



LETTERS AND ARTICLES ON
A TRIP INTO THE YUKON REGION

by REV. BJUG HARSTAD

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Introduction to the
Letters and Articles on

A TRIP INTO THE YUKON REGION

by Rev. Bjug Harstad

Dr. Neelak Tjernagel received a copy of these letters and articles on "A Trip into the Yukon Region" shortly after I had run off the first copies on the mimeograph. I was quite sure he would be interested in these things because his father, Rev. H.M. Tjernagel, was a missionary in Alaska from 1910 to 1913.

Dr. Tjernagel, now pastor of Indian Landing Lutheran Church, Rochester, New York, is the author of the book "Henry VIII and the Lutherans" (1965), and also of "The Reformation Era," one of the books in the Concordia Leadership Training Program.

Under date of Nov. 3, 1973, I received a letter from Dr. Tjernagel in which he writes the following concerning father's letters and articles:

"I am most grateful to you for sending me your father's Alaska Letters. It is really one of the most remarkable documents I have ever read. H.M.T. often spoke of the Klondike gold rush and I have had a considerable interest in it ever since.

"The reasons for your father's going are remarkable enough in themselves. What is so astounding is his rather casual description of the rigors of the journey that took such a terrible toll of lives of others. To him the trip was difficult, but he makes it seem much less than herculean. And then he tops it all off by comparing this rigorous adventure to a college student's summer vacation, which refreshes him and makes him better prepared for the tasks ahead. What a man this Bjug Harstad must have been."

I was very grateful for these words of Dr. Tjernagel and am therefore passing them on to you. I am also persuaded that the story of these hardships which father endured should not die, but should be passed on especially to his descendants, and also to others who may wish to read it.

Adolph M. Harstad
Nov. 19, 1973

Victoria, B.C.

10th Feb. 1898

Dear Herald:

Herewith a friendly greeting to all readers.

Yesterday a little before 9 a.m., we left Tacoma on the steamer City of Seattle on our way to Dyea, Alaska. It was hard to extend the hand in farewell to wife, children, and friends for such a long time as a trip into the base interior of Alaska requires.

Were one to linger over thoughts of hardship and want, dangers and accidents that may so quickly cut the thread of life, then the heart would yield to sadness and sorrow; but when one remembers that the call and duty that one has agreed upon with friends and relatives requires this sacrifice, then one clings the better to his heavenly Father and to His unspeakable mercy, glorious and never failing promises and His unlimited power to stand by a poor wanderer in all His ways. Thus we are in good spirits. We have received needed food and sleep so both body and mind are in the best of health.

The crush and confusion here beggars all description. Otis Larsen and I were fortunate enough to get a bunk together. There are three bunks, one above the other. We have the middle one. In each bunk there is room for two persons. There are 18 inches between our bunk and the one above. The aisle between our bed and the next row of bunks is 34 inches. All bunks are occupied by an indescribable crowd of Irishmen, Norwegians, Germans, and Americans. To save a few dollars we have all taken steerage.

If any get seasick, which is very likely here, there will be fun. My companion and I do not expect to get sick.

At the table we stand closely packed together with hats or caps on and eat meat, potatoes, beans, and bread and butter from large cups and plates. All tableware is of tin or sheetmetal except knives and forks which are of steel. We eat well, but no one who is particular or fastidious should be here. We wish to ask all who are thinking of going to Alaska to note the following:

Those who wish to go over the mountains at Dyea and into Canada by way of the lakes should have a good supply of tools and clothes together with provisions for one year. Such equipment will cost \$150 to \$200. But if four or more go together the party can get along with one tent, one stove, and one set of carpenter's tools. Those who buy merchandise in the United States must pay duty when they cross the boundary into Canada. Therefore we advise those who buy equipment to buy either in Victoria or Vancouver, British Columbia, thereby saving duty which is otherwise demanded. Duty amounts to about one third the value of all equipment. Later we will inform you further about this matter.

We arrived here at 9 o'clock and will leave at 12. Letters will reach us at Dyea, Alaska, during the next two weeks. We wish you all well. God be with us.

H.

Vancouver, B.C.

11th Feb. 1898

We arrived at 6 o'clock this evening and will stay until 9. Between Victoria and here we had some rough seas. Neither I nor Otis have felt the slightest seasickness, but it has not been hard to see that food has not done some much good.

I have just had a long talk with the manager of the old trading company, "Hudson Bay Company," that was organized in 1870 and has done much trading along frontiers. When the first settlers came to the Red River Valley this company had many stores and the people always received good merchandise.

This company has a large store in Vancouver where it always has in stock a good selection of everything an Alaska traveler needs. The manager assured me that he could outfit goldseekers a little cheaper than in the States and for the most part with better merchandise especially as far as clothes are concerned.

Certain things are a little higher here, for example, Rex Bacon, from Kansas City is about two cents per pound higher. But he assures me buyers would have no trouble crossing the boundary into Canada without paying duty. Everything would be well packed, carefully marked and sealed by them. One need only stay here a day or two, buy what he needs and everything will be taken care of by the company. Those who come from the east by way of the Canadian Pacific Railway can get off the train here, buy what they need and continue north by boat.

Those who must save as much as possible should arrange to make purchases here. Merchandise that they wish to get through duty free must not be opened until they reach Canada again. Those who go by way of Dyea, will perhaps have to pay duty to the U.S. for Canadian merchandise but will get the money back when they cross the line. Those who go this summer will do well to take the Fort Wrangell, Stikine River route.

When we get to Dyea more information will be forthcoming.

Vancouver is a beautiful and thriving city and is the terminal of the Canadian Pacific Railway. From here large and luxurious steamers sail for China, Japan, and Australia. All steamers for Alaska call here.

Finally, a friendly greeting and good night till we meet in Dyea or perhaps in Wrangell.

H.

S.S. City of Seattle

11th Feb. 1898

Today it is raining and somewhat colder. Only here and there we see snow. The clouds hang so low we cannot see the tops of the mountains.

We are now passing between Vancouver Island on the left and the mainland on the right. As far as land and sea are concerned we might be sailing on Puget Sound. The water is perfectly smooth. Islands and

spits give variety to the surroundings. Some places islands lie directly on our course and the passages are so narrow that one fears getting lost in one or the other inlet among the mountains.

A little before noon we reach the north end of Vancouver Island. Here we have about 50 miles of open sea on our left and the boat begins to roll quite violently. Now seasickness sets in in dead earnest. One after the other disappeared while we stood at the dinner table helping ourselves. Some became nauseated before they could get away from the table. We saw strong men, standing deathly pale, offering up to the sea. As a rule they did not get much sympathy from their traveling companions who were better off. The bystanders usually began to hoop in unison and mimic the sick.

At twilight we were among the islands off Bella Cola and River Inlet. Here we took a pilot aboard. Both water and wind were still.

The Parklanders walked the deck during the stormiest time and held their own well. To the present time they have eaten every meal and have retained them.

We went to bed a little late. Had it not been for the fact that the sea became smooth we would have remained on deck during the night. To stay down in this cellar, the third deck below, among swearing, vomiting, coarse people is not pleasant. While in our bunk we hear the roaring of the sea, and the beating of the waves causes the boat to crack at every seam. This boat was not built for the open sea, but rather for navigation on inland waters, especially the beautiful and quiet Puget Sound.

12th Feb. We awoke today well refreshed. God be praised for His mercy. The boat moves so quietly that one hardly notices that he is at sea. The weather is colder. Snow-covered mountains hold us enclosed on both sides. We pass through quite narrow straits. Now snow lies close down to the sea. They say we will reach Fort Wrangell, in Uncle Sam's domain, by evening. We are still among the islets north of Queen Charlotte Island. Despite the fact that snow lies on the dark forest-covered mountain sides it is not so cold but that we can stand on deck thinly clad without mittens.

At half past ten we pass the wreck of the Steamer Corona that was wrecked here a couple of weeks ago. Passengers and crew were saved, nothing else. The hull lies only a few hundred fathoms from a little island. It lies on even keel with the bow entirely out of the water and the stern under water. It seems that it is held fast by a couple of large rocks. Yes, it would be sad to be thrown into the water or landed on one of these barren rock islands. This is just outside the mouth of the Skeona River where there are supposed to be some settlers. Some years ago a Norwegian by the name of Jacobson lived here. Perhaps he is still here.

At 8 o'clock we stop at Nary Island where there is a U.S. customhouse. There is only one large house to be seen on the beach of a large island. The snow lies a couple of inches deep. There is rain and sleet and a quite cold wind. Up to the present time we have had no fog and so we pass without difficulty through the narrow passes between innumerable small islands and skerries. Some of these stick only a few feet above water. On some of these islands there is thick grass, but no forest. In thick fog it must be impossible to navigate here by compass only.

The following Scandinavians that we are more or less acquainted with send greetings to relatives and friends: P. Olson, E. Wedeberg, K. Wedeberg, J. Berg, Frastavaag, H. Strand, and Hansen, all from Tacoma. The last name is going to Wrangell. Holt and Strand are from St. Paul. H. Amunsen, Arnt

Teller, Ole Vold, Alfred Solid are from Dunn County, Wisconsin, and expect Isak Isakson and Syverg Evenson to follow. From Minneapolis we have O.L. Andersen, P. Holtum, Nils Johnson, and Martin Nilson. From Washburn, Wisconsin, we have David Nedlund, Wm. Olson, Oscar W. Lundgren. From Luverne, Rock County, Minnesota, Ole and Elias Gabrielsen and Isac Olsen. The party from Washburn, Wisconsin, had 40 dogs which they could not get aboard ship in Seattle since the steamship inspector would not allow the captain to take more cargo. There was trouble in Seattle about this matter and the boat was not allowed to leave the wharf until they promised to pay the expense for the dogs and two men till they could continue the journey.

We do not expect to reach Fort Wrangell, where this letter will be posted, until early tomorrow morning. Good night.

H.

City of Seattle, Fort Wrangell, Alaska

13th Feb., 1898

Dear Herald:

God be thanked for good fortune and blessings to the present time and for a refreshing sleep. Today at half past six we ride at anchor at Wrangell. Here snow and ice lie on the deck, but the weather is quite mild and we will undoubtedly get more snow. Some passengers and a little freight were put ashore here.

Last night when I went to bed, I was quite apprehensive and did not get to sleep until after midnight. There are no heavy seas, the boat floats quietly on perfectly smooth waters; but it is pitch dark and there are islands and spits wherever one looks. The boat moves at half speed and often stops altogether as if to feel its way forward in order not to strike a rock or run aground. It must be impossible to navigate these waters in fog because they are so full of rocks and turns.

Early today a rumor from Wrangell spread among the passengers to the effect that the boilers of the steamer Clara Nevada had exploded recently between here and Dyea and all aboard were lost. We hope the rumor is false.

Today is the second Sunday before Lent. Our brothers in faith gather in a body, each with his family, in God's house to meditate upon God's grace and praise his wonderful works; and we are in captivity or exile far from relatives and friends. We go farther and farther away into cold and desolate regions. It is snowing hard, the snowflakes are so close together that it is difficult to see land although it is close on both sides. In Parkland they will soon gather for services in peace and comfort. What a blessing and comfort it is to be in the bosom of one's family and enjoy the benefits of a congregation. We would that we put a higher value on it than we do. How can I bear witness of my Savior today? There are over 800 persons aboard, a few women and children, the rest men. Every nook and corner is full of people. The tables in the men's cabin are occupied early and late throughout the day by card players. All passengers mingle without regard to what class they belong. True, there are signs that read: "Steerage passengers are not allowed abaft this notice," but all such regulations are disregarded here, and it does not seem to cause any trouble.

Among false rumors this was one.

So I have also followed the crowd up from the cellar into the cabin. They say that some steal in and eat with the first class passengers. I have not been tempted to do that. I can live well on the food we get. To stand at the table and eat lukewarm and cold food is good preparation for worse hardships.

