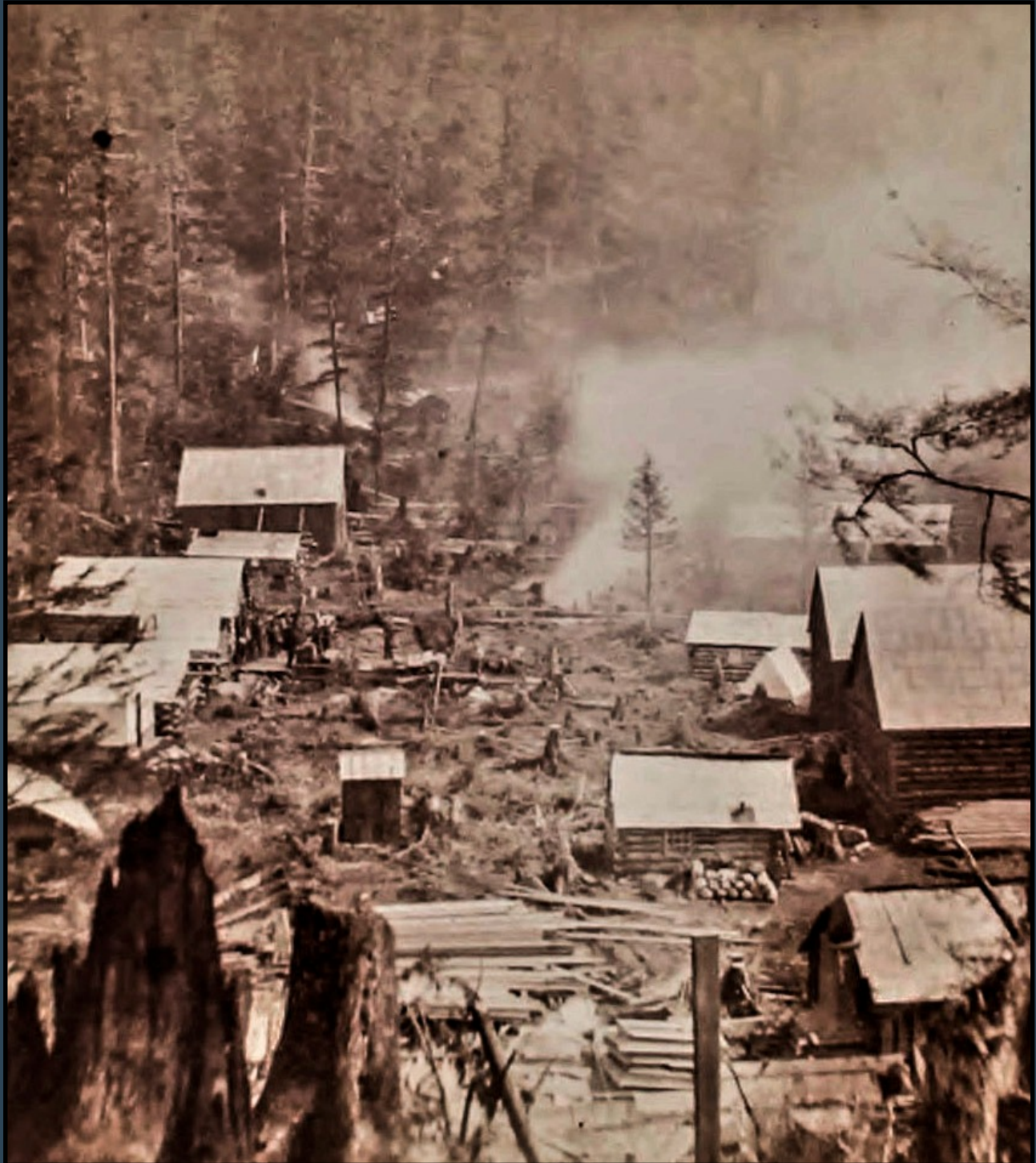


# A ROUGH AND TUMBLE COUNTRY

Juneau's Origins as Alaska's First Gold Mining Boomtown  
As Described by Eyewitnesses, 1880-1881



Edited and Notes by Chris Allan and Mark Kirchhoff



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2020

# Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Sandra Johnston of the Alaska State Library, who helped us with written sources and photographs; Dick Wood of Juneau whose knowledge of Alaskana was invaluable; Lynn Horvath for her help in proofreading; and the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for providing photographs by Henry H. Brodeck.

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**Front Cover:** A view of early Juneau when the mining town was still called Harrisburg and Rockwell, July 1881. The photograph was taken by Henry Brodeck using a stereoscopic camera as part of his work for the Northwest Trading Company. Presbyterian Historical Society, Henry H. Brodeck Photographs (2143).

**Title Page Inset:** Auk Chief Kowee (center), Taku Chief Aanyalahaash (right), and an unidentified elder posing aboard a ship at Juneau, ca. 1885. Chief Kowee collected ore samples for George Pilz and guided Richard Harris and Joseph Juneau to Gold Creek and Silver Bow Basin where he knew they would find the gold they were seeking. Alaska State Library, Portrait File (P01-4511).

**Back Cover:** “Native Huts, Near Treadwell’s Mill”—A Tlingit family near the present-day Douglas townsite on Douglas Island, ca. 1885. In 1881, John Treadwell purchased mining claims on Douglas Island from the French-Canadian prospector Pierre Errasaud, or French Pete. The claims eventually became the largest hard rock gold mine in the world, employing 2,000 men and producing three million ounces of gold over the next four decades. Presbyterian Historical Society, Sheldon Jackson Papers (600).

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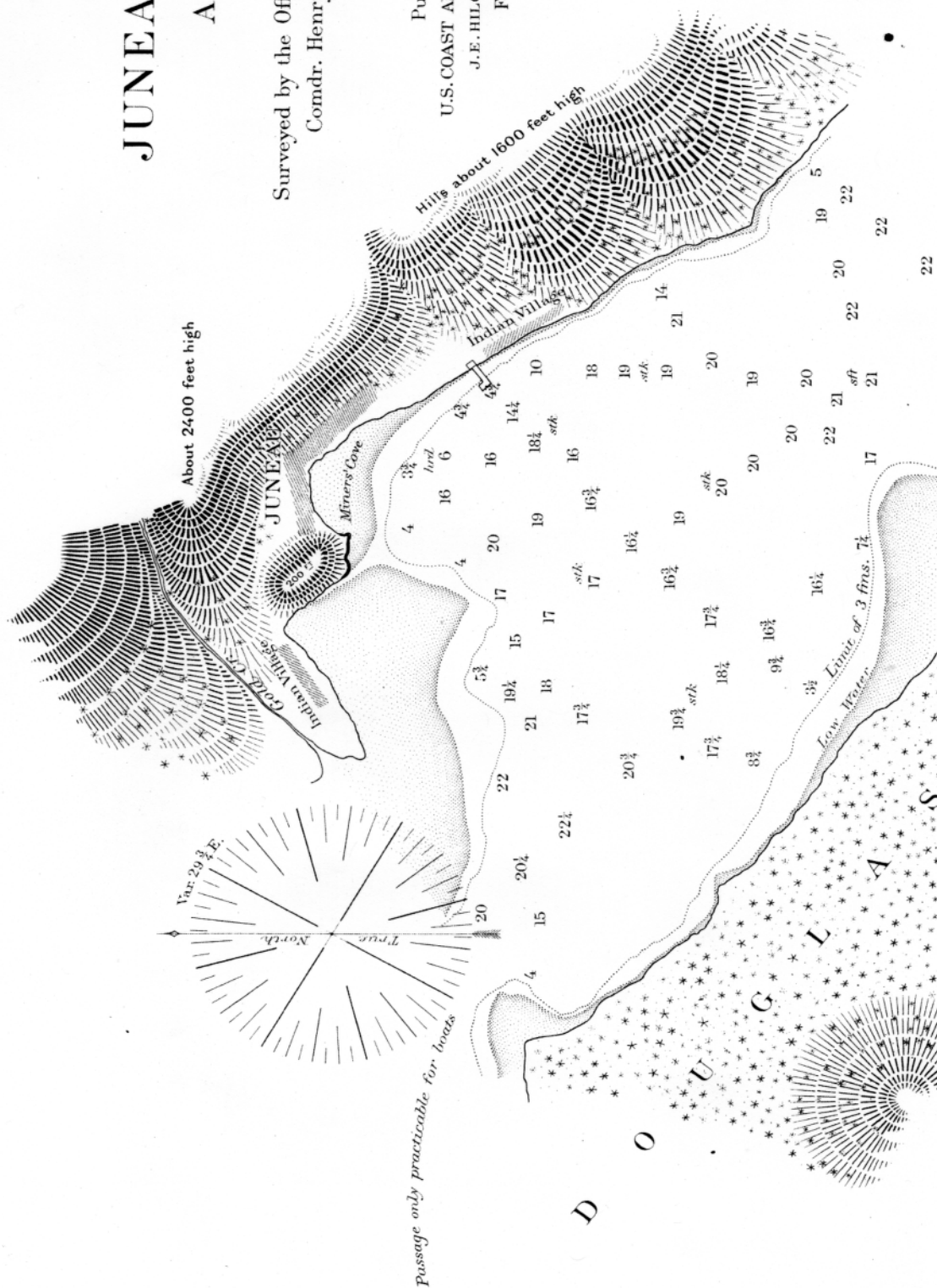


# JUNEAU HARBOR

## ALASKA

Surveyed by the Officers of the U. S. S. Wachusett  
Comdr. Henry Glass U. S. N. Comdg.  
1881

Published by the  
U. S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY  
J. E. HILGARD, Superintendent  
February 1883



Officers aboard the U.S.S. *Wachusett* created this nautical chart when they arrived in Gastineau Channel in August 1881. The steam-powered sloop-of-war replaced the U.S.S. *Jamestown* as the Navy's flagship in southeast Alaska and delivered fresh officers and marines to relieve the men who built Juneau's naval outpost.

# Foreword

Alaska's capital city, in its first frenetic year, was known by many names—*Takou*, after nearby Taku Inlet; *Harrisburg*, after the co-discoverer of gold Richard Harris; *Rockwell*, after the Navy's Lieutenant-Commander Charles Rockwell; and *Juneau City*, after Joseph Juneau, who, it seems, had to buy several rounds of drinks at a tavern to get the name changed to his own. To the local Auk Tlingit people, the area around Gold Creek was known as Dzántik'i Heeni, which translates roughly as "creek at the base of the hill shaped like a flounder." George Barnes, a miner who arrived in 1880 aboard the Northwest Trading Company's vessel *Favorite*, commented on the devil-take-the-hindmost atmosphere in the burgeoning mining camp when he wrote, "This is a rough and tumble country; everybody for himself and Old Nick for us all."

This booklet brings together eighteen accounts from people (including George Barnes) who participated in Juneau's genesis as Alaska's first gold mining boomtown. The source of each account differs—some are newspaper stories, letters from miners, military reports, or memoirs written years later—but they were all produced by people who were there. This is critical for capturing the voices of the past, including those of key players like George Pilz, Richard Harris, Charles Rockwell, and Newman Fuller. In addition to written sources, this booklet offers some of the earliest photographs of Juneau. The stereographic images of Henry H. Brodeck are particularly interesting because they provide a rare chronicle of Juneau in 1881 (see page 16 for a profile of the photographer and his technique).

First-person accounts are important because they provide a glimpse into a phenomenon of the American West—the gold camp—in the first weeks and months of its formation. Although similar camps sprang up from Michigan to California, it is rare to find detailed, eyewitness reports that allow readers to learn the vocabulary of the day and to understand the motivations and

attitudes of early participants. One thing not captured here are the voices of the Auk Tlingit and other Alaska Native people who witnessed the sudden influx of outsiders and who came to live and work in the new mining town. Though their participation was essential—as packers, hunters, and miners—their stories are underrepresented. For this reason, photographs like those of Henry Brodeck are particularly important. The Auk leader known as Kowee is also central to Juneau's origin story—he appears in a photograph on the Title Page and his role in Juneau's origin story is described in the Postscript on page 25.

Over fifty years have passed since the publication of Robert DeArmond's *The Founding of Juneau* (1967), and the book has stood the test of time. DeArmond produced a vivid portrait of the historical action in early Juneau and a detailed biographical dictionary profiling the key participants. As he predicted, new materials have come to light over the years, and the goal of this booklet is to offer these sources—some known to historians, others obscure—to a new generation of readers. This process of discovery and re-examination is critical to the historian's craft.

Each account in this collection begins with an "Editor's note" providing contextual information, identifying the author of the piece, and explaining archaic vocabulary. In many cases the accounts are excerpted, leaving out portions not related to Juneau or its vicinity. Spelling and capitalization are left unchanged, though some abbreviations are spelled out for the reader's convenience. In-text notes in brackets are used to clarify where necessary. One tip—when writing dates in the 1880s, *instant* (as in "July 13th instant") meant "this month" and *ultimo* meant "last month."

Our hope is that this collection will interest Juneau residents and anyone curious about the origins of Alaska's first gold mining boomtown.



View of Juneau facing south by Edward DeGroff of the Northwest Trading Company, ca. 1882. DeGroff was Juneau's first postmaster and a deputy recorder for mining and property claims. The town wharf, built in May 1881, appears in the background. Alaska State Library, Edward DeGroff Photographs (P91-65).



# ACCOUNT 1

## From Sitka to the New Discovery

Walter H. Pierce

**Editor's note:** In this excerpt from *Thirteen Years of Travel and Exploration in Alaska* (1890), the itinerant prospector Walter Pierce describes the experience of most early arrivals at the new gold field on Gastineau Channel—the news that Richard Harris and Joseph Juneau had struck gold, journeys through unfamiliar waters, the onset of winter, and negotiations with the Auk Tlingit. In the thirteen years since the United States had purchased Alaska from Russia, miners like Pierce had been visiting Sitka and (without much luck) searching for gold. And like Pierce, many of them were fresh from the Cassiar mining district in British Columbia. Now they had the chance to stake profitable claims and to found the community that would in time become Alaska's capital.

The summer of 1880 I spent in prospecting in the vicinity of Sitka. I did not find anything of value. I was thinking I would leave Alaska, and was waiting in Sitka for the ship. We then had only one vessel a month. Just then two other prospectors came in, who had been prospecting in the neighborhood of the Tarko [Taku] River. They had made good discoveries, both in quartz and placer gold. I concluded to remain, and joined a party with four others.

