

## **LETTERS FROM A GOLD MINER**

**Bigger John "B. J." Bower**

**a.k.a. Billy Bowers**





**1867 - 1949**



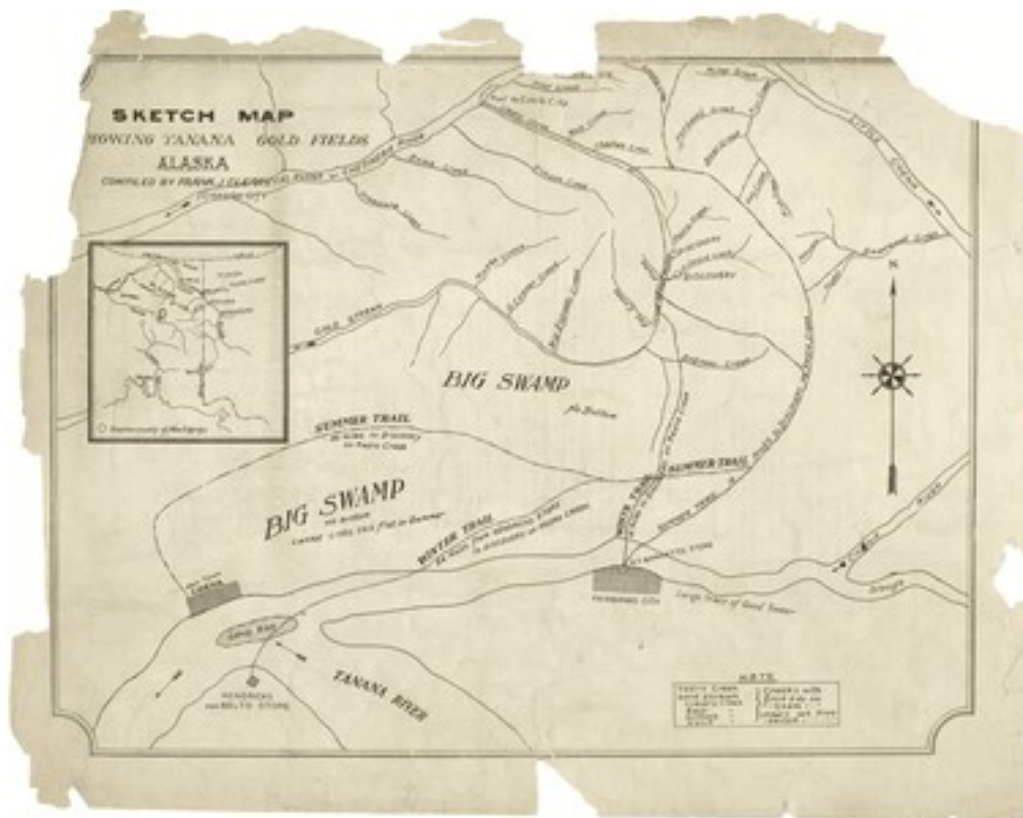
**Bigger John "B. J." Bower, known in frontier Alaska as Billy Bowers, had this portrait made in Kansas City, Missouri. During more than three decades in Alaska, he mined, trapped, and worked as a carpenter. Photo courtesy Sally Irvine.**



**In a 1909 letter to his young daughter in Seattle, B. J. wrote that he was one of seven partners in the Tillicum Mining Company on Cleary Creek. He may be among the miners pictured here in this photo by Albert J. Johnson. Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.**

<b>Collection Name:</b>	<u>Albert Johnson Photograph Collection, 1905-1917</u>
 <b>Identifier:</b>	<u>UAF-1989-0166-25-Print</u>
 <b>Title:</b>	<u>The Tillicum Mining Co. on Cleary Creek</u>
 <b>Description:</b>	<u>Title taken from caption.</u> <u>"The Tillicum Mining Co. Cleary Ck."</u> <u>Cataloguer's note: Notice the women miner (second from left).</u> <u>Johnson, Albert J.</u>
 <b>Creator:</b>	

<http://www.alaskahistorystore.org/map035.html>



Frank J. Cleary created this map for inclusion in a publication titled "The Tanana Gold Fields," published by Mason & Hill in Fairbanks, May 1904. University of Alaska Fairbanks Rare Books Collection.



University of Alaska Anchorage. Archives & Manuscripts Dept.

