

THE

YUKONER

MAGAZINE



ISSUE
No.27

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- HUNTING GRIZZLY BEARS
- THE CARCROSS PARROT
- ROADHOUSES
- AN AUSTRALIAN PIONEER



WHITEHORSE MOTORS



SALUTES



Doug & Pearl Bell

Doug and Pearl were prairie folks from Saskatchewan when they started working their way north shortly after they married in 1946. Doug was a radio operator for Transport Canada and later became area manager, doing stints at Beatton River, Fort Nelson, Watson Lake, before moving to Whitehorse in 1969. Always a great speaker, he became Commissioner of the Yukon from 1980 to 1986.



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Cover: A dog named "Ears" who rides to the Carcross Cut-off on a four-wheeler with his owner, Don Noble. [S.H. photo]



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Publisher: Dianne Green Editor: Sam Holloway

From the Editor

I left the Yukon once, never to return. Sold everything except what would fit in the back of my truck and away I went. Didn't say goodbye to many people because I knew I would never see them again anyhow.

Arriving in Edmonton on a rainy evening, I drove up and down Jasper Avenue a few times and decided to get out into the country.

Next thing I knew I was in Grand Prairie, then Dawson Creek. Two days later I was back in the Yukon trying to start over.

It's a story that happens over and over. In fact, a friend of mine keeps a diary of all the people he has known who tried to leave the Yukon for good—and failed.

And then there are those of us who can't even leave for a holiday. My old friend Joe LaRoque only gets as far as Teslin (110 miles from Whitehorse) before he gets the heebie-jeebies. When that happens, you can say that we are "bushed." But I'm all right, you see, because I managed to get to my son's wedding in Camrose last winter.

Of course there are lots of people who do manage to leave, to find another life or to retire in a warmer place. But they leave their hearts in the Yukon.

We had a great story for this issue about the hippies who came here during the late 1960s and '70s and squatted on Crown land. Many of them are here yet and now own the cabins and properties.

However, the subject of one of the stories, who is now a prominent citizen, objected strongly to his past life being laid bare. We respected his wishes and cancelled that article.

So long for now,
Sam



Eileen O'Hara, who started out in a tent and now owns this fine cabin on Squatter's Row near Whitehorse. [S.H. photo]



Dear Sam,

Just a note to say how great the *Yukoner Magazine* is. I worked up at MacMillan Pass in the late 80s and travelled the area a bit so know the names of many of the towns mentioned in the stories. We had to cross a river at the town of Ross River on a small ferry. A very seasoned gentleman from Ross River who had some very interesting stories to tell of the area delivered our fuel and supplies. Can't recall his name at the moment. There was an adit (tunnel) in the mountain not far from our main camp, which was close to the NWT border on the North Canol Road. It was called the Ross Toms Mine. If any of your readers know the history of this mine I would be interested in reading it.

*Andy Attwater
Kenogami, Ontario*

Dear Sam,

My brother worked as a diesel mechanic on the Alaska Highway. He is the man who passed the motion to name Destruction Bay. His name was Gordon Kerr. A chap named Eddie C Jackson seconded it. Gordon passed away December 1971 with cancer. Just thought you might like to know.

*Ken Kerr
Meaford, Ontario*

Dear Sam,

We have been to the Yukon twice and plan to return again soon. The photo of your old trucks is like me and my hobby—restoring old army Jeeps, 1940 – 51. If you know of any for sale please contact me.

*Don Reynolds
Canim Lake, B. C.*

Dear Sam and Dianne,

I have remembered a couple more nicknames of miners I met in the Yukon when I worked in the mines around Keno. One was Emil "Smokey" Lehingret and the other was "Pukey Luke" (probably couldn't hold his liquor). His last name may have been Bergstrom or he may have been a partner of Bergstrom's. I can't remember.

*R. Leftrook
New Denver, B. C.*

Dear Editor,

Some years ago we found the Hornsby Chain Track tractor named "Mammoth" on the beach of Apple Bay in Holberg Inlet. Somebody stole the boiler and all the brass. Being English style, most of the engine went



with the boiler. The chassis, water tanks and tracks survived. My partners and I laid plans to bring out the remains. We were discouraged after searching and talking to old timers. There were no clues as to the fate of the boiler. Finally we gave up. Now the remains have been moved to Port McNeil.

We accumulated a thick file on it, now in the hands of another steam engine enthusiast. We made a contact in U. K. who found original photos of the Hornsby Co. trials in 1910!! We let the local Historical Society have copies. Our contact in U.K. visited us and we hired a floatplane and flew to Apple Bay to show him the remains so he could photograph them. We soon realized we couldn't finance a full rebuild. Here's where you can help—what records exist of the Northern Lights Power and Light Company, which ordered the engine to haul coal?

My theory is that this tractor never made it to Dawson. This unit would weigh at least 15 tons. So how would it be shipped to Dawson in 1910? My partners believe that it went to Dawson where it proved to be impractical and was shipped back to Vancouver where it sold for storage. We have a photo of it on, we think, False Creek waterfront, minus its winter cab. The track pads each have an oil reservoir and each is faced with an oak pad.

A logging company brought it to Apple Bay to haul pulpwood for the Port Alice mill. The terrain is either rocky slopes or swamps so the machine was never used and abandoned.

Neil Brady-Browne Sr.
Comox, B. C.

Note: We haven't had a chance to look into this but perhaps one of our Whitehorse readers will have time to check the Yukon Archives for records of the Northern Lights Power Company.

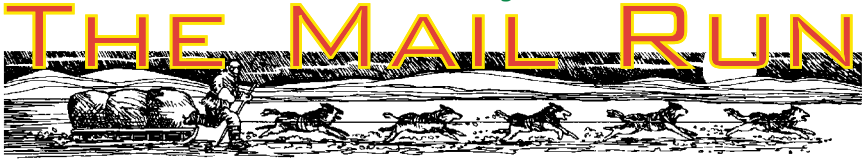
Dear Sam and Dianne,

I sure enjoyed *Growing Up Yukon*, the story of Penny Sippel. To think her mother and dad lived so close to me here in the Keremeos area. That is just amazing, Martha that Penny's mother, still drives all the way to the Yukon at 87 years old. All of the stories in your little magazine are so interesting. Keep up the good work, keep them coming. It is so interesting to hear all about the old timers from way up there.

Henry Austin
Penticton, B. C.

Hello Dianne and Sam,

I especially enjoyed the article by Fred Cook in the last issue. It's neat



to see people referred to that you knew over 50 years ago. I worked for the BYN and when in Dawson lived in rooms above the warehouse on the dock and took all meals at the restaurant in the Royal Alex, courtesy of the company. When the waitresses were serving coffee they usually took the cups from the same shelf. But when things got busy they would reach to the shelf above or below and invariably disturb a cockroach. If Harry Gleaves saw it he would react with a great intake of breath: "Oh! Where did that come from?" as if he'd never seen one before. One morning my mate and I were having pancakes for breakfast and, as he poured the syrup, a large drowned cockroach plopped out of the bottle. We reordered ham and eggs. The Bella that Fred Cook mentioned worked there as one of the waitresses. Bella's mother discovered I was ticklish and used the knowledge with fiendish delight.

W. R. Slater

Denman Island, B. C.

Note: Sadly, Fred Cook passed on in March. We will miss him but are fortunate to have a written record of his life: *The Life and Times of Digger Cook* as told to Henry Legal.

Dear Sam,

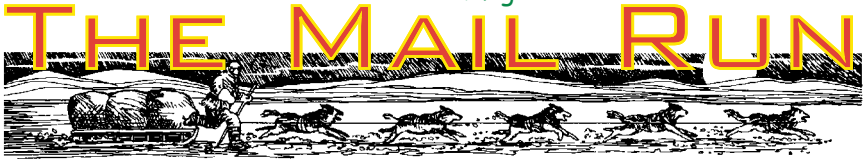
Kudos to *The Yukoner Magazine* and Les McLaughlin for the story on Terry Delaney. He was my younger brother and loved the Yukon. When the radio station turned over from the volunteer operation to the CBC, Terry was the last voice heard as a volunteer and the first voice of the CBC on the air in the Yukon. There are many pioneers of the north whose stories you will undoubtedly tell, including George Black, the Yukon's first member of parliament, as well as Aubrey Simmons, TC Richards, Clyde Wann who brought in the *Queen of the Yukon*, the plane that established the first air-mail service in the Yukon, Alex Van Bibber, with the Order of Canada and the only man to snowshoe from Whitehorse to Yellowknife, Jimmy Gaudin, who was the engineer for the British Yukon Navigation Company. The list goes on and I am sure that most of these stories are on your drawing board for future issues.

Hugh Delaney

Calgary, Alberta



The winner of our gold nugget draw for subscription renewals is C.H. Sim of Wetaskiwin, Alberta.



ON THE TRAPLINE NEAR ROSS RIVER

By Tensley Johnston

Many years ago when I was still trapping the 231 line I flew in with and outfitter and spotted an old cat trail not too far from one of my lines. Later I hiked in there and checked it out. I found it ran for a good day's trap line run and turned out to be quite profitable for several years.

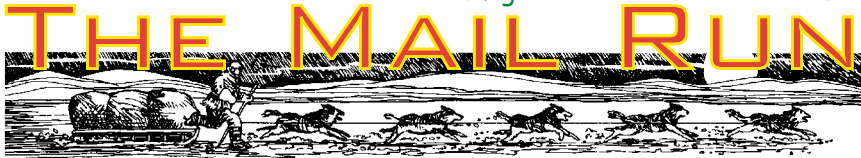
That day as I hiked along that old trail looking for signs with my little dog ahead of me a large black bear came out on the opposite side of the trail about 10 feet from me. It just walked towards me and I also kept on walking but with my rifle centered on his left eye. It didn't do anything aggressive so I just kept on walking 'til I was well past it, then it went back into the bush again. My little dog never made a sound and later, when I came back past that spot, I checked and I'm sure we couldn't have been more than five feet from each other. It was a nice looking bear, I believe well fed, certainly not looking for trouble. I'll admit I had the shakes for a few minutes later.

That winter I made a trail up onto that old road and found I could go for a good many miles of very good trapping. I set up a tent back there and stayed a lot of nights in it but the next year, when I went back, bears had torn it to small pieces. I hunted back there that next fall and saw a number of bears but none of them looked good enough to shoot. I believe I trapped that area about 10 years and I never did see a big bear in there so maybe I just imagined it was such a big one that day we passed each other.

In different years I made many trips on those old cat trails with my four wheeler and a saw a lot of bears, even a couple of grizzlies. Many times I've wondered how many men have had experiences like that and. I've always thought if it had been a grizzly would it have ended the same way?

I had another rather bad time once with the four wheeler. I came onto a big washout on the trail and as I was crossing it, I rolled the bike over onto myself and was pinned down. I dug myself loose with my hunting knife, lots of bruises but no lasting effects. I've read stories of old timers carrying hand guns, not for protection or dispatching animals, but to keep from suffering a long time if they were helpless. I have a friend in London, Ontario who fell and broke her leg and wasn't found for a couple of days. She recovered. We write each other regularly.

Animals lose out occasionally too in the bush. When I first took over that trapline I found two traps and seven snares still set and I had this real big husky type dog and one day he just disappeared. I hunted for days and never found any sign of him. There were plenty of wolf tracks and they may have got him but I have the feeling he got caught in a snare. I've had wolves follow me lots of times but didn't always see them. If I intended to camp or



sleep under the stars and knew they were close I would fire a rifle shot before I went to sleep and I would hear them sometimes but never was bothered in the night. Only once did they come close enough to the campfire so I could see their eyes. It's kind of hard for me to believe all the wolf stories I've heard or read.

I will never forget my first wolverine. I was checking traps close to my cabin and we hadn't had any snow yet. I got to this trap with part of a squirrel in it and I thought, "Well, there's been a marten here." I reset the trap and started on my dog Judy who was trying to get up an old dead snag off a tree. Up about 30 feet was this wolverine. I had my 22 rifle so I shot it and it fell to the ground but had a lot of life left and Judy tackled it. Well I had a time getting another shot into it. It was a large, well-marked male. I sold it in Faro for a good price. There is just no feeling like being out there in the bush alone with a dog and gun and a few traps. I sure miss it.

Tin



"Well, this was my Weekend of the Tire. In 1943, I was in the RCAF and on a 48 hour pass. You couldn't buy tires during the war so you went with what you had. I'll swear these must have been originals on the 1928 Buick because I had 7 flats in that 48 hour period. A flat in '43 meant remove tire and tube, patch it then and there, reinstall and pump it up with hand pump." Doug Bell.
[See inside cover for more photos of Doug]



A Hunt to Remember

By Rick Mortimer

The Yukon is the place of dreams for people from all over the world. Every year hundreds of non-resident hunters arrive in the Yukon to fulfill their life-long yearnings—to hunt moose, caribou, sheep, and bears in the remote wilderness of the Yukon Territory. There they know they are not going to see another human being, except their guide, for the next two weeks or so.

Such was a fellow I hunted with in the fall of 2003, while guiding for Koser Outfitters of Ross River. The hunter, Les, and I packed out of the South McMillan River area and into the high country of the South Fork mountains looking for a trophy Stone sheep ram. We had seven horses in our string and amongst these were some of the tough wiry Halflinger breed. These gentle red horses are wonderful to work with and act as very good pack horses due to their calm disposition.

Les is a man with lot of hunting experience under his belt and, although obviously unfamiliar with horses, he enjoyed the two-day ride to our spike camp where we wanted to hunt sheep from for the next ten days or so. He was a great guy around camp too and liked to help with all the work involved in this kind of a trip, such as packing and unpacking the horses with gear, setting up camp, cooking, and gathering firewood. I found myself really enjoying his company as he told jokes and reminisced over his other hunts in Alaska and the lower forty-eight states.

As we rode over a mountain pass and into the valley where we intended to set up our spike camp, we found ourselves suddenly surrounded by Stone rams! They had been traversing the mountainside and, as they climbed the side hill onto a level flat to reach a different mountain peak, they crossed into the path of our small pack train and suddenly there were Stone rams running in every direction.

Quickly we dismounted and, grabbing our binoculars, searched for the full curl legal horns of a trophy ram. As we watched, they in turn stopped a couple of hundred yards away to watch us. It was an awesome sight to see nine Stone rams standing that close and simply staring back at us and our strange looking animals wrapped in canvas and pack boxes.

After carefully glassing them for what seemed like a long time, we real-

ized we were looking at a group of seven-year old rams, with none of them reaching the full curl of a trophy ram. These rams were young and probably had never before seen men and horses, so they were just as curious about us as we were of them. Les and I watched as they slowly grazed their way up the steep grassy slope and on over the top of the mountain out of our sight. It had been a real thrill to see this group and one that filled us with much hope for the hunt ahead in these last few days of August. We rode on down the other side of the pass and set up a comfortable little spike camp by a small clear lake. From this spot we could glass a huge area of mountains and lower slopes where sheep graze during the sunny days of summer.

We awoke in the morning to find our hopes of seeing any rams that day thoroughly dashed. We were totally socked in with fog and slight mountain drizzle. We could hardly even see the lake right in front of us and, if it hadn't been for the far off tinkling of horse bells, it would have been easy to believe we were all alone on planet earth. We knew we would not get any hunting in this day and so just tried to relax and do a few camp chores.

The wind picked up slightly around mid-afternoon and ever so slowly seemed to lift the clouds a few hundred feet off the lake, revealing the same group of eight rams laying up in the rocks well out of the wind on a ridge across the valley. Glass as hard as we liked, we could not see any other rams, nor make the horns 'grow' to legal size on any of these ones. An hour later the clouds dropped back down to the surface of the lake and we were once more lost in the drizzly fog.

The second morning was no better: rain and wind and fog. This can be hard to endure for two people who are so anxious to get out and about in the mountains, and entertainment is a bit short in a spike camp like this. Les couldn't sing too well and I cooked worse, so we had to resort to jokes and frequent runs to check on the horses when we found ourselves unable to sit any longer in that wet camp.

The third morning brought hope. The fog and drizzle were still with us but it now had that lighter look of thinning cloud. We decided that we should eat breakfast and bring the horses in to get saddled and ready to ride in case the clouds did lift enough for us to get out and do some glassing with our spotting scopes and binoculars. Around 2:00 PM we got our wish and the clouds started to lift. After very carefully glassing the same group of rams once more in case an older larger ram had joined them during the night, we rode on down the valley bottom towards another series of rocky ridges where I had seen rams laying up before. It sure felt good just to get moving again!

After a two-hour ride we found



The author at Yukoner Magazine International Headquarters.

an open spot in the short willows along the side of a mountain that afforded us a great view of a whole series of ridges and side-hills across the valley. We tied up our horses and, spreading a large canvas tarp on the ground, set up our spotting scopes and opened our lunches. The clouds were still hanging around the tops of the peaks and it looked like it could rain at any moment, but we were very hopeful of seeing rams on these rocky peaks or on the green grassy areas of the slopes.