We purchased a boat, and taking about two weeks' provisions with us started for the new discovery. It was our intention to go there as soon as possible—try to get claims near the discovery and return to Sitka to winter. It was then the first of November, and we did not care to try to do anything during the winter.

We were not acquainted with the coast in that locality, and were obliged to travel by an old Russian chart, which I had managed to pick up at Sitka. The chart was not correct and caused us to lose our way several times, for our route lay among the numerous islands along the coast. After a good deal of traveling and hunting around we succeeded in finding the Auk Indian village. The Auks are a small tribe of Indians who live in the vicinity of the place where the gold was found.

I have neglected to mention that we could not get any reliable information from the two men who made the discovery, as they did not want parties to go there before spring, fearing that they might interfere with their claims. Had they been willing to give us a map of the location it would have saved us much time and annoyance. However the Auk Indians knew the place, but were smart enough to demand a large fee for showing us where it was. It also began to snow, which made it yet more difficult, as it covered up the tracks made by the first parties.

The Indians demanded one hundred dollars for showing us the place. This demand we did not feel inclined to comply with. After a good deal of dickering and losing several days more time, we finally induced them, for a small sum, to show us where the discoverers had camped on the beach. Every thing was covered with snow, but we kept up our search and finally found their location stakes in a little valley [Silver Bow Basin] about four miles from our camp.

Owing to the depth of the snow, which was increasing every day, it was impossible to prospect to any advantage, and we were forced to give up trying to get any claims until spring. In the meantime our provisions had completely given out. We were one hundred and sixty miles from Sitka, the nearest supply point.

We decided to return at once to Sitka. First we went to the Indian village where we invested several dollars in dried salmon, which, although not very palatable food, is a great deal better than nothing.

We started for Sitka, but the winter storms were fully upon us. The wind blew continuously, and, day after day, we were obliged to lie in camp, the wind and seas making it too difficult to travel. Our food was dry salmon and clams; and to add to our discomfort the snow turned to rain, and the heavy winds drove it through our tent like a sieve. All of our clothing and blankets were very wet—so wet that we could not sleep in them. We could not dry them for the rain was continuous and heavy, however, we managed to make a large log-heap fire. Fortunately we found some pitch pine which made a fire possible.

This added much to our comfort. Here we could cook three meals a day, and have a change every meal. Thus, salmon and clams for breakfast, clams and salmon for dinner, and reverse it again for supper. On several occasions I went hunting, and once I was rewarded with a porcupine. He was fat and made us a fine stew.

Well it could not storm always, so one day it quit and cleared off. We launched our boat and returned to Sitka without further trouble.

By this time a lot of miners, who had come from the Cassiar mines to the coast to winter, heard of the new strike and had come to Sitka to outfit and go there. This created a stampede. Every one wanted to go. Although nothing could be done during the winter, they would be there when the spring opened. So everybody, or all the miners, went there.

Again I outfitted. This time with two partners, and taking winter supplies went back. The weather was good, and we had no trouble on the trip. We all camped on the beach, about forty miners all told, and started a new town. That town is now Juneau City, the metropolis of Alaska.

*After the purchase of Alaska, gold miners came to Sitka looking for new opportunities. St. Michael's Cathedral and Mt. Verstovia can be seen in the background of this 1881 image. Presbyterian Historical Society, Henry H. Brodeck Photographs (2118).*



## ACCOUNT 2

### Sitka Excited

*San Francisco Chronicle*, February 8, 1881

**Editor's note:** This report from San Francisco offers all the elements needed to create a gold stampede, including glowing reports of mineral values, proclamations from trusted sources, and mild warnings to proceed cautiously. In this case, James Carroll, captain of the steamship *California*, is the trusted source and one of the few people to have seen the rich ores of what was being called the Takou, or Tokow, district. In October 1880, Joseph Juneau and Richard Harris staked a mining for him in Silver Bow Basin, and he later acquired interests in other local mining endeavours. The *sulphurets* mentioned in the report refer to threads of gold woven among quartz crystals. The *California* carried mail, freight, and passengers once a month from the West Coast to Alaska, and the ship would be instrumental in the evolution of the mining camp in its first year. Over the years, Captain Carroll piloted ships like the *Idaho*, *Mexico*, and *Queen*, and today his name can be found on Carroll Way in Juneau and Carroll Inlet near Ketchikan.

The steamer *California*, thirteen days from Sitka, arrived in port yesterday with the sensational news that Alaska is afflicted with a virulent gold fever. Some two months ago genuine quartz croppings were discovered near the Tokow [Taku] river, about eighty miles north of Sitka. The indications of a rich lode were so strong that the discovery created an excitement which has increased with every breath of news from the new El Dorado.

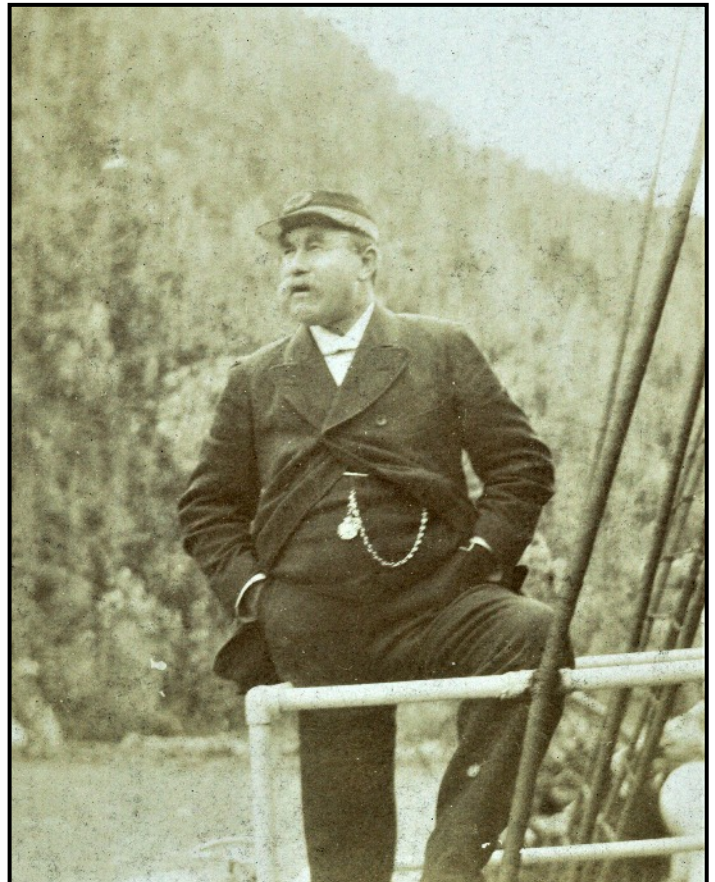
Owing to the great depth of the snow which prevails at this season of the year, it is impossible to work the mines, so that the imagination of the gold-seekers have full play, and the reputation of the lode grows apace. Nothing is so beneficial to a new mining district as the interposition of natural obstacles to its rapid development. If one might judge of the quality of the ore brought down by Captain [James] Carroll of the *California*, the Tokow district is bound to prosper on its merits.

The specimens of quartz brought from the vein mines of the Captain have assayed as high as \$3,000 to the ton. The ore, to speak in terms not technical, is of whitish-yellow, profusely sprinkled with sulphurets. The rock is rich enough, if found in large quantities, to make a bonanza prince of every man in Sitka, and every man in Sitka appears to have become imbued with that idea.

As no means of transportation can be furnished until the *California* returns, the excited merchants have to remain in Sitka at present. According to the best authenticated reports, however, they are pulling down their stores and packing their implements for a trip to the Tokow district, and when the *California* goes back she will transform the station into a busy mining camp.

At present there are about fifty men on the gold-fields, and it is probable that every man has a claim staked off, though Captain Carroll says that but eleven claims have been located. The mines cannot be worked until the end of March, but while waiting for the snow to melt the adventurers will lay out their town. The *California* will take all the lumber she can carry, and the Captain will feel disappointed if every man in Sitka does not insist on joining the expedition.

*Captain James Carroll of the steamer California, who brought ore samples from Juneau to San Francisco and broke the news of a gold strike. Alaska State Library, Clarence L. Andrews Photographs (P45-1318).*





## ACCOUNT 3

### The Alaska Mines, A Letter from George Pilz *Mining and Scientific Press*, February 19, 1881

**Editor's note:** The energetic and irascible George Pilz, born in Germany, is the man who hired Richard Harris and Joseph Juneau to search for promising gold prospects in the vicinity of Gastineau Channel. They staked claims in his name, and he brought his wife Marion and son William to the booming mining camp he helped to establish. Early in 1881, Pilz and the naval officer Charles Rockwell joined forces as directors of the Arctic Mill & Mining Company, and Pilz sought investors in other mining concerns. But, his grumpy and often conspiratorial personality seemed to torpedo his business ambitions. In a lifetime of prospecting from Alaska to California, and from Mexico to Bolivia, he never seemed to find the wealth and satisfaction he sought. Pilz died in Eagle, Alaska, along the Yukon River in 1926.

I think it probable that as you have not heard for a long time from this part of the coast (Sitka), a few notes in regard to certain newspaper reports may be of advantage to the readers of the *Mining and Scientific Press*. During the past summer, feeling confident of the mineral wealth of Alaska, I fitted out seven different parties to prospect, each with six month's provisions and equipments. I also paid each party, which consisted of five or six men, regular wages; as otherwise I could not expect to have the prospecting of the country done to my own satisfaction.

The last of the seven parties returned in the later part of November, and brought here to Sitka, on a canoe, almost two tons of the richest quartz I ever saw in any country. I went up to this new El Dorado, leaving here on the 25th of November, and arriving there, in a canoe, on the 29th of the same month.

The district is called after the discoverer "Harris District," and is situated on the mainland of Alaska . . . opposite Douglas Island, on the northern end of Admiralty Island. The discoveries of the ledges and placers were first made on Gold creek, but since traced and found in Salmon creek and Glacier creek, five and seven miles northwest respectively, and in Sheep creek, three miles southeast.

In Gold creek and its tributaries some 60 claims are now already taken up and staked out, and on all very encouraging prospects have been found. They may be called \$5 to \$20 diggings. But very little can be done there before April or May, as the men are not prepared to work yet, and are only getting ready and prospecting their grounds.

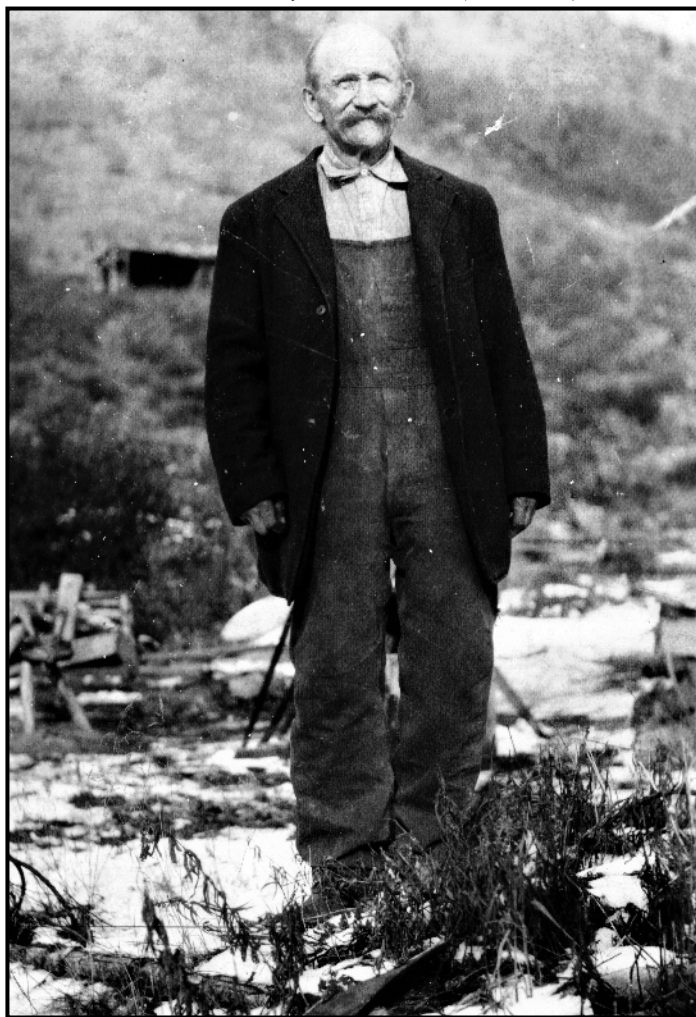
The ledges which made these placers are at the head of the creek, and cross the creek twice in a distance of about two miles. There is but one belt of them, which is about 3,000 feet wide, and in it the six main ledges run parallel to each other, besides a number of smaller veins . . . and the whole length shows the richest kind of ore. . . . I have made upward of a hundred assays, both fire and wet, and the lowest assay out of the very poorest piece of quartz yielded \$33 per ton, while the average of my assays which might also be

called average of the ledges, are \$285 per ton, and run from \$100 to \$5,000 per ton. . . .

The way to it [Harris District] is very easy and any large vessel can sail to the mouth of the creeks and anchor within 200 feet of the shore. Already I had a 150 ton steamer up there, taking up my men and supplies, and by the middle of February, I expect to have the mail steamer *California*, running up there with lumber and supplies. . . . I must not forget to give due credit to Commander Glass and the other officers of the U.S. ship *Jamestown* [stationed at Sika since 1879], for their ready assistance to us prospectors, they having done everything in their power to further our efforts.

Yours respectively, George E. Pilz, Sitka, Alaska

*George Pilz was born in Germany and came to Alaska when the United States purchased the territory from Russia. He financed Richard Harris and Joseph Juneau and they struck it rich. Alaska State Library, Portrait File (P01-4416).*



## ACCOUNT 4

### A Name Change to Rockwell

*Sacramento Record-Union*, March 16, 1881

**Editor's note:** In early February 1881, Lt. Commander Charles Rockwell of the U.S.S. *Jamestown* traveled from Sitka to the new mining camp to assist in establishing a new code of laws for the Harris Mining District and to resolve irregularities in the district's record book. As a result of his help, the miners voted to change the name of the camp from Harrisburg to Rockwell. Unfortunately for the miners, the name Harrisburg had already been trumpeted up and down the West Coast, and for the next year, confusion reigned regarding the camp's true designation. Camp residents frequently resorted to putting both "Rockwell" and "Harrisburg" on their letters.

