

Alaska State Library
Historical Collections

Guide to Collection

Roppel, Patricia, Collector
DeArmond, R. N. Collector

Jack Dalton and the Dalton Trail, ca. 1885-1915

MS 264

1 box
Papers

Processed By: Gayle Goedde
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ACQUISITION: This collection was the product of research, conducted by R. N. DeArmond and Patricia Roppel, into the life of Jack Dalton. Patricia Roppel donated the collection to the Alaska State Library Historical Collections in June, 2011. (Accession number: 2011-015).

ACCESS: Viewing the collection is unrestricted.

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PROCESSING: Papers were organized by type and subject.

HISTORICAL NOTE

Jack Dalton, a colorful character who first came to Alaska 1885, is best known for establishing a packing route from Pyramid Harbor, near Haines, to the Yukon River. This route, which became known as the Dalton Trail, was first traversed by Dalton when he joined the 1890 “Frank Leslie Newspaper Expedition” to explore the territory between the Alaska Coast and the Yukon River. One of the members of the expedition, Edward James Glave, who had experience exploring Africa, was intrigued by the prospect of further exploration, and he teamed up with Dalton to take a string of pack horses northward toward the Yukon. Later, in a letter to the *Alaska Journal* (May 13, 1893), Glave wrote, “In the summer of 1891, Jack Dalton and I took the ‘Pioneer Pack Horses into Alaska’ and opened a way from Chilcat to the rich lands to the northward of Mount St. Elias and during the whole trip my partner proved himself to be an energetic, determined, courageous, and exceedingly capable man –endowed with excellent judgment. . . The work in which Jack Dalton has been engaged is a most important step towards Alaska’s development. The establishment of a reliable transport through to the Interior will give impetus to the mineral industries.” However, as Glave also pointed out in his letter, Jack Dalton’s success was not universally acclaimed. Glave commented, “His venture has created a great deal of ill feeling, and white men and Indians have endeavored to thwart him, fearing competition with their interests.”

Not one to back down from a fight, Jack Dalton found himself in trouble with the law when a Pyramid Harbor storekeeper, Daniel McGinnis, reportedly tried to rile the local Chilkat Indians into denying access to Dalton’s trail. When Dalton confronted McGinnis, a fight ensued, and McGinnis was fatally shot. When the case came to trial in Juneau the following summer, Dalton was acquitted, and there was speculation the jury had been bought. The July 13, 1893, issue of the *Juneau City Mining Record* quotes Dalton as saying “the jury acquitted me because the killing was justifiable.” The editorial commentary accompanying this quote reflects skepticism: “On the stand, Dalton swore that he shot McGinnis two or three times ACCIDENTALLY. He also prates about he and his friends being poor, yet he says he was going to build a trail from Chilcat to the Northwest Territory and then start a trading post. Such talk is all bosh. To build a trail in such a rough and rugged country takes money and not wind. The same will apply to starting a trading post. It is presumed that his friends will furnish the wind and he will furnish the post.”

Dalton had enemies, but he also had many friends, some of whom had money and influence. Attorney John F. Maloney of Juneau was a business associate of Dalton’s for decades. Together, and with other partners, they established several businesses. The firm J. Dalton & Company established trading posts, organized cattle drives, and freighted goods into the Interior. When nuggets of gold were found in the Klondike, the stampede to the Yukon spiked use of the Dalton Trail, and Dalton formed the Dalton Trading & Transportation Co. to outfit miners and transport their equipment and supplies to the new mining districts. The Dalton Trail remained in use for many years, until the White Pass and Yukon Railway supplanted it by providing a more convenient link to the Interior. Dalton went on to other enterprises; and, when he left Alaska in 1916, he sold all his holdings, including mineral claims and a saw mill in Cordova, to the Copper River and Northwestern railroad. He lived to old age, dying in San Francisco on December 16, 1944.

For further information: *Jack Dalton: The Alaska Pathfinder*, by M. J. Kirchhoff, 2007.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

There is one photograph in this collection, and R.N. DeArmond has identified the individuals pictured as Jack Dalton, his wife, Estelle Richey Dalton, and Ed Hanley. The bulk of the collection consists of the research files on Jack Dalton, collected by R.N. DeArmond and Patricia Roppel. Included are pages of research notes, biographical data, timelines, newspaper articles, personal correspondence, copies of U.S. General Land Office documents pertaining to the Dalton Trail, and published articles on the Dalton Trail (R.N. DeArmond, in *Alaska Sportsman*, July 1963) and on the history of the mining community Porcupine (Patricia Roppel in *The Alaska Journal*, Winter 1975).

SUBJECTS

Jack Dalton, 1856-1944; Dalton Trail (Alaska and Yukon); Discovery & exploration; Explorers; Freight and freightage; Cattle drives; Gold mining; Mining equipment & supplies; Trading posts; Business people; Alaska Natives—Southeast Alaska—Tlingit; Chilkat tribe, Klukwan

INVENTORY

Box 1 of 1

Folder 1: Images

- 1 Photograph of Jack Dalton, Estelle Richey Dalton, and Ed Hanley. Identifications provided by R.N. DeArmond
- 2 Copy of Jack Dalton's Certificate of Death from the California State Registrar of Vital Statistics, showing date of death as December 16, 1944, and cause of death as "Arteriosclerotic heart disease with pulmonary edema."
- 3 Copy of an advertisement from the *Alaska Mining Record* (August 9, 1899), for the "DALTON Trading & Transportation Co., Outfitting and Packing of Supplies into the rich gold fields of the Porcupine and Salmon River districts."

