

# The Wreck of the A.J. Goddard

A sternwheeler from the days of the Klondike Gold Rush



Lindsey Thomas, Doug Davidge and John Pollack





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*Boats line the shore of Lake Bennett at the height of the Klondike Gold Rush.*

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This book is dedicated to Fay Goddard and to all the volunteers who have helped with the work related to the *A.J. Goddard*.

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*Front cover: Underwater view of the paddlewheel of the A.J. Goddard. Photo: Larry Bonnett*

*Back cover, top: Clara Goddard with the A.J. Goddard at Bennett, circa 1898. Candy Waugaman Collection, KLG0, U of Alaska; centre: The A.J. Goddard in Dawson City, June 1898; A.J. Goddard Collection, courtesy of Fay Goddard; bottom: Albert Goddard looking out from under a tarp on his namesake vessel, Bennett Lake, circa 1898. A.J. Goddard Collection, courtesy of Fay Goddard*

*Back cover, background: Underwater view of the bow of the A.J. Goddard. Photo: Larry Bonnett*



## Gold

In August 1896 gold was discovered on a tributary of the Klondike River near what is now Dawson City.

Because of the area's remoteness, news of the find did not reach civilization until July 1897 — nearly a year later — when two ships laden with prospectors and gold reached Seattle and San Francisco.

Newspaper headlines and telegraph lines spread the news across North America at a tremendous pace. People



YA, *The Seattle Daily Times*, Sunday, July 18, 1897

quit their jobs by the tens of thousands and left for the Klondike as quickly as they could find equipment and supplies.

The business community across the Pacific northwest rushed to equip the stampedees who were setting out to seek their fortunes in the Klondike gold fields.

Guidebooks were hurried to press, written in most cases on the basis of secondhand information by authors who had not been there. West coast cities such as Vancouver, Victoria, Seattle and San Francisco became the departure point for the stampedees.

*Right: Stores in west coast cities competed for the miners' business. In its haste to cash in on the rush, this store misspelled "Klondike."*

YA, Bill Roozeboom collection #6303



In the midst of this excitement, a group of Seattle businessmen decided to go north and exploit the commercial opportunities of the gold rush.

*Above: Stampedees tried almost anything in their rush to get over the mountain passes.*

YA, U. of Alaska Archives photograph collection #3122





## A chance to profit

Albert J. Goddard was a Seattle businessman and was active in politics. Originally from Iowa, he and his brother Charles managed a prosperous Seattle foundry business, the Pacific Iron Works, for several years.

Albert had benefited from the great Seattle fire of 1888, which destroyed all of the foundries except his own. When gold was discovered in the Klondike, Goddard's business was one

*Below: Steamboats Louise and Bella at St. Michael, Alaska, ca. 1898.*

ASL, Claude Hobart Photograph Coll. P425-6-34



of the most profitable foundries in the region and he was financially capable of immediate action.

Goddard had expertise in fabrication and steam engineering. This put him in an excellent position to head north and benefit from the commercial opportunities that were emerging on the routes to the gold fields.

All the routes to the Klondike involved vast distances. One — the all-water route — led north along the Pacific Coast by coastal steamer to St. Michael, Alaska, near the mouth of the Yukon River.

*Right: Gold-seekers through the Seattle waterfront, 1898.*

A.J. Goddard Collection, courtesy of Fay Goddard



At St. Michael, passengers transferred to one of the few river steamboats headed up the Yukon River to Dawson.

This route, approximately 7,000 kilometres (km) long, was expensive and passed through the treacherous Bering Sea. In addition, the short northern summer limited the navigation season on the river.

*Above: This 1897 map promotes Portland, Oregon as a departure point for the Klondike.*  
YA, Pamphlet 1897-82C





*Left: An unending line of stampedeers ascends the Chilkoot Pass, ca. 1898.*

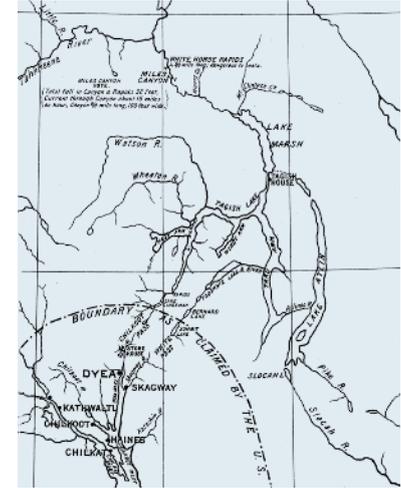
YA, Winter and Pond fonds #2293

## The land routes

Most of the gold seekers took a shorter but more difficult route. After travelling by steamship to southeastern Alaska, they packed their supplies over the Chilkoot or White Pass trails to the headwaters of the Yukon River system.

The ports of Dyea and Skagway, Alaska were the staging points for the two headwater trails; Dyea was the starting point of the Chilkoot Trail and Skagway was the starting point of the White Pass Trail. The trails led from the United States to Canada, across a boundary whose exact location had still not been determined (*see map, right*).

The two trails became infamous for their hardships. In addition to severe weather and harsh terrain — and the inexperience of most of the stampedeers — there was another challenge: the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP), concerned that thousands of people would arrive in Dawson without adequate food or supplies, ruled that every gold seeker had to bring a year's supply of provisions. The stampedeers had to haul this "ton of goods" over the mountain passes, relaying it on trip after trip.



*The land routes to the Klondike. The disputed boundary line shown on the map is farther inland than the eventual U.S./Canada border.*

YA, A.E. Ironmonger-Sola: *Klondyke: Truth and Facts of the New El Dorado*, 1897

*Right: Organised chaos at Dyea, ca. 1898.*

YA, Anton Voege fonds #114





## Boats for the Klondike

Once the stampedeers finally hauled all their goods to the headwater lakes, they had to build a boat or raft for the 800-km river portion of the journey to Dawson City. Most of them had never built a boat before, and many



*Above: Two men whipsawing lumber for a boat. YA, George B. Ladd fonds 90/13R #183*

of the vessels that they built at the headwater lakes were crude scows manoeuvred with long oars, or sweeps, barely able to make the trip to the gold fields.

Albert Goddard saw the need for a more sophisticated vessel. He ordered parts for two small prefabricated steamboats from the Risdon Iron Works in San Francisco, California. The vessels, which were designed to his specifications, would be shipped north in pieces and assembled at Bennett. They would be put to use on the Yukon River system by the new venture he established, the Upper Yukon Company.