Right away, in between bites of peanut butter and jam sandwiches, we started seeing sheep: two here, five there, three more on this ridge, a group of ten on that one. But they were all ewes with lambs. At least we were seeing sheep, though, and our hopes of seeing a ram climbed along with those ever-lifting clouds. It was still cold and blustery weather and sitting still wasn't helping us to stay very warm either, but at least we were out hunting. Along with seeing all these ewes and lambs we also saw many caribou and one big bull moose way off on the edge of a lake down a valley that lay between the hills we were glassing. He was pretty safe from us today though, as it would have taken a full day to ride to where he was. But it was just great to be seeing all this game and Les confirmed that this was the trip he'd been waiting for most of his hunting life. Lots of game, and good reliable horses, not to mention a well-prepared and dry camp to return to at night.

But our luck was not with us this day. Along about 7:00 PM the wind dropped and the clouds started to descend into the valley once more. The mist thickened into drops of moisture and it got mighty uncomfortable sitting there on that hillside and wiping the moisture off our spotting scopes, just so we could glass the fast disappearing hills one more time.

We agreed on giving it another ten minutes, when all at once Les announced with an excited voice: "Bear!"

I quickly pulled my eye away from my own scope and looked around me, not knowing where he was looking, but I could see he had his own eye screwed up tight to his scope and was glassing along a side hill on our right.

"Where is he?" I asked, as I swung my binoculars up. As he gave me directions to the spot he'd seen, I picked up the moving black dot in my binoculars, then switched over to my spotting scope for a better look.

"Man, that's a big old boar!" I told Les, as I watched that bear working a patch of blueberries about a mile distant and about the same elevation as us on the slope. And he was big! You could see the massive shoulders and width to his chest, along with what appeared to be a small, almost tiny head riding on that short thick neck. His bulging belly looked to be almost dragging the ground and when he turned away from us, his butt looked about two axe handles across. This was good big mountain grizzly bear, in all probability an eight footer.

Mountain grizzlies in this part of the country don't usually get much over seven or seven-and-a-half feet, so an eight-foot one is something to get excited about. These bears don't attain the size of the coastal bears because they don't have the advantage of the high protein salmon runs in their

territorial feeding area. The bears that do have these salmon runs to feed from get so much protein in their diet that their growth from all that good food can be awesome indeed. The Kodiak bears are an example of this, as are the bears of coastal B.C. and Alaska. But the average interior mountain grizzly in the Yukon, especially away from the vicinity of the Yukon River salmon spawning runs, does not attain the size and weight of his coastal cousins. These 'mountain' grizzlies live on roots, berries, vegetation and whatever they can kill successfully by themselves, along with any kills they can rob from the wolves. A big boar grizzly like this one we were looking at is also cannibalistic. He will also kill and devour any cubs he can find.

This bear was a big, prime specimen. He was almost a dark chocolate color over most of his body, with the ends of the longer guard hairs on his neck and shoulders being a beautiful light blonde to contrast the brown. His ears looked like tiny teddy-bear ears and his snout was long with loose hanging lips covering those mighty fangs.

We watched him for perhaps ten minutes to get a 'line' on his direction. He was feeding on blueberries and they were so thick that at one point he just rolled over onto his side and lay there raking berries into his huge mouth with his paws. It was quite a sight to watch!

We were planning on how to get over to him, when all at once, the clouds came down between him and us and he was obliterated from our view. In our excitement, we had forgotten the clouds, and now they were rapidly dropping to the valley floor again.



Rick Mortimer, left, with Pete Koser with the bear. September 2003.

Les and I both agreed that the only thing we could do now was to wait until tomorrow and try again, weather permitting. Hopefully the bear would stay in this valley, as there seemed to be an abundance of blueberries here to feed on.

It was a long night for both of us. We could hear the slight drizzle of rain pelting the tent during the night as we tried not to think of the size of that bear. He was huge!

Dawn found us in great shape weather-wise. The sun was trying to peek out between high thin clouds and the wind was slight but steadily blowing up the valley which helped to lift the clouds up and away from us. Once again we saw and glassed the same eight rams we'd seen so many times before. Apparently our little camp in the valley floor and the tinkling of horse bells made no difference to them at all. Perhaps they were curious still but, whatever the reason, there they lay up in the rocks staring down at us.

I wrangled the horses into camp while Les cooked up some breakfast and soon we were on our way back down the trail to the spot we glassed from the previous evening. We stopped along the way and glassed for rams, not wanting to miss any that may have moved into the area during the storm but, once again, all we saw were Stone ewes. Finally, we reached our spot of the night before and quickly got out our binoculars. Yes! The bear was still in the valley and feeding once again on blueberries. He'd moved about a quarter mile farther down the valley but he was still on our side of it. The willows were fairly thick in the valley floor but there were many open areas where the blueberries grew thick and plentiful and he was feeding in one of these openings, which was perhaps a mile away from where we were now standing. Once again, we both marveled at the size of this animal as he flipped rocks away like tennis balls and his massive paws raked branches laden with berries into his blue-stained mouth.



The Pelly Mountains. [Richard Harrington photo]

As we watched, we noticed he was feeding towards the bottom of the slope on our right. There was a spot, about 150 to 200 yards above where he appeared to be slowly heading as he fed on the berries. We figured that if we could get to that spot and its small, rocky outcropping before the bear got there then we would have a chance at getting him.

Quickly, we mounted up and headed off down the valley. Carefully, we watched for the spot we had seen. It would be a marker for us to turn up the side hill toward a stand of small wind-bent spruce trees where we could tie the horses. From there we would go on foot toward the rocks which would put us within shooting range of the bear.

We were both pretty excited by now, as this was no ordinary bear but a full-sized, mature mountain grizzly bear. Every once in a while on our stalk we would 'peep' over the edge of the small ridge we were behind and make sure he was still there. Finally, we got to the rocks we had observed from so far away and found, indeed, that if the bear kept feeding the direction he was going he would be about 150 yards below us when he arrived at the slope of the side hill.

But it was not to be. Surrounded as he was on three sides he was unapproachable from those directions. It would have been just too noisy to try and stalk him through that mess of willows and we did not want to chance the shifting wind giving us away. So we sat and watched him feeding about 350 yards away—just too far to shoot a grizzly bear!

Slowly, ever so slowly, the bear kept feeding in our direction and shortening the distance: 325...300...275.... Getting there. Coming ever closer. Then, suddenly he turned and started feeding back in the direction he came from! I looked at Les right then and I've never seen such a look of disappointment on anyone's face. He knew, as I did, that bear was going to keep going in the wrong direction. And it did. He fed back until he was once again almost 400 yards away, then all at once he bolted for the hill across the valley and he was gone.

I don't know if he got a puff of our scent or just what prompted him, but he crossed the little creek across that valley and hit the side hill full out running. The last we saw of him was when, about half an hour later, we spied him going over the top of the mountain and heading for parts on the other side.

Two very disappointed hunters rode back to our little spike camp that night. It was fairly late in the afternoon and, although we did glass for rams going back to camp, we never saw anything other than two wolves that were running along the sheep trails where the eight rams had been earlier. They were gone now also.

That night we cooked our meager supper and talked about what to do with the time we had left. We were not seeing any legal rams in this area for some reason and 'our' bear had left also. We still had a two-day ride to get to base camp, which left us one day to hunt. Talking it over, we thought the best plan would be to head into base camp the next day and use the last day of hunting to float the McMillan River by boat and see if we couldn't find a good moose for Les.

So that's what we did. After a beautiful two-day ride in wonderful sunny weather we arrived back in base camp late in the afternoon. We talked to Peter Koser about the river trip the next day and he told us that he had been seeing moose along the river and our odds would be good of finding a good bull. He volunteered to come along and help with the work if we did get a bull. That was nice to hear! Those big animals are a lot of work to get back to camp.

So the next morning away we went downriver in Peter's 18-foot, flat-bottom riverboat. The Macmillan rolls along pretty fast and it didn't take us too long to cover four or five miles downstream. We stopped at a couple of likely looking backwater sloughs and looked for moose, but we saw no bulls. We did see a couple of cows though, so our hopes were up. I really wanted to see Les go home with a good trophy animal of some kind, even if it was not a beautiful Stone ram.

Along we drifted and I could see the backs of the mountains Les and I had just come from. They stoop up sharp and clear against the blue sky and you could easily imagine the rams walking around on those peaks!

I had my binoculars in my hand and my rifle lying by my knees as we rounded another curve in this windy river. Suddenly I saw something move in the willows on the left bank about 200 yards downriver.

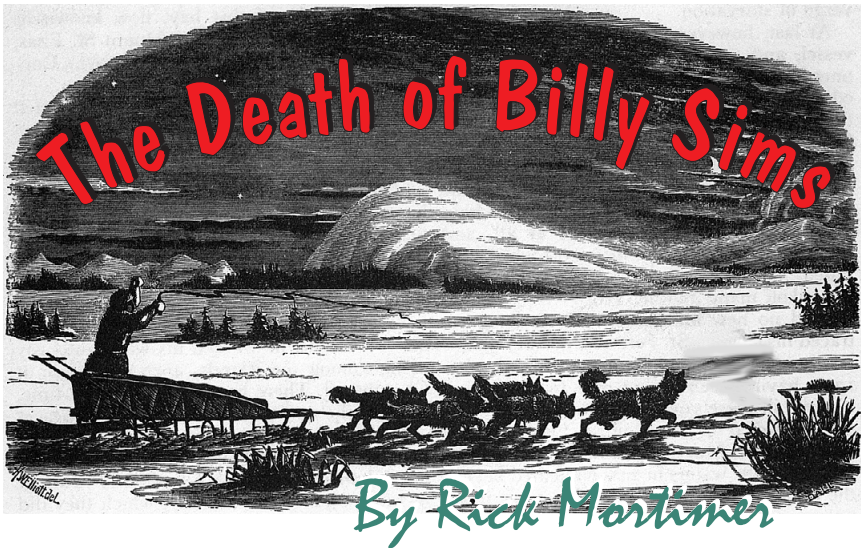
"Bear!" I loudly whispered just as Peter and Les both said something similar. Les lay across the bow of the boat with his rifle ready and Peter and I scrunched down as best we could. Peter steered the boat for the beaver house that the bear was tearing apart and quickly the gap closed between the boat and the bear.

The bear had not seen us, as he was so engrossed in tearing into that beaver house. Forty yards, thirty, twenty, BOOM! At the sound of the shot, the bear dropped and lay perfectly still. Only one paw was moving as a nerve twitched. Les fired once more to be sure that the bear was dead.

As we carefully approached him we could see the blonde color of the guard hairs on his neck and shoulders. Les looked at me, and we both realized at the same time that this was the same bear that had eluded us but two days before. Talk about a second chance! The mountains we had just come from and which this bear had crossed made a perfect backdrop to where we now stood admiring him.

He was a good eight-foot Yukon grizzly bear and his claws and teeth were in very good condition. He had many scars across his nose and one lip had been split at one time and healed. He was no doubt the dominant boar in this area!

Quickly we set to work taking pictures, then began skinning. What a wonderful way for Les to end his Yukon hunt. We didn't get a ram, that's for sure, but we did get a second-chance grizzly bear!



"Vengeance is Mine!" saith the Lord, but I knew I could never comply
 So I chased the man called Billy Sims to the edge of the Arctic sky.
 From far out on the prairies, to the rim of perpetual ice
 I tracked the wretch who'd stolen the heart, of my young and beautiful wife.

For a year I had trailed this murderous wretch, a year where I suffered and bled
 Knowing I'd follow his thieving hide, no matter where his trail led.
 From ninety above, to sixty below, I stayed on the wandering track
 Of Billy Sims, and the hate was so strong, I knew I could never turn back.

From my beautiful farm to the edge of hell, he raced in heedless flight
 Trying to run from the crimes he'd done, that violent sin filled night.
 The tracks had led from my homestead bed, to the edge of the Arctic ice,
 Not Billy's alone that staggered on, but also those of my wife.

By the fire at night, I sat alone and stared into the leaping flames
 Exhausted in body and mindless of all but the sound of his thieving name.
 "Billy Sims, Billy Sims" was all I could hear o'er the sound of the frozen
 wind
 And his death was all that I dreamed of— and the way I would do him in.

Through endless miles of lonely trail, in a land that seemed frozen and dead
 I cared nothing for the endless pain but thought of revenge instead.
 At night as I lay in my goose-down, and the ice of the river cracked
 I saw in my mind the bloody end of the perfidious pair I tracked.

In front of me they ran for their lives, and the tracks told me the tale
Of a thieving man, and a woman who ran, to live with him on the trail.
A tale as old as hell itself, of love betrayed and spurned
And I followed on, each frozen dawn, while the need for vengeance burned.

The tundra was endless -a frozen waste, and the air was thick with frost
The nights were as black as the thoughts I held, but I cared not what the
cost

I'd find this pair and in despair he'd gasp out his last breath.
This Billy Simms who'd stolen my life, and left me close to death.

And often my mind returned to my farm, and all that I once held dear.
A life of love and happiness far south on the western frontier
Where we'd carved a life in the prairie's sod, my beautiful wife and I
And now she'd run off with Billy Simms, after leaving me there to die.

And while I followed that endless trail, I dreamed of how it would end
I'd find their camp and walk right up and shoot him again and again.
I dreamed of the look in his thieving eyes as he saw me raise my gun
And my lips would curl in a frozen snarl, and I'd whip my dogs to a run.

Week after week, and month after month, I followed the trail ahead
"Til it became the center of my life, and I cared not where it led.
Winding down the frozen rivers, climbing the mountain crests
I knew only the heat of my revenge, and cared nothing of food or rest.

And then one day as I pushed the sleigh up a ridge, then started down
I notice a haze in the distant sky, and the lights of a little town.
I whipped the dogs 'til they cried and whined; Billy's tracks led arrow straight
Right into that frozen hamlet, and up to the Mountie's gate.

"Where is that thieving yellow dog!" I yelled as I pushed inside
"I aim to blow his brains out, and nail up his yellow hide!"
It was gloomy in that little room, and awful hard to see
But I heard the click of a scattergun and I saw it was aimed at me.

The Mountie stood with his back to the wall, a shotgun in his hand
His red surge suit was cleaned and pressed, his face was leather tanned.
He stood six-four, and he blocked the door that led to the only cell
And from the gloom in that other room came Billy's terrified yell...

"Shoot him! Shoot him" Billy cried, "I'm telling you that's him!
"He's the guy who's dogged my trail! Now he's trying to do me in!
"My wife and I don't know the guy! I fear he's quite insane!
"He's put us both through hell and back! So shoot him! Then shoot him
again!"

The Mountie's shotgun never moved, his eyes stayed upon my face
 "Now perhaps you'll want to tell me friend, what's your part in this race?"
 "But first you'd better carefully, set your rifle on the floor
 "Or this scattergun will send you backwards through that entry door."

All I could think of at the time were the months I'd tracked them down
 Of endless miles through frozen waste, which led finally to this town.
 The months of lonely campfires, the winter's deadly chill
 The endless burning for revenge on this man I'd come to kill.

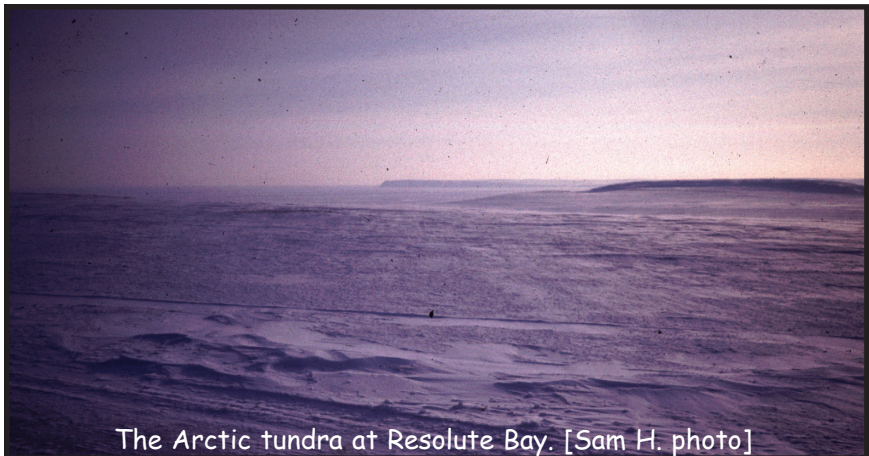
"The man you have inside your jail is a liar through and through
 He tried to kill me, stole my wife, then stole my lead-dog too!
 He's nothing but a scoundrel whom I've tracked through every turn
 Now if you'll kindly step aside, I'll see the scoundrel Burn!"