At 10 o'clock some gather around a man with a guitar in the back part of the cabin. They sang some of the newer Sunday School songs quite well. When they had sung a verse of "Rock of Ages," and there was a pause, I took the opportunity, first to thank the ladies and gentlemen for the song; then to remind them of a Bible passage that all knew and that contains the essentials of Christ's Gospel, namely John 3:16. I succeeded in pointing out some of God's unspeakable love for all mankind, especially every sinner; also how one can share in this great love, which has been revealed to all people through Christ's complete fulfillment of the demands of the Law. I succeeded also in briefly calling to mind how faith justifies and that the fruit is pleasing to God. There were several hundred present and they were all much more attentive than I had expected. I closed with the Lord's Prayer. At my request they sang "Nearer my God to Thee." I was encouraged by this testimony and hope that God's word will not return empty here either.

The mountains are shiny with snow and a cold wind is blowing. This evening we expect to reach Juneau where I hope to post this letter. From there it is only 100 miles to Dyea which we hope to reach tomorrow afternoon.

This afternoon I saw a glacier that fills a large valley. The blue ice reaches nearly down to the sea, but new snow covers everything except here and there where it has blown off the ice. Water freezes on deck, yet we do not feel the cold much. The air is clear and dry. The snow-covered mountains glisten in the sun. We are now in Juneau at 7 o'clock this evening. This is Alaska's largest city. It lies in a narrow inlet enclosed by high mountains on both sides. It was here that Governor Church died while on a business trip just before Christmas.

Herewith a friendly greeting to all readers. God willing, you will soon hear from us in Dyea.

H.

A Night between Skagway and Dyea, Alaska

Our boat landed in Skagway soon after noon Feb. 14th. There is here a narrow valley with precipitous mountains, some of which must be about 6000 feet high. Half way up there is a sparse, short tree growth; otherwise nothing but snow and cliffs. Here and there one can see blue glaciers peek from the mountain tops.

It is not exactly cold today, yet one would like a good fur coat. Most of those who meet at the wharf with transportation wear leather clothes. It is evident that there is a mixed population here. Some wear Eskimo clothes with furred trousers and loose shirt made of pelts of many colors. A hood is attached to this shirt and is either drawn over the head or hangs between the shoulder blades and looks like a monk's cowl. Some drive dogs, others horses or mules, while others themselves draw as much as they are able on long, narrow sleds.

We who were going to Dyea had time to observe the motley multitude. Indeed, it is so cold that it is not comfortable to go ashore thinly clad. There is a couple of feet of snow which is dry and cold about as in Dakota. Although we heard the captain command that the baggage for Dyea should be unloaded first, it took a long time to transfer it to a scow or large, open, flat-bottomed barge which lies close to the wharf where our boat is berthed. Soon it became evident that the passengers for Dyea were also to go board the same open barge and be transported around some high crags to Dyea, which lies about six miles north in a little inlet.

Since my young friend and fellow traveler, Otis Larsen, had contracted a bad cold on the boat and besides was quite thinly clad, I advised him to put on all available clothes, take his sleeping bag and blanket, go ashore and find a good hotel. I would then take care of our things and continue on to Dyea.

No sooner said than done. But my journey was very slow. It became dark night. A cold wind blew and the barge was almost full of goods and about 200 men were still to go aboard. I dreaded standing on that open hull in this winter cold even if it were for only an hour or so. Then I went to the purser and asked if I could not stay aboard ship until the next day, since I had my own bed and would not ask for food, if I could but escape going on an open barge so thinly clad as I was. But no, I could not stay on the boat. I told him then what I thought about being sent on my way at night in the middle of winter on an open barge without as much as a canvas around for protection against the wind and cold. Again he refused. Had I known that we would remain standing on that barge until midnight, neither he nor the captain would have had peace. I would have remained on board no matter what he or anyone else said. But I thought, if anyone else could or would go, then I could also. About 8 o'clock a little steamer took us in tow. There we were, about 200 men on an open barge. Our baggage was piled about three feet high around the edges. That was our protection. A man stuck his head out of a shanty that stood astern and asked if there were any women aboard, they could come in by the stove; but I saw none nor did I see an owner of the barge until later. The little boat that took us in tow did not seem to be in any hurry. At last up in a cramped valley we see several lights that must be in Dyea. But now the tugboat left us. No one knew why. We had not landed, nor were we aground as far as anyone knew. If anything it seemed we would drift back again, but that did not happen either. After we had been standing so like trapped unresisting cattle for some hours we became frozen and impatient. When an older man took a plank that lay on the shanty and something was mumbled about forcing the door or rowing to shore with the plank, a man stepped forward and forbade anyone to take the plank, and asked us to be patient awhile longer and we would be disembarked. Then we were told that the only way to land here was to wait until the tide went out and left the barge on dry land. There were now only two feet of water. Now people came with rowboats and offered to row us ashore for 50 cents. Only a few accepted the offer. After I had waited a long time and wished in vain that I had wings like Noah's raven, and remembered my boots were not fit to wade with—my high rubber boots were in the baggage that was checked—I decided reluctantly to hire help to get ashore. Now teams and wagons came and drove up close to the barge with water up under the horses' bellies. The fare was now 25 cents per person. In the thought that I was to ride into Dyea, I took as much hand baggage as I could and stepped into the wagon. When we had come a little way above high water we were deposited on the beach and had to walk the rest of the way. In the dark it was not easy to see how much farther it was to town. It was now midnight. I laid my pack straps out on the beach, strapped the heaviest bundle in, sat down beside the pack and put the slings over my shoulders, stood up with the burden on my back and trudged away toward the many lights seen in the distance. In one hand I carried the tent, in the other the sleeping bag in which there was a large woolen blanket. This my first pack trip in Alaska did me much good; if the last is just as beneficial it will be well. Pulse and breath were animated and I got warm after the long stay on the

barge.

On my back and in my hands I had at least 100 pounds and soon became tired. I rested a little on a block of ice. I felt I could not well carry all of it to town in one load. When one is expecting to carry 1200 pounds several hundred miles over mountains and valleys, then it will never do to break oneself down at the first attempt. So I left the heaviest bundle and went into town with the two. I was to arrange for beds for myself and five others who were to wait until the tide went out and left the barge high and dry. At last I reached the town and went into a large log house. This was a hotel. There are many such hotels.

Although it was after midnight, three men and a woman sat busily engaged in gambling for money which they had lying on the table before them. Here we could sleep on the floor above in our own clothing for 25 cents per person. I accepted this offer gladly. It was impossible to put up a tent at night and sleep outside. Satisfied I went back to meet my five friends and fetch the bundle I had left behind, if I could find it.

Thank god, all went well. I have described these things at such length in order that those who might think of going to Alaska may learn. To be on the frontiers is not like traveling within the realm of civilization. Those who are thinking of going this way should mark well the following notice: "Notice is hereby given to all parties intending to enter the Canadian Yukon District, that each and every person must in future have at least sufficient provisions to last for one year at the rate of three (3) pounds per day."

Z.S. Wood,
Comdr. Mounted Police

One must pay \$10.00 for miners' license. Customs duty is not so little; from ten to thirty dollars. For all that, it will scarcely pay to buy provisions in Vancouver, since the U.S. Customs Inspector will cause one much trouble and expense, especially on this route. One must pay a deputy \$3.00 a day to take care of things until they are brought across the boundary, and that might well take a month or more.

Herewith a friendly greeting to all readers.

H.

A Day in Dyea, Alaska

Tuesday morning the 15th of February, we awoke only half rested. I ached in every muscle both because of the cold on the barge and the heavy burden I had carried during the night. It is so unbearably hot here that we must get up. In order to get breakfast ready the cook has fired so hard that we can no longer lie here above the kitchen stove. A frugal meal costs 50 cents. After we had eaten each went to his work. Our party was now made up of six men. Some went into the woods to find a convenient place for our tents, others were to go and fetch the baggage which was checked and bring everything to our temporary camp. I went to Skagway to see how my companion was and to take care of our freight.

It is blowing a little colder today, not so bad but that I intended to get along with my mackintosh coat and boots without overshoes.

Down at the beach I found two men who would take passengers to Skagway. It costs one dollar per person. After I had waited awhile two other men came that were going the same way. He who is going aboard a boat and, like me, does not have rubber boots must hang on the ferryman's back and ride through the surf until he is dumped aboard a large rowboat which is also rigged with a little mast and sail. Soon these were up and we drifted away, but cross winds were driving us ashore and the sails had to come down. Soon we trimmed the sail and sailed away quite fast, but the wind increased and the waves became quite threatening. The boat heeled over a good deal; now and then we shipped water. The worst was that the wind was so fickle and unpredictable that one could never know from what direction it came. We got several small seas over us and the water froze to ice almost immediately. My leather mittens got wet and it became quite cold. Meanwhile, one of the passengers whose teeth were chattering because of the cold and anxiety became so frightened that he cried out that the sails must be taken down and that we must row. The owner of the boat finally consented and I rowed with him with all my strength and so got warm. Yet we got some small seas over us before we reached Skagway.

I found my friend making a speedy recovery. However, we agreed that he should stay where he was until we had gotten our tents and affairs in order. After having talked a little with Martin Monson, who is from Parkland and is now a teamster here in Skagway, I returned to the harbor to get back to Dyea. Carl Hordness from Tacoma is also working here as a member of a transportation company.

From Skagway over White Pass it costs 15 cents per pound to haul goods to Lake Bennet. It will cost Yukon travelers who do not wish to pack or pull their own equipment of 11 to 1500 pounds \$150 for each 1000 pounds. From Dyea over Chilkoot Pass it is much cheaper.

Having returned to Dyea a little before noon, I found that all the freight and some few passengers who had, as a matter of course, remained quietly on board the boat overnight, had been transported here on a large covered barge. They had been quite comfortable and the freight had also been under roof. Soon after noon the water was low enough to load the freight on wagons and haul it to town.

Can anyone say that the following is a considerate arrangement of one's work and duty? They put people with a little hand baggage on an open barge and transport them in the middle of the night; but for freight they have a well-covered and protected barge which they transport during the best time of day, namely, forenoon. That wretched company called the "Washington and Alaska Steamship Company," ought to receive severe punishment for that stroke of genius. If Herald can do anything to prevent life and health from being risked unnecessarily, I hope you will do so. If I find time and opportunity I think I will give that company "a piece of my mind," as they say. I do not believe that will help.

Our freight, that is, our outfit for a year, food and clothing, was now hauled from the barge to town. Here there were about two hundred men to receive their sacks, boxes, and bundles as the names were called out. Everything was mixed. Now we realized how important it was to have everything in strong canvas bags with name and address marked plainly on each piece. One ought never have more than 50 pounds in a sack or box. Here things are carried, dragged, and tossed about. You can imagine what hubbub there is. If the owner of a piece of property was not present it was thrown aside by one after the other. It took until dark to bring everything ashore, and then Larsen and I missed two boxes of goods. But now we were frozen and tired and had to go into the woods to take over our temporary place of residence. Peder Olson and his companions had now gotten their tent up and since we had brought a

stove, we soon had a fire in this frail house. There was snow on the site although most of it had been shoveled away.

Since I had not gotten my tent up and since the five fellow travelers from Tacoma about filled their tent (10 x 12), I got a night's lodging with Mr. Totland who is also from Tacoma. He came some weeks ago and was quite comfortable in his tent. Here I slept well and was treated to a savory meal in the morning.

Wednesday, the 16th of February

Now we must move our property up here and get ourselves in as good order as possible under the circumstances. I borrowed Totland's sled and went to town again. Now I found the two missing boxes and was glad. Now we had all our property so far. While I was loading my sled a man came and asked so nicely if he could borrow one of our shovels for half an hour, and I could not say no. We have not seen the man nor the shovel since.

Having returned to our camp with the first sled load I started leveling off the site for our tent, which is only 8 x 10 feet. There is about two feet of snow to shovel away. It is dry and cold about as in the Red River Valley. There is not the slightest indication that it will thaw. Accordingly, our place of abode for a time will be between the trees on this frozen snowy hill. To live in a tent between the beautiful trees in Parkland would be like living in a carpeted parlor compared to this place with much snow, quite severe cold, and a rather strong wind.