Some stampedeers who took the longer, all-water route to St. Michael



*Men on handmade boats at Bennett, ca. 1898; note the small paddlewheel at left. UAF-Selid-Bassoc coll. 64-92-369*

in 1897 had been caught by winter, and found their steamboats frozen in on the lower Yukon River. Goddard decided that the mountain passes, while difficult and dangerous, were the better routes for transporting the disassembled vessels, mill and supplies.



## Bennett Lake

By March 1898 Goddard's company had moved the many tonnes of tools, sheet iron, rivets, steam engines and boilers to the community of Bennett, British Columbia. Bennett, at the head of Bennett Lake, was where the Chilkoot and White Pass trails converged. Most stamperers made the overland trip in the winter

*Above: Bennett, ca. 1898. Note small wooden sternwheeler, centre (not the A.J. Goddard).*

ASL, P.E. Larss collection PCA 4-1-21

and then set off in their homemade boats as soon as the ice was off the lakes and river.

The Upper Yukon Company employees reportedly hauled their freight over the White Pass Trail, longer but less steep than the Chilkoot and more suitable for horses. They may have returned to the coast via the Chilkoot Trail. They may also have used the aerial tramway that had recently been installed on the Chilkoot Pass.

Bennett was a bustling frontier tent community created by the gold rush. Tens of thousands of men and woman were camped there, waiting for the ice to go out, building boats of all shapes and sizes.

Over the course of many weeks the company's skilled workers assembled two 16-metre riveted steel stern-wheelers on the shores of the lake. The *A.J. Goddard* was completed first, followed by the *F.H. Kilbourne*.

*Below, left: The completed A.J. Goddard at Bennett, with the hull of the F.H Kilbourne (at right); below right: At Bennett while the vessels were being assembled; Clara Goddard at right.*

Left: Robert Courtney Coll., Klondike National Park Historic Site; right: A.J. Goddard Coll., courtesy Fay Goddard





## The Yukon River system

Like the stampedeers, the company depended on completing the vessels by the time the ice melted and the river opened up. Then the race to the gold fields would continue, now on water instead of land.

*Above: Raft in Miles Canyon, ca. 1898.*  
YA, Vancouver Public Library coll. #2174

The upper Yukon River system consists of a series of four large interconnected headwater lakes that extended more than 243 km, from Bennett in B.C. to the downstream end of Lake Laberge in the Yukon.

From the foot of Laberge it is another 550 km on the Yukon River to Dawson City. The Yukon River flows north to Dawson, then curves west to empty into the Bering Sea.

The waterway is navigable in both directions, except for the five-km section of water at Miles Canyon and the Whitehorse Rapids, just upstream



*Above: The A.J. Goddard, with a canoe across the bow, at Carcross circa 1898.*  
YA, Vancouver Public Library coll. #2237

from what is now Whitehorse. There, after many stampedeers came to grief, the NWMP ruled that only experienced river boatman and pilots could run the gauntlet of swift whitewater and rapids. Upstream travel through the rapids and canyon was impossible.

*Left: Stampedeers at Marsh Lake, waiting for the ice to go out.*  
YA, 92/15 Roy Minter coll. #21



## Leaving Bennett

On May 28, 1898, the ice went out on Bennett Lake. Thousands of boats took to the water within 48 hours and headed for the Dawson City gold fields. The *A.J. Goddard* appears to have departed Bennett on June 2, 1898, reaching the NWMP's Tagish Lake post the next day. The boat was under Canadian registration.

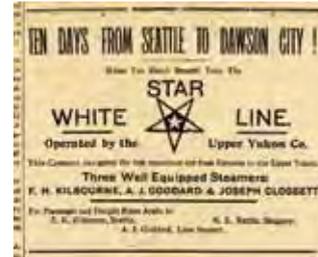


*The F.H. Kilbourne towing boats on Lake Bennett, 1899. MacBride Museum 1989-3-1-412*

Since the U.S.-Canada boundary was still being determined at the time, the stampedees, who started their overland journey in Alaska, had to clear Canadian customs, either at the summit of the Chilkoot or White Pass, or at Tagish.

On June 17, 1898, the *San Francisco Call* reported a trial run on May 31 by the *A.J. Goddard* between Bennett and Carcross, at the foot of Bennett Lake. The vessel likely returned to Bennett and waited there for the rest of the headwater lakes to become free of ice.

The *A.J. Goddard* stayed on the lakes south of Tagish post for another two weeks, possibly because ice was still



blocking Marsh Lake. The crew likely took advantage of this opportunity to tow other boats for profit (see photo, below left), or to act as a ferry, as the Upper Yukon Company had planned for the *Goddard's* sister ship, the *F.H. Kilbourne*.

Above: ASL, *Daily Alaskan* (Skagway), July 22, 1898  
Below: *The A.J. Goddard at Bennett.*  
ASL, Charles H. Metcalf Photograph Coll. P34-009





## On to Dawson

On June 16, 1898, the *A.J. Goddard* departed the upper end of Lake Bennett and headed for Dawson. Shortly afterward, the vessel arrived at the small landing of Canyon City, just upstream of Miles Canyon.

The *A.J. Goddard* proceeded under its own power through the difficult stretch of water, only the third stern-wheeler to accomplish this feat. The

*The A.J. Goddard at the dock in Dawson, 1898.*  
A.J. Goddard Collection, courtesy of Fay Goddard

vessel arrived in the small settlement of Whitehorse on June 17.

The boat continued down the Yukon River to Lake Laberge, then through the section of river known as the Thirty Mile. It arrived in Dawson City in the early hours of June 21 with ten passengers and a crew of eight.

The *A.J. Goddard* was the first stern-wheeler to navigate from Bennett to Dawson City in 1898. A short time later, it was one of the first stern-wheelers to make the return trip upstream from Dawson to the lower end of the Whitehorse Rapids. Albert Goddard's wife Clara accompanied

him on the voyage, and was later honoured as the first female riverboat pilot on the Upper Yukon River.