"No! don't let him near me!" Billy hollered, petrified.
 "He's mad! I tell you! Gone quite mad! Don't let him here inside!
 I don't know why this man pursues me, and wants to take my life
 But if he'll agree, instead of me, he can have back his little wife!"

The Mountie kind of blinked at that, but still he blocked the door
 Then from the cell room came a thud as something hit the floor
 Who would have thought... that gentle gal... Why, bless the little tart!
 She'd taken out her penknife and stabbed Billy through the heart.

Now all that happened years ago, but the memory never dims
 And I often sit and wonder 'bout the death of Billy Simms.
 And I often wonder how it was, that Billy never learned
 That you cannot trust a woman scorned, when 'ere your back is turned!

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The Arctic tundra at Resolute Bay. [Sam H. photo]



The Parrot Who Made Carcross Famous

By Sam Holloway

Thanks to Archie Satterfield (author of "After the Goldrush" and other books) for much of the information in this story.

A few days ago, I drove to Carcross, on the trail of a long dead bird.

The Caribou Hotel restaurant where the famous bird once lived is closed now. The present owner of the hotel is an unfriendly sort so I knew there was no information there. However, a gentleman named Herb was sitting in the bar and said he heard there was a photo of the parrot hanging on the wall in someone's cabin.

With some vague directions, I stumbled onto the right place where a First Nations fellow by the name of George lived. Sure enough, there was the photo, nicely framed, on George's wall. He kindly let me scan it there and then, but he couldn't recall how he got the picture in the first place.

Then I went to the Carcross graveyard, where famous Yukoners like Skookum Jim, Kate Carmacks, Tagish Charlie, Johnny Johns, and many others are buried. Just inside the gate I found the parrot's grave and headstone, all engraved with brass lettering.

Polly the Parrot was born in 1850 and died in 1972. Although well known in the Yukon, Polly didn't become famous until just before he/she died in November of that year.

It happened that in 1972 an unknown reporter by the name of Dennis Bell had been sent to the Yukon on a "godforsaken assignment to Carcross." Dennis had a few beers in the Caribou hotel and discovered the parrot in the restaurant next door.

When he got back to Vancouver, Bell wrote a story that won him a Canadian Press award for story of the year. The article sped around the world by wire service and was reprinted so often that the little town where noth-

ing ever happened (and still doesn't) became a household word. Dennis Bell's story went like this:

Parrot Reformed but Hates Everyone

By Dennis Bell

The world famous Carcross Parrot is probably the oldest, meanest, ugliest, dirtiest bird north of the 60th parallel—but he remains as this Yukon community's one claim to international fame.

He hates everybody. Which is understandable, because the damned old buzzard has resided within spitting distance of a beer parlour since 1919 and has had to endure 64 years of beer fumes, drunks who mash soggy crackers through the bars of his cage, and phantom feather pluckers.

The Carcross Parrot seems to have been in the Yukon ever since the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898. He is at least 125 years old and has lived in the Caribou Hotel since 1919. He has survived a fire that flattened the premises, fall frost and ferocious winter blizzards and has outlived everyone who ever owned the tiny 22-room hotel. And that's quite a few people.

The Carcross Parrot gets fan mail. People from as far away as California have heard about him and some have travelled all the way to the Yukon after hearing about him from parents and grandparents.



The Caribou Hotel in 2001. The tavern door is on the right. A ghost, which was actually captured on film, inhabits the upper floors. [S.H. photo]

Bird of Ill Repute

Time was when the Carcross Parrot had a reputation as one of the most formidable drinkers in the North. Tipsy miners used to stagger out of the adjoining beer parlour and slip him a short beer or a scotch neat.

"The parrot used to be quite a drunk," said Dorothy Hopcott, who has owned the hotel since 1959. "People would come in and give him a few belts. He'd get so drunk he'd fall off his perch and lie on the bottom of the cage with his feet sticking in the air."

But the parrot got religion. A few owners ago, the hotel was run by a man of piety who toned down the Carcross Parrot's purple prose and cut off his booze ration. According to the locals, the former owner patiently taught the bird several choruses of Onward Christian Soldier and eventually eliminated the somewhat racy sea chanties from his repertoire.

There's nothing worse than a reformed drunk, so the saying goes, and the Carcross Parrot is no exception. Somewhere in the dark recesses of his tiny brain, the Parrot associates all adults with his days of ribaldry.

Squawks at Guests

Nowadays, anyone who comes out of the little six-table pub gets squawked at. Then he turns sullen. Won't say a word. Polly want a cracker?

"Go to hell," is the Parrot's stock answer.

"He can't stand drunks," sighed Mrs. Hopcott. "He can smell beer



Dorothy McLennan told me that someone in Carcross had this photo. Thanks to George for letting me copy it. S.H.

fumes and he gets mad.”

The Parrot's disposition changes abruptly whenever children are nearby. Somehow he's figured out that kids don't drink. On Sunday mornings when the pub is closed and the restaurant is open, he likes to strike up long involved conversations with children which make absolutely no sense at all.

“He gets down in the corner of his cage and mumbles away to himself,” said Mrs. Hopcott. “A lot of the time we can't understand him. He's picked up a lot of strange words and strange accents over the years.”

Nobody is too sure how the bird got to the Yukon, but the first recorded owner was a Captain Alexander, who operated the Engineer Mine near here during the First World War.

The good captain and his lady left the Parrot at the hotel to make a trip to Vancouver in the winter of 1918. They went down with the Princess Sophia, a CPR steamship that sank in the Lynn Canal off Skagway, Alaska, with the loss of all aboard.

The Parrot has lived in the hotel ever since. [end of article]

When this story came out in newspapers all over the world, reporters were told to get ready for a trip to the Yukon. This parrot was too good to be true. And then the bosses at Canadian Press got thinking, ‘too good to be true?’ Darn that Dennis Bell, he probably made the whole thing up. What if television crews flew all way to Whitehorse, drove over the dusty, winding road to Carcross 50 miles away, and found no parrot?



In the foreground is the little steam engine, The Duchess, which once hauled passengers over the shortest railway in the world, from Tagish Lake to Atlin Lake. The paddlewheeler Tutshi in the background was destroyed by fire since this photo was taken in 1976. [S.H. photo]



Polly the Parrot's grave marker at the Pioneer Cemetery in Carcross.



Yukon writer Darrell Hookey at his "Caps & T's" store, behind the hotel in Carcross. [S.H. photo, 2003]

Even today old journalists think the whole thing was a hoax.

Then, in November of 1972, the parrot died. Dennis Bell got wind of it and wrote that “the world famous Carcross Parrot, the meanest, dirtiest bird north of the 60th parallel, has chomped his last cracker” and that the bird was found deceased, drumsticks up, after having survived the ferocious northern blizzards, fire and the dregs of the Klondike Gold Rush.

Dorothy Hopcott (now Dorothy McLennan), owner of the hotel at the time, always maintained that the bird never did get religion. When it died, she planned to stuff Polly in a freezer until the ground thawed in the spring for a proper burial.

But when the word got out, people everywhere demanded a real funeral right away. The Yukon government granted a special dispensation to bury the parrot in the Pioneer Cemetery at Carcross.

A funeral train loaded with dignitaries rode out from Whitehorse on the White Pass railway. Johnny Johns, the famous hunting guide, performed the eulogy and sang some verses of “I Love You Truly,” while beating on a skin drum.

With the service over, almost the entire population of Carcross, folks from all over the Yukon and elsewhere, went to the Caribou Hotel for drinks—many, many drinks.

Dorothy Hopcott received many letters, calls of condolences and offers of more parrots. She eventually tried one by the name of “O’Hara” but none could match old Polly for character.

No one ever knew for sure if Polly the Parrot was male or female, but they did discover that it had come over the Chilkoot Pass in 1898 and had belonged to an Italian barber in Vancouver before that.

The Caribou Hotel still stands in Carcross, in a very dissipated state. Because it is one of the oldest structures in the Yukon, the government hesitates to condemn it outright. To retrofit the building would be an impossibly expensive project. The present owner has only been able to keep the restaurant and bar open for brief periods before a personality conflict brings the whole thing to its knees. Could it be that Polly’s spirit has reincarnated and is now running the hotel?

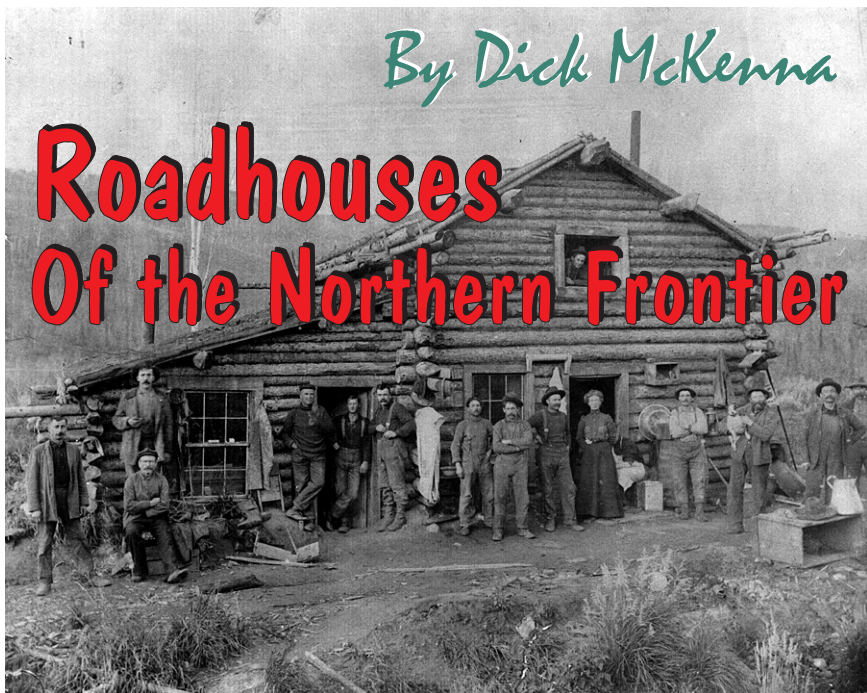
And Carcross looks about the same as always, minus the Tutshi, with its best remembered resident being a cranky old parrot. A very successful caribou recovery program in the area has resulted in caribou crossing the roads all around the little town, reminding us of the original name, Caribou Crossing.



Dorothy Hopcott (McLennan)
with the famous parrot.
[photo by Norm Poole]

By Dick McKenna

Roadhouses Of the Northern Frontier



Roadhouse: An inn, outside city limits providing liquor, usually meals, dancing and often gambling. —Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.

The first roadhouses came into being in medieval England when roads were first built branching out from London to the countryside and distance travel became more usual among the common people. The roadhouses on the northern frontier

were very similar to the medieval “inns.” Both served the basic needs of travellers for food, lodging, and a place to rest their horses, or, in the north, their dog teams.

Near the northern centres of Dawson City, Fairbanks, Nome and Whitehorse, where there were ladies and miners who welcomed the chance to fatten their pokes, these establishments provided entertainment in the form of liquor, dancing and gambling. Because the premises stood outside city limits and were, therefore, exempt from the \$1,000 per year liquor licence fee, the wily proprietor of such an establishment could make a bundle.

Nonetheless, many a road house proprietor supplemented his income by prospecting, cutting wood or farming. Often the establishment doubled as a general store, post office, trading post, telegraph station or community hall. Roadhouses were not only an integral part of the transportation infrastructure of the north, but of the social infrastructure as well. Memoirs of our northern pioneers often include fond and nostalgic memories of the roadhouse.

By 1920 there were roadhouses along all major transportation routes in Alaska. Northern researcher and writer Murray Lundberg estimates that there were probably over 1,000 roadhouses located in Alaska and Yukon before World War I. Whenever a new road was built, a road house would soon appear.

Until the 1950s, rivers were the highways of the north. People travelled by steamboat, raft or launch in summer or by walking or driving a team of dogs or horses over the frozen surface during the winter. After 1912, more automobiles started showing up on the rural roads; after 1918 there were cat trains. All these travellers were potential patrons of the road house operator.

The Valdez - Fairbanks Trail

In the winter of 1906, Alaska pioneer John Clark undertook a rather daring (some would say insane) bicycle excursion between Valdez and Fairbanks, Alaska. The 350-mile journey took 15 days. Slinging their cycles on their backs and scaling mountains through waist deep snow in a whiteout, or peddling down the frozen surface of the Copper River against a mean head wind, or slogging through 14 inches of overflow, the party endured the most brutal weather conditions. A roadhouse, no matter how rudimentary an outfit, could mean the difference between life and death.

Clark said later that he would never forget the tent roadhouse at the summit of Thompson Pass. "When the top of the pass was reached, we experienced the full fury of the storm driving in from the hundreds of miles of bleak mountain ranges extending for apparently immeasurable distance to the west. The roadhouse had been built within a few hundred feet of the summit at the extreme tip of a funnel shaped basin."

When Clark entered the roadhouse he found 20 or so men seated around a table that extended down the length of the room. "My travelling companions were doing their best to eat everything in sight and the proprietor took one look at me and laid another plate, pulled up a box for a chair and told me to sit down. He placed before me a great deep tin bowl holding about a quart of red-hot tomato soup. I needed no further instruction as to the proper roadhouse etiquette under such circumstances. Frozen stiff lips did not affect my ability to wield an active and wicked spoon.

The next move of the proprietor was to take a pint tin cup, fill it halfway full of scalding coffee and cool it with an equal amount of well seasoned Bourbon whiskey." Clark was then served a heaping dish of Irish stew before the proprietor led him down two flights of ladders and to a sub-basement where he slept.

The summit roadhouse illustrates ingenuity and the ability of northerners to use what is at hand. Up to 50 feet of snow per season could accumulate in the cranny where the roadhouse was built. Because lumber was scarce, its use was kept to a minimum. The roadhouse was constructed

in the fall in anticipation of hoards of travellers that were expected to pass through during the winter.

A floor of rough lumber was laid down. Boards extending about seven feet upwards furnished the walls, and a 12- by 16-foot tent was placed over top. The structure was then firmly anchored to the rocks with ropes. With the addition of a crude stove, a few dishes, and a rough table, it was open for business. Provisions were hauled up as needed and the packing crates served fine as chairs and shelving.

Once the winter winds started, the snow was piled up around the walls and the proprietor commenced his daily duty of clearing a path to the door. In a matter of a few weeks, the entire structure was buried. The proprietor simply pulled up the tent, constructed another 12- by 16-foot platform on top of the original structure and again set up the tent in the same manner, linking the lower level with a seven-foot ladder through a square cut in the floor. When Clark was there, the structure had three levels and the proprietor assured him that there were "excellent prospects" to move up another level before spring.

According to Clark, the roadhouses along the Valdez trail were generally crude affairs. Meals ranged in price from \$1.50 to as much as \$3 and beds were usually \$2. Clark stressed that the word bed was a misnomer. "They were only bunks built against the wall, usually in tiers of two or four depending on how high the walls were. The bunks were constructed of round spruce poles and the mattress and springs were the same material".

Food ranged from down right rude to a veritable feast. Clark recalled one roadhouse on the Gakona River, where he dined "sumptuously on a stew made of ptarmigan bones, water and a little flour." At another, the Ernestine Roadhouse, ham, cold-storage eggs, sourdough bread, Lubbock potatoes, and canned butter at \$3 per plate, was living luxury. However, the party made sure to "keep clear of the kitchen part of the establishment as the reputation of the roadhouse had reached us before we had reached the roadhouse."

Another Alaska pioneer, Judge Wickersham, extensively travelled the trails and roads conducting court circuits, observed the following culinary procedure at the Nigger Bill Roadhouse: "At 5 o'clock in the morning the chef woke me up when he lighted the Yukon stove. With half-closed eyes I watched him mix the dough for biscuits. Balancing it in his hands he expertly mixed and kneaded it until by accident, he dropped the whole mass upon the gravel floor, which was carpeted with evergreen needles and dirt. Hastily recovering it, he brushed off as much dirt as he could without too much labour, picked out most of the needles, and then quickly turned it inwards to conceal the soiled parts". Although Wickersham insisted he was particularly fond of biscuits for breakfast, that particular morning his morning meal consisted solely of lamb chops and coffee.

During particularly active seasons, many of the roadhouses were filled to capacity and beyond. Some designed to house 25 travellers were crammed with over 50. At one establishment for the sum of \$2 Clark rented a blanket

“And part of the contract was the privilege of trying to find a place to lie down”.

Most of the roadhouses along the trail consisted of one big room, which served for cooking, dining and sleeping quarters. Some would have a lean-to built off the side, which served as a kitchen, and others of more substance, had wings attached to the main room and built as needed to accommodate the increasing number of travellers.