The bed is to stand crosswise at the farther end of the tent. About three feet from the end we lay an aspen log as long as the tent is wide, eight feet. We fill in with spruce boughs and snow. On top of this we will lay our flour sacks covered with spruce boughs. Over this again we put rubber sheets and sleeping bags. On top of all this we make our bed of two sheep skins and woolen blankets. While I was setting up the stove, my traveling companion Otis came with the happy declaration that he was now well again. This was a great relief. Now we soon got things arranged so we could begin to make supper; but to our great disappointment we find that the stove will not draw well. Every time we put wood into the stove the tent fills with smoke, nor will the wet wood burn. This causes much discomfort. Nevertheless we got to bed after having held our devotion and commending ourselves and all ours to the merciful arms of the Lord.

We slept little. Our bed was hard and uneven, besides it was so cold from the flour sacks that we kept warm with great difficulty. It blew so hard that we often feared that trees would blow down or our tent would be swept away. There has been no danger so far. The next day we took the flour sacks away and put spruce boughs instead. Since then we have slept good and warm.

We live quite well and are often surprised that one can live as comfortably as we do now in 8 below zero weather which we have had.

Herewith a fervent greeting to all.

H.

Dyea, 28th Feb., 1898

We have now lived here in the woods a week and a half. We have not heard a word from our homes since we left, but try to believe that everything is well at home, just as it was when we left our dear ones. We live above all expectations well. Yet everyone will understand that we are not on a pleasure trip. The entire first week after we were settled in our little tent the weather was raw and stormy. A cold north wind blew night and day. One day the thermometer went to ten below zero. To live in a tent in the middle of winter in ten below zero weather is not exactly a pleasure. Our tent is 8 x 10 feet with a three foot wall. Two people live in this house, have their bed and stove in addition to all their provisions for one year and an ample supply of shoes, clothes, and tools. The stove stands to the right of the entrance; under and around it lies wet wood and material for sleds. Both our gold pans stand on edge by the stove. One is used as a dish pan, the other as a wash pan. If they shall ever see gold lies in the hand of God.

The candle box with a waterbucket on top stands farther in along the wall; next a tin box of dried potatoes, and at the head of the bed stand sacks full of flour and beans.

The bed lies along the end wall of the tent. The tent post which carries one end of the ridgepole naturally stands here also. We have fastened our bookshelf to this upright post. There we keep our books, writing materials, needle and thread, scissors, etc. Our candle holder hangs just under the bookshelf a little above the bed. When the candles have been used up, the grease lamp will hang there. A little three-cornered file that our engineer at P.L.U. had magnetized just before we left hangs just above the bed. This little file is our most unerring compass. At the foot of the bed and all along the left wall stand full sacks and boxes, piled as high and as close together as possible. Some of our sacks of clothing must stand on the bed during the day. A box which serves as table and cupboard is fastened to the bed pole which lies across the tent inclosure. At table we sit one on each side. Now you have a complete picture of the inside of our tent. I am unable to describe the food situation. At each meal we wish we had taken a course in cooking before we left. We have both taken great pains but it does not help. The best that can be said about our meals is what my young friend said dejectedly after we had made our first soup: "It is not soup like we get at home."

A couple of days later I was going to make soup on beef extract and put a couple of hands full of rice in. We had some piece of pilot bread that also went into the soup. After I had boiled it for a long time and had to add water repeatedly, I had half a bucket full, not of soup but of gruel.

Well and good, when we consider the difficulty of gathering wood, making food, scorching the oatmeal mush, burning the fingers, smoking, drying, baking ourselves, then indeed we know that "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Yet, if it will only bear good fruit it will be well.

Here I should like to send a fervent greeting to my old tent companions of the fall of 1881, namely: Rev. O. Aaberg, Mr. Jorgen Lomen, and the brothers Ole and Halvor H__g. Tent life here is worse than on the Dakota prairies.* (*Reference is to a trip from Goose River to Mouse River in Dakota Territory. An account of the trip was given in "For Hjemmet" and translated by Mr. Reishus and Rev. __oft__ss in connection with anniversaries in Minot and Devils Lake, North Dakota.)

Dyea is an Indian name and means "burden" or "burden road." For some years there has been a trading post here for Indians. Only last year people began to flock in here in large numbers. Hotels and shops

are being built every day. There is a press of business that has no equal. Yet there is such a large number seeking work that it is not advisable for anyone to come here empty handed. Many give up here, or they must postpone going inland until they have procured about 1100 pounds of provisions. All kinds of business is represented here. Almost every other house is a restaurant or boarding house. It seems to me that the only thing that would pay would be to have milk cows. Milk sells for 38 cents per quart. With the exception of fresh meat which is 20 cents per pound, ham and bacon 12 to 15 cents per pound and flour \$1.75 per 50 pounds, prices are not unreasonably high. One can get an acceptable meal for 25 cents to 50 cents.

A great number of people pass through town and over the mountains into the Yukon country. The trail leads up through a narrow canyon. As soon as we have made our sleds, we must start to pull our provisions upward. The most one can pull on a sled is 290 pounds per man, but there are steep places where 50 or 100 pounds is load enough. If we do not wish to hire hauling or packing, it will take us a long time to get our things over the mountain pass which lies 3500 feet above sea level, even though it lies only 15 miles from the beach and eight of these miles have only a slight grade.

We are expecting O. Finley from Stanwood and Iver Larsen from Silverton, Oregon. Peder Olson, one of our Tacoma friends with whom we have had company, got a few days of carpenter work. Both Wedeberg brothers, Berg and Strand, will begin to haul some of their things up while the weather is fair. We ought to do the same but must build sleds first. For some days we have had quiet and fair weather and we do not feel the cold so much. At 7:30 in the morning the sun begins to gild the mountain tops, but it is 10 o'clock before it smiles on us here in the valley and at 3 o'clock it leaves us. The clocks are one hour later here than in Tacoma and three hours later than in St. Paul.

As far as I know, Dyea lies just as far north as Norway and we are but a short distance from Norway's antipode. No one ought to come here without good health and a good supply of goods, clothing, and money.

Kindest regards,
H.

Dyea, March 3, 1898

Dear Herald:

For three days we have been engaged in pulling our provisions up toward Chilkoot, and we are soon ready to move our tent. We have now come eight miles up to Canyon City, a stopping place just at the foot of the incline. From there it is about eight miles to the top of the mountain pass.

We must make that trip in two or three stages. Heretofore two men have pulled 500 pounds on a sled, but the trail has been smooth and there is but very little grade. This kind of work, pulling and dragging the sled with all one's might may well make the limbs ache. However, we are now hardened enough to endure as much as ordinary strong men.

We feel quite well after we began to work like dray animals every day. One thing is sure: Hunger is an excellent cook. We shall not complain about the food as much now as at first.

We now have very fine weather, bright sunshine without much cold. However, it usually blows down the valley. The wind comes from the top of the mountain and follows the valley. During the day there is enough thawing weather to destroy the sleighing soon; but during the night it freezes so we slide on ice early in the morning. One must then be well and sharp shod in order not to slip and fall on one's face too often while struggling to get his load along.

Today I was to remain at this end of our route in order to get the mail and take up the work with our sleds. But I received no mail. The post office windows are closed because of a fire. A lodging house caught fire and burned down at 7 o'clock. One man burned to death immediately and another lies at death's door from burns.

We have not yet heard a word from home. This is and will be the most trying part of our journey.

It is soon high time that our companions reach us.

The snow is already so worn away down here in the valley that it is difficult to pull the sleds. To pack on the back will go slow. It now costs two dollars per 100 pounds to haul goods 11 miles. It becomes no small sum when one must have about 1500 pounds altogether.

I think about half of those who now flock over the mountains are Norwegians or Swedes.

With a friendly greeting,

H.

Sheep Camp, Alaska, March 13, 1898

Dear Herald:

Although I do not feel inclined to write, an attempt must be made to fulfill a promise.

When at last we had pulled our things up to Canyon City, a part of our camp was moved up here. We had to shovel away about five feet of snow before we reached the ground and found firm groundwork for our tent. So the larger part of this stands below the surface of the snow, and there are several steps down to the entrance of our tent. While clearing the site for our camp we found a tent under the snow. When this rumor spread, a man came and claimed he had bought both tent and lot from a man who left the place and tent last fall. However, we could have our tent here if we did not claim the lot. If we did this we would be driven away immediately. We explained that we wanted neither the tent nor the lot and would leave the place as soon as we had gotten our things up to the pass, and so the matter rests.

Sheep Camp got its name from the fact that mountain sheep were often found at this spot which lies but a little way below the mountain tree line. It is only a short distance up to a couple of glaciers. It is but 11 miles to Dyea and four miles to Chilkoot Pass.

Sheep Camp is now a complete city with hundreds of tents, some few houses that are used as stores, restaurants, gambling houses, and hotels. There are now several thousand people here who, like ourselves, are struggling hard to haul their goldseeker's equipment up this narrow canyon and these steep snow-covered slopes.

On a good sled one man can draw 150 pounds. To get 150 pounds up, which is the least one man must take along, is a severe test of both physical strength and patience.

When one has made his way up with a heavy load which demanded his utmost ability and in spite of straining every nerve has brought him to his knees and all fours, then one is glad and unloads with pleasure. With still more pleasure one slides down these steep slopes on his sled exceptionally fast. However, the trail is so crowded with pulling and driving people that one must look carefully both where he himself and others in front and in back rush headlong down hill. Several days ago a man was killed here when struck by a sled.

When in the evening, sweaty and tired after three such trips, one creeps, sweaty and tired, into a little cold tent to make a little food, then one's thoughts turn toward home. O happy home! Then one understands better Israel's thoughts when they speak of the fleshpots, melons, pumpkins, and onions of Egypt. One yearns for these things when the principal food has been mush, beans, and bacon for several days or weeks.

Everyone who can enjoy the happiness of home and need not consider such a trip as this a duty should praise God. He who has said; "As thy days are so shall thy strength be" helps and comforts the wanderer here also. It is wonderful what one can endure. To lie in a flimsy tent of eight ounces duck high on a mountain in storm and cold, one would think is impossible in Alaska, but it is really not so hazardous. Most of the time we eat and sleep well.

We hold our devotions mostly with our friends from Tacoma. On Sundays we gather in their tent which is much larger than ours. Jens Berg has one the same size as ours, 8 x 10 feet.

After we had gotten our tents up here and needed dependable information in order to arrange our journey and movements hereafter as sensibly as possible, we agreed that a couple of men should find the Canadian Customhouse and investigate the trail and distance on the other side of the mountains.

E.R. Wedeberg and the undersigned started out the 8th of March. We tied sleeping bags, blankets and a hand ax, together with two days' provisions, on one of our sleds and with the multitude of people made our way upward. One of us pulled and the other pushed the sled. Since we had a light load we passed many that had heavy loads. The trail takes a serpentine course up the slope.

As far as we can see above and below us the trail is full of travelers. Yonder is a man and a woman, side by side, hitched to a sled with a couple of hundred pounds of provisions. Then a man in a yellow parka, as it is called. It is a loose knee-length shirt with a large hood sewed to it for a cover over the hat or cap.

One drives dogs, another goats, a third mules, others drive little donkeys, some oxen, still others horses, but most pull the sled themselves. Some have mast and sail on their loads which today are pushed upward by a strong wind that blows at our backs from the south. Each seems to have enough with his burden and all pass for what they are without a look or a remark from anyone, however odd their equipment may be. All heave and struggle with all their might up along the barren mountain slope.

Soon we have the treeline and some glaciers far below us.

At the so-called "Stone House," about a mile below the "scale," as they call the foot of Chilkoot Pass, there is a landing or a little place with many boulders as large as a house. It was here that an Indian woman with her little child froze to death in a heavy snowstorm the first part of February this year. Some other Indians would also have perished had not people from Sheep Camp found them and brought them here. The mother had put most of her clothes around the child which was still in the embrace of the mother when both were found dead.

After one has come up a couple of steep slopes there is a ridge about three quarters of a mile long and now we see the last mountain tops. The migration heads for a majestic mountain or snow well with deep gap high up. From this gap clear to the flat hangs what seems to be a heavy rope. On the flat are large piles of sacks, some tents, and houses.

Now we are at Chilkoot Pass. Having come closer we see that the heavy rope is made up of people who were creeping slowly up the steep mountain. There is a rise here of 1500 feet and as precipitous as a steep stairway. There really is a rope here stretched, to which one holds while carefully seeking a foothold on the steps that have been chopped in the ice and snow. Most people are stunned by strange feelings when they stand below and look up at this mighty stairway.

