

Alaska State Library  
Historical Collections

Guide to Collection

McIntosh, J.B.

J.B. McIntosh Diary of Yukon Trip with Frederick Schwatka, 1883

MS 4-37-12

1 Folder  
Diary transcription  
23 pages

Processed by: Alea Oien &  
Anastasia Tarmann, April 2009  
Revised by: Jacki Swearingen, March 2017

**ACQUISITION:** The J.B. McIntosh Diary of Yukon Trip with Frederick Schwatka, 1883, was donated in 1974 to the Alaska State Library Historical Collections and is #33 of Kay's "T" files.

Donor is unknown, however, the diary was transcribed by a son of J.B. McIntosh, "My father's diary of his Alaskan trip as a member of Lt. Schwatka's Exploring Expedition, loaned to me especially for this story by my brother, Claude McIntosh of Malott, Wash." In a letter dated 1973, George Mackie (Malott, Wash.) stated that "this material is the property of my mother-in-law, Athel Thrapp whose maiden name was McIntosh." Mr. McIntosh was her grandfather.

**ACCESS:** The collection is unrestricted.

**COPYRIGHT:** Request for permission to publish or reproduce material from the collection should be discussed with the Librarian. Photocopying does not constitute permission to publish.

**PROCESSING:** This collection has been described at the item level. All items have been placed into a pH-neutral folder.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

This diary, dated from May 21 to October 9, 1883, was kept by J.B. McIntosh while on the Southeast Alaska and Yukon River exploration expedition with Lieutenant Frederick Schwatka. J.B. McIntosh was the only civilian in the U.S. Army exploring party. McIntosh was the party assayer.

## HISTORICAL NOTE

Frederick Gustavus Schwatka was one of America's most important Arctic explorers. While honoured in his time, he is only a footnote in the search for Sir John Franklin. He commanded, in 1878–1880, an expedition of the American Geographical Society of New York which had the aim of retrieving records from King William Island. Although none were found, he did discover a number of expedition relics and remains. His extensive sledge journey during this expedition was one of the longest recorded by a European-North American expedition, over 5232 km (3,251 statute miles). Moreover it was conducted under some of the coldest conditions ever endured in polar exploration. Schwatka's party included three Europeans, William H. Gilder, a journalist from *The New York Herald*, Henry Klutschak, a naturalist, and Frank E. Melms, an experienced seaman, and 'Eskimo Joe' Ebierbing, an Inuit who had served on previous expeditions in search of Franklin. 'Schwatka's search', as it was known, concluded efforts to discover the fate of the Franklin expedition in the nineteenth century. It laid the groundwork for the important expeditions in the twentieth century that revealed new information concerning the fate of Franklin's men. Schwatka's expedition was without death or deprivation. Much of his success was based on a clearly defined plan and on adopting Inuit practices including living off the land, lessons he learned from his experiences with American Indians as part of his military assignments. Born in Illinois, he was educated at West Point, the United States Military Academy, acquitted himself well in the Indian Wars and then went on to qualify for the bar and secured a medical degree during his military service. He died an early and unfortunate death at the age of 43. The research reported in this article provides an understanding of the factors that shaped Schwatka and the skills that he used in this expedition. [Abstract from a paper by Ronald Savitt (2008). Frederick Schwatka and the search for the Franklin expedition records, 1878–1880. *Polar Record*, 44, pp 193-210.]

See also: Schwatka, Frederick. *The Search for Franklin: A Narrative of the American Expedition under Lieutenant Schwatka 1878-1880*. London: T Nelson and Sons, Paternoster Row, Edinburgh and New York, 1899.

## SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

Transcription of the diary of J.B. McIntosh, assayer, for the Schwatka Exploration Expedition in Southeast, Alaska, and the Yukon River, 1883. Short daily entries about the people, activities, trials, and weather of the expedition. Descriptions of Native Alaskans and First Nations people and their lifestyles, including gardening, trade, and linguistic abilities.

## SUBJECTS

Frederick Schwatka, Southeast Alaska, Yukon River, Telegraph, Chilkoot Trail, Yukon Territory, J. B. McIntosh, Franklin Expedition

## INVENTORY

### Folder 1 of 1

Transcription of the diary of J.B. McIntosh, May 21 to October 9, 1883.  
(24 pages, *page 21 missing*)