *Gold, Men, and Dogs*, 66-67; Berton, *The Klondike Fever*, 225-27.

114. Oliver, "My Klondike Mission," 47.

115. Walden, *A Dog-Puncher on the Yukon*, 134.

116. Mary Lee Davis, *Alaska: The Great Bear's Cub* (Boston: W.A. Wilde Company, 1930), 77-78.

117. Allan, *Gold, Men, and Dogs*, 49.

118. John G. Brady, *Report of the Governor of Alaska*, H.R. Doc. No. 5, 55th Congress, 2nd Session; "Has Struck a Hotel," *San Francisco Call*, July 31, 1897.

119. Ethel Anderson Becker, "Monument at Dead Horse Gulch," *Alaska Sportsman* (May 1957), 15.

120. "Presage of Horrors," *San Francisco Call*, July 29, 1897, 2.

121. Allan, *Gold, Men, and Dogs*, 270-285; Harrison, *Nome and Seward Peninsula*, 185.

122. Marshall, *Arctic Village*, 119.

123. Stuck, *Ten Thousand Miles With a Dog Sled*, 238.

124. Gage, "Eli Gage's Yukon Journey," 317; Allan, *Gold, Men, and Dogs*, 50.

125. Douglas W. Allen, "Information Sharing during the Klondike Gold Rush," *Journal of Economic History* 67, No. 4 (December 2007), 947-49; Berton, *The Klondike Fever*, 23.

126. Walden, *A Dog-Puncher on the Yukon*, 133-34.

127. Allan, *Gold, Men, and Dogs*, 49.

128. Merle Colby, *A Guide To Alaska, Last American Frontier* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943), 234.

129. Scott A. Sandage, *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), 88.

130. Ibid.

131. Alex D. Velez, "'The Wind Cries Mary': The Effect of Soundscape on the Prairie-Madness Phenomenon," *Historical Archaeology* 56 (June 2022), 263.

132. Ibid., 264-65.

133. Stuck, *Ten Thousand Miles With a Dog Sled*, 16-17, 98, 390; Walden, *A Dog-Puncher on the Yukon*, 117; Haskell, *Two Years in the Klondike and Alaskan Gold-Fields*, 83.
134. Robert W. Service, "The Spell of the Yukon" in *The Spell of the Yukon and Other Verses* (New York: Barse & Hopkins, 1907), 18.
135. Kathryn Winslow, *Big Pan-Out* (London: Phoenix House Limited, 1952), 215-16.
136. Thomas Arthur Rickard, *Through the Yukon and Alaska* (San Francisco: Mining and Scientific Press, 1909), 204, 206.
137. Despite the name, it was also observed to occur with Huskies of any type as well. See Salisbury and Salisbury, *The Cruelest Miles*, 21.
138. Carrie M. McLain, *An Illustrated Chronicle of Gold-Rush Nome* (self-published, 1969), 19.
139. Nellie Neal Lawing, *Alaska Nellie* (Seattle: Seattle Printing & Publishing Company, 1940), 71.
140. Troseth, "Alaska Husky Dogs," 109.
141. Troseth, "Alaska Husky Dogs," 22; Kirk, *Twelve Months in the Klondike*, 207.
142. Esther Birdsall Darling, "The Sourdough," in *Up in Alaska* (Sacramento: Jo Anderson Press, 1912), 13; Bernard R. Hubbard, *Mush, You Malemutes!* (New York: The America Press, 1932), 7-8.
143. Ted Lambert, *Ted Lambert: The Man Behind the Paintings* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2012), 75.
144. Wirt, *Alaskan Adventures*, 36.
145. Adney, *The Klondike Stampede*, 387-88; he would describe it again, slightly differently, in "The Sledge Dogs of the North," 137.
146. Frank Coffee, *Forty Years on the Pacific* (New York: Oceanic Publishing Company, 1920), 247.
147. H.M. Bannister, "The Esquimaux Dog," *The American Naturalist* 3, No. 10 (December 1869), 525.
148. S. Hall Young, *Adventures in Alaska* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1919), 65-67.
149. "Quit Poisoning Dogs," *Semi-Weekly Klondike Nugget* (Dawson, Yukon), September 9, 1900, 6.
150. "Human Traits in the Dog," *Alaska Sentinel* (Wrangell), May 16, 1907.
151. Allan, *Gold, Men, and Dogs*, 270, 305.
152. Marshall, *Arctic Village*, 120.
153. Winslow, *Big Pan-Out*, 216-17.
154. Addison M. Powell, *Trailing and Camping in Alaska* (New York: Wessels & Bissell, 1910), 113, 351. The man in question evidently owed his life to the dog, a "husky" named Mose.
155. Margeson, *Experiences of Gold Hunters in Alaska*, 102.
156. *Douglas Island News*, June 12, 1901.
157. "Fifty Dollar Reward," *Daily Morning Alaskan* (Skagway), January 20, 1900.
158. William Ross Collier and Edwin Victor Westrate, *The Reign of Soapy Smith* (New York: The Sun Dial Press, 1937), 244-45.
159. Simpson, "Dogs Is Dogs," 61-62.
160. Margeson, *Experiences of Gold Hunters in Alaska*, 78.
161. "Quit Poisoning Dogs."
162. Simpson, "Dogs Is Dogs," 70.
163. "Council Meets," *Douglas Island News*, May 28, 1902, 2.
164. "Poison Kills Dogs" *Daily Morning Alaskan* (Skagway), August 22, 1900.
165. "Feud Breaks," *Daily Morning Alaskan* (Skagway), September 29, 1900. In an odd twist, Moore, named a "prominent party in the dog feud," was sent to jail three weeks later, for three days, after having been accused of "using vile language