Many lose their gold fever here and return home and many have turned back before reaching this point. It is blowing hard today and the weather is somewhat dark, so not as many are going up today as in bright weather. One cannot go up every day of the week. A little to the right is the so-called "Peterson Trail," which is not quite so steep but somewhat longer.

We now divide our load and each puts his pack on his back. The sled must also be carried. When one looks up only and not down and is careful about his footsteps he gets along above all expectation. The grade is so steep that one's (pa)ck bumps the one ahead when we walk close together.

We got up safe, but it is blowing and drifting like in a blizzard in the Red River Valley, though it is not cold. It is a chinook wind, south wind. Here we are in a narrow pass, 3500 feet above sea level. If several desire they might, for a reasonable price, get a picture of both Stone House and Chilkoot as they looked yesterday, the 12th of March, by applying to Herald's Expedition.

The Canadian government's customhouse stands up here in this narrow pass. We wished to speak to the inspector.

We are driven forward between many large piles of goods by wind and drifting snow, but we see neither the customhouse officer nor the customhouse. Suddenly we stand at the edge of a steep snow declivity. In the hope that the drifting of the snow would moderate a little this side of the mountains, we stop, take our packs off and lash everything to the sled again. Far below us we see some dark objects on a long narrow plane with high mountains on both sides. We slide down a very steep declivity about 500 feet and find ourselves on Crater Lake, which is really the source of the mighty Yukon River. It is 2100 miles from here to the mouth of the Yukon. Since we had decided to visit Lake Lindeman we continued on our way, but could see the trail only here and there. The driving snow was not so bad but that we could see the formation of the mountains around us. We see nothing but snow and mountains, not even a little bush, until we get far down.

It is about nine or ten miles from Crater Lake to Lake Lindeman. Most of the trail leads over two intervening lakes, Long Lake and Deep Lake. Between the lakes are narrow and sometimes steep canyons, where some places there are many feet of snow. When we had plodded along until 3 o'clock without lunch, we saw the ridges of a couple of tents sticking up out of the snow a short distance from the trail. Here we also found people, but the tent which was called a restaurant was completely covered by snow. A long passage led down to the entrance. It was quite dark inside because the largest part of the roof was also covered with snow. They got water easily here. A bag had formed in the roof of the tent above the stove and as the snow melted the water ran into this bag and from the bottom of the bag into the water bucket. From this snowwater we each got a cup of coffee which cost 25 cents. Together with our lunch it tasted very good. Here we met a man who had been lost in the storm that forenoon. He was from Massachusetts and was also going to Lake Lindeman. We continued on our way down and were very much encouraged when the first dwarf trees appeared at the foot of the mountains. They became larger the farther down we came. We reached Lake Lindeman, which is six miles long, toward evening. At the south end there is a city of tents and a few houses. The travelers here also pitched their tents along the extended valley that leads down to the lake.

In a so-called restaurant we were allowed to sleep on the ground in a large tent for 50 cents per person. Since we did not wish to walk so far against a strong wind and snow flurries, we became weatherbound here for two days. We ate of our provisions until we had but little left, which we needed for lunch on our way back or as a help in case we should have to camp out. It was no fun to buy food here since a meal cost \$1.25 per person.

Although one can find timber 10 to 12 inches in diameter at the root here, it is poor boat material. The largest trees are a kind of balsam which, when dry, is lighter than cedar. At Lake Lindeman, eight miles farther down, the timber is supposed to be better.

On the fourth day the weather was quite good and we started on the return journey over the mountains out of Queen Victoria's kingdom.

When we got up to the pass from the north it was blowing a little from the south. A thick mist or fog, which is formed when the mild chinook wind meets the cold dry air north of the mountains, flowed through the pass. However, the mountain air is very agreeable and we did not notice that we were as high as 3500 feet above sea level, yet we saw one man that bled from the nose.

I talked with the customs officer today. Each person who wants to go into the goldfields must have at least 1100 pounds of provisions when he passes Lake Tagish; otherwise he will be turned back. At Lake Bennet one can get a miner's license which also gives him the right to cut timber and hunt game for his own use. Duty must be paid on everything one has along except \$20 worth of clothes. A duty of about one fourth the value of the equipment must be paid; on certain things over one third.

On this side of the mountains we met some of our party who were packing goods for wages. Now we heard that there were letters for us at home in the tent and we slid down to Sheep Camp as fast as possible. It is now over a month since we left, but now we received mail for the first time.—Mr. O. Finley from Stanwood who was to follow us on the next boat became ill and had to give up the trip. Iver Larsen from Silverton is not coming either. On the other hand, we can soon expect a party that we have promised to wait for, namely: Capt. J. Lucky, Albert Thrudsen, Moe, Sjule, Steiner and C.

Jorgenson and perhaps a brother of Rev. Stensrud. Would that they were here. The weather is very nice and the sleighing will soon be over in the valley out of Dyea. If this weather holds up, the snow will soon be gone down on the flat. Up here and on the other side of the mountains the snow will last a long time yet.

Herewith a fervent greeting to all readers.
H.

P.S. Letters will reach us at Lake Tagish, Northwest Territory, Alaska.

Sheep Camp, Alaska

28th of March, 1898

Since you last heard from us we have worked with all our might to get our things up the mountain. We try to be diligent. As a rule we get up between 5 and 6 o'clock and have usually eaten and are ready to go to work at 7 o'clock. The dishes must stand unwashed until we get home in the evening. A day and a half of work will bring our equipment to the foot of the last high ascent, Chilkoot.

We are now working about three miles up the valley from our camp. There are no trees; only snow, cliffs, and glaciers up there.

Some people cannot stand to work at such a high altitude. Some bleed at the nose, especially when they reach the summit of the pass. Others become snowblind on account of the bright snow and ice. To the present time we have suffered no harm from all this. We seldom wear our snow glasses.

The weather has been very fine, though at times so cold that one must work hard to keep warm. For our lunch which consists of bachelor-bread, oatmeal, crackers, butter and bacon, we usually take a little water or coffee along in a flask; but the other day the flask froze and our drink was ice despite the fact that we had wrapped the flask in a coat and thrust it into the snow.

Our work is so heavy that in spite of the cold we perspire all day. Up gentler slopes we haul 100 pounds on a sled each trip, but on the steepest slopes we use block and tackle. By splicing our rope to one belonging to Mr. H. Amundsen and his party we have about 600 feet. We tie a sled at each end of this rope. In this way one man can haul 100 pounds up the steep slopes. One follows the sled up while the other pulls the empty sled down. In this way we move our equipment 1400 feet up the slope per day. According to our experience this is the best way to get up the steep slopes. Some carry everything on their backs.

We had earnestly hoped that we could get our goods up on the pass, pay the duty and move our camp to Lake Lindeman as soon as possible, in order to celebrate Easter in peace and quiet at Lake Lindeman. But it does not seem that can be. We may well be here in Sheep Camp until after Easter. This is not a comfortable place to keep holy the festival of Easter.

Our friends from San Francisco have now arrived, but they had to wait several days for their goods. There are two parties. One is named the "Viking Company" and consists of the following courageous men: A. Thronson, J.K. Stensrud, Ole Sjule, Olaf Anon, and Anders Strom. The last two came instead of Mr. Jorgenson and Capt. Lucky.

The second party is called C. W. T. and consists of: Mrssrs. Geo. Christie, Wendt, and Tobias Tellefson. Wendt is German; all the others are Northern.

They bought their equipment in Victoria to save a little duty, but they say they hardly save anything because of delays, a stay in Victoria, and expenses for customs brokers which they had not figured on.

One can perhaps buy as cheap and good equipment in Juneau, Alaska, as anywhere else and thereby save some freight costs.

Hans Nederlee from the Seattle congregation is also on his way to Yukon. His traveling companions are L. Christiansen, Chris Gulbrandson and Andrew Redberg. They expect to move over to Lake Lindeman the first of April.

One day Nederlee shot six ptarmigan a little way up the mountain from here. He says they are a little smaller than the ptarmigan in Norway.

Herald would naturally like to know and say something about missions in Alaska. Some of our countrymen are in business in Juneau, Skagway, Dyea, and even here in Sheep Camp. But as far as I know none of them intend to stay any length of time. Very few of them have their families here. The missionary ought rather follow the many Scandinavians who go into the Yukon. Many of them really wish to have a chaplain along. As such the writer of these lines will act. As far as a mission among the Indians is concerned I cannot say much. Yet I understand there are not so few Indians along the coast and in the interior. The tribe that lives hereabouts and that we have become slightly acquainted with is called "Chilkoot." This word means "The Tempest Place." Whether this tribe claims the topmost place among other Indian tribes or has received the name of the pass over the mountains into the Yukon Valley, I cannot say. This pass or gap in the mountains is called "Chilkoot" and means, as an Indian told me, "Summit Top," but he also told me that the word "Chil" means place, spot, also town.

For the most part the Indians seem to be good-natured and intelligent people. It is believed they lead a moral life. Many of them have undoubtedly visited Hains Mission, which lies about twenty miles from Dyea. These Indians that we have spoken to speak English well. An incident which put us Christians to shame happened soon after we had arrived in Dyea. One Sunday a Norwegian Lutheran went into a store operated by an Indian and asked the price of their fur caps. A woman said to him immediately in good English, "The Lord gave us six days in the week for work and the seventh for rest. We don't sell on Sunday. Come again tomorrow." This was a mission sermon that brought him to shame. The man concerned said he had never been so ashamed as when he heard this from an Indian. These Indians are industrious and capable workmen. They continue to have their Chief.

In the vicinity of an Indian camp here in Sheep Camp there is a large sign which reads: "George II is Chief of the Chilkoots and a friend of all white men."

H.

Sheep Camp, Alaska

April 4th, 1898

Dear Herald:

Yesterday was Palm Sunday and together with our friends from San Francisco, we were edifying ourselves in our Tacoma friends' tent in song, prayer, and meditation upon God's Word. We had just finished when the tragic news came from the mountain pass that several people had perished in a snow slide. We hoped it was not as bad as the rumor said, but before evening nine bodies had been brought to Sheep Camp.

Last Friday, Saturday, and all Saturday night it snowed hard and by yesterday morning two feet of wet snow had fallen. Yesterday we both saw and heard several large snow slides a little way above us. Our tents are on a high point in the upper part of Sheep Camp and considerably higher than Chilkoot River. We have no reason to fear that a snow slide can overtake us, but half a mile up the valley from here mighty ice and snow slides came down the large Katherine Glacier which hangs far down the side of the mountain.

It was two miles farther up the valley that the disaster happened. Today the weather is fair and they are busily engaged in digging the victims out. About forty bodies have been found and it is feared that still more are buried in the snow.

There were many people close up under Chilkoot Pass. Some lived up there and had restaurants and others were trying to get over the pass yesterday. Others were busy working on a cable-road that is being built up through the valley.

Because several smaller snow slides took place yesterday forenoon and because the drifting snow became thicker and worse in the afternoon than before, people fled down the slopes. They say that about seventy people took a long rope, elected the strongest man in the party to go in front with one end of the rope while the others followed clinging to the rope. They say that all except a few men who were at the end of the troop were buried in the snow. Two women were among them. One of these was caught twice. She was pulled out of the snow the first time, but soon after a new slide buried her completely. Some have been found buried in their tents, others on the trail. (*A report in the Tacoma Ledger soon after the accident states that 54 bodies had been identified. More bodies were found late that summer after the snow melted. Some authorities say that 70 lives were lost.)

The bodies of some of those working on the road have been found. Among them there is one by the name of Ueland or Ulent from Sedro Wooley, Washington.

This forenoon one man was dug out wholly unharmed and well. Yesterday two men were found dead in their tent which was not buried very deep. A man said he had warned them just a couple of hours before and told them they should move to avoid being buried, but they did not believe there was any danger although a slide had passed just a little way from their tent shortly before.

A man and his wife tried to save themselves by fleeing downward. The woman perished while the man was uninjured. Thus death strikes here and there. To many it seems death strikes blindly, but, thank God, our Savior overpowers death and holds the keys to life and death in His merciful hand. Seriousness is stamped on most faces today. One does not now hear the unbounded cursing and swearing and abuse of dumb animals which has reverberated all along the way before.