Present at all such establishments though, and located in the main room was an “Yukon” wood stove made of a used oil barrel. And above the stove near the roof would be a rack made of poles or wire from which would hang wet socks, soaked shoes, shoe pacs, moccasins, and additional soggy garments belonging to the patrons. For ventilation there was usually a small, 4- inch square aperture in the ceiling near the stovepipe. This was supposed to provide all the air circulation needed for the place.

As Clark noted, “It’s not a matter of wonder that a traveller was always ready to start off the next morning, regardless of what reports he had received as to the trail ahead!”

Referring to proper roadhouse etiquette, Clark had this to say: “A musher would come in, find a box or log or whatever was used for chairs, sit down and remove his wet foot gear, hang it on the rack and, after skirmishing around in his “war bag,” find dry foot gear, his pipe, matches, etc. When his pipe was started, he might then condescend to speak to whoever might be in the roadhouse. I have seen hundreds of men come into roadhouses



On the Kluane Trail: The Bear Creek Roadhouse, which was the exchange point from autos to horse & wagon for passengers travelling to points past Kluane Lake.

The man leaning against the automobile fender is Frank Harbottle. The woman is Lillian Harbottle. Frank owned a small transportation line from Whitehorse to Kluane Lake. [Yukon Archives photo, Harbottle collection]

and follow out the above ritual before speaking a word, and while so engaged no one would speak to them. Each man's business was his own and unless he chose to take others into his confidence, he was strictly let alone".

According to Judge Wickersham: "When the mail-team reaches the roadhouse at the end of the days run, the driver unhitches the team and turns all dogs loose to rustle for themselves except the leader. The leader, his parka, gloves and whip, he brings into the road house: puts the leader under his bunk, hangs his garments on the best wires around the stovepipe-and woe unto him that complains about the leader under the bunk!" In fact, under U.S. law, the mail-team and driver were given absolute right of way on the trail and in the roadhouses. - "He is given the best seat at the table, the first service of hot cakes for breakfast, and the best bunk at night".

Most roadhouses, had accommodation for both dog teams and horses. Hay and oats would often be available for the horses, and perhaps frozen salmon for the dogs. More often than not, however, the feed for the dogs would be the responsibility of the driver.

At times the proprietor would take care of the maintenance of the road nearby the roadhouse. At one such establishment on the Copper River the proprietor displayed another act of northern ingenuity. "The roadhouse keeper kept the trail scraped for about 15 miles south of his place after each fall of fresh snow. As he had no scraper, he used a dead horse for that purpose. Even though the horse was thoroughly frozen, it was pretty well worn out before spring".

The following is a list of roadhouses on the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail and the mileage from Valdez (1906).

Valdez	0
Camp Comfort Road House	10
Keystone	13
Wortman's Road House	20
Eureka Road House	30
Ptarmigan Drop Road House	31
Beaver Dam Road House	40
Tiekal Road House	48
Ernestine Road House	58
Tonsina Road House	77
Willow Creek Road House	89
Copper Centre Post Office & Hotel	103
Tazlina Road House	110
Gulkana Road House	128
Gakona Road House	132
Hart's Road House	152
Gillespie's Road House	159
McMullen's Road House	183
Timberline Road House	192
Yost's Road House	208

McKinley Road House	215
Rapids Road House	225
Nigger Bill's Road House	250
Bennett's Road House	252
Joe Henry's Road House	272
Chena Slough Road House	300
Dolan's Road House	333
Murray's Road House	342
Fairbanks	350

Today, two of these roadhouses are still in business: The Gakona and The Copper Centre, are now designated as lodges.

The Whitehorse - Dawson Road

The *White Horse Star* of January 1901 lists 51 places along the route where between one and three roadhouses were established to serve the travelling public. Luckily, there was a choice at some of these stops as to which type of establishment a traveller would patronise. For instance, at Upper Laberge was located The Upper Laberge Hotel, the Lake Laberge Hotel and the Palace Roadhouse. All were roadhouses. Several years later, however, there were less than 25 roadhouses along the same route. Murray Lundberg says that the average roadhouse in the north survived as a business for two years. Many burned down, as roadhouses, although being a safe haven from the elements, were also notorious firetraps. Consequently, in 1907 the territorial government required all roadhouses to be equipped with an adequate fire escape. More often than not, operators complied with this requirement in true frontier spirit - a rope hung out of a window.

By 1902 the Whitehorse-Dawson Road, or the Overland Trail as it came to be known, was shortened by 39 miles. Instead of striking east to Lake Laberge from Takhini Crossing, it struck north up the Little River to Breaburn and then over the divide, down the Nordenskjold River and to Carmacks. In years following, the road between Carmacks and Dawson would again be re-routed several times as mining activity in an area became more or less active. These events obviously put many roadhouses out of business, while new ones opened for business.

Also, from the main road, branch roads and trails were built leading to gold diggings located further inland with at least one roadhouse being located at the point of departure. Selwyn, Coffee Creek, Kirkman's, Thistle, and Stewart River are some. Coffee Creek, for instance was a sizeable community during the Chisana Alaska Gold Rush of 1916 when the government constructed a road from there to those diggings.

The White Pass & Yukon Route was not only contracted to build and maintain the Whitehorse - Dawson road, but won the lucrative Royal Mail contract from the Territorial Government as well. Also, since the company was in the transportation business, it ran regular tri-weekly stage lines on the route between the years 1902 and 1914.

It is no wonder then, that the YP&YR also owned some of the best roadhouses along the route. YP&YR either owned or held contracts with 14 roadhouses along this route. These roadhouses were spaced from ten to 20 miles apart and, along with the usual facilities all had good stables, high protein feed and a fresh change of horses. With these efficiencies, the trip could be made in as little as five days, but, in cases of severe weather, the trip could take as much as 14 gruelling, endurance-testing days—. for horse, driver and passenger.

The company provided each passenger with a heated brick as a foot warmer and a buffalo robe to huddle under in the open sleigh affair. Still, many passengers found the long journey extremely trying to say the least. Laura Berton, who travelled the route several times in the early days related this: "It was not a comfortable trip. The seats had hardly any backs and we had not been out long before I became unpleasantly conscious of my neck. It just wouldn't hold up my wobbling head. With no support from the seat I tried tying a scarf over my head. It was no use".

As for the roadhouses, Berton described the typical one: "In one general room stood the familiar giant heater around which was built an iron rack on which we hung our wet gauntlets, scarves and coats. Beside this was a long table absolutely jammed with hot food - roast moose, caribou,



This is the 16-mile Roadhouse, which could have been 16 miles from Dawson, Valdez, Whitehorse, etc. Note the dirt floor and socks hanging from the rafter. [Yukon Archives photo, VPL collection]

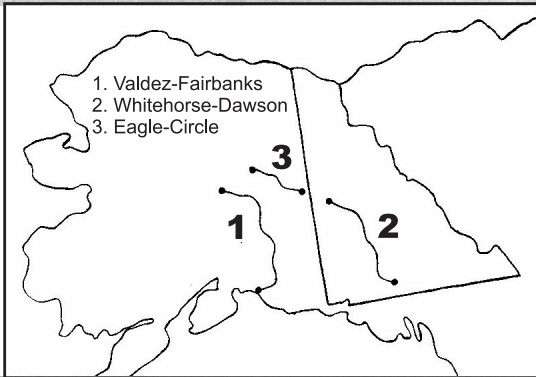
mountain sheep, native blueberry pie and huge dishes of baked beans. As I was travelling alone I was allotted a tiny cubicle with a bed to myself. The single men slept in bunks, which in the smaller posts were all in the main room”.

W.A. Puckett, staker of the Anaconda Copper Mine in the Whitehorse Copper Belt, owned a total of four roadhouses along the route and was referred to locally as the “Roadhouse Magnate”. Puckett’s roadhouses had a reputation for being clean, well stocked and commodious. Two of these were the Tahkheena Roadhouse located at Takhini Crossing and the Little River Roadhouse located about 12 miles to the north. The latter was managed by



The roadhouse on Last Chance Creek, near Dawson, in 1899. [Yukon Archives photo by Asahel Curtis].
(This creek is where the Yukoner Magazine gold nuggets have been mined.)





Ole Dickson, staker of the Rabbits' Foot Copper Mine and Puckett's partner in these copper properties. Puckett discovered and staked the Takhini Hot Springs, which today is a year-round outdoor swimming pool.

North of the Little River Roadhouse came the Kynocks Roadhouse, the Breaburn Roadhouse and the Montague Roadhouse. The latter two were operated (1907) by Archie McLennan and R.H. McDonald respectively. Next came the Tantalus Roadhouse (Seymour Rowlinson) and then McKay's Roadhouse at Yukon Crossing where the road crossed the river. Here, a cable ferry was used to shuttle the stages across the river during the summer months.

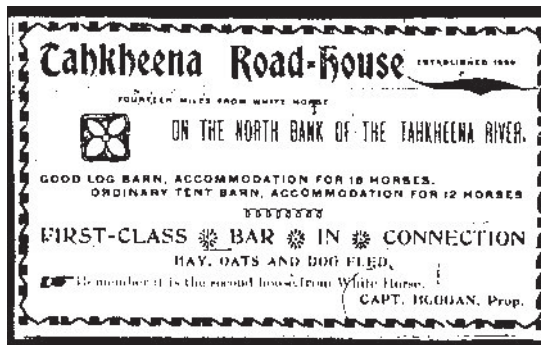
The Tahkheena Roadhouse was probably one of the best along the route. It was built in 1899 and survived well into the second decade of the 1900's. One reason for this survival was due to the fine service it provided, and another was its location, being located at a crossroads. From it, one road struck north to Dawson, another south to Whitehorse, another east to Laberge and a fourth headed west to the new gold diggings at Kluane and Burwash Creeks.

The Tahkheena Roadhouse had facilities to house 30 horses, dog kennels, good hay and oats, and dog feed. It also boasted a fully-stocked bar and a ballroom. Puckett had a reputation for throwing good parties, either at his Tahkeena roadhouse or at his Anaconda Mine mess house. Puckett also provided free transportation to and from Whitehorse in one of his "Tin Lizzie's," as Puckett also owned the Ford dealership in town.

Perhaps one of the most substantial roadhouses on the route was the Stewart City Hotel on Stewart Island, located at the mouth of the Stewart River. Owned by a Mr. and Mrs. Shand, it was referred to locally as Ma Shand's Road House. Ma Shand came to the Yukon from Scotland in '97 and brought with her a heavy Celtic accent.

Built of logs, the Stewart City Hotel had a total of seven rooms downstairs, five rooms and a bunk room upstairs, as well as a cabin attached to the side which served as the Shand's residence. A local resident described the interior: "Hudson's Bay blankets did duty for a carpet, skins of various animals served as rugs, and the walls were adorned with heads and rifles." Connected to it were the Stewart City Store and the "Dead shot saloon", renowned for it's poker, wild parties and fights.

Another roadhouse was located on the Island and run by a Mr. and Mrs. Smythe. Apparently, the Smythes and the Shands were never "fond" of each other. This condition was made worse when the Shands bid \$22.50 to handle the mail and thus secured the contract that had pre-



viciously been handled by the Smythes for \$45. This was obviously an act of spite as the low bid made the venture extremely unprofitable. Moreover, Emma Smythe, who was apparently of a slightly more wholesome breed, absolutely detested the goings-on in the saloon and voiced her opinion openly and freely and to anyone who would listen. Finally, in 1913 the Mounties did listen and set up a post on the island to keep order.

In 1935 the Shands' roadhouse and store were taken over by a Mr. and Mrs. W.E. Bramford. G.S.C. Geologist Hugh Bostock often visited the establishment and later recalled the "unusual number of characters" that frequented the place, "of which Dick Gooding was probably the most interesting."

Gooding, the telegraph operator, was an Englishman and although much liked and respected he was a devout communist who loved to argue. When not at work, he often crossed the river on the ice "to join the group that gathered at the saloon at the roadhouse where they talked the long winter evenings away. One winter night after Gooding had put on his pack to cross the Yukon, the others conspired to see how long they could keep him there talking. He walked back and forth in the saloon talking with quite a heavy pack on his back for about two hours before he finally left to cross the river".

Another evening Gooding was "expounding the stupidity of having a Royal Family in England and what a useless bunch Royalty were. An American in the group took this as an appropriate time to join in and began running down the Royal Family. Gooding jumped up and knocked him down saying, "I'll say what I like about the Royal Family but I'm not going to have an American run down my Royal Family. What does he know? He hasn't even got one".

Roadhouses located between Whitehorse and Dawson and their mileage from Whitehorse (1901).

Whitehorse	0
Seven Mile Tent	7
Tahkheena	14
Upper Laberge	27
New Island Roadhouse	36
Middle Laberge	42
Lower Laberge	57
Midway	67
Chico	79
53 Roadhouse	91
Montague	99
Robertson's	113
Model Roadhouse	124
Carmack's	125
Miller's	133

Wilson's	135
MacKay's	145
Aurora No. 5	153
Hootchikoo	159
Minto	169
Patterson	176
Meat Cache	182
Eldorado Steamboat	185
Selkirk	193
Tent	202
Capt. Whalen's	208
Ritchie Island	216
A.B.C.	222
Selwyn	227
Ritchie's	226
Sleepy Hollow	242
Big Four	245
Clark's Roadhouse	256
Island Post	258
Coffee Creek	262
Tulare	265
Kirkman's	270
Thistle	278
White River	285
Stewart River	298
Nine Mile House	312
Mrs. Burn's	313
Ogilvie	321
Log Cabin	329
Reindeer	334
Lansdowne	340
Indian River	341
Ainslee	352
Cozy	354
Twelve Mile House	357
Dawson	369

Eagle - Circle Winter Trail

In the early 1900's there were no less than 12 roadhouses located along the river route between Eagle and Circle Alaska. Being in an area rich in gold, many served as a drop off and supply point for the gold fields located further inland. Each proprietor competed for his share of the business. To

entice travellers to patronise his establishment, the keeper of the Nation City Roadhouse was said to have on display a 50- ounce jar of course gold nuggets local creeks.

Frank Slaven's Place, just down river from the mouth of Coal Creek, was built in 1932 and was until the late 1950's used extensively by companies mining both coal and gold in the vicinity. Slaven, described as "small, quick tempered, and easily excited" also had claims on Smoky and Sam Creeks, both within several miles of Coal Creek. Stanton Patty, the son of a miner, grew up in the area and described Slaven's roadhouse later with starry-eyed nostalgia.

"Slaven's place was littered with old, really old, out-dated magazines. And chairs that I never knew how they got there. The kind of chairs you found in a hotel lobby. Black leather, black plastic, whatever they were in those days. Some of them rocked, some of them didn't, but they were always comfortable. It was a great place to snuggle up to magazines and read. There were beautiful sunsets across the river. There is a magic...the sun works through the birch trees and on the river when the light is low".

In 1994 Slaven's roadhouse was restored by the National Park Service and today serves as a public-use cabin as well as a dog food drop and shelter used by mushers on the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race.

One more roadhouse located along the Eagle to Circle trail deserves mention. The Woodchopper Roadhouse located several miles down river from Slaven's was built around 1906 by Valentine "Woodchopper" Smith and was originally a series of interconnected cabins. Eventually the complex was replaced by a 24- by 36-foot, two-story log structure, reputed to be "the height of elegant accommodation along the Yukon River." Sometime later Valentine sold out to Fred and Flora Brentlinger and, following Fred's death, Flora sold the roadhouse to Jack and Kate Welsh in 1929. For extra income, Jack ran a trap line in winter and operated a gas launch in summer catering to the mining companies and prospectors in the area, while Kate served as postmistress.

During a particularly severe break-up in the early 1940's, water and ice flooded the low-lying bench where the roadhouse was located, to the point where the water had reached the second-story window. At about this time Jack began experiencing "severe hallucinations" that the German army was marching up the Yukon River. Not wanting to be taken alive, Jack wounded himself with a gun in a suicide attempt. Meanwhile, Kate who was already crippled by rheumatism, managed to drag herself two miles up river to George McGregor's cabin for help, later dying in hospital in Fairbanks. At this point Jack who was obviously "mentally unbalanced" took to his boat and floated down the river in search of his wife, never to be seen again. Later it was reported by Inuit living at the mouth of the Yukon River that a man was seen standing in a boat floating out into the Bering Sea.

Following the Welsh's untimely departure, the Woodchopper Roadhouse remained abandoned and today lies in ruins, its roof caved and the upper

story fallen in. Littering the area lie a cook stove, a rocking chair and a few tables.

Epilogue

By the 1950's, highway lodges had replaced the historic roadhouses. These establishments still served the same purpose, providing services to the traveller: a hot coffee, meals, liquor and perhaps a place to sleep. But instead of hay and a change of horses travellers ask for gas, oil, a few minor repairs and a top up to the fluids.