*Charles H. Rockwell, Lt. Commander of the U.S.S. Jamestown, served in Alaska from 1879 to 1881. For a time, his name was given to the mining boomtown. Courtesy of Chatham Historical Society (2012.28.44).*

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Port Townsend, March 15, 1881:

The steamer *California*, arrived from Sitka, via Nanaimo, last evening. She arrived at Sitka on March 4th. . . . The steam launch of the *Jamestown*, under command of Lieutenant [Charles H.] Rockwell, had returned from Takou. New surveys of the mining district had been made, new records filed, and the name of the town changed to Rockwell. . . .

The *California* left Sitka on the 6th instant with 50 passengers, 100,000 feet of lumber and 20 tons of provisions, and anchored on the 7th within three miles of the quartz and placer mines, thirty hours from Sitka, after having anchored twelve hours at Whitewater Bay. The channel is clear and the anchorage at Takou Bay very good.

There were several capitalists and mining experts among the passengers from San Francisco. . . . Twenty-five new houses have been built at Harrisburg. There are now about five feet of snow at the mines. Preparations are being made to carry lumber and provisions on sledges.

Commander [Henry] Glass, of the *Jamestown* had a conference with the Auk Indians. They ask him to prohibit the introduction of hoochinoo [moonshine], or material for its manufacture. The citizens also petition him to the same effect. Provisions are very scarce at Harrisburg. There are 100 men in the camp. The *California* left the mines on the 9th.





# ACCOUNT 5

## Quartz on the Brain

*Rocky Mountain Husbandman*, June 9, 1881

**Editor's note:** On two occasions the miner George W. Barnes of Diamond City, Montana, wrote to his hometown newspaper reporting on the mining camp they called Rockwell. In his eyes, the town emerging from the "rough and tumble country" near the water's edge showed marvelous potential, even if the devil ("Old Nick") held sway. The arrival of the *California* marked a building boom, and the number of homes and businesses had doubled over the previous two months. With banks, assaying offices (to measure gold values in the ore), a hotel, barber shop, and restaurant, the town was beginning to resemble mining communities throughout the American West. Barnes also notes the presence of two "gin-mills," or saloons.

Editor *Husbandman*:

Perhaps an item from the new camp found on the mainland in Alaska Territory last fall may be of interest to some of the readers of your valuable journal. I will endeavor to state things as they are at present, so as to not mislead anyone.

Spring is on hand gladdening the hearts of nearly everyone. The winter just passed has been a very mild one on the whole, for this latitude.

Nearly everybody here has quartz on the brain, although no one has died from the effects yet. Everything looks encouraging for a new camp. The quartz lodes, or the most of them that have been opened, are from one to two miles back from salt water. They are situated in what is called Silver Bow Basin, so named by the discoverers. The surface rock where it crops out of the ground shows quite rich in gold. Some of the lodes are free milling rock, and some of them contain a good deal of galena [lead ore with silver content]. Very little has been done on the lodes yet on account of the deep snow.

Building houses up at the mines and a laid-out town close to salt water has been the order of business for the past two months. There are now some fifty new houses erected in Rockwell and more contemplated. The sound of the axe and hammer is heard on all sides, early and late.

About three hundred Indians are camped along the beach who make night hideous with their music, when accompanied with the howl of their companions, the coyotes and dogs.

Castings arrived by the last steamer for six cars. A tramway is being talked of from the mines to the sea this summer.

Beach diggings have been found about three miles from town, but not very extensive. The parties making the discovery think they can make \$10 per day with sluices. The gold is very fine.

A sign has just been raised which reads: "Assay Office. Gold Dust Bought. Banking, Etc."

There are now three stores in Rockwell, one hotel, restaurant, barber shop, and two gin-mills. Whiskey has the same effect on the brain in Alaska, as in other parts of the world. Some are anticipating quite a rush here this summer.

This part of Alaska will be thoroughly prospected this season. I would not advise anyone to come to Alaska unless he has means

to prospect or go into business. This is a rough and tumble country; everybody for himself and Old Nick for us all.

Living is not very dear here excepting luxuries. Lumber is selling for \$40 per thousand. This will be a good camp for some enterprising saw mill man. Good water privileges can be found and plenty of spruce timber.

The waters here among the islands and passes are deep enough for the largest vessels. Captain [Henry] Glass, of the *Jamestown*, is here looking after the welfare of the citizens and Indians. He has taken up ground on Knob Hill and has ordered a temporary guard house to be built immediately.

The weather here for the last ten days has been as balmy as one could wish for in this latitude. We have about eighteen hours daylight here now.

Adieu till the steamer arrives, [May 2, 1881], G.W.B.

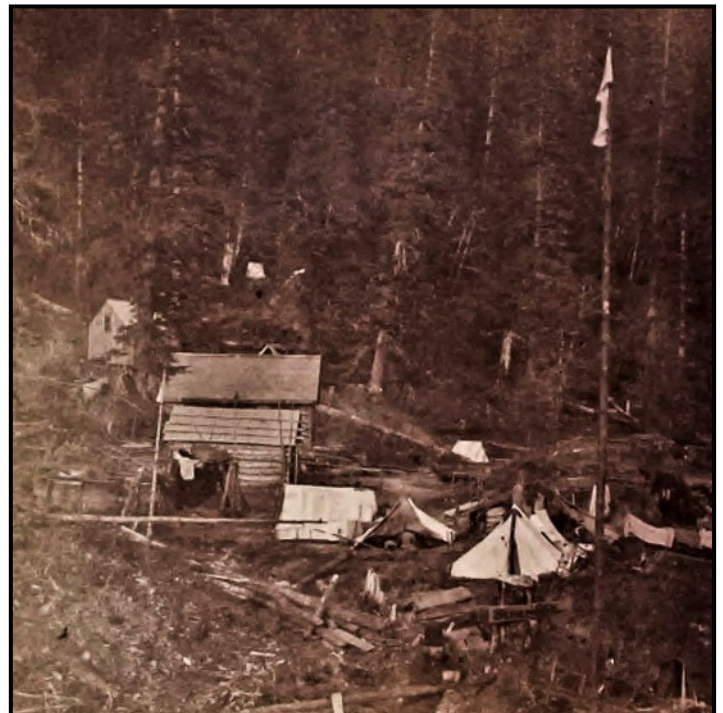
Later—The steamer *California* arrived last night. She brought about twenty passengers, fifty tons of freight and 40,000 feet of lumber from Sitka. She will probably take down a few tons of quartz on her return trip.

The Montana & Alaska Prospecting and Mining Company, that left Montana last February, arrived here in March all right. They like the country very much. They have built houses and have made several locations. J.M. Cooper, the Captain of the company, informed me that they have been offered \$7,000 for one of their locations. Town lots are already up in the hundreds.

The day here is rather windy, but I guess that my wind is exhausted. When the tide is out the table is always set along the coast of Alaska. Should you find this letter rather long, take a reef in it.

Rockwell, Alaska, May 12, 1881, George W. Barnes

*Tents and log cabins in Juneau, 1881. Presbyterian Historical Society, Henry H. Brodeck Photographs (2139).*



# ACCOUNT 6

## There Is No Law in Alaska Henry Glass Writes to the Navy Secretary

**Editor's note:** In this letter to the Secretary of the Navy, Commander Henry Glass asks for authorization to establish a fort at the mining camp along Gastineau Channel. Since the purchase of Alaska in 1867, various military officers found themselves in the awkward position of playing police and judge in a land without a system of laws. According to Glass, a Navy garrison of twenty-four marines was needed to protect against Indian attack and violent clashes between miners. To this end, he posted a notice and sent the officers and enlisted men to erect tents and frame buildings. Three years later, Congress would pass the Organic Act of 1884 which provided Alaska with a rudimentary government.

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U.S.S. *Jamestown*, Sitka, Alaska, May 7, 1881:

Sir: As reported in my previous dispatches, extensive ledges of gold-bearing quartz and productive placer-mines have been discovered on the mainland of Alaska, near Douglas Island. These ledges having now been opened for working, and their gravel value beyond question, a large influx of miners and prospectors has followed, and the number of white persons at the mines is daily increasing. The Indians belonging to the surrounding tribes have been attracted to the mines in large numbers. An extensive mining district has been formed in accordance with law, and a mining town called Rockwell established. This town now contains a population of about 150 whites and 450 Indians. These numbers will soon be largely increased, as with the disappearance of the snow on the ledges extensive work will be undertaken.

Frequent disputes as to the ownership of the property in the town, the placer-mines, and on the quartz ledges occur, often attended with threats of violence, and there is an imperative necessity for the establishment of some authority to prevent disturbances and control the lawless element usually attracted to new mining regions.

During the past winter I have kept up communications with the mining region by means of steam launches of this ship, with the double object of keeping order among white men, and of preventing collisions between them and the Indians, and on the 10th of April, I sent Lieutenant Commander Charles H. Rockwell, U.S.N., the executive officer to the mines, to observe and report on the condition of affairs there. Mr. Rockwell returned on the 27th ultimo, and his report decided me to go at once to the mines, to investigate the situation, and take such steps as might be necessary.

I arrived at Rockwell on the 30th of April in the first steam launch of the ship, and at once called upon the mining recorder, and several other gentlemen of intelligence for information, and became convinced from their statements that some prompt and decided action should be taken to guard against serious disturbances which were liable to occur at the mines at any time, it being said frequently 'there is no law in Alaska.' I was confirmed in my opinion on finding some disputes relating to property in the town, which had been referred to me for an opinion, terminating in threats of open violence to persons and property.

In this condition of affairs, and after careful consideration of the state of the Territory, where no civil government has ever been established by Congress, I decided to give notice to all inhabitants of Alaska, and more particularly to the miners at Rockwell, that the military authority of the government would be exercised for the preservation of good order and the protection of all residents. With this object, I called a meeting of all the miners, and others in town, on the 2nd of May, and gave notice of my intention, explaining that the notice was issued for their protection and the preservation of good order, but it was not intended to affect any rights of persons or property. A copy of the notice was posted conspicuously, and another copy furnished the recorder, to be placed on file. I enclose herewith a copy of the notice.

In pursuance of the notice given, and in consideration of the inadvisability of attempting to take the *Jamestown* through the intricate passages leading to the mining regions, I have decided to send Lieutenant Commander Rockwell, in the steamer *California*, to establish there a post on shore; the force detailed for the purpose being four officers, ten marines, and the crew of the second steam launch of the ship, a total of twenty-four officers and men. A suitable location was selected and marked as a government reservation for the erection of tents and such temporary buildings as may be necessary for the comfort of the detachment.

This force I shall maintain on shore at Rockwell until relieved in command on the station or otherwise instructed by the department, the effect such a step will have on the Indians being in itself a sufficient ground for so doing. I enclose herewith a copy of the instructions given to Lieutenant-Commander Rockwell.

In order to settle disputes as to property, as far as possible without actual interference, I have directed a careful survey to be made of the town plot of Rockwell, in accordance with the local mining records, which contain notices and descriptions of all locations of property. A copy of this survey will, when completed, be forwarded for transmission to the Interior Department.

For this action, which I consider the only one now possible, in pursuance of the obvious duty resting upon me of preserving peace and good order within the limits of my command, I would respectfully ask the approval of the department.

Very respectfully yours, your obedient servant, Henry Glass,  
Commanding.



## ACCOUNT 7

### Establishment of the Harris Mining District From the Diary of Richard T. Harris

**Editor's note:** This manuscript, held at the Alaska State Library, was written by Richard Harris and serves as a principal source for all histories of Juneau's early days. Harris describes working under contract for George Pilz, prospecting creekbeds between Sitka and Gastineau Channel with Joseph Juneau, and discovering signs of gold at Gold Creek—at every point aided by Tlingit crewmen who paddled the canoes and hauled their supplies. Harris shares the awe he and his French-Canadian partner felt seeing the gold-encrusted quartz in what he named Silver Bow Basin, and how the Northwest Trading Company ship *Favorite* and the *Jamestown's* steam launch raced to bring miners and supplies from Sitka.

[Regarding the] original discovery of the Harris Mining District, Alaska, discovered October 4, 1880 by Richard T. Harris and Joe Juneau:

On the 19th of July 1880, Richard T. Harris and Joseph Juneau, old and experienced miners, originally from Colorado, Montana, and Cassiar, British Columbia, entered into contract with George E. Pilz of Sitka and the Hall Brothers of San Francisco, California for the purpose of prospecting along the coast of the mainland, for gold or silver bearing quartz, or gold bearing gravel deposits.

The said George E. Pilz & Company [was] to furnish the outfit of provisions and boat and also three native Indians, Richard T. Harris having charge of the expedition and to receive \$60 per month, and furnished everything, and also all the extensions on any quartz lode, gold or silver, that might be discovered and also all the gold gravel deposits. All that Pilz and Hall reserved to themselves was the 1st and 2nd locations on all and every gold and silver bearing quartz lode.

We left Sitka, Alaska on July 19th in a canoe, provisions for 3 months and three native Indians to man our canoe, and took our course in a northerly direction over the rapids and followed Peril Straits to its mouth. The 23rd of July [we] tried to cross Chatham Straits in our canoe, a distance of 13 miles across the channel to Hootznoo, an Indian village on the southwest side of Admiralty Island, but was compelled to turn back as the sea was running high.

[On the] 24th we run south 25 miles down to the N.E. side of Baranoff Island and crossed Chatham Straits to an Indian village named Elltooskin [and] continued our course south to Point Gardner, the extreme S.E. corner of Admiralty Island, where Chatham Straits enters Prince Frederick Sound. July 26 crossed Prince Frederick Sound, about 20 miles in width and landed above Cape Fanshaw on the mainland.

On July 28 commenced to prospect and found colours of gold in small stream emptying into a bay; plenty of float quartz. We named the bay Quartz Bay. The bay was well stocked with whale, seal and silver salmon; the prospect [was] not good enough in gold to warrant us in locating.