*Below: Clara Goddard, 1898, in the tent that served as her home and the office of the Upper Yukon Company. When her husband Albert became ill with typhoid she took over his duties as well as nursing, cooking and cleaning.*  
A.J. Goddard Collection, courtesy of Fay Goddard



*The Columbian, Joseph Clossett and Victorian on the Whitehorse waterfront, Spring 1900. The diminutive Clossett was still 7 metres longer than the Goddard.*  
YA, UAA collection #3124



## After the gold rush

From this point on, little is known about the *A.J. Goddard*. Like many of the pioneer vessels on the Yukon River, it was likely too small to be as profitable as the larger steamboats on the 500-km journey between Whitehorse and Dawson City. With the completion of the White Pass and

*The A.J. Goddard in Dawson, dwarfed by larger boats. YA, Robert Coutts fonds, 78/69 #357*



Yukon Route railway (WP&YR) between Skagway and Whitehorse in 1900, Whitehorse had become the head of navigation on the Yukon River; Bennett became a ghost town.

The *A.J. Goddard* was too small to easily navigate the more difficult sections of the Yukon River, such as Five Finger Rapids and Rink Rapids. It spent much of its time in the towing business on Lake Laberge.

In 1899 the Upper Yukon Company was sold to a competitor, the Canadian Development Company (CDC), which appears to have confined the vessel's service between Whitehorse and the foot of the Thirty Mile River. Two



years later, the CDC was itself sold to WP&YR, but there is no evidence that the *A.J. Goddard* was ever recognized as being a part of WP&YR's assets.

*Above: By 1901, Whitehorse had grown (compare this to photo, p. 10). Most of these vessels were owned by WP&YR's river division. YA, E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen coll.), 2002/118 #95*



## The worst storm of the year



In the late fall of 1901, the *A.J. Goddard* made a trip back to Whitehorse from Lower Laberge. The small vessel had only five people on board: the crew — Captain Charles Edward MacDonald, cook Fay Ransom, fireman John Thompson and engineer Julius Stockfeld — as well as one passenger, C.P. Snyder.

*Lake Laberge is prone to wind and storms.*

Photo: Government of Yukon

On October 11, the *A.J. Goddard* entered Lake Laberge with a large barge in tow; Captain MacDonald likely hoped to make Whitehorse by the end of the day. The lake is similar to many other large mountain and northern lakes in western Canada. Violent storms and dangerous sea conditions, with short steep waves, can arise with little warning.

The *Klondike Nugget* reported that the *A.J. Goddard* encountered the “worst storm of the year.” An October storm in a small open steamboat on a large northern lake would be

an intense and miserable experience. The little ship was blasted with freezing rain and snow and pounded by waves that put water onto the decks. The vessel was reported to have lost its tow and was compelled to keep its bow into the now intense wind.

*Clara Goddard with the vessel at Bennett. Note how open the ship was to the elements.*

Candy Waugaman Collection, KLG0, U of Alaska





## Disaster

Despite the crew's efforts, the *A. J. Goddard* began to take on water, which extinguished the boiler fires. This left the wood-burning ship without power. The vessel foundered and sank to the lake bottom only a few hundred metres from shore. Charles MacDonald, Fay Ransom and John Thompson all drowned.



*Albert Goddard on his namesake boat, Bennett Lake, circa 1898. The open vessel provided little protection from the elements.*

A.J. Goddard Collection, courtesy of Fay Goddard



Julius Stockfeld and C.P. Snyder went into the water and hung onto the detached pilothouse. After more than an hour of fighting for their lives, they were rescued by a local trapper in a rowboat. Given the cold temperature of the lake it is remarkable that they did not die of hypothermia. There is little doubt that the trapper's actions saved their lives.

The body of Charles McDonald was found on May 3, 1902; Fay Ransome was found July 8 and John Thompson was found July 27. The three were buried at the back of the Lower Laberge police post by the members of the detachment.

*Above: The Royal North-West Mounted Police detachment at Lower Laberge, 1915. Glenbow Archives NA-1663-43*

# STR. GODDARD WRECKED ON LAKE LEBARGE

Capt. McDonald, Cook Ransom and an Unknown Fireman Were Drowned—The Boat Was Engaged in Towing a Barge Across the Lake When It Encountered the Worst Storm of the Season—Line Parted But Boat Could Not Reach the Shore—No Bodies Have Been Recovered.

Lower Lebarge, Oct. 14.—The worst place. Clarke went out into the surf. Finally the water began breaking storm of the season occurred on Lake in a small boat and succeeded in over the bow and sides and put the Lebarge on Friday last, as a result of hauling both men in, although as a fires out.



### Lost to memory

The *A.J. Goddard* was one of several sternwheelers from the gold rush era that were lost due to misfortune or disaster. Despite extensive research, information about its whereabouts was not found; the location was never mapped or described in any detail.

*Above: Clara Goddard died in 1953; Albert in 1958. A.J. Goddard Coll., courtesy of Fay Goddard  
Page 14: YA, Klondike Nugget, October 14, 1901*

The only thing that marked its existence was the name of the modest shoreline prominence, Goddard Point, which in 1936 became an official map feature on the National Topographic System Map Series and is still in use today.

People returned to Goddard Point on a few occasions to pay homage to those who had died. The surviving family of Captain MacDonald received a photo taken in 1939 (*above, right*) showing



two men who placed a marker at the grave site of Captain MacDonald.

In the early 1950s, MacDonald's daughter, Irene MacDonald Hopp, made a pilgrimage from southeast Alaska to the Yukon to remember her father. With the help of well-known Yukon pilot Bud Harbottle, she

reportedly flew to the Lower Laberge area to look for the grave site and to drop a bronze plaque over the site of the wreck in honour of her father.



*Above: Grave of Capt. MacDonald. N. Decker Coll.  
Left: A model of the A.J. Goddard appeared as a parade float in the 1929 gathering of the Sourdough Stampede Association in Seattle.  
A.J. Goddard Collection, courtesy of Fay Goddard*



## The years pass

Over the years, any knowledge of the wreck's location was eventually lost as people familiar with the story either left the territory or died. The few articles and books that mentioned the *A.J. Goddard* talked about the loss as a mystery or as the ghost ship of Lake Laberge.



*Left: Looking south at Goddard Point. Photo: Government of Yukon*

Tourists and outdoor adventure seekers passed by Goddard Point by the thousands without knowing what lay beneath.

In 1978, however, interest in the many historical shipwrecks along the upper Yukon River and Southern Lakes region of the territory increased. Parks

Canada teams, under the direction of Peter Waddell, visited many wet or submerged historic gold-rush-era sites; these stretched from Lake Lindeman in B.C. all the way down the lake and river system as far as the Thirty Mile River in the Yukon.



