



Lisa Mighetto, Marcia Montgomery. *Hard Drive to the Klondike: Promoting Seattle during the Gold Rush*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002. xiv + 154 pp. \$19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-295-98227-4.

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Gold Is Where You Find It

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The relationship between urban development and gold rushes in the United States has been a popular subject for authors of fiction and social commentary, as well as western historians since the mid-nineteenth century. California's 1849 gold rush was the first of the great western gold rushes of the nineteenth century to garner widespread public notice. The stampede to the Klondike in 1898 was the last. Coastal cities became important supply points for more remote areas where the actual mining occurred. It was often the port cities, rather than the mining camps, which reaped the long-lasting benefits from the mines. Cities actively promoted themselves as supply points for mining rushes, and historians have been interested in this subject for well over a century. Indeed, H. H. Bancroft had gathered extensive material about the California gold rush and the development of San Francisco long before the first cry of "Gold in the Klondike!" was bellowed on the Seattle waterfront.[1]

Seattle was one of many communities on Puget Sound that sought to become the region's commercial and industrial center in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Lumber, fishing, and the advent of transcontinental railroad connections were crucial elements in the early economic development of the region. Following a frenzied three decades of competition with other cities in the region, the Klondike gold rush of 1897/98 was, possibly, the event which ultimately cemented Seattle's place as the economic center of not only Puget Sound but the entire region. The torrent of wealth seekers rushed through the city on the way north to the gold fields and, as usual, the merchants who "mined the miners" were the ones who reaped the greatest economic rewards. Commercial success manifested itself in brick and mortar, as some Klondike profits were invested in Seattle real estate. The buildings financed with the profits from supplying the North as well as from mining are a tangible legacy of the gold rush. Other portions of the legacy are less tangible,

but, the authors conclude, equally important.

Seattle's importance as a supply point for mining in the north and the role of city boosters in that aspect of the region's development have been discussed at varying levels of historical sophistication, usually as a chapter in a history of Seattle or the region.[2] In their book, *Hard Drive to the Klondike: Promoting Seattle during the Gold Rush*, Lisa Mighetto and Marcia Montgomery argue that the Klondike gold rush of 1897/1898 probably did as much to create a lasting impact for Seattle as it did for the north country. In the process of promoting itself as the gateway to the Klondike, Seattle fostered a commercial and entrepreneurial energy which is still evident a century later, the so-called "Seattle Spirit." To place the relationship of the Klondike rush and Seattle into a larger historical perspective, the authors briefly discuss the early development of the city and the start of the Klondike gold rush. Mighetto and Montgomery subsequently examine the way Seattle marketed itself as the entry point to the Yukon and the commercial impact of the gold rush on Seattle, including the urban infrastructure. The legacy of the Klondike stampede is considered both in the built-up environment and in the legacy of historical interpretation of the impact of the gold rush on Seattle.

The central focus of the authors is the marketing of Seattle as an access point to the North and the various advertising techniques employed. Mighetto and Montgomery effectively outline the salesmanship methodologies and the personalities involved. The analysis of the changing historical interpretations of Seattle's role in the Klondike rush is the focus of chapter 5. Cultural resource studies are often done under a tight deadline with authors working to meet a client's specific need, which often is different from the interests of academic historians. The efforts to address the social and cultural impact of the gold rush are more effective than the efforts to address the economic impact or to place that into a regional setting.

Academic historians, especially specialists in economic history, will probably find the analysis a bit underdeveloped. The role of silver in the Panic of 1893 is passed over (p. 10) and the relationship between specific railroads and specific port cities might have been better explained as it would help to explain why San Francisco or Vancouver were promoted by the Southern Pacific or Canadian Pacific, respectively (p. 19). The relationship between the Turner Frontier Thesis, the New Western History and the Klondike rush (pp. 11-12) might be worthy of more expansive treatment. *Hard Drive to the Klondike* originated as a historic resource study undertaken for the Seattle portion of the Klondike Gold Rush National Park. The first version was made available to the public as a federal document, issued in 1998.[3] This edition, essentially a condensed version of the federal document, was published four years later. Most of the text of the introduction, six chapters, and footnotes are unchanged from the historic resource study. However, some maps and some of the appendices (consisting of reproductions of National Register of Historic Places survey forms and supplemental documentation) have been excised.

Herein lies one problem with *Hard Drive to the Klondike*. The body of material which might be especially valuable to other practitioners of public history

has been deleted. Cultural resource management historians looking for the kind of technical information about downtown Seattle buildings and their eligibility or lack thereof for National Register status will be better served to search out a copy of the original report produced for the NPS than by using this edition. In the effort to appeal to everyone, from postmodernist theorists to the casual tourist, the book lost some of its value to the group for whom cultural resource studies normally are written. However, as an overview of the subject for a wide audience, *Hard Drive to the Klondike* succeeds, and continues to demonstrate the "Seattle Spirit" of selling the city to all comers.

Notes

[1]. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft*, vol. 23, *History of California, 1848-1859* (San Francisco: Hubert Howe Bancroft, 1888), and vol. 24, *History of California, 1860-1890* (San Francisco: Hubert Howe Bancroft, 1890).

[2]. Murry Morgan, *Skid Road: An Informal History of Seattle*; William C. Speidel, *Sons of the Profits, or There's No Business like Grow Business! The Seattle Story, 1851-1901* (Seattle: Nettle Creek Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 305-338.

[3]. Lisa Mighetto and Marcia Montgomery, *Promoting Seattle during the Gold Rush*.

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