

March 17, 1899

Dawson City, Yukon

Dear Sarah,

I hope this letter finds you and the children well. I'm writing to you from Dawson City, where I've been living for the past few months. I know I've been quiet for a while, but I wanted to give you a proper update on my situation. The weather is starting to thaw, and we're finally seeing some signs of spring in the Yukon.

As you know, I've been working as a saloon owner in the camp, but I've also been dabbling in prospecting. I've staked a claim on Eldorado Creek, about 10 miles from here. I've been panning the creek bed, and I'm optimistic about finding some gold. The creek is rich in pay dirt, and I've already seen some promising signs. The problem is, the weather has been brutal lately, and it's been difficult to work the claim. The cold has been biting, and I've had to send some of my grub to the local blacksmith to be repaired.

Speaking of the blacksmith, I've been friends with Tom since we arrived in Dawson. He's been a godsend, fixing all my equipment and keeping me going. I've also been visiting with Father Bernard, our local missionary. He's been doing some amazing work here, helping the native populations and spreading the word about the Gospel. I've even been helping him out with some of his projects, like building a new school for the kids.

The steamboat captain, John Irving, came into town yesterday, and I had a chance to catch up with him. He's been navigating the Yukon River for years and has some incredible stories to tell. He told me about a group of prospectors who struck it rich on Bonanza Creek, just a few miles from here. They found a vein of gold that was estimated to be worth over \$100,000! I know it's a long shot, but hearing stories like that keeps me motivated.

In other news, prices are going up in town, and I've had to adjust my menu at the saloon accordingly. A pint of beer now costs 25 cents, and a plate of grub will set you back 50 cents. I know it's a lot, but we have to make do with what we have here. I've also been hearing rumors about a new strike on the Yukon River, but I don't have any details yet.

I know I've been gone for a while, and I promise to come back to you as soon as I can. I'll be writing more often, and I hope to hear from you too. Until then, take care of the kids and give them a hug from me.

Yours truly,

James

P.S. I've included a small map of the creek where I'm prospecting. I hope you can make out the details. I've also included a small sketch of the saloon. I'm proud of what we've built here, and I know you'd love it.

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Geographic Location: Dawson City

Document Originator Type: Newspaper

Settlement Type: Mining Camp

Main Occupations: Saloon Owner, Missionary, Steamboat Captain, Blacksmith

Event Year: 1899

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Document Date: 2022-03-17

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**Event Year (1899):** Tracks the lifecycle of the rush. 1896-1897: discovery and initial staking. 1897-1898: mass stampede (estimated 100,000 set out; 30,000-40,000 reached Dawson). 1898-1899: peak operations. 1900+: decline and consolidation.

**Population Estimates (100-35,000):** Dramatic fluctuations characterized settlements. Dawson: 500 (fall 1897), 5,000 (spring 1898), 30,000-40,000 (summer 1898), 8,000 (1900).

#### **Key Measurement Systems:**

- **Troy ounces:** Gold measured in ounces, with prices around \$16-17/oz
- **Claim dimensions:** 500 feet along creek, bank to bank
- **Distances:** Miles on trails (Dyea to Lake Bennett: 33 miles; Skagway to Bennett: 45 miles)
- **Freight rates:** Cents per pound (peaked at \$1/lb over Chilkoot Pass in winter 1897-98)
- **Wages:** Daily rates (\$15/day for skilled labor in 1898, \$1.50/day Outside)
- **Temperature:** Fahrenheit readings (-60°F common in winter; working conditions ceased below -50°F)
- **Royalty rates:** 10% on gold output initially, later 2.5%
- **Outfit requirements:** Canadian government mandated 1,150 pounds of provisions per person