Fortunately, the Valdez - Fairbanks Trail now survives as Alaska State Highway No. 4. And as mentioned earlier, two of the old roadhouses are still in business: the Copper Centre Lodge and the Gakona Lodge and "they offer people a genuine look back at life in a pioneer roadhouse".

Unfortunately, most of the historic Whitehorse to Dawson Road fell into disuse with the building of the Mayo Road, in 1950, and the Stewart Crossing to Dawson extension, in 1952. These roads linked Mayo, Stewart Crossing and Dawson City to the Alaska Highway. The highway construction in 1942 signalled the end of the historic road and the mighty old steamers. In 1952 the last steamer, the *SS Klondike* was pulled up at Whitehorse where it sits now sits proudly over looking the Yukon River and is a national historic site.

Today, the Alaska Highway follows the same route as the Whitehorse to Dawson road as far as Takhini Crossing. A government highway sign overlooks the old crossing and, in the gully across the river, remnants of Puckett's old Tahkheena Roadhouse can be seen with binoculars.

The territorial government has partially restored or stabilized the Carmacks and Montague roadhouses. Remains of the roadhouse at Yukon Crossing, located about 40 miles up a gravel road west of Carmacks, can still be seen from the road. River travellers can see remnants of the old roadhouses along the Whitehorse to Dawson road: Selwyn, Coffee Creek, Kirkman's Thistle and Stewart River.

At Fort Selkirk, site of the old Selkirk Hotel, the Savoy Hotel and Shaver's Roadhouse, the federal government has done a fine job of preserving an abandoned community. About 40 buildings have been restored or stabilized at this historic location. The number includes: two churches, a school house, several residences, the Taylor & Drury Store, Hudson Bay Post and the NWMP Post. Unfortunately, the river claimed Shaver's Roadhouse in the 1940s and both hotels are gone. Founded by Robert Campbell in 1849, Fort Selkirk was abandoned in 1952 when the new road to Dawson City opened.

From its beginnings in medieval England to its decline in the 1950's following the advent of modern highways and reliable automobiles, the roadhouse remains an important part of Yukon heritage.

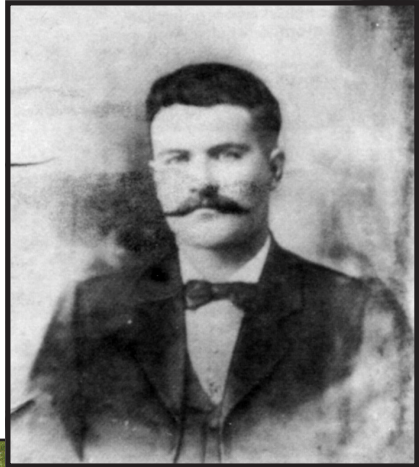
An Australian in the Yukon

The Story of William Perkins

As Told Through Letters to his Family

Edited by Sam Holloway

Excerpted from a family history book called "Children of the Page," compiled by Anne Carmel Smith, 1982. The subtitle is: "The Story of the Perkins Family of Rose Hill, Blandford, N.S.W. (New South Wales, Australia) Thanks to Mary Smolders of Whitehorse for bringing the story back with her from a vacation in Australia.



Editor' Note:

I visited William Perkins's grave at the Pioneer Cemetery in Whitehorse. The headstone has broken off and lies embedded in the ground. As I knelt to take this photo, I thought of his bones lying just below, how those bones fought the old warrior Frank Slavin to a standstill, and wandered the Yukon in search of gold and copper. He probably stood over an old copper mine a mile away from where I sit tonight. Although his time was short, he lived as honourably and sincerely as anyone who has ever lived and died in the Yukon. S.H.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM PERKINS TO HIS FAMILY 1898-1900

DAWSON CITY, KLONDYKE.

June 14th, 1898.

Dear Mother,

You will notice by the heading of this letter that I have arrived here alright. I last wrote home from "Tagish Lake". Well since then have been on the road. It is a terrible country to get a letter in. I have not received any of your letters yet and it is just four months today since I left Sydney. I got down without any accident of any kind. I arrived here on June 7th and the first mail goes out tomorrow so I left the letter - to the last day. This city is a wonderful place. There are thousands of people here and more coming every day. Half of them will go away disappointed, in fact there are a great many going now every day. They won't wait to see how things are going.

I have started to build a log cabin for the winter, as it is impossible to live in a tent. It is very hard to get logs. I have to drag them down a mountain at the back of the town.

There is no doubt about the gold being here but every place is staked out, therefore it is hard to get a claim. Provisions are very high in price here. Butter is 10 shillings a pound, sugar 4/2d, beef 6/4 a pound; flour is fairly cheap at 52 shillings a hundred.

I will be finished with my cabin in a fortnight from now. This letter will have a great trip before you read it. It goes down the river to St. Michalis 1,700 miles right up in the Arctic Circle, then over 4,000 miles to Vancouver. I don't know how long it will take to go. I would like to get some of your letters now. Anyway I hope to have them before this reaches you. Well mother I won't write much with this pencil, I will try and get some ink, and I will write to Bernard then.

I hope you are not having a severe winter, now while I write it is real warm and mosquitoes are in droves. It never gets dark up here now, it is a continual stretch of daylight, the sun rises at half past three and sets at eleven o'clock. I take it for granted mother that you are well at home and I hope I am right. I can't write much until I get some of your letters. I haven't heard any news of any kind from Australia, you might be all at war for all I know. I hope Frank is alright. You will soon get more letters when I know what I am going to do.

Your affectionate son, William.

PART OF LETTER. NO DATE.

Eldorado and Bonanza are very rich in placer gold. Parts of Hunker and Dominion creeks are also rich. All other creeks will scarcely pay working expenses. Prospecting in this country is the hardest and worst kind of work imaginable. There are no roads of any kind and during summer the

surface of the ground is always wet and sloppy, consequently walking is difficult. You pack your own food, blankets and prospecting tools on your back... There is no outside capital in here, buyers being shy of placer finds. No gold bearing quartz has been discovered yet and many think this cannot possibly last more than two years without fresh discoveries. Others say the future of the place entirely depends on quartz ledges being found. At present this field is only a fifth rater. There are about 40,000 people here, yet it is supposed about 25,000 will winter in and around Dawson. There are three newspapers, two bi-weeklies and one weekly, the last mentioned being conducted by Australians. The American papers were 32 million dollars out in their reckoning of this year up on the Klondyke and 40 millions being the . .

.... making it almost impossible to sink any depth on your limited supply of food for you cannot carry more than will last for sixteen days no matter how strong you are. This kind of prospecting sent most parties who tried it out, off the country pretty quickly. A great many Australians have returned disgusted with the place but still a few remain and intend to winter here. There will probably be 25,000 people here through the winter. The two creeks, Eldorado and Bonanza supply nearly all the gold got so far up here on the Canadian side. They are both wonderfully rich, owners of ~laims asking up to 100,000 dollars for half interests. There is little or no speculation in mines going on and very little foreign capital in the country, all buyers being shy of the placer claims. They are waiting for a quartz ledge to be put on the market. Then some very old experienced miners seem to think quartz of a gold bearing character is not to be found in this country. Most everyone agrees that the future of this place depends on the chance of quartz being found or not. It will only be a matter of three years to work out the present gold bearing creeks. Outside the two creeks named there is very little that will pay working expenses. Certainly there is a chance of a new find any day. The mining laws caused great dissatisfaction and everything in the government offices appeared to be in a bad state. Charges of bribery and all kinds of corruption was made against officials from the highest to the lowest and citizens demanded an enquiry with the result that Mr. W. Oglivie is now in charge (full) of all this mining district as Governor and everything seems on a good way to be remedied.

There has been a great deal of sickness in the city, mostly fever, and quite a few have died. There are two hospitals at present tending to sick.

Saloon-keepers are doing by far the biggest business and making money fast. Provisions are still dear in most lines. Should any of the young men about Murrurundi contemplate coming to Klondyke it would be as well to bring plenty of money along and don't start without giving the proposal good consideration for there is everything you can think about and a lot of things you know nothing about, against a trip in here.

Yours etc

Wm. Perkins

(Written on bottom of previous letter) DAWSON 20.9.98

The actual output for the year being barely eight millions. There are a good many who have made fortunes in here and there is a chance for a few more still left, but to take the whole field and populations, there is not more than a one in a thousand chance to make a decent stake. There are several fields in Australia with a better average chance. Anyone coming should not chance it with less money than £400 when leaving Sydney. There has been a lot of fever during summer, mostly typhoid and malaria, the hospitals being crowded out for two months and good many deaths occurred. But now the winter freeze has set in, the health of the place will be, much better

**DAWSON CITY, KLONDYKE RIVER
NORTH WEST TERRITORY, CANADA.**

Nov. 10th, 1898.

Dear Mother,

The last mail went out the latter part of October and I sent some letters by it, which I hope you will have received before this reaches you. I got some more letters, one from you dated June 11th so you will see how the mail is, after considering I have had letters from both you and father as late as July 15th and 3rd and I got them three weeks before I received this one. I was very pleased to receive a letter from Jack Written at Muttaborra dated June 11th. It is the first and only one I have received from him. Well mother I hope all are well, still, as your last letter told me you were, and now you will be getting the warm summer weather. And here, well, now it is just as cold as it can be ... 30 degrees below zero and only the beginning of November. I had my nose frozen for a start today and everyone you meet will say "why your nose is all frozen" and you will be on the point of asking him what he is talking about. Well when you look at him it's ten to one you can say, "Why, so is yours" he will say "You don't say so is it?" Then away both of you duck off into the snow, and rub your nose for a while as hard as you can rub with snow, and in five minutes you are alright again.

Well mother I am having good times looking out for claims but it is simply impossible to raise money on them here. Money is very, very scarce. But I might do pretty well before the winter is over. I am taking particular good care of myself for I find this extreme cold is very severe. I have plenty of good clothes and good food and any real cold day I stop inside the cabin all the time.

I think I mentioned to you in my last about the big fire in this city a few weeks ago. There is not a single drop of water to be seen anywhere now. The big Yukon River is one solid mass of ice. You can imagine how cold it would have to be before that little Page River would become one solid mass so that you could take ten tons across it, and this river runs almost as fast as the Page. There were four men to be hanged here on November 1st for murder, but they got a reprieve somehow of four months. It is dark at 4 o'clock in the evening and eight in the morning. There have been no new discoveries to talk of anywhere in this district lately. I am going out after another claim tomorrow. If I get it I won't be able to work it as it is too late to go out without having a cabin secured. Now that the water freight has

gone provisions have taken a flight upwards. It is a good thing for me that I have my winter's stock in. Sugar is worth 3 shillings a pound a present.

Part of letter to Mother.

There are a lot of poor fellows leaving here every day who sold up their little homes to get enough money to come here in the first place, and are returning without a shilling to their name. I tell you mother, some of them will have a terrible tale to tell. There are lots of men who worked for wages all the time and can get no money 'The claims' owners having gone insolvent. Some are owed as much as £200 and can't get a shilling. If I decide to stop till next year, I will have to have something pretty sure and should I fail after staying that long, well, if I have my good health I ought to be satisfied there is nothing in here for me and go back home to Australia quite contented.

Up the Pelly River there are plenty of wild mountain sheep, caribou, bear and moose, so we will have plenty of fresh meat all the time, coming in from the Indian hunters. Moose meat is the finest I have ever tasted. It beats any bullock or sheep I have ever eaten. Well mother, I won't write much more this trip. I will only say that Francis Martin is a good young fellow to write me such a nice letter and Theresa is a nice fellow too. I will write to Pat and father next mail.

From your affectionate son, William.

DAWSON CITY,

Dec. 10th, 1898

Dear Mother,

The dog teams arrived yesterday with a mail and I had the good luck to get 6 letters, four from home; yours were dated July 31st, also Nellie same date. Another from you and Bernard August 28th and the latest September 9th. They were delayed on account of the ice or I would probably have had them before. Anyhow, it did me good to hear you were all well. I also had one from Jack from Barenya written in July. I am writing to him today also I am sending one to Tom; if you have his address you might send it on to him. I am pleased to know that father thinks of sending me some papers as we get very little news of the outside world at all. Well, we are getting near to Christmas again. It comes round no matter where you go. The Arctic cold does not steady of the round for a new year. Well I would like to deal you of a bit of this cold for Christmas. I know you could do with some of it very well and I am sure I could do without it. The days are all nights just now. Everything still keeps very dull in here. I sold one of my claims for 1,000 dollars, £200 and intend to work all next month on my other property to try if there is anything in it. There are thousands of disappointed miners in here. They find the ground is not rich at all. It is only a few lucky ones that hit it. I was fortunate in selling mine as it proved a rank duffer. These Canadians are boasters of the first water. They are worse skitters than Americans, and the worst class of a cringing British subject I have yet to meet. Well mother, I

will write Nellie in your envelope, so yours, Bernie's and Nellie's will make a fair letter. Glad that father and yourself was well and in good spirits. I trust Mary is getting on well too, hope she enjoyed her trip to Singleton and Francis Martin has not answered my letter yet. I will ask Theresa "What's his racket" I expect to hear from Pad next trip. I am 15 stone lb in weight, good health and as strong as an ox, thank God.

Your affectionate son, William.

DAWSON CITY,

Jan. 27th, 1899.

Dear Father,

The first mail of this year leaves here on February 1st, consequently, this is the first letter I have been able to send out for some time. The last I wrote to mother was December 15th, so I know you will be waiting for word from me. Well I must tell you at once, that I am in the best of health, never been one day sick since I arrived, thank God. The winter has been extremely cold up to date, especially this month of January. There is a mail expected from the outside next week sometime, so I hope to get news from home. The last letter I had was dated September 7th. I am not over anxious to spend another winter in these regions. It is alright for once in a lifetime, but beyond that, I don't care for it too much.

I have been prospecting on one of my claims ever since Christmas, and up to now have had no luck. But I still have a chance for I am not down to bedrock yet. It is very slow work, sinking a shaft in this country. You will understand what a slow process it is, to have to make a fire on the bottom of the shaft, let it burn all night, and in the morning it is thawed or loosened out sufficient dirt to keep cleaning out for about two hours. In stone or gravel, a good fire will go down from one foot to three feet. In muck or any sediment from 8 inches to 12 inches. I expect to test it properly in ten more days. Business is in a standstill in this city. Everyone is living in hopes of the spring bringing forth a better time

DAWSON CITY,

March 15th, 1899.

Dear Mother,

At last I have a pile of letters in front of me nearly all from home. How I was looking for that pile of news from home you can imagine. This is the 15th March and the last letter I read of yours was dated September 11th, 1898, a little better than 6 months ago. But-now I have nearly all the mail due to me. I had 12 letters today. Two from Jack, the rest from you, father, Bernie, Pat, Nellie, Johanna and Maggie, dated January 15th, 1899. I have been away up in the Rocky Mountains prospecting a claim of mine and just came in last night for it is very deep ground, and having to burn it out makes very steep work. We are down thirty feet now, and the ground is frozen all the way so you can guess how cold the climate is. We expect it to be 50 feet to the bottom. The winter is going off now very fast. It is still very cold but some days we have beautiful sunshine. Up here I am working, near the great

Rocky Mountains, the views are splendid. Pat will tell you all about the Rocky Mountains. We all used to learn the geography of this great range of mountains running from one end of America to the other: . .

Well mother, as far as mining is concerned there is nothing very good to talk of in this field so far, but I must give it a good trial now I am here, and now the long dark winter is a password, it will be much more pleasant to live through the spring and summer. I am enjoying the best of health thank God. I am sorry to learn that Tom had such a hard time during the dry spell. I know you will be out of a letter from me for some time until you get this. This is the first mail that has left for some time.

All the snow will be gone and the rivers will be clearing themselves of ice and I will be glad. One gets sick of this continued cold. I have been working nearly all the winter and I don't think I will put another one in here, unless I have some great inducement. A great many people are disgusted with the country and are only waiting for the rivers to open, so as to leave it. Then comes my chance, if there is any chance at all, for at present there are far too many people in here. I have good fellows to work with all the time.

Your affectionate son, William.

DAWSON CITY,

September 16th, 1899

Dear Bernie & Mag,

Well our sunshine is almost over for this year. In four more weeks from date we will be frozen in good and solid. I am off to "Last Chance" creek to work on a claim. I am in with two more Australians and a little Russian. We get 50% of the gross output. The claim is a good one and I am sure to leave here next spring for the Sunny South, please God. I am not sure where I will put the whole of the winter in but I presume it will be on Last Chance. The big rush on Cape Nome on the Pacific seaboard about 2000 miles from here has been the means of taking a great number of people away from here, making the camp much better than it was last winter. Wages are holding good yet as it is easy enough to get work at 10 dollars per day, but remember the price of provisions are still pretty stiff, especially beef, at 3 shillings per lb. I am in perfect condition, never better in my life, and all the boxers seem to know it too.