On July 29 we arrived at a large creek named Shug [Shuck] and went up a small stream called Spruce Creek to the summit of the mountain, and found gold all the way up Spruce Creek to the summit but did not think it would pay more than 3 or 4 dollars per day to the man. A few miners were working on the creek for Charles Brown Company and a few others had formed a mining

district and called it Darwin District. On July 30 we located 2 quartz lodes for Pilz and Company and named [them] 'George E. Pilz' and the 'Morning Star.'

On August 1, we left Shug Creek, rounded Point Windham in a north-east direction for Holcomb [Holkham] Bay; plenty of float ice the year round; prospected a creek named Somedon [Sumdum]; found 10 miners at work making about \$3 per day to the man. Did not discover any quartz rock as the summit of the creek is a solid field of ice. We then sailed for Somedon or Holcomb Bay in a northerly direction, prospecting all the small streams for 8 days, and run into Snettisham Bay and found small prospects for gold. On the 11th we sailed for the mouth of the Takou River and run into the Stevens [Stephens] Channel, cutting through between Admiralty Island and Douglas Island. Prospected some small streams on the island, getting some light prospects.

On August 13 run over to Auk Indian village [and] saw an Indian had some rock; it was iron and copper. Prospected the creek but found no gold. Mainland runs north from Auk village as far as Chilcat and Chilkoot rivers. Left Auk village on the 14th, sailed between Shelter Island and the mainland, sighted Point Retreat, [and] sailed up Lynn Canal as far as Auk Glacier or Glacier River. Met three men, by name Hilton, Donnelly and Rosewald, on their way out from the headwaters of the Ucon [Yukon] river, another party that was sent out to prospect in the Ucon country for Pilz and Hall, but they were not successful in finding anything.

[Continued next page]

*Richard Harris, co-founder of Juneau. Alaska State Library, Winter & Pond Photographs (P87-2372).*



On the 15th of August, we concluded to sail no further north and we took our course back with those men as far as the south end of the Auk Bay, and then proceeded south to Fort Wrangle [Wrangell], and we continued our search for gold. On August 16 we run into a creek we named Salmon Creek; we went up the creek and panned out a few particles of gold, but we concluded it would not pay. This creek empties into Gastineau Channel from the mainland.

On Tuesday, August 17th, we run down the channel about 2 miles and discovered another creek running from the mainland and emptying into Gastineau Channel; went up the creek about a mile and a half and found in the bed of the creek above what is now called Snow Slide Gulch about ten cents to the pan of gravel. We named the creek Gold Creek as it was the best prospect we had found on the trip. We also found some very good float gold quartz in the creek. We carried out about 100 lbs. of the quartz and panned out about \$1.50 in gold. And Juneau and myself being well satisfied there must be good gold deposits on the headwaters of the creek, concluded to return to Sitka, as our provisions were running short, and get another outfit and return to prospect the headwaters of the creek, and also to report to George E. Pilz.

And on the 23rd of August, we left Gold Creek and sailed for Sitka about 200 miles from Gold Creek, and took a southerly course around the end of Admiralty Island and prospected all round the island from Stephens Channel to Chatham Straits but didn't find anything. On the 27th we shot a deer swimming out to sea in Prince Frederick Sound.

On Wednesday, 1st of September, we reached the North-West Company store at Killisnoo, crossed Chatham Straits, sea very rough, and sailed up Peril Straits as far as Canoe Island and prospected one quartz lode by pulling in and blasting four shots of Giant powder [dynamite] but did not find anything. We run over the rapids and prospected in Fish Bay, but found nothing. We then sailed through the White Stone Narrows into Sitka and landed in Sitka on Wednesday, September 8, 1880, making 51 days [of the] first prospecting trip.

On the 9th I went to the office of George E. Pilz, give him the gold I panned out and also the quartz that we carried back in our canoe. Mr. Pilz, being an expert in minerals and No. 1 assayer, examined the rock and the gold and give me orders to get another supply of provisions and mining tools and return and prospect the headwaters of Gold Creek. We rested for 8 days and sailed on our second expedition from Sitka on Friday, September 17, 1880, in a good canoe which I named the *Alaska Chief of Gold Creek*. I took the same course and got the North-West Trading Company's steamer, *Favorite*, to tow the canoe as far as Cross Sound. [We] landed at Hootznoo at 2 o'clock in the morning of the 18th, Saturday, and on Sunday night we sailed for Hoonah, running west of Chatham Straits. About 11 o'clock in the night a storm came up, wind blowing from the south-east, and the steamer *Favorite* was compelled to cast us loose at 12 o'clock in the night or else lose our canoe and outfit, but we got ashore all right.

Monday morning, 20th, the sea was very rough but made a good run to Cross Sound, wind from the N.E. On Tuesday the 21st made a good run against a head wind. On the 22nd we run north into Linn [Lynn] Canal, a fair west wind, and passed Point Retreat on the extreme north end of Admiralty Island. Thursday, 23rd, sailed past Shelter Island, passed the Auk Indian village and camped on the north end of Douglas Island. Friday the 24th sailed over the Auk Bar into Gastineau Channel and camped and prospected

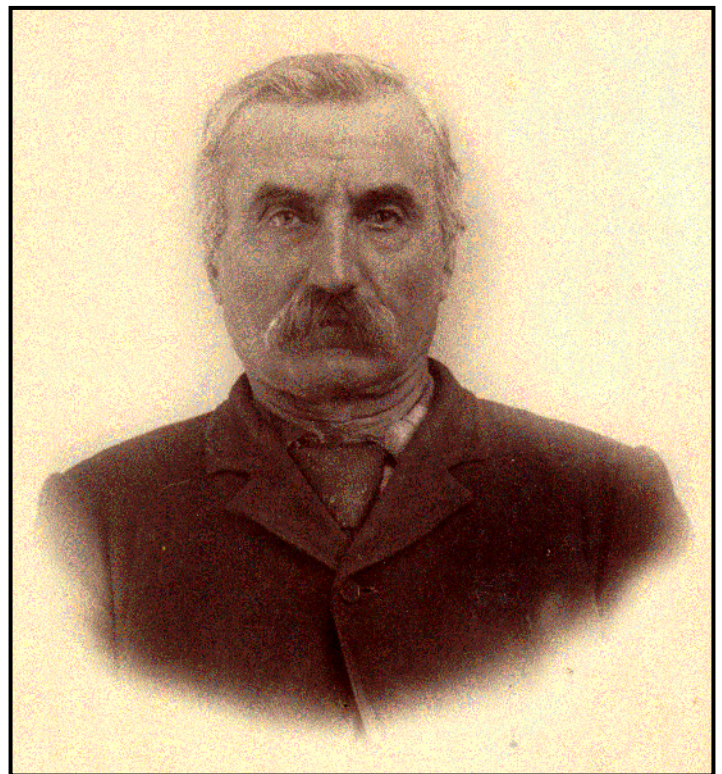
Salmon Creek and was compelled to remain in camp as there was a strong head wind blowing from the south-east for a few days. We then sailed for Gold Creek and on Wednesday 29th landed at Gold Creek, and put up our tent and rested four days.

And on Sunday, [October] 3, we packed one Indian and Juneau and myself, and the Indian started for the headwaters of Gold Creek and tributaries. We could not follow the creek as the brush was too compact, and one or two canyons we could not well get around. Our only shot was to climb the mountain. We followed up Snow Slide Gulch and worked our way to the summit of the mountain. After reaching the mountain summit we obtained a beautiful view of what is now called Silver Bow Basin and Quartz Gulch. The basin I named after Silver Bow Mines in Montana, and the gulch I named from the fact that it contained the most gold bearing quartz I had ever seen in one gulch.

We followed the gulch down from the summit of the mountain into the basin, and it was a beautiful sight to see the large pieces of quartz of black sulphite and galena all spangled over with gold. I felt then satisfied that we two had found good gravel or placer mines as well as quartz. Before we got to the mouth of the gulch we examined several quartz lodes that cropped out on the edges of the gulch, and I broke some with a hammer and Juneau and myself could hardly believe our eyes. We knew it was gold, but so much and not fine particles, streaks running through the rock and little lumps as large as peas or beans. We then made our camp for the night down in Silver Bow Basin, and early in the morning while Juneau and the Indian were cooking breakfast, I took the gold pan, pick and shovel and panned four pans and got \$1.20 or 30 cents to the pan. After breakfast we went at staking and measuring the placer mines in the gulch.

[Continued next page]

*Joseph Juneau, co-founder of Juneau. Alaska State Library, Winter & Pond Photographs (P20-12).*





And on October 4th, I wrote out a Code of Local Laws giving the size of placer claims and the number of claims each miner could hold, and also quartz claims. We were then governed by Military & Navy law. We prospected around Silver Bow Basin until the 18th of October, and had our Indians pack out to the beach on salt water about 1,000 lbs. of gold quartz rock, the richest I ever seen. We picked the best specimens that we could find [and] we packed it over the highest mountain, a distance of three miles to salt water along about the 20th of October.

We measured and laid out a town site on the south side of the mouth of Gold Creek, along the beach. The beach on Gold Creek I named Harrisburg, and the district we named Harris Mining District [with] Richard T. Harris elected as the first recorder of the Harris Mining District. The town was afterwards changed to the name of Juneau.

On the 25th of October, we went about 4 miles further south to another nice looking creek we named Sheep Creek as we killed several mountain sheep, hence the name. We found some gold in the gravel and saw some good looking quartz lodes cutting through the mountain, but did not make any locations on Sheep Creek. We kept on prospecting in different places until Sunday, November 7, when we launched our canoe and loaded up our quartz rock and our records and laws and started for Sitka, a distance of 200 miles. We landed in Sitka on Wednesday, the 17th day of November, 1880.

[The] next day when we delivered our quartz to George E. Pilz and give him a full statement of our find, the inhabitants of Sitka could not believe there was such good quartz in Alaska. Mr. Pilz assayed the rock and said it would go thirty-thousand dollars to the ton; the quartz was streaked all over with lumps of gold. It created quite a sensation in Sitka; the people were almost wild with delight.

The U.S. ship *Jamestown* was then laying in the harbour at Sitka and her officers and men had the gold fever bad. Too much praise can not be given to the officers of the U.S.S. *Jamestown* as they assisted us in every manner in opening up the camp. Captain Henry Glass and paymaster James A. Ring and Lieutenant Edward P. McLelland and in fact every officer aboard the ship, both Warrant and Commissioned, done their best in helping to open up the camp. The United States Navy never furnished a more honorable or obliging set of officers on one ship than the U.S. ship *Jamestown* had on board at that time, when laying at Sitka, Alaska. And for a few days after our arrival in Sitka, every man in the town had the gold fever to get to the new diggings.

And about the 24th of November, Captain Glass give us one of his steam launches, commanded by Lieutenant McLelland and paymaster James A. Ring, an engineer and fireman, [and] six sailors to take us to the new diggings, and the North-West Trading Company sent their steamer *Favorite* to carry the miners that was then in Sitka to the mines. We had quite a lively time to see who would get to the diggings first, but as I piloted the steam launch we got to the mines ahead of the steamer *Favorite* [by] 2 days. We came very near losing the launch twice, 1st time in crossing Chatham Straits and 2nd time on November 27 at Point Retreat.

After arriving at the mines, there was a lively time staking off town lots and placer claims. On the 2nd of December, 1880, we went into Silver Bow Basin, the snow being on the mountain about 2 feet deep, and showed George Pilz his quartz locations and everything we had staked and recorded for him according to agreement. Mr. Pilz being well satisfied with what we had done and paid us off and give me one dollar a day more than my

agreement called for; that made \$3 per day and found [meaning food and lodging] and Juneau \$2 per day and found.

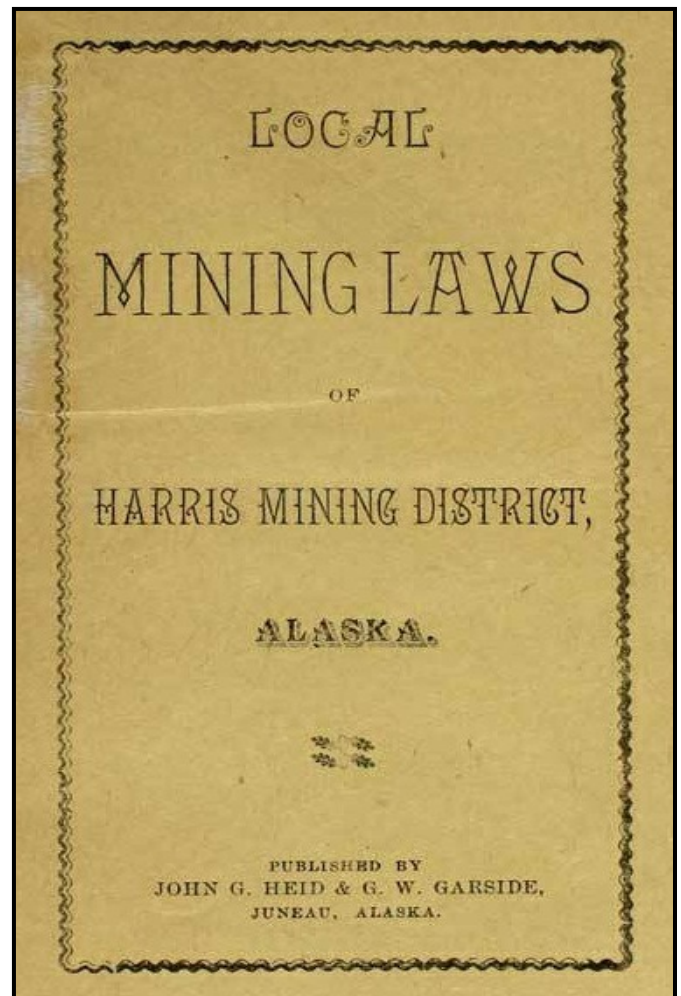
On December 3 and 4, we made some more locations in the basin and then came down to the beach. The miners that arrived on the steamer *Favorite* went to work building cabins and houses and they had all brought their provisions from Sitka to supply them for the winter. George E. Pilz put up the first house in the town, as it was brought from Sitka already framed on the steamer *Favorite*.

I then copied off the records and mining laws and recorded about 50 placer claims and town lots. I want to say for the native Indians of Alaska that all the way through on our exploring trip, they behaved friendly and assisted us all they possibly could. I can not give them too much praise and they were always very anxious for us to find gold as we were entirely at their mercy as there was not a white man nearer than Sitka, a distance of 200 miles. I could not speak their language, the Clinket [Tlingit]. I could speak the Chinook jargon very well, and some of them could understand it, but with the assistance of three Indians that we took along from Sitka we got along very well.