*Above: Aerial view of Goddard Point, May 2010; note ice on lake. Photo: Doug Davidge*

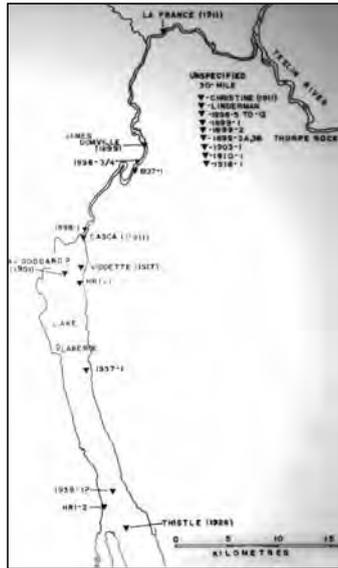
The Parks Canada dive teams surveyed many sites, including the area near Goddard Point. Many anecdotal reports of the time connected the *A.J. Goddard* to the wooden remains of a sternwheeler along the shoreline not far from Goddard Point.



## Looking for clues

There is, in fact, a wreck site visible in shallow water just to the north of Goddard Point. Field work in 1978 by the Parks Canada team revealed that this was not the *A.J. Goddard*, but most likely the remains of the steamer *Vidette*

and possibly a second wooden-hulled vessel. The Parks Canada team searched offshore of Goddard Point using divers on a towed dive board, but did not detect any sign of the *A.J. Goddard* wreck.



In 1986 the Yukon Underwater Diving Association (YUDA) resumed the search for the many wrecks in the waters of the upper Yukon River. The Government of

Left: Yukon Underwater Diving Association Heritage Resources Inventory: Final Report.

Yukon’s Department of Tourism provided funding for the Yukon Underwater Historic Resources Inventory, which would further investigate the many stories behind the sternwheeler wrecks.

Marine archaeologist Norm Easton conducted a great deal of archival research, during which he discovered that the *A.J. Goddard* sank closer to Goddard Point than previously thought. Finding the vessel, which was only about 15 metres long and about three metres wide, would be very difficult when searching one or more square kilometres of lake bottom.

Below: Steamer *Vidette*, which later sank in Lake Laberge, stuck in the ice near Indian River, south of Dawson. YA, A.K. Schellinger fonds #5919





## People of the lake

The Ta'an Kwäch'än are a First Nation who take their name from Tää'an Män (Lake Laberge) in the heart of their traditional territory. Goddard Point is a traditional camp for Ta'an Kwäch'än families, and it is possible that they assisted in the rescue of people from the sinking sternwheeler.

We acknowledge the assistance of Mark Nelson, Glen Grady and Jason Shorty, who visited the project in 2009 with TKC elders.



*Above: Ta'an Kwäch'än elder Jim Miller (at right) was born at Goddard Point and his family resided there for many years following the sinking. When Jim started working, he was a crew member on the sternwheelers and used to pass by Goddard Point all the time. Dennis Broeren (at left) grew up at Lower Laberge, not far from the wreck site. Photo: Ta'an Kwäch'än Council*

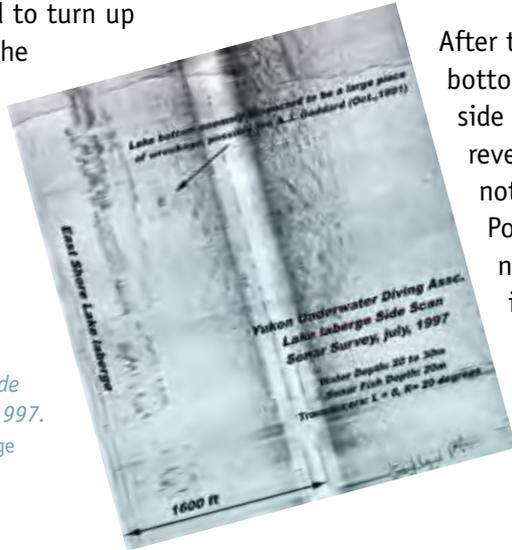
*Left: Dennis Broeren, Jim Miller and Glenn Grady at Lower Laberge, 2009. The wooden fragments along the shore are the remains of the sternwheeler Casca, sticking out of the beach gravels. Photo: Don Reid*



### The search continues

In 1986 volunteers from YUDA conducted detail grid surveys in the vicinity of Goddard Point using conventional depth sonar technology. This proved unsuccessful; no promising sonar targets were detected anywhere close to Goddard Point. Attempts to spot the wreck from the air also failed to turn up any results. The question remained: Where could the *A.J. Goddard* have gone down?

*Right: Goddard side scan chart, July 1997.*  
Photo: Doug Davidge



As underwater sonar technology improved, YUDA acquired a side scan sonar system, which was better suited for searching large flat areas. Goddard Point was the perfect place to test the equipment. In July 1997, Doug Davidge, with the help of Steve Arrell, used the system to scan a swath of lake bottom 1000 metres wide.

After they surveyed the lake bottom they had a grainy side scan image that revealed a promising target not far from Goddard Point. The technology was not refined enough to identify the object, however, or to pinpoint the exact location. GPS technology was not yet available.



Further attempts to hone in on the wreck site or investigate the lake bottom met with little success. The *A.J. Goddard* remained elusive.

*Above: Doug Davidge surveying the wreck of the sternwheeler Canadian in 1986.*  
Photo: Norm Easton



## A promising find

In 2007, interest in Yukon wreck sites was rekindled by the Institute of Nautical Archaeology (INA) and individuals such as John Pollack and Robyn Woodward. They visited the many wreck sites between Carcross and Dawson City to explore and document the variety of ship's architecture used along one of North America's longest navigable river systems.



*The Olive May, sinking in the Thirty Mile River and roped to shore. YA, E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen coll.), 2002/118 #93*

The Yukon River Steamboat Survey (YRSS), a collaborative effort, gradually evolved. Its partners included the Government of Yukon, the INA, ProMare and the Royal Canadian Geographical Society. In early June 2008, the YRSS focused on several of the known and rumoured wreck sites along the Thirty Mile River.

A small team from the survey made an unscheduled stop at Goddard Point at Doug Davidge's suggestion to test their equipment while on route to the Thirty Mile. The group included Davidge, John Pollack, Robyn Woodward, Chris Atkinson and Tim Dowd.



