

# The Yukon Saw Mill Company: *Last of the Gold Rush Sawmills*

*Including Additional Resources and Information*

*Prepared for Heritage Branch, Yukon Government*

*February 1997*



**Net Word Business Services  
Florian Maurer Architect Ltd.**



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Claire Eamer and Antonio Zedda. Prepared for Heritage Branch, Yukon Government, February 1997

### ***Additional Resources and Information***

Claire Eamer (Daley Networks). Prepared for Yukon Cultural Services Branch, March 2005

Index to 1997 Report: The Human Element.

Annotated List of Photographs related to Yukon Saw Company and  
Lumber/Milling Industry in the Yukon.

Notes to Guide to the Alaska Commercial Company Papers, 1868-1940.



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Claire Eamer  
Net Word Business Services  
309 Hawkins Street, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1X5

Antonio Zedda  
Florian Maurer Architect Ltd.  
1114 First Avenue, Whitehorse, Yukon



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# Introduction

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The Gold Rush was a unique time in the Yukon's economic history. In less than two years the Klondike region went from lightly populated wilderness to a bustling centre of industry and commerce with a population in the tens of thousands. The driving economic force behind the phenomenon was gold mining, but a range of attendant businesses and industries supported the mining industry and the miners. Probably the largest non-mining industry in those first years was the milling industry.

The strength of the early milling industry lay in the isolation of Dawson and the Klondike. Major supply shipments came a long, uncertain way up the Pacific coast to St. Michael on the Bering Sea. Then supplies were transferred to river steamers that pushed their way more than a thousand kilometres up the Yukon River to Dawson City, service centre for the Klondike goldfields. The shipping season was short, limited not only by ice but also by water levels, and the risks among the shallow waters and shifting sandbars of the Yukon River were high. Only vital supplies like food were consistently brought in on the river. For most needs, the inhabitants of Dawson and the Klondike had to manage with the materials the country provided. And the country provided plenty of wood, at least at the beginning of the Gold Rush.

The mining industry and the new town of Dawson had a huge appetite for wood. It was used to build sluices and flumes, buildings and furniture, docks and sidewalks, boats, wagons, and sleighs. It was burnt to heat buildings, thaw the ground, run steam engines, and cook food. Even the chips and sawdust were used, to level streets or to insulate buildings.

The milling industry was part of Dawson's economic fabric from the beginning. Days after Joe Ladue staked his townsite at the mouth of the Klondike River at the end of August 1896, he began selling fresh-cut lumber from his sawmill. The mill ran day and night through the rest of the 1896 season and ran just as hard in 1897, never catching up with demand. In 1897 and 1898, more mills started up until, at the height of the population boom, there were at least seven in Dawson itself and several more nearby on the Yukon and Klondike rivers.

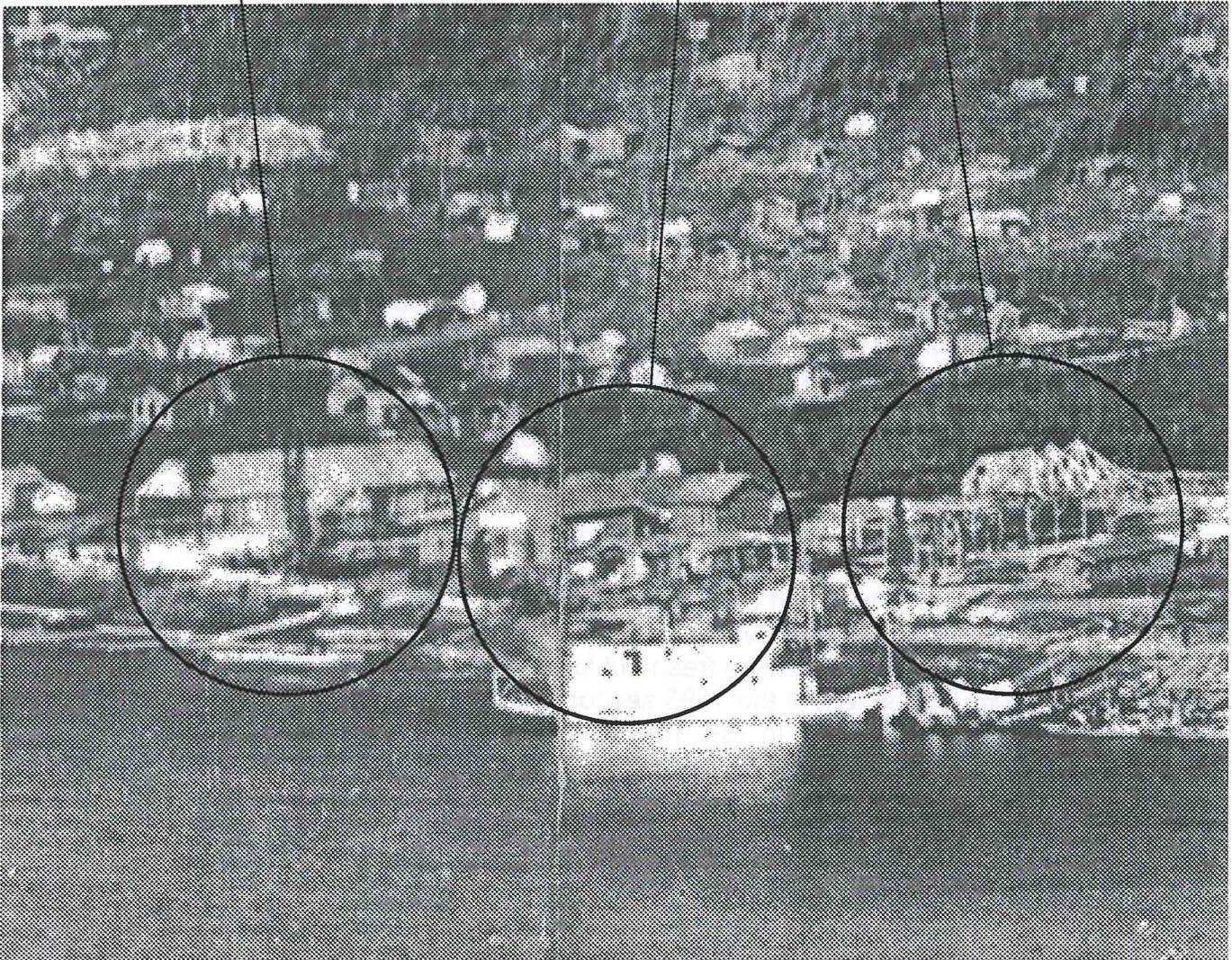
The Yukon Saw Mill Company was among the first of the Gold Rush sawmills. It leased its first timber berth in March 1898 and was considered an established Dawson business by that summer. When it faded away twenty years later, it had been the only sawmill in town for a decade, the end of what had once been a significant component of the Klondike's economy.

After the demise of the Yukon Saw Mill Company, the milling industry in the Klondike followed the pattern of milling elsewhere in the Yukon. Small sawmills came and went over the years, responding to demand. When the demand for wood declined or the local supply of timber diminished, the sawmills were packed up and moved to the next location. Never again has the Klondike supported a milling sector on the scale of the Gold Rush era. The Yukon Saw Mill Company was the most successful, the longest-lived, and the last of the Gold Rush sawmills.

**Yukon Saw Mill Company**  
Note mill building under construction  
in spring of 1898

**Ladue Saw Mill**

**O.W. Hobbs Mill**  
(Dawson Saw Mill Company)



**FIGURE 1.1**

Panoramic view of Dawson waterfront, spring 1898  
Yukon Archives Pho O/S MCD Acc. 87/35

## Chapter 1

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# Milling Techniques in the Klondike

*As usual with mills in this country, where the operating season is short, this company makes a continuous daily run of 24 hours, turning out a finished product of 35,000 feet.<sup>1</sup>*

At its peak in the spring of 1902, the milling industry in and around Dawson provided great quantities of dressed and rough lumber to the highly active mining and construction industry. In order to maintain a continued and reliable source of milled wood during the ice-free period of the year, a series of related activities and operations needed to occur. "A season of five months places the extreme limit. After that, the logs are frozen, the capacity of the mill is, in consequence, cut to one half, and the expense is such to make the business unprofitable."<sup>2</sup> Due to the nature of the climate and the restriction of mining and construction activity to summer months, mills operated around the clock. "In this extreme latitude it is not practicable to run a sawmill more than six months in a season, during which time both day and night shifts are employed, the working day being 24 hours."<sup>3</sup> In addition, mill machinery required maintenance, a supply of logs needed to be stockpiled nearby, and finished lumber had to be delivered to prospective clients. The industry employed loggers, freighters, and mill workers, whose work schedules varied throughout the year.

When, in the late summer of 1896, Joe Ladue moved his sawmill from Ogilvie to the flats just downstream from the junction of the Yukon and Klondike rivers, he selected a site quite suitable for milling operations. The waters of the Yukon River along this portion of the Dawson waterfront provided a natural eddy for the mooring of both steamers and log booms. The waters of the Yukon were the life blood of the mills dotting the waterfront. Although Ladue was the first to set up operations, others soon followed, and many established their businesses in roughly the same location along Dawson's waterfront: O.W. Hobbs's Dawson Saw Mill Company, adjacent to Ladue's mill in 1897, J.F. Burke's Yukon Saw Mill Company in 1898, and the Canada Yukon Lumber Company in the spring of 1900 (Figure 1-1). The Klondike Mill Company, located at Klondike Island, went so far as to dam a finger of the Klondike River to create a slough or log pond that greatly facilitated the transport of logs and dressed lumber to and from the mill.

Although as many as twelve mills operated at one time in and around Dawson, only six of the larger mills sustained a relatively permanent presence.<sup>4</sup>



**FIGURE 1.2**

Loggers rolling logs into the Yukon River using skids  
 Yukon Archives Acc. 82/222  
 O.D. McKenzie Collection



"...from the mouth of the Klondike to where the bluffs run down the water's edge north of town, the waterfront of Dawson is occupied... At the north are log booms, acres in extent..."

*The Klondike Nugget, 1898*

Log booms tied up along Dawson waterfront

**FIGURE 1.3**

"Dawson City Centre of Klondike Gold Fields - August 1900"  
 Yukon Archives Photo no. 3741

The great demand for lumber allowed a relatively high concentration of mills, with operations from mill to mill being quite similar. The majority of operations were simple affairs. Mill machinery had been hastily relocated from elsewhere and was moved on just as quickly when markets declined.

## ***The Source of Wood***

*There is no doubt in my mind after the closest investigation for years of the methods used by loggers and wood choppers, that they only cut the choicest of the wood and mill timber....*<sup>5</sup>

By the spring of 1898 the Canadian government had appointed the Yukon's first Crown Timber Agent, F.X. Gosselin, whose office was established in Dawson. Gosselin and his assistant, J.W. Wilson, became responsible for the administration of the Yukon's timber resources and, specifically, logging and milling activity in the Dawson area. Regulations were established and berth permits awarded to worthy applicants. The first of many timber berths issued to the Yukon Saw Mill Company, reveals that timber was taken from sources at some distance upstream from the Dawson mill. Timber Berth 31 (permit #26698) granted on March 24, 1898, is described as follows: "One square mile, commencing about .75 mile above a large creek coming in on left limit of Yukon River, about 18.5 miles above Thistle Creek, thence going up the river one mile in length and one mile in depth including islands in the river."<sup>6</sup> Regulations stipulated a berth area of no larger than five square miles with a breadth of no less than one mile. By 1910 the Yukon Saw Mill Company had eight separate timber berths "in good standing" for a total combined cut area of forty square miles. Yet in 1898 the great demand for timber berths caused such alarm among officials in Ottawa that a moratorium was declared until the situation could be better assessed. In a description from later that year, journalist Tappan Adney comments on the quality of the nearby forests: "In the valleys, however, of the main river there is an abundant supply of spruce, the trees going often ten to thirty inches diameter, straight and tall."<sup>7</sup> The mouths of many tributaries feeding the Yukon River provided ideal stands of spruce. "The creeks nearest Dawson... contain a large quantity of wood and saw logs, and very little timber has been cut on the heads of these creeks. I might state that of the ground inspected by me to date that this contains the best timber."<sup>8</sup>

The main logging activity took place during winter freeze-up when mill operations slowed and felled trees were easily transported with horse and sleigh. As logs were taken from deep in the bush, they were transported to the nearest landing along the shoreline and stored until spring breakup. When the creeks and rivers cleared, woodcutters skidded and rolled logs into the river (Figures 1-2 and 1-3) where they were tied and rafted downriver to the Dawson area sawmills. In 1898, *The Klondike Nugget* complained "...from the mouth of the Klondike to where the bluffs run down the water's edge north of town, the waterfront of Dawson is occupied.... At the north are log booms, acres in extent, and to the south are also acres of boats...."<sup>9</sup> At times during the summer season, the rivers became so crowded with logs that the Acting Commissioner was forced, in one instance, to instruct the manager of the Klondike Mill Company to ensure an open and passable river route:

It is stated, immediately the ice goes out you are in the habit of hauling the logs from the stump and rolling them into the river, and this was continued last year until you had about two million feet of timber scattered over a stretch of twenty-five miles of the Klondike River from Flat Creek Down. Owing to this fact, it was necessary for other men with logs to break up jams and float your logs over shallow places before they could make any headway with their own drives... I have been asked to draw your attention to the matter, as it cannot be allowed.<sup>10</sup>

Not all mills acquired their logs from great distances. Due to the portability of mill equipment and the specific site requirements for milled lumber, many mills were set up where the supply of wood and the demand came together. The Twelve Mile Mill, erected in 1906 by the Yukon Saw Mill Company under contract to the Yukon Gold Company, existed solely for the purpose of supplying the enormous amount of lumber needed for flume construction associated with the Yukon Ditch Project. "The standard flume, 6 feet wide and 4 feet deep, was built of lumber cut from spruce timber growing on the valley of Twelve Mile."<sup>11</sup> The milling operation "depleted the small forest available, but it proved sufficient."<sup>12</sup> Local timber supplies were supplemented by imported Californian redwood, which the mill planed for use as pipe staves.

As the milling industry evolved to meet the needs of the local market and ensure its long-term survival, more specialized woods and value-added products were introduced. The construction of the White Pass and Yukon Route Railway to Whitehorse in 1900 afforded Dawson mill owners the possibility of importing southern woods and building materials. They imported large amounts of locally unavailable hardwoods and softwoods from British Columbia and Washington State along with the specialized machinery needed to mill these woods. The variety of lumber available in 1901 at the Yukon Saw Mill Company yards is described as "...very extensive, covering a site 150 x 700 feet, and in which is stocked immense piles of lumber, of oak, ash, hickory, cedar, redwood, sluice box, flume lumber and the heaviest timbers used in the construction of bridges, warehouses, etc."<sup>13</sup> In a 1903 letter to the General Manager of the White Pass Route, the Yukon Sawmill Company requests a quote for the delivery of lumber and finished goods: "...with reference to shipments of lumber to Dawson during next season... in order to do business we shall have to be in a position to import at \$40 per 1000 [ft.], laid down on our wharf here. Kindly let us know if you can quote us a freight rate which will allow us to do this, and which will also cover our shipments of shingles, sash, doors, etc."<sup>14</sup> Another letter, from the Kerry Mill Company of Seattle, quotes prices for the delivery of dimensional Douglas fir lumber, mouldings and ship lap siding to the A.C. Company wharves in Seattle for delivery to Dawson. Mill companies purchased planers, lathes, band saws and other machinery to produce a wide variety of milled products including sashes, shingles, brackets, mouldings and furniture. Advertisements from the turn of the century describe the range of services and manufactured wood products available to Dawson customers (Figure 1-4). "For a long time the only furniture in Dawson was of home made [or imported] manufacture; today there are chair factories, furniture factories, office furniture makers, stair builders and moulding turners, coffin and casket makers, and in fact everything in which lumber forms the raw material."<sup>15</sup> The scale of finished wood manufacturing in Dawson during this period, though perhaps overstated, indicates the will of many mill operators to

# The Yukon Saw Mill Co.

Manufacturers of  
**FIRST QUALITY MATCHED, DRESSED RUSTIC, BEVEL SIDING,  
 ROOFING AND ROUGH LUMBER.**  
 Doors, Sash, Mouldings, Building Materials, Fir, Redwood, Cedar,  
 Oak, Etc., Etc. **DAWSON, Y. T.**  
 J. F. BURKE, Manager.

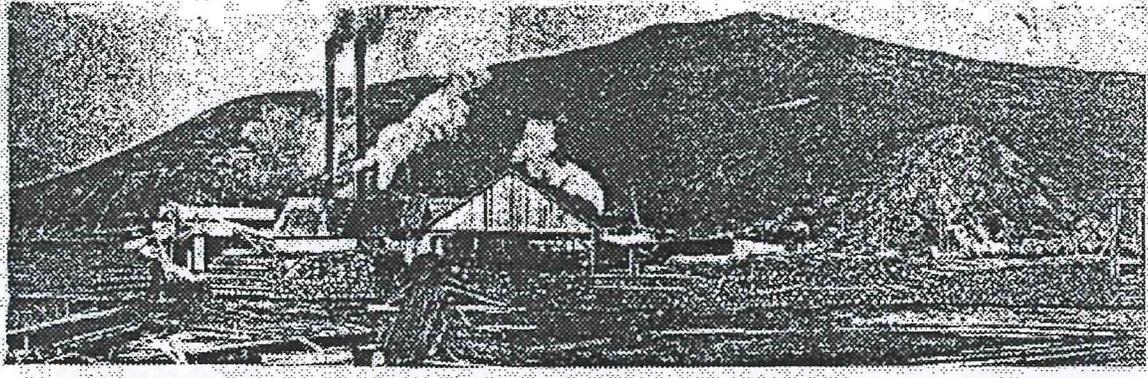
## YUKON SAW MILL CO.

Manufacturers of All Kinds of Rough Native

# LUMBER

For Sluice, Flume and Building. Dressed, Matched and  
 Mouldings

Importers of FIR, CEDAR, OAK, and HICKORY. DOORS, SASH and SHIMULES.  
 Post Office Box 504, DAWSON, Y. T.



# LUMBER

Mouldings, Sash, Glass, Panel and Lattice Doors, Furniture.	Mill and Machine Work. Store, Office and Bar Fixtures, Wood Turning, Scroll Sawing,	Estimates Furnished to Builders and Contractors.
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**BRANCH OFFICE:  
 N. A. T. & T. CO. KLONDIKE MILL CO., DAWSON, Y. T.**

FIGURE 1.4

Sawmill company advertisements appearing in Dawson print media  
 Top: Ferguson Directory and Gazetteer, Dawson, 1901  
 Middle: Dawson Daily News Sourdough Edition, August 17, 1913  
 Bottom: Dawson Daily News, July 3, 1900

**Ladue Saw Mill**

Men are sitting on logs likely belonging to the Yukon Saw Mill Co. and the Dawson Saw Mill Co.



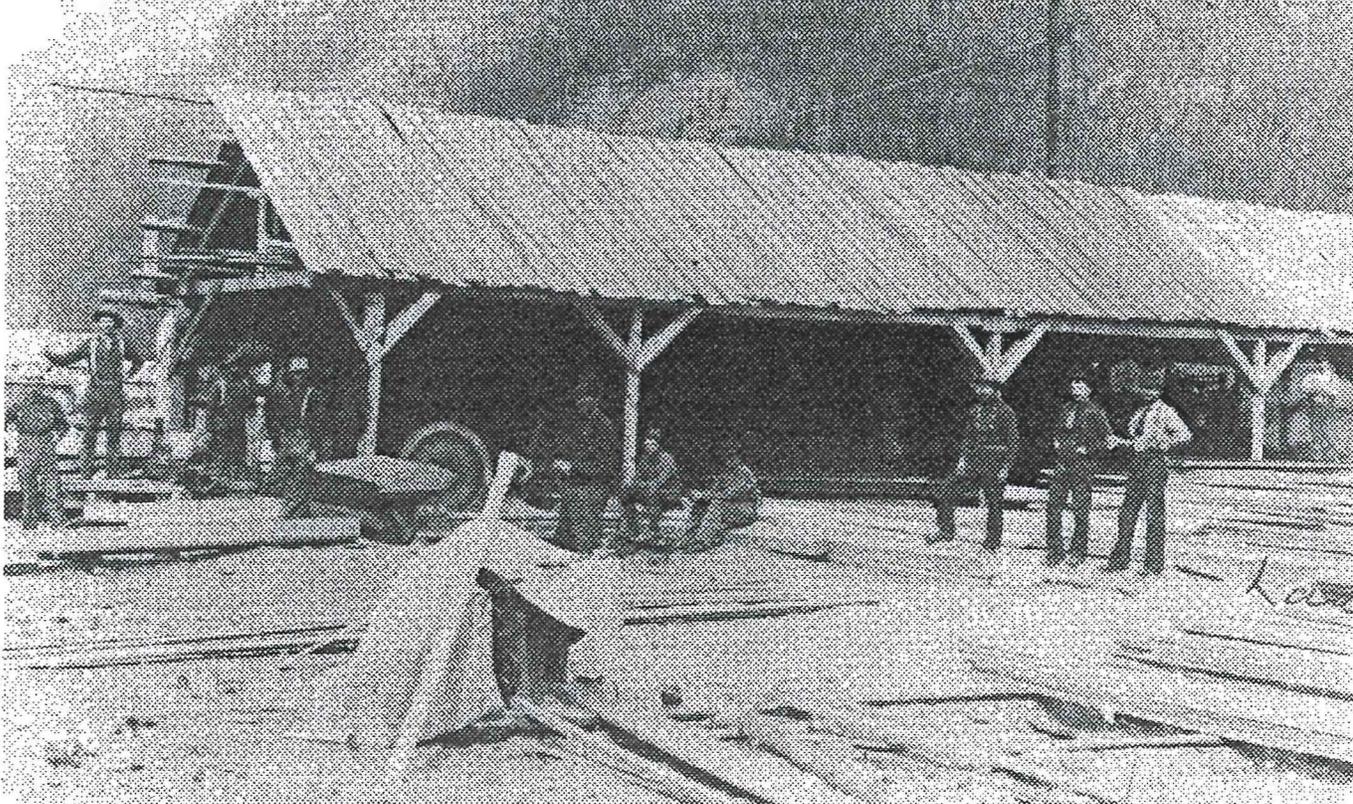
**FIGURE 1.5**

Arrival of miners in Dawson; spring 1898- Ladue mill on right

Photo courtesy of Yukon Archives

Photo no. 4187

First saw mill build fall 1896 by Ladue  
First man from R. of picture is Ladue on his right  
is Will Lamay I do not know the others



**FIGURE 1.6**

J. Ladue Mill - first saw mill building in Dawson; autumn 1896

Photo Courtesy of Dawson City Museum, Ladue Collection

Photo no. 0047 100 0

pursue the manufacture of value-added items and expand beyond their original markets for rough and dimensional lumber.

As the local market declined and with the milling season limited to a few short months, owners found it necessary to adapt and broaden the scope of their businesses. "The lumber sales have decreased nearly 2,000,000 feet during the past year due no doubt to the fact that the various mining companies have secured all their sluice lumber, and also to the decrease in building activity in Dawson."<sup>16</sup> Between 1902 and 1903 the quantity of milled lumber in the Dawson region (Foot Board Measure) decreased from 7,936,505 to 4,422,400.<sup>17</sup> By 1906, the demand for mill logs waned, with sawmills amalgamating or winding down their operations, signalling the end of the unparalleled growth evident only a few years before.

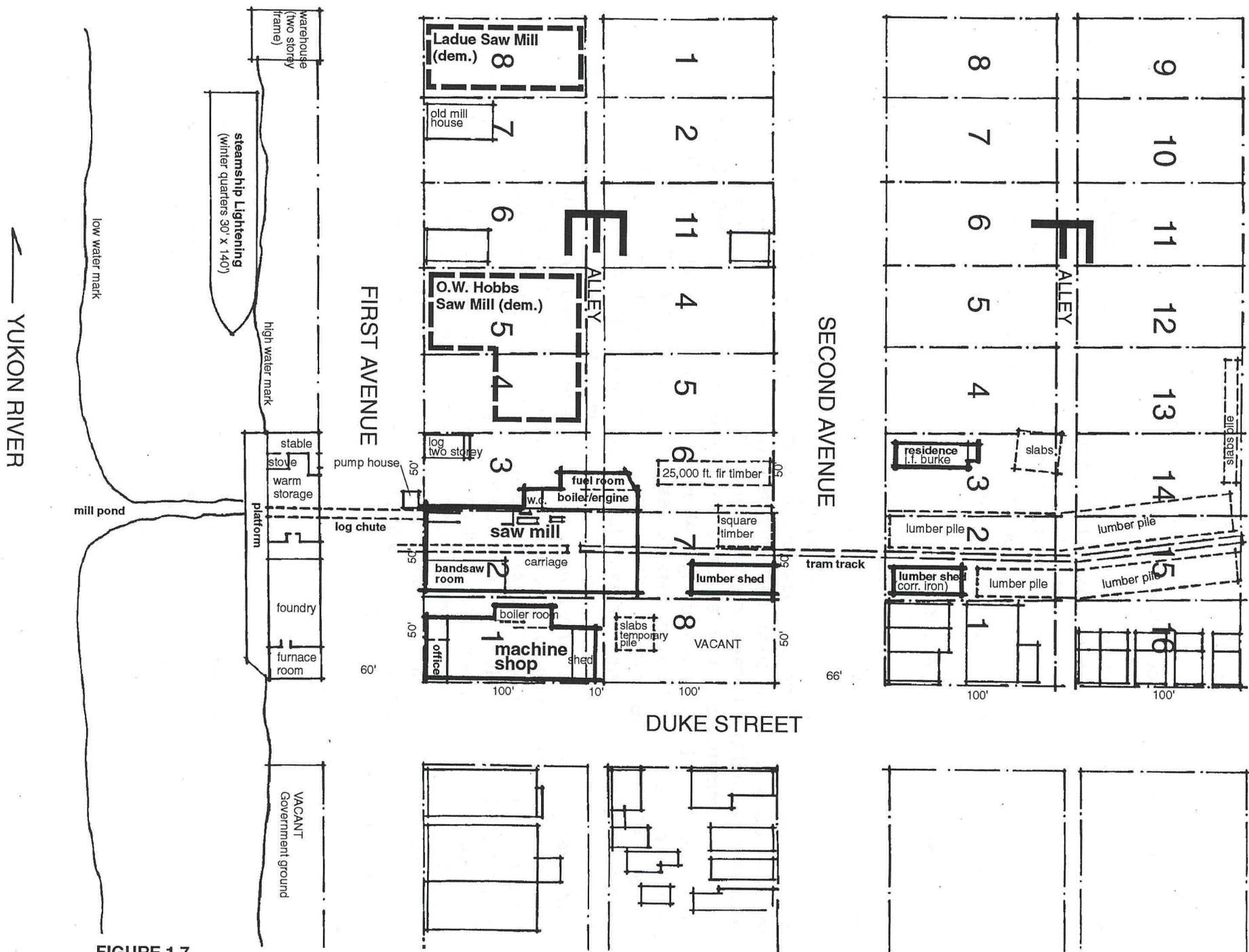
## ***Mill Operations - Overview***

*With the broad Yukon flowing past its front door, Dawson becomes the centre of the lumber industry for the district.*<sup>18</sup>

During the summer months the Dawson waterfront bustled with a patchwork of activity as logs, men, barges and steamers crowded the river's edge. The Yukon River nourished Dawson with the goods carried on its flowing surface and thus the interface between water and land became much coveted for the storage, distribution, and production of materials and supplies. Canada's Minister for the Interior in 1899, Clifford Sifton, fearing that this tract of land might fall under the control of private parties "who are in the position to exact tolls on persons desiring to land or use wharfage privileges" directed his Yukon representative to draft lease agreements with the various waterfront enterprises.<sup>19</sup> Sawmill owners were eager to maintain a direct waterfront link crucial to the future well-being of their operations. By 1899, agreements were in place, with monthly rental fees set at \$7.50 per lineal foot for frontage occupied by sawmill companies. Of these, the following leases were taken: the Canadian-Yukon Lumber Company, 100 feet; the Yukon Saw Mill Company, 150 feet; the Dawson Saw Mill Company, 100 feet; the Ladue Company, 150 feet (Figures 1-5 and 1-6). However, by 1901, a group of lease holders, three of which were mill owners, made a formal request to the Crown Timber and Land Agent to reduce the rental fee to \$5.00 per lineal foot citing "the present dull condition of business."<sup>20</sup> By 1907, with the Yukon Saw Mill Company remaining the only active mill along the waterfront, another request was made to reduce rental fees to \$2.50 per lineal foot.

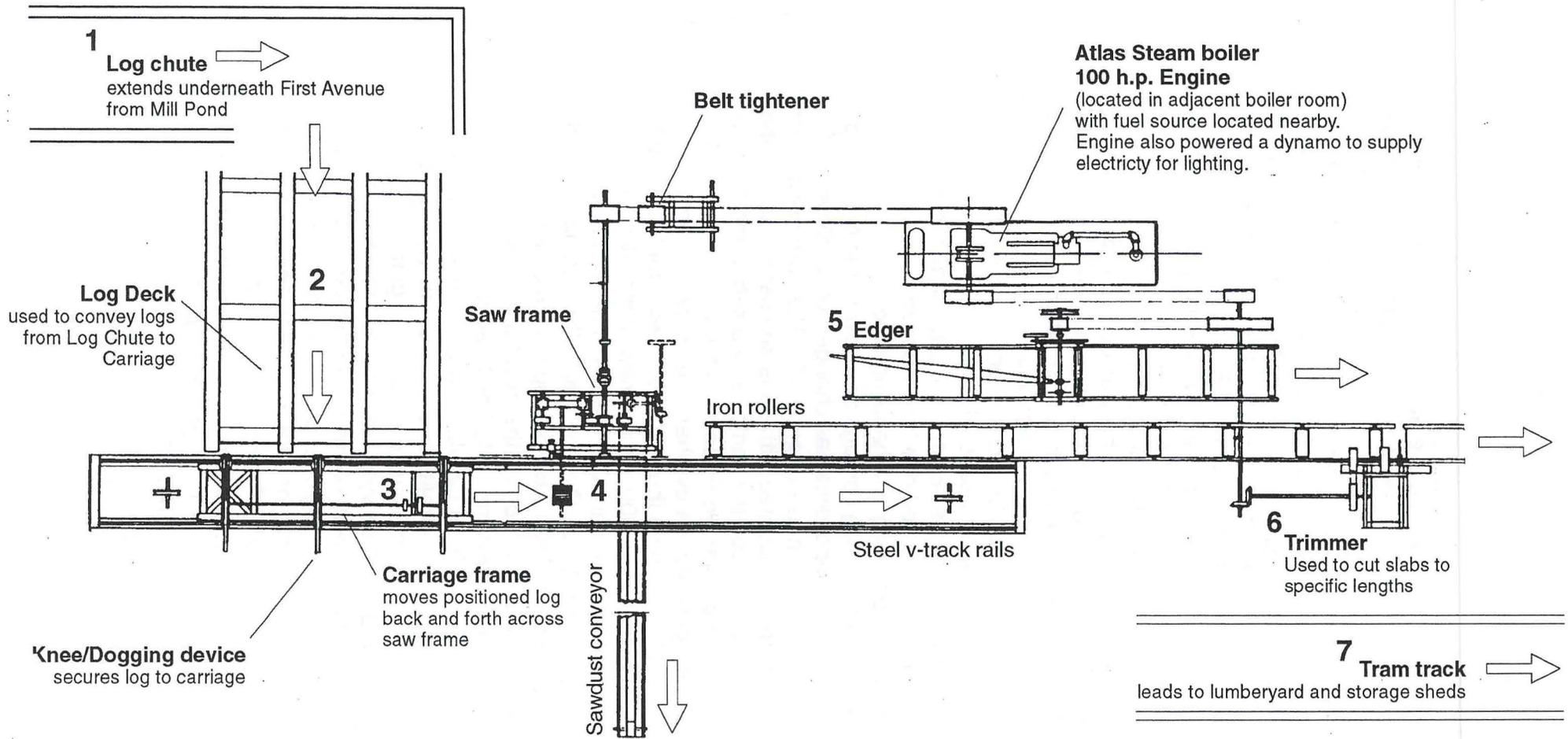
## ***Machinery and Mill Layout***

Of the sawmill operations concentrated on the Dawson waterfront, no trace of original mill buildings or machinery exists today. However, drawings contained within the Alaska Commercial Company records provide a detailed layout of the Yukon Saw Mill Company mill, machine shop, office, horse stable, foundry and lumberyard (Figure 1-7). A.S. Allen in his 1901 pamphlet, *Dawson, Yukon Territory*, describes the operations of the company mill: "The dimensions of the mill proper are 50 x 125 feet. The mill is provided with all modern appliances necessary to meet the heavy demands of the trade."<sup>21</sup> The main mill building was similar in size and operation to other mills



**FIGURE 1.7**

Plan showing Yukon Saw Mill Company and adjoining buildings, 1909  
 Taken from a drawing by W.J. Rendell, C.E.  
 Dawson, January 1909. Credit: Stanford University, Alaska Commercial Company Collection



1. Logs are transported from Yukon River via log chute.
2. Upon arrival, logs are rolled along ramp towards carriage frame.
3. The setter or dogger adjusts "dogs" to secure log to carriage.
4. Once secure, the sawyer operates the set-works necessary to drive the carriage towards the saw frame. The circular saw makes longitudinal cuts resulting in a centre cant, squared log or slabs.
5. Cut slabs are fed into an Edger and cut to dimensional widths.
6. A Trimmer makes the final cross cut to pre-determined lengths.