At present I am living with a little Jew from South Africa. He is a nice little fellow with his watches and diamonds and roast turkey for-de-dinner. I suppose you had a good old time when in Sydney. How did you get on? I suppose you are on to all the confidence chappies by now. Can't take you down. You and Pat will have to come to Sydney when I am going through on my way home.

I must write to Bill Greer again. I think it is a good thing for some of those fellows that they know enough to stay at home, for if by any chance they should stray into a country like this, well I guess it would be all off with them. Dawson has improved wonderfully this last summer. It is now a big city with some good three storey buildings and one hotel of four stories.

There is no boxing for heavyweights. I am in the lead there and they won't want any of me.

Well old fellow I won't say any more at present but with wishes and good luck to yourself and Maggie.

I am your affectionate brother,

Wm. Perkins.

N.W.T. Canada.

DAWSON CITY,

Sept. 28th, 1899.

Dear Father,

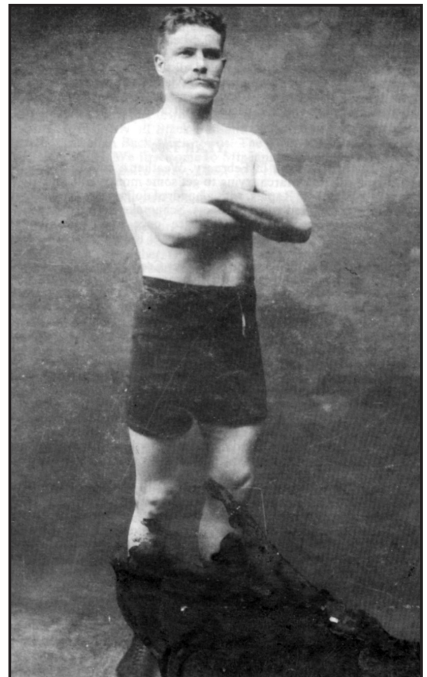
As this will be the last mail going out before the ice blocks the river, I will send you a short note. Am writing to Bernard and Maggie also. I had a letter from you dated August 13th, also one from Tom enclosed. I was telling Bernard I had a lay on a claim on Last Chance. But since I finished his letter, I have had a better offer and I am going out tomorrow to look at it. It is 54 miles from Dawson. I will be able to tell you in my next what I will be at for the winter and all about my prospects.

The cold weather is setting in again, and it is necessary to get into your fur caps and robes. We have a telegraph wire from the coast at Skagway to Dawson now. But there is nine hundred miles from there to Vancouver not finished yet, but the boats can run nearly all the year to Skagway. So it is possible to get news in much quicker now. But the expense is very heavy. One pound for one word, and your address is charged for at the same rate. Glad to hear that Nellie likes Auckland. I had a letter from Jack dated 26th July, Aramac. He was O.K. Pleased to know yourself, mother, Frank and all the girls are well. I am O.K. myself, thank God.

I also had a letter from Jim O'Brien. There is great excitement in here re the Dreyfus case. There are a lot of Frenchmen in here you know, and they are playing up old Harry about his conviction. Dutchmen in here look like they would like to eat up the English speaking race over the Boer trouble in South Africa.

Will tell you all about my doings next letter, which will go out over the ice I suppose. And so father, I will conclude, remaining your affectionate son,

William Perkins.



Will Perkins in his boxing outfit.

FORTY MILE POST,

Dec. 18th, 1899.

Dear Father,

I have just returned from "Eagle City" 55 miles down the Yukon River after being away about three weeks. I wrote to mother from Dawson before I left. I received a letter from you about that time and also one from Mary. I am now on my way up this "Forty Mile River" to Wade Creek. I do not know how long I will be up there, probably most of the winter. Our court case lasted 13 days at Eagle City and it went against us. Sommerville, the man I was in with lost over six thousand dollars fighting the case. The American Justice Courts are as bad as the Canadian every bit. It was open talk about town that whoever cared to pay the judge the most money would win out. We had such a clear case that it seemed impossible to lose, and the other side got in and bought the judge and lawyer for 1,500 dollars (£300) and of course the verdict went against us. The case has been appealed and will be taken out to Sitka, 600 miles away in June of 1900. In the meantime I am going up to the property to square up matters as best I can. I am out just £ 125 by the crooked deal but I have chance of making it up in June next. It is a pretty tough country where the suppose courts of justices rob a man in open daylight just because he hasn't enough money to bribe them with. Well I am satisfied that I will come out even with them before I leave.

It is extremely cold weather now, and the trip up here the thermometer ran down to 45 degrees below zero. We are now getting the shortest days. Of course, after the 21st we will be on the long stretch again. It does not get properly daylight at all now, a kind of twilight from 10 o'clock till 2:30, then darkness, except when we have a moon. The moon is as bright as day dur-



Will Perkins and his little mule on their way from Dawson to Whitehorse.

ing the cold weather. This is a small town on the mouth of the Forty Mile River where it empties into the Yukon. It is a Canadian post 23 miles from the United States boundary line of Alaska and about 56 miles from Dawson City. I will have my mail sent to me in a week or ten days. I know there are a good many letters up there for me. Well father, I hope you are going to have a merry Christmas. I intend to have a good one up on Wade Creek. I know some good chaps up there, which will enable me to have a good time. I haven't had a letter from Jack for a good while now. I am writing to him today. I hope all the girls, and Pat and Frank are in good health, as I am thank God, also yourself and mother. Tell Mary I will write her a note as soon as I am settled down again and now I will conclude by wishing you one and all a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

*Your affectionate son, William Perkins,
Dawson City.*

Undated

Dear Mother,

I landed here yesterday from Wade Creek and was just in time to receive your good old letter of December 31st, also Mag's of the same date. You must think my affairs are in a kind of a muddle by the many different letters you get from me. Well mother, I have been doing fine all this winter, working on Bill Somerville's property at Wade Creek. I haven't succeeded in making that old fortune yet, but I still have that good health which you say is a fortune and I agree with you, it is the finest fortune in the world. The fellows in here say I never looked better in my life. I had a lot of long letters from Tom while on Wade, also a lot from yourself, father, Mag, Bernie and Pat, also Jack. I wrote to Mary. I notice in Mag's letter of December 31st, Mary is back again. It was good of Mag to go home and of course it was the right thing for her to do, just to help you through the summer.

I was in several deals down in the American Territory. But I came out with about £80 ahead. Poor old Bill Somerville dropped a lot of money. I am starting to work on a mine on Hunker Creek tomorrow at 10 dollars a day (£2). So you see mother, I am never short of a job in the mines.

It is only about 13 miles from Dawson City, so I will be able to receive your letters more regularly now. I don't know how long I will stay, but I can stay as long as I care to. But you know mother, I don't care to work for wages if there is any kind of a chance to make do of it any other way, because you know, there are more chances when you are knocking around. I was pleased to hear you were all so happy at Xmas, also that father was pleased to hear of me getting

The winter has been very severe here the thermometer going down below zero. But the back of the winter is broken now and in a few weeks time we will have beautiful weather again. There are only a few Australians left here now and only about two are making any good money.

Well mother, I guess I will conclude now by trusting you are all as well as I am myself, thank god.

Your affectionate son, William Perkins.

P.S. They have changed the name from North West Territory to the Yukon Territory, consequently address Y.T. instead of N.W.T.

DAWSON CITY, March 20th, 1900.

Dear Father,

I have been intending to write you this last two weeks waiting for the incoming mail, and besides I wanted to know just what I was about to do. Well now I have decided and will write you a few things in general. I am starting away up the Yukon River tomorrow for the White Horse Rapids in the lakes country. White Horse is looming in the copper business. It is about 375 miles from Dawson and only 150 miles from Skagway on the coast, so you see it is so much on my way out. I am getting paid money and an interest in anything I get for going up there. I have been working up the proper people for over a month now and had a bit of trouble to get them together. Money is very scarce in here just now. I will just have time to get to the end of my journey before the ice breaks up. I have a young English doctor going up with me, who has a great deal of influence with the Canadian officials, so I will be treated fairly well I expect. We have had a very severe winter, intense cold all the time till about the 10th March. Just at present the weather is simply glorious. I never felt stronger or better in my life, thank God. I am as hard as iron and weigh 14 stone 10 lbs.

Your affectionate son, William Perkins.

WHITE HORSE RAPIDS,

April 21st, 1900.

Dear Mother,

You will of course have my last letter written from here. I have been busy ever since I arrived at White Horse. I cannot do any mining for a couple of weeks yet. The snow is too deep. I have two more horses now, and I feel as pleased as possible. I paid \$90 (£18) for the two of them, so I am well set up. This is going to be a big town soon and a good one too.

You will find enclosed a picture of myself and little mule, with a sled and a fur robe, just as I travelled up from Dawson, 350 miles over the ice. He is a great little fellow to trot along. The likeness is not very plain, as it was taken and developed by an amateur lady photographer, a Mrs. Flemming. She did it as well as she could, I know you will be pleased to receive it. Tell Frank I will get a little bob-tailed mule for him when I go home. I will not write to father until I get some good property, which I expect to do very soon now. Then I will have something solid to tell him. Tell Tom and Jack to address my letters to White Horse Rapids. I will write again about the 1st May. I hope all at home are well as I am, thank God.

Your affectionate son,

William Perkins.

White Horse, Upper Yukon, Canada.

WHITE HORSE RAPIDS,

May 18th, 1900.

Dear Father,

I have been promising to write to you for some time now but had not any fixed plan of operations until present. I have been out prospecting for 14 days, and arrived back here yesterday.

I had one mule and a horse with me to do the packing. I have been over a lot of the lakes country. I found two "reefs", copper and silver, but the snow was so thick that I could not get any idea as to its richness. I will be going back again in about a week from now to open it up. This is a great reefing country, and if I am any way fortunate I will surely have something worthwhile by the end of June. I have secured a half-interest in a "Copper Claim" 6 miles from here named "The Grafter". I also staked two more copper claims, one called "Carnage" and the other "Newhaven". One is only four miles from here and the other is up at Tagish Lake about 46 miles, I don't place much value on them but I am almost sure I can sell both of them for £300. I wouldn't take £500 for my half interest in the Grafter. Of course I am holding with the expectation of a "boom" and then there is the other chance that the bottom might fall out of the whole business and a man must take all kinds of chances. The mails have been delayed now for over three weeks, on account of the break-up of the river and lakes, and I was never so anxious to hear news from home as I am now, since I read in the papers about that plague in Sydney. The last account I heard about it was that it had extended way up into the country. I trust that report is untrue and I do hope it has not gone up our way. It must have caused a great scare all over the country. I am still enjoying the very best of good health, thank God. I will have plenty of time to reach home for Christmas if I leave here on the 1st September. I will probably get away before that time though if things come my way a little. We get very little war news in here, but as I understand from the latest dispatches, they are fighting just as hard as ever. Well father, I expect letters from almost everyone at home when the first boat comes from Dawson. Of course they will be pretty old but all the same it will be fresh news to me.

I have not written to Jack for some time now, and I will wait till I get my next mail, and of course as I have nothing very particular to write to him about, you can tell him how I am getting on a pinch. I hope you are having better health. When mother wrote last she was telling me you were troubled with "boils" which as I know, are a great inconvenience (to say the least) when a person is compelled to work. I hope Frank and the girls are well also Pat and Bernie. I expect to hear from Nellie soon. That is if she is allowed to write when she wishes. Will write again in 3 weeks time. Hope Tom is O.K.

*Your affectionate son,**Wm. Perkins.*

DAWSON CITY,

July 4th, 1900.

Dear Father,

As I told mother in my last letter I was coming down here, you will not be surprised to hear from here. I did not care to say in my last letter what I was coming here for but now it is all over and I suppose if I don't tell you someone else will, so I might as well tell you myself. I fought F. P. Slavin last night here in Dawson, nine of the hardest rounds he ever fought in his life. We were dividing the gate receipts and today I was paid a clear 1,200 dollars (£240) as my share. The house was packed from floor to ceiling. It was a terrible hard go. I had Slavin beaten in the eighth round but my inexperience made me too eager and I left a chance which he succeeded in taking, and the referee counted me out. Slavin reckons they couldn't beat them anywhere only up our way who would put up such a fight as I did. I am going back to the White Horse at the end of this month to sell my copper claims and clear for Australia by September. I am writing to Pat and Bernard and will tell them all the news etc. I was awfully pleased to get that picture of Jack and his mates from you. It did me good I'll tell you. I had a letter from Tom and all the girls at home. I will write to all of them soon. I do hope Jack is alright today, as I am, thank God and I hope at home, yourself and mother especially are in good health.

*Your affectionate son,**William Perkins.*

P.S. Don't be afraid of me following the ring, but whenever I can pick up £240 I must snap it you know.

PART OF LETTER TO MOTHER

I am very careful in dealings with Canadian people and I will not be too sure until I have the money in my pocket. I have the photo of all the Clermont Rough Riders posted up in my cabin. I think Jack looks fine. I was surprised to learn of Purcell going to South Africa. I did not think he had the right stuff in him, but it appears I was mistaken. I haven't heard from Jim O'Brien or Bill Greer lately. I suppose Bill Greer will be shocked to hear of me going up against Frank Slavin. But he does not know anything about it, to be honest about it. I can assure you mother, I was quite proud of the good show I made against such an old war horse. Also to Tom I sent accounts of my boxing match with F.P. Slavin. I am in the best possible health, thank God, and I will be going away from here for the outside world inside of six weeks from today. I have been doing alright with my copper properties and expect to sell out before two weeks. I will have a few hundred pounds to go home on and will (probably) have to come back here (for) a final payment, for the money market is very close. I am expecting 10,000 dollars, £2,000, for my interests here, and will have it all fixed up in a short time. The buyer is out in British Columbia and will be here on the 12th August. He has already inspected the claims and is satisfied, but had to go out there to raise the money, and I have to give him twelve months to make final payment.

PART OF A LETTER TO BARNEY

... I talk nothing but mines and mining now and (by the way) am considered to be quite an expert on quartz mines. I will move out from here before the snow flies in the fall, and expect to be on my way across the continent of America, to cross the briney ocean for my home down south. And if anyone ever talks America or Canada to me, once I land beneath the Southern Cross, I will cross him with my "right" for sure.

How is Pat and Frank and Theresa and Kate and Johanna and Mary and Mag and Mother and Father ? I guess I got them all in that time, all but poor Nellie and I will be able to see her for myself when I am going home. I would like to be able to put Tom on to something in here, but it would be sheer madness to advise him to come now. The state of the country is, to say the least, in a most deplorable state of confusion. The people are selfish, their government is rotten and their gall is unlimited. So, you will understand that it is a pretty hard combination to fall up against. I hope Mother and Father are having good health and I trust you yourself are having no fault to find with the general trend of things. Write me soon old fellow and tell me all the news from the old camp.

Your affectionate Brother,

Wm. Perkins.

White Horse, Upper Yukon. Y.T. Canada.

PART OF LETTER TO MOTHER

.....United States and fight, but I refused them all for it is not a good business to follow and I know it and besides I like mining too well and would not miss any chance here just at present. You will believe me when I say I have all kinds of friends on this Yukon River from the Governor of the Territory down to the working men, and the fun of it is none of them look on one as a professional at all. I can get 1,000 backing anytime I say one word. They all count on me a good miner and prospector and I tell you I am quite proud of it. I have good mates with me here. Bill Woodney is in with me on the claims. The price we are asking is 25,000 dollars (£5,000) and of course we cut up even and if we sell, after all expenses, we will have £2,000 apiece.

I do hope Jack will have good luck in South Africa. If he comes out without getting hurt he ought to do well. It will be Christmas before I reach home for I will be told of I expect, by a company to go to New York thence to New Orleans and on to Mexico in South America and look at some mines down there. From there I go to San Francisco and across to Auckland and Sydney. But if they don't decide to send me down there, I will go via Chicago and New York to England and probably take in The Cape on my way to Australia.

I don't think it is any good of you writing here any more but if you write as soon as you get this to Vancouver B.C. I will be likely to get it. I was glad to hear that Jim Keenan's little girl was such a nice good child, pleased you liked her so well. If you care to, you can send this letter to Jim. I hope Tom will have luck at the mines, I will write to Nellie soon and send it to you to be forwarded and tell Maggie and all the girls I will write to either from here or

some part of the United States. You can tell Pat to be ready for me, also Bern and Frank. I guess I can show them a pointer or two with the gloves.

Well mother, if I am any judge, you were all happy enough when you wrote my last letter, that is if one can judge by the tone and I trust you will be so when you receive this. With best wishes I am your affectionate son,
W. Perkins.

Vancouver P.O.