While the team members tested out a new side scan imaging system, a conventional fish finder picked up a sizable target of interest in about 15 metres of water, not far from Goddard Point. The team made repeated passes over the target to obtain

accurate GPS coordinates, so they could revisit the site.

*Above: Carlos Velazquez conducts a LIDAR survey of the Evelyn/Norcom on Shipyard Island, Thirty Mile River, 2007. Photo: John Pollack*  
*Below: The Klondike I, sinking in the Thirty Mile River, 1936. YA, GSC coll. 90/36 #81585*





## Discovery

On July 5, 2008, Doug Davidge returned to Goddard Point by boat on a solo trip. He wanted to investigate the promising sonar target that the survey team had found in June. With the aid of GPS technology and a depth sounder, he relocated the lake bottom anomaly and flagged it with a float marker.

He then lowered a small underwater video camera to the lake bottom while drifting over the target. Despite poor visibility, images of metal structure came into view on the small video display in the boat.

Davidge made several more passes over the wreckage while recording video images from the underwater camera. It was clear that there was a large metal structure as well as deck hatches, planks and machinery.

The key finding was a steam-powered windlass. It was obvious that this was a sunken vessel. All that he could see had a strong resemblance to the *A.J. Goddard* as seen in historic photos.

Davidge reported these initial findings to the Cultural Services Branch of the Government of Yukon and to the members of the INA team.

*Right: The first glimpse of the wreck, July 2008. Photo: Doug Davidge*





## Detailed survey

It was clear that more time and effort was needed to substantiate the initial findings. Doug Davidge planned a follow-up survey using a more sophisticated underwater video camera.

On August 30, 2008, Doug Davidge, Bonnie Burns, Ken Nordin, Mitch Nordin and Dylan Nordin travelled in two boats to Goddard Point. The next morning, the team members deployed a remote operated vehicle (ROV) to the lake bottom and began a detailed survey of the discovery.



*ROV survey boat, August 2008.*

Photo: Bonnie Burns

Within a few minutes they saw a complete paddlewheel still in place on the stern of a small shallow-draft hull. It was indeed the *A.J. Goddard*. The vessel sat perfectly upright, with debris and objects of all sorts littering the deck and surrounding area.

It was the view that Davidge had wondered about for more than 20 years and it was exactly how he had dreamed it might look. The little gold rush steamer was no longer the ghost ship of Lake Laberge.

After returning to Whitehorse that evening, Davidge alerted the Government of Yukon and the YRSS team of the exciting findings.

*Left: Doug Davidge next to the wreck, June 2009. Photo: Don Reid*



## The 2009 season

After the wreck of the *A.J. Goddard* was discovered in 2008, the priority of the YRSS project team was to dive the wreck as early as possible in 2009 to carry out a preliminary assessment. The team planned a field season for early June as soon as the ice was off the lake.

*Above: A Longnose sucker (Catostomus catostomus) on the paddlewheel. Photo: Larry Bonnett*

Doug Davidge and the INA's John Pollack led a team of archaeologists, scientists and photographers. They spent five days living on the shore of Lake Laberge and diving on the shipwreck, despite a water temperature that hovered around two degrees Celsius.

Team photographer Don Reid took hundreds of photographs of the vessel and major artifacts. The rest of the team surveyed the ship using traditional methods: tape measures and slates. The measurements and photographs were used to create a set of plans for the vessel.

The extent of material at the site made it clear that a return trip in 2010 was needed. Lindsey Thomas, a graduate student in the Nautical



Archaeology Program at Texas A&M University, was offered the site for her thesis project.

*Above: John Pollack, Doug Davidge and Jim Delgado sitting around the campfire, 2009.  
Below: crew, boat and gear on shore, 2009.*

Both photos: Government of Yukon





## The 2010 season

In June 2010 a larger 14-member team was led by Lindsey Thomas. Team members travelled to Lake Laberge for ten days, with four goals: record the machinery and construction features of the hull; use sonar to



*A German film crew filming the documentary Gold Rush Ghost Ships, 2010.*

Photo: Government of Yukon

map the vessel in three dimensions (3D); create a complete catalogue of artifacts; and recover artifacts for conservation and exhibit.

The team set up a large base camp on the shore of Lake Laberge (*right*).

Most team members were volunteers from Canada and the United States; they were led by underwater archaeologists from both countries. Diving and sonar operations extended through the day and sometimes as late as ten o'clock at night, taking advantage of the midnight sun.

Recording of the hull, which began in 2009, continued. Divers laid a baseline down the centre of the bow and



along the side of the midships section of the hull in order to record the vessel's dimensions and layout.

Although this method was very useful for recording small details of the hull, it could not answer all questions. The team would need to use a sonar unit to obtain accurate data about the three-dimensional shape of the hull and the interior of the vessel.

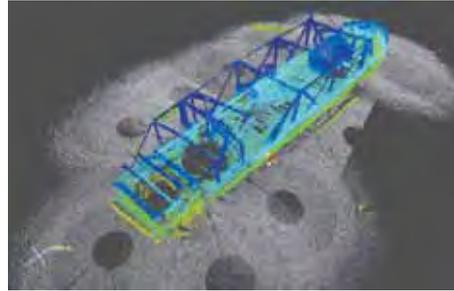
*Above: Camp photo, 2010. Photo: Wayne Lusardi*



## New technology

The field team had access to the BlueView BV5000, a fast high-resolution profiling sonar, through the donated assistance of BlueView Technologies, which develops underwater acoustic measuring and imaging systems, and OceanGate, a company dedicated to assisting scientific research by pairing researchers with interested volunteers who contribute resources.

*Below and right: Images from BlueView sonar. BlueViewTechnologies and OceanGate Inc.*



The sonar unit, which was mounted on a tripod and deployed by divers, was ideal for the *A.J. Goddard* project. It was set up 22 times both on and around the vessel in order to create a digital model of the boat.

Visibility at the site was limited to two metres even on the best days, and the 3D image produced by the sonar unit was the only way for divers to see the entire vessel at one time.