7. The fresh cut lumber is stacked and transported to the lumberyard via flat bed tram cars.

Further finishing machinery including a moulder, planer and band saw were located nearby or in adjacent band saw room.

Local material (spruce and pine) was stacked for air-drying. Imported woods (Oak, Fir, Cedar, Hickory) were milled as specialty items and stored in lumber sheds nearby.

Bark slabs were collected and sold as firewood, etc.

**FIGURE 1.8**

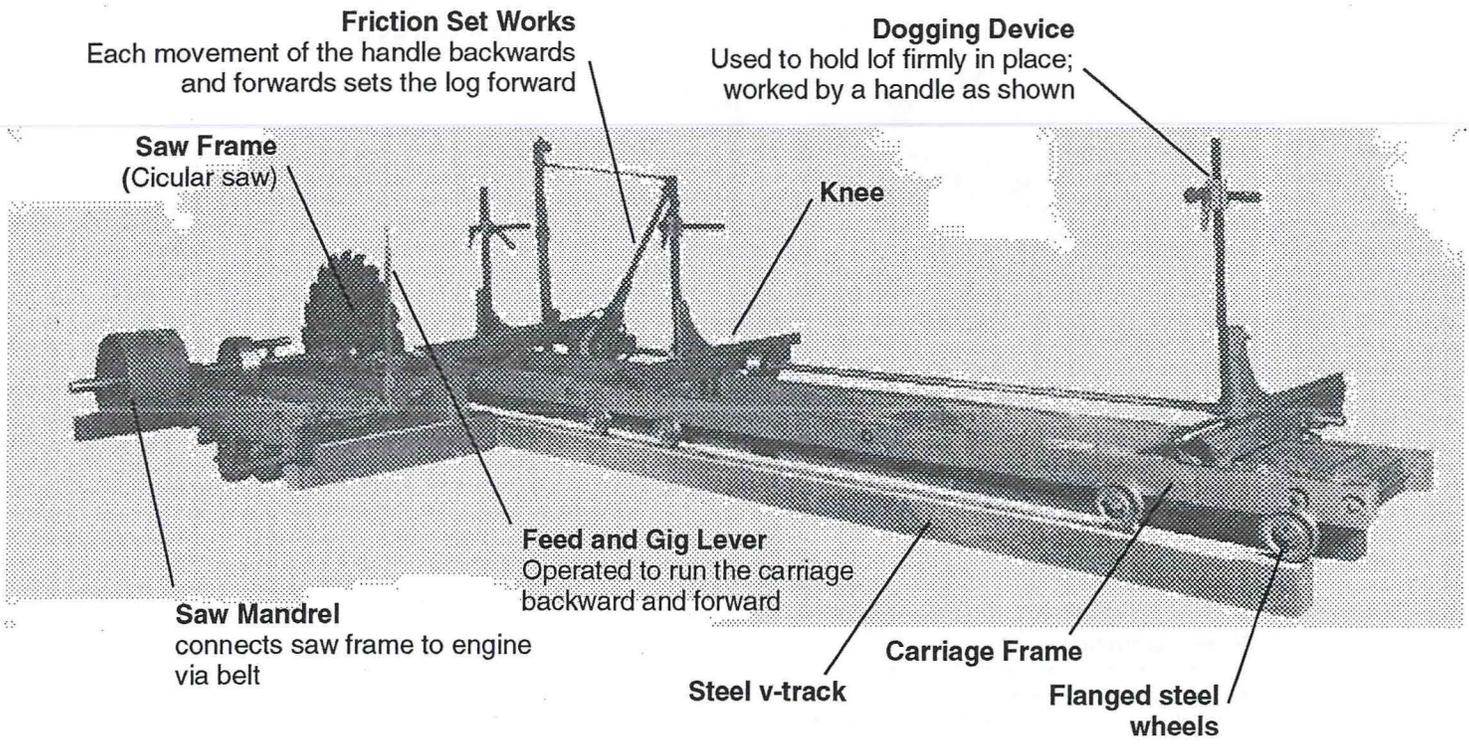
Machinery layout of Yukon Saw Mill

Based on a drawing from: B.R. Robertson's "Saw Power: Making Lumber in the Sawmills of Nova Scotia"

established nearby (Figure 1-8). It consisted of a simple gable-roofed post and beam structure with large openings at both ends and along the sides. A small shed attached to one side of the mill housed the boiler, steam engine, and dynamo. "All the company's buildings are lighted by electricity, furnished by a 500 light dynamo. The engine furnishing power for the plant is an Atlas steam boiler of 100 horse power."<sup>22</sup> O.W. Hobbs, manager of the Dawson Saw Mill Company, looked to the river for the source to power his mill. "Smith and Hobbs have purchased the little steamer Martha Clow for \$4,000.00 and their men are now at work dismantling her.... Her 70-horsepower Scotch marine boilers will be placed in the planing mill and will furnish power for the electric light plant as well as the new machinery being placed in their mill."<sup>23</sup> With secure access to a portion of the waterfront, log booms could be floated to the mill pond and individual logs fed into the mill as required. This was done by "pike men" who poled logs toward the chute ramp.<sup>24</sup> The Yukon Saw Mill Company constructed a log chute that extended from the Yukon River, underneath both its wharf facility and First Avenue, and directly into the mill building. The log chute or "log haul up" consisted of a chain-type mechanical feed with special steel teeth used to convey the logs from the water's edge. Once in the mill, a log setter would assess the wet log, remove it from the log chute with a peavy pole, and roll it down a skidded ramp towards the log carriage and saw frame. The peavy pole consisted of a long wooden pole with an adjustable double claw that facilitated the turning and handling of logs.

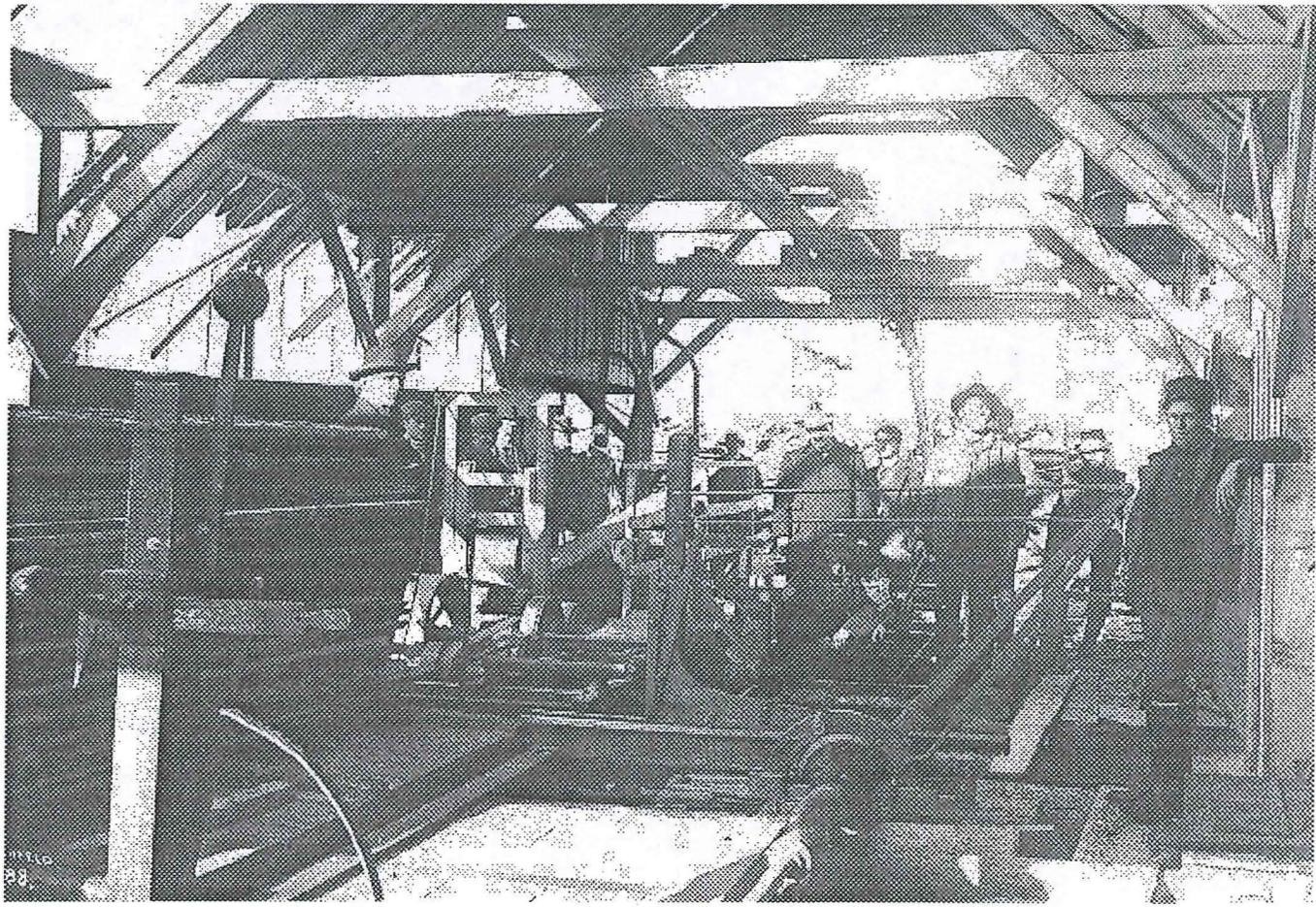
The heart of any mill is made up of the log carriage and saw frame or headrig. The working principle of these two main components has changed very little since first conceived in the mid-19th century and is still in use (Figure 1-9). The carriage consists of two elements: the flat bed steel carriage mounted with dogs and set-works and the track below it. In larger mills, logs were set upon the carriage by a setter and a dogger. However, in smaller mills, the canter or sawyer would position the dogs to secure the logs to the carriage with the sawyer operating the overhand set-works.<sup>25</sup> The dogs were sharp steel points used to hold the log onto the carriage. They could be adjusted to accommodate the varying sizes of logs. An 1900 interior view of the Atlin Sawmill in northern British Columbia shows an empty log carriage, dogs and set works with the sawyer and setter standing nearby (Figure 1-10). Once in place, the carriage moved the log towards the stationary saw frame or head saw for longitudinal cutting.

It was the responsibility of the sawyer to control the overhand set works and guide the log's travels through the headrig. (Figure 1-11) The headrig of the Yukon Sawmill Company mill consisted of either a single circular saw or band saw. It may have started as a circular saw and years later retrofitted to a band saw type of headrig. This was likely considering the addition of a bandsaw room to the original mill building in 1901.<sup>26</sup> Alone or together with a dogger, the sawyer ensured the smooth operation of the headrig and the parallel cutting and placement of the log on the carriage when turned. The most common method used for cutting logs was either the "sawing around method" or "canting." In small portable mills, only the headrig was used for cutting. In this method the log was cut on one face, turned 90° using a cant hook, cut and turned again until all four faces were squared. The remaining centre cant was now ready for cutting into sizes appropriate to its quality (Figure 1-12). In the larger and more established Dawson mills, the process varied slightly from the "sawing around method" due to the availability of other cutting machinery more suited to specific lumber milling. These included edgers, trimmers, and resaws. The most common of these was the



**FIGURE 1.9**

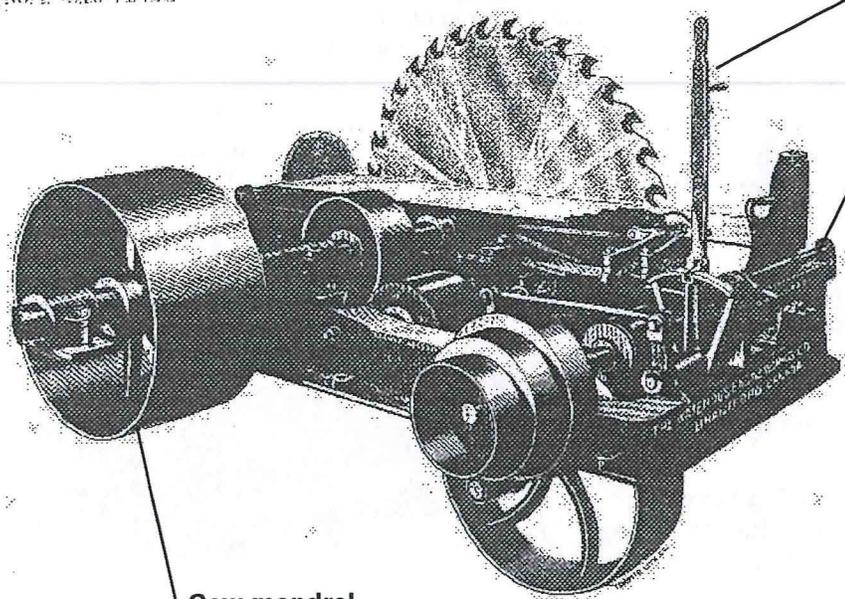
Log Carriage and Saw Frame for small mill  
 Photo courtesy of Vancouver Public Library Coll.  
 Photo no.26200



**FIGURE 1.10**

Interior view of Atlin saw mill  
 Photo Courtesy of BC Archives and Records Service  
 Photo no. D-01720

"No. 1 Saw Frame"



Feed and Gig Lever

**Timber guage**

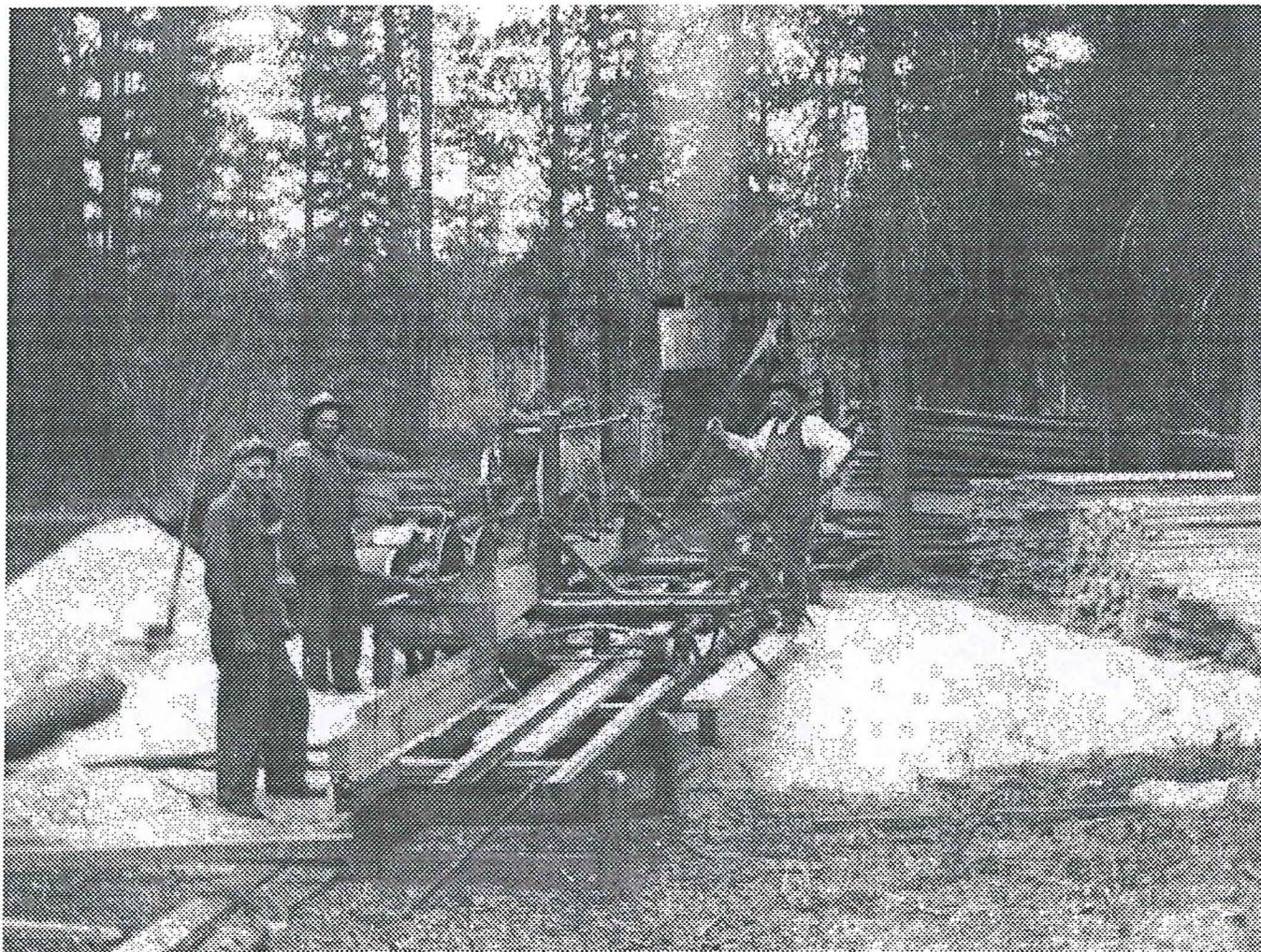
"To cut dimensional stuff, it is only necessary for sawyer to drop a pin into the hole marked the size desired and turn handle to it; this brings the rollers the exact distance from the saw..."

**Saw mandrel**

The mandrel is one of the most important parts of the mill; for if not properly made and fitted, the saw will not hang or run true, and uneven lumber is the result..."

**FIGURE 1.11**

"No. 1 Saw Frame" from Waterous Saw Mill Machinery Catalogue, Text excerpts and image by Waterous Engine Works Company, Branford, Canada 1890



**FIGURE 1.12**

Portable saw mill - B.C. Interior  
Photo Courtesy of B.C. Archives and Records Service

edger. After the headrig squared and cut the log into evenly spaced slabs, the edger, with two parallel saws capable of being set to standardized spacings by hand controls, made longitudinal cuts. The trimmer, consisting of one or more fixed or movable saws, crosscut pieces arriving from the headrig or edger to required lengths. The slabs or bark edges resulting from the milling process were stacked, bundled and later sold as firewood.

The Dawson mills were equipped with a full range of machinery, which had been collected over a short period of time and placed into quick use. The 1899 Dawson *Daily News Special Mining Edition* mentions the breadth of machinery in use at Dawson area mills. The Ladue mill, it said, "...is equipped with a full line of planers, edger, cutoff, matchers and circular saws." Two years later, A.S. Allen described the equipment of the other mills. In the Canadian Yukon Lumber Company, the "latest designed equipment including rotary edgers, planers, matchers and shingle machines are taxed to their fullest capacity turning out in each run of 20 hours 20,000 feet of lumber..."<sup>27</sup> At the Dawson Saw Mill Company, Allen wrote, "Only the latest modern machinery that human ingenuity can devise is used, the mill being completely equipped with all the necessary planers, shapers, band saws, etc., propelled by a 25-horse power Atlas engine."<sup>28</sup> An advertisement in the 1898 *Klondike Official Guide* by Waterous, a Canadian machine and boiler manufacturer, trumpets the merits of its special Yukon saw mill machinery, including "the Dixie Shingle Machine," the "Little Giant Planer, Matcher and Moulder," and the "14 h.p. Yukon Engine on Wheels." The machinery was "special" because it could be carried over the Chilkoot and White passes: "[Boiler and engine] can be packed in 150 lb. parcels and smaller fly wheels in four parts. Log seats, being girder steel, are light and unbreakable."<sup>29</sup> (Figure 1-13) A list written on Yukon Saw Mill Company letterhead details an inventory of machinery possibly owned by the Klondike Mill Company. In 1908, the operations of the company were amalgamated with those of the Yukon Saw Mill Company. The inventory describes at length the variety of machinery and parts contained within the mill:

- 1 set complete log carrier about 25 ft. Long; Log holder hook mark no.3 - 1884
- 1 Rip log saw table (no saw) Saw .... in boiler room
- 1 Gang edger \*\*\* self feed saw machine with 3 circ. inserted tooth saws
- Mark Brenner & Co. K.60, Louisville, Ky
- 1 complete swing cut off saw, with 1 circ. solid point 25" dia.
- The Goldie & McCullough Co. Ltd., Galt, Ontario Machine No.703
- 4 sides planer machine 8" x 24". 4 knife blocks
- 1 "American" shop no. 55810 4 sides mould & sticker machine
- The Levi Houston & Co., Montgomery P.A. USA
- 2 Steel planing mill exhausters and exhaust system
- Garden City Fan Co. 30. Chigaco.<sup>30</sup>

Once logs were rough sawn, they either underwent further milling or were stored in the lumberyard for drying and sorting. Possible further milling included planing, moulding, turning and scroll-sawing, used to produce more specialized wood products. These machines milled mostly imported fir, oak, ash and cedar. The varying list of products included shingles, sashes, mouldings, lath, doors, matched flooring and exterior siding, which were stored in the company's lumber sheds. The remaining

dressed lumber was loaded on flatbed tram cars and moved upon rails to dry-sheds, or storage piles in the lumberyard. The Yukon Saw Mill Company lumberyard stretched over three city blocks with a tramway extending from the mill building to beyond Third Avenue. On either side of the track were located piles of milled lumber, imported rough lumber, and slabs.

Between 1897 and 1901, the demand from the building and mining industry for lumber could hardly be met by the numerous mills located in and around Dawson. Yukon Gold Commissioner Thomas Fawcett, in his 1897 annual report makes mention of the great demand for lumber and the inability of the few sawmills to provide enough material. "The sawmill here is working twenty-four hours per diem, but cannot begin to keep up with the demand at present. The Alaska Commercial Company is building a large warehouse and is monopolizing the output of the mill at present."<sup>31</sup> By 1899, the six Dawson-area sawmills had a combined capacity of 100,000 feet of lumber per day. Yet their average output was limited to 60,000 feet due to the limited supply of logs.<sup>32</sup> The great demand meant that milled lumber was seldom given proper time to season. It was quickly utilized by customers eager to make use of the limited supply. "There is no such thing as seasoned lumber. It is snatched away from the mill and put into service almost as wet, most of it as it came out of the river. Occasionally, the best cuts from picked logs are allowed to lie in the weather for a few days. They are then labelled as 'seasoned lumber,' and away they go."<sup>33</sup>

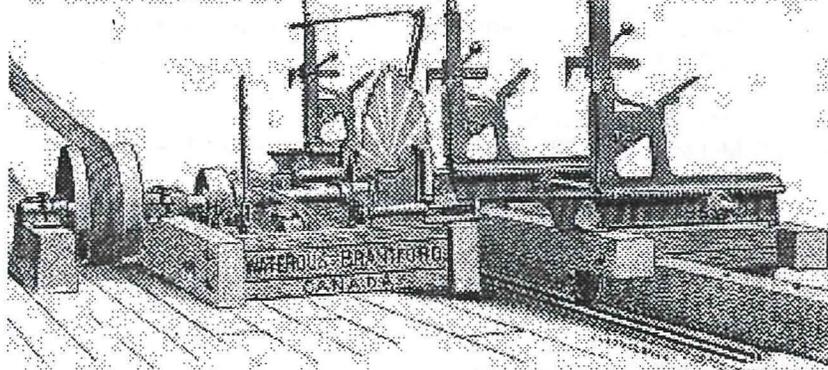
## ***The Demise of an Industry***

*Log houses are a thing of the past, and all buildings are now put up the same as in all settled communities, with timbers and lumber. The lumber mills are kept busy in summer day and night, supplying the demand....*<sup>34</sup>

The price of lumber followed closely the fortunes of the Klondike. In the winter of 1897-98 the price for 1000 feet of dressed lumber ranged between \$250 and \$350.<sup>35</sup> The great demand for sluice box lumber and dimensional construction materials, the shortage of logs, and the fact that only two companies had set up mill operations contributed to the high cost of lumber. By late 1899 the price dropped to between \$90 and \$150 per 1000 feet. Competition between mills increased as new operations entered the market and vied for a segment of the activity. However, between 1903 and 1908, markets had steadily dwindled with many mills unable to sustain the volume of sales to warrant continued operation. "The price for lumber has lately been \$45 to \$50 per thousand, but as the Northern Lumber Company has gone out of business and the Yukon Sawmill is preparing to take over the Klondike Mill... the average price will be about \$60."<sup>36</sup> The end of the First World War signalled the demise of the Yukon Saw Mill Company and with it one of the last original milling operations in the Klondike. The much-relied-upon machinery, boilers and engines were to remain forever silent.

# YUKON

# Saw Mills



## B.B. MILL COMPLETE

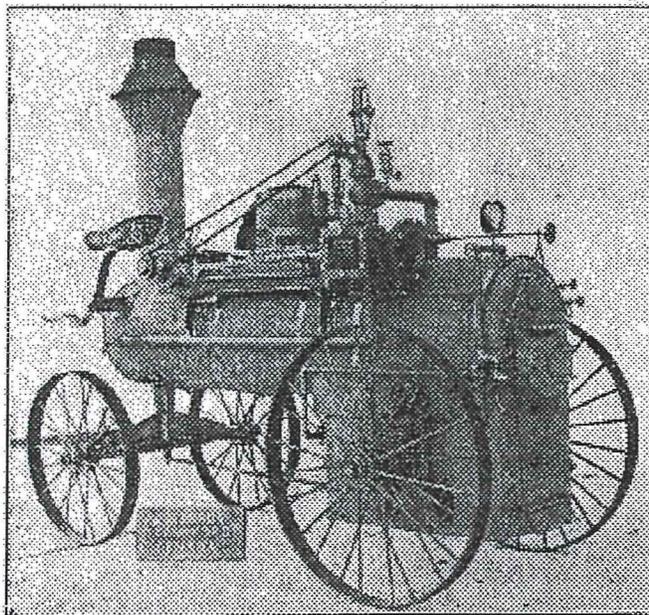
14 h.p. capacity.  
500 feet per hour.  
Standard Mill Engine and Boiler on wheels; 10,600 lbs.  
Supplied without woodwork when desired, and with very light cable feed in place of rack.

For the Chilcoot and White Passes we supply a Sectional Water-tube Boiler, weighing about 1,500 lbs. for 15 h.p., and 3,500 lbs. for 60 h.p. Also an Upright Engine on steel posts. Can be packed in 150 lb. parcels, and smaller fly wheels in four parts. Log seats, being girder steel, are light but unbreakable.

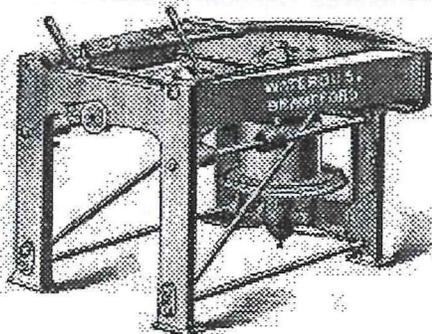
## WE HAVE BUILT Portable Saw Mills

for mule-back transportation for years, and can outfit you better than anyone in Canada or the States.

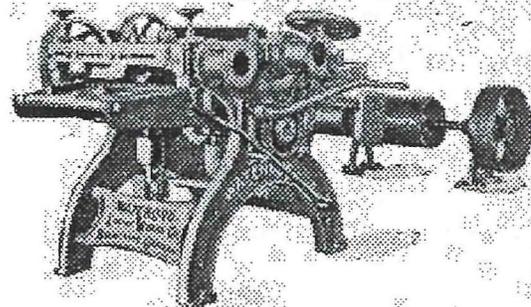
We are making special provision for the YUKON trade, and although our orders to date (1st February, 1898) are large, we shall be able to make prompt shipments.



14 H.P. YUKON ENGINE ON WHEELS.  
Weight, 2,000 lbs. Boiler alone, on wheels, 1,000 lbs.



THE DIXIE SHINGLE MACHINE.  
Weight, 450 lbs. Can be divided into very light packages.

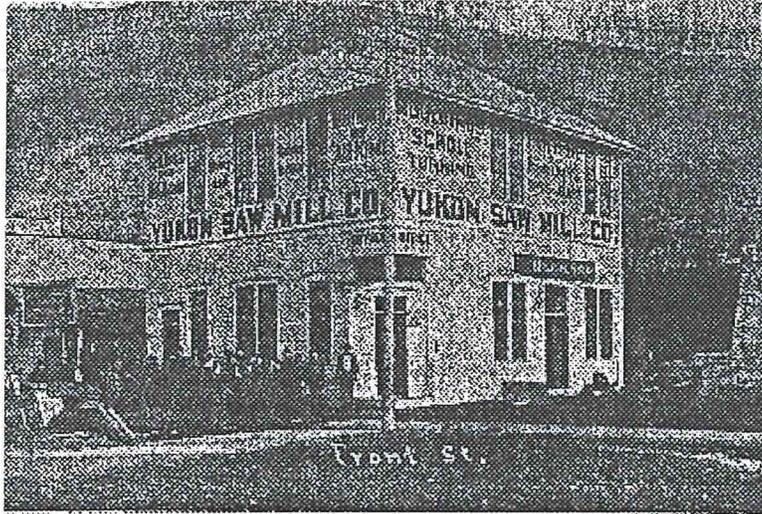


LITTLE GIANT PLANER, MATCHER and MOULDER  
Lightest combined planer built, 1,300 lbs. Can be packed in small weights.