This is a true history of the Discovery of Silver Bow Basin, Harris Mining District and District of Alaska, as I kept a diary every day.

Richard T. Harris and Joseph Juneau, Discoverers

*This version of the district's mining laws was adopted on February 9, 1881. Courtesy of the Alaska State Library.*



## ACCOUNT 8

### The New Takou Gold Mines *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 4, 1881

**Editor's note:** This portrait of the "Town of Rockwell" describes the establishment of naval authority in the mining camp as well as "jumping" on mining claims and town lots, when latecomers moved in to occupy another person's property. The idea that the Navy had imposed "martial law" on the camp is a deliberate exaggeration used by miners who resented any whiff of government oversight. Commander Henry Glass was careful to explain that his forces were under orders to prevent violence and other criminal behavior, not to interfere with mining and business activities. Taku Inlet (spelled Takou or Tokow at this time) is about twelve miles southeast of Juneau and was a focus of mining interest until richer discoveries were made in the mountains behind Juneau and on Douglas Island. The account was likely written by one of three early miners—Daniel McLean, John McLean, or Neil McLeod—with names that matched the abbreviated signature.

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Sitka, Alaska Territory, May 9, 1881:

In and about the locality of the new gold mines in Takou Inlet, small icebergs float up and down with the tide. It is not an unusual sight to see these bergs stranded near the doors of the miners' cabins on the beach, in the thriving and busy mining Town of Rockwell.

The snow is still very deep on the mountains in Takou, but this does not deter the hardy miners from prospecting, and new gold-bearing quartz-ledges are discovered every few days. More than fifteen rich ledges have been discovered in the mining district of Takou, and the excitement is daily on the increase. New ledges have been discovered within a radius of 100 miles of Takou, and prospecting parties are going out every day to explore new fields.

There are now about 200 miners—including about twelve mining experts—on the ground; and forty other miners came up from San Francisco by the last steamer. There are more than thirty well-built log-houses, and the Town of Rockwell is regularly laid out in streets. It receives its name from [Charles H. Rockwell] the Executive officer of the United States steamer *Jamestown*.

There are several good stores; a dance-house is nearly finished; and of course there are whiskey-shops, three or four in number. The town is picturesquely situated, at the head of a deep-water inlet, with high mountains on each side. The inlet is from 4,000 to 5,000 feet wide, with a very steep, almost perpendicular, rocky height, bare of trees, in the immediate background, making a complete shelter from the northern winds. Several placer mines have been located, and Captain Vanderbilt, of the trading steamer *Favorite*, purchased the first gold taken from these.

All the experts testify most strongly to the richness of the quartz discovered by their long stay in the country. Several mining companies have been formed, and real work will be inaugurated at an early day. All that is now wanted is capital, for there are plenty of rich mines, judging from the specimens of quartz taken from them. Everything has been done quietly and harmoniously, with the exception of town-lot jumping, which is done in every new mining town; but no blood has been shed. A few ledges have been jumped by expert miners, because the original discoverers neglected to stake and locate them properly.

Nearly all of the officers of the *Jamestown* are interested in the mines, and the steam-launch of the *Jamestown* is kept running there and back to Sitka continually. Commander Glass has proclaimed martial law in the mining district, and detailed a squad of forty men from the ship, with a full complement of officers, staff and line, with Gatling gun, howitzers, small arms, and ammunition, to proceed there without delay. It is believed Commander Glass is interested in one of the mines that was jumped recently.

Only a very small portion of the country has been prospected, a mere fringe on the shores of a few bays and inlets. The prospector need never fear that he will suffer from hunger. A rifle or shotgun and fishing tackle are all that is necessary to procure abundance of food, for the forests are full of game and the waters teem with fish.

[Signed] McL.

*Navy sailors from the U.S.S. Jamestown pose in front of their new garrison headquarters on a bluff above Juneau, 1881. Presbyterian Historical Society, Henry H. Brodeck Photographs (2145).*





# ACCOUNT 9

## Conditions at Rockwell

### Charles H. Rockwell to Commander Glass

**Editor's note:** Lieutenant Rockwell's report describes the process of surveying land and building a military post on a hill just behind and to the right of the emerging settlement of Rockwell. The Navy's surveyor, Gustave Hanus, also laid out the streets, blocks, and lots of the emerging gold camp and, in the process, imposed order on the chaotic boomtown. Rockwell also mentions the commander's order forcing the Auk Tlingit camped in and around the townsite to move to the mouth of Gold Creek. Rockwell's primary concern are the miners cum agitators spreading reports that the Navy had imposed "martial law" and intended to violate their rights. A petition to this effect was on its way to Washington, DC. In his eyes, this was nothing more than the work of troublemakers wishing "to remain unrestricted in unlawful acts."

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Sir, I have to make the following report:

In obedience to your order of the 7th instant, I took passage on the steamer *California*, with a force of twelve marines, two petty officers, and three officers. The second steam launch, under command of Boatswain Peter H. Smith, and containing six petty officers and seamen, was taken in tow by the *California*.

This force was detailed under my command to establish a military post at this mining town, for the purpose of maintaining order among the white miners, preventing collisions between the whites and the Indians, assisting the officers of the Treasury Department in enforcing the laws relating to the Indian country, making surveys, and performing any duties rendered necessary in the preservation of order.

A Gatling gun, with 3,000 rounds of ammunition, was taken with the detachment, as well as provisions and stores for two months. Six hours after leaving Sitka, while the *California* was in Peril Straits, the weather being very stormy, I directed that the steam launch should cast off. She sought a secure harbor, and when the wind moderated came on, arriving at this post on the 14th instant. On the 13th, William H. Oliver, a private marine, deserted, and I think left on the steamer *California*.

On our arrival at this place the weather was very bad and as there was no shelter for the men and stores, I hired a house near the beach, in which to place the men, stores, arms, and ammunition, until I could provide suitable quarters for my command on the land reserved by you for government purposes. This house I rented for \$3 a day. I also rented a small log cabin for the sailors to occupy, and in which to keep our tools, near the government reservation.

The large house near the landing had no floor or door, and the crevices between the logs were all open. I caused a temporary floor to be laid, caulked the crevices with moss, and landed all our stores and men on the 12th instant, and hoisted the flag, established a sentry, and made the men as comfortable as possible. The officers were permitted, by the courtesy of George E. Pilz, to occupy a small log cabin near the marines' quarters.

On the morning of the 13th, Master Gustave C. Hanus proceeded to lay out the lines, and to actually stake the government

reservation, while the rest of the available men of the detachment began to clear the ground for building temporary quarters. This ground, situated on the highest part of the ridge on the right of the town, was much encumbered by fallen and standing trees, undergrowth, and brush, and as the weather was rainy and disagreeable, the labor was severe and trying. Officers and men worked cheerfully and with enthusiasm, and before night we had the sills of a building laid, of the size of 16 by 30 feet. The next day a small cabin for the shelter of the officers and instruments was begun of the size of 12 by 20 feet. The weather continued very disagreeable and stormy until the 24th, since which time it has been very fine.

On the 21st, the officers and marines moved to the new quarters, which, although not entirely finished, were in a condition for occupancy. The tent of this ship was then erected, with a log foundation, board floor and sides for the blue-jackets, and a small log house was built adjoining this for a kitchen. The house rented for the marines was occupied ten days, the log cabin for the other men fourteen days. The total expense for the rent will therefore be \$35. The detachment is now comfortably housed, a portion of the ground is cleared, stumps removed, etc., and everything is in order. The post is on elevated ground, which commands a view of the white town, as well as the Indian settlement.

In obedience to your order, Master Gustave C. Hanus, assisted by Assistant Surgeon David O. Lewis, has made a survey of the town location, extending his work beyond any locations yet made and as far as the nature of the ground would permit. A copy of the plot will be forwarded to you as soon as it is finished, and one will also be furnished to the district recorder.

The survey has been made in such a manner as to affect as few people as possible. Most of those affected have cheerfully complied with the rectified lines, but some few have removed some of our stakes and have endeavored to embarrass the work in other ways. Nearly all the locaters, however, express great satisfaction at the work being done.

The Indians camped in front of the town have, in obedience to your order, been directed to remove to the mouth of Gold Creek, and nearly all have done so. When all have moved I will pay the indemnity money raised by the white men as ground damages.

Upon my arrival here I found that the lawless element of the camp, which is mostly composed of foreigners, had raised some excitement in reference to your order of May 2, and had informed the more ignorant portion of the community (a number of whom can neither read nor write) that 'martial law' was declared; that it meant unlimited power for the naval officers to seize, imprison, and punish any person; and generally had inflamed the worst part of public sentiment into an antagonism against law and order and all its representatives. Their action finally took the form of a document, which they called a petition, in which, as I have been informed, and which, if the reports are given to me are true, they made allegations against officers and their action in this Territory which are distinctly false.

I have been unable to procure a copy of this paper, but I have not been able to hear of a name of any man of character being signed to it. I have since heard that two papers of this nature have been prepared and sent to Washington.

[Continued next page]

As I have been on duty in this Territory nearly two years, and am intimately acquainted with every official act performed here by the commander of the *Jamestown*, and the other officers, and as I know the history of this mining camp and its inhabitants very well, I can say that this action is doubtless founded on malevolence and a desire to remain unrestricted in unlawful acts. I have been informed that this element of the people here has boasted that there is no law in Alaska, and that no one could restrain them in anything they chose to do. The better portion of the community expressed to me great indignation in reference to this action on the part of these people, and expressed a desire to get up a counter statement. I have not troubled myself in the matter, and only mention it in this letter as having a bearing upon the possible action of these people in reference to my duties here.

A number of persons here have applied to me in reference to their private disputes about town lots and other matters. I have, in each case, explained that I had no concern in their private affairs, but should repress violence, and arrest those committing assaults or other violent outrages and send them to Sitka for your disposition. The health of the officers and men of the detachment remains good. As many of the people of the town came to Dr. Lewis for treatment for diseases caused by drinking impure water, I posted a notice in the town on the 24th instant, warning the people against drinking such water, and showing them how to improve it if unable to procure any other.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
Charles H. Rockwell, Lieutenant-Commander, U.S. Navy,  
Commandant Post

*This log structure, built in 1881, served as a carpentry shop before becoming a school and Presbyterian church; it later housed a beer and soda water brewing operation. Alaska State Library, Michael Z. Vinokoureff Collection (P243-2-39).*





# ACCOUNT 10

## True Version of Alaskan Troubles *Daily Astorian*, June 22, 1881

**Editor's note:** As news spread about tensions between the naval authorities and miners, an unnamed author wrote to Oregon's *Daily Astorian* to describe the scene and render a verdict—the disgruntled “roughs” and “desperadoes” were merely attempting to take advantage of Alaska's lack of laws to claim-jump and perform other illegal maneuvers. In reponse, Commander Henry Glass and Lt. Charles Rockwell were struggling to explain to the local population that they had no intention of meddling in questions of property ownership or other civil matters. These questions were resolved, after a fashion, when the garrison was withdrawn on December 15, 1881 and the buildings of the post were turned over to the postmaster.

A correspondent of the house of William T. Coleman & Co. gives another version of the troubles in Harris district, Alaska, very different from the statement in the petition which has been forwarded to Washington.

The correspondent states that a number of roughs from the British territory and Montana invaded Harris district, and, finding the place unprotected by civil law, proceeded to run affairs to suit themselves. They first objected to the manner in which the town of Rockwell had been laid out in lots, with a frontage of 50 feet, by 200 feet in depth. Seeing an opportunity to do some profitable land jumping, the desperadoes resolved to reconstruct the plan of the town and make the lots 50 by 100 feet, thus leaving a goodly part of the slice to squat on.

Naturally the peaceable settlers who had lain out the town, with the honest purpose of building it and following lawful occupations, objected to these high handed proceedings. There being no civil law to aid them, the distressed pioneers applied to Captain Glass, senior officer of the *Jamestown*, stationed at Sitka. Captain Glass inquired into affairs, and being the only representative of the national authority in the district, issued the following proclamation:

Notice is hereby given that, considering the absence of any form of civil government in the territory of Alaska, and the liability that acts of violence, threatening the safety of the lives and property of citizens, may occur at any time, and also considering the necessity of preventing such acts, I, Henry Glass, commander of the United States navy, and senior United States officer in the territory, do hereby announce that, until instructions to the contrary are received from the President of the United States, the military authority will be the only government recognized, and that all residents of the territory will be governed in accordance with military law. This announcement will not affect the operation of any local mining laws properly established and not conflicting with the United States, and it is not intended to affect in any way the rights to property now held or to be acquired under such laws.

The marauding band of cowboys and other outlaws, it is said, had not only announced their intention of reconstructing the town of Rockwell, but of making changes to suit their own purposes in the mining laws and locations. Captain Glass forwarded to Washington an official report of his acts, and the condition of affairs in the district. It is said by those conversant with the facts that not only did Captain Glass not exceed his duty in the premises, but that he would have been derelict in his duty had he done less.