British Columbia. Canada.

PORTIONS OF LETTERS, UNDATED.

To Mag.

I wrote to Bernard from Chicago. I hope you have news from Jack and that he is alright. I don't know when I will be able to hear from any of you at home again, I will probably know in a few days and will write to mother or father from New York. I hope Pat and Bernard are alright and I suppose Mary and all at home are well. I trust they are as well as I am, thank God.

I expect to sell all that copper of mine when in New York. I will write to Nellie today and post her note in your letter. Well Mag I will conclude with best wishes to all at home.

Your affectionate brother, W. Perkins.

WILLIAM PERKINS' STORY IS CONTINUED THROUGH THESE LETTERS 1901-1903

BOARD OF TRADE, WHITE HORSE, Y.T.

April 8th, 1901.

Dear Father,

I landed here on Thursday, 4th April. I did not write at once because I knew there would be no boat for Australia for some time and it gave me time to look around. I found Woodney looking fine and the copper claim (The Grafter) looks a lot better than when I left. We are shipping ten tons of ore to the smelter at Tacoma, Washington. I brought 1,500 pounds in today to the railway station. It is only a test.

We have a horse and sled. There is from 4-6 feet of snow round here yet it runs down to 20 below zero of a night. It is a great change isn't it and all in about seven weeks. It won't be long before we do something in the line of a sale. In the meantime we are comfortably fixed in a cabin on the claim and plenty of good grub and plenty of work. I was at work the day after I landed. We were "snowed in" on the White Pass Summit for 20 hours and had to run the train back to Skagway, but we got over alright next day. I hope and trust that you are hearing from Jack and that he is alright. You might send him my address and tell him to write to me.

I am writing to Pat tonight. I hope mother and yourself, the girls and Frank are as well as when I left as I am myself, thank God. I must write to Maggie and Johanna soon. Well father, I will have more to say next letter.

*From your affectionate son,
William Perkins.*

WHITE HORSE, Y.T.

May 4th, 1901.

Dear Jack,

I have just received your letter from Bradfort, Orange Free State. Needless to say, I was anxious to hear from you, and pleased when I did hear, to learn you were alright. I landed back here April 4th, just a month ago). Everything looks good to me. The copper mine certainly looks well, and there is a good prospect of making a good sale this coming summer. We have shipped five tons for a test to the smelter in Tacoma, Washington. We have not got the returns yet, but the ore looks good. Woodney had a fine cabin built on the claim when I returned. It is about 6 or 7 miles from White Horse township and railway terminus.

I hope you have been relieved by this time, and probably you will never receive this letter at all in South Africa. Of course, if you have nothing in view you will never go back to Western Queensland, to follow the same life as we led out there, and if you feel like it, you might as well come in here. I have no money now, but I see every chance of getting on well and I don't see why you shouldn't do so too. You may have some other plans, if so, of course, use your own judgement. If Livingstone would come, and you feel like telling him, I think he could do worse also. But also use your own judgement in that too.

I am glad to hear of all of you being safe, up to the time of your writing. I had a letter from mother since my return, and all were well at home.

I somehow think you won't get this letter, consequently can't write at length. I hope to have news, of or from you soon again, and will know more definitely. However, as I said before, if you have no other prospect in view, come on in here via Vancouver and Skagway or any other way you care to. It is 112 miles by rail from Skagway, on the Alaskan Coast.

Kind regards to Power, Purcell, Livingstone, and best wishes for yourself.

Your affectionate brother, Bill.

WHITE HORSE, Y.T.

Dear William (?Greer),

I have been expecting a certain thing to turn up here that would give me some definite plan, where I might write you some interesting news of myself and this country, but everything seems to move slowly just now and I will put off writing no longer.

I am pleased to be able to tell you, the property I am interested in here is looking first class and I expect to sell early in the summer, say June or July.

I had a most enjoyable trip across the Pacific. I saw my sister Nellie in Auckland and she was as pleased and happy as is possible to imagine. She has grown into a fine woman now and I am satisfied she is at ease as to the life she has chosen. Then we were on the same route I travelled some three years ago, with the difference that we visited different parts of the Samoan group of islands. Those glorious islands of the South Seas. It is no wonder Stevenson lived his life out amongst them, for they are truly very fascinating. San Francisco was a "lively city" when I was there and is making a bold and (I think) successful bid for the Far Eastern trade, namely China and the Philippines.

You will smile when you read that I met a lady on that trip who afforded me more real and lively interest than any woman I ever met. In fact I will say that if I had time to stay a few weeks, there is no doubt you would have heard of me being married by this. But there it is again. I always 'have no time'. You may have seen some of her work in the Sydney Art Gallery. She is a painter or artist. Her name Marion Drewe. And there is the first woman that ever made me think. But I am telling you a lot of things, am I not? Somehow, you and I always did tell one another a great deal. But however when one gets out over the border of civilisation, away from white people and their doings (where the best is as the worst) and go on, you get hard again, and I am hard and solid just now. But on one of my long trips I suppose I will steer right up on the rocks and I don't care even if I get wrecked. I could write for a week when I set to pen a few lines to you, and right now could tell you of doings of people in here that you could scarcely credit. It makes a man feel disgusted with humanity and I am sure it were better not to write or think of these things.

I am not going to bore you with any long tales, but hope to have the pleasure of telling you personally some of the funny little adventures of mine, even since I left you last. It is common report round here that I am worth in property value 100,000 dollars (£20,000). Well one old lady sent to me at 'Frisco to do her a good service, as she would trust me with her life etc. I was to go to Oakland and escort her daughter in here to White Horse as she was only nineteen and had just left school. Of course I went to Oakland and got the girl and brought her in (anything for a change). Well the poor girl got sick and she (?). I nursed her back to life. "How romantic" the old lady says, and 'you made the girl love you Willie and if I expected she would go and do that I would not have asked you to fetch her in". And the poor woman fancies she can see that bunch of money all fixed in the family. The girl is pretty but totally devoid of all brains. So there you are.

There are broken down Widows to burn, going around looking for a copper king. Oh I tell you it is quite a big part of the world's stage up here, but the actors are not so bright and clever as they might be. Well old fellow, I trust you and yours are enjoying the very best of good health. Kindly remember me to Mrs. G. (your wife) also Bobbie and his wife, and when you see our old mutual friend P O'B., Mrs. O'Brien, Barbara and the other girls kindly say I often think of them and hope they are well.

Hoping to hear from you soon, believe me your sincere friend,
Wm. Perkins.

WHITE HORSE, Oct. 2nd, 1901.

Dear Mother,

I have just returned from Dawson and received your letters written in July, also Father's and Pat's, and one from Mag - written August 2nd just 2 months from today). She tells me you had just got word from Jack, both from Adelaide and Sydney. You must have been pleasantly surprised. You will tell me all about it in the next letter. I was in Dawson for five weeks and just got back here before the river froze up. I did fairly well down there one way and another. I am not quite settled yet as to what I shall do for the winter but will know pretty soon. The copper people still hang fire trying to get a low price and I won't let it go at their figure. I know it will pay us to hold on. We are expecting a buyer from Butte City, Montana, any day now, if he comes before the snow flies. I think he is a purchaser. I was pleased to hear you were all so well at home.

Your affectionate son,

Wm. Perkins.

WHITE HORSE, Oct. 20th, 1901.

Dear Father,

I have been up the river and on to Marsh Lake for a few days. Just come back today. The weather is good yet, night and mornings pretty cold but no ice to speak of yet. The river steamships have stopped running and have gone into winter quarters, and we have had a little snow - and everyone is expecting to see the glass drop below zero anytime. We are still holding our copper, we expect everything to come out good. A copper claim called "The Best Chance" was sold yesterday for 35,000 dollars (7,000 pounds). It joins the "Grafter". Our claim is considered a lot better mine than the one that brought that price. Consequently we are holding for a bigger price. I expect to be here for most of the winter if not for all of it. I have written several letters home and I was glad to get a letter from Jack written from "Rose Hill". The spell at home will do him good. I will write to Pat next. I wrote to Jack the day before I got his letter. I was pleased to learn you were all well, as I am, thank God. It did one good to know you and Mother were so pleased to get those photographs of myself and mate on the mine. We are building two more cabins on the claim now and will have them finished in about 10 days, so one will be well fixed for the winter. We would be shipping ore to "Tacoma" only it is so far away. It is more than a thousand miles from here and has to be trans-shipped three times so the expenses are somewhat heavy. I hope Tom is getting on alright. Bernard was telling me in his letter that he was doing pretty well, and of course Pat is away shearing, so you have only Frank at home and of course Agnes, Kate and Theresa. Mother was telling me Mary was coming home. I guess she will do fine now. I staked a claim the other day on Marsh Lake and I called it the "Warren Hastings"

rather a formidable kind of name isn't it. I expect it to turn me in a little money some day. I understand our copper mine on the Timor Road is not developing into a dividend payer yet, but there is plenty of time. Well Father, I will not write more this time. Will write to Jack next Sunday.

Your affectionate son,

Wm. Perkins.

DAWSON CITY, Y.T. Oct. 24. 1901.

Friend Billy,

There is nothing here of any great importance to report to you. Louis Bellney of White Horse was looking for you yesterday. I told him you had gone to White Horse. He then stated to me that Woodney had seen and talked with him. He, Woodney, wanted him to take a bill of sale of the Grafter and give him in return an agreement. This was for the purpose of doing you out of your interest. He stated he would give Bellney an interest for so doing. Bellney refused to do so. Woodney then stated he would give Baxter a bill of sale and cut you out of everything. I do not like advising you in this, you can judge better yourself. If I were in your place, I would put your partnership agreement on record. It would then be impossible for them to do anything without you.

Nothing further at present, will write you next mail, kind regards and good luck,

Your Friend,

M. V. Somerville,

PART OF LETTER:
WHITE HORSE, CANADA.

Nov. 20th, 1901.

Dear Pat,

I have just read your letter with the copy of the assay values of copper etc. I have never received the letter you spoke of having sent from Come-By Chance. I would like to have got it. That assay is worth going on 3.70 per cent in copper is worth about 36 shillings per ton. It would be sure to improve, and if there was any quantity of it, it would pay handsomely provided it was worked judiciously. Don't you waste any time or money on it however, for I believe it will lay there a long time without being interfered with.

I haven't got everything in going order here yet and consequently could not say when or how I am to come out. The winter is on us now with all its dreariness. Ice and snow, short days, and long nights with all their accompanying dullness. There has been no definite arrangements made about sales of the properties so far, though there are several in the prospective. Woodney is here still and is pretty obstinate to handle. I am starting my athletic club next month. More to put in time

WHITE HORSE, Y.T. Canada.

Dec. 15th, 1901.

Dear Bernard,

I received a letter from Father today, also one from Mother, both dated Oct. 27th. I have written to you Pat 'and Jack telling you all about the sale of "The Grafter". I am up against a big fight to get my share in the proceeds. It will be well on into the New Year before the thing is settled. This fellow Woodney is clean off his head. He has no hope in the world of beating me in the courts, yet he is determined to take it there, and blow all his money. I find he is as crooked as he can be, and being crazy, makes him a hard proposition to deal on. I guess I will come down on my feet alright at the finish. I thought I would be able to send you a 50 along by Christmas, to square up on and buy some shandy, but as the old 'un says "There is many a slip etc".

If things come my way at all next year, I expect to do well here. At present it is very dull. I understand both you and Jack were to go to Rockwood, on New England. I'll bet Jack does not like the shearing process after his campaign in South Africa. Well, between the three of you, you will have quite a cheque ... enough to -paralise the gang". I will have all kinds of blood-curdling things to relate next time I go home. Love, Romance and War, worse than any deadwood dick you heard tell of.

Your affectionate brother,

Wm. Perkins.

WHITE HORSE,

Jan. 1st, 1902.

Dear Mother,

This being the first day of the New Year I will make a good start and write to you. I feel very good today. I have just received your letter written on November 17th with little Frank's enclosed. Frank writes splendidly and I was very pleased to hear from him. By the time this reaches you the hottest part of the summer will have gone by and I know you will be longing for the cool days of autumn and winter.

We have had a very mild winter for this country but we had two very severe days. The thermometer went down to 60 below zero. I am working every day now. I am building a big hall right in the town here. I have a carpenter in with me and we are making a fine job of it. We expect to finish in 10 days from now. I am going to give lessons in Physical Culture and expect to do well.

I am having some serious trouble with Woodney my former partner. He had turned out pretty bad in fact. He is pretty crazy. He is trying to beat me out of my interest in the "The Grafter" now that there is some money in sight. I am trying to settle without going to court, but I am afraid it is no use. I can win the case easy enough, but any way I go about it will cost one 5,000 dollars. It will be necessary to take all my witnesses to Dawson and go there myself, 400 miles over the ice, so you can imagine what that means in this country.

Well mother, I was to Midnight Mass on Christmas night and I never saw such kneeling down this long time. It was 2 o'clock when we got through,

20 below zero and the moon shining as it can only shine in this Arctic country. It was as bright as day. So I got a horse and sled and started out for a road house 15 miles down river where I was invited for Christmas dinner. I arrived there at 5 o'clock on Christmas morning and had a real good old Christmas dinner with Captain Hoggan and his wife. It wasn't quite as good as being at Rose Hill for Christmas but it was the next best thing to it. Altogether I had a good Christmas and I have been to 11 o'clock Mass today. Now I am off over to Mr. and Mrs. Campbells for my New Year's dinner, so you see I am not doing too bad am I?

I think Jack is doing a wise thing by going to South Africa. Tell him to write often and keep me posted as to his movements. I have had letters from everyone at home lately and I think I have answered them all. I haven't heard from Nellie for ages. I am sure Agnes is a swell musician by now. How is Kate and Theresa. Frank tells me all the news in a nice brief way (letter torn). Your affect.

(along margin:) a Happy New Year to one and all - Wm.

WHITE HORSE,

Jan. 19th, 1902.

Dear Bernard,

I have just finished up a terrible fight in the courts on that Grafter copper mine. It was a bad one I can tell you. A lesson to me, always to have everything in black and white. It was the worst skin game I ever got into. Woodney is crooked, crazy son-of-a-B. He is mad alright. You know what it cost me? 10,000 dollars all told. I get 5000 dollars free and clear of all expenses. My first payment is in April. Second \$40 and last in January next year, \$200. It was the cleanest case of robbery you ever heard of. The judge told Woodney that he might as well have stolen 10,000 dollars out of my pocket. It is rotten luck, isn't it? But however, I get a thousand pounds and I have started the camp going.

I am starting up a business in real earnest this coming week. I have a nice little gymnasium built and have a lot of pupils and by next summer, I expect to have a bank roll. It would take too long to tell you about this deal and how I was done up on it, but I will remember it well enough to tell you when we meet.

Wm. Perkins

WHITE HORSE,

March 8th, 1902.

Dear Mother,

I am sure it is nearly time for me to write you a word or two. I have just received two letters, one from Bernard and one from Maggie. Mag tells me she was intending to go home in about two weeks from the time of writing, so I suppose she will be home when this letter reaches you. This month has turned very cold here. It is colder now than it has been all winter, but it won't last long. I am not doing much of anything now. I am still running my gymnasium here in town. The mines are turning out better every day.

I suppose the boys have told you that I had some trouble with my former partner, Woodney. Well it is all over now, and I am sure he is not the better off for his crooked dealing.

I don't know a thing about Pat these days, but I suppose I owe him a letter as I think he wrote to me last. Remember me to Aunt May-Jane and Jim Keenan when you write. I understand Bill Greer has a family of his own now.

How are all the people round there anyhow? Tell Frank to say a few words to me occasionally. I will conclude now mother, this letter anyhow. I expect to get one from you or father in a week or two and will write in answer as soon as I receive it.

*Your affectionate son,
W Perkins.*

WHITE HORSE,

March 31st, 1902.

Dear Father,

I have been waiting for letters from home before I wrote to you. I have just received several, one from mother, Pat and one from Jack, while he was in Sydney. Everything seemed to be going along fine at home. I have been into all kinds of things here. At present I am manager of the Grand Hotel. I get £30 per month and my expenses. I am still running the Gymnasium, and altogether I am doing well. The first payment will be made on The Grafters, two weeks from now. I get £200 in the first payment, and £800 in second. My crazy partner sacrificed all my chances and his own, just through petty spite. If I had kept on with the fight, neither one nor the other would have got a cent. The lawyers would have it all. We sold for £6000 on time payment, and today, the company who bought it, would not take less than two hundred thousand dollars (£40,000) for the mine.

However, I feel satisfied I will come out a winner on this country yet. I am having splendid health, thank God, and I understand from mother's letter that you are all well at home. According to Jack's letter, he was likely to be off to South Africa by this time. Glad to hear Agnes was doing well at school. I presume Mag is home by now. I had a letter from Jim Keenan from Quirindi. How is Frank, Theresa and Kate. It seems a long time since I heard from Frank.