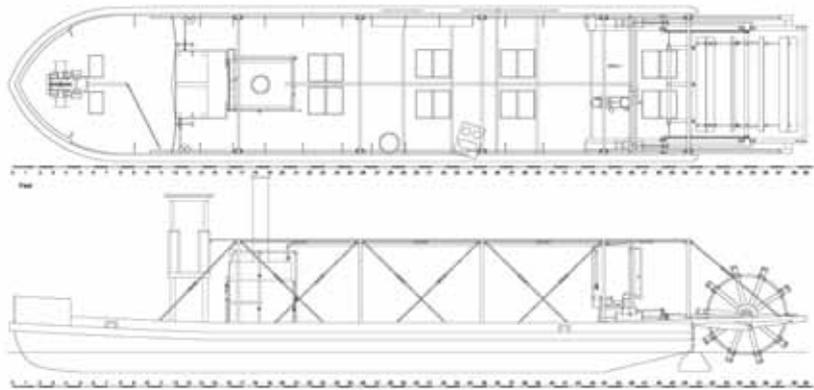


A valuable aspect of the sonar unit was its ability to see inside sections of the hull. Construction details that were otherwise inaccessible to divers, such as the spacing of deck beams, were visible on the computer screen within minutes of the scan.

*Wayne Loeber with a BlueView BV5000 mechanical scanning sonar. Photo: Mark Thomas*



Exterior  
plan.  
Lindsey  
Thomas



## Construction design

Lindsey Thomas used the sonar data and field measurements to create a construction plan of the *A.J. Goddard*. The plan would help team members better understand the methods used by the boat's builders and the people who carried the component parts of the vessel over the mountains.

The hull of the *A.J. Goddard* features a simple construction design, likely to facilitate both its assembly in the wilderness and any future repair. Only the pilothouse, guards, tack strips, bow railing, cylinder timbers, wheel support, splash bulkhead and paddle-wheel buckets were made of wood. They were likely hand-cut from the

*Right: The wooden hull of the S.S. Klondike II, under construction at the Whitehorse shipyards, 1936–37; Syd Smith on scaffolding. The vessel was built to replace its predecessor, also made of wood, which sank in the Thirty Mile River in 1936 (see page 20). Syd Smith collection Parks Canada*

spruce trees surrounding Lake Bennett, thus eliminating the need to carry these parts over the mountains.

The hull and deck are made of steel sheet single-riveted to the deck beams and frames. The structural components are relatively uniform, with five-cm angle iron used for the framing, deck beams, carlings, trusses, stanchions, clamps and hatch coaming.

The *A.J. Goddard* was unusual for its time; most Yukon steamboats were built of wood. Albert Goddard's familiarity with metal boat construction at the Pacific Iron Works influenced his choice of a metal hull.





## Prefabrication

The *A.J. Goddard's* construction, using angle-iron framing, is similar to many other metal hulls built during this period. While the simplicity of the design, which meant ease of repair, was suited to the Yukon, it was not developed specifically for use on the Yukon River. Instead, it is part of the larger tradition of the newly developing field of metal hull construction.

*Risdon Iron Works, San Francisco, ca. 1898.*  
A.J. Goddard Collection, courtesy of Fay Goddard

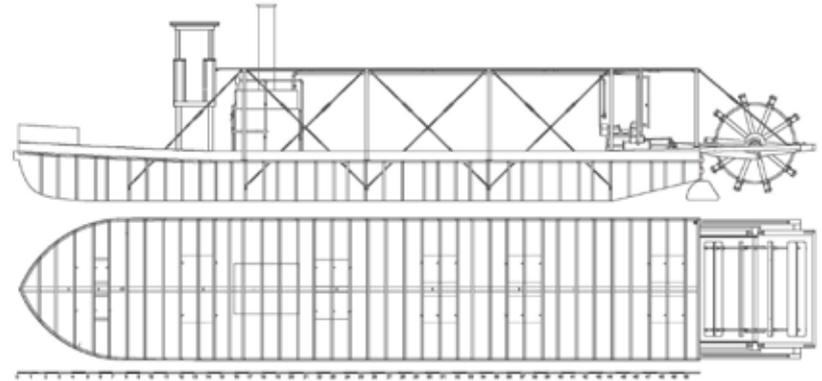
Similar design and construction features can be found in numerous ship-building guides from the nineteenth century. These types of vessels were far more common outside of the Yukon, where the traditional wooden boat-building methods were predominant.

Prefabricated in San Francisco by Risdon Iron Works, the *A.J. Goddard* was a kit vessel intended to be transported in sections. "Build It Yourself" steamboat kits were common at the end of the nineteenth century. Buyers could purchase

a boat through a catalogue or from a supplier and assemble it themselves.

Instead of purchasing a pre-designed kit vessel, Albert Goddard designed one himself. Risdon Iron Works likely handled the details of creating a full construction plan. If specific plans still exist, they have not yet been found.

*Interior plan.* Lindsey Thomas

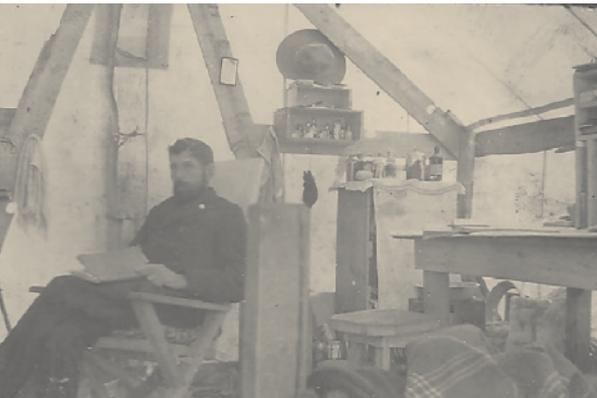




## For profit and adventure

When Albert and Clara Goddard travelled north with the Upper Yukon Company (UYC) in 1898, they were taking a great risk. Albert Goddard clearly had a good idea of what was required when he designed his vessel, but questions must have lingered as he and Clara headed over the mountains into the wilderness.

*Below: Albert Goddard had to contend with typhoid fever in addition to other challenges. Here he recovers in the home/office of the UYC. A.J. Goddard Collection, courtesy of Fay Goddard*



Would the vessel suit their needs and transport them safely to Dawson? Had they chosen the right type of boat? Research into the history and construction of the *A.J. Goddard* answers some of these questions.

The Goddards went north for profit and adventure. In order to profit, speed was essential. Although hauling the boats over the Coast Mountain range meant exponentially more effort than shipping them by the all water route, Albert Goddard knew that this was the fastest and most reliable method of getting to the gold fields. He designed a boat that would be suitable for these circumstances. Portability was the most important factor in determining the design of the vessel.