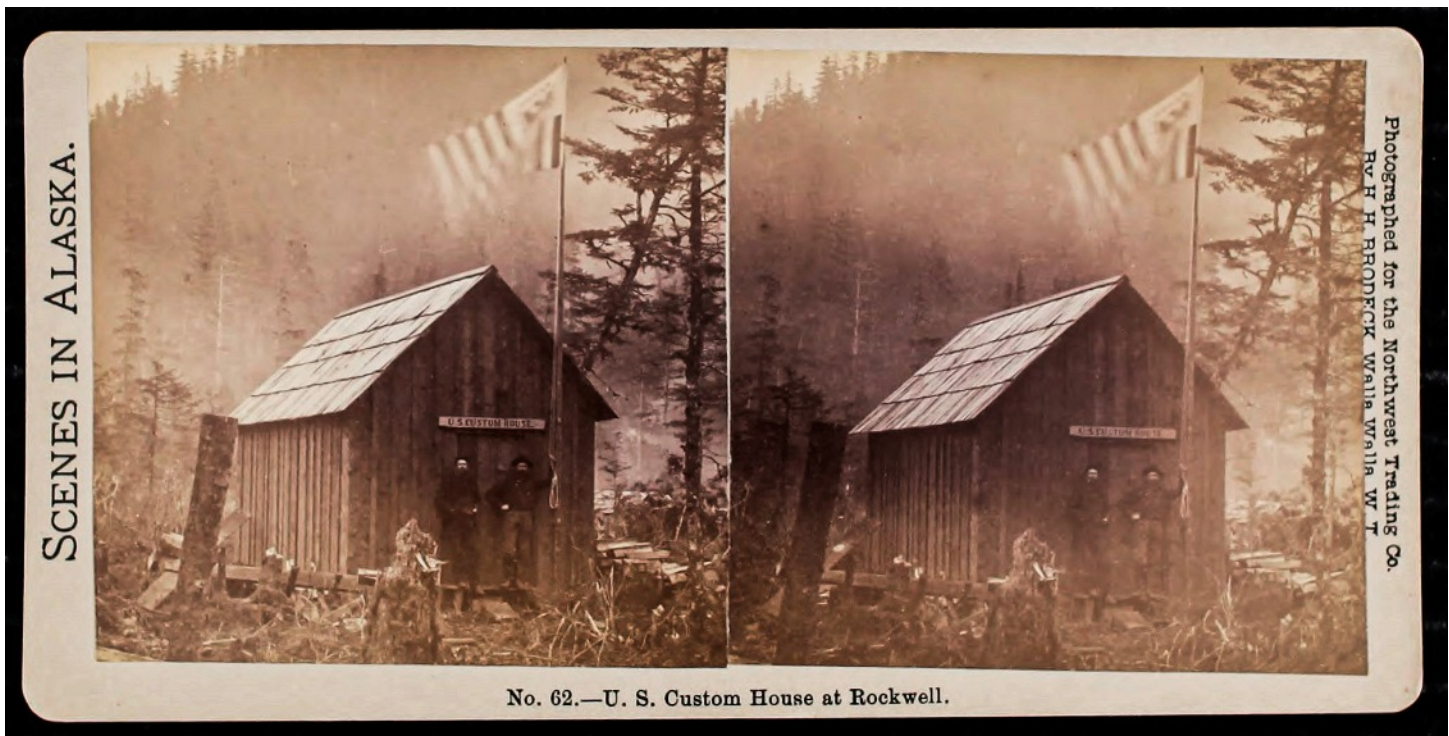
*The Northwest Trading Company's steamer Favorite (foreground) and the three-masted sloop U.S.S. Jamestown anchored at Sitka, 1881. Presbyterian Historical Society, Henry H. Brodeck Photographs(2156).*



In 1881, the Northwest Trading Company hired Henry H. Brodeck of Walla Walla, Washington, to take photographs of scenery and of the firm's new trading posts in southeast Alaska. His roughly 100 photographs, taken between May and July 1881, became stereographic cards and were sold to a public eager for images of the northern frontier. When viewed through a hand-held stereoscope, the combined images give the illusion of three-dimensionality. Brodeck's "Scenes in Alaska," are among the earliest images of Alaska and include pictures from Sitka, Hoonah, Killisnoo, and Klukwan. His photographs of early Juneau—when it was still called Rockwell—are the only ones known from the town's first year. Collections of Brodeck's work can be found in the archives of the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia and the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley. Note: Single-frame images by Brodeck elsewhere in this booklet are cropped from stereograph cards.



*"Auk Chiefs, Rockwell" shows an Auk Tlingit family of high status sitting in front of the Northwest Trading Company store. The card below shows a symbol of United States government authority, the Custom House where officers collected fees on imported goods and launched anti-smuggling operations. Courtesy of the Presbyterian Historical Society.*





# ACCOUNT 11

## News from the Far North

*Sacramento Daily Union*, June 22, 1881

**Editor's note:** In 1881, the steamer *California* often provided the only source of Alaska news available to outsiders, and this report that appeared in a Sacramento newspaper offers a glimpse of goings-on in Sitka and Harrisburg. Fights and gunplay in both towns were a problem for Commander Henry Glass; Presbyterian missionaries under the direction of Sheldon Jackson were establishing themselves at Sitka; the coveted job of Collector of Customs for Alaska was taken from Mottrom D. Ball and given to William G. Morris; and the Navy's attempt to raid saloons and enforce prohibition in Alaska proved ineffective because saloon owners and smugglers were skilled in evasive tactics. John Treadwell's name appears—his claims on Douglas Island would soon evolve into Alaska's most profitable gold mining property. And the reference to prospecting in "Chilcat country" hints at a future when miners routinely crossed the Coast Mountains to make the next big gold discoveries along the Yukon River and its tributaries.

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Port Townsend, June 21, 1881:

The steamer *California* arrived here from Alaska at 6 o'clock this morning. She reports having arrived at Sitka on the 10th. . . . [In Sitka] Captain Glass arrested Nicholas Dern and H. Impoff for firing two shots into S. Meig's house [ref. to James Schmeig, druggist]. They will be kept in confinement until an opinion is rendered by the Attorney-General. [James] Taylor is also in confinement for threatening to kill a man at Harrisburg.

Captain Glass, in conjunction with the Presbyterian Board of Missions, has converted the old Government Hospital into a Mission Home for the Indians. The schools are numerously attended.

A petition has been forwarded to President Garfield, signed by nearly all the citizens of southeastern Alaska, asking that Colonel Mottrom D. Ball be retained as Collector of Customs, and that his removal be reconsidered.

A statement numerously signed has also been forwarded to the President, emphatically denying the recent absurd reports relative to Captain Glass having instituted martial law in the Territory, or that he had in any manner interfered with the rights of citizens.

The snow has entirely disappeared at the Takou mines now. Quartz lodes have been discovered, and the placer claims are being vigorously worked. The Ready Bullion Company have shipped eighty ounces of bullion, as the result of three weeks' run. The Harris claim has shipped forty ounces and the Jamestown thirty. The *California* has on board 200 ounces of bullion to be sent to the Mint for coinage. The placer claims are paying well, and the quartz show better than ever.

The Montome party, who went up into the Chilcat country upon a prospecting expedition, were not allowed by the Indians to ascend the river, as the upper and lower tribes were at war, and might kill the prospectors. Eleven Indians had been killed up to that time.

The *California* has two tons of rich ore en route to San Francisco to be worked. Half of the Pilz mine has been sold to San Francisco capitalists, who intend organizing a stock company.

Among passengers who arrived on the *California* are Joe June [Juneau], the original discoverer, John Treadwell, a prominent expert from California, and [Martin] W. Murray, who has very rich specimens and ore samples. . . .

Most of the miners at Harrisburg seem to have unlimited faith in the richness of the new gold ledges, and town lots are increasing in value every week, and are being rapidly cleared. The whisky and beer saloons are doing a flourishing business. A party from the United States steamer *Jamestown* made a raid on the saloons recently, but, as usual, no whisky could be found. The Indians are flocking into the mines from all parts, and are found useful in transporting provisions into the mountains.

The military camp stationed by Captain Glass on the hill overlooking the town of Harrisburg has a most wholesome influence in keeping the peace from being broken. Seventy-two to twenty-eight ounces per week has been about the average yield from the Ready Bullion placer mine, four miles from Harrisburg. The quartz ledges are in status quo, waiting purchasers.

*Juneau residents in front of their log cabin, 1881. Presbyterian Historical Society, Henry H. Brodeck Photographs (2141).*



# ACCOUNT 12

## The Indian Question

Charles H. Rockwell, June 25, 1881

**Editor's note:** This report from Lieutenant Rockwell to Commander Henry Glass of the U.S.S. *Jamestown* illustrates the continuing role of the military as Alaska's de facto government. As Rockwell explains, he is frequently called upon to arbitrate "old feuds and quarrels" between Tlingit people living in the vicinity and is impressed with their ability to remain peaceful. Even so, he recommends that military posts like the one at Juneau be replicated across Alaska—either that or he suggests sending a gunboat to intimidate Native communities. Among the miners, occasional fights and threats of violence remained a problem because the Navy did not have the authority to hold court or build prisons. One solution Glass and his successors did implement is referenced here—hiring Tlingit leaders in Sitka and Juneau as an indigenous police force.

Sir: By far the most important question here at this time is the Indian question. The presence of white men here and the establishment of trading stores have attracted to this place many Indians of various tribes. They are generally docile and easy to manage, and seem to be anxious to be on friendly terms with the whites. Scarcely a day passes that I do not have a number of cases to arbitrate and decide, not only between the Indians themselves, but also between the Indians and the whites.

According to their peculiar ideas of revenge or accountability for injuries received these cases are at times very interesting, but the docility of the Indians, their perfect sense of justice, and their child-like faith in the action of a government officer render them easy to manage, while at the same time it is necessary that the most exact and impartial justice should obtain in settling their differences.

I have caused those Indians who were camped on the beach to remove to other places, outside the town limits, and they have established two villages, one on each side of the town, near the water. The chiefs of nearly all the neighboring tribes have visited this post, and a number of old feuds and quarrels have been settled in my presence, or are now in process of settlement.

I have constantly impressed upon them the duty of kindness and hospitality to strangers and travelers, as they have too often in the past ill-used those who were unable to protect themselves. On the 20th Kaw-Eck, an Auk chief, came to the post and reported that a nephew of his had been killed two years previously by a Stichine [Stikine] chief. He said that the proper equivalent of this would be the life of one of the Stichine Indians, but as he knew that you do not wish the Indians to revenge their injuries, he brought this case asking for justice.

I sent for the Stichine chief, and an investigation into the affair was made. The Stichine chief acknowledged the justice of the claim of the Auk chief, and said that he would endeavor to prevail upon the members of his family to settle the matter. I directed him to return to his tribe and bring the necessary persons here and settle the matter in my presence. He has gone for them, but he has not yet returned.

At present many of the Indians are absent, as this is the season of the year when they catch their winter supply of salmon. The beneficial effect of this post is felt among all the Indians in this part of the Territory, and half a dozen such posts in different parts of these inland waters would make the whole Territory of Alaska as absolutely safe for white travelers as any part of the United States. The same result could be accomplished by a gunboat visiting each tribe as often as once a quarter.

If the chief of each tribe was appointed a policeman, with the pay of a seaman in the Navy, compelled to wear a uniform, and held responsible for the good behavior of his tribe, the Indians of Alaska could be governed as easily as any community in the world.

The white settlement is quiet. The reputable portion of the community express the greatest satisfaction at the protection afforded by the force at this post. The district recorder told me a few days ago that he was convinced that but for this force murder would have been committed before this time.

A murderous affray occurred at the placer diggings on Douglas Island, about three miles from this post, on the 23rd instant. Two miners, who were partners, disputed over a frivolous question, and hot words passed, followed by a desperate fight, in which one of them was badly beaten. The injured man threatened to kill the other, and might have done so, but was unable to find the cartridges for his gun. On hearing of the affair I sent Master Gustave C. Hanus, United States Navy, with two men to inquire into the affair, and he soon settled the matter by telling the belligerent party what the effect would be in case of any further action. The health of the officers and men of my detachment remains good.

Very respectfully, Charles H. Rockwell, Lieutenant-Commander U.S. Navy, Commanding Post



*Auk leaders and their families at the Northwest Trading Company store in Juneau, 1881. Presbyterian Historical Society, Henry H. Brodeck Photographs (2148).*



## ACCOUNT 13

### From the Notebook of a San Francisco Lady *San Francisco Examiner*, December 18, 1881

**Editor's note:** Mary O. Reynolds, writing to the *San Francisco Examiner* about her journey to Alaska, described herself as one of "a company of jovial tourists, whose sole object was to see all there was to be seen." In this section of her travelogue she describes arriving in Harrisburg in August and, after her ship, the *Los Angeles*, runs aground, touring both the mining camp and the nearest Auk village before moving on to visit the Taku Glacier. Her enthusiastic prose offers an early glimpse of Juneau's first tourism season.

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We were now but a short distance from Harrisburg, as the bird flies, but were obliged to make almost a complete detour of Douglas Island, as the western passage into the strait leading to the village is too shallow to admit of the transit of the steamer, thereby lengthening our journey by at least ten miles. We had hoped to obtain our first view of the town by daylight, but as we rounded the eastern point of the island into the narrow strait, night seemed to fall suddenly as we glided between two frowning lines of mountains that shut out the last remaining gleams of sunset.

In the dim distance a line of blue smoke marked the spot where, we felt assured, eager eyes had sighted the ship the instant her nose had turned the point of the island, and anxious hearts were longing for news from the world that had been as a blank to them since the ship's last visit, a month before. A half hour more and the twinkling lights of the town were visible through the darkness, that had now fallen indeed.

A roar from the ship's cannon that threatened to splinter the stony peaks of the mountains and bring them down upon us, announced our coming, and with an air of "See the conquering hero comes," the gallant little steamer made a grand sweep in order to bring her port side to the wharf in her finest style and—stuck. An astonished hush for a moment pervaded the ship; then the engine recovered its breath and beat frantically in its endeavor to back her. But all in vain; she would not budge an inch either forward or backward, but she listed—gracious! How she listed. Soon she became not a ship, but a hill—a hard, uncompromising hill, on whose slippery incline the sailors, who had walked the decks in storms as though to the manor bore, now tumbled about like the best of the land-lubbers. . . .

We wished the gun had not been fired quite so loudly, and that the ship had not attempted quite so proud a sweep; but there was no help for it. A peep over the top of the hill revealed that the ship's larboard side was hard aground in the mud, which the rapidly receding tide had now left distinctly visible. To the starboard the water was many fathoms deep, and now from that direction we heard the sound of oars and voices, and soon, through the gloom, discerned the forms of canoes shooting rapidly toward us. A moment more and a number of the townspeople were among us, eagerly greeting their friends and inquiring for news from the outside world.

When bedtime came we dispersed without our usual evening song. Out of purest consideration for our Captain's feelings we forbore, concluding that our repertoire did not contain anything peculiarly adapted to his present frame of mind. Fortunate were those who occupied staterooms on the larboard side, as they did not require any bracing to keep them in their beds; but we of the downhill side were not so comfortable. . . .

Awakened in the early dawn by the thump of the engine, I found that the boat had righted and was now near the wharf, which she reached in safety, having apparently experienced no injury from her brief rest on land. After breakfast we sallied out, despite a fine rain that fell at intervals, to view the town.