Established 1844.  
Employ over 100 men.  
New Works opened, 1896

# WATEROUS, Brantford, Canada

- <sup>1</sup> A.S Allen, *Dawson, Yukon Territory*, (Dawson: American Journal of Industry, 1901), 40.
- <sup>2</sup> Dawson *Daily News* Mining Edition, 1899.
- <sup>3</sup> Allen, 38.
- <sup>4</sup> "Six Busy Mills" in Dawson *Daily News*, Oct. 9, 1899.
- <sup>5</sup> Report by Govt. Agent C.R. McLeod, Oct. 28, 1910, Yukon Archives, GOV 1649, File 26747: Timber resources 1910-1914.
- <sup>6</sup> Report by F.X. Gosselin, Crown Timber and Land Agent, May 12, 1910, in Yukon Archives, Canada. Department of the Interior. Annual Reports.
- <sup>7</sup> Tappan Adney, *Harper's Weekly*, Oct. 1, 1898, 963.
- <sup>8</sup> C.R. McLeod, 1910, Memorandum to the Commissioner, Yukon Archives GOV 1649, File 26747.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Klondike Nugget*, June 20, 1898.
- <sup>10</sup> Yukon Archives GOV 1625, File 3230.
- <sup>11</sup> Lewis Green, *The Gold Hustlers* (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing Company, 1977), 126.
- <sup>12</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> Allen, 40.
- <sup>14</sup> Yukon Archives COR 74, 77/60-1, File 2: Maggie's Museum Coll.
- <sup>15</sup> R.L. Polk and Co.'s *Alaska-Yukon Directory and Gazetteer* (Seattle, Washington: Alaska-Yukon Directory Co., 1903), 336.
- <sup>16</sup> Report of Crown and Timber and Land Agent, 1903, in Yukon Archives, Canada. Department of the Interior. Annual Reports.
- <sup>17</sup> Northern Design Consultants, *A History of Logging the Yukon: 1896-1970*, Volume 11A (Whitehorse: Northern Design Consultants, 1993), 15.
- <sup>18</sup> Allen, 23
- <sup>19</sup> Yukon Archives GOV 1684 Dawson Waterfront, 1898-1908, 3/3.
- <sup>20</sup> Yukon Archives GOV 1684 Dawson Waterfront, 1898-1908, 2/3.
- <sup>21</sup> Allen, 40.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> Dawson *Daily News*, Aug. 1899.
- <sup>24</sup> Peter Adams, *Early Loggers and the Sawmill* (Toronto: Crabtree Publishing Company, 1981), 24.
- <sup>25</sup> Barbara R. Robertson, *Saw Power: Making Lumber in the Sawmills of Nova Scotia* (Halifax: The Nova Scotia Museum and Nimbus Publishing, 1986), 139.
- <sup>26</sup> Allen, 24.
- <sup>27</sup> Allen, 40.
- <sup>28</sup> Allen, 38.
- <sup>29</sup> William Ogilvie, *The Klondike Official Guide* (Toronto: Hunter Rose, 1898).
- <sup>30</sup> Courtesy: Ed Jones
- <sup>31</sup> Annual Report, Department of Interior, 1897, in Yukon Archives, Canada. Department of the Interior. Annual Reports.
- <sup>32</sup> Dawson *Daily News* Mining Edition, September 1899.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>34</sup> *Dawson City, Yukon Territory and Alaska Directory and Gazetteer 1901*. (M.L. Ferguson, Publisher, 1901), 49.
- <sup>35</sup> Dawson *Daily News* Oct. 9, 1899.
- <sup>36</sup> Report by the Crown Timber and Land Agent, E.C. Senkler, 1908, in Yukon Archives, Canada. Department of the Interior. Annual Reports.



# YUKON SAW MILL CO.

FOUNDRY AND MACHINE WORKS.

Dawson, Y. T.,

190

SOLD TO

Rollers  
Engines  
Pumps

Iron and Brass Castings.

Blades  
Scrapers  
Self-Drummers

## In Saw Mill.

- 1 Set Forward & Astor engine for carrier, 2 cylinders 9x12 -  
Mark No 768 = 54. (Unknown Made)
- 1 full length  $\frac{3}{4}$  cable. (1 lubricator + 2 piston rods in Boiler room.)
- 1 Set complete log carrier about 20ft long.  
Log holder hook mark no 3. - 1884.  
Slide base Mark No 4. - 1884.
- 1 Rip log saw table. (No saw) Saw blades in boiler room -
- 1 Gang edger X X X self fed saw machine.  
With 3 in incanted tooth saws.  
Mark Brunner & co K.60. Louisville Ky.
- 1 length sprocket chain (No 55) size  $1\frac{1}{4}$  wide  $1\frac{1}{8}$  long for table in boiler
- 1 Complete swing cut off saw, with 1 in solid point 25" dia.
- 1 The Goldie & McCallough co Ltd. Gatt Ontario Machine No. 703.  
4 sides planer machine 8" X 24". 4 Knife blocks -  
Tools in boiler room -
- 1 "American" Shop no 55810. 4 sides Mould & sticker machine.  
The Levi Houston & co. Monticome P.A. U.S.A.

FIGURE 1.14

№ 57

# 2 Show Cases

5' 8" x 2' 2 1/2" x 15 1/2" high

pieces	length	width	thick	№	Kind of wood	Shape	
8	12 1/2"	1 7/8"	7/8"	1	Spang		Door stile
4	10"	1 3/4"	7/8"	2	"		Center " "
8	2' 6 1/2"	1 7/8"	7/8"	3	"		Top and Bottom Door rail
8	13 3/4"	8 3/4"	1/2"	4	"		Door panel
2	5' 6"	2' 0"	1/2"	5	"		Bottom
5	6' 0"	1"	1"	6	"		
3	6' 0"	1"	1"	7	"		
8	2' 2"	1"	3/4"	8	"		
1	3' 0"	1 1/2"	1"	9	"		
4	6' 0"	2 1/2"	3/4"	10	"		
2	6' 0"	2 1/2"	1"	11	"		

FIGURE 1.15

Millwork order No. 57 for Two show Cases - Klondike Mill Company Order Form  
 Dawson City Museum Collection, No date.

## Chapter 2

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# Dawson Sawmills 1896-1920

### Before 1896

Before the discovery of gold on Bonanza Creek on August 16, 1896, there were no sawmills in the Klondike. However, two sawmills were operating not far away:

- Up the Yukon River, Joe Ladue operated a sawmill in conjunction with his trading post at Ogilvie, on an island at the mouth of the Sixtymile River.
- Down the Yukon River, near the mining community of Forty Mile, John J. Healy of the North American Trading and Transportation Company operated a sawmill at his trading post, Fort Cudahy.

### 1896

Within a couple of weeks of the gold strike on Bonanza Creek, the Klondike valley was full of goldseekers and the creek was staked end to end. Down on the flats at the mouth of the Klondike River, Joe Ladue and his partner, Arthur Harper, staked their own gold mine – a townsite that they named Dawson City.

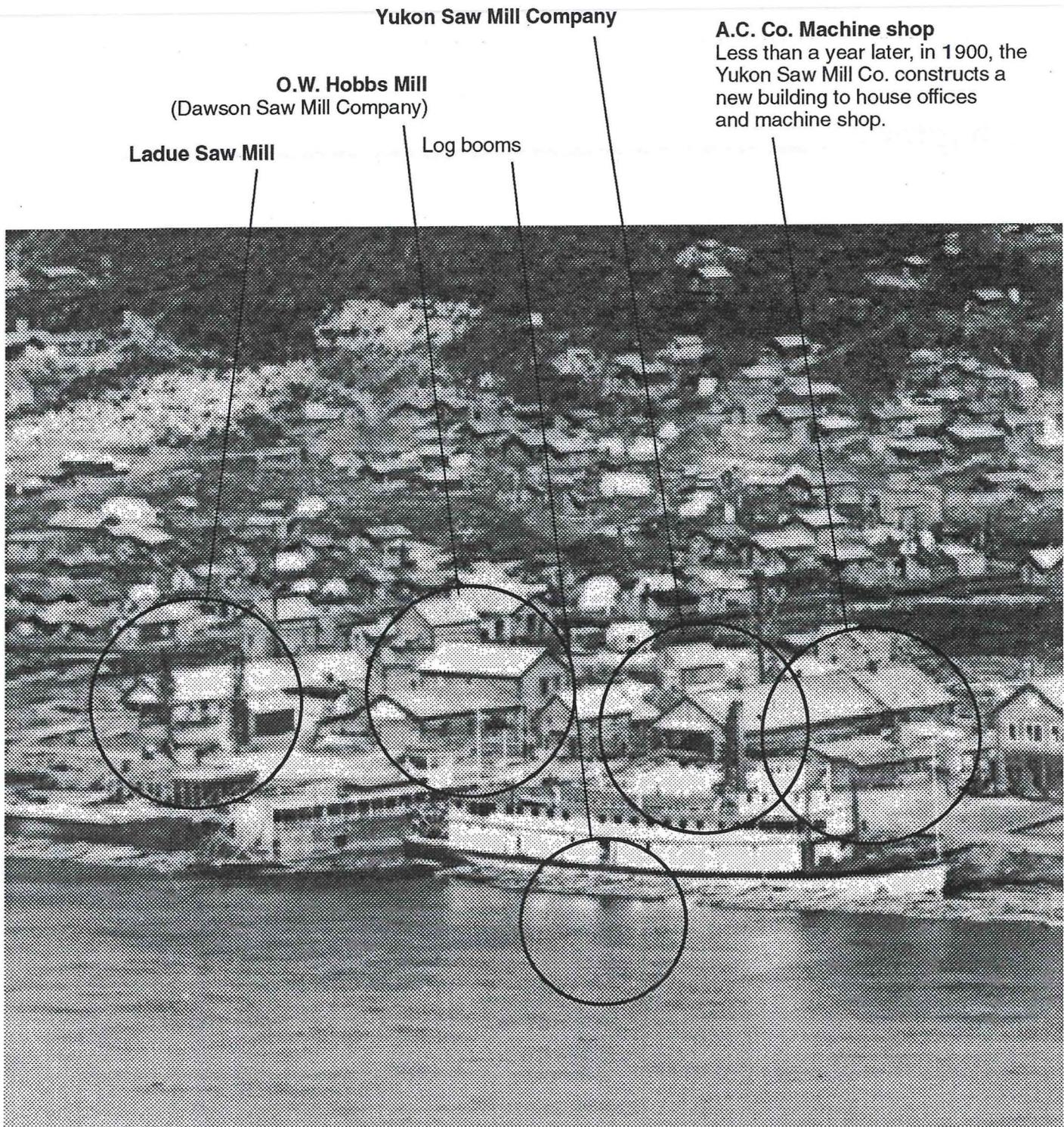
- **The Ladue Mill**

In late August, after learning of the gold strike, Joe Ladue floated his sawmill down from Ogilvie to the Klondike and set it up on the bank of the Yukon in his newly-staked townsite. The mill was turning out rough lumber by the beginning of September 1896.

Writing in the fall of 1897, American official Sam C. Dunham reported: "The sawmill was put into operation at once, and has turned out about two million feet of product, supplying the mines with sluice-box lumber and the town and vicinity with building material. But little building was done during the winter, the cold weather making such work impossible, but men were engaged in getting out logs for the construction of houses in the spring."<sup>1</sup>

### 1897

The Dawson City building boom began in 1897. According to Sam Dunham, there were only three or four buildings in Dawson in January 1897. By early October, he wrote, the town held four to five hundred houses and buildings, the largest of which was the substantial two-storey log store built by the Alaska Commercial Company.<sup>2</sup>



**FIGURE 2.1**

View of three saw mills - Dawson waterfront, 1899.

Photo courtesy of Yukon Archives

Photo no. 2016

- The Ladue Mill

For the first half of 1897, the Ladue Mill was the major source of lumber for building and mining. Thomas Fawcett, the recently-arrived Gold Commissioner, wrote in frustration to his superiors: "My prospect for acquiring a comfortable office, or in fact a building of any kind is at the present time nil. The sawmill here is working twenty-four hours per diem, but cannot begin to keep up with the demand at present. The Alaska Commercial Company is building a large warehouse and is monopolizing the output of the mill at present."<sup>3</sup>

- Klondike Mill Co.

The North American Trading and Transportation Company (NATT) was not far behind the Alaska Commercial Company in seeing the possibilities of the Klondike. John J. Healy arrived from Fort Cudahy on June 8, less than a week after the ACC Company, but found the lumber supply already cornered by the ACC. He moved his own sawmill from Fort Cudahy to Dawson in July, set it up as the Klondike Mill Co., and began milling his own lumber.

By the next year, the Klondike Mill was located on an island at the mouth of the Klondike River. However, there is some evidence that it was located elsewhere that first summer. In his book *The Klondike Stampede*, journalist Tappan Adney provided a meticulous description of Klondike City and Dawson as they were when he arrived there at the beginning of October 1897. In his description of the island – "a low island covered with small cottonwoods" – there is no mention of a sawmill or a building of any kind.<sup>4</sup> However, when he followed the trail from Klondike City to Bonanza Creek a few days later, he described "a small steam saw-mill just ready for winter work" on the left bank of the Klondike, just past the last group of cabins associated with Klondike City and about two miles before the trail veered away from the river and toward Bonanza.<sup>5</sup> The first survey of Klondike City shows a mill site laid out on the left bank of the Klondike at the upriver end of the townsite. There is no record of a mill located there in later years, and the patent was never taken up.<sup>6</sup> It is possible that the mill Adney describes was the Klondike Mill, and that it was first set up on the mill site in Klondike City.

## 1898

The full flood of stampedeers reached the Klondike in 1898 and Dawson swelled to 30,000 people or more in the space of a few months. That spring, buildings sprang up overnight, Tappan Adney wrote, and three sawmills working day and night couldn't meet the demand for wood: "Men stood with teams waiting, taking the boards as they fell from the saw."<sup>7</sup>

The three sawmills Adney mentioned were probably the Ladue Mill, the Klondike Mill, and the Yukon Saw Mill Co., which registered its first timber lease in March 1898. The first three mills were soon joined by others. A July 10 article<sup>8</sup> in *The Klondike Nugget* listed five mills already in operation, and six more just completed or about to be completed, although not all of them were in Dawson itself.

The mills that had been supplying "Dawson's sudden expansion" in the first half of 1898, according to the *Nugget* article, were:

- The Ladue Mill

The mill was commonly referred to as the Harper and Ladue Mill at this stage in its history.

- Yukon Saw Mill Co.

Located near the south end of the block on which the Ladue Mill was established, the Yukon Saw Mill Co. was founded and managed by Joseph F. Burke, in association with the Alaska Commercial Company.

- Dawson Saw Mill & Building Co.

In the *Nugget* article, this mill is called "Hobbs & Smith" after its two owners. It was located on First Avenue between the Yukon Saw Mill Co. and the Ladue Mill. Later, Owen W. Hobbs apparently took full ownership, and the mill is often called simply the Hobbs Mill. An article<sup>9</sup> in *The Klondike Nugget's* July 12, 1898, issue says Hobbs and Smith were "erecting a sawmill in conjunction with their woodworking plant and expect to have it in operation at once." Since Hobbs told the writer A.S. Allen in 1901 that he established his business in 1897, the woodworking plant is probably the one, described by Tappan Adney, "which worked all winter turning out well-made furniture and cabinet-work, [and] supplied most of the fittings of saloons and stores."<sup>10</sup>

- Arctic Saw Mill

An Adney photograph of stampedeers selling their outfits on the Dawson waterfront in July 1898 shows a sign for the Arctic Saw Mill in the background.<sup>11</sup> There is nothing in the photograph or Adney's book to suggest where on the waterfront the sawmill was located. The sign in the rather blurry image appears to give "W.M. Weldon" as the name of the manager. The *Nugget* article refers to "Welboon" but this might be one of the newspaper's frequent typographical errors. The Arctic Saw Mill probably operated for only one season in Dawson City. By 1899, Joe Boyle and his partner, Frank Slavin, had bought the mill and moved it to the mouth of Bear Creek where it operated for approximately another five years.<sup>12</sup>

- Williams Mill

Referred to also as the James Williams Mill or the Williams Bros. Mill, this sawmill was located in the southern part of Dawson, probably on or near the waterfront location where Joe Boyle later built his wharf. Boyle bought it and the Arctic Saw Mill in late 1898 or early 1899. He continued to operate the Williams Mill for a couple of years, but by 1903 he appears to have moved all his milling operations to the Arctic Saw Mill at Bear Creek.<sup>13</sup>

The *Klondike Nugget* article also listed several new mills, some of them in Dawson and some supplying Dawson from further away. The Dawson mills were:

- D.G. Stewart & Co.

The Stewart mill, according to the *Nugget*, had just begun operations on a waterfront site a short distance south of the North-West Mounted Police barracks.

- Klondike Mill Co.

Although the Klondike Mill had been milling lumber in 1897, the July 10 *Nugget* article lists it among the new mills and seems to suggest that it is operating in a new location: "The Klondike Mill Co., F.G. Noyes, manager, will have a large mill in operation on the Klondike slough in a very few days, if indeed, it is not sawing already." The Klondike slough refers to the area of slack water behind the island at the mouth of the Klondike, so this article might pinpoint the company's move to what came to be known as Klondike Island or the N.A.T.&T. island. The theory is lent some credence by the signed statement of Charles Barwell, Dominion Land Surveyor, dated July 8, 1898: "I hereby certify that the island shown in the accompanying plans lying at the mouth of the Klondike River between Dawson and Klondike City has no permanent buildings on it with the exception of the foundations of a sawmill erected by the applicant for said land."<sup>14</sup> Barwell's description suggests that the Klondike Island mill site was still under construction when he made his survey, at the request of Healy, in early July.

## 1899

By 1899, the scramble to throw up any kind of shelter for the stampeders had passed. Both Dawson and the milling industry were stabilizing. There was still need for rough lumber for mining and other industrial uses, but Dawsonites were also looking for wood and supplies to build the kind of elegant, late-Victorian houses popular in southern Canada and the United States. In response, the mills began expanding their services and the smaller mills disappeared, probably to the creeks where their rough-cut lumber was most in demand. (Figure 2-1) The mills that remained in Dawson City were:

- The Ladue Mill

- Klondike Mill Co.

- Yukon Saw Mill Co.

- Williams Mill

The mill was now owned by Joe Boyle. Advertisements for it and for the Arctic Saw Mill, which Boyle had bought and moved to the mouth of Bear Creek, often appeared under the company name Boyle & Slavin at this time.

- Dawson Saw Mill & Building Co.

An advertisement in the *Dawson Daily News Mining Edition*, Sept. 1899 shows O.W. Hobbs as sole proprietor. The ad says, in part: "The company owns and operates its own saw mill and in connection has a large planing mill and wood working establishment, and is in a position to furnish dressed lumber of all kinds, flooring, ceiling, rustic mouldings, doors, sash, roller top desks and furniture of all kinds at the lowest prices."

More than any other sawmill, the Dawson Saw Mill staked its future on diversification. The same advertisement announced that Hobbs had established a large brickyard and lime kiln on the Yukon river, that the company carried a full line of builders' hardware, tar paper, and wall paper, and that its "Undertaking Establishment

is the best in the Yukon, having the only line of burial clothes and casket trimmings north of Juneau. Bodies embalmed for outside shipment.”

## 1900

The erection of more substantial buildings in Dawson, particularly by the government, meant a continued demand for the kind and quantity of lumber supplied by the surviving mills. As a result, the milling industry remained fairly stable in 1900, apart from the addition of one new player. (Figure 2-2)

- The Ladue Mill
- Klondike Mill Co.
- Yukon Saw Mill Co.
- Dawson Saw Mill & Building Co.
- Williams Mill
- Canadian-Yukon Lumber Co.

The D.G. Stewart & Co. sawmill, which began operations in 1898, appears to have been out of business by 1899. However, D.G. Stewart’s name appeared in the *Dawson Daily News Mining Edition* of September 1899 as “Resident Manager, Dawson” in an advertisement for the Canadian-Yukon Lumber Co. The Montreal-based milling company had been operating a mill at Selkirk since 1898. In the spring of 1900, it moved its mill and lumber yard to a location on the waterfront at the north end of First Avenue, a little more than a block north of the Ladue Mill. (Figure 2-3) The move meant that four sawmills were lined up along the northern part of First Avenue, in the space of just over two blocks.

## 1901

In the summer of 1901, writer A.S. Allen came to Dawson City to prepare a booklet about the community on behalf of the *American Journal of Industry*.<sup>15</sup> He listed five sawmills (the Williams Mill had disappeared) and described each briefly, providing an interesting snapshot of the milling industry in Dawson in 1901.

- The Ladue Mill

The mill employed thirty-five people and could turn out 25,000 feet of lumber in a 24-hour period, Allen wrote. It produced rough and dressed lumber, mouldings, matched flooring, and sluice and mine lumber.<sup>16</sup>

- Klondike Mill Co.

In 1901, the Klondike Mill was the largest of its kind in the Yukon, Allen wrote. It employed fifty to sixty men and could produce 4,000,000 board feet a year. “It is fully equipped with the latest improved modern machinery and is lighted by electricity, furnished by a dynamo of 100-light capacity. The mill operates from March until November of each year, the daily run being 24 hours.”<sup>17</sup>

- Yukon Saw Mill Co.

Allen called the Yukon Saw Mill Co. "the most extensive" enterprise of its kind in Dawson. It employed seventy people in its various departments, which included the sawmill itself and the largest machine shop north of Vancouver. The sawmill had the capacity to turn out 35,000 board feet in a 24-hour run.<sup>18</sup>

- Dawson Saw Mill & Building Co.

Allen referred to the Dawson Saw Mill as "the Hobbs Mill." It was equipped, he wrote, with "planers, shapers, bands saws, etc., propelled by a 25-horse power Atlas engine." The mill's annual output was 480,000 board feet. Hobbs was also the largest manufacturer of brick and lime in the Yukon, Allen added.<sup>19</sup>

- Canadian-Yukon Lumber Co.

Among the equipment Allen listed at the Canadian-Yukon Lumber Co. were rotary edgers, planers, matchers, and shingle machines. The company employed fifteen people and could turn out 20,000 board feet of lumber and 25,000 shingles in a 20-hour run.<sup>20</sup>

## 1902

The number of sawmills in Dawson City decreased in 1902. Two sawmills closed for reasons particular to the mills themselves, but no mills moved in to replace them. The report of the Crown Timber and Land Agent dated August 1, 1903, offers an explanation: "The lumber sales have decreased nearly 2,000,000 feet during the past year due no doubt to the fact that the various mining companies operating have secured all their sluice lumber, and also to the decrease in building activity in Dawson. Timber is not very plentiful, and it is very seldom that a timber cruiser can find a square mile on which a quarter million feet can be cut...."<sup>21</sup>

- The Ladue Mill

The Ladue Mill still appears in the Dawson Assessment and Tax Rolls for 1902, but not in the Crown Timber and Land Agent's list of operating mills. The apparent shutdown of the mill might be related to Joe Ladue's death a year earlier and the years-long business of settling his estate.

- Klondike Mill Co.

Still operating.

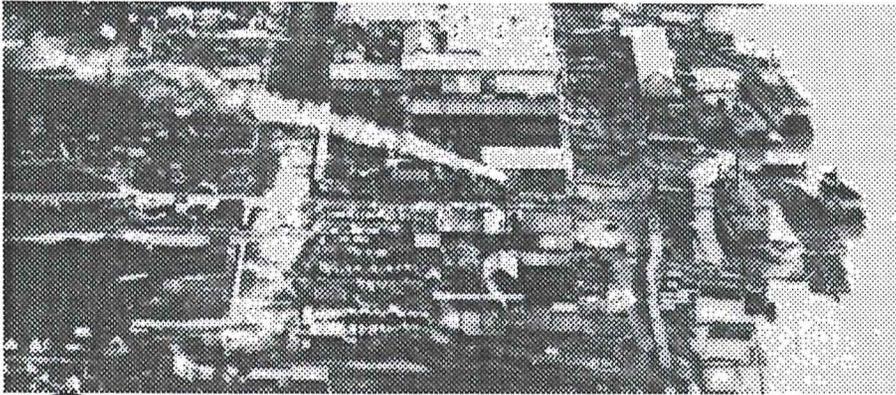
- Yukon Saw Mill Co.

The Yukon Saw Mill Co. expanded its machine shop and added a foundry to its services in 1902.

- Dawson Saw Mill & Building Co.

O.W. Hobbs's experiment with brick manufacturing proved to be a financial disaster and he went out of business, turning over his various properties to his creditors. Records for the sawmill property in the Dawson Assessment and Tax Rolls for 1902 show Hobbs's name crossed out and "Chute" written in. In 1902, Jerome





View of Dawson from north with Yukon Saw Mill Co.(smoke stack) in foreground  
Photo courtesy of Yukon Archives #3739



north

By 1900 the north end of Dawson's waterfront was bustling with the activity of four saw mill operations.

"In the line of manufacturers there is probably no city in the world of equal size the value of whose products equal those of the City of Dawson. In a new and growing district the saw mill industry is one that forms one of its most important features."  
(A.S. Allen, p. 40)

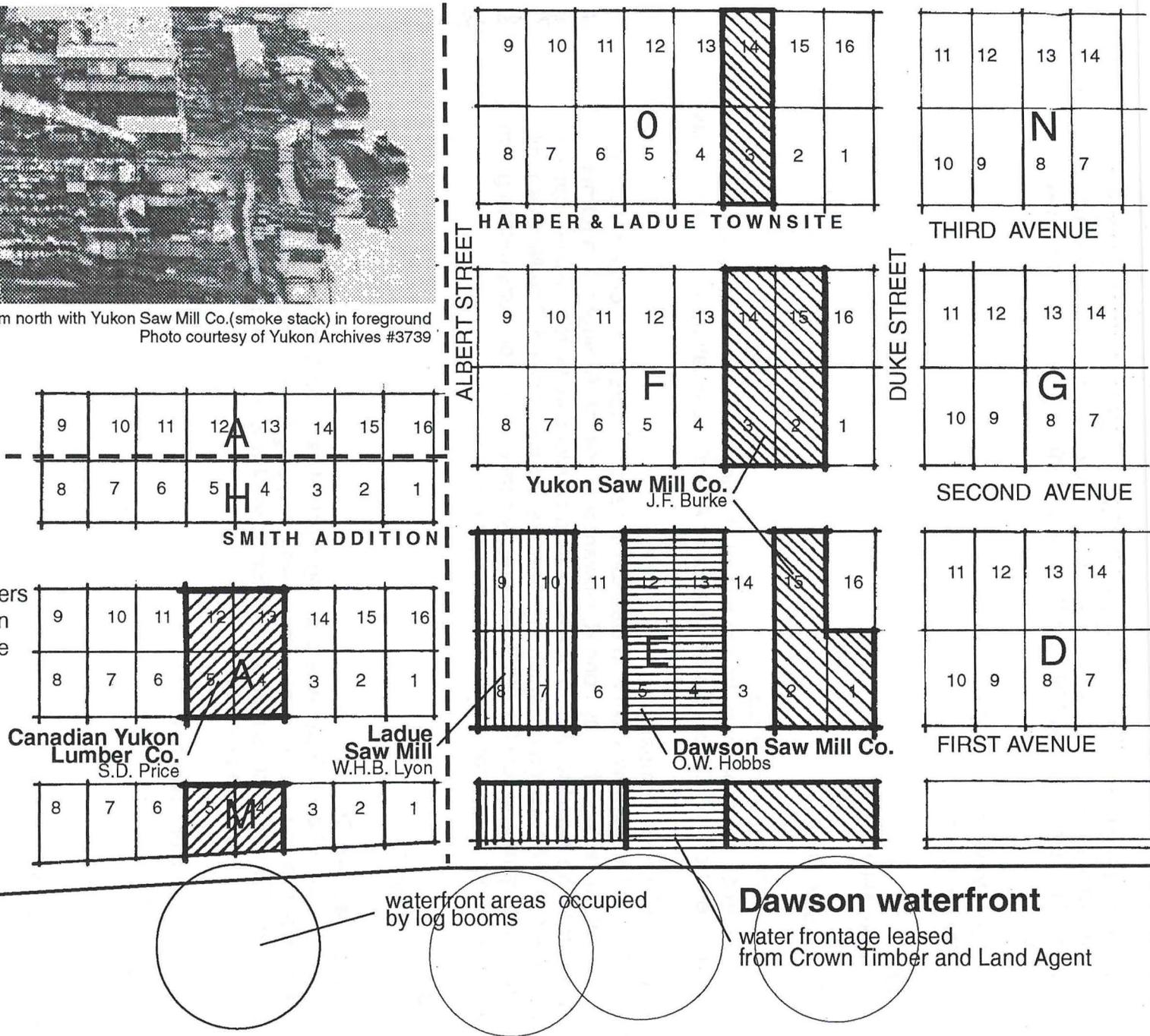


FIGURE 2.3

Plan of operating saw mills - north end of Dawson waterfront, 1900  
Drawing not to scale

Chute was assembling land for the Klondike Mines Railway, which originally intended to run its track along the Dawson waterfront to a freightyard it planned to build near the location of the Dawson Saw Mill. The Dawson waterfront portion of the railway was never built.

- Canadian-Yukon Lumber Co.  
Still operating.

### **1903**

- Klondike Mill Co.

- Yukon Saw Mill Co.

- Canadian-Yukon Lumber Co.

The mill was probably in the process of shutting down. By the next season, it had disappeared from the Crown Timber and Land Agent's calculations of operating mills.

- Northern Lumber Company

The first major new sawmill in Dawson in several years, the Northern Lumber Company was established by John R. Howard and Joseph A. Segbers, a former manager of the Klondike Mill Co. It was located on Klondike Garden Island, upriver from the N.A.T.&T. island on which the Klondike Mill was located. The Northern mill began cutting lumber July 23, 1903, apparently concentrating on construction grade lumber for both house construction and mining use.<sup>22</sup>

### **1904**

- Klondike Mill Co.

- Yukon Saw Mill Co.

The Yukon Saw Mill Co. was ordering much of its wood from Washington State sawmills at this time. At the same time, it was shopping for new modern machine shop equipment. The two factors indicate that the sawmill was becoming less profitable and the machine shop more profitable.<sup>23</sup>

- Northern Lumber Company:

### **1905**

- Klondike Mill Co.

- Yukon Saw Mill Co.

- Northern Lumber Company

### **1906**

In his report for 1906-07, dated May 1, 1907, Crown Timber and Land Agent F.X. Gosselin wrote: "... There are three saw-mills operating in Dawson district at the

## **1911**

- Yukon Saw Mill Co.

Founder, part-owner, and long-time manager of the Yukon Saw Mill Co., Joseph F. Burke, died December 26. He was succeeded as manager by Bernhard (Ben) Volkman, whose name first appears in connection with the company in 1904.<sup>27</sup>

## **1912**

- Yukon Saw Mill Co.

The Alaska Commercial Company began trying to sell off the Yukon Saw Mill Co., its last major investment in Dawson.

## **1913**

- Yukon Saw Mill Co.

Ledgers suggest that the Yukon Saw Mill Co. machine shop on First Avenue was shut down and the building was probably deserted.

