



All for the Greed of Gold: Will Woodin's Klondike Adventure

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Enhanced with family photographs and skillfully edited, Will's diaries, short story, and candid 1910 memoir describe the travails of taking an uncommon route to the Yukon over the White Pass and Tutshi Trails. This narrative highlights the camaraderie and cooperation among working-class men.

When the steamship Cleveland left Seattle's docks on March 1, 1898, William Jay Woodin was on board, traveling with his father and several others. It was the nineteenth century's last great gold rush, but rather than mine, they planned to earn their fortune by providing supplies. Unlike many stampederes, Will's party chose to take both the White Pass Trail and the Tutshi Trail, and his story offers a rare glimpse into ordeals suffered along this less common, seldom chronicled route.

In another unique aspect, Will's experiences epitomize the story of how working-class men endured a grueling Yukon journey. Most published gold rush memoirs, letters, and diaries were written by middle- or upper-class adventurers, but Will was part of an emerging middle class who, with minimal formal education, left farm life to seek urban employment. Whether packing tons of goods on their own backs or building boats at the Windy Arm camp, his accounts bring to light the cooperation and camaraderie necessary for survival, and his simple yet perceptive observations reveal much about how the average Klondike stampeder lived, worked, and struggled to overcome hardships.

Enhanced with family photographs and skillfully edited, Will's writings-- including diaries, a short story, and a candid 1910 memoir--record events, emotions, and reflections, as well as his youthful wonder at the beauty surrounding him. He provides specific descriptions of trail conditions, extreme weather, travel hazards, and social relationships as the horde of thousands climbed the White Pass and floated down the Yukon to Dawson. He describes the workings of the gold fields and the economics of minimizing risk.

Editor Catherine Spude's expert integration of the autobiography and selected journal entries places the young stampeder's views within the context of the era's value systems, economics and social structures, and also illuminates what memoir writers sometimes fail to discuss when crafting personal narratives. A historian and archaeologist, she has written popular history for magazines and newspapers as well as numerous journal articles. Her book about the legend of Soapy Smith was a finalist for a Western Writers of America Spur Award.

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