We walk in danger all the way; we walk also toward death all the way. One fleeting breath can end our way.

But we are in good spirits and try to believe and confess: "I walk with angels all the way; they shield me and befriend me; All Satan's pow'r is held at bay when heavenly hosts attend me; They are my sure defense, all fear and sorrow hence! Unharm'd by foes, do what they may, I walk with angels all the way." "I walk with Jesus all the way, His guidance never fails me; Within His wounds I find a stay when Satan's power assails me."

H.

Sheep Camp, Alaska

April 7th, 1898

To All Friends of Pacific Lutheran University,

Since, God willing, we will soon move into the Yukon Valley and do not know what may happen, whether or not we can receive letters or send letters readily, I feel an urge to thank earnestly all those who have supported the school on the West Coast in any way.

I am intensely sorry that those who bought property on account of the school cannot now sell and get their money back. I need hardly say that neither I nor any of the others who have carried on the work for the school would have undertaken what we did had we been able to foresee the hard times that would come. I do not believe that the disappointments can be as bitter and humiliating for anyone as they have been for us. Were it within our power to compensate you for these disappointments it would be our greatest pleasure to do so.

But, unfortunately, we cannot.

To those who have loaned money to the school I should also like to offer my sincere thanks for your patience and indulgence.

I also feel bitterly the injury that has been brought about by our inability to repay according to our promises.

To report our calculations and how we, from time to time, (d)ared to raise such loans and what reasons we had will not be of much advantage. Therefore I can only thank you all and say that it is my firm belief and hope that the merciful heavenly Father will not permit us to become swindlers in your sight, but that He will train us all in faith and hope and charity. This both we who owe and you to whom we are indebted need. I ask you kindly also to rejoice that your money has been and is in the service of a great and important cause that may witness and bear fruit for many generations. The money has not been squandered or speculated away. The Lord has preserved the school building in which the money is invested. You may call the school yours and the good it does the fruit of your labor.

You know that I am now on a peculiar journey. Both you and I believe in that Lord to whom the world and its abundance belongs. Should He desire to allot to me any of the riches which He has clearly

deposited in many places here in the far north, then you ought to know that it is to be devoted to the repayment of the debt to you. If this could happen, several years' work would be sacrificed with pleasure. We have tried many other solutions. Now we will try if the Lord will not find a solution for us here. I do not believe He will permit me to die as a swindler.

In any event we will, in God's Name and in faith, do everything in our power to pay our debts. You will do well to pray for this cause and wait patiently until the Lord finds a solution for us so we can pay our debts.

Finally, I thank you with all my heart for all help. The Lord Himself will repay you.

With a brotherly greeting, I remain yours in Christ.

B. Harstad

Sheep Camp, Alaska

April 17th, 1898

Who Has a Better Reason to Travel?

Many are surprised that the undersigned should go to Alaska among goldseekers. I should like to ask those if they know anyone who has a better reason for going into the goldfields than I.

I suppose we can all agree that there are large fortunes of gold deposited in many places here in Alaska. This is clearly proven. Moreover, we may also agree that gold and silver as well as the earth and its fullness are the Lord's, that He desires that man should benefit thereby and that His gifts should be used in His service for building the Church.

Furthermore, it is firmly impressed both upon me and many others that our school on the Coast is responsible for large sums of borrowed money that must be repaid. We are in duty bound to try every reasonable means of fulfilling our obligations.

Perhaps it is the Lord's will to unlock for us some of the earthly treasures that are deposited here in Alaska. That must be worth an earnest attempt. But one cannot expect that others will or can go on the same errand that I both can and will. Besides I can work for the mission and bring the food of God's Word to many who wish this nourishment on the way. There are some here who not only belong to Christian congregations, but also appreciate the unadulterated milk of God's Word.

Besides these things I might also mention that I have for a long time been worn out and tired. When both colleagues and other Christians can undertake long, expensive, and dangerous journeys to foreign countries for rest and pleasure, then, I dare say, this journey can be defended much easier. It is both a rest and pleasure as we, by the grace and power of God, hope to be rescued from great pecuniary distress and worry. If we are disappointed in this hope, which we must naturally be prepared for, we still have the satisfaction that a serious attempt to fulfill our promises has been made.

Should some find that the above-mentioned things are not good reasons, I beg that they will not judge me too harshly but try to put themselves exactly in my place, especially in respect to my obligations

toward Pacific Lutheran University.

The harder the times have been and the more difficult it became to pay the interest and principal of our debt the more general it has become to make me almost alone responsible for the debt and for many other mistakes which we all, under the changed circumstances, both see and bitterly regret. As long as times were good and everything looked fairly promising everyone was as well satisfied as we. Although we both in writing and orally almost to abomination publicly and privately reported both what we were thinking of doing and how we did it, we heard both publicly and privately: Carry on! Complete the work begun! But when adversity and distress came, then many sang a different song, yes, the whole undertaking has been wished into the depth of the sea. This is not said to upbraid anyone, but in order that also these things are taken into consideration when passing judgment upon my present journey.

It was not my idea that a school should be built on the West Coast, nor was it my decision that I should have anything to do with the matter. This decision was made by the General Conference in Decorah, Iowa, in October, 1889. After I, in accordance with this decision, had come to Washington and in association with several others had accepted an offer, it was not my wish that I should continue the work and remain on the Coast more than two years. It was resolutions made without my request, first by pastors on the West Coast, then by the Norwegian Synod together with the congregations I was then serving. Neither did I vote to build so big.

But this, that I against my wish and inclination was given the duty of carrying on the work, does not in the least relieve me from feeling the heavy responsibility.

It will not help to complain about those who have given me the task while others could have done it much better. I thought then, as I do now, that it was my sacred duty not to act in accordance with my wish or inclination, but with diligence to carry out the work assigned to me to the best of my ability. I will, with God's help, continue to do this. The fact that I am now the only one left of the original Board of Trustees increases my feeling of responsibility for the debt.

When I consider the severe pressure that is put on colleagues and many others to pay the debt, then everything indicates that it is my sacred duty to make every possible effort to free us from the distress and misery we are in on account of the debt. A couple of years of work and toil here in Alaska is as nothing if we can but come out of debt.

My duties at the school, in the Parkland Congregation, and in the Pacific District are taken care of even though I travel in Alaska.

I hope all will approve of this attempt and further the act with believing prayers and intercessions. The cause itself is the Lord's and although He leads it through many afflictions He is still the gracious Father and merciful Provider who will, at some time in one way or another, lead us out of them again.

B. Harstad

Sheep Camp Alaska, April 21, 1898

Today, finally, we have gotten our provisions and other equipment over Chilkoot down to Crater Lake

in Queen Victoria's domain. We are glad that we have come so far. It is not easy work to carry 3500 pounds on the back over the steep mountain pass. There is still much snow although it is thawing, especially down in the valley. On the high mountains that we are now crossing the snow lies untouched. I dare say we will camp on the snow for another month. We are in good health and busy. In the evening our entire face and lips smart as though we are sunburned. That comes from the reflection of the sun on the snow. We are now about as weather-beaten and reddish brown as Indians. Otherwise we are vigorous and have had good luck and have made good progress.

We have been exposed to many dangers, but so far the Lord has helped. Today we have moved our equipment down to Crater Lake from the top of the pass. It is exceedingly steep and it is difficult to be the master of a sled with a two or three hundred pound load. There is a great throng of people so that one is in danger of running others down or being run down by those who lose their balance and drop the loads. Every now and then a loaded sled comes plunging down, others come rolling down. Then everything depends upon getting out of the way. Several men have been killed on the slope we have worked on yesterday and today. Now we are, praise God, ready here. God willing we will break camp early tomorrow morning and move to Lake Lindeman. From there we will fetch our equipment down to the lake. Every pound must be drawn on sleds nine miles. It will take us several days. We are now three in company since we have taken H. Strand from Tacoma with us.

There might be much to write about here, but time will not permit. We must use our time diligently while the weather is fair. The first days of this week it snowed so hard we could not do anything and we fear it will begin again, but we have had very fine weather the last two or three days. Heretofore the Lord has blessed and secured the work of our hands and we are glad and thankful to Him. We have heavy and burdensome spring work this year; what the harvest will be no one knows; but we work in the hope of Him who is the Giver of all good gifts. The heaviest adversity we have is that we get mail so seldom. Since we left home the 9th of February we have, to date, received mail three times. Last Saturday Otis Larsen went the fifteen miles to Dyea to get the mail before we crossed the mountains. We were glad and sure we would get both letters and papers, but it was all in vain. We received nothing. The postal service is miserable here. We will very likely not get any mail until we reach Lake Tagish. When that will be we do not know.

We will have to leave our Vikings from San Francisco here, though we are glad they will follow in a few days. Later we will be in their company steadily, but we do not wish to stay here any longer than is absolutely necessary.

Herewith a hearty greeting from
H.

Lindeman, Alaska, April 27th, 1898

Dear Herald:

As stated before, we broke camp at Sheep Camp and moved to Lake Lindeman Friday morning the 22nd. We had paid our duty to the Canadian Government the day before. The duty for our equipment, food, clothing, and tools for three men for one year amounted to \$44.33. We had brought everything we did not need in our tent from the top of Chilkoot Pass down to Crater Lake. Yet our packs the last morning were not very light. We who must carry everything and move both house and home often soon

learn that one hardly knows what he has until he moves. Our friends, the Vikings from San Francisco, helped us faithfully to carry our things up the pass. There we tied stove, tent, clothes, dishes, etc., on our sleds and slid down to Crater Lake. But here, too, it was overcrowded with people who were bringing their things down the steep slope. Since we had light loads and could easily manage them down through the four or five foot deep ruts or runways that were worn in the snow, we could have slid down the six or seven hundred feet to the lake quickly. Since all the runways were full of people with heavy loads that were not easily righted when lying on the side or upside down or standing with the front end deep in the snow below one or the other of the deep faults that are found here and there, then it takes a long time to get down. One must wait and help others along while taking care that no loaded sled that has gotten away from its owners runs one down. Luckily, we get down this time, too, without a scratch.

Before we have eaten our lunch and have our loads ready for departure, it is 3 o'clock. Our loads are not very heavy but somewhat high and are easily overturned. Each of our loads weighs a good 200 pounds. The weather is beautiful and wherever one looks he sees only mountains and valleys, all covered with the purest snow that glistens and shines in the sunlight. Here everyone must be reminded of the poem, "Beautiful Snow." After crossing Crater Lake, which is about one and one half miles long, one comes to a narrow canyon. On both sides are steep stone walls. At the bottom there is a river that is open here and there. Yet, in many places the snow is 30 or 40 feet deep. We make slow progress here since the trail is crowded with people, sleds, horses, etc. Many are heavily loaded and very clumsy about their work and in overcoming difficulties. From the way many of these Klondike travelers do things it is evident that they are fortune hunters, but certainly not architects of their own fortunes. Many neither can nor want to work. Down through this canyon, as on the next two smaller lakes, namely Long Lake and Deep Lake, we progress tolerably well. Yet it will be late before we find Olson, Wedeberg, and Berg, who have their camp a mile and a half down on Lake Lindeman. Between this lake and Deep Lake there is another narrow canyon about three miles long. When we arrive, there are long lines of Klondikers waiting their turn to go down. Finally our turn comes too. The trail is badly torn up and worn. Also here there are deep runways through which we must maneuver our loads.

There are also breaks or faults the height of a man here and there. Then the traveler must get his load to stand still while he himself climbs down and draws the sled forward until he gets hold of the front end and steers it as best he can. Then everything depends upon the ability to stand on one's feet or bring them along when pushed down in front of the load. In the worst places it is necessary to put a rough lock on the runners. If one puts on a full lock the load may tip end over end. That is what happened to the undersigned. In a narrow and deep runway in the snow where the sled could not roll sideways, I stood at the bottom of a fault to take hold of the front end of the sled and it came rolling end over end. Nothing worse happened than that the load and sled landed with runners in the air, then continued down the same way until it finally stopped right side up. Here we often had to stand and wait long periods to get on. It was getting late and cold. We were tired and hungry and seriously considered putting up here overnight or leaving our loads and going to Lindeman empty handed to find a hotel for the night. But we did not like to do that either. By investigating the trail ahead we found we could get around those that were hung up and so we got away and finally found Olson and Co's tent among hundreds of others. It was now 10 o'clock and we were very thankful when J. Berg got up and made coffee for us and offered us food and drink while we took off our wet and cold boots and socks.