## **1914**

- Yukon Saw Mill Co.

Frank S. Neill and Ben Volkman made an offer to purchase the Yukon Saw Mill Co. milling operation on Klondike Island.

## **1915**

- Yukon Saw Mill Co., Frank S. Neill and Bernhard M. Volkman, proprietors

Neill and Volkman took over the sawmill operation in March. The purchase did not include the old Yukon Saw Mill buildings and property on First Avenue, which had been abandoned and stripped of almost everything.

## **1916**

- Yukon Saw Mill Co., Frank S. Neill and Bernhard M. Volkman, proprietors

In the spring, Frank Neill and Ben Volkman signed a new five-year lease on the mill's land and buildings on Klondike Island.

## **1917**

- Yukon Saw Mill Co., Frank S. Neill and Bernhard M. Volkman, proprietors

The company is listed in Polk's Gazetteer for 1917-18, but not in the next available issue, 1923-24. The sawmill appears to have ceased operations toward the end of the First World War.

<sup>1</sup> Sam C. Dunham, *The Alaskan Gold Fields* (Anchorage, Alaska: Alaska Northwest Publishing Company, 1983), 31.

<sup>2</sup> Dunham, 31.

<sup>3</sup> Extracts from Reports of Thos. Fawcett, D.T.S., Gold Commissioner for the Yukon District. Dawson, Yukon District, 16th June, 1897. (Canada. Department of the Interior. Annual Reports).

<sup>4</sup> Tappan Adney, *The Klondike Stampede* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), 177.

<sup>5</sup> Adney, 195.

present time, all of which are located in Dawson and all are run by steam-power. In addition to these there is a mill on the Twelvemile river, operated by the Yukon Consolidated Gold Fields Company, at which they manufacture the lumber required by them for mining purposes." In the first half of 1906 both the Northern Lumber Company and the North American Transportation and Trading Company, owners of the Klondike Mill, applied for permission to mine for gold under their mill properties, suggesting that the mills themselves were losing value.<sup>24</sup>

- Klondike Mill Co.
- Yukon Saw Mill Co.
- Northern Lumber Company

### **1907**

- Klondike Mill Co.
- Yukon Saw Mill Co.
- Northern Lumber Company

### **1908**

Over the winter of 1907-1908, the Yukon Saw Mill Co. eliminated its last two competitors. It bought the Northern Lumber Company and shut it down, selling off its assets over the next few years.<sup>25</sup> It also bought all the equipment and inventory of the Klondike Mill Co. However, instead of shutting the Klondike Mill down, the Yukon Saw Mill Co. leased the Klondike Island land and buildings used by the mill and prepared to move its own milling operation to the island. The change of location was probably prompted by high taxes on the Dawson waterfront and the fact that the primary market for wood was now the dredges, thawing machines, and waterways on the creeks of the Klondike, not the dwindling community of Dawson City.

- Yukon Saw Mill Co.

The company's machine shop and offices remained on First Avenue but the milling operations were moved to Klondike Island. Engineer's drawings based on a survey done in the summer of 1908 show that lumber was still being stored at the company's First Avenue complex, but the Crown Timber and Land Agent's report says the only mill operating in 1908 was the Klondike Island mill.<sup>26</sup>

### **1909**

- Yukon Saw Mill Co.

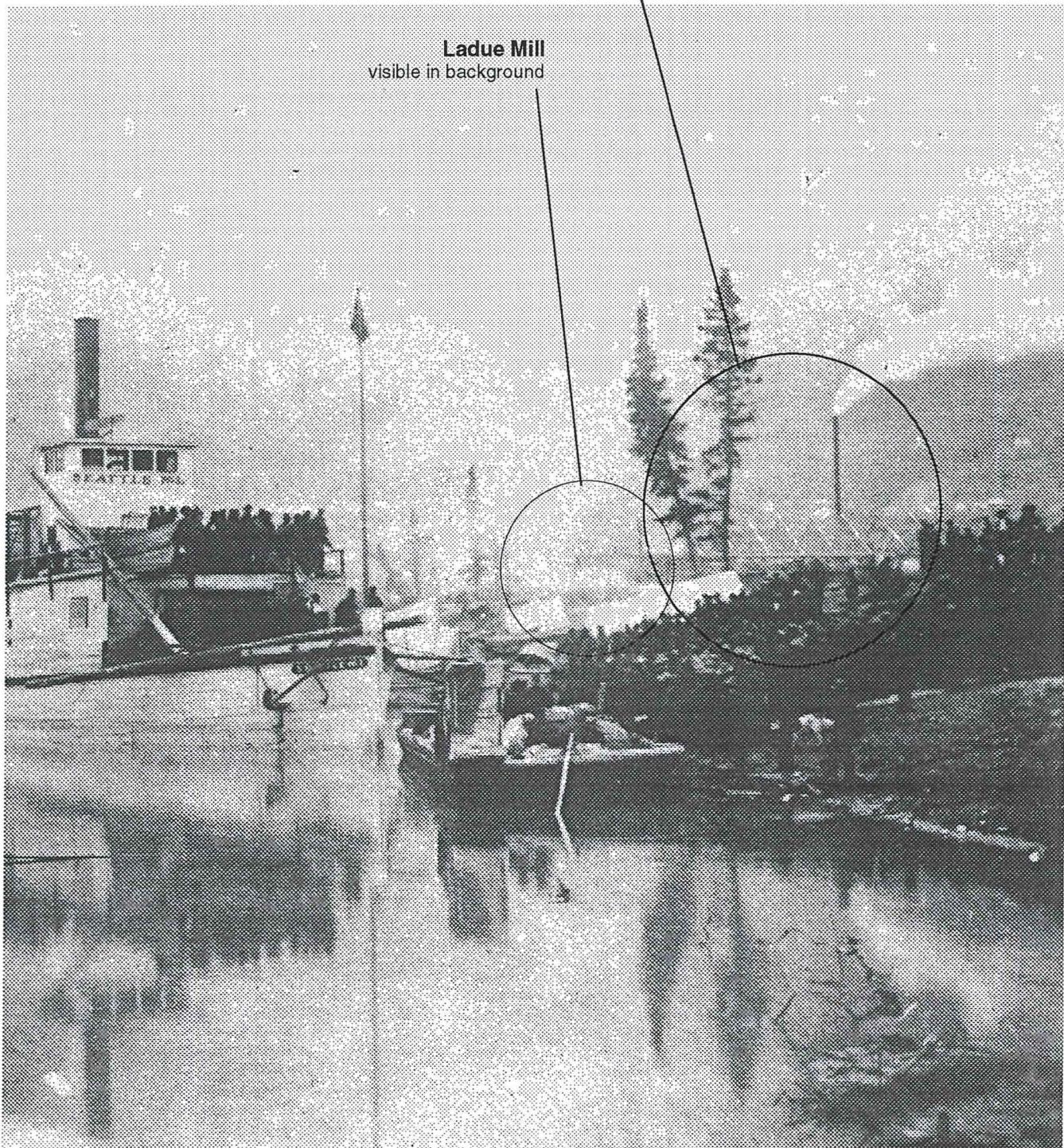
The move of the mill to Klondike Island was complete by the 1909 season, although the offices and machine shop remained on First Avenue.

### **1910**

- Yukon Saw Mill Co.

- <sup>6</sup> GOV 1619, V.9, File 1374: Klondike City Townsite 1899-1916.
- <sup>7</sup> Adney, 366.
- <sup>8</sup> "A Ten Acre Public Wood Yard..." in *The Klondike Nugget*, July 10, 1898.
- <sup>9</sup> "The Lumber Situation" in *The Klondike Nugget*, July 12, 1898
- <sup>10</sup> Adney, 366.
- <sup>11</sup> Yukon Archives PHO 260, Acc. 81/9, #121: Tappan Adney Coll.
- <sup>12</sup> Dawson *Daily News* Mining Edition, Sept. 1899, 28.
- <sup>13</sup> "Boyle suing Alex M'Donald" in Dawson *Daily News*, Oct. 8, 1903.
- <sup>14</sup> Yukon Archives GOV 1622, File 2518: J.J. Healy - Island at Mouth of Klondike for Sawmill
- <sup>15</sup> A.S. Allen, *Dawson, Yukon Territory*, (Dawson: American Journal of Industry, 1901).
- <sup>16</sup> Allen, 46.
- <sup>17</sup> Allen, 44.
- <sup>18</sup> Allen, 40.
- <sup>19</sup> Allen, 38.
- <sup>20</sup> Allen, 40.
- <sup>21</sup> Report of the Crown Timber and Land Agent, August 1, 1903, (Canada. Department of the Interior. Annual Reports)
- <sup>22</sup> Advertisement in *Yukon Sun*, Aug. 2, 1903.
- <sup>23</sup> Yukon Archives COR 74, 77/60-1, File 2: Maggie's Museum (Letters received by Yukon Saw Mill Company, 1903-1905)
- <sup>24</sup> Yukon Archives GOV 1622, f. 2518-2: Extract from a Report of the Committee of the Privy Council, approved by the Governor General on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1906. P.C. No. 1664.
- <sup>25</sup> Alaska Commercial Company Records, Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries.
- <sup>26</sup> Canada. Department of the Interior. Annual Reports.
- <sup>27</sup> Dawson Assessment and Tax Rolls.

**Yukon Saw Mill begins production, 1898  
while still under construction**  
Wall and roof framing visible below  
bellowing smokestack



**FIGURE 3.1**

Arrival of steamer *Seattle* at Dawson, spring 1898.  
Photo courtesy of Yukon Archives, McBride Museum Collection  
Photo no. 3805

## Chapter 3

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# The Yukon Saw Mill Company

## *The Gold Rush Years*

The Yukon Saw Mill Company was founded in late 1897 or early 1898 as a partnership between Joseph Francis Burke and the Alaska Commercial Company (ACC), one of the two major trading companies operating in the Yukon River valley at that time. Burke, a 35-year-old marine engineer from California, had been associated with the AC company at least since 1896 when he came to Dawson City as chief engineer on the AC steamer *Bella*. He returned in 1897 and, according to his obituary in the Dawson *Daily News*, “established, in connection with the A. C. company, the Yukon Mill.”<sup>1</sup>

Although the obituary writer says the company was set up in 1897, A.S. Allen’s 1901 pamphlet on Dawson City gives the date as 1898. (Figure 3-1) Allen’s information comes from interviews conducted with Dawson business people, probably including Burke, in the summer of 1901,<sup>2</sup> ten years earlier than the obituary, and it is likely to be more accurate. The first reference to the sawmill in surviving ACC records appears in draft statements for the Dawson Station, September 30, 1898. The station assets include a half interest in a saw mill, but no company name is provided.<sup>3</sup>

It is certain that the Yukon Saw Mill Company was in full operation by late spring, 1898. The Commissioner’s report for 1898 shows consecutively numbered timber berths leased in the names of J.F. Burke and the Yukon Saw Mill Co. for that year,<sup>4</sup> and an article in the July 10 edition of *The Klondike Nugget* lists the “Yukon Sawmilling Co.” as one of the mills that have been supplying Dawson during its rapid expansion.<sup>5</sup> In September, regular advertisements begin to appear in *The Klondike Nugget* for the “Yukon Saw Mill Co. Manufacturers of First Quality Matched, Dressed, Rustic, Roofing, and Rough Lumber. House Logs Furnished, Cordwood &c. Orders filled promptly.”<sup>6</sup> Later in September, a front page article quotes “J.F. Burke, proprietor Yukon sawmill” among the prominent local citizens whose opinions were sought about the proposed incorporation of Dawson City.<sup>7</sup>

Although in 1898 as many as a dozen mills were supplying wood to the burgeoning community of Dawson City,<sup>8</sup> a year later the building rush and the Gold Rush had both subsided and the milling business was beginning to stabilize. By 1899, the milling industry in and near Dawson consisted of six major mills, one of which was the Yukon Saw Mill Company.<sup>9</sup> Panorama photographs from the period show the mill at Block E Lot 2 of the Ladue subdivision. The Yukon Saw Mill Company building that survives today, located on Block E Lot 1, had not yet been built in 1899.



**FIGURE 3.2**

Yukon Saw Mill Company - newly completed office and machine shop building, autumn 1900

Photo courtesy of University of Alaska Fairbanks, Erskine Collection

Photo no. 70-28-208N

## After the Rush

The Gold Rush came and went, and by 1900 the excitement and the stampeders had moved on to pan for gold on the beaches of Nome, leaving Dawson to settle into stability and respectability. Some sawmills went out of business, while others grew and diversified. Among the survivors was the Yukon Saw Mill Company.

Ferguson's *Dawson City, Yukon Territory and Alaska Directory and Gazetteer 1901*, based on information collected in 1900, lists Joseph Burke as manager of two companies: the Yukon Saw Mill Company and the A.C. Machine Shop.<sup>10</sup> Advertisements for the two companies appear together on page 80 of the *Directory*, and the address given for the A.C. Machine Shop is the corner of First Avenue and Fifth Street (Duke Street), the location of the surviving Yukon Saw Mill Company building.

Over the winter and spring of 1900-1901, the two companies were reorganized as a single business under the name Yukon Saw Mill Company. Joseph Burke was registered as a partner in the operation.<sup>11</sup> At the same time the company expanded its facilities. It constructed a substantial two-storey building (Figure 3-2) at the corner of First Avenue and Duke Street, the site of the old A.C. Machine Shop.<sup>12</sup> The new building, which still stands on the site today, housed the company's machine shop and offices. The sawmill itself covered a much larger area, including all of Block E Lot 2, and part of lots 3, 6, and 7, stretching across the alley between First and Second avenues (Figure 3-3). In his 1901 pamphlet, *Dawson, Yukon Territory, A.S. Allen* mentions that the Yukon Saw Mill Company had also recently added a new building to the sawmill itself, "in which all kinds of planing and moulding is done."<sup>13</sup>

In the same pamphlet, Allen wrote enthusiastically about the Yukon Saw Mill Company's operations:

.... Of the enterprises of this character [sawmills] the Yukon Saw Mill Company is the most extensive, giving employment in the various departments to 70 people.

The principal location is corner of First avenue and Fifth street, where it was established in 1898, under the management of Mr. Jos. F. Burke, an experienced millman, whose personal supervision over the details of every department has resulted in a measure of prosperity that is seldom equaled. The dimensions of the mill proper are 50x125 feet. Of the machine shop, which is an important adjunct, 40x40 feet, in one corner of which is occupied by the company's offices, which are fitted up in convenient and modern style.

The yards are very extensive, covering a site 150x700 feet, and in which is stocked immense piles of lumber, of oak, ash, hickory, cedar, redwood, sluice box, flume lumber and the heaviest timbers used in the construction of bridges, warehouses, etc.

As usual with mills in this country, where the operating season is short, this company makes a continuous daily run of 24 hours, turning out a finished product of 35,000 feet. The machine shop, which is the largest north of Vancouver, B.C., is equipped

with the latest improved machinery, lathes, etc. And a specialty is made of general repairing.

The mill is provided with all modern appliances necessary to meet the heavy demands of the trade. All of the company's buildings are lighted by electricity(sic), furnished by a 500-light dynamo. The engine furnishing power for the plant is an Atlas steam boiler of 100-horse power.<sup>14</sup>

Later photographs of the building at the corner of First Avenue and Duke Street show a large shed-like addition on the east side of the building (Figure 3-4). Allen's description of the dimensions of the machine shop (40 x 40) indicates that the addition had not yet been built in the summer of 1901. However, engineer's drawings of the Yukon Saw Mill Company operation as it was in the summer of 1908 show the machine shop extending almost the full 100-foot depth of the lot.<sup>15</sup> Photographs of the addition in the 1970s, when its western end had collapsed, reveal that it was attached to the main building over painted company advertisements like those on two other exterior walls. This suggests that it was a hastily-erected extension of the machine shop built to accommodate the shop's expanding business.

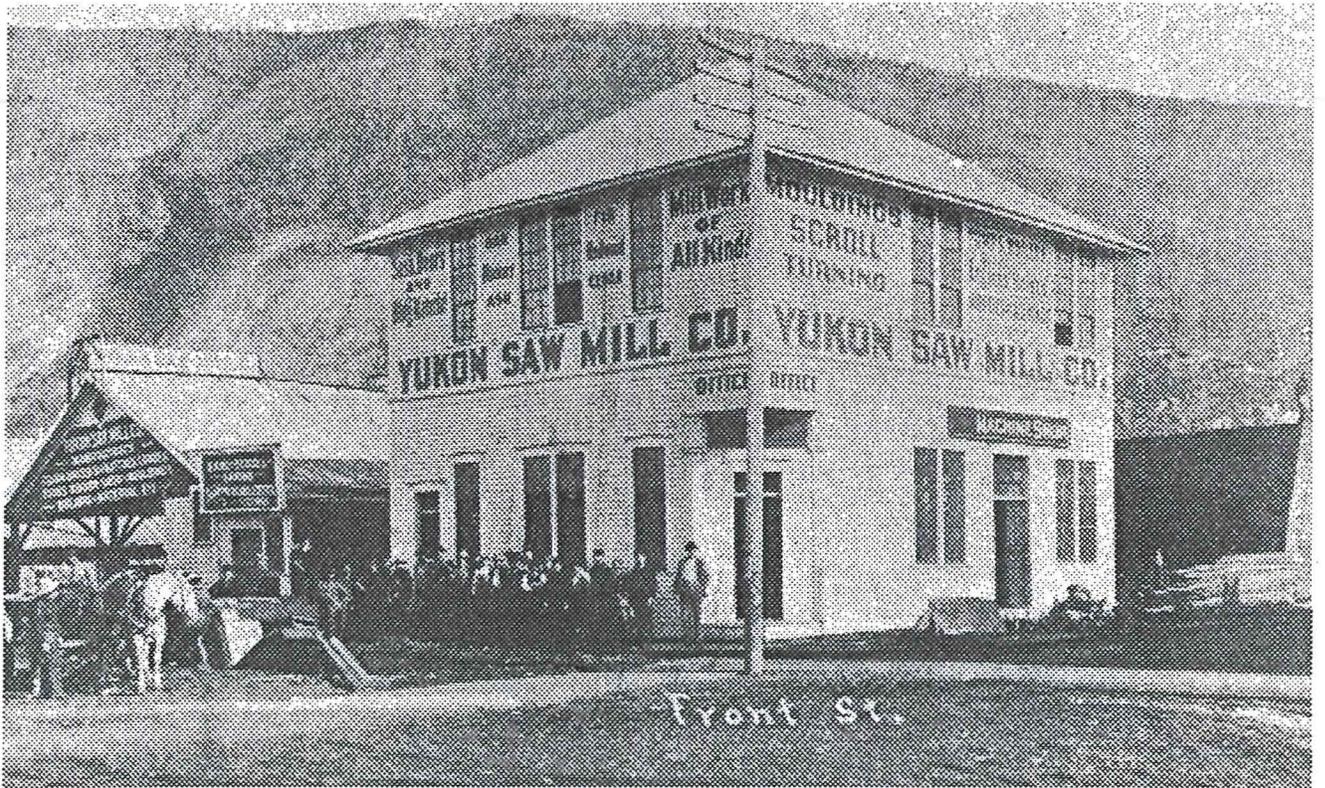
The addition might well have been built as early as the next year. Advertisements in the *Dawson Daily News* and *The Weekly Klondike Nugget* at the beginning of October 1902 announced an expansion of the Yukon Saw Mill Company's services: "We are now prepared to do all kinds of Casting & Machine Work. Repairing a Specialty. Yukon Saw Mill Machine Works and Foundry. 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. and Duke St. 'Phone 27. Dawson."<sup>16</sup> The foundry mentioned in the advertisement appears in the engineer's drawing of the 1908 operation, on the leased waterfront directly across First Avenue from the building housing the offices and machine shop.

## ***Declining demand for lumber***

The demand for milled lumber was falling off sharply by 1903,<sup>17</sup> as the population of Dawson declined. However, the move toward mechanized mining and the construction of railways meant a heavy demand for the services of the Yukon Saw Mill's machine shop and foundry. A Yukon Saw Mill Company file of incoming correspondence, dated from July 1903 to the summer of 1905, reveals the company actively searching for the latest in modern metal-working machinery for its shop.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, it was purchasing much of its lumber outside the Klondike. Letters from the winter of 1903-4 show the company soliciting prices from the White Pass and Yukon Railway for delivery of lumber from Vancouver to Dawson. The company's lumber buyer spent much of January and February 1904 in Seattle collecting tenders from Washington State lumber companies for an order that covered everything from rough lumber to shingles and mouldings.

Land title records register a change in the ownership of the Yukon Saw Mill Company's property in 1904 and, possibly, of its ownership structure. The patent on Block E, Lot 1 (the site of the office and machine shop building) had originally been issued on March 5, 1901, to Joseph Burke, but titles on that lot and the others used by the company were registered on May 30, 1901, by Jens Emil Hansen, who was then Assistant Superintendent of the Yukon Territory for the Alaska Commercial Company.



**FIGURE 3.3**

Photograph as part of Yukon Saw Mill Company Letterhead, (1901)  
Employees, management and horses posing for photo with buildings and boilers as context  
Buildings from left to right: saw mill, bandsaw room, offices and machine shop  
Courtesy of Yukon Archives, Corporate Records Collection  
Acc. no. 80/127



**FIGURE 3.4**

Yukon Saw Mill Co.- Office and Machine shop building w/ addition: abandoned, mid-1960's.  
Photo courtesy of Ed Jones  
Private Collection

The sawmill operation also covered a portion of Block E, Lot 3, which was owned by Dr. James Rowan and leased by the Yukon Saw Mill Company.<sup>19</sup>

On October 18, partnership papers were filed listing Louis Sloss of San Francisco and Joseph F. Burke of Dawson as partners in the Yukon Saw Mill Company.<sup>20</sup> The next day, October 19, Louis Sloss obtained title, for a consideration of \$15,500.00, to the properties occupied by the Yukon Saw Mill Company's operations: Area 3, Block E, Lots 1, 2, 6, 7; Area 3, Block F, Lots 2, the south half of 3, 14, 15; Area 3, Block O, Lots 3 and 14. The north half of Block F, Lot 3, owned by Joseph Burke, was the site of Burke's residence and never formed part of the Yukon Saw Mill Company property.

The change of title and the new partnership agreement in 1904 probably does not reflect a major change in the Yukon Saw Mill Company. (Figure 3-5) Louis Sloss was a San Francisco businessman and one of the founders of the Alaska Commercial Company. A letter to the ACC head office, written a decade later by Thomas McGowan, the ACC's solicitor and agent in Dawson, affirms (with a fine disregard for punctuation) that Sloss was acting on behalf of the ACC in acquiring the land:

Referring to the portion of your letter in which you mention the fact that this property still stands in the name of our Mr. Louis Sloss, this is correct as deeds from him have not as yet been recorded. This for the reason that to record these deeds would require the surrender of our present government certificates of title which are in his name, and thereupon new ones would have to be issued and we would then have to pay an insurance fund on the valuation into the Government and a new certificate would then have to be issued in the name of our Company or its trustee, which would be an item of expense and inasmuch as I hold, at this end, Mr. Sloss' Power of Attorney and can transfer this property direct from him to anyone who might purchase the same, I did not think it necessary to go to the expense of placing these transfers on record. However, if you think this should be done, I shall do so.<sup>21</sup>

The title change probably represents no more than a transfer of the property from an ACC employee (Hansen) to a shareholder of the Alaska Commercial Company (Sloss).

What might have changed at this time is the balance of the partnership. When the original Yukon Saw Mill Company was established, ACC records indicate the company held a half interest in the mill. By the time of Burke's death in 1911, the ACC held a three-quarters interest.<sup>22</sup> The change in the balance of ownership might have happened during the merger of the saw mill and machine shop in the spring of 1901 or, possibly, in 1904 when the properties used by the Yukon Saw Mill Company were transferred to Louis Sloss and the new partnership agreement was registered. Whenever the change in the balance of partnership occurred, it had little effect on the day-to-day running of the company. Surviving company records up to Burke's death at the end of 1911 show him acting as manager, and legal documents of the period list him as "Mill owner."<sup>23</sup>

Louis Sloss, too, was more than a figurehead. Although he was based in San Francisco and involved in a large company with investments extending through much of Alaska and into California, he took an active interest in the Yukon Saw Mill Company. Letters in the spring of 1905 show him helping the company to expand the



# YUKON SAW MILL CO.

FOUNDRY AND MACHINE WORKS.

Dawson, Y. T., 190

SOLD TO

Boilers  
Engines  
Pumps

Iron and Brass Castings.

Boats  
Screens  
Self-Dumpers

Form No. 358

FIGURE 3.5

Yukon Saw Mill Co. Letterhead "Form No. 358"  
Courtesy Yukon Archives, Corporate Records Collection  
Acc. no. Cor 8, 80/127

metal-working side of its business. On May 18, he wrote: "... After receipt of your wire I saw Mr. Barbour of the Risdon Iron Works, and he stated that they had not as yet decided to whom they would give their agency in Dawson, but that most likely they would send some one in from here to look the ground over before making the appointment. However, in the meantime we will do all we can to try and secure it for the Yukon Saw Mill."<sup>24</sup>

The machine shop was an increasingly important part of the Yukon Saw Mill Company's business through the first half dozen years of the century. The demand for

**EVERYBODY**

Wants to see the ICE GO OUT.  
When our flag on the ice commences to move, the big steam whistle of the

**Yukon Saw Mill Will**

**Blow 5 Blasts!**

Giving everybody a chance to witness the grand sight. Everybody, without waiting for the whistle, can take advantage of

**Our Big Cut in**

**Prices!**

Dawson Daily News, May 5, 1902

lumber was declining, but the growth of mechanized mining meant there was plenty of demand for metal work and repairs to machinery. A summary of the Yukon Saw Mill Company's assets and liabilities for the years 1905, 1906 and 1907, exclusive of the plant, lists the machine shop as the largest single asset in each of those years.<sup>25</sup> The summary of assets and liabilities also shows that the company was prospering. In 1905, its assets (exclusive of the plant) were calculated at \$63,299.88. In 1906, the assets were \$72,416.82. By 1907, the company's assets were valued at \$83,773.56.

The company remained active in the milling industry as well through those years, even expanding its operations. In the spring of 1906 it contracted to set up a sawmill on the Twelve Mile River to supply lumber for A.N.C. Treadgold's Twelve Mile Ditch project.<sup>26</sup> The mill was up and running by late April,<sup>27</sup> cutting lumber for the flumes that would carry the water along part of the ditch's route. A photograph of the sawmill in 1907 shows a substantial operation with a large log pond, a large covered mill, a house and several smaller buildings.<sup>28</sup> There is some evidence that the Yukon Saw Mill Company sold the Twelve Mile mill or withdrew its operation before the spring of 1908 when a newspaper article refers to "the private mills on the Twelvemile, maintained there by the Guggenheims for the purpose of supplying their log flume and ditch system."<sup>29</sup>

## **Consolidating the Milling Industry**

The middle years of the decade were a time of consolidation in Dawson's economic history both in the goldfields and in support industries. The Yukon Saw Mill Company was an eager participant in the consolidation process. In 1906, the company signed an agreement to purchase the property, building, and assets of the McDonald Iron Works Company, a potential competitor for the Yukon Saw Mill Machine Shop and Foundry.<sup>30</sup>

The final consolidation of the milling industry came in the spring of 1908, and the Yukon Saw Mill Company was the great consolidator. In 1907, three mills had operated in Dawson: the Yukon Saw Mill Company, the Klondike Sawmill (owned by the Northern Transportation and Trading Company), and the Northern Lumber Company. Over the winter, the Yukon Saw Mill Company bought out its two remaining competitors. The Northern Lumber Company was shut down, but the Klondike Mill was taken over as a going concern.

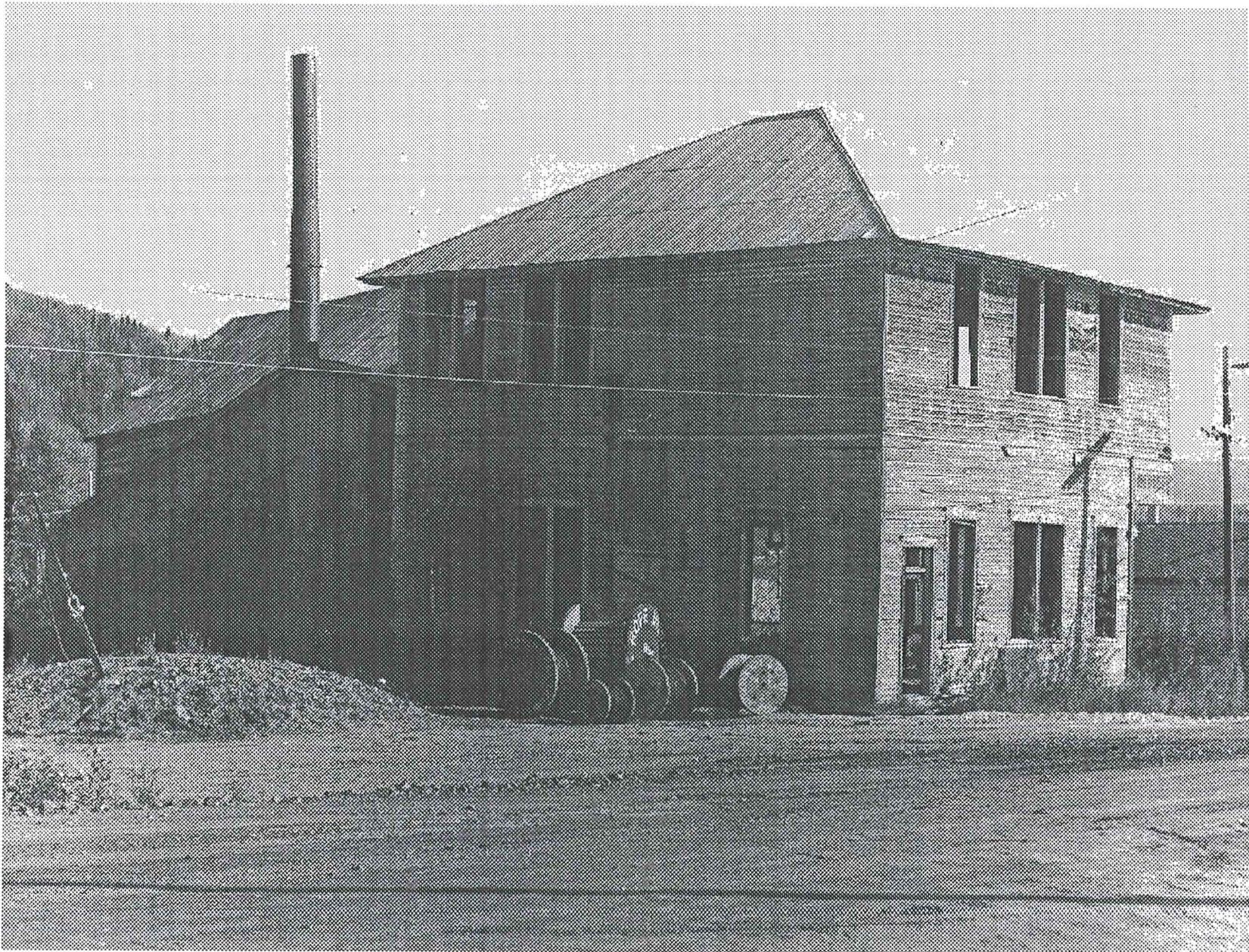
"Deal in Saw Mills – Joe Burke Takes Over the N. A. T. & T. Mill and the Stock," ran the headline in the Dawson *Daily News* on March 27, 1908. The story continued: "The Yukon Mill, Joe Burke proprietor, has taken over the North American Transportation and Trading company's big sawmill plant and stocks of lumber and logs at Klondike City. The deal is one of the heaviest made in the Klondike for a long time, and gives Mr. Burke the control of the lumber business in the camp...." The deal included all the mill equipment and all the stock on hand, including 1,275,000 feet of saw logs, for \$58,298.97.<sup>31</sup> The NATT retained ownership of the buildings and land on which the mill was located, but leased them to Joseph Burke, representing the Yukon Saw Mill Company.