On the right side of the wharf, along the narrow beach, were a few straggling huts belonging to a small band of Sitka Indians. These we visited and soon exhausted, and turning to the left threaded our way along the gravelly beach and into the town, which, but little more than a mining camp, lies in a little sheltered nook at the foot of the mountains. At the back of the village, and apparently almost overhanging it, rises a mountain, 2,200 feet high in height, upon whose summit lay, here and there, patches of snow, feeding a little stream that precipitated itself down its rocky face; to the east and west the mountains were clothed to their summits with evergreens of various kinds.

This little camp, whose site a year previous to the time of which I write had never been visited by white men, now consists of nearly a hundred homes, and bids fair to double its size before another year shall have rolled around. On the eastern side of the town lies a little hill upon which is situated the military post, where a Gatling gun commands a most comprehensive view of the town and also of the Awk [Auk] village on the opposite side of the hill. Both of these places we visited, being kindly escorted over the breakneck trail to the Indian village by a gallant young officer from the post.

The Awks had formerly occupied the site upon which Harrisburg now stands, but were subsequently invited to remove themselves around the point, being much more agreeable to leeward. We had observed, as we went further north, that the type of Indian seemed to improve in appearance. The Awks are a strong and hardy race, possessing both industry and intelligence. The bulk of labor is not thrown upon the women, and almost without exception, a domestic harmony reigns in their families that might well serve as an example to more civilized races. Their strength is immense, and an Indian thinks little of shouldering a burden of 125 to 150 pounds weight and trotting briskly off up the steep mountain trail to the mines, four miles away.

We wandered through their village, which was much like others that we had seen; always built as closely to the water as the tide would permit, barely having room for their canoes to be pulled up before their doors; the same all-pervading smell of salmon oil; an equal number of dirty-faced, romping children paddling about on the beach in their single and much-abbreviated garment, that had evidently never been removed for the purpose of cleansing since it was first completed and put on; and a like host of coyote dogs, large and small, apparently more at home than anybody else.

We paused before the door of a tent to watch an Indian manufacturing silver bracelets out of coin. He beat them to a desired shape on a small anvil and then carved them quite artistically by means of a common jack-knife. They also make very handsome gold bracelets, which they value at \$50 to \$60.

On the following day the ship made an excursion to Taku Glacier, thirty miles away, but owing to the shallow water was not able to get near enough to obtain a fair view. Upon their return in the evening we, who were going to remain at Harrisburg until the next trip of the steamer, bade farewell with much regrets to the little company of tourists, all of whom we had found most congenial and delightful companions.

Mary O. Reynolds

## ACCOUNT 14

### Chas Sperry Reports on the Takou Mines *Seattle Daily Intelligencer*, August 26, 1881

**Editor's note:** When Charles B. Sperry arrived in Harrisburg he registered a claim for Lot 5 in Block 1, but he soon sold the property to Antone Marks, who is mentioned below. When Sperry returned to Seattle, he described a vibrant community with new homes sprouting from the stump-scattered hills and workshops and retailers opening every day. Sperry also mentions a July 4, 1881 meeting to elect representatives for the purpose of "taking some action toward the procurement of recognition and representation of this Territory" in the next Congressional Session. He also distinguishes between placer mining (collecting gold dust and nuggets mixed with streambed gravels) and hardrock, or lode, mining, which involves removing veins of gold from, in this case, quartz deposits. In either situation, the miners needed water to process material, which is why they were digging "water trenches to their claims."

Chas Sperry, who went up to Takou mines in Alaska, last May, arrived home by the *Los Angeles* on Tuesday. He reports the Takou mines in a splendid condition, new discoveries being made every day of placer diggings. The best placer diggings are found high up on benches, or high gulches, as far as prospected. Gold Creek, the main stream of the district, has never been prospected to bedrock, but is thought to be very rich. The monthly output of dust has been sufficient to pay all bills.

The claim of Richard Harris, the discoverer, in Silver Bow Basin, is very rich, and has yielded \$14,000 during the past year. The next best paying claim belongs to Antone Marks, an old Seattle coal miner, and has paid \$12 to the hand during the season. There are at least twenty-five claims in the mines that are paying \$10 per day to the man.

Owing to the scarcity of water but few hours' work can be done each day. The country has proved to be very dry, and the miners are now digging water trenches to their claims, and will not do much more in the way of taking out gold this season. Next year they expect to do big work in the placer diggings.

Quartz ledges have been discovered all over the district, some of which are now being prospected by San Francisco capitalists, with favorable results. The general price of quartz locations ranges from \$10,000 to \$20,000 for each location. Mr. Robinson [ref. to William B. Robertson], a representative of William T. Coleman, of San Francisco, has spent six months in the mines, and has secured interests in a number of choice locations, and came down on the steamer, on his way to report to his wealthy backer, expecting to return in October.

The town of Harrisburg contains over 125 houses; 5 stores, 1 drug store, 1 blacksmith shop, 1 shoe shop, 2 carpenter shops, 1 boat builder's shop, 5 saloons, 1 barber shop, [and the] marine garrison with 30 United States marines. On the 15th instant a convention of delegates from all over the Territory met at Harrisburg to arrange for the election of a delegate to go on to Washington, to lay the wants of the people of Alaska before Congress, and ask for the establishment of some form of government for the people.

The election will be held on September 5th. The contestants for election will be ex-Collectors Mottrom D. Ball and Montgomery P. Berry, with the chances strongly in favor of the former. In case the people succeed in getting some form of government, Harrisburg will undoubtedly be the Capital, or seat of Government. Mr. Sperry brought down some fine specimens of gold and silver quartz to back his assertions in regard to the richness of that northern country.

*A cross-section of Juneau society gathered at the Northwest Trading Company store, 1881. Presbyterian Historical Society, Henry H. Brodeck Photographs (2147).*





## ACCOUNT 15

### Opinion of a Miner Who Spent Three Months at Takou

*Victoria British Colonist*, September 29, 1881

**Editor's note:** This unnamed writer offers an idea of how difficult it was to pull a fortune from the earth at Harrisburg. A miner needed to find promising ground, register claims with the proper authorities (called *locating*), invest in tools and provisions, hire help or take on partners, and then hope the investment paid off. For this reason, those first on the ground at a new discovery often chose to sell their claims for quick profits rather than risking heavy losses. The writer refers to *free gold*, which means it is easily separated from the quartz ore, and *float rock* referring to fragments of a lode or vein that have broken away and can be collected without digging or blasting. And an *arastra* is a primitive mill, powered by horses or mules, that pulverizes ore with heavy stones dragged around a circular trough. Once the ore is crushed, it can be processed using water and mercury to isolate the gold.

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A miner just from Takou writes concerning the mines:

I have not seen anything as flattering as the accounts given by some of our papers, and I do not intend to disparage the Harris mining district of Alaska; but will endeavor to show it in its true light. The mining district of Harrisburg is of small area being all located and inter-located, claims being temporarily settled at miners' meetings.

On the discovery of Harrisburg men came from Sitka as many as could find suitable a conveyance. Some came in the steam-launch from the U.S.S. *Jamestown* through the gracious favor of Captain [Henry] Glass, who, being himself a holder of some of the ground, which was then covered with snow, locations became very much complicated. Messrs. Harris and Juno [Juneau] being the discoverers, they have a good placer claim which is not usually the case with discoverers.

There are many other placer locations; but few pay over \$2.50 per day, with the exception of one owned by Michael Powers and one on Douglas Island owned by [Edward] Prior and [James] Rosewall. Those three are said to pay well. Captain Glass' ground did not pay when we consider the painful necessity of having martial law for its protection, which he was under. Some few months after its location some miners finding the ground idle went to work upon it, but were dispossessed without remuneration for their labor and martial law was declared. I should judge the establishment of a military post there was very proper for the requirements of all concerned.

The quartz ledges are all of a very delicate nature. There is no ledge that has been sunk deeper than six feet. That is owned by Mr. [Martin] Murray and is supposed to be one of the best claims. It is a somewhat peculiar ledge. There have been some heavy slides from the mountain overhanging this ledge and until the debris is removed I should not wish to pass my opinion as to its value. There are other ledges owned by several parties. Some of them hold as high as twenty locations. Some locations have free gold, but to call them ledges or stringers would be too great a stretch of the imagination.

Mr. Treadwell has started a prospect tunnel at the base of one of these blowouts; but so far there is no information whatever that would cause a miner to predict that he would find a body of ore. Sage Miller [J.D. Sagemiller] has some very good looking rock, how much is a question. There have been some *arastras* built and some torn down. Whether they are paying is a mystery, but from the mode in which the miners get their rock I should say they ought to. As I passed by I saw men at work picking up float rock and packing it in sacks to the *arastra*.

Harrisburg is not a place for a man of small means. Real estate has depreciated greatly this month. Ledges are also easier. We have four grocery and dry goods stores, one dance house and seven saloons, a shoemaker shop, one drug store, one merchant tailor and about twenty private dwellings, officer's quarters and barracks. In all, quite a respectable town with a wharf and a warehouse thereon.

The principal dealers in dry goods, groceries, and hardware are Patrick Corcoran and the Northwest Trading Company. Provisions are reasonably cheap. We also find the milkman going his rounds daily while your peaceful slumbers are disturbed by the tinkle of a cow bell or the doleful bray of a forlorn looking donkey, imported here by Mr. Pilz, but having no roads the siwash [ref. to a Native person] takes his place and the donkey wanders about town in a state of ignoble ease. All the town stands in need of now is gold-bearing ground and a few quartz ledges.

*A rough and tumble Juneau back lot, 1881. Presbyterian Historical Society, Henry H. Brodeck Photographs (2142).*





## ACCOUNT 16

### George W. Barnes Writes from Rockwell *Rocky Mountain Husbandman*, Dec. 29, 1881

**Editor's note:** Six months passed before George Barnes again wrote to his hometown newspaper [see Account 5], and much had changed in the fast-growing mining camp. He mentions that the population of miners had reached three hundred and mining companies were expanding their operations into the mountainsides surrounding Silver Bow Basin. Freezing weather and low water levels in the creeks were a problem, particularly for placer miners who needed a reliable flow through their sluice boxes, and at least one "five-stamp quartz mill" was in operation, pounding ore into powder with heavy hammers. Barnes also refers to a delegate "gone on to Washington"—this was Collector of Customs Mottrom D. Ball, who was elected to lobby for Alaskan interests before Congress.

Rockwell, Alaska, November 18, 1881:

Through the courtesy of Hanson H. Barnes we are permitted to make the following extract from an interesting letter received from his brother George:

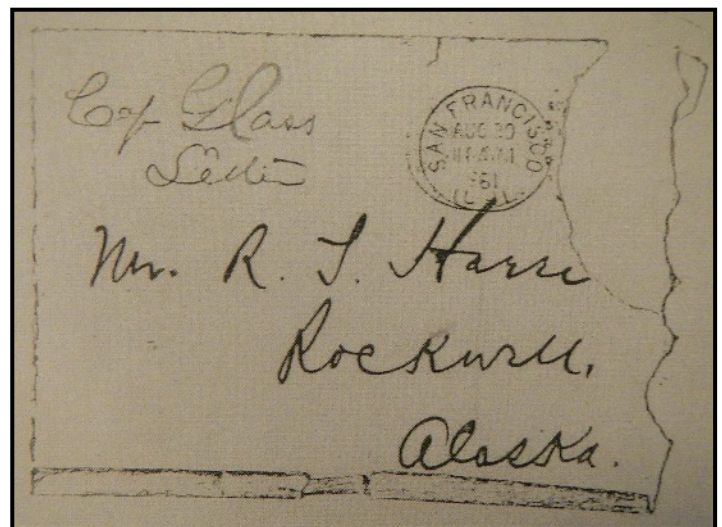
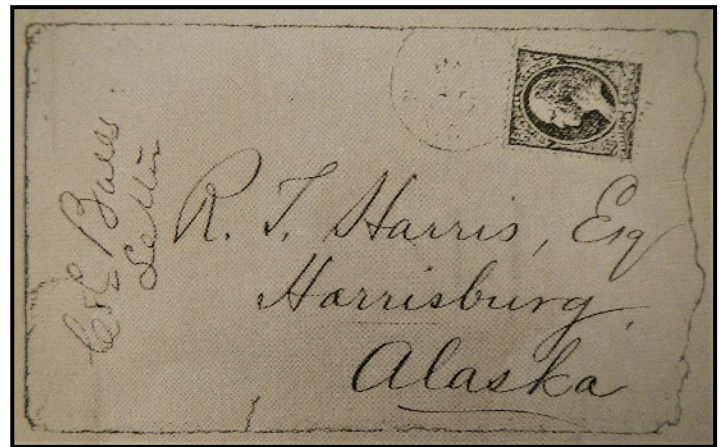
As the mail steamer is expected every hour, I will write you a letter, and may add to it on her arrival. The doings of the present season are as follows: Unexpected placers were found here this summer, which has given the country quite a boom. They have been working with good results, paying from \$2.50 to \$15 per day to the laboring man. The principal mines found are in Silver Bow Basin. They are what we call bench or hill diggings. The gold is fine and light, but of good quality. Some of the claims lay very high up in the mountains and are covered with snow from seven to ten feet deep in mid-summer.

Most of the diggings in Silver Bow Basin can be worked about four months in the year. Wages per day for white miners are \$4; Indians get \$1.50 and \$2 per day. A cold snap has prevailed for the last six weeks, which caused a suspension of business. Since the 14th instant, however, the weather has grown mild. I have been engaged in running a drain in Gold creek, for the purpose of ascertaining whether it would pay with a bed-rock flume. The creek is pretty flat. In running 700 feet I got down 12 feet. The ground is very loose and easily washed. I got a color nearly every pan. The creek is from 150 to 300 feet in width, and can be worked about seven months in the year, with plenty of water for a four-foot flume.

One five-stamp quartz mill arrived on the last steamer, and is now in running order. The parties who had the bar diggings on Douglas Island have recently sold their interests in the quartz which the gold came from for twenty thousand dollars. I think this will be a pretty good camp next season. The white population of the town is about three hundred. The first death occurred yesterday. The old gentleman was out chopping and a tree fell on him. His name is E.P. Hark.

A convention was called here last August in regard to the organization of the Territory of Southern Alaska and the delegate has gone on to Washington to represent our case. A petition has lately been circulating for an increase of our mail service from monthly to semi-monthly.