We are having glorious weather here at present. The place is quite lively. Well father, I must finish now. You can tell mother that I will write to her next Sunday. Today is Easter Sunday and we have all been as good as we could be.

I am writing to Pat today, also Jim Keenan.

*Yours affectionate son,
Wm. Perkins.*

WHITE HORSE,

April 6th, 1902.

Dear Jack,

Your letter from Sydney just received. Glad to hear you had a chance to come out square on the horse deal. There should be good money in that South African horse business. I have had several letters from Bernard and Pat. I presume Barney is a pretty shrewd horse dealer.

Well Jack, I am doing pretty well considering everything. I am clear of this crooked mate of mine. Had to blow 10,000 dollars on the deal, but I am sure you know all about it long ago. I am running my Gymnasium and Physical Culture School, besides being manager of the Grand Hotel here. I don't know how long it will last, but it is the best job I have ever struck, £30 a month, a good bed, good tucker, and nothing to do.

You can imagine what sort of a time I have teaching some of the young blades the Noble Art. I more than hold my own. So far flattened a few out, when they got too fresh.

I am in splendid condition. I don't expect this to reach you very soon, but write as often as you can, if it is only a few lines. Mother and father and all at home seem to be doing fine. Mag wrote me a long letter telling me she was going home. I think it is fine of the girl to go home, it shows she is a sensible lady. I intend to stay on here till things change. Let me hear from you when you get a fixed address.

*Your affectionate brother,
Bill.*

UNCLE WILL'S LAST LETTER.**WHITE HORSE, April 14th, 1902.***My Dear Old Mother,*

I have had a bad accident and am about to be operated on for it. If I pull through you will not get this. If not, you can see my last thoughts were for those at home and you. Don't fret Mother, I will be alright. Frank, Theresa, Kate, Agnes, Nellie, Maggie, Pat, Bernard, Jack, Mary, Tom, Father and poor old Mother. Tell everyone I thought of them at last.

Your loving son William.

I can't write more. Mr. Archie Gould will look after all my money and forward it to you. He is as honest as the sun, and as good to me as a brother.
Will.

TAKEN FROM THE WHITE HORSE WEEKLY STAR.**APRIL 16. 1902****DIED.**

At the General Hospital in White Horse, Y.T. at 1.30 a.m. on Tuesday,

April 15th, Wm. A. Perkins, a native of Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, in his 30th year.

To a stranger, the above announcement will simply mean the passing away of a young man in the prime of life who had come to this north-land like so many others to try and better his worldly condition, but had been called away before the realisation of his dreams. To those who knew and loved him however, it will have an infinitely deeper meaning. It will mean the loss of a staunch and loyal friend respected and honoured by the entire community for his manly and upright character; the loss of a good citizen; the loss to society of one of its brightest and versatile members, and the loss to a fond mother in a distant land of Australia of a loving and dutiful son, the news of whose demise will cause her a heart agony that time alone can assuage.

In this land of the midnight sun, men in their wild scramble for gold, and for the reason that they are almost daily brought into contact with danger and death, have become calloused to a certain extent, and it requires the happening of the unexpected to pierce through the outside veneer of selfishness ... (line deleted) ... drop a tear over the silent form of a departed comrade or friend. But this feeling of indifference was marked by its absence during Mr. Perkins' illness and when he was taken to the hospital, and it was learned that serious complications had arisen and it was doubtful if he would recover, a pall of sadness settled upon the entire community, and his death, though anticipated from the words of his physician, was the cause of universal sorrow and regret.

Mr. Perkins first came north in the spring of '98 and joined with the rush of that memorable year to the goldfields of the Klondyke. For almost two years he lived in or early in 1900 he left there and came to White Horse. On his arrival here, he was taken near Dawson, but his ventures in the mines only proved moderately successful and was taken in as partner in the Grafter copper mine by Mr. Woodney, who had known him for a number of years.

After doing considerable work on the mine, and satisfying themselves that it was a valuable piece of property, Messrs. Woodney and Perkins concluded to try and interest capital to open it up, and Mr. Perkins made a trip to New York and visited Marcus Daley, who as it was afterwards proved, was lying on his deathbed. Mr. Daley expressed his willingness to go into the deal, but before arrangements could be perfected, died.

Mr. Perkins then went to London for the same purpose but met with no success, after which he paid a visit to his father and mother in Australia and then returned to White Horse, arriving here 5th April, 1901. Since that time he has continued to reside here until the time of his death.

A few months ago the Moore Investment Co. of Seattle, bonded the Grafter mine for \$30,000, Mr. Perkins interest amounting to \$5,000. Monday, the first payment came due and was paid, \$1,000 being placed to the credit of Mr. Perkins in the Canadian Bank of Commerce.

After the sale of the Grafter mine, Mr. Perkins associated himself with Mr. Archie Gould and started the White Horse Gymnasium, of which he

became Physical Instructor, and which position he filled with credit to himself and satisfaction to the public, until his last illness.

A few weeks ago, at the earnest solicitation of Mr. John Barrett, the proprietor, Mr. Perkins took charge of the Hotel Grand and under his able management it was fast recovering the ground it had lost previously in the estimation of the public.

On Tuesday, April 8th, Mr. Perkins was taken with severe pains in the bowels but thought by keeping quiet he would recover in a short time. He went to bed, but continued to suffer and finally called in Dr. Lindsay. After two days with no relief, he called in Dr. Nicholson, who at once ordered his removal to the hospital, to which place he was taken Friday night. Saturday morning, he felt so much better he got up and dressed himself, but only remained up for a short time, as his malady recurred with extreme violence, causing him excruciating pain. After this he continued to grow worse until Monday morning, when it was decided as a last resort to perform an operation.

Mr. Perkins' (some missing) under his affliction and when informed of the necessity for an operation expressed a wish to set his affairs in order. With the aid of Mr. Gould he prepared a letter to his mother, to be forwarded in the event of his death; and also made a will bequeathing to her everything that he possessed.

Monday morning, Dr. Nicholson, assisted by Dr. Scharschmidt, performed the operation, but before its conclusion, it was apparent to their experienced eyes that no earthly power could save the sufferer.

After the operation he appeared to rally, but it was only the flickering of the lamp ere it was extinguished forever. The end came peacefully at 1.30 a.m. Tuesday morning.

Mr. Perkins leaves a father, mother and two brothers to mourn his loss. His father, mother and one brother live in Sydney, N.S.W. and the other brother is with the Australian contingent in South Africa, where he was recently decorated with the Victoria Cross, for bravery in the field of battle.

The funeral service took place today at 10 o'clock in the Catholic church where beautiful and impressive services for the dead were conducted by Rev. Father Lefebvre. Tender hands had placed beautiful artificial floral decorations on the coffin, and we felt as we gazed upon the casket in which he lay that even though he had passed away while far from home and kindred, nothing had been left undone that should have been done.

Upon the conclusion of the services in the church, the body followed to its resting place 'neath the whispering pines by the largest concourse of people ever seen in White Horse upon a like occasion.

Dutiful son, loyal friend, staunch comrade, farewell. May your sleep be calm and peaceful.

ITEM.

Out of respect to the memory of the late Mr. Wm. Perkins the entertainment by the White Horse Literary Society which was announced to take place tomorrow night, has been postponed until Thursday night of next week.

LETTERS AFTER THE DEATH OF WILLIAM PERKINS

WHITE HORSE, Y.T.

April 16th, 1901.

Mr. Bernard Perkins,

Dear Sir,

I am under the painful duty of informing you of the death of your brother and my esteemed friend, William Perkins, which happened at 1.30 a.m. yesterday morning after a short but severe illness, and was buried in the cemetery here at 12 o'clock today, with all the honors that the people of White Horse could bestow on him.

As we get his affairs settled up I will be glad to inform you at any time of anything you wish to know as regards his affairs which I shall learn more about in the near future. I will hope to hear from you after you receive this letter, and believe me when I say all the relations of our dearly beloved friend who has just passed from amongst us, has the heartfelt sympathy of everyone in White Horse tonight.

I sincerely remain your friend in sorrow,

A. R Gould,

White Horse,

WHITE HORSE GENERAL HOSPITAL,

April 28th; 1902.

Dear Madam,

I regret to have to announce to you the death of your son William in this place on April 15th; although I have no doubt but that you have been already informed by Mr. Gould.



Woodney and Bill Perkins at their copper mine, Whitehorse.

I was not the Physician in attendance when he first took ill, but when I took his case in charge I found him to be suffering from a severe attack of appendicitis. When he showed no rapid signs of any improvement I decided to operate on him as a last resort to save his life.

Previous to the operation I informed him that his chances of recovery were extremely small and advised him to settle any affairs accordingly.

At the operation I found his condition to be so very bad that no power on earth could save him. His appendix was perforated in several parts and a diffuse suppurative peritonitis existed, besides every inch of the entire bowel bound down by adhesions (arising from the inflammation).

His condition was the worst I have ever seen in many scores of similar cases; and the operation alone was the only means of giving him a fighting chance.

The poor boy died however, twelve hours after the operation, in spite of all that could be done for him.

I felt it my duty to explain to you the true cause of his death, and to assure you that he had the best of care from the best of trained nurses and hospital attention. Your son was a valued personal friend of mine of many months standing and no one regrets more than myself his untimely end.

As one of the executors of his will, I will do my duty in settling his estate; which will require nearly a year on account of a payment of \$4,000 on a mine recently, sold in a bond, not becoming due until January, 1903.

In conclusion permit me to express my deep sympathy for you in your irreparable

Yours respectfully,

F J Nicholson

BLANDFORD, N.S.W.

8th July, 1902.

Messrs. Nicholson and Gould,

Executors of the late

William A. Perkins.

Dear Sirs,

I want you to transfer to my son John J. Perkins, all my interest in those two mineral properties known as Newhaven and Carnage and all other mineral properties left by my late son William Perkins, to me, with the exception of the Grafter. The transfer I want made to my son John J. Perkins, are for the purpose of enabling him to open up these properties and to develop them. I am having my signature witnessed by a Justice of the Peace as a guarantee of its being genuine. I would be much obliged if you would also send me a copy of my late son's will and a statement showing how I stand under my son's will, as I have not one and would like a copy of the will for reference. Thanking you very much for your kindness to my late son and for looking after my interests.

Yours sincerely,

Eleanor Perkins.

Mother of the Late William Perkins.

WHITE HORSE,

July 7, 1902.

Dear Mag,

Your long looked for letter from home I received on Saturday. and was pleased to see you were all bearing up well, and I was real pleased to hear of father and mother bearing their awful sorrow so well. Now a few lines about myself.

I know you have got some of my letters by this. You will see by some I wrote that I was working at Labarge, 30 miles down the river. I worked 26 days at \$3.00 a day, about 12/6 English money. The job is now finished. I am working in town now, I don't know how long it will last, however, I think I can manage till I settle poor old Bill's business matters for mother. I told Bernard that that first \$1,000, it is now paid into the Bank, so that part is alright.

Mr. A. Gould received yours and Bernard's letters and he was very pleased. He is a genuine good fellow. A Mrs. Smith wrote mother a long letter. I hope she received it alright. This Mrs. Smith is a grand woman. I sent you a photo of Mrs. Smith and Mr. Gould.

Tell mother I am collecting everything I can of Wills. That ring that you refer to I am told belonged to Bill's partner, W. Woodney, and when they fell out, Bill gave him the ring. I am not sure, but I will find out. He had another little plain ring and Mrs. Smith wishes to be allowed to keep it. She was very fond of Bill. She has planted two rose bushes on Will's grave. About the headstone; we have, at least, the people have sent out for one. We have to send right down to Vancouver. It would be some time before it is done. Mr. Gould is a carpenter and he is going to put the palings around the grave himself. It was Mr. Gould that made poor Will's coffin.

However, we will get things fixed up soon. About getting Mass offered up, well I might tell you I did get the priest (the same that attended Bill at the last moment) to offer Mass on yesterday, but I don't intend to any more over here. Tell mother is costs \$25 or £3 for one Mass (a lot of money in a place like this). And if you get Mass offered over there, it will be as well.

I have had several yarns with the priest, he is a fine little Frenchman. Well Mag, you can tell father and mother, as soon as the grave is done up well I will have a picture taken of it. I have pictures of the funeral and the coffin, and also some flowers off the coffin, also a lock of hair of Wills. How is Nellie, I wrote her, also wrote Tom, Bernard, yourself, Pat and I wrote a couple of letters to father and mother.

I am enclosing clippings of White Horse paper with card of thanks, also my card of thanks that I had inserted just after I arrived. Well Mag, I will conclude by saying that I feel a lot better since I received news from home and to learn that you all bear the shock bravely. I am writing Bernard to-night or tomorrow. So with best wishes to all at home. From your affectionate brother, Jack.

I will write Frank, Therese, Kate, Agnes, one of these days. I will be anxious for a note from father and mother themselves.

J.J.P. [William's brother]

THE WHITE HORSE HOTEL

2nd December, 1902.

Dear Father,

I received your letter some time back while I was working on the trail between here and Dawson. I was glad to get your letter, and glad to learn you were enjoying good health, as I am myself, thank God. I also received letters from mother, Agnes, Katie, Theresa and Frank. I was very pleased to get letters from the little 'uns (I don't know that I should class Agnes in the catalogue of little 'uns). I wrote to mother a few days ago, I think I forget to mention that I received photos of Will alright, I gave Mr. Gould one, he prizes it very much. I will write to all the little ones in due time.

Well father, I have the grave all fixed up in good style now, a nice neat marble stone, and it is the only one in the White Horse graveyard at present. I had a picture taken and it looks splendid, I am going to have a picture taken with a few friends standing by. Well father, I have considered what you suggested, that is, about shipping Will home. Well, I have thought over it often myself, and I have talked the matter over with Mr. Gould and I have concluded it is best to leave Will rest where he is for the present. I am sure it would not be his wish for you to spend any of your money in that way as the days are growing on now, when you and mother will require all the money you have got or will have. So I think father, if we leave things as they are at present, and somewhere in the future, his brothers may be in the position to remove is remains back to the old church yard at Murrurundi.

Mother told me she received £300 insurance money alright, but had to send it back to London to collect. How I warned the lawyer about that; I advised him to send it to London first, and have it collected and sent to Australia. But however, it was a good thing you got it alright, for of course, if you are a little pressed for money, the banker at Murrurundi will advance you money on the draft.

Well father, I told you some time back, that I would try and be home for Xmas, but you will understand by this that I can't do so. I am watching mother's interests. His Grafters, there have been different reports, some good, some bad, but the latest is good. I was told last night by one of the company, that they struck nine feet of solid ore, and they expect to raise money (be able to) to pay up their calls on 14th January. That is the day that the \$4,000 or £800 fall due, and the chances are that everything will be paid alright. They might ask for an extension of time to pay.

However, as soon as I see everything on a good sound basis, I will leave for home. Well father, it is very cold here now. The thermometer registered 50 degrees below zero the other morning, the river is frozen, and you could drive 100 ton over the ice.

Well father, I'll conclude by sending best wishes and love to all (and best wishes for Xmas day).

Your affect.

J. J. Perkins.

[William's brother]

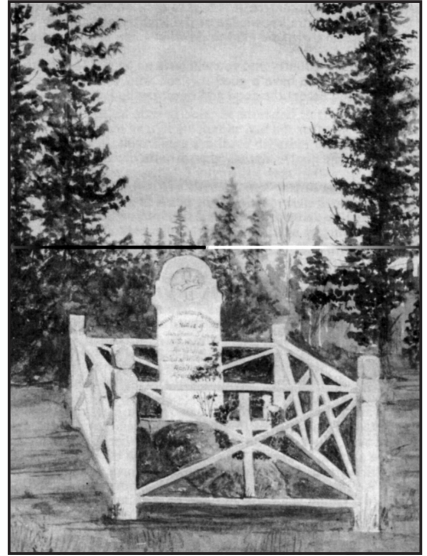
Editor's Note:

As we can see from the long procession below, Canadians appreciated Will Perkins more than he imagined. Had he lived, he might have become a pillar of the community and left a dynasty here lasting to the present day.

His remarks about his health throughout his letters indicate perhaps that he had a premonition about an early death.

Many sections had to be left out because of space. In particular, I regret omitting a description of Perkin's great boxing match with Joe Boyle's partner, Frank Slavin, as described in the Dawson Daily News.

Issue No. 24 had a complete history of the Whitehorse copper mines, by historian Dick McKenna. Issue No. 25 showed Jim Robb visiting the old copper mine near Army Beach. S.H.



William Perkins' grave at Whitehorse, from a painting. There is a photo of this grave at the beginning of the article.



Will Perkins funeral procession, Whitehorse.