The *Daily News* reporter noted that the consolidation had led to an immediate increase of 10 to 50 percent in the price of lumber, adding that "Mr. Burke says there has been no profit at the old rate, and that the advance in prices was absolutely necessary." In a short article in the same issue of the newspaper, the Yukon Saw Mill Company announced its offerings and prices for the 1908 season:

The Yukon Mill is prepared to furnish all kinds of plain, fancy and dressed lumber now for all lines of work. The company is preparing to continue the business this season on a large scale, and has on sale a fine line of oak, ash, fir, redwood, doors, mouldings, sash, glass, and the like.

The dressed lumber, ship lap, siding flooring, ceiling and rustic, sells at \$75 per thousand feet; the sluice lumber at \$70 to \$90 per thousand; rough lumber, including 1 by 4, 1 by 6 and 1 by 8, and all dimension lumber at \$60 per thousand; the 1 by 10 at \$62.50, and the 1 by 12 at \$65.<sup>32</sup>

The summer of 1907 was probably the last season a full-scale sawmill operated at the Yukon Saw Mill Company's First Avenue site. The annual report of the Crown Timber and Land Agent, dated April 21, 1909, says in part: "Only one saw-mill, namely, the Klondike Mill, owned by the North American Transportation and Trading company, and situated on the island in the Klondike river at its mouth, was operated last season, by the Yukon Saw-mill Company under a lease."<sup>33</sup> When the Yukon Saw Mill was established during the height of the Gold Rush, the First Avenue site was conveniently close to the sawmill's primary market, the burgeoning community of Dawson City. By 1908, however, Dawson had plenty of empty buildings, and the primary market for new lumber was the dredges, power plants, thawing plants, and water systems on the creeks of the Klondike. The Klondike Island site, away from the highly-taxed Dawson waterfront and near the creeks and the Klondike Mines Railway, was a much better location for a sawmill.



**FIGURE 3.6**

Yukon Saw Mill Co. - Office and Machine shop building w/addition, mid 1960's

View from north showing shed addition housing boiler room

Photo courtesy of Ed Jones

Private Collection



**FIGURE 3.7**

Yukon Saw Mill Co. - view of office/machine shop building from First Avenue, May 14, 1925

Photo courtesy Yukon Archives, I.O. Stringer Collection

Pho 33, Acc. 82/332, F.2, no. 48

Nevertheless, there is evidence that the First Avenue site was not abandoned entirely in 1908. The machine shop and offices remained there for several years, but an engineer's drawing dated January 1909, and based on information collected in the summer of 1908, shows the sawmill still at least partly in business.<sup>34</sup> Storage sheds and piles of lumber are noted in the drawing, as well as the principal components of both the sawmill and the machine shop building. While the Crown Timber Agent's report indicates that milling of native lumber, at least, was moved to the Klondike Island mill, it seems likely that stock in hand was still being sold from the First Avenue site. Custom work might also have been done at the First Avenue site in the 1908 season.

### ***The Extent of the First Avenue Mill***

The engineer's drawing of the Yukon Saw Mill Company, dated January 1909, reveals the operation at what must have been close to its peak. A preliminary sketch for the drawing, contained in the same records, notes that the site was surveyed August 1908 by W.J. Rendell, C.E. The completed drawing shows a number of buildings as part of the Yukon Saw Mill Company complex. On the leased waterfront property, the company had a loading platform, a foundry, warm storage space, and a small stable. A "mill pond" (a channel cut into the bank) extended from the river to the loading platform. A log chute ran from the mill pond across the street into the main sawmill building, north of the surviving building. Wood rafts were landed on the river bank in front of the mill, and the logs were transferred to the mill on a rubber belt type conveyer, located under the sidewalk.<sup>35</sup>

The sawmill building itself, on Block E, covered most of Lot 2, about one-quarter of Lot 7, and corners of Lot 6 and Lot 3 (which did not belong to the company), spanning the alley between First and Second avenues. It contained a band saw room, a large extension to house the boilers and engine, and a smaller fuel room behind the boiler room.

A log carriage extended from the river side of the mill about one-third to one-half of the way into the building. Almost meeting it was a tram track that ran out the back (east side) of the building and continued through Lot 7, Block E, across Second Avenue, through Lot 2 and Lot 15 of Block F, and terminated at Third Avenue. Several lumber sheds and piles of lumber are indicated in the drawing on both sides of the tram track. Another lumber shed is shown on Lot 14, Block O, beyond the end of the tram track, and the company's lots on Block O are designated a lumber yard.

The only part of the complex that survives today is the building on Block E Lot 1, which housed the company offices and the machine shop. The engineer's drawing shows a large rectangular building taking up most of the lot. The rectangular building was, in fact, the 40-foot-square building described by A.S. Allen in 1901, combined with the large addition built a year or two later to expand the machine shop. Company offices occupied the Front Street side of the surviving building, taking up approximately one-quarter of the floor area. Marks left by the wall that divided the offices from the machine shop are still visible on the north and south interior walls of the building. A small addition, since demolished, on the north side of the building was the boiler room (Figure 3-6). Allen's description of the building does not mention the second storey, but the many large windows and the finished flooring (still in the building) suggest that it was used for offices or, possibly, a showroom.

## The Declining Years

The move to Klondike Island must have gone well at first. Yukon Saw Mill Company ledgers for the years 1910 to 1913 show a special set of expenditures on "Klondyke Mill Improvement."<sup>36</sup> The bulk of the work was paid for in the summer of 1910, with the final item appearing April 30, 1913. In late summer, 1911, expenses are recorded for "Warehouse Demolishing," perhaps part of the move away from the First Avenue site.<sup>37</sup> The move was certainly complete by 1911. R.L. Polk & Co.'s *Gazetteer and Business Directory* for 1911-12 lists the "Yukon Saw Mill Co., Joseph F. Burke, Mngr, Saw Mill Klondike Island, Foundry and Office 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North, corner of Duke." A revised set of the 1909 engineer's drawings of the First Avenue plant, dated April 1912, contains notes indicating that the waterfront structures had been demolished, some of the lumber sheds had been torn down, and the tram tracks had been taken up and sold.

In the spring of 1911, Joe Burke signed a five-year lease on the Klondike Island site, an indication of confidence in the longer-term viability of the mill.<sup>38</sup> However, Dawson was still in decline and business prospects were declining with it. To make matters worse, the Yukon Saw Mill Company received a devastating blow at the end of 1911. Its founder, manager, and part owner, Joseph Burke, died unexpectedly of a stroke on December 26, 1911, at the age of 48.<sup>39</sup> Ownership of the company was left in the hands of a San Francisco-based firm that was already in the process of withdrawing from Dawson.

The decline of the Yukon Saw Mill Company is evident in the ledgers.<sup>40</sup> In the machine shop, which was busy in 1911, activity tails off in 1912. In 1913, the business appears to be at a standstill, or even shut down and the assets sold off. Entries under merchandise also show a decline. In 1913 the company was still dealing in small amounts of lumber, sashes, doors, and other products. In 1914 the entries all appear to be related to a shut-down.

A letter from ACC solicitor Thomas McGowan, dated August 13, 1914, confirms the impression, created by the ledgers, that the ACC was no longer interested in the Yukon Saw Mill Company. Addressing his employers in San Francisco, McGowan writes: "Gentlemen: As it has been your desire for some years last past to close out the mill here, and as you have at various times suggested to me that I endeavor to close up this last investment which stands in your name in the North, I have had this matter under discussion with Mr. Volkman for the past two years." Mr. Volkman was Bernhard (Ben) Volkman, a long-time ACC employee in Dawson and successor to Joe Burke as manager of the Yukon Saw Mill Company.

Volkman had been unable to secure financing, McGowan explained. However, in 1914 he succeeded in interesting Frank S. Neill in a proposition to buy the sawmill. Neill, a wealthy businessman then based in New York, had a long history of running wood camps and lumbering operations in the Klondike. He and Volkman formed a partnership and made an offer that the AC Company decided it could not refuse. The offer totalled \$36,303.72, including inventory. Neill and Volkman paid \$15,000 by March 1, 1915, and signed a promissory note for the remaining \$21,303.72.<sup>41</sup>

The selling price was \$22,000 less than the Yukon Saw Mill Company had paid for the Klondike mill and inventory in 1908, even without adding in the improvements made in 1910-11. In submitting the original proposal from Neill and Volkman,

McGowan pointed out that the equipment was old and much of it would have to be replaced soon. He added: "In submitting this proposition, I realize that it does not show a great profit, and you know that I think that as the life of this camp will last several years yet and as the business is a good one, my idea would be to continue, but, in view of your earnest and repeated requests that we endeavor to close this business out, I am submitting to you what I consider to be a fair deal, particularly in view of the fact that Mr. Volkman has been with us for a great many years and that you have always suggested to him your desire to assist him to establish himself in business and give him a chance to make some money."

The deal did not include, McGowan noted, "real estate and buildings and assets situate at the old plant on the water front, which will still belong to us." There is no indication in the correspondence related to the sale of the Klondike Island mill that the machine shop on the waterfront was still functioning and some hint that it wasn't. (Figure 3-7) It had certainly been abandoned by 1915 when a letter in the ACC files refers to the "lots on which the old shops and saw mill are situated." A December 1916 letter says the buildings had been stripped of everything "save and excepting the Engine, Fire Pump and Mill Carriage."

## ***The End of a Gold Rush Sawmill***

Frank Neill and Ben Volkman opened for business in the spring of 1915 under the name of Yukon Saw Mill Company, Frank S. Neill and Bernhard M. Volkman, proprietors. Their entry in Polk and Co.'s *Yukon Gazetteer and Directory* for 1915-16 read: "Yukon Saw Mill Co. Frank S. Neill, B.M. Volkman Proprs, Rough, Dressed and Matched Native Lumber, Importers of British Columbia Fir and Cedar and Eastern Hardwoods, Office Klondike Island, Tel 45."

When they bought the company, Neill and Volkman had taken over the five-year lease on the Klondike Island mill site signed by Joe Burke in 1911. In the spring of 1916, the partners were confident enough to sign a new five-year lease on the property.<sup>42</sup> Their listing appeared again in the 1917-18 Polk and Co.'s *Gazetteer*. However, by the time the next issue of Polk's *Gazetteer* appeared, for the years 1923-1924, the Yukon Saw Mill Company listing had disappeared, as had the personal listings for Ben Volkman and Frank Neill. Sometime between 1917 and 1922 the Yukon Saw Mill Company, the last of the Gold Rush sawmills, shut down its machines and faded away.

<sup>1</sup> "Joe Burke is Dead in City of San Francisco" in *Dawson Daily News*, Dec. 27, 1911.

<sup>2</sup> "A.S. Allen, Journalist" in *The Klondike Nugget*, July 30, 1901.

<sup>3</sup> Alaska Commercial Company records (Special Collections Department, Stanford University Libraries): meeting books, under Memoranda of Dawson Station, September 30, 1898.

<sup>4</sup> Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the Year 1898, in Yukon Archives Canada. Department of the Interior. Annual Reports.

<sup>5</sup> "A Ten Acre Public Wood Yard..." in *The Klondike Nugget*, July 10, 1898.

<sup>6</sup> *The Klondike Nugget*, Sept. 10, 1898.

<sup>7</sup> "Expressions on Incorporation" in *The Klondike Nugget*, Sept. 24, 1898.

<sup>8</sup> "A Ten Acre Public Wood Yard..." in *The Klondike Nugget*, July 10, 1898.

<sup>9</sup> "Six Busy Mills" in *Dawson Daily News*, Oct. 9, 1899.

<sup>10</sup> *Dawson City, Yukon Territory and Alaska Directory and Gazetteer 1901*, (M.L. Ferguson, Publisher,

1901).

<sup>11</sup> Yukon Archives GOV 2114: Partnerships Ledger 1899-1953. Feb. 15, 1901: Jos. F. Burke is listed as a partner in both the Yukon Saw Mill Co. and the A.C. Machine Shop. May 30, 1901: the partnership under A.C. Machine Shop was dissolved (probably merging the two operations).

<sup>12</sup> Margaret Carter, *A History of the Use of Wood in the Yukon to 1903* (Canadian Parks Service CAIPS 2R036, 1973), 185.

<sup>13</sup> A.S. Allen, *Dawson, Yukon Territory* (Dawson: American Journal of Industry, 1901), 24.

<sup>14</sup> Allen, 40.

<sup>15</sup> ACC records: Item 367 on Yukon Archives microfilm, described as "Correspondence regarding interest in purchasing ACCo properties in Dawson, specifically Yukon Saw Mill."

<sup>16</sup> *Dawson Daily News*, Thurs. Oct. 2, 1902; *The Weekly Klondike Nugget*, Sat., Oct. 4, 1902.

<sup>17</sup> Report of the Crown Timber and Land Agent, Aug. 1, 1903, in Yukon Archives Canada. Department of the Interior. Annual Reports.

<sup>18</sup> Yukon Archives COR 74, 77/60-1, File 2: Maggie's Museum.

<sup>19</sup> Letter dated Sept. 13, 1915 from the office of Thos. A. McGowan to Alaska Commercial Company, San Francisco, in ACC records Item 367.

<sup>20</sup> Yukon Archives GOV 2114: Partnerships Ledger 1899-1953.

<sup>21</sup> Letter dated Sept. 13, 1915 from the office of Thos. A. McGowan to Alaska Commercial Company, San Francisco, in ACC records Item 367.

<sup>22</sup> Power of Attorney dated 8 July 1912 in ACC records JL 6 Box 10/57 #328 (not on Yukon Archives microfilm).

<sup>23</sup> Yukon Archives GOV 1453, File 175: Burke, Gustavus Edwin (Estate).

<sup>24</sup> Yukon Archives COR 74, 77/60-1, File 2: Maggie's Museum.

<sup>25</sup> ACC records, Item 293 on Yukon Archives microfilm: "Comparative Statement of Assets Yukon Saw Mill Co. exclusive of plant."

<sup>26</sup> Lewis Green, *The Gold Hustlers* (Anchorage, Alaska: Alaska Northwest Publishing Company, 1977) 94.

<sup>27</sup> Green, 96.

<sup>28</sup> Green, 102.

<sup>29</sup> "Deal in Saw Mills" in *Dawson Daily News*, Mar. 27, 1908.

<sup>30</sup> ACC records, Item 367: "Agreement between Alexander McDonald and Yukon Saw Mill Company... dated March 7, 1906; registered March 15, 1906 as No. 5748 ch in Yukon Chattels Registration District, Dawson."

<sup>31</sup> ACC records, Box 8/44 #237: Bill of Sale, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1908 (not on Yukon Archives microfilm).

<sup>32</sup> "Yukon Mill Has Fine Line Now" in *Dawson Daily News*, Mar. 27, 1908.

<sup>33</sup> Report for 1909. Canada. Department of the Interior. Annual reports.

<sup>34</sup> ACC records: Item 367 on Yukon Archives microfilm, described as "Correspondence regarding interest in purchasing ACCo properties in Dawson, specifically Yukon Saw Mill."

<sup>35</sup> Parks Canada notes in Yukon Saw Mill Company file, Dawson City Museum.

<sup>36</sup> ACC records: Yukon Saw Mill Company ledgers 1908-1915.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> ACC records: Item 367.

<sup>39</sup> "Joe Burke is Dead in City of San Francisco" in *Dawson Daily News*, Dec. 27, 1911.

<sup>40</sup> ACC records: Yukon Saw Mill Company ledgers 1908-1915.

<sup>41</sup> ACC records, Item 370: "Correspondence 1914-1915."

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

**Yukon Saw Mill Company**  
office/machine shop-abandoned

**Yukon Saw Mill Company**  
mill building-abandoned

**Former Canadian-Yukon Lumber Co.**  
mill building - abandoned



**FIGURE 4.1**

Dawson waterfront (c.1930,) abandoned Yukon Saw Mill Co.buildings on right

Photo courtesy Yukon Archives R. Minter Collection

Acc. 92/15-3, p.75

## Chapter 4

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# The Yukon Saw Mill Co. Building

Location: First Avenue (Front Street) and Duke Street, northeast corner  
Block E, Lot 1, Area 3  
CIHB Code 3-BE-1

Building name: The Yukon Saw Mill (also, and erroneously, called the Ladue Mill)

Original owner: Joseph Burke

Date of construction: 1901

Historic information:

### 1898

- The Yukon Saw Mill Company was established by Joseph F. Burke in partnership with the Alaska Commercial Company. The sawmill probably operated from the beginning on Block E Lot 2, where it was located in later years.

### 1899

- May 1: The Yukon Saw Mill Company leased 150 feet of waterfront directly opposite lots 1, 2, and 3, Block E.

### 1900

- The lot on which the building now stands was occupied by the A.C. Machine Shop, owned at least in part by the Alaska Commercial Company and managed by Joseph F. Burke. Burke was also manager and part owner, along with the Alaska Commercial Company, of the Yukon Saw Mill Company which occupied the adjacent Lot 2.

### 1901

- March 5: Patent for Block E Lot 1 issued in the name of Joseph Burke, Lumber Merchant
- May 30: First title on Block E Lot 1 issued in the name of Jens Emil Hansen. Hansen, who was Assistant Superintendent of the Yukon Territory for the Alaska Commercial Company, also registered title on Block E, Lots 1, 6, 7; Block F, Lots 2, 14, 15, and the south half of Lot 3. All of the land was used for Yukon Saw Mill Company operations.

- June 3: Joseph Burke registered title on Block F, northerly half of Lot 3, where he built his own house.
- The existing building was erected in the spring and early summer of 1901 to serve as the Yukon Saw Mill Company's machine shop and offices.

#### **1902**

- October: The Yukon Saw Mill Company advertised expanded machine shop and foundry capacity. The foundry was located on the company's waterfront lease, opposite lots 1 and 2. The expanded machine shop probably refers to the large, gable-roofed addition, visible in many photographs, on the east side of the surviving building. This addition was demolished in the 1970s.

#### **1904**

- October 19: Louis Sloss of San Francisco obtained title to Block E Lot 1 and the other Yukon Saw Mill Company properties. The consideration on his title was \$15,500.00. Sloss was a founder and board member of the Alaska Commercial Company. A day earlier, Sloss and Joseph Burke had filed papers declaring their partnership in the Yukon Saw Mill Company.
- Joseph Burke continued to serve as manager of the Yukon Saw Mill Company.

#### **1908**

- March: The Yukon Saw Mill Company bought out its two remaining competitors, the Northern Lumber Company and the Klondike Sawmill. It closed down the Northern Lumber Company, but leased the Klondike Sawmill's land and buildings on Klondike Island from the North American Trading and Transportation Company and began shifting its milling operations to the island site.
- August: Civil engineer W.J. Rendell surveyed the Yukon Saw Mill Company's operations for the Alaska Commercial Company. His completed drawing based on the survey is dated January 1909. It shows all the company's buildings still standing and lumber stored on much of the property, indicating the company was still active at the site in the summer of 1908.
- December 24: A revised partnership agreement between the Alaska Commercial Company and J.F. Burke says, in part, that the ACC is the owner of all Yukon Saw Mill Company land in the Harper and Ladue townsite. The new partnership agreement and the engineer's survey of the townsite properties were probably linked with the sawmill's move to Klondike Island and the possible disposal of the waterfront site.

#### **1911**

- All sawmilling operations had been moved to Klondike Island.
- The surviving building was listed in advertisements as the Yukon Saw Mill Company's offices and machine shop.
- December 26: Joseph Burke, manager and part owner of the Yukon Saw Mill Company, died in San Francisco.



**FIGURE 4.2**

Yukon Saw Mill Co. - Office and Machine shop building w/addition, mid 1960's  
View from corner of Duke Street and First Avenue  
Photo courtesy of Ed Jones  
Private Collection

### **1912**

- April: A revised version of the 1909 engineer's drawing of the Yukon Saw Mill Company holdings indicates that the waterfront buildings had been demolished, as had a number of lumber sheds and storage buildings, and the tram tracks had been taken up and sold.
- The machine shop in the surviving Yukon Saw Mill Company building was still operating, but business declined through 1912.

### **1913**

- Yukon Saw Mill Company ledgers show that machine shop business was at a virtual standstill in 1913, and the company appears to have been selling off machine shop assets.

### **1914**

- Negotiations opened for the sale of the Yukon Saw Mill Company operation on Klondike Island to Ben Volkman and Frank Neill.
- Correspondence related to the sale suggests that the entire waterfront site, including the machine shop, had been abandoned.

### **1916**

- December: A representative of the Tantalus Coal Company expressed interest in the purchasing the old Yukon Saw Mill Company property. A letter in ACC records said that the buildings had been stripped of everything except the engine, fire pump and mill carriage.

### **1917**

- January: In a letter to the Tantalus Coal Company representative, Thomas McGowan, on behalf of the Alaska Commercial Company, offered to sell all the ACC's Dawson lots for \$2500.00 cash. The offer was not taken up.

### **1923**

- June 13/July 6: Charles Redmond took over title of Block E, Lots 1, 6, 7; Block F, Lots 2, 14, 15, and south half of Lot 3; Block O, Lots 3 and 14 from Louis Sloss.
- July 6: Charles Redmond took over title of Block E, Lot 2 from Louis Sloss.

### **1931**

- June 4: John Spence took over title of Block E Lot 1 from Redmond. Spence was a prominent grocer who used the surviving Yukon Saw Mill Company building for cold storage. (Figure 4-1)

### **1938**

- May 19: Northern Commercial Company took over title of Block E Lot 1 from John Spence. The sale was registered on May 26, 1938, for a consideration of \$10,000.00, a sum that clearly represents more than the value of the lot and building. Since Spence owned one of the largest grocery businesses in western Canada, the purchase price probably includes the contents of the warehouse or a

part of his business. The Northern Commercial Company may have used the building as a warehouse, as Spence had done.

**1967**

- September 27: Ownership was transferred to the Crown. (Figure 4-2)

**SOURCES:**

Dominion Land Titles  
Territorial Land Titles  
Dawson City Municipal Records. Assessment and Tax Rolls  
Dawson City Directories  
Heritage Branch files  
Parks Canada file in Dawson Museum  
John Gould, personal communication  
Dawson City Directory of Existing Structures, Sept. 1973  
Alaska Commercial Company Records, Stanford University Libraries

**WE are now prepared**  
**to do all kinds of Cast-**  
**ing & Machine Work.**

Repairing a Specialty. 

**Yukon Saw Mill Machine Works**  
**and Foundry.**

1st Ave and Duke St.

Phone 27.

Dawson.

**LUMBER**   **LUMBER**

*The New Saw Mill of*

**THE NORTHERN LUMBER COMPANY**

*Is now in operation. They Have a large Stock of Logs on hand with which  
-- to do business --*

*When you want to build a house or construct a flume, don't forget to telephone  
the Company and get their prices*

**THEY ARE IN A POSITION TO FILL ANY ORDER FOR ANY SIZE LUMBER, AND**

***They sell none but the BEST***

**THE MILL IS SO SITUATED THAT THEY CAN HANDLE THE CREEK TRADE TO THE  
ADVANTAGE OF THE MINERS.**

***THE NORTHERN LUMBER COMPANY***

*Office and Yard on Klondike Bay on Island,  
Phone No. 431.*

***Jos. A. Seybers, Manager***

**O. W. HOBBS,** MANUFACTURER **LUMBER**  
AND RETAILER OF

**Mill Work in All Branches.**

Manufacturer and Dealer in Brick and Lime.

Correspondence solicited.

**Dawson Saw Mill & Building Co.**

O. W. HOBBS, PROPRIETOR.

DAWSON, Y. T.

## Chapter 5

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# Approaches to Interpretation

The Yukon Saw Mill Company building is an appropriate venue for an interpretive display on the history of milling in the Klondike. Although the building itself was never a sawmill, the company that erected it as part of its industrial complex was the leading (and, eventually, only) Dawson sawmill company for most of its twenty-year history. In addition, the building is located on what might well be called "Sawmill Row" – the portion of the Dawson waterfront that accommodated four large sawmill operations at the turn of the century. Never before or after was there such a large and competitive milling industry in the Yukon.

The information gathered for this report provides a good foundation for developing an interpretive display, and the resources listed in the Reference section offer a wide selection of period photographs, newspaper articles, and advertisements that could be used to help interpret the history of the Yukon Saw Mill Company and the early milling industry in the Klondike. Below is a more detailed listing of some of the resources that could prove particularly useful in developing an interpretive display.

### ***Original Documents***

Research for this report turned up a number of surviving original documents related to the Yukon Saw Mill Company. Some of them, or good reproductions of some of them, could be used as part of an interpretive display in the Yukon Saw Mill Co. building.

- **Alaska Commercial Company Records:**

The original records are at the Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California. Yukon Archives has a complete finding aid and a restricted microfilm of selected documents, including most, but not all, of the documents related to Dawson and the Yukon Saw Mill Company.

Of particular interest are the engineer's drawings of the Yukon Saw Mill Company complex and the Klondike Island mill site. The records contain both preliminary sketches and final drawings of both sites as they were in 1908, and a 1912 version of the Yukon Saw Mill Company complex with notes marking the changes made since 1908. The Stanford Collection also contains Yukon Saw Mill Company ledgers from 1908, when it took over its remaining competitors, to 1915, when it was sold to Frank Neill and Ben Volkman.

- **File of correspondence received by the Yukon Saw Mill Company, 1903-1905 (Yukon Archives COR 74, 77/60-1, File 2: Maggie's Museum)**

The most relevant of the letters are the price lists provided to the company's

lumber buyer by Washington State sawmills in the winter of 1903-04 and the buyer's handwritten assessment of the bids. There are also many letters from makers of metal-working machinery indicating the Yukon Saw Mill Company's interest in expanding its machine shop at this time.

- Yukon Saw Mill Company blank order form from early 1900s (Yukon Archives COR 0008, 80/127: Yukon Saw Mill Co.)

The order form is remarkable mainly for a very sharp and detailed photograph of the surviving Yukon Saw Mill Company building with the company staff lined up on the wooden sidewalk in front. The photograph shows part of the sawmill itself, next-door to the building, and the early stages of construction of the machine shop addition on the building's east side.

- Yukon Saw Mill Company sales ledger (Dawson City Museum)

The original sales ledger from the early years of the century records the details of what was sold, who bought it, and how much was paid. Its primary interest is in the goods and prices listed and the linkages revealed with other Dawson City businesses.

## ***Sources of artifacts and interpretive information***

Any machinery used by the Yukon Saw Mill Company disappeared long ago, probably absorbed into another mill or mining business as spare parts. This is equally true of all the mills that operated at the height of the Klondike milling industry. However, since small-scale sawmilling has not changed dramatically in the last century, it should be possible to acquire sawmill machinery very similar to the equipment used by the Yukon Saw Mill Company.

Klondike National Historic Sites has some pieces of machinery that have been identified as sawmill equipment. The pieces are stored at the Bear Creek compound and were buried under snow during the research period of this report, and photographs of the pieces do not provide enough information to determine exactly what they are. Once the snow is gone, the artifacts themselves should be assessed by someone with good knowledge of sawmill equipment.

Bill Bowie of Arctic Inland Resources logs every winter in the area around Dawson where much of the turn-of-the-century logging and milling took place. Several times he has come across abandoned sawmill machinery, well back in the bush, during his logging operations. He is interested in the possibility of an interpretive display and would be prepared to assist in retrieving some of the abandoned equipment.

## ***Recommendations for further research***

Although the sawmills of the Klondike's great milling era are long gone, some archaeological evidence might remain. Because most of the sawmills were located a distance from the centre of Dawson, the ground has been less disturbed over the years than in the core of the town. Now that the mill sites have been located, archaeological work might turn up further information. The Klondike Island site is likely to be the most productive since it has seen the least amount of traffic since the sawmill closed down.

## ***Possible components of an interpretive display***

Clearly there are many approaches to developing an interpretive display. Without prejudging the approach Yukon Heritage Branch might choose, we suggest the following as possible components:

- Large-scale enlargement of the engineer's drawing of the Yukon Saw Mill Company site as it was in 1908. The original drawing is in the Special Collections department of Stanford University Libraries. It is roughly 18 inches by 24 inches and seems to be in reasonably good condition, given its age.
- Large-scale enlargement of a panorama shot of the Dawson waterfront, highlighting the four sawmills in operation at the peak of sawmill activity.
- A guide to Dawson buildings where the types of lumber and building materials furnished by the mills can still be seen. This could be set up as a walking tour and co-ordinated with other historic sites, or it could include historic buildings and lumber operations along the creeks as well.
- Video of a working sawmill with commentary linking it to the operations of the historic mills. Bill Bowie's Arctic Inland Resources mill, just outside Dawson, operates in much the same way the historic Dawson mills operated, and with the same kind of wood. It could serve as sample of a working mill, along with Bowie's explanation of the milling process.
- Interpretive signs at the sites of the other sawmills along the north waterfront, possibly including photographs of the mills and advertisements for their products.

# Canadian Yukon Lumber Co.

Established  
and  
operating  
SAW MILL PLANT  
at  
SELKIRK  
for  
over a year

Holds Large Timber Limits on  
Yukon and Stewart Rivers; Ranks  
among the largest Lumber Com-  
panies in the Yukon Territory

## Future Operations

Next year Immense Lumber Yards will be estab-  
lished in Dawson and at Stewart River, and new  
Saw Mill located at Stewart River, which will  
enable the Company to manufacture all kinds of  
LUMBER, SASH, DOORS and SHINGLES, for the  
future building of Dawson.

## The Canadian-Yukon Lumber Company

ORGANIZED IN MONTREAL

Messrs. Capt. Bliss, Price and Anthony  
MANAGERS OF THE COMPANY

Mr. D. G. Stewart  
RESIDENT MANAGER, DAWSON

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Yukon Sun

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### **Dawson City Museum:**

Parks Canada notes in Yukon Saw Mill Company file, Dawson City Museum  
Dawson Assessment and Tax Rolls - Dawson Museum microfilm.

### **Stanford University Libraries**

Alaska Commercial Company Records: Original records are at the Manuscript Division, Special Collections Department, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California.  
Yukon Archives has a complete finding aid and a restricted microfilm of selected documents, including most of the documents related to Dawson and the Yukon Saw Mill Company.

