



DEAD HORSE GULCH, WHERE MUCH HARDSHIP WAS ENDURED. THE GULCH IS SEEN FAR BELOW THE WINDING RAILWAY

The Gateway of the North

By HIRAM A. CODY

How lust for gold led to stupendous hardships and great endurance in the making of a highway to the Klondyke

"Portal that leads to an enchanted land
Of cities, forests, fields of gold,
Vast tundras, lordly summits, touched with
snow."



WHEN the great gold discoveries in the Klondyke thrilled the whole world and thousands of people pressed into the country, suffering untold hardships, many were the schemes planned for transferring freight over the mountain passes and down the Yukon River. Steam motors, traction sleds, and

railless locomotives were almost as numerous as the stars. One man, who had no knowledge of freighting and had never been near the Yukon River, invented a machine with cog wheels with a treadmill behind to run on the ice. He imagined the river was as smooth as a skating rink, and knew nothing of the jammed and twisted piles of ice which in winter mark every foot of the way. Another invented a machine even more cumbrous and ridiculous, but this contrivance got no further than Dyea, for when the inventor

looked upon the frowning Chilkoot Pass he took the first boat for Seattle and never returned.

When the gold fever was at its height, and all sorts of wild schemes were being daily put forth, the White Pass and Yukon Railway Company looked around for the best route for the proposed railroad. Many surveys were made and the whole contour of the country carefully considered.

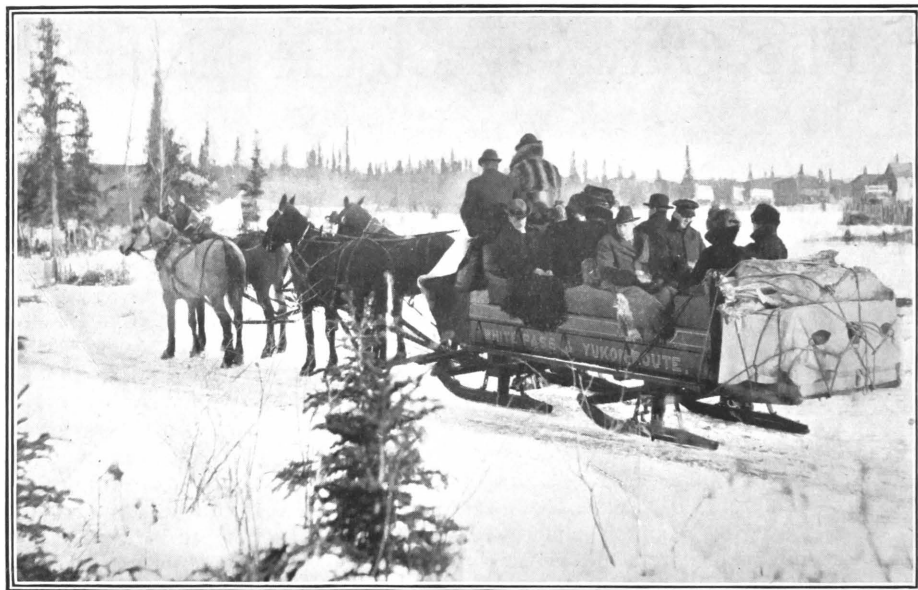
Stretching away from Skagway, on the Lynn Canal, was the famous White Pass route over which thousands of people passed to the gold fields. In 1887 Mr. Ogilvie, who was sent out by the Honourable Thomas White, then Minister of the Interior, for the exploration of the country drained by the Yukon River, heard of a low pass which led to the head waters of that mighty stream. The Chilkat Indians professed to know nothing of the way, wishing, no doubt, to keep it a secret for trading purposes with the Indians along the Yukon River. After some difficulty a Tagish Indian was obtained who knew the trail, and guided Captain Moore over the summit, which was then named by Mr. Ogilvie the "White Pass," in honour of the Minister

of the Interior. This was the route finally settled upon by the White Pass and Yukon Railway Company when in 1898 they began the building of that narrow-gauge road which has become so famous.

