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J U N E A U

by

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Juneau is one of the cities in Alaska whose early history is very interesting. I here quote the official history of Juneau by Arthur C. Spencer of the Geological Survey in his report of 1906.

"Prior to the possession of Alaska by the United States in 1867 there had been no gold mining in the territory. Some old Russian records show that small amounts of the metal had been observed in various localities, though it was not believed to be of commercial importance. In these early years the greater part of the abrupt mountainous belt of southeastern Alaska was known only to the native Indians and a few fur traders.

"The auriferous gravels at the head of Stikine River were probably the first gold discoveries in this general region. They were found in the early part of the sixties. During that decade many miners went to the newly discovered Cassiar gold district, on the Canadian side of the international boundary.

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In 1869 Mix Sylva and other disappointed Cassiar miners traveled northward from Fort Wrangell and made placer discoveries at Windham Bay and on Powers Creek at Sumdum Bay. It is reported that $40,000 was extracted from these placers in 1870-71. This represents the first gold production from Alaska.

"At Sitka, the capital of the territory of Alaska, situated on the west coast of Baranof Island, mining activity began in 1877, when the Lucky Chance and Stewart properties were located. On the latter property a ten-stamp mill was built in 1879, but this was long since abandoned.

"In the spring of 1880 N. A. Fuller, of Sitka, on the strength of a favorable report by John Muir, relating to the mainland of southeastern Alaska, sent Joe Juneau and Richard Harris to investigate the coastal belt between Windham Bay and Sullivan Island. These two prospectors, with three Indians as guides and packers, arrived at Windham in May. Though they located and recorded several quartz veins they were not encouraged by their discoveries here and continued prospecting along the coast to Gold Creek, where they arrived the middle of August. Here they found not only rich gravels, but near the mouth of the creek, specimens of quartz float containing free gold. Following up the stream and crossing the ridge at the head of Snowslide Gulch to Silver Bow Basin, they discovered auriferous quartz in place. From these ledges, at present the property of the Alaska-Juneau Company, they carried away nearly 1000 pounds of ore, and, after staking both placer and quartz claims, returned with it to Sitka early in November. This strike caused great excitement and

November 26 a party of thirty started for Gold Creek, where they arrived December 6. Numerous locations were made that winter, and, though the hills were deeply covered with snow, the small colony continued to grow and founded the present town of Juneau.

"The spring and summer months of 1881 showed much activity in this new gold field and the entire region was prospected. Among the numerous locations made were the Treadwell group of claims and most of the Gold Creek mines now under development. In the autumn of 1881 the population of the village numbered over 100. It was first called Rockwell and later Harrisburg, but at a miners' meeting held December 14, 1881, it was voted to rename the town in honor of the elder of the two discoverers of the district. The record of this meeting shows that 72 men were present. Later the "Harris Mining District" was so named after Juneau's partner, Richard Harris, at that time recorder of the district. The foregoing data was secured in part from Mr. Harris and in part from the early records in the recorder's office at Juneau.

"The first work, both on the present Treadwell and Ready Bullion properties and on the mainland near Juneau, was that of placer mining. Evidence of the old placer workings may be seen in most of the gulches and on many of the hillsides in the Gold Creek drainage. At that time it was only natural for the prospectors to seek the quickest returns with the least initial labor and expense. Many of these miners made several dollars a day with shovel and sluice box, working on the gravel deposits in Gold Creek and tributary streams.

In looking back a little over a half century, and knowing the marvelous progress of Juneau, it seems impossible that in a short time from a village of 100 people to a modern city, the stride of progress would be so great. The city has grown to maturity in this short.time.

The writer recalls a visit to Juneau in 1882 and 1883, and saw only very few buildings that would be of any size, but mostly beginning from Second Street up to the Gastineau Heights there were nothing but small log cabins with no streets or sidewalks. The most outstanding change of Juneau is the progress of buildings and streets. Where there were small wooden log cabins, there are now large modern concrete business and office buildings. Where there were old wagons and carts drawn by horses and mules, one observes the latest improved automobiles and busines delivery trucks. From wooden planks and dirt streets, we see clean side-walks and pavements. All thorough-fares at present in the down town district are paved. Great strides were made in the last year in civic improvements. There are beautiful homes with lawns and flowers. There are large hotel structures, apartment houses, a hospital, and beautiful buildings for various organizations. The most striking building in the city is the new Federal and Territorial Building where all the offices and headquarters of the Territorial Government are housed.

In walking along the waterfront, one is more amazed than at anything else. From a row-boat ferry that was used in the early

eighties to a great steel bridge spanning across the Gastineau Channel, approximately hundreds of cars pass up and down each day. The bus carrying passengers between Juneau and Douglas is always filled with passengers.

There are churches of almost all denominations in Juneau. There are fine school buildings and picture theatres. Juneau is electrically lighted on par with any large city in the States. There are two daily newspapers in this city.

For transportation, instead of having one boat per month, we now have regular ocean liners plying between Seattle, Tacoma, Vancouver and Juneau, carrying hundreds of passengers on every trip.

Juneau is peculiarly situated in its environment, for you can, within ten minutes, in an automobile be out in the country where you get the benefit of sports in fishing and hunting.

Juneau is also the headquarters for sea-planes and land-planes. You can reach any city in the Territory within five or six hours.

The mine with its mill crushes twelve thousand tons of rock per day, and employes from eight to nine hundred people in its plant per day.

The cold storage handles over four millions of pounds of halibut and salmon per season.

The place of interest in Juneau and vicinity is the Alaska Historical Museum and Library, which contains in its collection

probably the most complete collection of Eskimo antiquities. It has historical objects from the Russian Regime, the pioneers of Alaska, the Thlingit, Aleutian and Eskimo baskets, the finest and most complete one on the Pacific coast. The historical library contains books of travel beginning the latter part of the 18th century. As a reference library, it stands very high. Anyone wishing to find out anything pertaining to Alaska can be satisfied within ten minutes, by consulting the librarian. Its bird-life is not exactly complete, but it has sufficient amount of the different species of bird that can be studied right in the museum. In summer-time the museum entertains between seven and eight thousand visitors. Lectures are given to the visitors on various subjects, on history ethnology, anthropology, wild life, totem poles, their origin and meaning. Great many legends are also offered for the benefit of the visitors.

By taking a bus from the dock when the steamer lands, in thirty-five minutes, you can be at the Mendenhall Glacier with its beautifully tinted ice, and the road leads right up to the wall of the glacier. The latter creates much interest, and on the arrival of every boat, more than 50 people make a trip to the glacier. In the spacious wood skirting Juneau hunting and fishing abound, moose, deer, bear, both black and grizzly, and mountain goat. All the specious of fish that could be desired by anyone can be got by gun or rod. Ducks ptarmigan, geese, and grouse are here. In season, the fur-bearing animals can be obtained, beaver, land otter, fox, ermine, marten and mink, and I would say others too numerous to mention. Of course, there is a difference between sportsmanship, necessity and slaughter. Our game laws are becoming better, stricter, more adjusted to this fact.