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GOV 1619, File 1374: Klondike City Townsite 1899-1916  
GOV 1622, File 2481  
GOV 1622, File 2518: J.J. Healy - Island at Mouth of Klondike for Sawmill  
GOV 1624, File 2877: Dawson Townsite 1896-1902  
GOV 1625, File 3230  
GOV 1626, File 3306: Klondike Mines Railway  
GOV 1629, File 4649: Dawson Waterfront Leases 1899-1943  
GOV 1629, File 4703: Welsh/Hobbs  
GOV 1633, File 6816: O.W. Hobbs  
GOV 1637, File 9934: Information for 1904 yearbook  
GOV 1638, File 11314: Northern Lumber Company  
GOV 1646, File 25180  
GOV 1649, File 26747: Timber resources 1910-1914  
GOV 1655, File 29708: Timber and Forestry Branch Inquiries  
GOV 1659A, File 30811  
GOV 1676, File 3525: Commissioner's Annual Report 1921-49  
GOV 1677, File 1: Commissioner's Correspondence 1898  
GOV 1681, File 33: Surveying  
GOV 1684, File 81: Applications for town lots April 1898  
GOV 1684, File 82, 1-3: Dawson Waterfront Lease Agreements 1898-1908  
GOV 1858, File 25648: G.E. Burke  
GOV 1862, File 28003: J.F. Burke  
GOV 2040, File 4614-5: 1902-17, Corr. regarding lease of Dawson waterfront....  
GOV 2078, File 3: Report on Wood  
GOV 2079: Ledger of Waterfront Leases, Crown Timber and Land Agent  
GOV 2082: Ledger of Waterfront Leases, Dawson  
GOV 2085  
GOV 2090

GOV 2099: Timber Berth applications  
GOV 2114: Partnerships Ledger 1899-1953  
MSS 122, Acc. 82/524, Pt. 1, Strong, M.H. Coll.  
PAM 1897-72C: *Saws for the Klondyke - 1897*  
PAM 1977-303: "Who owned the Alaska Commercial Company?" in *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, July 1977.  
PAM 1978-66: "Klondike Photographs," Margaret Archibald.

**Yukon Heritage Branch**  
Yukon Saw Mill Co. files

## **Archival Sources - Photographs/Maps**

### **Dawson City Museum**

PHO 983R.56 #M13-32: Yukon Sawmill Co. Collection  
PHO 983R.40 #M13-16: Klondike Mill Company Collection  
PHO 990-50-18: A.G. Courtney Collection, 1900, "Moonlight at the mouth of the Klondike River"  
PHO 1993.67.1.56b: D.H. Ferry Collection, 1906-07, "Yukon Gold Co. Sawmill on the 12-mile River."  
PHO 984R.190.2: Ladue Collection. View of Ladue sawmill with machinery, men and lumber, 1896.  
PHO 984R.190.3: Ladue Collection. Front view of Ladue sawmill with men and logs, 1898.  
PHO 1993.67.1.56B: Ferry Collection. View of Twelve Mile Sawmill, 1906.  
PHO 991R.1.76: Coley Collection. Yukon Sawmill, April 22, 1904, Ledger of Sales for Sawmill inventory.

### **Klondike National Historic Sites, Department of Canadian Heritage, Dawson**

Pho H-63-Gould, A view of Ladue Quartz Mill on First Avenue. 1972  
Pho H-61-Sutherland, "Bombay Peggy's", 1967  
Pho UW-19-Hegg, University of Washington, Hegg #11CA, "dog team in front of Smith and Hobbs' Mill"  
Pho Al-6, University of Alaska, Bassoc. Coll. #64-92-348, dog sled photo taken in front of Hobbs Sawmill, with Canadian-Yukon sawmill visible to left; Dawson.  
Pho 5:DH-95, Dawson City Museum, Dorothy Whyte Collection, Album #3, Box #1, "Birds Eye View 8-5-08" Dawson.  
Pho H-40, Partial photo from 1901 Panorama of Dawson.  
Pho BB-6-Goetzman, Bancroft Library, University of Cal. Berkeley #17129-75, "Dawson 28 June 1901."  
Pho UA-8, University of Alberta, Special Coll. Div., "Teams and men outside A.T. & T. Co.'s Warehouse."  
Pho P-70, Public Archives of Canada #PA13297, "A.E. Co.'s Warehouse."  
Pho IC-5-Grant, T., Information Canada #64-943, "Yukon Sawmill (Ted Grant, 1963)"  
Pho H-67-Gould, for NHSS, 1972, "Yukon Sawmill Co. On North East Corner of 1st Ave. And Duke St. in Block E."  
Pho H-66-Innes-Taylor, for NHSS, 1961, "Yukon Saw Mill."

Pho H-65-Innes-Taylor, for NHSS, 1961, "Y.C.G.C. Quartz Mill" (formerly Ladue Quartz Mill).

**University of Alaska Archives**

PHO 70-28-208N: Erskine Photo Collection: Newly constructed Yukon Saw Mill Co. office building, 1900.

**Yukon Archives: Catalogued photo collections**

#845  
#2007  
#2008  
#2009  
#2016  
#2017  
#2018  
#2020  
#2021  
#2975  
#2976  
#3740  
#4698  
#8348

**Yukon Archives: Uncatalogued photo collections**

PHO 003: Coutts, R.C. Coll.  
PHO 06  
PHO 16, Acc. 82/222 Pt. 2: McKenzie, O.O. "Jack" Coll.  
PHO 17, Acc. 82/219 Pt.2: Gaundroue, M. Coll.  
PHO 22: Cleary, Rev.C. Coll.  
PHO 23  
PHO 33, Acc. 82/332: Stringer, I.O. Coll.  
PHO 37  
PHO 45, Acc. 82/369: Ladue, Joseph Coll.  
PHO 47, Acc. 82/412: Pugsley, Ed Coll.  
PHO 50, Acc. 82/403: Misc. 11 Coll.  
PHO 65  
PHO 68  
PHO 72  
PHO 75, 77/60: Maggie's Museum  
PHO 76: Hamilton Coll.  
PHO 80: Yukon Dept. of Tour. & Info Services 1965-70.  
PHO 81, Acc. 78/50: Sammons, Frances, Coll.  
PHO 87, Acc. 78/69, Pt.2: Coutts, R.C., D.Griffith Coll.  
PHO 94: Coutts, R.C.  
PHO 102: Harrington, Richard Coll.  
PHO 110, Acc. 79/49: Pierson, Betty Coll.  
PHO 138: Harbottle Coll.

PHO 139: Watson, J.A. Coll.  
PHO 140, Folder 3, Folder 5:  
PHO 153, Acc. 82/524, Pt. 2: Strong, M.H. Coll.  
PHO 154  
PHO 155, Acc. 82/15: Tyrell, J.B. Coll.  
PHO 159, Acc. 82/50: Grant, A.S. Coll.  
PHO 176  
PHO 177: Eccels, P Coll.  
PHO 178  
PHO 190: Whitehorse Star Coll.  
PHO 231: City of Vancouver Coll.  
PHO 241, Acc.84/12: Tompkins, E.J. Coll.  
PHO 246, Acc. 84/78: Oxford Historical Society (3)  
PHO 256, Acc. 80/122, Pt.1 (f.11): Rock Fluff, Clinton Creek  
PHO 260, Acc. 81/9: Tappan Adney Coll.  
PHO 291, Acc. 81/18  
PHO 292  
PHO 296  
PHO 317, Acc. 86/87: Senkler, E.C. Coll.  
PHO 325: Metcalf, Charles F. Coll.  
PHO 351, Acc. 87/93 Pt. 2: Whitehouse, E.J. Coll.  
PHO 352: Whitehouse, E.J. Coll.  
PHO 364: Whitehouse, E.J. Coll.  
PHO 366, Acc. 88/129: Craig, C.W. Collection.  
PHO 371, Acc. 89/19: Greenbank, J. Coll.  
PHO 374, Acc. 88/127: McCombe, Molly.  
PHO 375: McCombe, Molly  
PHO 385  
PHO 395, Acc. 89/90, MacRae, J.K.  
PHO 422, Acc. 85/85 Mowry, C.A.  
PHO 639  
PHO 845  
PHO 1023: B.C. Archives Coll.  
PHO 2016  
PHO 2020  
PHO 2021  
PHO 2033: University of Alaska Archives, Bassoc Coll.  
PHO 2086: Vancouver Public Library Coll.  
PHO 2874  
PHO 2975  
PHO 2976  
PHO 3739  
PHO 3740  
PHO 3741  
PHO 3742  
PHO 3805  
PHO 4171

PHO 4185  
PHO 4187  
PHO 4698  
PHO 8348  
PHO 8351  
PHO O/S 003 A1: Coutts Coll.  
PHO O/S 008  
PHO O/S 011, Acc. 77/60: Maggie's Museum  
PHO O/S 15, Acc. 86/87: Senkler, E.C. Coll.  
PHO O/S MCD 3, Acc. 87/17  
PHO O/S MCD 3, Acc. 87/35

Becht, Bill, Collection, Acc. 87/72 O/S H/2/7  
Craig Collection: H-1774, Map  
Minter, Roy, Collection, Acc. 92/15, Box 3 (Accession in process)  
The Observer, Acc. 87/35, O/S H/2/7  
Walmsley Coll. 9732, 9774 (Slides)

### **Private Collections**

E. Jones Collection. Exterior views of Yukon Sawmill Company office and machine shop building. The photos were taken in the mid-1960s by E. Jones.

### ***Personal Contacts***

William B. (Bill) Bowie, Sawmill owner  
Arctic Inland Resources Ltd.  
Dawson City, Yukon

John Gould, Resident  
Dawson City, Yukon

Barb Hogan  
Dawson Museum  
Dawson City, Yukon

Ed Jones, former Dawson resident  
Santa Fe, New Mexico

John MacFarlane, Project Manager of Restoration  
McLean Mill National Historic Site  
Port Alberni, British Columbia

Staff of Klondike National Historic Sites  
(Michael Gates, Paula Hassard, Louise Ranger)  
Dawson City, Yukon



# **The Yukon Saw Mill Company: Last of the Gold Rush Sawmills**

## *Additional Resources and Information*

Prepared for the Cultural Services Branch  
Government of Yukon  
March 2005

By Claire Eamer  
Researcher, Daley Networks  
Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada

### **Items submitted as part of this project:**

1. Appendix to 1997 Report: The Human Element
2. Annotated List of Photographs Related to Yukon Saw Mill Company and Lumber/Milling Industry in the Yukon, in binder with:
  - a. 37 archival prints
  - b. photocopies or digital print-outs of many of described photos
3. Annotated finding aid to Alaska Commercial Company Records, indicating which records are on Yukon Archives restricted microfilm, which might be pertinent to Yukon Saw Mill Company, and detailed notes about several files of particular relevance.
4. Set of files containing:
  - a. Alaska Commercial Company records: some photocopied files from Stanford Library collection; slides of drawings from Series 1. Account 367, and prints made from slides. Note: slides are not in focus and are useful for information purposes only.
  - b. Yukon Archives: selected photocopies related to Yukon Saw Mill Company and Klondike milling industry
  - c. Various sources: selected photocopies related to Yukon Saw Mill Company and Klondike milling industry
  - d. Photocopies of newspaper stories and other items related to Yukon Saw Mill Company and milling industry
  - e. Photocopies of advertisements and directory entries related to Yukon Saw Mill Company and milling industry

## List of additional or notable sources:

### Documentary Sources at Yukon Archives

#### Alaska Commercial Company Records

Yukon Archives has a set of restricted-use microfilms of selected files from these records. No photocopies may be made from the microfilm. Some files potentially pertinent to the Yukon Saw Mill Company are not included in the microfilm. For more complete information, see the annotated Finding Aid to the Alaska Commercial Company Records, prepared as part of this project.

#### *Dawson Daily News* microfilm

“Gus Burke is dead” Tuesday, August 17, 1909

“Crushed to death in machine shops” Monday, July 11, 1910

“Joe Burke is dead in city of San Francisco” December 27, 1911

“Thos. A. M’Gowan passes away in San Francisco” Thursday, Jan. 23, 1919

#### Territorial Court Records:

- GOV 1453 175 Gustavus Edwin Burke 1909 \*
- GOV 1457 242 Thomas A. McGowan 1919

*Information about business dealings, placer claim holdings, associates of named individuals and of J. F. Burke.*

#### Yukon Government Central Registry Records: First Series:

- GOV 1616 533 Stewart Menzies, Land at junction of Stewart and Yukon Rivers, 1896-1904 CM 10-006
- GOV 1630 4734 Stewart Menzies – Dawson townsite, 1896-1915 CM 10-018

*Information about Menzies’ land speculation and length of time in the territory.*

#### Yukon Government Central Registry Records: Second Series

- GOV 1858 25648 Burke, G. E. - Deceased Menzies, Stewart W. B. – Deceased 1909-1911 \*open
- GOV 1862 28003 Burke, J. F. - Deceased 1912-1915 \*open

*Information about business dealings, placer claim holdings, associates.*

For additional sources, see files submitted as part of this project.

### Photographic Sources

See annotated list in accompanying binder.

## Sources for further investigation

### Yukon:

#### Yukon Archives

Further investigation of both document and photograph holdings, particularly in relationship to people identified as associated with Yukon Saw Mill Company, and into later years of company (1919-?).

#### Klondike National Historic Sites

Further investigation of both document and photograph holdings, particularly in relationship to people identified as associated with Yukon Saw Mill Company.

#### Dawson City Museum

Further investigation of both document and photograph holdings, particularly in relationship to people identified as associated with Yukon Saw Mill Company.

### Canada:

#### B.C. Archives and Records Service

Both photographs and documents related to Gold Rush period.

#### Glenbow Institute, Calgary

Photographs, documents, diaries and letters from Gold Rush

#### University of Alberta Archives/Northern Collection

Photographs, documents, full series of Pacific Northwest Quarterly (several relevant articles)

#### National Library and Archives of Canada

Government documents, census information, World War I inventory of male residents, photographs

### United States:

#### Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

Photograph collection contains many Klondike images, including some of sawmills.

#### Bassoc Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Both photographs and documents

#### Stanford University Library – Special Collections, Stanford, California

Alaska Commercial Company records.

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University of Washington Library  
Photographs, particularly Goetzman

San Francisco court records

Probate proceedings and documents associated with Joseph Burke's estate. The estate took at least four years to settle, so documentation could be substantial.

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# **The Yukon Saw Mill Company:**

*Last of the Gold Rush Sawmills*

**Appendix to 1997 Report:**

*The Human Element*

**Prepared for the Cultural Services Branch**

**Government of Yukon**

**March 2005**

By Claire Eamer  
Researcher, Daley Networks  
Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada

**Contact Information:**

Cultural Services Branch  
Tourism & Culture  
Government of Yukon  
Box 2703 (L-3)  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Canada Y1A 2C6

Claire Eamer  
Daley Networks  
37 Alsek Road  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Canada Y1A 3K3  
Tel. (867) 667-6332

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## Life and Death of a Business

The Yukon Saw Mill Company was created in 1897, in the early days of the Klondike Gold Rush, by a group of young men all linked with San Francisco and the Alaska Commercial Company (ACC). It flourished through Dawson's prosperous days, expanding its yards across three city blocks and adding a substantial machine shop to its milling operation. When the Gold Rush faded, the company followed the trend set in the mining industry and consolidated, taking over its competitors one by one until, in 1908, it was the only remaining sawmill in Dawson. The Yukon Saw Mill Co. and its associates also expanded into the mining business, buying up blocks of claims and working them in close association with the sawmill. By 1909, the Yukon Saw Mill Co. looked like a sound, growing business, positioned to weather the economic downturn in Dawson's fortunes.

The company's strength, as it turned out, was also its vulnerability. The men who had founded it, built it, and were busy engineering its continued growth were still only in their forties. Energetic and ambitious, they could reasonably expect another twenty years or more of business life – time to make all their fortunes. However, accident and illness intervened. Less than four years after the Yukon Saw Mill Co. took over its last competitor in 1908, three of the men who had spearheaded its growth were dead, and the ACC had lost interest in the company and Dawson. By 1914 the Yukon Saw Mill Co. was on the sale block at a bargain price.

The group of men who had founded and built the company included:

- Joseph F. Burke – founder, manager, and part-owner of the Yukon Saw Mill Co.; president of the Hunker Development Company;
- Louis Sloss Jr. – son of a founder of the ACC, part-owner of the Yukon Saw Mill Co. on behalf of the ACC, and the major source of capital behind both the sawmill and the venture into mining;
- Stewart W. B. Menzies – land speculator, machinist, and long-time associate of Joe Burke; stockholder in the Hunker Development Company;
- Gus E. Burke – brother of Joe Burke; manager of and stockholder in the Hunker Development Company; and,
- Thomas A. McGowan – legal counsel and business agent for the ACC, for its successor in Dawson, the Northern Commercial Company, and for the Yukon Saw Mill Co.; vice president of the Hunker Development Company.

The two Burkes, Menzies, and Joe Burke's wife Lilly made up the Hunker Development Company. Louis Sloss seems to have been the moneymen behind both it and the Yukon Saw Mill Co., and Thomas McGowan was intricately involved in the affairs of both.

Gus Burke was the first to be struck down. He died suddenly, in August 1909, of a ruptured appendix. At the time he was managing the Hunker Development Company's properties on Hunker Creek. Stewart Menzies was next. In September 1909, he left the

Yukon Saw Mill Co.'s machine shop, which he appears to have established, and took a job as chief mechanic with the Yukon Gold Corporation. In July 1910, he was killed in an industrial accident in the YGC's machine shop.

The Yukon Saw Mill Co. carried on, as did the Hunker Development Company, although court documents show that Joe Burke and Thomas McGowan were both deeply embroiled in sorting out the complications of ownership and inheritance created by two unexpected and intestate deaths. In the fall of 1911, however, the Hunker Development Company was expanding again, with new partners and with the estates of the two dead men still listed on its books. According to Hunker Development Company minute books included in the Alaska Commercial Company's Dawson ledger (ACC Records. Series 2. Subseries A. Volume 46.), a deal to take over a substantial new set of claims was almost complete when Joe Burke left to spend the winter with his wife and stepdaughter in San Francisco. McGowan wrapped up the last details early in December, but before Joe Burke could approve the deal or sign the papers, he was dead, struck down by a stroke around Christmas 1911.

Joe Burke seems to have been the glue that held the complex set of business dealings together. The sawmill, now based on Klondike Island, carried on under the management of long-time employee Bernhard (Ben) M. Volkman, but the machine shop shut down in 1912. Louis Sloss Jr., who had been involved in the business from a distance, appears to have lost interest in it, perhaps in part because the Alaska Commercial Company was withdrawing all its business activities from the upper Yukon Valley at that point. As early as 1912, McGowan was asked to find a buyer for the Yukon Saw Mill Co.

In 1914, Ben Volkman formed a partnership with Frank S. Neill and began negotiations to buy the Yukon Saw Mill Co. Neill had made money cutting wood in the Klondike, sometimes for the Yukon Saw Mill Co., and had married into a wealthy family in New York. With Neill providing the capital and Volkman the management expertise, the partnership of Neill & Volkman took over the Yukon Saw Mill Co. name and the milling operation on Klondike Island in the spring of 1915. The deal did not include the town properties belonging to the ACC but still registered to Louis Sloss; nor did it include the Yukon Saw Mill Co. office and machine shop building, sitting stripped and vacant on Front Street. The building and properties remained in Sloss's name until 1923, when Charles Redmond took over ownership.

*Primary Sources:*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <i>ACC Records on microfilm at<br/>Yukon Archives</i>                    | <i>Series 1. Accounts 367.<br/>Series 1. Accounts 370.<br/>Series 2. Subseries A. Volume 46.<br/>Series 2. Subseries A. Volume 47.</i>                         |
| <i>Yukon Government Central<br/>Registry Records: Second<br/>Series:</i> | <i>GOV 1858 25648 Burke, G. E. - Deceased Menzies,<br/>Stewart W. B. - Deceased 1909-1911 *open<br/>GOV 1862 28003 Burke, J. F. - Deceased 1912-1915 *open</i> |
| <i>Territorial Court Records</i>   | <i>GOV 1453 175 Gustavus Edwin Burke 1909 *<br/>GOV 1457 242 Thomas A. McGowan 1919</i>  |
- See also sources for individuals listed in next section*

## People Behind the Yukon Saw Mill Company

*(Note: unless otherwise noted, sources are located at Yukon Archives)*

### **Louis Sloss, Jr. (b. circa 1863 – d. 1923)**

- Younger son of Louis Sloss, one of the founders of the Alaska Commercial Company. Louis Jr. and his older brother, Leon, were the effective leaders of the family business interests at the time of the Gold Rush and through the first two decades of the twentieth century.
- Was personally involved in the Yukon Saw Mill Co. Properties in Dawson were registered in his name; he is listed as partial or sole owner of many of the mining properties owned by the Hunker Development Company, an associate of the Yukon Saw Mill Co.; from 1904, he is listed as one of the registered owners of the company, in partnership with Joseph Burke. (For more detail, see Eamer & Zedda, *The Yukon Saw Mill Company: Last of the Gold Rush Sawmills*, Yukon Heritage Branch, 1997.)
- Had a personal relationship with Joseph Burke, founder and manager of the Yukon Saw Mill Co.: actively pursued business for the plant and reported to Burke in personal notes; stood as guarantor for Joseph Burke's administration of estate of his brother, G.E. Burke.

*Sources: Letters in COR 74, 77/60-1, File 2: Maggie's Museum  
Territorial Court Records: GOV 1453 175 Gustavus Edwin Burke 1909  
ACC Records on microfilm at Yukon Archives*

### **Joseph Francis Burke (b. 1863 – d. 26 December 1911) (also Joe Burke)**

- Born Mokalumne Hill, Calaveras County, California, where parents had arrived in 1849 gold rush. Later lived in Lodi and San Francisco. Trained as marine engineer and worked on steamships out of San Francisco for many years.
- According to Dawson Daily News, was engineer on the A. C. steamer Bella in 1896 – one of last steamers to leave the Klondike area in the fall, after gold was found. Returned in 1897 and founded Yukon Saw Mill Co., in partnership with Alaska Commercial Company. Was manager from the beginning.
- Also acquired and worked mining properties on Dominion and Bonanza early in Gold Rush period; later formed group of investors, including Menzies, Gus Burke, Fairbanks, and others – possibly with financial backing of Louis Sloss Jr. – to acquire and consolidate claims on Hunker Creek and, later, Sulphur Creek. Began with group of claims called Johannsen Properties.

- Formed Hunker Development Company to manage, work, and expand mining properties. Stockholders: J.F. Burke, Lilly Domnan Burke (J.F.'s wife), Stewart W.B. Menzies, G.E. Burke. Thomas A. McGowan later acted as vice president, possibly representing Louis Sloss's interest. Was also part of Burke, Menzies & Co.
- Also invested in oil development at Coalings, California, and handled oil investments for other Yukon residents.
- Died, aged 45(?), in San Francisco in 1911 a few days after suffering a stroke.

*Sources:* Dawson Daily News, December 27, 1911  
 Various Dawson Daily News stories, 1898-1911  
 Territorial Court Records: GOV 1453 175 Gustavus Edwin Burke 1909  
 GOV 1862 28003 Burke, J. F. - Deceased 1912-1915  
 ACC Records on microfilm at Yukon Archives

### **Stewart W. B. Menzies (b. 1867 – d. 10 July 1910)**

- Born in Callao, Peru, but father took him back to Scotland at an early age. Served 5-year apprenticeship with John Elder's Ship Building Works on the Clyde River. Moved to San Francisco to join his father, then consulting engineer at Union Iron Works. Chief engineer for the Portland Power & Light company for two years, then chief of the steamer Geo. W. Elder on Skagway run during the gold rush.
- First filed townsite claim for "Menzies Addition" to Dawson in October 1896. Also filed for land at mouth of Stewart River. May have left over winter and returned in 1897 since Dawson Daily News says he "came over the trail together" with Joseph F. Burke and George Matlock.
- Associated with Yukon Saw Mill Company from beginning and is listed as mechanic with the company in the Polk's Gazetteer 1903. Left YSMCo. in September 1909 to become master mechanic with the Yukon Gold Company in their machine shops at Ogilvie Bridge.
- Shareholder in the Hunker Development Company, the mining development company managed until 1909 by Gus Burke and made up of YSMCo. associates. He was also associated with Joe Burke (and possibly Gus Burke) in Burke, Menzies & Company. Letterhead for the company appears in Alaska Commercial Company files and reference is made to it in the documents related to Joe Burke's estate. Dawson Daily News story says he was associated with Burke for 25 years before Menzies' death in 1910.
- Menzies was killed in an industrial accident at the Yukon Gold Company shop on July 10, 1910, aged 43.
- Other links: Cousin Stewart Menzies, San Francisco, was assistant secretary of the Northern Commercial Company in 1910.

*Sources:* Dawson Daily News, Monday, July 11, 1910  
 Yukon Government Central Registry Records, First Series: GOV 1616 533 Stewart Menzies, Land at junction of Stewart and Yukon Rivers, 1896-1904 CM 10-006  
 Yukon Government Central Registry Records, First Series: GOV 1630 4734 Stewart Menzies – Dawson townsite, 1896-1915 CM 10-1018  
 Yukon Government Central Registry Records, Second Series: GOV 1858 25648 Burke, G. E. – Deceased; Menzies, Stewart W. B. – Deceased, 1909-1911

**Gustavus Edwin Burke (b. 1860? – d. 16 Aug. 1909)**  
**(also Gustave Edward Burke, Gus Burke)**

- Born Mokalumne Hill, Calaveras County, California. Father arrived in 1849 gold rush. Educated in California.
- Was in cloak and suit business in Portland, Oregon, for ten years as a member of the firm of Burke and McDonald. Also involved in quartz mining in Baker City and other portions of eastern Oregon.
- Moved to Dawson 1903 to become manager of the Hunker Development company, operating the steam conveyor on upper Hunker. Brother of Joe Burke, manager of the Yukon Saw Mill Company and head of Hunker Development company.
- Died August 16, 1909, aged 49, of septic peritonitis at #60 below Bonanza while he and his wife were on their way from Hunker to Dawson. Buried in Portland, Oregon.

*Sources: Dawson Daily News, Tuesday, August 17, 1909*  
*Territorial Court Records: GOV 1453 175 Gustavus Edwin Burke 1909*  
*ACC Records on microfilm at Yukon Archives*

**Thomas A. McGowan (b. 1866? – d. 22 January 1919)**  
**(also Thos. A. McGowan, Tom McGowan)**

- Possibly born in Scotland but raised in San Francisco, trained as lawyer, and admitted to bar in California
- Legal counsel and agent for Alaska Commercial Company, Northern Commercial Company, and Yukon Saw Mill Co. in Dawson from 1898 onward. Took active part in negotiating business deals for saw mill and for Hunker Development Co.
- Newspaper stories and documents indicate he had personal as well as professional relationships with most of the people involved in the Yukon Saw Mill Co., including Joe Burke, Gus Burke, and Ben Volkman.
- In later years, moved to Fairbanks on behalf of NCC and maintained offices there and in Dawson. Dawson office was co-located with John Patrick Smith's offices, and J.P. Smith handled McGowan's estate in the Yukon.
- Returned to San Francisco circa 1917 or 1918 due to ill health.

*Sources: Dawson Daily News, Thursday, January 23, 1919*  
*Various Yukon court records associated with Burkes and Menzies*  
*ACC Records on microfilm at Yukon Archives*

**Bernhard M. Volkman (b. circa 1870? – d. ?)**  
**(also Ben Volkman, Benjamin Volkman)**

- Listed in NWMP records on checkpoints for those coming over the Chilkoot as "VOLKMAN, B.M., registered Jun 11, 1899, from San Francisco, in scow 202." Probably reflects registration at Lake Bennett.

- Registered several placer claims as early as 1899; some were on Sulphur Creek where Sloss, Menzies, and the Burkes later held interests in claims.
- Began working for Yukon Saw Mill Co. no later than 1903, when he is listed as collector; in obituary for Joe Burke, newspaper says Volkman was in charge of Burke's interests in Dawson; managed company after Burke's death, with salary appearing in Yukon Saw Mill ledger.
- Purchased Yukon Saw Mill Co. name and milling operations on Klondike Island, in partnership with Frank S. Neill, in 1915
- Newspaper reports in 1919 list him as member of the Yukon Development League and indicate that sawmill is still operating at that time. Further research required to establish remainder of company history.

*Sources: Various Dawson Daily News stories, 1908-19  
 NWMP records of people entering the Yukon  
 Records of Placermining Applications, Yukon Archives  
 ACC Records on microfilm at Yukon Archives*

**Frank S. Neill (b. ca 1876 – d. ?)  
 (also Frank Neal)**

- “In the fall of 1897 a Philadelphia promoter talked twelve technical-school students into persuading their fathers to buy a schooner and send them around Cape Horn to the Klondike. The promoter was supposed to be a navigator, but turned out to be a very poor one. After a series of fits and starts, delays and bunglings, storms and calms, the vessel finally stumbled into Juneau, Alaska. All of the boys went home except one, Frank Neill. He pressed on to the Klondike, arriving finally in 1900. All the gold was gone, but Neill made a small fortune hauling logs, used it to get started in the construction business in Long Island, and did well enough to marry and make a wedding trip back to the Klondike. He remained a wealthy, respected man in Skagway long after the great rush abated.” (The Klondike Weekly, May 1, 1998, <http://yukonalaska.com/klondike/bystate.html>)
- Appears in early Yukon Saw Mill Co. accounts as one of company's wood suppliers.
- In 1914, formed partnership with Ben Volkman, long-time manager of the Yukon Saw Mill Co. Neill provided \$25,000 in cash and other resources to finance the purchase of the Yukon Saw Mill Co.'s milling operation on Klondike Island from the Alaska Commercial Company, to be operated by the partnership of Neill & Volkman. The pair took over the operation in the spring of 1915, with Volkman running the business. (Information from ACC records)
- Post office listings of people leaving the Yukon show him departing 17 May 1915, with forwarding address c/o W.R. Grace & Co. Hanover Square. New York, NY

*Sources: The Klondike Weekly, May 1, 1998  
 ACC Records on microfilm at Yukon Archives*

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**Other names** associated with Yukon Saw Mill Co., Hunker Development Company, and associated individuals:

- Robert Moncrieff: mentioned in association with mining interests
- Richard Laning: mentioned in association with mining interests
- O. S. Laning: manager, Northern Commercial Company in Dawson
- John Patrick Smith: prominent Dawson lawyer and Crown prosecutor; member of Dawson council; associate of Thomas A. McGowan.
- William Hiram Fairbanks: manager of Northern Commercial Company in Dawson; long association with Alaska Commercial Company
- George Matlock: mentioned as coming into Klondike with Joe Burke and Stewart Menzies

## **Selected Documents Related to the History of the Yukon Saw Mill Company and Associated Individuals**

### **1898**

*Klondike Nugget*, 27 August 1898

#### **IMPROVEMENTS AT THE YUKON MILL**

The Yukon Mill Co. has just completed the construction of a commodious office building. It is made from sawed logs and will afford very comfortable quarters for the transaction of business during the coming winter. The dimensions of the building are 18 by 21. Alongside of the mill there is an immense pile of logs which however manager J. F. Burke states will last the mill not to exceed six weeks. In the river in front of the mill there are rafts of logs which will scale not less than 500,000 ft. Mr. Burke states that the mill will be able to run nearly all winter.