It was a great engineering feat, worthy to be classed with the celebrated labours of Hercules. On the seventh of July, 1897, the first pack train started from Skagway over the White Pass trail to Lake Bennett, and on the same date one year later the White Pass and Yukon Railway Company ran its first locomotive through Skagway's central thoroughfare.

The first fifteen miles of the road rises to an altitude of nearly three thousand feet, winding up and around the stone-walled confines of the Skagway Valley. On the old trail there was the "White Pass City," where thousands of packers rested in their terrible climb of 1897. Above the remains of the old resting-place the strenuous workmen carved the road into the mountain side along a high bluff, whilst far below, the men who were working on the same line appeared like so many dots, and the houses of the deserted resting-place like children's toys.

How foolhardy the whole work must



PASSENGERS AND MAIL ON WHITE PASS AND YUKON WINTER STAGE ROUTE, HEADING FOR DAWSON CITY, 320 MILES AWAY



SWINGING INTO WHITEHORSE, YUKON TERRITORY, WITH A LOAD OF GOLD-SEEKERS

have seemed to an ordinary onlooker! But the engineers knew their work. Thousands of tons of powder were used, an army of workmen employed, and millions of dollars poured out in the construction of that road, and yet, without the brains of those great engineers, the work would have been in vain.

Up, steadily up, the road forced its sinuous way, passing along the side of a sheer wall of rock, from which a splendid view was obtained down the valley to Skagway and the waters of the Lynn Canal; whilst away to the westward towards Dyea, great snow-capped peaks could be seen, bleak, rugged, and grand.

At the summit, a distance of twenty-one miles, an altitude of almost three

thousand feet was reached, and then the road began to dip on the other side. Across that wind-swept region, where in winter the snow piles like mountains, the workmen stretched, week after week, those two steel bands till the silver sheen of Lake Bennett burst into view. And there, on the border of that memorable sheet of water, those toil-worn men paused for a time to indulge in a well-earned celebration—a celebration which is full of interest for us to-day.

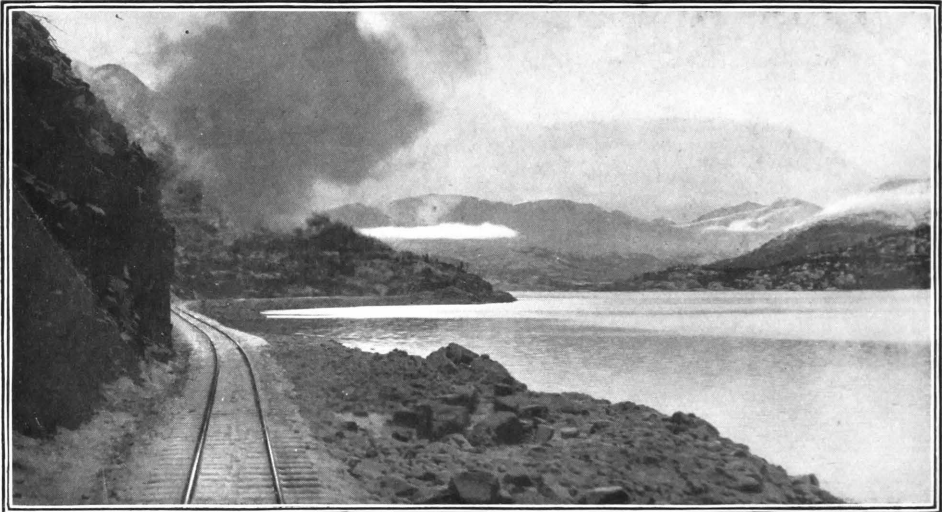
Bennett was beautifully situated on the border of the lake, which received its name in 1883 from Lieutenant Schwatka, of the United States army, in honour of Mr. James Gordon Bennett, of the *New York Herald*. This place at the

present time is almost deserted, but, in May, 1898, the people in and around Bennett numbered twenty-five thousand. It was the central point for gold-seekers who travelled over the Chilkoot and White Pass trails. From one hundred to one thousand tons of supplies were daily shipped into the interior of the country through this point, and it is estimated that as many pounds of gold were taken out. There were two banks, one newspaper, sixteen hotels and restaurants, ten general stores, two saw-mills, three physicians, seven churches, and two saloons.