NAME OF SHIP <i>A.J. Goddard</i>		When built <i>1898</i>	Where built <i>Bennett, Yukon</i>	Builder <i>James H. Bennett</i>
Whether a sailing or steam ship, if steam, name and power	<i>Steam</i>	<i>1898</i>	<i>Bennett, Yukon</i>	<i>James H. Bennett</i>
Number of Decks	<i>One</i>			
Number of Masts	<i>None</i>			
Keel	<i>Square</i>			
Beam	<i>Round</i>			
Depth	<i>14 ft 6 in</i>			
draught	<i>16</i>			
Length from Forepart of Mast to the After end of the Deck or Mast				
Main Beam to Outside of Plank				
Depth to Bulk from Main Deck to Ceiling at Midships				
Depth to Bulk from Upper Deck to Ceiling at Midships in the case of Ships of Three Decks and upwards				
Length of Engine Room (if any)				
PARTICULARS OF ENGINES (if any)				
No. of Engines	<i>One</i>	Whether steam or other make	<i>Steam</i>	When made
	<i>1898</i>		<i>James H. Bennett</i>	
	<i>High Pressure</i>		<i>Bennett, Yukon</i>	
			<i>South Fork of Yukon</i>	

*Right, top: The A.J. Goddard and F.H. Kilbourne being assembled at Bennett.*

*A.J. Goddard Collection, courtesy of Fay Goddard*

*Right, above: Ship's registry for the A.J. Goddard. P.A.C. Registry Records (Public Archives of Canada)*



## Was the design suitable?

For the most part, it was. The *A.J. Goddard* was a small boat with a shallow draft, well-suited for navigating the shallow upper Yukon. In addition, it was made up of small parts that could be transported in sections over a high mountain on trams, sleds and the backs of men and pack animals.



Ideally, any vessel used for trans-

portation would be as large as possible, which would maximize profit. Although larger boats, some close to 100 feet, had been navigating on the upper Yukon, the *A.J. Goddard's* primary requirement was that it be easily transportable over land.

*Above: Pieces of the dismantled A.J. Goddard in San Francisco on the way to Steamer Dirigo for shipment north to Alaska.*

A.J. Goddard Collection, courtesy of Fay Goddard

Transportation limitations likely restricted the types of machinery used. The larger machinery and assemblies would have been the most difficult things to carry over the mountain, particularly the boiler. Wisely, the owners of the Upper Yukon Company chose a Buckley Water Tube Boiler. The inventor of the boiler emphasized in the patent that it featured a compact design, as well as easy assembly and repair. It could be transported in many smaller pieces and assembled on the other side of the mountains. Modifications were required, however, for its successful use on the Yukon River.



*Right: Underwater photos of the boiler (above) and Buckley firebox (below).*

Photos: Larry Bonnett



## Modifications

Although the modest size of the *A.J. Goddard* helped it navigate the narrow Yukon River, the UYC found that the vessel was too small to operate easily

on the larger sections of the river. After the boat's first trip to Dawson, the *A.J. Goddard* was switched to ferry service on the lake. Its usual route ran from Whitehorse to no farther down-

stream than the foot of the Thirty Mile River.

Experience on the water resulted in other modifications. The photographic record indicates that the windlass

(*see left*) was not added until after the trip to Dawson, possibly because the crew did not need it during the first trip downriver and the company didn't want to expend the effort to haul it over the mountains.

Other modifications include the addition of the bow rail and a new higher pilothouse with windows,

likely to protect the open boiler door and the pilot from spray while on Lake Laberge in storms (*see below*). The roof was extended as well, providing extra seating for those who wanted to sit away from the commotion on deck. A tall tow post located amidships may have been removed later in the vessel's career.



*Windlass.* Photo: Larry Bonnett



*Left: Early pilothouse, circa spring 1898; right: later pilothouse, July 1898.*

*Left: Candy Waugaman Coll., KLG0, U of Alaska; Right: YA, Dawson Klondike Hewitt fonds, 82/255 #8*



## Artifacts

More than one hundred artifacts were catalogued around the wreck site. They provide a fascinating glimpse into life aboard the steamboat at the beginning of the twentieth century. The men who fled the *A.J. Goddard* when it sank did not have time to save much, if anything.

*Above: Axe handle and shovel.*  
Photo: Larry Bonnett

There are three general categories of artifacts on and around the ship. Cooking pots, enamel-ware, bottles, and cups are scattered in the immediate vicinity of the vessel, and the small galley stove remains on the deck.

There is also a broad variety of wood- and metal-working tools, including a carpenter's mallet, anvil, small blacksmith's forge, and other hand tools required to maintain and repair a small sternwheel steamboat.

Finally, there are the personal effects of the crew, including small bits of clothing and three shoes, full bottles of ink and vanilla, and a pocket magnifying glass.

*Underwater photo of an enamelware plate with an artifact inventory tag attached. The plate remains on the wreck site.* Photo: Larry Bonnett

When engineer Julius Stockfeld fled the sinking ship, he threw off his shoes and those of the fireman. Perhaps the shoes found at the site belonged to them.



*Above: One of three shoes recovered from the wreck. All three have worn heels, so they likely belonged to the men on board.*

Government of Yukon





## Life on board

Many of the *A.J. Goddard's* artifacts are what one would expect to find on a small working vessel in the middle of the wilderness. One of the more surprising finds was a Berliner gramophone in a wooden case. When divers found it, they initially thought it was a type of chronometer or compass. Wayne Lusardi identified it as some kind of player, but no one believed him until he retrieved one

**The Berliner Gram-o-phone**

Was awarded the **MEDAL** at the **TORONTO EXHIBITION, 1900**

The phenomenal success of the **Berliner Gram-o-phone** in the talk of the musical world—showing that the sterling quality and simplicity of the machine—the excellence and durability of the mechanism—appreciated by the public, and now extending its early columns and brilliant harmonies of the delectable talking machine compass, the Berliner Gram-o-phone is being sold rapidly by the tons. **Two million** of these phonographs were sold last year.

To show the public the superiority of our instruments all subsequent developments of gramophone instruments against the "pirates" in the market are being made with our **Trade Mark** through the usual channels, so all must bear a close watch on the various new selling propositions of our case—after reading the name of **E. BERLINER** and the various names mentioned by they failed to receive the outstanding results.

**E. BERLINER**  
 2113 St. Catherine Street  
 MONTREAL.

Factory: 267-271 Avenue Street  
 MONTREAL.

ERLANUEL BLOUT, General Manager for Canada

Retail Price  
**\$15.00**  
 (including a 6-inch  
 Wax 10 1/2 Records.)