*Klondike Nugget*, 10 September 1898

#### **A POPULAR CONCERN**

One of the busiest places in Dawson, because the wheels of industry within it are running every hour of the day's twenty-four is the Yukon saw mill on First Avenue. The mill is equipped with the best of machinery, of latest improved designs, and turns out house logs, dressed and matched lumber, mouldings, finishing and dimension materials in vast quantities daily. The proprietor, Mr. J. F. Burke is noted among Dawson's most enterprising and public spirited citizens, his close attention to every detail of his business, courteous treatment of patrons, resulting in the building up of the extensive business they now enjoy. An able lieutenant the firm has in Mr. Perkins in charge of their office.

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### **1901**

Excerpts from *Dawson. Yukon Territory*, edited and compiled by A. S. Allen. Published by the American Journal of Industry, Dawson, Yukon Territory, October, 1901.

#### **THE LUMBER INDUSTRY**

With the broad Yukon flowing past its front door, Dawson becomes the center of the lumber industry for the district. Along the banks and on the tributaries of the noble river there grows an abundance of the different varieties (sic) of spruce, which the river affords a ready means of transportation to the mills in Dawson of which there are five.

The Yukon Saw Mill & Lumber Co., the Ladue Lumber Co., the Canadian Lumber Co., the Klondike Mill Co., and O. W. Hobbs.

All have on hand large stocks of plain and dressed lumber, cut from native wood, and all are provided with the latest improved machinery. The Yukon company has lately erected a new building in connection with the mill in which all kinds of planing and moulding is done. (pp. 23-24)

#### YUKON SAW MILL CO.

In the line of manufacturers there is probably no city in the world of equal size the value of whose products equal those of the city of Dawson. In a new and growing district the saw mill industry is one that forms one of its (sic) most important features. Of the enterprises of this character the Yukon Saw Mill Company is the most extensive, giving employment in the various departments to 70 people.

The principal location is corner of First avenue and Fifth street, where it was established in 1898 under the management of Mr. Jos. F. Burke, an experienced millman, whose personal supervision over the details of every department has resulted in a measure of prosperity that is seldom equalled. The dimensions of the mill proper are 50x125 feet. Of the machine shop, which is an important adjunct, 40x40 feet, in one corner of which is occupied by the company's offices, which are fitted up in convenient and modern style.

The yards are very extensive, covering a site 150x700 feet, and in which is stocked immense piles of lumber, of oak, ash, hickory, cedar, redwood, sluice box, flume lumber and the heaviest timbers used in the construction of bridges, warehouses, etc.

As usual with mills in this country, where the operating season is short, this company makes a continuous daily run of 24 hours, turning out a finished product of 35,000 feet. The machine shop, which is the largest north of Vancouver, B. C., is equipped with the latest improved machinery, lathes, etc., and a specialty is made of general repairing.

The mill is provided with all modern appliances necessary to meet the heavy demands of the trade. All of the company's buildings are lighted by electricity (sic), furnished by a 500-light dynamo. The engine furnishing the power for the plant is an Atlas steam boiler of 100-horse power. (p. 40)

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## 1905

Letter, dated 14 December 1905, from Thomas McGowan to Jos. Burke [carbon copy in possession of Mac's Fireweed rare books department, March 2005]

[Report to Burke on progress of negotiations to purchase groups of claims on Hunker and Gold Bottom creeks. Reference to Tom Kirkpatrick group and Johannsen group.]

"...to be worked by the Saw Mill under your management. It might be well to have the Saw Mill build these dredges and take options or lays on all of this ground. The dredges to remain at all times as an asset of the Mill."

## 1908

*Dawson Daily News*, March 27, 1908

### DEAL IN SAW MILLS

\*Joe Burke takes over the N. A. T. & T. mill and the stock\*

\*Advance in price\*

\*Lumber market is stiffened. Northern is also out of the field.\*

The Yukon Mill, Joe Burke proprietor, has taken over the North American Transportation and Trading company's big sawmill plant and stocks of lumber and logs at Klondike City. The deal is one of the heaviest made in the Klondike for a long time, and gives Mr. Burke the control of the lumber business in the camp aside from the private mills on the Twelvemile, maintained there by the Guggenheims for the purpose of supplying their big flume and ditch system.

During the winter Mr. Burke took over the stock of the Northern mill, and that mill is out of business. During the history of this camp nine lumber mills have supplied the demand. They were not all contemporaneous, but the majority were. The mills were known as the Yukon, the Canadian Yukon, the Sixtymile, the Ladue, the Banks, the Joe Boyle, the Williams, the Northern and the N. A. T. & T.

The Yukon Mill bought out all the others except one, which was absorbed by the Klondike. Now the uYkon (sic) has absorbed its last competitor, getting with the deal 1,250,000 feet of logs, which are at the mill, and considerable lumber which is in the yards. The N.A. T. & T. retains the timber berths up the Klondike, and the 18 acres of land at the mouth of the Klondike, where the mill and yards are.

The N. A. T. & T. last summer prospected the 18 acres with the view of putting on a dredge in the near future.

Following the elimination of the N. A. T. & T. mill the price of lumber has advanced 10 to 50 per cent. The stiffest advance is chiefly in the sizes not commonly called for. The new quotations are \$60 to \$75 per thousand feet.

Mr. Burke says there has been no profit at the old rate, and that the advance in prices was absolutely necessary.

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## 1909

*Dawson Daily News*, Tuesday, August 17, 1909

### GUS BURKE IS DEAD

\*Prominent Yukon Operator succumbs suddenly on Creek\*

\*Here a Long Time\*

\*Manager of Hunker Development Company at Time of Death\*

Gustave Edward Burke, one of the best known mining operators in the Yukon, died late yesterday afternoon at the hotel Sixty below on Bonanza creek. He and Mrs. Burke had arrived two days before for a trip with their buggy from Hunker to Dawson by

way of the Forks, and it was while on the way down bonanza that Mr. Burke suddenly was taken ill.

Mr. and Mrs. Burke started on the trip from Hunker Saturday, and it was while coming down Bonanza that Mr. Burke first felt any severe symptoms. He stopped on upper Bonanza and drank from a spring, and it was immediately after drinking that the pains came on him. He stopped at a hotel at the Forks, and Dr. Catto [sic], who happened to be up Bonanza, was called, and did all possible. The patient was resting easily, and the doctor came to town, and yesterday morning again visited Mr. Burke at the Forks. It was thought that Mr. Burke could be brought to Dawson safely, and the start was made with a rig. At Sixty the pains became severe, and a stop was made there. Mrs. Burke was with her husband and with assistance of others did all possible to alleviate the pains, and sent to Dawson for a doctor. Dr. Alfred Thompson was found, and hurried out in a rig. By the time he arrived Mr. Burke had expired.

It is believed that death resulted from appendicitis or some similar trouble. Mr. Burke had been complaining some little time of what he thought dyspepsia or similar stomach trouble of no serious character, and it was not until on the way down Bonanza that the case became alarming.

Gustave Edward Burke was born at Mokullmne (sic) Hill, Calaveras county, California, 49 years ago. He was educated in California, and after an active career as a young man, was in the cloak and suit business in Portland, Oregon, for ten years as a member of the firm of Burke and McDonald. For a number of year (sic) he was in quartz mining in Baker City and other portions of eastern Oregon. He came to Dawson six years ago, when he became manager of the Hunker Development company, operating the steam conveyor on upper Hunker. He was in this position as (sic) the time of his death.

Mr. Burke was married in Portland four years ago. The bride was Miss Annie Monk. Mr. Burke is a brother of Joseph Burke, manager of the Yukon Saw mill of Dawson. Their father and mother settled in California in '49. The father is dead, while the venerable mother lives at Lodi, California.

Mrs. Burke is inconsolable today in her grief. She is not rugged, and the blow is therefore doubly trying. Mr. Burke was a man of sterling character and highly esteemed by a host of friends.

The funeral services over the remains of Mr. Burke will be held at St. Mary's church at 8 o'clock tomorrow morning. Mrs. Burke will take the remains to the coast for interment.

*Dawson Daily News*, Wednesday, August 18, 1909

#### FUNERAL IS HELD

\* Last sad services are held over remains of Gus Burke \*

\* Many are present \*

\* Beautiful floral tokens from friends of city and creeks \*

The funeral of Gustave Edward Burke, the prominent Hunker operator, took place at 8 o'clock this morning. The services were held at St. Mary's church, with Father Godfrey Eichelsbacher and Father Rivet officiating.

After the requiem mass, the remains were escorted to Lowe's chapel, where they will be held until sent to the coast for interment. Mrs. Burke plans to have the interment made in Portland, Oregon, the old home of Mr. and Mrs. Burke.

A large number of friends were at the funeral. Many of them were from the creeks. The casket is one of the handsomest ever seen in Dawson. It is covered in heavy black plush, and has heavy oxidised trimmings. Many beautiful flowers were sent by friends, among them a large pillow of cut lillies and other flowers from Dawson gardens and greenhouses, a present of the boys of the Yukon mill. Creek friends and others contributed in expressing their sympathy with choice floral tokens.

The pall bearers were Benjamin Volkman, Stewart Menzies, Robert Moncrieff, Richard Laning, L. E. Cook and J. P. Smith.

*Death Records from Green's Mortuary*

BURKE, Gustave Edward; 49 years old; [cause of death] Septic peritonitis; [location of death] #60 below Bonanza; [date of death] August 16, 1909; [attending physician] Dr. Catts; Funeral at Catholic Church; [paid by] Joseph Burke; [occupation] Miner

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**1910**

*Dawson Daily News*, 11 July 1910

**CRUSHED TO DEATH IN MACHINE SHOPS**

\*Stewart Menzies, Well Known Master Mechanic For the Yukon Gold Company, Meets a Sad End\*

Stewart W. B. Menzies, master mechanic in the Yukon Gold company's large machine shops at Ogilvie bridge, was willed (sic) accidentally yesterday while working in the shops. A three-ton steel bull wheel from one of the dredges, which was being repaired, fell while being lifted with one of the cranes, and struck and pinned Mr. Menzies beneath. The chain running through the chain block broke. Only one end of the piece of material was off the ground at the time, but the weight was so great that there was no hope of any one on whom it might fall escaping alive.

Death was almost instantaneous. For perhaps a minute after the huge piece fell, Mr. Menzies made a desperate effort to struggle free, but it is doubtful if he scarcely realized the fate that befell him.

Richard Shaw, one of the machinists, and three other men were present. With use of crowbars, they quickly removed the huge piece of material, but it was to no avail. Dr. Alfred Thompson was called immediately. He was taken out in the Yukon Gold company's auto, but death had claimed its victim. The doctor says that one of the large blood vessels of the abdomen (sic) was broken immediately, that the rapid flow of blood, and the crushing of thy (sic) and other bones from the hip down were most serious immediate injuries.

Friends were notified, and the remains were removed to the city.

Men present at the time of the accident state that Mr. Benzies' (sic) last act was one of utmost consideration for those about him, and that had he not been so solicitous of them he probably would have escaped death. He warned the men that the chain was not safe, and told them to stand back, while he stepped forward and himself took hold of the big piece of material, to swing it. While thus exposed to danger beneath the great weight it fell on him, crushing his life from him before he scarcely could realize what had happened.

The remains have been taken charge of by Dawson Lodge No. 1 of Independent Order of Odd Fellows, of which the deceased was a member. The funeral will be held this week. No definite date will be announced until (sic) word is received from San Francisco in reply to a telegram sent to Stewart Menzies, a cousin of the deceased, who is the assistant secretary of the Northern Commercial company. So far as known, Mr. Menzies leaves no surviving members of his immediate family. He is known to have an aged aunt in Scotland, who was much devoted to him, and leaves several cousins, among them Stewart Menzies, who was mentioned as being in San Francisco, Graham Menzies, also in San Francisco. The deceased is a nephew of Stewart Menzies, a prominent pioneer business man of San Francisco, who died several years ago, and who is survived by two daughters.

The deceased was born in Callao, Peru, in 1867. He went to Scotland with his father when quite young, and served an apprenticeship of five years in John Elder's Ship Building Works on the Clyde. Coming to San Francisco, he joined his father, then consulting engineer at the Union Iron Works. Menzies later was chief engineer of the Portland Power & Light company, where he remained two years. Giving up that position, to accept a position of chief of the steamer Geo. W. Elder, which was on the Skaguay run during the rush. Stewart caught the fever, and joined Joseph F. Burke and Geo. Matlock, and they came over the trail together. Since arriving in Dawson he was associated with the Yukon Saw Mill company until last September when he became master mechanic for the Y. G. Co. Mr. Menzies and Mr. Burke, now here, have been associated in various enterprises for 25 years.

Mr. Menzies was well known in Klondike, and had a host of friends who deemed him sterling. His untimely death will be regretted by many now on the coast as well as those who knew him here.

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## 1911

*Dawson Daily News*, December 27, 1911

JOE BURKE IS DEAD IN CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

\*Noted Klondiker passes away after few days' illness\*

\*Paralysis is the cause\*

\*Was one of the most prominent business men of the Far North\*

Joseph F. Burke, president of the Hunker Development company and organizer and manager of the Yukon Sawmill Co. of this city, died yesterday at his home in San Francisco. Paralysis was the cause. Ben Volkman, in charge of Mr. Burke's interests

here, received the news yesterday by wire. Several days ago Mr. Volkman was advised by wire that Mr. Burke had suffered a stroke of paralysis.

Mr. Burke leaves a widow and a step-daughter. They lived in Dawson until five years ago. Since then they have made San Francisco their home. Mr. Burke left here on one of the last steamers of the year for the outside.

Joe Burke, as he was most familiarly known by the countless friends he had throughout the North, was born 48 years ago at Makalumne Hill, a famous mining town in Calaveras county, California, where his father was engaged in mining. The father died some years ago, but the aged mother still lives, and makes her home with her daughter at Lodi, California. Two years ago Joe's brother died suddenly on Bonanza. He was then devoting his time to the operations of the Hunker Development company.

As a lad Joe Burke spent his days in California, living in Calaveras county and later at Lodi and San Francisco. He learned the trade of marine engineering, and for years was chief engineer on some of the largest steamships plying out of San Francisco to all coast points north to Puget Sound and south to Panama, and across the Pacific. In 1896 he came North as engineer on the A. C. steamer Bella, of the Yukon river fleet, and was one of the earliest men in this country. He intended last fall to join the Yukon Order of Pioneers just before leaving, but the political campaign was absorbing the attention of all just about the time he left Dawson, and he deferred.

After his visit here in '96, Mr. Burke went outside, and returned in 1897 and established, in connection with the A. C. company, the Yukon Mill. He also acquired valuable mining properties, and owned and worked 6 above lower on Dominion and 18 above on Bonana [sic]. In connection with the A. C. and others, he was heavily interested in the Hunker Development company at the time of his death. He also was one of the lucky buyers of oil lands in company with several other Klondikers who got in at Coalings, California. His holdings there are just becoming productive, and promised to make him a man of great wealth. As it is, he leaves an estate that entitles him to rank as one of the most successful Klondikers. Joe Burke was well known throughout Yukon and had a host of friends who admired him for his frank and manly qualities, and who regret his early death.

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## 1914

Alaska Commercial Company Records. Series 1. Account 370.  
Extracts from letter from Thomas A. McGowan, Dawson City, to Alaska Commercial Company, San Francisco, dated August 13, 1914.

Gentlemen:

As it has been your desire for some years last past to close out the mill here, and as you have at various times suggested to me that I endeavor to close up this last investment which stands in your name in the North, I have had this matter under discussion with Mr. Volkman for the past two years.

Our Mr. Gerstle, who left here on last Monday, also discussed this matter with Mr. Volkman and expressed to him your strong desire to close out the mill, so far as you

were concerned, and to give him a chance to take it over, if proper arrangements could be made.

I have never been able to do anything in this connection before, for the reason that up to the present time Mr. Volkman has not been able to arrange for financing the proposition. Now, however, he has succeeded in interesting Mr. Frank Neal [sic], who has \$25,000 in cash on hand and is well connected in New York City. Mr. Finlaison, Manager of the Bank of British North America here, informed me that Mr. Neal has \$25,000.00 in cash available here and has other resources, in New York. For this reason, I had a long interview with Mr. Neal and Mr. Volkman, resulting in a proposal along the lines of the memorandum herewith enclosed....

....

It would be impossible to close the deal at the present time for the reason that we are now manufacturing lumber and selling it as rapidly as possible, but the stock will be considerably reduced during the season, and it will be much easier to inventory and fix prices after the close of this season's operations.

With reference to the plant, as you know, it has been used for a number of years and under the circumstances, I think \$5,000.00 is a fair price for same. The horses, sleds, etc., are all old and will have to be replaced in the near future, so that \$1,000.00 seemed to be a fair price for them.

I thought it only fair that the logs on hand and the outside lumber, sashes, etc., should be paid for at landed cost, in cash, and with reference to the price fixed for inside lumber, \$25.00 per M, after considering the fact that large portion of our lumber is narrow and cannot be sold as rapidly as standard widths, and that a large portion of it has been piled in the yards for a number of years but must be taken over with the rest, the figure of \$25.00 per M., seems a fair price.

Concerning the lease, I do not think we will have much trouble in securing an renewal of the lease [sic] from Mr. Isom and as soon as you advise me your decision in this matter, I shall take it up with him. The insurance the Home Office has always carried, and the same amount will be allowed to remain as it now stands, with the additional provision that loss, if any, shall be payable to us....

....

In submitting this proposition, I realize that it does not show a great profit, and you know that I think that as the life of this camp will last several years yet and as the business is a good one, my idea would be to continue, but, in view of your earnest and repeated requests that we endeavor to close this business out, I am submitting to you what I consider to be a fair deal, particularly in view of the fact that Mr. Volkman has been with us for a great many years and that you have always suggested to him your desire to assist him to establish himself in business and give him a chance to make some money.

....

Thos. A. McGowan, same date as above, in note outlining sale proposition:

"...This deal does not include real estate and buildings and assets situate at the old plant on the water front, which will still belong to us."

## 1915

Alaska Commercial Company Records. Series 1. Account 367.

Extract from letter dated September 13, 1915, from the office of Thos. A. McGowan to Alaska Commercial Company, San Francisco.

....Referring to the portion of your letter in which you mention the fact that this property [Dawson lots associated with Yukon Saw Mill Company] still stands in the name of our Mr. Louis Sloss, this is correct as deeds from him have not as yet been recorded. This for the reason that to record these deeds would require the surrender of our present government certificates of title which are in his name, and thereupon new ones would have to be issued and we would then have to pay an insurance fund on the valuation into the Government and a new certificate would then have to be issued in the name of our Company or its trustee, which would be an item of expense and inasmuch as I hold, at this end, Mr. Sloss' Power of Attorney and can transfer this property direct from him to anyone who might purchase the same, I did not think it necessary to go to the expense of placing these transfers on record. However, if you think this should be done, I shall do so....

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## 1916

Alaska Commercial Company Records. Series 1. Account 367.

Extract of letter from "Office of Yukon Saw Mill Co., Neill & Volkman, Props" and signed by B. Volkman, informing Alaska Commercial Company of inquiry received from George Milton of Tantalus Coal expressing interest in the land and improvements still owned by the ACC in Dawson (Yukon Saw Mill Co. building and associated properties):

"....The buildings are stripped of everything save and excepting the Engine, Fire Pump and Mill Carriage, mention that these things are on the premises and do not go with the deal, they can be sold separately."

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## 1919

*Dawson Daily News*, Thursday, Jan. 23, 1919

THOS. A. M'GOWAN PASSES AWAY IN SAN FRANCISCO

A telegram received here last evening from San Francisco announces the death of Thomas A. McGowan in that city yesterday from influenza, which was contracted while he was in a state of ill-health of long standing. The message came to O. S. Laning, manager of the N. C. from Volney Richmond, superintendent of the company.

Mr. McGowan was the legal advisor of the N. C. company the last twenty years, the most of which he spent in Dawson and Fairbanks. He first came to the Yukon in '98 and was a prominent figure here during the most exciting days of this camp. Later he went to Fairbanks in the interest of his company, and maintained offices there and here jointly.

A year or more ago Mr. McGowan's health began to fail and he since had been at his old home in San Francisco.

Mr. McGowan was one of the most capable and energetic of all the legal men ever in the North and was known to practically everyone in Yukon and Alaska, in which regrets over his untimely death will be universal. Mr. McGowan was of Scotch parentage, and was raised in San Francisco and received his education there, and was admitted to the bar of California. He was about 55 years of age at the time of his death.

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**Annotated List of Photographs  
Related to Yukon Saw Mill Company  
and Lumber/Milling Industry in the Yukon**

Prepared for  
Cultural Services Branch  
Government of Yukon  
March 2005

by  
Claire Eamer  
Researcher, Daley Networks  
37 Alsek Road, Whitehorse YT Y1A 3K3  
Tel. (867) 667-6332 : Email [claire@northwestel.net](mailto:claire@northwestel.net)



## MacBride Museum Holdings

### *Non-Klondike Sawmilling and Lumber Industry: 1895-1920 – Photos identified*

Description	Designation	Quality
Two men on top of two whipsawing platforms, with others in background. No indication of date or location with photograph, but appears to be Gold Rush era and show part of a large group of people processing lumber, possibly plank sawing along Lake Bennett. Illustrates pre-sawmill manufacture of lumber.	X89.5.1A.12PH # 96-144.	Quality good.
View of sawmill showing buildings, boiler, and five unidentified men. No indication of location; apparently Gold Rush era or shortly afterward.	1987.8.1.5 Unit 2, Shelf 1, Box 1PH.	Quality very poor. Upper right quarter faded out.
Waterfront view of town showing log boom, sawmill, covered barge. Town unidentified and unfamiliar.	1989.5.1.160 Unit 2, Shelf 1, Box 3PH. # 95-389	Quality good.
View of logging or sawmill operation showing boom and pulley, wood piles, man, two women, and child. Location not identified. Gold Rush era. Probably logging operation. No sign of sawn lumber or saw.	1989.26.1.143 Unit 2, Shelf 2, Box 5PH. # 99-218	Small print; quality fair.
Photograph of a sawmill, lumber coming off green chain. Man standing by.	1999.24.7 Unit 2, Shelf 3, Box 9PH	Quality poor. Print small and damaged.
Three men sitting on the ground, possibly at a sawmill at Conrad. The mine tramway tower is in the background, ca. 1900-1905. Main indication of sawmill is sawn planks.	1999.24.7 Unit 2, Shelf 3, Box 8PH # 01-718	Quality fair.
Possibly a sawmill at Conrad, ca. 1900-1905. Main indication of sawmill is sawn planks.	1996.41.41 Unit 2, Shelf 3, Box 8PH # 01-719	Quality fair.
Series of photographs from Yukon Field Force collection showing construction at Fort Selkirk in 1898. Several are labelled: "rafting logs for construction to Fort Selkirk probably from sawmill, just upstream." Show process of rafting and moving logs, also log construction. Little indication of lumber sawing.	1988.1.22 (#02-797) 1988.1.23 (#2002.798) 1988.1.25 (#2002.800) 1988.1.90 (#2002.865) 1988.1.91 (#2002.866) and others. All in Unit 21, Shelf 3, Box 8PH	Quality good.

*Non-Klondike Sawmilling and Lumber Industry: Post-1920 – Photos identified*

Description	Designation	Quality
Caption: "Portable Sawmill Used by Engineers on Alaska Highway to Make Lumber for Bridges and Culverts". Shows five men. Printed as postcard. Shows how little portable sawmilling changed in 50 years.	1989.5.1.160 Unit 2, Shelf 1, Box 3PH	Quality good.
Sawmill at Johnson's Crossing, fishing boat, log booms, pilings. Taken looking over lake or river toward mill. Inscription: "Johnson's Crossing Sawmill Alaska" Alaska Highway era	1994.3.1.17 Unit 2, Shelf 3, Box 8PH	Quality good.

## Yukon Archives Holdings

### *Prints Acquired*

Description	Designation	Quality
Yukon Saw Mill Co. office and machine shop building with addition, July 1964. View from corner of Duke Street and First Avenue.	PHO 291 f.6 Yukon. Public Affairs 81/18 YA# 55	Quality good 5x7 print
Grader on waterfront (possibly during spring flood), with Yukon Saw Mill Co. building in background. Collection covers 1934-1960. Most are mid-1930s. No donor-imposed restrictions.	PHO 374 Molly McCombe fonds 88-127 YA# 45	Quality fair to poor.
Advertisement for "Yukon Saw Mills" showing sawmilling equipment specifically targeted at Yukon trade. Date of text and illustrations 1 February 1898. Ad appeared William Ogilvie, <i>The Klondike Official Guide</i> (Toronto : The Hunter, Rose Co., 1898)	Yukon Archives collection 917.121 Og Also in Coutts Library and WPL Northern Collection	Quality excellent
"Miners just arrived in Dawson City, Alaska (sic)" Arrival of miners in Dawson; spring 1898 [sic] – Ladue Mill on right. Ladue Mill looks as it did in Dawson City Museum photo listed in this document (Collection: Ladue, Photo #984R.190.2) and probably from 1897.	PHO 325 F.2 Charles F. Metcalf fonds 87/31 YA# 80	Quality fair. Photo is cropped and overexposed version of Alaska Historical Society photo listed below. 5x7 print.
Arrival of miners in Dawson; spring 1898 [sic] – Ladue Mill on right. Ladue Mill looks as it did in Dawson City Museum photo listed below (Collection: Ladue, Photo # 984R.190.2) and probably from 1897.	Catalogued photo Alaska Historical Society Collection #4187	Quality good.
First large buildings, Dawson 1897 Approx. 30 men sitting and standing around, piles of logs, outside tables, mud, gear, buildings in background. Long trackway going into nearest building indicates it might be sawmill – or trackway was built to move materials across mud.	PHO 325 F.2 Charles F. Metcalf fonds 87/31 YA# 81	Quality fair.
Dawson River Front 1897. After four months. Shows Front Street substantially built up, with many large buildings, warehouses, docks. Large log boom in foreground.	PHO 325 Charles F. Metcalf fonds 87/31 YA# 84	Quality fair.

<p>Loading riverboat <i>Alice</i> at Dawson. Dawson 1898 [sic]  Steamer pulled up at dock, many men standing and sitting, looking north toward Ladue Mill – roof and smokestack visible. Stacks of lumber visible in front of one building, and logs lying around. Long shot of scene in “Arrival of miners in Dawson, spring 1898” above. May be 1897.</p>	<p>PHO 325  Charles F. Metcalf  fonds  87/31  YA# 101</p>	<p>Quality fair  Somewhat faded  and blurry</p>
<p>The C.K.M. Co. Construction Camp, Bonanza Basin, August the 2<sup>nd</sup> 1912. Photo by J. Doody, Dawson.  Two dredges under construction. Klondike Mines railway runs along side of site, and lumber is piled on both sides of track for the entire length of the site. Shows how much lumber was used, even at this era.</p>	<p>PHO 110  Betty Pierson fonds  79/49  YA# 18</p>	<p>Quality good</p>
<p>Bonanza Basin, May the 12<sup>th</sup> 1913.  Photo probably by J. Doody.  Shows same view as above, but with both dredges completed and working.</p>	<p>PHO 110  Betty Pierson fonds  79/49  YA# 20</p>	<p>Quality good</p>
<p>[Small sawmill on creeks, with six men, two women, and small child posing. Gold rush era or soon after. ] No date.  Fonds cover period 1899-1921.</p>	<p>PHO 110  Betty Pierson fonds  79/49  YA# 28</p>	<p>Quality good</p>
<p>Yukon Saw Mill Co. – close-up of photo used in company order form. Shows office building with staff (probably) lined up on boardwalk in front. Sawmill building with signs beside it, and team of horses in front. Buildings from left to right: sawmill, bandsaw room, offices/machine shop. Wood is stacked behind office building, and no sign of machine shop addition or loading bay later cut into upper storey on Duke Street side. Order form date space says “190_” so photo probably dates from 1900 or 1901 at latest.</p>	<p>COR 008 (80/127)</p>	<p>Quality fair.  Original image  very small.</p>
<p>Yukon Saw Mill Co. order form – full form. Blank form from Yukon Saw Mill Co. Foundry and Machine Works, with inserted photograph of sawmill and office on form. See description of insert above.</p>	<p>COR 008 (80/127)</p>	<p>Quality fair.  Minor staining.</p>
<p>“lumber yard scene” [no date]  [sawmill with rough log chute leading up from water, stacks of lumber, piles of logs, man leaning against bank. Spring – bits of ice along shore]  Fonds cover period 1898-1909.  Restriction: Any photographs used in publications must have donor’s clearance first. there is a charge for each photo used in a publication. The credit line will be: Presbyterian Church of Canada. Andrew S. Grant Collection.</p>	<p>PHO 159  Andrew S. Grant  fonds  82/50  YA# 159</p>	<p>Quality good</p>
<p>Loggers rolling logs into the Yukon River using skids.  No date. Fonds cover 1949-1968, but photo looks earlier.  Possibly wood camp for sternwheelers.</p>	<p>PHO 016  O.O. “Jack”  McKenzie Collection  82/222 Pt. 2  YA# 1</p>	<p>Quality fair to  poor.  Blurry, some  fading and  spotting.</p>

<p>Flood after Break-up at Dawson, May 14, 1925. Shows Front Street flooded from downriver to about half a block upriver of Yukon Saw Mill Co. building. YSMCo. office building and machine shop addition are clearly visible. Photo is available in several collections.</p>	<p>PHO 33 I &amp; S Stringer fonds 82/332 YA# 48</p>	<p>Quality fair to good.</p>
<p>Arrival of steamer <i>Seattle</i> at Dawson, spring 1898. Yukon Saw Mill Co. is visibly in production, with smoke coming out of its stack, although the shed roof over the sawmill is still just framed in. Ladue Mill is barely visible beyond it.</p>	<p>Catalogued photo McBride Museum Collection #3805</p>	<p>Quality poor.</p>
<p>[Typed caption] - Hauling Lumber In Yukon. - [Front view of a tracked steam tractor hauling several sleds loaded with lumber on what appears to be the Klondike River in the winter]. - [1898-1910]. ***See photocopy of clipping [following in binder], "Wood to be Handled by New Method" Dawson Daily News, 17 July 1916, which appears to describe this machine.***</p>	<p>PHO 535 &amp; 536 Roy S. Minter fonds Series 2: Black Albums 92/15 YA# 741</p>	<p>Quality good.</p>
<p>[Typed caption] - Scenes 1, 2, 3, &amp; 4. Scows of Ore at Dawson 1923. - On verso - 5 Little ones - (Montana, [Woloernie], John A., Dakota, &amp; Sterling) hanging on down below. Some of them are still there. - [Looking downstream towards Moosehide, barges moored to Dawson shoreline.] Yukon Saw Mill Co. building on right of photo. After shutdown - windows boarded up.</p>	<p>PHO 537 Roy S. Minter fonds Series 2: MacBride Album 92/15 YA# 1124</p>	<p>Quality fair.</p>
<p>Panoramic view of Dawson waterfront, spring 1898. Ladue Saw Mill, O.W. Hobbs Mill, and Yukon Saw Mill Company (building still under construction). Print is part of four-panel panorama.</p>	<p>PHO O/S 27 The Observatory 87/35</p>	<p>Quality fair</p>
<p>Dawson waterfront, July 4, 1899. One of three prints (#2016, #2017, #2018) that make up a long-range panorama of Dawson from across the Yukon River. Ladue sawmill, Hobbs sawmill, Yukon Saw Mill Co. all visible, along with boats and log booms along river. Photo predates construction of YSMCo. office/machine shop.</p>	<p>Catalogued photo Vancouver Public Library Collection #2016</p>	<p>Quality fair. Slide was cracked, but image very sharp.</p>
<p>"Panorama of Dawson from across the Yukon River. Circa 1900." [Date almost certainly 1899. Ladue sawmill, Hobbs sawmill, Yukon Saw Mill Co. all visible on right, along with boats and log booms along river. Photo predates construction of YSMCo. office/machine shop. Same time and view as #2016.]</p>	<p>Catalogued photo Vancouver Public Library Collection #2020</p>	<p>Quality fair. Some damage but image very sharp.</p>