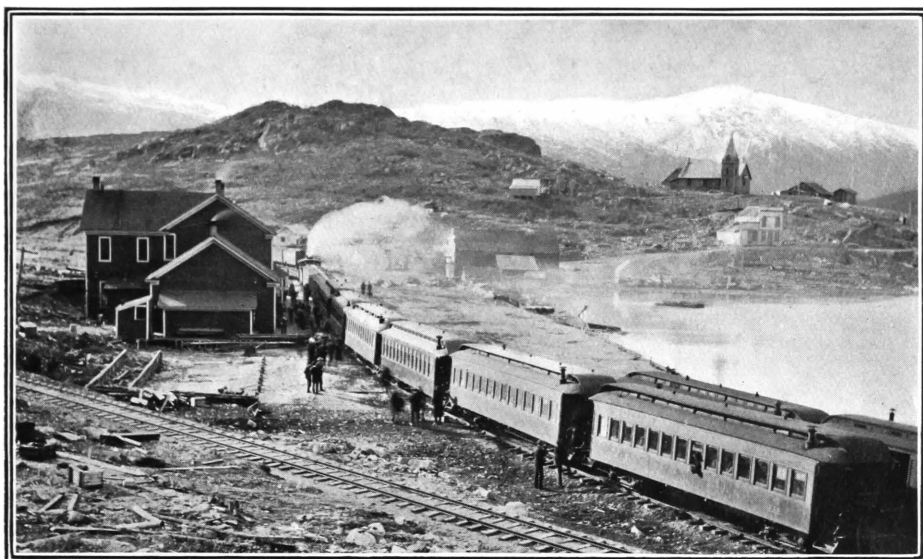
This was the town which, on July the 6th, 1889, arrayed itself in holiday attire to celebrate the driving of the golden spike which completed the road from Skagway to Bennett. Carloads of excursionists came from the coast to view the ceremony, which was most imposing. From the steel track to the water's edge the carts of the Red Line Transportation Company were drawn up four tier deep, whilst on the lake, forming a splendid background, floated numerous steamboats. Not without reason was this arrangement, for the impressive act signified that the connecting link was forged which united Skagway with St. Michael's, at the mouth of the Yukon River, over

three thousand miles away. Since then over that unbroken line multitudes of people have passed, and thousands of tons of freight carried to all parts of the country. But the glory of Bennett was soon to depart, for the tide of progress swept on, and the once prosperous place was left desolate and forsaken, a city without inhabitant.

The building of the extension to Whitehorse was less difficult. The country was not so rugged, and the course lay past many lakes, over creeks and rivers, through woods and fens, into lowlands covered with poplars, wild fruit, and flowers, and through a meadowy, swampy country till Whitehorse was reached. Yet there were many interesting problems for the engineers to face during the building of this portion of the road. One is significant. A lake of considerable size threw its sheet of water as a barrier across the way. It was proposed to drain it, and when the work was partly completed, the clay soil gave way with a mighty rush, and the lake, confined for ages, burst forth glad of its freedom, carrying everything before it into the Watson River, and now the huge basin is seen with clay-cracked sides, through which a little stream winds its devious way. Such speed was made with this portion of the road that on July



A GLIMPSE OF THE FAMOUS LAKE BENNETT—THIRTY MILES LONG; THREE MILES WIDE. ELEVATION, 2,150 FEET ABOVE THE SEA



A DESERTED CITY

Bennett, which once had a population of 25,000, has now only a few employees of the White Pass and Yukon Railway. The church and house in the background are stripped and bare

the 30th, 1900, the first passenger train ran from Skagway to Whitehorse, a distance of one hundred and ten miles. Since then, the latter town has been the terminus, and all passengers and goods bound for the interior of the country are transferred, in summer to the fine river boats of the company, and in winter to the comfortable sleighs which ply between Dawson and Whitehorse.