DEALERS EVERYWHERE  
 ORDER BY  
 APPLICATION

Write for Catalogue and  
 Order List.

of the three records also at the site. Early Berliner gramophone records had recording information stamped directly into the hard rubber. Cleaning revealed the records to be “Ma Onliest One,” “Rendez Vous Waltz” and “The harp that once through Tara’s Halls.”

Music was undeniably important during the gold rush, and the crew of the *A.J. Goddard* was willing to care for a bulky and unwieldy gramophone in order to be able to hear music. In fact, the record containing the song “Ma Onliest One,” written by the American vaudevillian Fay Templeton, was still on the turntable when the player was found.

The gramophone was available from the Canadian distributor for 15 dollars, less expensive than other

models in Sears,

and came with three records.

Perhaps the crew member who owned the grama-

phone took advantage

of the

offer. The

records and the

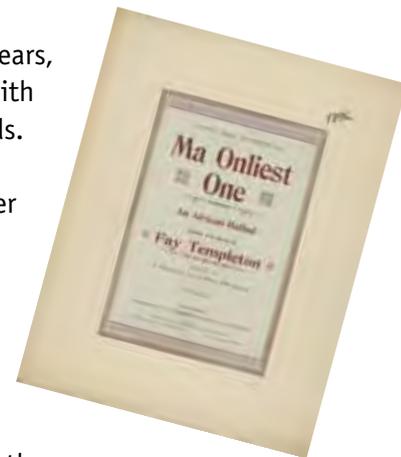
gramophone are currently

undergoing treatment at the Canadian

Conservation Institute in Ottawa for

display at the Yukon Transportation

Museum in Whitehorse.



*Left: Berliner Gramophone advertisement.*

[www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/gramophone/028011-3005-e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/gramophone/028011-3005-e.html)

*Above: Sheet music, 1896, for “Ma Onliest One.”  
 New York Public Library*



## Outfitting the vessel

The machinery and artifacts found on board tell a story about how the boat was outfitted. Although the hull was built in California, makers' marks indicate that Albert Goddard used a variety of sources to equip the vessel.

The steam fixtures came from all over the United States: Seattle, Boston, Rochester, New York and Cincinnati. While it is possible that these parts were ordered new from their original manufacturer, the UYC — in its rush to reach the Klondike — would likely have purchased them used and cobbled them together to quickly outfit the *A.J. Goddard*, or found new parts from various dealers in Seattle.

Some of the other artifacts, such as the forge and other tools, can be found in the 1897 yearly catalogue of Sears, Roebuck and Company.

Presumably they were also available from other catalogues. If they were obtained after the ship reached the Klondike, they probably came from one of these catalogues.

The items could have been purchased in Seattle, although the crew would have limited what they carried over the mountains. The hodgepodge collection of dishware suggests that pieces were collected over the years or that the crew members owned their own sets.

*L-R: Steam gauge; water pitcher (see also photo, page 34); ship's forge and cookstove. Photos: Larry Bonnett*





## More than utilitarian

There were few towns along the Yukon River and thousands of miles between the Yukon and outside world. The crew of the *A.J. Goddard* had to be self sufficient. This is reflected by the tools and forge found aboard the vessel.



*First Avenue, Dawson City, 1898.*  
YA, Vancouver Public Library coll. #2092

Since only a plank roof and canvas curtains separated the crew and passengers from the elements, life on the small open ship during bad weather must have been hard. Because of this, some of the luxury items found at the wreck came as a surprise. Although many of the larger western river steamboats were known for their luxurious accommodations, most of the sternwheelers of the Klondike were far more utilitarian.

The vanilla suggests that the menu was not as basic and uneventful as might be expected. Music might have sounded along the river on quiet nights, hand-cranked



from the cherished gramophone. If thousands of miles of ocean, river and mountains didn't stop fresh grapes, cigars and lemonade from reaching Dawson City during the gold rush, perhaps it's not unusual to find such luxuries on board the smallest and most utilitarian member of the Yukon River steamboat fleet.

*Water pitcher (see page 33), documented in the field before being returned to the wreck site. Photo: Government of Yukon*



## Conclusion

During the Klondike Gold Rush, hundreds of rafts, canoes, barges and steamboats were built or brought in to the Yukon. The *A.J. Goddard* was one of these vessels. Most of the 266 sternwheelers that operated on the Yukon River were large multi-decked wooden vessels.

The *A.J. Goddard* is the only example found of one of the smaller steamboats; of the Klondike sternwheelers still scattered along the river, it is the best preserved in its original form.

The vessel was not ideally suited for the larger sections of the Yukon River, but it was fast and was constructed with ingenuity. Unlike some of the thousands of boats that set out for the Yukon in the spring of 1898, it made it to Dawson in time for the gold rush. The little sternwheeler went on to have a short but successful career on Lake Laberge.

The intact state of the wreck of the *A.J. Goddard* and its cargo makes it a tangible link to the past. This, combined with details about Albert and Clara

Goddard, provides a glimpse of the life of one of the Yukon's small sternwheelers. Afloat for less than four years, the *A.J. Goddard* tells a story that conveys the inventiveness and perseverance against terrible odds that characterized the Klondike Gold Rush.

In 2010, in recognition of the importance of the *A.J. Goddard* to the early transportation history of the Yukon and the significance of its intact state of preservation, the vessel was designated as a Yukon Historic Site.

Photo: Larry Bonnett



*The A.J. Goddard next to larger boats at Dawson, 1898.*  
YA, Vancouver Public Library collection #2079





## Acknowledgements

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We sincerely thank the elders and members of Ta'an Kwäch'än Council for their hospitality and for their acceptance of this project in their traditional territory. We also thank Drs. James P. Delgado and Kevin Crisman for their steadfast support.

*Left: Sign for White Star Line at Bennett, 1898. A.J. Goddard Collection, courtesy of Fay Goddard Above, right: Rob Ridgen next to paddlewheel. Photo: Larry Bonnett*







The *A.J. Goddard* was one of hundreds of rafts, canoes, barges and steamboats that were built or brought in to the Yukon during the Klondike Gold Rush. The little sternwheeler worked for only four years before it sank in a storm on Lake Laberge. In 2008, more than a hundred years later, the wreck of the *A.J. Goddard* was discovered. The intact state of the vessel and its cargo provides an extraordinary link to the past.