to some little girls," and being convicted of expressing "utterly unseemly remarks on the occasion testified to." See "Moore Now In Jail," *Daily Morning Alaskan* (Skagway), October 17, 1900.

166. "Quinn Is Acquitted of Pointing Gun," *The Daily Alaskan* (Skagway), October 4, 1900.

167. If census records are anything to go by, her name may have been Marie, a naturalized Québécoise. If so, it is not unreasonable to assume there may have been an underlying language or cultural tension which could have spurred the incident.

168. "Saloon Protest Heard," *The Daily Alaskan* (Skagway), October 14, 1900.

169. "More Dogs Poisoned," *The Daily Alaskan* (Skagway), October 4, 1900.

170. "Ordinance No. 9," *The Daily Alaskan* (Skagway), December 15, 1900.

171. Examples include "R.B. Coutts, a veterinary surgeon," *Daily Morning Alaskan* (Skagway), April 15, 1900; "C.N. Bement," a veterinary dentist, announced as being at "Joe Warren's Residence" in Nome, *The Daily Gold Digger*, November 26, 1906.

172. "Creeley's Mange Cure" which was "Prepared from a prescription of the celebrated Dr. Creeley, V.S.," and which came with a money back guarantee, *Daily Morning Alaskan* (Skagway), January 11, 1900; "Crary's Mange Cure cures," and "That Mange Cure at Valdez Pharmacy will cure your dogs," *The Alaska Prospector* (Valdez), March 6, 1902.

173. *Mange* technically refers to two different painfully itchy (i.e., pruritic) skin conditions, one being *demodicosis*, the other being *scabies*; the advertisements in Alaska newspapers at the time do not differentiate between the two. Of note, the latter is zoonotic (i.e., can be spread between humans and other animals), while the former is not.

174. Hudgins advertised in the *Alaska Forum*, always on page 3, forty-two times between March 7, 1901, and August 30, 1902.

175. *Nome Nugget*, November 20, 1901. The exact treatment for mange probably varied from seller to seller, but a column in *The Alaska Prospector* (April 7, 1904) details a mixture "made public by the Seattle Humane Society," which was to be applied dermally to the affected area on a dog: "Sulphur, sublimate and whale oil, each eight ounces; blue ointment and oil of tar, each one-half ounce."

176. Chap. 37, Act Apr. 28, 1915: "Rabies—Prevention of—Killing of Dogs Under Certain Conditions."

177. "Current Comment," *The Daily Alaskan* (Skagway), March 16, 1901.

178. For a philosophical analysis of dogs-as-property, see Lilian Carswell, "'The Power of Choice': Darwinian Concepts of Animal Mind in Jack London's Dog Stories," in Tina Gianquitto and Lydia Fisher, eds., *America's Darwin: Darwinian Theory and U.S. Literary Culture* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2014), 320-21.

179. Adney, "The Sledge Dog of the North," 135.

180. William B. Stephenson, *The Land of Tomorrow* (New York: George H. Doran, 1919), 113.

181. Esther Birdsall Darling, *The Great Dog Races of Nome*, 5 (emphasis added).

182. Simpson, "Dogs Is Dogs," 71.

183. "Dogs in the Klondike," *New York Times*, January 1, 1899, 2.

184. Wells, *Magnificence and Misery*, 188.

185. Ibid., xii.