Whitehorse was at first but a very small camp called "Closeleigh," after the Close Bros., of Chicago, stockholders of the railroad. The experiment of the name was a bad one, and later, April the 21st, 1900, the company officially announced that the name henceforth would be the "old one, well known on two continents—'White Horse.'"

Too much credit cannot be given to one man, Michael J. Heney, the contractor and physical constructor of the famous line. For two-thirds of its way it is the most costly road in America, and it was by the expenditure of millions, and the untold energy of an army of men, horses and mules, and thousands of tons of powder, that the highway was blasted and forced through the stern defiles to the Yukon basin. Through the blizzards of

winter, the rains and summer days of sunshine and dust, Michael Heney and his men forced their way. The following is characteristic of the many stories told of the building of the road:

Financially the road has been a great success, and it is estimated that during the first year after it was built from Skagway to Bennett it paid for the whole cost of construction. The charge for travel, twenty cents per mile, is considered very high. Freight is in the same proportion, though great reductions have been made in the latter since the road was built. During the year 1904 almost twelve thousand passengers were carried over the road, and over thirty thousand tons of freight. The gross earnings were nine hundred and ninety-one thousand dollars, and the operating expenses five hundred and fifty-one thousand.

The furious storms of winter militate against the good working of the road. On the summit, especially, for weeks at a time it has been impossible to clear the track, and the rotary snow-plow with three or four engines plunging its way through vast drifts is a magnificent spectacle, though to the men working the plow great danger is often experienced. Dur-

ing the heavy storms of 1906 a snow-slide struck a seventy-ton rotary and sent it rolling down the mountain side with the crew inside, all of whom escaped as if by a miracle, though much bruised. The plow was caught by a bench thirty feet below the track, where it remained bottom side up, buried in the snow.

In the early days of the road, when the rotary surged through after a heavy fall of snow, it would be followed by many dog teams making for the interior over

Tagish Lake, and Windy Arm, to Conrad, a distance of twelve miles. A second from Log Cabin station, on the main line of the White Pass and Yukon Railway, above Lake Bennett by way of Tutshi Lake to Windy Arm.

Should Conrad prove to be an important mining centre the branch line will no doubt be soon constructed, which can be done with little difficulty.

What the future of the White Pass and Yukon Railway will be we can only con-



THE OLD WOODEN TRAMWAY, USED FOR CARRYING FREIGHT AROUND THE WHITE HORSE RAPIDS BEFORE THE WHITE PASS AND YUKON RAILWAY WAS BUILT

the track. At times the trains are forced to cease running, owing to the extreme cold. Last winter when it registered from seventy to eighty degrees below zero, the rails snapped like glass as the train passed over them, and great danger was encountered.

The new mining town of Conrad on Windy Arm, a southerly branch of Lake Tagish, is occupying much attention at the present time, and surveys have been made by the engineers of the White Pass and Yukon Railway. One was made from Carcross (formerly Caribou Crossing) along the shores of Lake Nares,

jecture now. Much depends upon the development of the natural resources of the country, and that they are great and valuable there can hardly be a shadow of a doubt. Hitherto, the rush has been for gold, and the vast deposits of silver, copper, and coal, almost overlooked. The country is only in its infancy. Other railroads are in operation in Alaska, and proposed routes are talked of as rivals to the White Pass and Yukon Railway, but come what may the latter will be recorded on the pages of American history as one of the marvellous feats of the nineteenth century.