Soon we had our bedding laid by the side of the others and lay down to rest. That boughs and bedding lay on top of several feet of snow made no difference. We slept and rested remarkably well. The next

day we had bright and beautiful weather also. Early in the morning we ought to have gone back the ten miles to Crater Lake to fetch our first loads of equipment, but we decided to use the day for setting up our camp and getting it in good order for Sunday. By working diligently, each at his task, we had things in fairly good order and a good supply of dry wood gathered by late evening. But here also, as in Sheep Camp, we had to dig out four feet of snow before we reached the ground. The snow is still compact and hard. We chopped it out in the shape of large bricks and with them built a wall around our tent, the ridge of which stuck a little above the wall. Here we celebrated Sunday which was the second Sunday after Easter. Also for us, up to the present time, the Lord has been a good Shepherd and has mercifully sustained both welfare and health, life and limb, courage and delight in our present work. God alone be praised for that also!

Monday it was also clear and quiet weather. At 6 o'clock in the morning we were ready and with our sleds went back up the canyon to Crater Lake to move our provisions down here. This is a beautiful mountain region, but no other sign of spring than that the sun is higher in the heavens and the days are quite long. Yet the sun was so warm during the day that the trail and the snow became quite wet. By evening we had moved more than 1000 pounds or 350 pounds per sled down. We must still make three trips before we have everything here. We will hardly be able to move such large loads again since the trail is getting worse. Yesterday and today it snowed so hard we had to turn back and stay home. For that reason this report can be written. There is much to do. It is not only cooking but also repair of clothes and tools that take time. We have made masts for our sleds and raise sails in order to get the help of the wind down on the lakes. There are several feet of snow on these lakes and in the mornings the crust holds up well. Today we have started making wooden shoes. These will be very good to put on in the evenings with wet feet. When we get our things down here we will transport them farther down and northward to Lake Bennet, where we think we will stop and build boats.

Herewith a hearty greeting to all Herald readers.

H.

Lake Lindeman, Canada

May 17th, 1898

Dear Herald:

Our progress is not as rapid as we had thought and hoped. A snowstorm of several days' duration hindered us from bringing our equipment from Crater Lake, which is about ten miles from here. Yet it took us only eight days. Most of this time we had a strong south wind with drifting snow. When, after having braved wind and snow-squalls, we reached our pile of goods on Crater Lake with our sleds we were well satisfied that a strong wind blew from the south. Now we could load heavy loads around the little masts on our sleds. After having secured everything we raised the sailyard which holds the sail stretched before the wind, to the top of the mast and are ready to set out.

Before we eat lunch we must get off Crater Lake, where the wind is cold, and a little way down the canyon where it is a little warmer and where we have easy access to water. We are now four in the party since a young man from Minnesota, Elias J. Lien, has joined us. While sitting on our loads in a group near a waterhole in the ice, our frozen lunch tastes as good as circumstances permit. We are, however, careful not to drink too much or stop too long since we are usually warm and sweat, while food and drink, wind and weather are icy cold. Then we sail away again. Some places we sail almost with the speed of the wind while we work hard to steer it so we do not run others down or get off the

trail into deep snow. No one keeps track of the number of times he capsizes.

At other places we must pull with all our strength. Where the slope is steep we have to "double up," as they say, that is not to hitch a team to the load, but to hitch two or more men to one man's sled. When the wind is favorable and sled, mast, and sail are in good order, one can haul four to six hundred pounds.

You may be sure we were glad when we had all our provisions under cover in our camp here at Lake Lindeman. So far we have been lucky since we have lost nothing except two shovels. Many have lost a large part of their equipment and some have lost everything.

Now we feel that the worst drudgery is over. If we wait until the ice breaks up we can load everything on boats and sail down the lakes. Indeed there are many feet of ice and snow on the lakes, but it is not very cold and the sun shines bright most of the time. Yet it has snowed now and then even during the last few days.

As soon as we had gotten our things down here it was necessary to transport them down to Lake Bennet or immediately start cutting logs and whip-sawing material for boats. Because it seemed the ice might become dangerous before we could get our goods to Lake Bennet and especially because we wished to keep company with the Vikings who had not yet moved from Sheep Camp, we decided to start cutting timber.

We found logs about two miles from the lake among some crags and little tarns. The snow is several feet deep but early in the morning the crust on the snow holds us. Later in the day it is difficult to move without skis because the first thing one knows he falls through into the snow up to his armpits.

Everyone can image that it is troublesome work to drag logs together in such sleighing. The weather is fair and beautiful and the work progresses above expectations. Two whipsaw while the two others drag the boards down to our tent. We cut almost 100 feet per day. We earn a good day's wage since we would otherwise have to buy lumber. They ask \$25 to \$30 per hundred feet or \$250 per thousand here.

Last Saturday, the 14th, we were through making and bringing home lumber and we were very glad that part of our work was done also. During the last few days the sun had been so hard on the snow and ice that it was quite difficult to get our material down.

Sometimes it was dragged and sometimes carried. Some places there was bare ground and boulders; other places snow and water up over the knees. The water was a couple of feet deep on the ice of three small lakes we had to cross and the ice was breaking up especially along the shore. The last half mile before we got down to Lake Lindeman was especially troublesome. The road led through a narrow canyon which, when we first started to use it, was so full of snow that the road was quite good and smooth, but now toward the last it was almost impossible to get through. It took time and patience to get three or four boards six inches wide and twelve feet long through. Where the road was and still is there is now a raging river. Those who have anything to haul over this road now find waterfalls, boulder-strewn slopes, deep puddles, driftwood and thick brush, etc. The only evidence of the former smooth, easily-traveled road is an occasional snowdrift or block of ice. The road has now become so difficult and changed that one can hardly recognize it. This reminded me very forcefully of how many of man's enterprises, started under favorable circumstances, soon look quite different and because of

unknown circumstances can look very foolish and deplorable to many. However good the road looked to start with, the sun wasted snow and ice away so that one sees the road lie over large and almost impassable obstacles. Large boulders, stumps and brush stuck up in the road and hindered almost all progress. Those who saw the road in this condition would certainly say: What fools those were that built the road above these impassable obstacles that they should have known were there. Yes, when they stuck up in the road and we bumped into them with our loads, then we found they were there and that the road should have been built alongside these impassable objects in the first place; but suppose another just as impassable obstacle lay alongside the one we wished to avoid?

But we were about to become boatbuilders. Just as we have built sleds, made wooden shoes, and learned to make food on this trip, so I suppose we can build boats also. When a person really wants to do something and is so serious about it that he will diligently apply those faculties and gifts he has received, then a person can do a good deal. We have now agreed that we want two boats: A cargo boat 24 feet long, five feet wide and two and one half feet deep; and a little boat ten feet long, two feet wide and one and one half feet deep. Both are to have as trim shapes as we are able to give them. We have elected Otis Larsen master builder. We have just started the work and do not have time to celebrate Norway's independence day.

Although we are writing on the 17th of May and most readers are enjoying the most beautiful summer sun and warmth there are very few signs of spring here. Only a few steps from our tent there is ice several feet thick and deep snow covers the mountains around us. At night ice freezes on water, sometimes also on our waterbucket by the side of the stove. However, we have good dry wood and can be quite comfortable when we fire heavily.

It is now three months since we started living in a tent. We still sleep on spruce boughs but are in very good health. We eat and work like loggers. We are much smarter here in the mornings than we were at home. We are often up at 4 o'clock and eat our breakfast at 5. We take our lunch along to the woods, but are home and have supper at 6 o'clock. It is broad daylight until 10 p.m. A couple of us are going down to Lake Bennet today. There we hope to get mail from Parkland.

Now and then we get hold of a Seattle paper. The news is mostly of war and rumors of war.

In the hope that the Herald and all its readers may prosper and that the Lord will continue mercifully to guide both church and state and that all things will work together for good to them that love God, we hereby offer hearty greetings to all friends and acquaintances.

We can also bring greetings from the Vikings. They arrived at Lindeman a couple of weeks ago, but have their camp a mile and a half from here. We went far down the beach while they stopped and pitched camp as soon as they reached the lake.

Kind regards,
H.

Lake Bennet, Canada

June 7th, 1898

Dear Herald:

Yesterday forenoon we loaded all our things on our two boats and left "Framnes." That is what we called the place on Lake Lindeman where we stayed several weeks. It was a convenient place for our camp and we were as well off as pilgrims in our position could expect. We had arranged ourselves quite comfortably. There we traded with our traveling companion, E. Lien, who had a larger tent alone than we three. Now our tent is 10 x 12 feet.

Yesterday the weather was beautiful and so quiet that our sails were useless so we rowed about four miles to the outlet. We had to pitch camp here again since the river between Lake Lindeman and Lake Bennet is so fast that we could not, without great danger, take even the empty boats through the rapids found here. We must land our provisions and portage about a mile until we are past the worst rapids. Today we have brought down about half of our equipment. If we succeed tomorrow we hope to be ready by evening to sail down Lake Bennet. It is twenty-five miles long. Then there is Lake Tagish where there is supposed to be much ice yet. We would like to reach it as soon as possible since we hope to receive much mail.

The days are so long that we can see the sun shining on the tops of snow-clad mountains around us at half past ten, and it is possible to read and write all night, but it is quite cold at night. Even yesterday morning when it was unusually beautiful weather, ice froze on quiet water. Saturday it rained a little, but snow fell a little way up the mountains. The snow has disappeared down here by the lake and a way up the slopes, but higher up there is still much snow.

We have no news other than things like the following: We have learned to make fairly decent food and what we lack there hunger makes up for it. At Framnes we baked good yeast bread for the first time in our lives. Otis Larsen is the mechanic and the undersigned cook. He built us two good and beautiful boats. Your reporter has had the honor of making a wheelbarrow that is very useful. When we have finished transporting our things below the rapids I will trade it for whatever I can get.

The 30th of May Lake Lindeman was about free of ice and on that day Olson, Wedeberg, and Berg left for Lake Bennet.

On the first of June, for the first time, we got a little game: two small ducks and a mudhen. In spite of the strong fishy taste we enjoyed fresh meat.

Hordness and Frantsvaag are still busy building boats here at Lake Bennet. They have sold boats as fast as they could make them, but the price has dropped from \$250 to \$100 per boat. The same is true of lumber.

Provisions can also be bought at a reasonable price compared to what they were before. At an auction, rolled oats sold for as little as 15 cents a pound.

Our Vikings, whom we will also leave behind again, will finish their boats in about eight days. We will wait for them at Lake Tagish and hope to travel with them continually thereafter.

Mr. Anon, one of the Vikings, has been seriously ill, and still is not well. We all enjoy good health. To carry 100 pounds of provisions a mile up and down rocky hills and make eight or ten such trips makes the back and other limbs ache, but after a good meal and a night's quiet sleep, we are just as active the next morning.

God, who gives strength and health and is the Giver of all good gifts, be praised forever for His mercy toward us also.

A hearty greeting from us all.
H.

NOTE: Letters written at Lake Tagish and Miles Canyon were lost in the Mails.

Fort Selkirk, Canada

July 2nd, 1898

Dear Herald:

We arrived here at Fort Selkirk today at noon. The mouth of Pelly River is on the other side, the northeast side of the Yukon.

Tuesday afternoon we unexpectedly became separated from the Vikings. On account of the strong current we could not land at the same place they did for the night. We floated a little way past and expected to meet them the next morning, but we have not seen them since. We assume they stopped at Big Salmon River to seek gold. Wednesday morning we waited quite some time for them, but since we thought they perhaps had passed us without being seen on account of the many islands in the river, we left in the hope we would meet them again soon. But since we did not find them at Little Salmon, we suppose they are back of us. Now we are only two boats and six men in our company.

Yesterday forenoon, luckily, we shot both Five Finger and Rink Rapids. Both rapids look threatening enough, but by keeping to the right side of the stream there is no danger. We shipped only an insignificant amount of water.

