

'Natural ingenuity combined with the amazing ability to make money out of thin air have become distinguishing features of Seattle'



look into the likely origins of the city's pioneering achievements

the world's best known and most successful companies: Microsoft, Boeing, Amazon.com, United Parcel, Costco and Starbucks – to name just a few.

"Fostering a culture of creativity and invention is critical to long-term economic health," says Nathan Myhrvold. The eclectically-minded founder of Microsoft Research – a theoretical physicist who once studied cosmology with Stephen Hawking and hunts, successfully, for dinosaur fossils – now co-runs

a small Seattle firm, Intellectual Ventures, devoted to innovation.

One of the secrets of the city's legendary inventiveness and ingenuity lies in its relatively short history (Seattle was founded in 1851), dominated by the Gold Rush. When gold was discovered in Klondike Valley in 1896, Seattle as the gateway to Alaska became the place where adventurers would stock up on food and equipment before going north. All sorts of businesses flourished. A special "publicity

committee" was formed to spread the stories of Klondike's unspeakable wealth all over the world. In all the years of the Gold Rush, the diggers discovered \$10m worth of gold. In the meantime, the merchants of Seattle made \$20m without ever setting foot on Alaskan soil. The real Klondike therefore was in Seattle.

Natural ingenuity combined with the amazing ability to make money out of thin air have become distinguishing features ►