Folder 2: Biographical timeline

R. N. DeArmond's timeline, year by year, of significant and notable events in the life of Jack Dalton, covering the time period from just before 1883, to December, 1944, the date of Dalton's death. The first entry "**Jack Dalton – before 1883; Ed Hanley story**" describes an incident in which Jack Dalton, then known as Jack Miller, shot and killed Matt Egan, who had been a cook in an Oregon timber camp. Jack Miller allegedly fired Egan from his

job as cook and hired a female in his place because he “liked her company better,” and this did not sit very well with Egan.

The **Jack Dalton -- 1899** entry quotes a letter from Governor Brady to the Secretary of the Interior, which recommends that John Dalton be allowed to collect tolls upon his trail. The fares for people, animals, and merchandise are listed, with the fare for foot passengers a dollar, and the fare for cattle, horses and mules, \$2.50 each.

The final entry is **Jack Dalton – Obituary**

Folder 3: Notes from newspapers and “Dictionary data” on Jack Dalton

Miscellaneous notes, gleaned from various newspapers and publications, which mention Jack Dalton or one of his family members. Dates range from an 1887 mention of John Dalton being in a party on “a little schooner ACTIVE of Juneau in from trip to the black sands deposits up the coast” (*Alaska Free Press*, November 5) to a 1927 note that “Jack Dalton is now a fruit grower in the Yakima Valley” (*Alaska Weekly*, August 19).

Folder 4: Biographical and Census Records of Jack Dalton and family

- 1 Jack Dalton chronology developed by W. W. MacBride of Whitehorse, with comments by R. N. DeArmond
- 2 1910 Census returns from Kantishna and Cordova
- 3 Alaskan biographies of Dalton family members: Joe Dalton, Kathleen “Mike” Dalton, Elizabeth Dalton, Margaret Dalton, May Dalton, Jack Dalton, Jr.
- 4 Partial article on The Jack Dalton House [from unnamed publication]

Folder 5: Photocopies of newspaper articles on Jack Dalton

Beginning with the March 9, 1893, account in the *Juneau City Mining Record*, titled, “Daniel McGinnis Death’s Victim; Beaten Over the Head with a Gun in the Hands of a Deputy U.S. Marshal and then Shot;” ending with the September 25, 1916, issue of the *Cordova Times*, titled, “Jack Dalton to Leave Alaska.”

Folder 6: Papers related to construction of Dalton Trail

- 1 Appendix B, “The Dalton Trail,” by G. W. Garside, Mining Engineer, Juneau, Alaska, October 6, 1898, *Report of the Governor of Alaska*, pages 48-49.

- 2 Copy of letter from Governor Brady, dated March 6, 1899, "In the matter of the application of John Dalton to collect toll upon trail known as the Dalton Trail."
- 3 Typed copies of report made by Alfred H. Brooks, U. S. Geological Survey, 1900; also, the G. W. Garside description printed in the *Report of the Governor of Alaska*, and the "Modus Vivendi between U.S. and Great Britain, fixing a provisional boundary line between the Dominion of Canada and the Territory of Alaska," 1899.
- 4 Copy of map showing location of Porcupine Placer District, by Charles W. Wright.
- 5 Articles of Incorporation of the Dalton Trail Company, October 15, 1900.
- 6 Copy of a stock certificate for Dalton Trail Company certifying that "E. B. Hanley is the owner of eight thousand three hundred and thirty three shares of the Capital Stock," November 1, 1900.
- 7 Copy of "Field Notes of the Dalton Trail Survey," by Geo. W. Garside, June 1898.

Folder 7: Government documents

- 1 Copy of memorandum from Ron Crenshaw, Park Planner, to Jack Wiles, Chief of Planning, State of Alaska Division of Parks, regarding a "First attempt to flag Dalton Trail," June 12, 1981.
- 2 Copy of Record Group No. 49 from the National Archives regarding the "Division 'F' Right-of-Way, Dalton Trail Wagon Road," which includes filings on disputes among various parties who claim or would use the land crossed by the Dalton Trail.
- 3 Copy of Record Group No. 49 from the National Archives regarding the "Division 'F' Right-of-Way, Dalton Trading and Transportation Company," which includes Field Notes on "the right of way and station and terminal grounds of the Dalton Road."

Folder 8: Magazine articles and bibliographies

- 1 "Another Dalton Trail," [by R.N. DeArmond?], in *Alaska Sportsman*, July, 1963.
- 2 "Some Notes on Jack Dalton's Trail," by R. N. DeArmond.
- 3 "Porcupine," by Patricia Roppel, in *The Alaska Journal*, Volume 5, No. 1 (Winter, 1975).
- 4 *III. The Dalton Trail (Pyramid Harbor to the Canadian Border)*; includes a "Preliminary Bibliography of the Dalton Trail and Vicinity"

- 5 *Dalton Trail: A bibliography of sources available at Yukon Archives*, Yukon Archives, September, 1985, 21 pages.

Folder 9: Correspondence and research notes

Letters concerning the life and times of Jack Dalton, which include the following:

Copy of letter from Dr. Fenton B. Whiting to "My Dear Georgie," July 27, 1929, in which Jack Dalton's wife's suicide is discussed.

Copy of notes E. B. Hanley, Jr., wrote about his father, Ed Hanley, a partner with Jack Dalton in the Dalton Trail.

Copy of notes from Jim Dalton, "Recalling some of his father's life," from a letter to Betty (Mrs. Rocky) Guitierrez, written in early 1977.

Letters from Kathleen (Mike) Dalton, containing comments about her husband's father: Jack Dalton.