Five finger is so named because five large crags, about 20 feet high, jut up in the middle of the mighty stream and divide it into several smaller rapids. Rink Rapids, six miles below Five Finger, are not so dangerous.

A few people live here at Fort Selkirk. A church, "Savior's Mission Church of England," is also located here.

There are some Indian graves that are covered with woolen blankets and surrounded by totems, some of which are decorated with excellent figures. We have not met any Indians today.

We have had fair weather most of the time although it is raining a little today and the mosquitoes are exceedingly annoying. People who smart and itch from its bite suffer dreadfully because of the untiring and united activity of these little creatures. Yet, I have not seen them quite as mean as they were in the Red River Valley in the early days.

We have decided to go to Dawson as soon as we are able. It is 180 miles from here. Perhaps it will take three days. We would like to reach Dawson the 5th or 6th of July, in order, if possible, to meet some

acquaintances and get dependable information about different things.

Herewith hearty greetings to all.
H.

Dawson City, N.W. Ter.

July 16th, 1898

Dear Herald:

We found the Vikings on the 5th of July about 30 miles below Fort Selkirk and have been with them since then. To decide where to go and where to set up winter quarters is a difficult question. If you ask others you get all sorts of advice. Many are returning home without having tried any work.

Together with friends from San Francisco and Tacoma we agreed to stop at Stewart River for the present and from there investigate what we should rather do. Four men, J. Stensrud, G. Christie, L. _ofstad and the undersigned were elected to go to Dawson City and investigate one thing and another. Ten men took their packs and went prospecting. Two remained at our tents and equipment. We took boat, food, and clothing and rowed 45 miles down to Indian River before evening. Here we learned we could ride a ____ raft if we would but help steer it down the river.

We left our boat and some provisions at Indian River and took along only the necessary food and clothing for ten days. We arrived on the 14th. There are a lot of people here just as bewildered as we. On the banks of the Yukon there are thousands of boats and up along the mountainsides there are thousands of tents. Here we again found Olson, Berg and Hagen(son?) with their party. They have built a cabin. Last night we stayed with our old friend from Seattle, O. Bindal, and received considerable information.

Today we are to start our return journey up along the Klondike, Bonanza and Eldorado, and from there over the mountain ridge to Indian River at the mouth of which we will find our boat. That will be a walk of about 30 miles. With a pack of 50 pounds this trip may prove very exhausting.

We are all well and greet all.
H.

Dawson, N.W. Ter., Canada

Oct. 14th, 1898

Dear Herald:

This day, the 14th of October, is so significant for friends of our Synod that one can rejoice in it even in these distant and cold regions. Although my partner, H. Strand, and I who are alone now that Otis Larsen and H. Lien have returned home are very busy putting our winter cabin in order, we are having a holiday today. We try as well as we can to rejoice in the good things the Lord in His mercy has granted our Church and thereby us also.

The first snow fell here the 21st of September. It had covered the higher ridges before that. We had

barely started building our little winter cabin. We moved in the 28th of September although we had neither put in the windows nor hung the door. After one has lived in a tent from the middle of February to the 28th of September and wandered here and there, sometimes sleeping on the bare ground under the open sky, then it was a festive day when we moved with our luggage and good sacks into something that is called a house.

I will not tire Herald with a description of our cabin. Yet, you ought to know that it is twelve feet square. The inside wall consists of upright birch poles. Outside these there are spruce poles laid on top of each other like logs and the space between these two walls is packed with moss. The roof consists of birch poles, moss, and earth. We have two small windows and one door. Around the outside we threw up an earthen rampart up to the windows. When we consider this building it looks wretched and we are involuntarily invited to call it the earthly house of this tabernacle. Yet it is wonderful to have it in this snow and cold. But it is not our home. It is good enough to stay in overnight and over winter, but it can never be our permanent residence or home. It is a pleasure, yet wonderful, to know this, but it is most wonderful to believe and know that "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked." 2 Cor. 5, 1-3.

Considering the circumstances we live very well in our hut, and Herald is asked to greet all my old friends of the pioneer days in the Red River Valley. I am living over again, with great pleasure, those cozy days in cellars, sod huts and low houses with sod roofs. I congratulate you on your present splendid homes and farms. I hope the old, humble self-sacrifice and love of work for the welfare of the Church will now bear for you and your children rich, everlasting, and God-pleasing fruit.

There has been much sickness and many deaths here in Dawson this summer. We do not know whether or not it will get better now that the cold weather has set in. The bold and able dentist from La Crosse, Wisconsin, Dr. Lee, was quite seriously ill this summer, but is now long since well. Four weeks ago, he, together with a Jew, Irishman, and an American, went hunting. They went up the Klondike River 80 or 90 miles. After an absence of four weeks they have just recently returned well supplied with moose meat. They shot three: a large buck that dressed out at about 300 pounds and two calves. Dr. Lee shot the large buck and one calf and was so kind as to present the horns to the Lutheran University. It is an exceptionally stately and large pair of horns with a spread of some over five feet and has fourteen points. The palmations are over one foot wide. Dr. Lee deserves much thanks for this gift. I hope to be able to send it to the school sometime.

A friendly greeting to all readers.

B.H.

Dawson, N.W Ter.

Jan. 25, 1899

A Christmas in Klondike

Christmas has great significance also here near the Arctic Circle among gold diggers of all faiths and innumerable forms of godlessness and scepticism. Not only those who wish to be Christians, but also others in their own way and at their conveniences try to lift up their hearts with joy and gladness.

But since it is difficult, if not impossible, for the heart and soul to be joyful when the body is in want, everyone tries to satisfy the reasonable demands of the body and thereby help the spirit attain real festive joy. Naturally this is true not only in Klondike, but everywhere. Since the body, in this cold climate and hard work, needs an excessive amount of food which tastes exceptionally good, this is truer here than in any other place the writer has any accurate knowledge of.

It is also true that one does not have to make great demands in order to feel a delightful change. There are many honorable people here, some of them accustomed to better things, that are glad and well satisfied if they can only buy a soup bone and make a feast for themselves and a friend whom they wish to invite for Christmas.

It is possible to understand this when one remembers that many work hard and have for a long time lived on poorly-prepared dishes of beans, ham, bread, pancakes, oatmeal mush, sugar, coffee, and tea. If one has a little butter, milk, dried potatoes, rice, and fruit he feels he lives well, especially if he has a good, well-lighted and warm cabin or log house. Some still live in tents and poorly-constructed huts. When the thermometer goes down to 50 degrees below 0 or 80 below freezing, as it has several times this winter, then it is not very comfortable or pleasant in these dark huts.

Of the great number of gold diggers in these narrow valleys one to fifty miles from Dawson City, very few have seen the sun since the middle of November. During Christmas there is daylight only three or four hours during the middle of the day. The sun shines only on the mountain peaks and here and there a little while in the valleys.

Since Thanksgiving in November I have been with an old friend and acquaintance from Dakota and Seattle, Ole Rindal. He had a contract to furnish wood for a gold mine, Number 22, above the forks of the Bonanza, about fifteen miles southeast of Dawson. We had a warm cabin alone until after Christmas. Since Rindal is a good cook the body got good and well-prepared food. We agreed not to neglect nourishing and maintaining the soul. We spent many a pleasant hour in reading and conversation.

We had two guests for Christmas, a Swede and a Finn; one was from Chicago, the other from Fern Hill, Washington. We had no Christmas tree nor did we have any of our families with us, but we tried to rejoice in the Savior, knowing that He would gladden and bless them even though we were not there to do so.

Christmas Eve we had two candles burning instead of one. Then it seemed our hut was doubly comfortable. It is but 10 x 12 feet without floor and without a window. Instead of windows we have a little aperture in the door and a large one in the wall. A piece of thin cloth from a flour sack is stretched across each. Although hoarfrost and ice form on the cloth, we get a little light—enough to make dinner at noon.

The undersigned is now moving up on Eldorado and will live with P. Olson and Berg from Tacoma and Pederson and Hagenson from California. A mile from them I will work on a bench claim that Rindal and I own on French Hill.

Every Sunday we have services with Olson and _aldal from Seattle.

Wishing all Herald readers a Happy and Blessed New Year, I remain,

Yours truly,
B.H.

Pacific Herald, July 28, 1899
A Little from the Polar Regions

Tuesday evening at 10 o'clock the steamer Robert Kerr left the dock in Dawson City, N.W.T., surrendered itself to the strong current of the mighty Yukon and bore down toward St. Michael, Alaska. The Kerr had aboard about 200 passengers and between one and one half and two million dollars in gold. Well-constructed boxes, about 10 x 12 inches, were so heavy that two men had all they could do to handle one of them.

The weather was beautiful all day. Here in the North the night is light as a fairly bright day. Wednesday evening, the 21st of June, we had said farewell to the beautiful and friendly mountain ridges that had attended us on both sides of the Yukon. Here and there we could see a mountain top that had receded into the distance. Instead of birch groves and beautiful flower-strewn sunny slopes the eye now met only the muddy water of the Yukon, which was continually being broken up by large islands consisting of low swampy land covered by a growth of spruce.

When a landlubber and klondiker stood on the deck and listened to the laborious groan of the steam engine and saw the pilot anxiously looking here and there, then he felt as though he were in a labyrinth from which there was no escape, especially if we were to run aground and be delayed for some days or weeks. This happens every year on these so-called "Yukon Flats."

At 10 o'clock in the evening we arrived in Circle City. The sun is still quite high in the heavens and they say the midnight sun shines here this time of the year. This city is an important gold center next to Dawson, but there is no comparison between Circle City and Dawson. Everything is quiet and dead, only some dogs and a few Indian children seem to have any life. There are few people and no business concerns that we can see. The gold mines are sixty miles south in the Tanana Hills. The road leads over flats and moss-covered swamps. Only a little gold is being brought out of the hills this year.

From Circle City, the Yukon continues to flow northwestward till it reaches Fort Yukon and the Arctic Circle, 69' 33" north latitude. Here the river turns toward the southwest. We arrived at Fort Yukon at 10 a.m., the 22nd of June. That afternoon we landed on the shore of an island where many Indians had pitched their tents. Here we took aboard two Indian pilots who are said to know accurately where the deepest channel of the river is this year. Now both free thinker and Christian feel safer.

It is true, we are at the mercy of the Redskins, but thanks be to the work of the missionaries that has had such beneficial and strong influence upon the hard hearts of these strong children of nature that we have full confidence in them when we see that they both understand the difficult task and will solve it with diligence. Now time passes smoothly and we make good time down the river.

We long for home in order to see and learn how things are there. Time passes slowly because we have nothing to do. We have but little reading material and naturally it is crowded and uncomfortable on a

boat filled to capacity with all sorts of pilgrims. Yet we should not complain since we get along quite well. Our worst adversity is when, at times, we happen to sit down beside one of these deplorable, ill-bred ruffians who cannot even eat like civilized people, but sit down at the table and fall upon the food as if to devour the world without leaving a crumb for anyone. It is pitiful what discomfort ill-bred people can spread just because they cannot eat like people, but like animals. How frightful it would be to see all the immoral smut such people live in. Let us thank God and our parents that we can eat like human beings though not as nice as we ought.

B.H.

Pacific Herald, Aug. 18th, 1899
The Alaska Trip a Rest Period

When a schoolboy has diligently used his faculties and energy for eight or ten months of the year in learning those good things assigned him, then he usually has a vacation that means a rest from school.

It has been learned that man's faculties need such a rest or change of surroundings and activities with which the body and mind have been busied. Many believe that a school vacation should not be used in laziness, idleness, or freedom from hard work. The body must and will breathe as long as it lives. Likewise the mind must be active every day in one way or another.

If the body does not really exert itself in exercise that also occupies the mind and leads it in a different direction than before, thereby giving rest on the one hand and on the other sound development during vacation, then the body becomes indolent or only eats, drinks, and sleeps while mental activity continues in the same direction as in school with the only difference that it believes it should have light and very often harmful reading materials. When that boy or girl begins school after a vacation, it is found that neither body nor mind has received any noticeable rest or growth during vacation. There is no noticeable change other than that they associate with parents, brothers, sisters, friends, and relatives instead of with teachers and companions in school. The activity of both mind and body is essentially the same at all times, both in school and during vacation.