<p>“Panorama of north Dawson from across the Yukon River. Circa 1900.”          Probable date 1901 or 1902.          Yukon Saw Mill Co. office building clearly visible, as well as sawmill. Loading hatch has been cut into upper storey, Duke Street side.</p>	<p>Catalogued photo          Vancouver Public Library Collection          #2021</p>	<p>Quality fair.          Some damage but image very sharp</p>
<p>View of Dawson from north. [1900?]          Plume of smoke is coming from Yukon Saw Mill Co. Log chute and booms visible along river in front of business.</p>	<p>Catalogued photo          McBride Museum Coll. Vol. 1          #3739</p>	<p>Quality fair.          Dark image, but sharp. Details visible under magnification</p>
<p>Dawson – Birds-eye View, May 5, 1900.          Shows waterfront and sawmill area. Not much activity – river still clogged with ice.</p>	<p>Catalogued photo          McBride Museum Coll. Vol. 1          #3740</p>	<p>Quality fair          Some fading but image is sharp</p>
<p>Dawson City Y.T. Center of Klondike Gold Fields – August 1900.          Good view of waterfront with log booms moored in front of sawmill row.</p>	<p>Catalogued photo          McBride Museum Coll. Vol. 1          #3741</p>	<p>Quality poor.          Faded and damaged around edges.</p>
<p>“Dawson City from the Dome”          A panorama of Dawson looking south from the Midnight Dome. ca. 1920s          Claude Tidd, photographer          Sawmills are gone from waterfront. Yukon Saw Mill Co. office building, with boiler room and machine shop additions, clearly visible. Entire sawmill complex beside it has been cleared and buildings across Front Street on waterfront are gone.</p>	<p>Catalogued photo          Claude Tidd fonds          #8348</p>	<p>Quality fair.          Dark – possibly night shot in June.          Sharp enough to see details of YSMCo. site.</p>
<p>A panorama of Dawson from the edge of the Dome above St. Mary’s Hospital. ca. 1930s.          Claude Tidd, photographer          Similar to previous photo (#8348) but from a slightly different angle. Taken later since brush has grown up considerably in vacant lots where sawmill operation used to be. Yukon Saw Mill Co. building with additions clearly visible, but paint has disappeared between previous photo and this one. Remains of log chute also visible.</p>	<p>Catalogued photo          Claude Tidd fonds          #8351</p>	<p>Quality fair to good.</p>
<p>Panorama view of ice jam in front of N.A.T.&amp;T. warehouse on Dawson waterfront. Ladue Sawmill, Yukon Saw Mill (waterfront) building, and Yukon Saw Mill office building clearly visible beyond warehouses on downriver side. Smoke coming from YSMCo. stack. Ca 1901.</p>	<p>PHO O/S 015          E. C. Senkier fonds          86/87          YA# 108</p>	<p>Quality of original good, but 8x10 print distorts it.          See large photocopy in same envelope.</p>

*Yukon Saw Mill Co. – Photos identified*

Description	Designation	Quality
<p>Yukon Saw Mill [external shot, series of sawhorses, two smokestacks in background] Possibly a distant shot of the Klondike Island mill when operated by Yukon Saw Mill Co., but doesn't show much. Photos on same page of album were taken 1910-12.</p>	<p>PHO 133 Ironsides family fonds 98-18 YA# 51</p>	<p>Quality fair. Print small.</p>
<p>Photo No. 2015. Shows Yukon Saw Mill Office and lumber yard in foreground with horses and tramline. Name "Goetzman" is handwritten on photo. Taken from 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue end of sawmill yard looking back toward river. Office building clearly visible above sawmill operations – blinds in upper storey half-raised in two windows. Machine shop addition is not visible in the photo, so this photo may predate that addition. Excellent detail of milling operation in foreground. About 400 of Goetzman's negatives were lost in a fire in 1907, so photo may not be available elsewhere.</p>	<p>PHO 140 Finnie family fonds 81-21 YA# 54</p>	<p>Quality fair, but content excellent and unduplicated elsewhere.</p>
<p>Clifford – Meeting blueberry pickers at Saw Mill in Klondike City (Lousetown) "1919" written on photo. Somewhat posed picture of teenage boy sitting on piled boards, looking through a berry can. Stacks of lumber in shed in background. Looks like a large mill still in operation. This is almost certainly the Klondike Island mill operated by the Yukon Saw Mill Co. under Ben Volkman and Frank S. Neill, and still in operation in 1919.</p>	<p>PHO 469 and 470 Ernest Schink collection 95-104 YA# 88</p>	<p>Quality good. Large print.</p>
<p>Dawson, looking north from bluff above Klondike City. Shows Klondike Island sawmill in foreground and Klondike Mines railway. Period 1906-1915. Yukon Saw Mill Co. took over Klondike Island operation in spring of 1908.</p>	<p>PHO 535 Roy S. Minter fonds 92-15 YA# 313</p>	<p>Quality good. Large print.</p>
<p>Dawson + Klondike City Looking North. Wolfe Photo Dawson Y.T. – [View of Klondike City, taken from the hill behind the Klondike Mines Railway Roundhouse, Visible are Klondike Mines Railway, Klondike Brewery, Klondike Sawmill, and South Dawson]. Sawmill is in background but visible. 1906-1915 period. Yukon Saw Mill Co. took over Klondike Island operation in spring of 1908.</p>	<p>PHO 535 Roy S. Minter fonds 92-15 YA# 529</p>	<p>Quality good. Large print.</p>
<p>Yukon Saw Mill Co. building. Print dated September 1970. Before restoration; windows unboarded. View from north on Front Street. Misidentified as "Joe Ladue's Yukon Sawmill"</p>	<p>PHO 291 f.6 Yukon. Public Affairs 81/18 YA# 60</p>	<p>Quality good, but print very small. Negative available.</p>

Yukon Saw Mill Co. building. Print dated September 1970. View south, opposite corner of Front and Duke. Before restoration; windows unboarded. Machine shop addition visible behind office building. Misidentified as "Joe Ladue's Yukon Sawmill"	PHO 291 f.6 Yukon. Public Affairs 81/18 YA# 61	Quality good, but print very small. Negative available.
Dawson from the Midnight Dome looking south. Larss & Duclos photo YSMCo. office building visible; plume of smoke from stack. Same as print acquired from Yukon Archives: Catalogued photo, McBride Museum collection Vol. 1, #3739	PHO 371 Jacqueline Greenbank fonds 89/19 YA# 16	Quality fair. See photocopy
Ferry landing in West Dawson. Yukon Saw Mill Co. building visible in distance on far bank. Time period – possibly 1930s or 1940s.	PHO 374 & 375 Molly McCombe fonds 88/127 YA# 34	Quality good See photocopy
Panorama of Dawson waterfront, possibly in 1920s. [Check Yukon Archives file] Shows Yukon Saw Mill Company building and property very clearly. Riverfront warehouse has been demolished, but sawmill building still standing.	PHO O/S 011 Walter R. Hamilton fonds 77/51 YA# 66	Quality very good See photocopy
View of Dawson from Dome, same era as above. Shows Yukon Saw Mill Company property clearly from north side. Extended lumber yards behind operation appear to be empty. (Check Yukon Archives print to confirm)	PHO 072 & 076 Walter R. Hamilton fonds 77/51 YA# 100	Quality fair See photocopy

***Klondike Sawmilling and Lumber Industry – Photos identified***

<b>Description</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Quality</b>
Sawmill at Police Camp. 1898. Small portable sawmill with one big log in the carriage, one man standing on top, and a couple more nearby.	PHO 154 J.B. Tyrrell fonds 82-15 YA# 12	Quality fair.
Sawmill at Klondike City, March 21. 1899. Sign painted on building says, "Klondike Mill Co. / Flume & Sluice Lumber & Specialty" Long shot of small mill building with stacks of logs all around. Ice and snow of river in foreground, dock visible, smoke or steam coming from two tall pipestacks.	PHO 154 J.B. Tyrrell fonds 82-15 YA# 123	Quality fair to good.

<p>Sawmill on Klondike River. 1904. Large operation. Looks as if it is upriver from the mouth of the Klondike, on the right side of the river. A small bridge is visible, possibly leading to the sawmill, and the road runs beside the river's edge. A Dawsonite might be able to identify the location.</p>	<p>PHO 156 J. B. Tyrrell fonds 82-15 YA# 319</p>	<p>Quality good.</p>
<p>Series of photos of a portable sawmill mounted on a tracked vehicle. Archivist indicates possibly Dawson. Time period probably 1920s or 30s. Close shots of saw blade and mechanism, as well as shot of men using it. Appears to be used for cutting firewood to length – possibly for steamers. Interesting and unusual operation, well documented.</p>	<p>PHO 514 Kenard Knott fonds 97-54 YA# 153, 154, 155, 156, 158</p>	<p>Quality good. Shows different kind of operation.</p>
<p>[Men working at a sawmill.] Large operation. Looks like Klondike valley or creeks; possibly early 1900s.</p>	<p>PHO 562 George Walters fonds 2000-71 YA# 136</p>	<p>Quality fair. Small print.</p>
<p>“Saw-mill where lumber sold at 30 cents per foot and Saw-dust at \$10.00 a load. Dawson City, Alaska” Stereo photo for old stereovision viewer. Copyright 1901. Shows Klondike Mill Co. main building from river, showing hill, chute, logs, water tower.</p>	<p>PHO 93 Robert C. Coutts fonds 78-69 YA# 117</p>	<p>Quality good. Double prints small but very sharp. See print-out of scans from Online Archive of California</p>
<p>[Steam-powered saw mill] Bush sawmill with lean-to roof. Three men working; stacks of lumber behind them, logs in foreground. 1900-1902?</p>	<p>PHO O/S 4 Robert C. Coutts fonds 86-15 YA# 166</p>	<p>Quality fair. Faded but clear medium-sized print.</p>
<p>Company supply houses being built. [one large building partly built with stacks of lumber around it] [1897] Example of building boom, construction techniques, and quantities of lumber required.</p>	<p>PHO 325 Charles Metcalfe fonds 87/31 YA# 82</p>	<p>Quality good. See photocopy</p>
<p>Dawson Waterfront 1897 Shows jumble of boats, tents, buildings in various stages of construction, piles of logs, and log booms in river.</p>	<p>PHO 325 Charles Metcalfe fonds 87/31 YA# 131</p>	<p>Quality fair. See photocopy</p>
<p>Aerial view of Klondike Mill Co. Operations and Yard Lousetown. 1900. Credit: Gaundroue Collection, Yukon Archives Excellent view of mill lay-out, log chute in operation, main building still without complete roof.</p>	<p>PHO 006 &amp; PHO 017 Margretta Gaundroue fonds 82/219 YA# 56</p>	<p>Quality very good. Signs can be read. See photocopy</p>

Where the Klondike and Yukon Rivers Meet. Panorama showing Klondike City, Klondike Island with good view of mill lay-out, and south end of Dawson. Possibly 1906-8 era.	PHO O/S 008 Margretta Gaundroue fonds 82/219	Quality very good. See photocopy
A Photograph Of Dawson Taken At Midnight. June The 24th 1912. - [Typed caption] - Dawson City And Yukon River. - [Birds eye view of Dawson City and the Yukon River taken from above Moosehide Slide]. - 1912. Rafts of logs moored along waterfront.	PHO 535 & 536 Roy S. Minter fonds Series 2: Black Albums 92/15 YA# 494	Quality fair. See photocopy
Winter scene - Caterpillar pulling several sleds loaded with logs. Small dimensions indicate probably fuel. Probably 1930s or 1940s at earliest.	PHO 374 & 375 Molly McCombe fonds 88/127 YA# 49	Quality good See photocopy
Winter scene – team of four horses hauling sleigh-load of large dimension logs. Another team visible in distance. Early 20 <sup>th</sup> century.	PHO 081 Frances Sammons fonds 78/50 YA# 15	Quality good See photocopy
Group of photo in The Yukon Sun and Klondike Pioneer, Sept. 1900. Display page shows snapshot-style photos of seven Dawson businesses in 1900, including the Klondike Mill, Canadian Yukon Lumber Co. and Mill, O. W. Hobbs' Mill, Yukon Saw Mill, and Ladue Co. Mill.	The Yukon Sun and Klondike Pioneer Sept. 1900 (Yukon Archives microfilm)	Quality depends on source. If print source available, then scanned images would provide fair quality. See photocopy.
Miners' outfits for sale, Dawson, July 1897 [Arctic Saw Mill Co. in distance] Credit: Department of Rare Books and Special Collections of the McGill University Libraries.	PHO 260 Tappan Adney fonds 81/9 YA# 121	Quality fair..

***Non-Klondike Sawmilling and Lumber Industry: 1895-1920 – Photos identified***

<b>Description</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Quality</b>
Atlin B.C. [Workers posing for photograph beside circular saw in sawmill.] Anton Vogee photographer. June 8, 1899. Clearly shows saw and cradle of small portable sawmill.	Digitized Collection Anton Vogee fonds 82/271 YA# 29	Quality good. 8x10 print. See reprint of digitized photo.

King's Lumber Yard Bennett [Barges being built in King's Lumber Yard.] Anton Vogee photographer. [1900] Wide shot of lumber yard with construction in distance.	Digitized Collection Anton Vogee fonds 82/271 YA# 48	Quality good. 8x10 print. See reprint of digitized photo.
King's Saw Mill Bennett N.W.T. [Exterior of buildings and lumber yard.] Anton Vogee photographer. [1900] Wide shot of buildings and lumber; snow banks obscure parts of yard.	Digitized Collection Anton Vogee fonds 82/271 YA# 49	Quality good. 8x10 print. See reprint of digitized photo.
Whipsawing lumber on Lake Lindeman [Stampeders whipsawing lumber for boat building at Lake Lindeman.] Anton Vogee photographer. [1899] Excellent close shot of whipsaw platform, two men sawing, two others waiting for boards. Tents and boat-building activity visible in background.	Digitized Collection Anton Vogee fonds 82/271 YA# 133	Quality good. 8x10 print. See reprint of digitized photo.
Two men sitting on piles of lumber with frame building housing a sawmill in the background. H.C. Barley, photographer. Circa 1900. Excellent shot of substantial sawmill set-up, identified by archivist as King's Mill, Carcross.	Digitized Collection H.C. Barley fonds 82/298 YA# 4669	Quality good. See reprint of digitized photo.
King's Mill employees building scows in the ship yard area of the mill. Piles of lumber, tents, and wooden sheds abound. Cabins across the river in the background. H.C. Barley, photographer. June 1900.	Digitized Collection H.C. Barley fonds 82/298 YA# 4670	Quality good. See reprint of digitized photo.
Yard scene. King's Mill, Caribou. U.Y.C. [View of the yard area, office, and buildings housing the saws for King's Mill. Three men having a conversation in the yard area near piles of lumber.] H.C. Barley, photographer. 1901.	Digitized Collection H.C. Barley fonds 82/298 YA# 4671	Quality good. See reprint of digitized photo.
King's Mill, Caribou. U.Y.C. [View from across the river of the buildings, sheds, wood stacks and yard area comprising Upper Yukon Consolidated Company's King's Mill. Barges built by the company line the shore.] H.C. Barley, photographer. 1901.	Digitized Collection H.C. Barley fonds 82/298 YA# 4672	Quality good. See reprint of digitized photo.
King's Mill employees posing for a picture under the frame structure of a building. H.C. Barley, photographer. June 1900.	Digitized Collection H.C. Barley fonds 82/298 YA# 4673	Quality good. See reprint of digitized photo.
King's Mill employees posing for a picture under the frame structure of a building. H.C. Barley, photographer. June 1900. Different view from previous photo, with more people, including some family members.	Digitized Collection H.C. Barley fonds 82/298 YA# 4674	Quality good. See reprint of digitized photo.
Scene in front of King's Mill, Caribou. U.Y.C. [King's Mill employees posing for a picture in front of a log building.] H.C. Barley, photographer. 1901.	Digitized Collection H.C. Barley fonds 82/298 YA# 4675	Quality good. See reprint of digitized photo.

Scene in front of King's Mill Caribou, U.Y.C. [King's Mill employees posing for a picture in front of a log building.] H.C. Barley, photographer. 1901.	Digitized Collection H.C. Barley fonds 82/298 YA# 4676	Quality good. See reprint of digitized photo.
Cattle scow ready to launch.- King's Mill, Caribou, U.Y.C. [King's Mill employees posing on a cattle scow that is ready to be launched. Cabins across the river in the background.] H.C. Barley, photographer. 1901.	Digitized Collection H.C. Barley fonds (82/298) YA# 4677	Quality good. See reprint of digitized photo.
Cattle scow ready to launch. - King's Mill, Caribou, U.Y.C. [King's Mill employees posing on a cattle scow that is ready to be launched. Cabins across the river in the background.] H.C. Barley, photographer. 1901.	Digitized Collection H.C. Barley fonds 82/298 YA# 4678	Quality good. See reprint of digitized photo.
Office scene. King's Mill, Caribou, U.Y.C. [Four men and a boy sitting in the office of King's Mill (U.Y.C. Co.,). Ledgers, clipboards and shelves of supplies line the available space.] H.C. Barley, photographer. October, 1901.	Digitized Collection H.C. Barley fonds 82/298 YA# 4679	Quality good. See reprint of digitized photo.
V.Y.T. Co. Mills, Bennett, Aug. 5, 1899 (Sawmill, buildings and tent), Hegg photo #B175 Distant view of sawmill complex with river in foreground and mountains behind. Not much detail visible.	PHO 114 Sincic collection 79-102 YA# 44	Quality good.
Sawmill at Fort Cudahy property of N.A.T. and T. Co. All logs for Police Post squared here and hauled ¼ mile on tramway with wooden rails. (1) Insp. Strickland; (2) Const. Ward, now living* in Kentville, NS - *died Kentville, NS, 1940. Daughter living there. Excellent shot of late 19 <sup>th</sup> century sawmill in operation, just before the Klondike gold rush.	PHO 57 J.E. Hiscock collection 82-422 YA# 6	Quality good. Large clear print

## Dawson City Museum Holdings

### *Prints Acquired*

Description	Designation	Quality
<p>Typed on photo:            First saw mill build fall 1896 by Ladue            First man from R. of picture is Ladue on is right is Will Lamay I do not know the others            [Shows long open roughly-roofed shed covering sawmill, lumber lying on ground in stacks, 10 men standing around.]            Photo probably from 1897 since building is substantial if rough and clothing of men suggests warm weather.</p>	<p>Collection: Ladue            Photo # 984R.190.2</p>	<p>Quality good</p>
<p>Typed on photo:            Ladue mill at Dawson about 1898. Ladue in center of picture the other men are his Employees.            [Shows front of building – probably improved and completed version of building in 1896 photo above – with large sign saying Joseph LADUE Gold Mining &amp; Development Co of Yukon. About 20 men standing and sitting around on logs. Large piles of logs on both sides of building; several men holding long-handled tools, and one holding paddle. Looks as if they might just have hauled a raft of logs ashore.]</p>	<p>Collection: Ladue            Photo#984R.190.3</p>	<p>Quality fair            Possibly photo of newspaper or magazine print.</p>
<p>View of Twelve Mile Sawmill, 1906.            [Shows sawmill in winter, with stacks of sawn lumber around it.]            Museum description: Sectional panorama composed of 4 separate 6.5” x 8.5” prints joined together of the Yukon Gold Co. sawmill on the 12-Mile (Chandindu) River. The warehouse buildings of Billy Cr. are evident.</p>	<p>Collection: D.H.            Ferry            Photo#:            1993.67.1.56b</p>	<p>Quality fair.</p>

**Klondike National Historic Sites,  
Department of Canadian Heritage, Dawson**

*Prints Acquired*

Description	Designation	Quality
<p>“Yukon Sawmill Co. on North East Corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. and Duke St. in Block B.E.” Taken by John Gould for N.H.S.S. June 20, 1972. Shows building before restoration, with boiler room addition and machine shop addition visible. Restrictions noted on photocopy version: “Restricted for research purposes only”</p>	<p>H-67 Gould Box 6</p>	<p>Quality good. Negative available.</p>
<p>Contact print of 8 negatives of Yukon Saw Mill Co. building on June 20, 1972. (Note that 3 negatives on lower left are reversed in contact print). Taken by John Gould for N.H.S.S. June 20, 1972. Full print of one photo was acquired and is described above.</p>	<p>H-67 Gould Box 6</p>	<p>Quality good.</p>

*Yukon Saw Mill Co. – Photos identified*

Description	Designation	Quality
<p>Yukon Saw Mill Photo by Alan Innes-Taylor, taken for N.H.S.S. 1961 Shows building before restoration, from downriver side, with boiler room addition visible. Restrictions noted on photocopy version: “Restricted for research purposes only”</p>	<p>H-66 – Innes-Taylor Box - 6</p>	<p>Quality good. Negatives available. See photocopy.</p>
<p>Yukon Saw Mill (Ted Grant, 1963) Close shot of First Avenue side of building, with remains of old painted signs and commercial signs for other businesses attached. Also small campaign poster for Erik Neilsen.</p>	<p>IC-5-Grant, T. 3-BE-1 Information Canada, #64-943</p>	<p>Quality good See photocopy.</p>
<p>“A view looking south along (1<sup>st</sup>) Front St. showing the Ladue Quartz Mill Building (now the Native Brotherhood, Nov. 1972) with the Yukon Saw Mill Building in the Background.” Photo by John Gould, 1972. Restrictions noted on photocopy version: “Restricted for research purposes only”</p>	<p>H-63-Gould</p>	<p>Quality good. See photocopy</p>

*Other – Photos identified*

Description	Designation	Quality
<p>Dawson 28 June 1901 Goetzman, photographer. View from hill at the north end of town, looking south (upriver). Good view of waterfront structures, log booms in river in front of sawmills. YSMCo. building visible, along with its warehouse structure across First Avenue on the waterfront. Restrictions noted on photocopy version: “Restricted for research purposes only”</p>	<p>BB-6-Goetzman Original according to KNHS records: Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, #17129-75 or 17129:89. Not listed in online finding aids.</p>	<p>Quality good. See photocopy.</p>
<p>“Birds Eye View, 8-5-08” View from Midnight Dome (?) looking south. Ice going out on river. Shows whole town, mouth of Klondike, Klondike Island and Lousetown, and view further upstream. Clear view of Yukon Saw Mill Co. complex, including log chute; sharp enough to enlarge. “Reproduction only with written permission from the Dawson City Museum and Historical Society” Credit: Dawson City Museum and Historical Society</p>	<p>Dawson City Museum Collection 5: DH-95 Dorothy Whyte Collection, Album #3, Box #1</p>	<p>Quality good. See photocopy</p>
<p>Dog team on river ice in front of Smith and Hobbs’ sawmill. Hegg, photographer Probably winter of 1898-99, since Smith left mill business before Sept. 1899 and mill was called Dawson Saw Mill and Building Co. Shows Smith and Hobbs/Dawson mill and, on downstream side, Ladue sawmill.</p>	<p>UW-19-Hegg Original: University of Washington, Hegg #11CA</p>	<p>Quality good. See photocopy</p>
<p>Dog sled photo taken in front of Hobbs Sawmill, Dawson. Canadian Yukon Lumber Co. is building to far left of photograph. Ladue Sawmill is in centre but obscured by piles of logs. Note: different dogteam and different time from previous photo. This one shows huge piles of logs on bank in front of Hobbs mill and Ladue mill. Sign on Hobbs/Dawson mill different from previous photo. Possibly winter of 1899-1900. Restrictions: publication permission and credit line necessary.</p>	<p>AL-6 Original: University of Alaska, Bassoc Coll. #64-92-384</p>	<p>Quality good. See photocopy</p>
<p>Partial photo from 1901 panorama, showing Ladue Mill with log booms in river in front of it.</p>	<p>H-40</p>	<p>Quality fair See photocopy</p>

<p>A.E. Co.'s Warehouse  Hegg, photographer  Shows piles of logs everywhere and buildings under construction. 1898?  Copyright expired; no restrictions on use.</p>	<p>P-70  Public Archives of Canada; Accession # 1967-014; reproduction # PA-013297 (copy negative number); J-6063-c6(54) Original item number) 1505 (Location number)</p>	<p>Quality fair  See photocopy</p>
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## B.C. Archives & Records Service

### *Prints Acquired*

Description	Designation	Quality
Caption: Canadian Yukon Lumber Co. Ltd. Sept. 6, 1900. By Goetzman, Dawson 688 New mill building, possibly still under construction, with stacks of cut lumber, and men standing and sitting around, including three on roof of mill building. Note: Commercial Use for Profit Requires Permission Fee	Photo # A-05498	Quality very good
Interior view of Atlin saw mill Note: Commercial Use for Profit Requires Permission Fee	Photo # D-01720	Quality good
Portable sawmill, B.C. Interior Note: Commercial Use for Profit Requires Permission Fee	Photo # F-09429	Quality fair

## Other Sources

### *Photographs Identified*

Description	Designation	Quality
Yukon Saw Mill Company – newly completed office and machine shop building, autumn 1900. Excellent close-up of building prior to additions. See p. 36 of 1997 report <i>The Yukon Saw Mill Company: Last of the Gold Rush Sawmills</i>	University of Alaska Fairbanks, Erskine Collection Photo no. 70-28- 208N	Quality very good

## Notes to *Guide to the Alaska Commercial Company Records, 1868-1940*

*Collection is located at: Department of Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California, USA 94305-6005*

These notes relate particularly to the history of the Yukon Saw Mill Company building and business in Dawson City. They were prepared by Claire Eamer (Researcher, Daley Networks, 37 Alsek Road, Whitehorse YT Y1A 3K3. Tel. 867-667-6332. E-mail [claire@northwestel.net](mailto:claire@northwestel.net)), 31 March 2005.

### Annotations in finding aid:

1. Records highlighted in **blue** are, or may be, relevant to Dawson and to the Yukon Saw Mill Company. In some cases, relevance is confirmed and the particularly useful items are noted below. In other cases where relevance is suspected, the files are not available locally or require more extensive examination than the current project permits.
2. Records marked with a **red check** are available on restricted-access microfilm at Yukon Archives. Records on the microfilm may not be photocopied.

### Items of particular interest:

1. Yukon Saw Mill Company accounts:
  - a. Accounts for June 1901 to December 31, 1902, are in "Dawson ledger, 1901" – Series 2. Subseries A. Volume 45. (p. 82 of finding aid)
  - b. Accounts for 1904-1907, with some information after that date, are in "Dawson ledger, 1904-1912" – Series 2. Subseries A. Volume 46. (p. 82 of finding aid)
  - c. Accounts for 1908 until transfer of company to new owners in 1915 are in "Yukon Saw Mill ledger, 1908-1915" – Series 2. Subseries A. Volume 47. (p. 82 of finding aid). Full ledger is about 210 pages.

Note that all ledgers are hand-written and difficult to read on microfilm.

2. Hunker Development Company accounts, notes and minutes:

This company was closely associated with the Yukon Saw Mill Company. Stockholders were Joseph F. Burke (YSMCo. founder and manager), Lilly Burke (Joseph's wife), Gus E. Burke (Joseph's brother), Stewart W. B. Menzies (YSMCo. machinist and long-time associate of J. Burke). A later addition to the Hunker Dev. Co. was Thomas A. McGowan, legal advisor to the Alaska Commercial Company, Northern Commercial Company, and Yukon Saw Mill Company. The Hunker Development Company held a set of claims, mainly on Hunker Creek, and worked them in close association with the Yukon Saw Mill Co.

  - a. Hunker Development Company accounts appear in the Dawson ledger, 1904-1912 and the Yukon Saw Mill ledger, 1908-1915, both mentioned above.
  - b. A set of notes, most dating from early 1912, about ownership of Hunker Development Company, along with minutes from several meetings of the

stockholders between July and December 1911, were tucked into the Dawson ledger, 1904-1912. The full notes, totally 24 pages, appear on the Yukon Archives microfilm photographed over pages 56-57 of the ledger – Series 2. Subseries A. Volume 46. (p. 82 of finding aid).

3. Series 1. Account 237 (see photocopy).  
This file contains all correspondence and agreements related to the purchase of the N.A.T. & T.'s Klondike Mill on Klondike Island by the Yukon Saw Mill Co. in 1908.
4. Series 1. Account 293. Saw Mill (Yukon) 1907 (page 40 of finding aid): "Comparative Statement of Assets of Yukon Saw Mill Co. exclusive of plant" – lists assets, liabilities, and net value for 1 May 1905, 1906, 1907.
5. Series 1. Accounts 367: Dawson Yukon Territory real estate; maps on Yukon Saw Mill, 1906-1917.  
This large file contains correspondence and documents regarding the sale of the Yukon Saw Mill Company operation on Klondike Island to Bernhard (Ben) M. Volkman and Frank S. Neill in 1915 and correspondence related to an interest expressed by the Tantalus Coal Co. in the Dawson lots owned by the Alaska Commercial Company, primarily the former sawmill site and the Yukon Saw Mill Company building. Included in the file are the following drawings and plans, in the order in which they appear:
  - a. Engineer's drawing of Yukon Saw Mill Co. property, buildings, and operations. Dated Jan. 29, 1909
  - b. Hand-drawn sketch of "Lots Standing in the Name of Louis Sloss (Old YSM Co.) Dawson, Y.T.) – not dated.
  - c. Large, detailed hand-drawn sketch by W. J. Rendell C.E. of the Yukon Saw Mill Co. buildings and properties, Jan. 1909. Appears to be the basis of item a, the engineer's drawing.
  - d. Drawing of "The Klondike Island"
  - e. Another version of item c, with a little more detail. The drawing shows the log chute under the street, leading from the mill pond (a narrow inlet off the river) to the chute inside the mill, and gives detail of what lumber is piled in the yards.
  - f. Drawing of Klondike Saw Mill and adjoining buildings, on Klondike Island, also by W. J. Rendell, January 1909.
  - g. "Plan of property belonging to Yukon Saw Mill Co., surveyed August 1908 by W.J. Rendell, C.E." – smaller and less detailed than items c and e, but shows the lumber yard extending over three blocks (E, F, O) along both sides of tram tracks. Notes that property includes 150 feet of lease-hold waterfront.
  - h. Plan of Klondike Saw Mill. Hand-drawn version of item f.
  - i. Small drawing of Yukon Saw Mill properties and buildings, dated April 2, 1912 – "Lots numbered in red belong to Yukon Saw Mill Co."
6. Series 1. Accounts 370: Yukon Saw Mill Co.–sale and sundry correspondence, 1914-1915  
Correspondence and legal documents related to the sale of the Yukon Saw Mill Company name and its operations on Klondike Island to Bernhard M. Volkman and Frank S. Neill. Includes of lease of island, partnership agreement between Volkman and Neill, inventory of stock and equipment.