*Envelopes of letters written to Richard Harris in 1881. Note that one is addressed to Harrisburg (top) and the other to Rockwell. Alaska State Library, Family Papers of Richard Tighe Harris.*



# ACCOUNT 17

## How Juneau Got Its Name From *Trailing and Camping in Alaska*

**Editor's note:** This account by Alaska pioneer Reuben Alberstone in Addison M. Powell's *Trailing and Camping in Alaska* (1910) mentions the role of the Auk Tlingit leader Kowee, who guided Richard Harris and Joseph Juneau to gold in Silver Bow Basin. Alberstone goes on to explain the naming of the Harris Mining District and of the town of Harrisburg. The account also offers a dramatic scene in which an indignant Joseph Juneau convinces his saloon-friends that he, not Harris, should be the town's namesake. Dankert Pettersen, who called the name-change motion, was a Norwegian carpenter who became one of Juneau's first housing developers. In less than two years, the town had been called Takou, Harrisburg, Rockwell, and now Juneau, an evolution that vexed postal officials for some time.

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[In 1880 an Indian] started from Sitka with Richard Harris and Joe Juneau. They landed at what was then Big Auk Village, now Juneau. It was with considerable persuasion that the Indian succeeded in getting his companions to ascend the steep mountain into Silver Bow Basin. After satisfying themselves of the value of the discovery, they proceeded to hold a miners' meeting and to organize a district which they called 'Harris.' . . .

When the little town was started, it went by the name of Harrisburg, until Joe Juneau concluded that his odd name should be handed down to posterity. He reasoned that it was enough for Dick Harris to have his name spread all over a mining district, without having it stuck on all letters received therein. Brooding over these facts, as he stumbled down the trail to Harrisburg, he determined to have a 'blowout' and he did.

He not only invited everybody there to drink to his health, but announced himself as the father of the place. The crowd rent the air with cheers and every man threw up his hat in his exultation at the prospect of another drink at the expense of the self-asserted 'dad.' Again and again they obeyed orders by stepping into line with military precision in front of the bar and 'looked at' Joe.

Dancut Peterson [Dankert A. Pettersen] mounted an inverted whiskey barrel, and calling the meeting to order, he made the desired motion to change the name of Harrisburg to that of Juneau. It is needless to say that the motion carried, and that the stream of good feeling continued to flow down their throats. The crowd intended the christening as a joke, but the name stuck. Joe prided himself ever after as being the paternal ancestor of the town, while Dick Harris proclaimed Joe as his personal enemy.

*Sacramento Daily-Union*, December 26, 1881:

The steamer *Eureka* arrived this morning from Alaska, bringing thirteen cabin and ten steerage passengers, and reports as follows:

The placer mines at Takou are an assured success. The district cannot be worked out for years. At least \$150,000 has been taken out this season, and the best claims were not discovered until August. One claim paid nearly \$500, the result of 105 hours of work. The miners are all in good spirits, and for the most part will winter at Harrisburg. They have been making money fast, and are entirely satisfied with the prospect. A great rush is looked for in the spring. . . . The miners held a meeting last week, and had the name of this place changed from Harrisburg to Juno City [sic]. The reason for doing so is that there are so many places called Harrisburg that many letters miscarry.

*Joseph Juneau, co-discoverer of gold in Gastineau Channel, searching for promising signs in local ore. Harper's Weekly, May 14, 1892.*





## ACCOUNT 18

### Newman A. Fuller Talks of Early Juneau *Alaska Daily Empire*, July 7 and 13, 1915

**Editor's note:** Newman Fuller's chance meeting with George Pilz brought him to Sitka in 1879 where he struggled to keep his store afloat. However, by helping to finance Richard Harris and Joseph Juneau's second excursion to Gastineau Channel, Fuller became an important figure in Juneau's early history. Although he exaggerates his wealth, Fuller does offer interesting details about Pierre Joseph Erussard, known locally as "French Pete." Erussard was a French-Canadian who, in 1880, opened a store in the Juneau gold camp. Fuller describes how Erussard sold one of his mineral claims to John Treadwell for a pittance and how that claim turned out to be the fabulously profitable Treadwell Mine.

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On the way up [to Portland, Oregon] I met a mining engineer named Pilz who offered me \$250 a month to go up to Alaska and work in the mine near Sitka. I told him that I had no desire to go to Alaska but that if, when he got there, he still thought it would pay me to come up to write me at San Francisco. . . . A month later I received a letter from him urging me to come at once. I paid no attention to the letter. Next month another letter came from him urging me to come by the next boat. I settled my business in San Francisco and came up.

When I got to Sitka I found that there were very few white men, not counting Russians, up there. John G. Brady, a missionary and afterward governor of Alaska, was working in a store in Sitka. . . . I started a store on Silver Bay near the mines. After six months I moved my store to Sitka still depending largely on the mine for my trade. The mine was largely owned by Portlanders. The anticipated profits not materializing, they became discouraged and refused to put up further money for needed new equipment. Before I realized it, the mining company owed me a considerable sum [Fuller goes on to explain how he went bankrupt and lost his store].

Some months before this happened I had grubstaked three different prospecting parties. One party went prospecting in the Yukon, another went to the Chilcat, and the third went to the Gastineau Channel country. This last party consisted of Joe Juneau and Dick Harris. . . .

When they came back to Sitka with a sack of quartz specimens that were seamed with gold, everyone who could possibly go stampeded to the new field. They called the district the Harris mining district. . . . When I reached there in March, 1881, there were two log cabins already up as well as numerous tents. My claims were called Fuller First and Fuller Second and they were the first quartz claims to be of commercial value in Alaska. As soon as the spring opened up the miners swarmed out over the hills and prospected the whole country around them, finding many excellent claims. . . .

I am not going to tell you how much I realized from my grubstake. I will tell you this much, however; a pack mule can carry comfortably about 300 pounds of gold dust, and I made enough from my grubstake to load a pack train of 25 mules with gold. That means more than a million dollars and that is as near as I am going to tell you what I made. . . .

[Continuing in *Alaska Daily Empire*, July 13, 1915]

The discovery of rich placer ground and extensive ore bodies attracted men from all over the west to the district. Pierre Joseph [Erussard], or French Pete, to give him the name by which he was best known, was running a store in Juneau in the early rush days during the winter of 1880-81. Some of French Pete's Indian friends brought him some samples of ore they had picked up on Douglas Island. Pete rowed over to the island, and seeing there was an extensive ore body there, he recorded the claim. This was in May 1881. The ore was low grade. With much richer ore bodies on the main land, it was hard to interest anybody in the Douglas Island discovery.

John Treadwell, a mining expert, had come during the first rush to the district to look the country over. He had struck good ore in the Silver Bow Basin and after putting in most of his money in developing it, he had bottomed it—the ore had pinched out. He came down to Juneau to take the boat for San Francisco. He was thoroughly disgusted with the district and had no intention of ever returning. While he was waiting in Juneau for the boat, French Pete, who had heard that he was a mining expert, came to him and asked him to examine his claim on Douglas Island. Treadwell refused to go. French Pete told a hard luck story, and said he had to sell it, as he was in need of money, so Treadwell went over to Douglas Island and found that the quartz vein had tremendous width.

However, he had no intention of investing in any low grade prospects. French Pete tried to sell it to him, and finally said, 'I have some freight in the warehouse and I can't get it out without paying the freight charge of \$264. If you will pay my bill for the freight I will deed you my claim on Douglas Island. Treadwell finally took up the proposition, and the mine was deeded to him. This was in November, 1881.

Treadwell took 22 sacks of samples from different parts of the vein and took them to San Francisco with him. The ore milled so well that he decided not to sell the claim, but to organize a company and develop the property. He organized the Alaska Mill & Mining Company, and interested some well-to-do San Francisco mining men in it. James Freeborn was selected as president of the company, and [John] D. Fry, [Edward] M. Fry, [Howard] H. Shin and [Horace] L. Hill were chosen as directors. They subscribed \$10,000 and purchased a five-stamp mill and also began running a tunnel.

After running the tunnel for 468 feet across the vein and still being in good ore, Treadwell realized they had a wonderful property. He went to San Francisco to urge the building of a 120 stamp mill. The company thought a 40 stamp mill was large enough, but Treadwell would not give in, and finally had his way.

I met Treadwell first on the little steamer which we had been traveling on from Sitka to Juneau. He asked me if I was a mining man. I told him I had a mine, but that it was not much good. This made a hit with Treadwell. He said, 'You are the first man I have met up here whose mine is not the best one up here. They all think they have a bonanza.'

Treadwell was a very likable man. He never drank or smoked, which was unusual in Alaska. He worked hard and lived clean. He was a builder and an organizer. He put me in his assay office. It is not much of a trick to assay for gold, or silver, any dub of ordinary intelligence can learn. When it came to building the 120 stamp mill [in 1884] they had to own and operate a saw mill to get out the timbers, so Treadwell put me in charge of the saw mill.



## Postscript: The Role of Chief Kowee

Alaska Native voices are frequently left out of historical accounts, and this is particularly true in the case of Juneau's origin story. One of those voices was that of the Auk Tlingit leader Kowee (also spelled Koweesh or Cowee) who is credited with leading Richard Harris and Joseph Juneau to Gold Creek and into the mountains to explore Silver Bow Basin. George Pilz, in *Reminiscences of the Oldest Pioneer Miner of Alaska* (1922), reveals dramatic details about the conduct of Harris and Juneau and places Kowee at the center of the action.

In the account, Pilz explains his business relationship with Kowee and the part he and other Tlingits played in the German mining engineer's strategy for finding gold in southeast Alaska and beyond:

*I had made a standing offer of a bonus of 100 pair of Hudson Bay blankets and work for the tribe at one dollar per day, for any ore samples brought me of rock in place which I could put men to work at after finding, upon personal examination, that it was valuable.*

Kowee, who Pilz described as "head chief of the Auks," brought him mineral-rich ores from Gastineau Channel in 1879 and later played an important role in Juneau's birth as a mining camp.

In 1880, when Harris and Juneau made their two excursions into Gastineau Channel, they were entering the homeland of the Auk people and visiting an Auk fishing camp at the mouth of Gold Creek. When Harris wrote out his diary [see Account 7], he made himself and his partner sound like reliable and even heroic characters. Kowee had a different story to tell. As Pilz recounts, at the end of their first trip, Harris and Juneau returned with only "a pitiful yarn to spin" about losing their boat full of provisions and tried to blame Tlingits for the vessel's disappearance. According to Kowee, the two men "began immediately to trade off their outfit for hootch and squaws" when they landed at the Auk camp and remained drunk for over three weeks. He said they were reluctant to leave the beach to hunt for gold and that while they were inebriated they left the boat unmoored—it was swept away with the tide and ended up in Taku Inlet.

When Pilz learned about the wasted supplies and the degenerate behavior of his employees, he was furious. Commander Henry Glass of the U.S.S. *Jamestown* suggested arresting the two men and sending them south for trial in Portland, Oregon, but Pilz was in a bind. Kowee was willing to guide another prospecting team to Silver Bow Basin and Pilz had no other miners to send. Losing no time, he sent Harris and Juneau on a second trip with the understanding that they would "go with Kowee wherever he went." What they found were fabulously rich quartz veins and Native workers packed heavy sacks of the richest ore out of the mountains and down to their canoe.

However, instead of returning to Sitka, Harris and Juneau conspired to abandon Pilz and head for Victoria, British Columbia, where they expected to receive money for the ore and for information about the rich prospects. In a remarkable reversal of fortune, when Harris and Juneau stopped at Sumdum Island, fifty miles to the south, they encountered another of Pilz's prospectors-for-hire, George Langley. Langley grew alarmed when he heard about their plan to trade the boat, guns, and outfit for passage on a steamer bound for Victoria.

Although Harris and Juneau anchored their canoe off shore, Langley's Tlingit crewmen paddled out to surreptitiously examine the ore bags, and when night fell, Langley took action. While Harris and Juneau were asleep, he removed samples of the ore and all of the guns and ammunition from the canoe, and when daylight returned he asked them again if they were going to Sitka to report to Pilz. Again they boldly announced their plan to reach Victoria with the ore where, they boasted, "they would be well paid for it." Next, in a dramatic moment described by Pilz,

*Langley pulled their own guns on them and told them to head for Sitka, and he kept them right in front of him. His canoe was light and Harris and Juneau had no chance to get away from him. At Sitka he took them alongside the Jamestown and turned them over to Captain Glass, who sent me word that he had them.*

But when Pilz saw the richness of the ore, he quickly forgot the two men's treachery and chartered the *Favorite* to carry miners and provisions while he boarded one of the *Jamestown's* steam launches to reach Gastineau Channel. As Pilz explained, "[On December 2, 1880] at the break of day I staked off the townsite of Auk, now the city of Juneau. Only one man had got there before us—an old man by the name of Bean . . . I had Harris and Juneau with me. Koweesh was also with me, as were also Charles Wells and J. Sagemiller." According to Pilz's little-known account, Kowee was central to the story—he had found the gold, he was a trusted guide and informant to George Pilz, and he was present on the day Juneau became a town.

In the years that followed, Kowee sought to bridge the growing cultural chasm between his people and the miners, remaining an important local leader and an officer in the Native police force established by the U.S. Navy. As Juneau grew on the profits from gold, Kowee watched as his fellow Tlingits struggled to find their place in the new society. The story of Alaska Native contributions to gold discovery and the development of mines at Juneau has faded, but Chief Kowee's name remains on Cowee Creek 30 miles north of Juneau, on Douglas Island's Kowee Creek, and on a memorial in Juneau's Evergreen Cemetery at the site of his cremation. He died on February 27, 1892.

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For the source of Accounts 6, 9, and 12, look online for *Report of the United States Naval Officers Cruising in Alaskan Waters*, U.S. House of Representatives, Ex. Doc. No. 81, 47th Congress, 1st Session (1882).

For more biographical information about the people mentioned in this booklet, consult the section of Robert DeArmond’s *The Founding of Juneau* entitled “People Associated with Juneau,” pages 135-205.

For a lengthy participant’s account of Juneau’s origins, see George E. Pilz’s *Reminiscences of the Oldest Pioneer Miner of Alaska*, December 2, 1922. This volume can be found at the Alaska State Library or online at HathiTrust.org.