Such school attendance and vacations may well explain the fact that after some years even stout farm boys appear to be nervous, absent-minded, helpless louts who among farmers hardly know "beans from buckshot," or can harness a horse. When such parlor philosophers go out into the world as pastors or teachers they are in many ways an amusing spectacle or comedy in which many might see themselves. In our opinion parents and teachers do not serve students well when they make them believe that hard work during vacation is not good for them. This harmful belief has crept into our society more and more. Good, hard, but reasonable and useful physical work is the best vacation, ordained by God, for students. We believe the work should rather be in the fresh air and so hard that the mind loses almost all desire for other mental activity except what family devotions and church services supply together with the most necessary newspaper reading. Not only my experience as a youth, but also the hard work during the last year and a half while on a difficult journey into the goldfields of the Yukon have strengthened me in this belief.

At my departure both my body and mind were so worn out, enfeebled, and exhausted that it seemed impossible that I could hold out long. All those with whom I associated are my witnesses.

In such a condition we came to Dyea, Alaska, about the middle of winter. There we had to live in a flimsy tent, in quite cold weather and, at times, a gale blowing. Our food was poorly made and our appetites were just as indifferent as when we left home. Unaccustomed to the climate we suffered from a fever and an unbearable thirst; then stomach trouble. On account of the minerals in the water we had kidney trouble and nightly trips outside the tent did not strengthen the body. When in one's fiftieth year one sees the serious gymnastics of carrying or pulling several hundred pounds, more than a year's provisions, from the sea, over Chilkoot to the source of the Yukon River, then one hesitates several days. But in order not to weaken one another's courage neither of us dared complain. Since now, more than at any other time in our lives the truth of the words, well known in practice to pioneers, "root, hog or die," became evident; we pulled ourselves together and started pulling our sleds up the Chilkoot River until the sweat really ran down our backs. It was cold with a strong wind. When at times we were tempted to stop too long to rest and catch our breath, we were chilled as though an ice blanket had been thrown over our naked bodies.

We were unaccustomed to heavy work and the body protested against the heavy load it was hitched to. No protest did any good here. We were outside the realm of law and reason. The body had to submit to the treatment, both during the day in front of a sled and in the evening at the bad soup. It was unbelievable how quickly it learned to adjust itself to the changed circumstances. Thought and reason had to help also. We understood that we must not be clothed too warmly while working nor to stop too often or long, still less to drink more water than absolutely necessary. In order to permit free evaporation and sweating we learned to dress lightly during work.

We coughed up a lot of slime and impurities from the lungs; soon we began to get an appetite and in a short time we felt very well. Hunger helped the cook and he got a greater desire to please and satisfy it in the best manner. In a few days we were in better spirits and stronger to carry on the work which was often very hard. Hard work was our best medicine; soon both of us were stronger in mind and body than we were when we left home.

If anyone should say: You must be exceptionally strong, I would answer that such is not the case. We were, in reality, quite feeble when we started the work, but we got better as time passed. If you do not attribute this to sound physical exertion, then you will have to attribute it to Him who has said: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Deut. 33: 25.

We needed much physical strength and we got it, and, besides, we enjoyed remarkable peace and contentment with our circumstances, which we marveled at and had to thank God then and now for it. It is as if we are much nearer God and the heavenly Father while in the desert than in the midst of our best friends.

To those dear friends who, we understand, have pitied us during our absence, I would like to say: You need not pity us. I can truthfully say: That year and a half was the easiest and least worrisome time I have had since I came to the Pacific Coast. That is true whether you believe it or not. I have never felt as well or weighed as much in many years as I do now.

The human body is created by God and fashioned for reasonable exertion which subdues covetousness. He who has not tested his powers to the utmost, i.e. much more than he thought he could stand, actually does not have the slightest conception of how much toil the human body can endure. He talks far more foolishly about it than the blind about colors.

The human body is not as feeble as the untried and pampered imagine, nor is it as sensitive or decadent as the nervous and timid believe. Even after the Fall, the human body is, according to its size, the best, strongest, and most durable of all visible creations.

Yes, as its duties and days are, so shall its strength be.

B.H.

Proceeds from the Alaska Journey
Pacific Herald, September 1, 1899

No doubt, there are many Herald readers who ask if our school on the Pacific Coast received financial help from my journey. They certainly have a right to have an answer, and I am sorry that nothing has been reported before. Unfortunately, the school has not yet received any financial help from my trip. The reason is that the Lord has not seen fit to give us any of the gold in Klondike. It is true, the undersigned owns a half interest in three claims and is the sole owner of another. From these the Lord can, if He wills, give the school all it needs. Two of these claims have not yet been tested or opened. The other two have been investigated a little.

One claim promises nothing and will therefore revert to the government unless someone makes a strike in the vicinity next winter. The other is more promising. Work on it will be resumed as soon as it is cold enough. Nothing could be done this summer because of gas which does not hinder the work after cold weather has set in. What the Lord will grant us from these attempts is in His hands. My interests there are cared for by a dependable young man who had decided to stay there another year. What they produce will go to the school. It must be understood that the school has not risked anything. In case the school does not get anything from these attempts it has no expenses on that account.

Besides these claims, I have a "Lunch House" on the Bonanza, eight miles from Dawson. This provided the money for my return journey and if sold will return to me the expenses I had on the trip.

So, I hope, no injury has been done. Yet, I am intensely sorry that my undertaking has caused dissatisfaction and concern for many, and for this I ask forgiveness.

B.H.

Two Letters from Correspondents

Lake Bennet, June 18, 1899

Dear Herald:

Since I have a little time to spare, I will send Herald a few lines. On week days we are busily engaged in building boats, but Sunday we will go prospecting. Yes, we are not in Alaska for fun.

Harstad left here the 8th of June. When he got down to Lake Tagish he hoped to receive letters from home. He has worked very hard on this trip, but he looks better than before. He felt very well and was in good spirits.

It is wonderful how President Harstad and I have met in our wandering. It started in Zumbrota, Minnesota, when I gave him my vote for district president. And now we have both come as far as Alaska for about the same reason, namely, to better our economic condition. God knows if we will succeed. May God in His mercy bless and protect us up here in this deserted, barren region outside civilization.

A week after Harstad's departure, the Vikings from San Francisco came down from Lake Lindeman and prepared themselves for the journey. They proceed with greater tranquility and make careful preparations before they sail. There were between four and five thousand boats ready to sail from Lake Bennet when the ice broke up. It was a thrilling sight to see all those hundreds of boats set sail.

Naturally, they did not all sail the same day, but most of them have left now. The last of my acquaintances was N. Lind, from Oldtown, Tacoma; he left yesterday evening. Some new immigrants come down here each day, but there are not very many. Three beautiful steamers leave Bennet several times a week, namely: Ora, Flora, and Nora. There is also a large, beautiful steamer, "Yodard," that is built of iron, and two others, besides some gasoline boats. They advertise that they will take a man to Dawson for \$12. I do not know if they can do that. I am sorry for many poor people who have come in almost destitute of everything, both food and clothing, in the hope of getting work at high wages; but who can give so many thousands work?

I often meet men that have been in Dawson and all over these regions for several years. I talked to one that had come in over the Whitepass Trail thirteen years ago. It is well to hear and understand the experiences of such men. Today I heard the fare from Bennet to Dawson is \$50. The journey takes between four and five days, if they can get the immigrants through. There are many that doubt it.

Of the so-called "400," I have seen Lord Sackville West from England, Nordenskold Jr. from Sweden, George Elliot, Captain Jack Crawford, and others.

I beg to be excused for all this twaddle from Lake Bennet.

With best regards to all acquaintances in Parkland, I remain,

Respectfully,
C. Hordness

Pacific Herald, August 16th, 1898
A Letter from Trail County, N. Dakota

It is well known that Trail County is the best in N. Dakota. And here the Northman has found his home. Again this year there will be a rich wheat harvest along Goose River. During the last few days we have had cool weather so the wheat got a good chance to fill out.

I have traveled about here a little and often meet people who have the Herald and await it each week. It is especially President Harstad's letters from the trip to Alaska people like. Yes, Harstad has many friends and acquaintances here that follow him with their prayers and best wishes. Here they know his ways and methods and understand him. They know that he has the best of intentions.

Some people from here also are out after gold in Alaska. On the 18th of June one wrote quite fully about conditions there. Indeed, a pastor like Harstad is needed up there for thousands of Northmen and Swedes who travel up north.

A Northman by the name of Andee Olson lives in Dawson and is called "The King of Dawson." He was one of the first goldseekers and is now worth several millions. Such is the rumor, at least.

The wheat is now filling out in cool weather. Everything points to a rich and abundant harvest. Hereabouts in Harstad's old congregations people have made great sacrifices for Lutheran University and many wish that everything will be for the best.

Members of the congregations have built themselves a beautiful school in Portland, Bruflat Academy, as it is called. This institution brings blessings upon the church and education among our people.

I see that Herald was pelted with abuse at the annual meeting in Silverton. Also, reproach is the wage of the world, and church people naturally mean everything well. But do not lose courage, Herald! I know you well. I worked hard for you at the time you came into the world and now you are in good hands. Yet, you are still of school age and have much to go through before you grow up. But that is the way with all young things; the struggle for existence hardens and steels one. Dear young friend, do not fear to suffer. You will indeed succeed if only you shape yourself well. But do not forget that modesty is a virtue of youth. Above all, be honest and upright, and buy wisdom. I hope you are not offended by this well-meant advice from one who was your god-father. You have many friends. These will not reject you, for you are a stalwart young lad.

Addenda
written by the Translator, Oliver Harstad

It is unfortunate that letters written at Tagish and Miles Canyon were lost. That stretch of water between Tagish and Fort Selkirk was the most dangerous part of the Yukon and many lives and much equipment were lost there.

Leaving Lake Bennet the boatman steered for a large rock at the entrance of the outlet. A short stretch of swift water shot the boat onto Lake Tagish. Just below the outlet of Lake Tagish the Mounted Police had established Tagish Post where all boats were stopped and each man was required to show a customs receipt for his outfit. Marsh lake, twenty miles long, was next. Klondikers called it "Mud Lake."

Fifty-Mile River ran out of Lake Marsh. The river became wider and swifter at every mile. About thirty miles below Marsh Lake the river seemed to end abruptly at a stone wall. On approaching nearer the boatman saw that the river narrowed to less than one hundred feet and shot down out of sight into Miles Canyon. This was the first of the three worst obstacles in the river. Less than a mile below, the river spun into a whirlpool called "The Squaw," then through two miles of flat country to a chain of low hills where it narrowed again to about twenty feet. This was White Horse Rapids, a good quarter of a mile long.

According to authorities two hundred lives were lost in this stretch of water through Miles Canyon, The Squaw, and White Horse during the summer of 1897. During the summer of 1898 the Mounted Police permitted only those to go through who hired a licensed pilot. Most goldseekers, after looking over Miles Canyon, unloaded and portaged their outfits to a point below White Horse Rapids and paid an Indian ten dollars to take an empty boat through Miles Canyon, The Squaw, and White Horse Rapids.

Father left Dawson on the river steamer Robert Kerr on the trip down the Yukon to St. Michael on June 20th, 1899. At St. Michael he boarded the S.S. Coronna and surprised everyone in Parkland when he arrived on July 20th, 1899.

Much has been written about the Klondike Gold Rush. An interesting book by Kathryn Winslow, "Big Pan-Out," based largely on two diaries willed to her by an old recluse who went into the Klondike Region by way of Dyea, Chilkoot, and the lakes in March and April of 1898, is available in most public libraries.

Stencils for this Seventy-fifth Anniversary Edition of "A Trip into the Yukon Region by Rev. B. Harstad, 1898 - 1899" were cut by the undersigned in the month of September, 1973, and copies made, mainly so that grandchildren and great grandchildren of Rev. B. Harstad might have the opportunity of possessing a copy. Rev. B. Harstad survived this memorable trip by 35 years, and died on June 20, 1933 in Parkland, Washington.

Adolph M. Harstad

First Placed Online: December 31, 1999

Route of Bjug Harstad in 1898/1899

Source of photos: U.S. National Postal Museum Website, 2011