**Billy Bowers is credited with directing construction of the hotel at Circle Hot Springs in 1930. The historic building still stands at the end of an eight-mile spur road off the Steese Highway at Central, in Alaska's Interior. University of Alaska Anchorage, Archives and Manuscripts.**

**Collection Name:**



**Identifier:**

[B. Black. Photograph Album, 1944-1945. UAA-HMC-0582 UAA-hmc-0582-6d](#)



**Title:**

[Circle Hot Springs lodge, 1944-1945.](#)



**Description:**

[Title taken from image. View of Circle Hot Springs lodge and numerous outbuildings and cabins, 1944-1945. Original photograph size: 2 1/2 x 3 1/2 inch.](#)

## More about B. J. Bower:

*The summer was so dry we could not get water to sluice our dirt with so we could not get out the dust until this winter and for that reason we could not get any money.*

December 1909, Cleary City, Alaska

*I have been very unlucky since I left Seattle in getting ahead financially.*

September 1912, Ruby, Alaska

*When I was in Seattle . . . there was no roof so complicated but I could cut every rafter on the ground before the foundation of the building was laid, no stairs so complicated but I could get out every piece of them in the shop hence I think by trying to be exact seeking facts and science in my work is the reason I excelled so many of my craftsmen.*

November 1913, Ruby, Alaska

Among the placer miners who worked the goldfields of Cleary Creek, Iditarod, and Ruby, one strapping young man was known as Billy Bowers. In the early part of the 20th century, Bowers was one of thousands who gave their youth to the search for Alaska's gold. However, "Billy Bowers" wasn't his real name, although it wasn't unusual for a nickname to forever replace a man's legal name. But in the case of Billy Bowers, his given name was perhaps more colorful than the nickname: Bigger John Bower (minus the "s"), or "B. J." for short. His tragic personal history, and his role in Alaska's gold-rush history, would be lost if not for the letters he left behind, all of them signed "B. J. Bower."

Born September 15, 1867, on a farm in Monroe City, Missouri, B. J. wasn't content to stay on the farm, and he headed for St. Louis as a young man. By the time he was 25, he'd roamed west and settled in Seattle, where he worked as a carpenter and an engineer. There B. J. met and married a dressmaker named Amelia Alexander and together they had three children in three consecutive years: Edwin, born in 1894, Loraine in 1895, and Gladys in 1896. But tragedy would soon tear apart the little family. Baby Loraine died at six months, and in February 1898, B. J.'s 26-year-old wife Amelia succumbed to peritonitis. Now a widower, B. J. relinquished the care of his preschool boy and baby girl to Amelia's parents in Seattle. And then heartbreak visited again in 1899 when five-year-old Edwin died in a drowning accident.

By 1900, B. J. was working as a prospector in Alaska and his only living child, Gladys, remained in the care of her grandparents. He had arrived at an opportune time. He was among the earliest to stake claims in the Fairbanks Mining District after other men, such as Felix Pedro, Tom Gilmore, and Frank Cleary, made discoveries in the first few years of the new century. By 1903, prospectors were pouring into the Interior. While most suffered disappointment or at best broke even, those with early claims on the three richest creeks—Cleary, Fairbanks, and Ester—had better luck.

Getting to the gold, buried deep beneath the overburden, proved more difficult than many imagined. Some reported that they had to dig through 200 feet of permafrost and rock to find the paystreak. And in B. J.'s letters, contending with brutal weather and potential claim-jumpers were further challenges.

From Cleary, B. J. moved on to Iditarod and elsewhere around the Kuskokwim before heading onward to claims around Ruby. He stayed on in Alaska year after year, chasing one strike after another, while his in-laws raised Gladys. And yet B. J.'s letters to Gladys and a sister-in-law, Lucy, dated between 1902 and 1914, reveal a tender, fatherly side in which he encourages Gladys in her schooling, details problems at the mining sites, encloses money, and expresses hope to receive more letters. [\(Link: Read B. J.'s letters to Gladys.\)](#)

“Family legend says that B. J. only returned to Seattle four or five times for visits until returning for good sometime in the 1930s or 1940s,” said his great-granddaughter, Sally Irvine. “When he came to town it was an event. He loved the opera and the theater, and he would treat the whole family to the arts, spend what was in his poke and then go back to Alaska to try for more.”

In 1930, still in Alaska and now in his sixties, B. J. was hired by Frank and Emma Leach to oversee the construction of their hotel at Circle Hot Springs. In a taped oral history dating from the early 1970s, Emma Leach recounted the year they built the hotel, recalling the man known as Billy Bowers. “He was an elderly man at that time,” she said.

B. J. was living nearby and working a trapline for a living. And although he lived in a rough log cabin, he was not without his brand of culture, said his great-granddaughter.

“In that cabin he had a phonograph and a stack of records, mostly opera,” Irvine said. “During the long, dark Alaskan winters he would invite his neighbors to take their phones off their hooks and wile away the hours listening to the music.”

B. J. never remarried, but had a lady friend in a neighbor named Mrs. Walker, Irvine said. “There was camaraderie but nothing else. My source of this information actually talked with Mrs. Walker up at Circle Hot Springs and was told that she—Mrs. Walker—had mushed along, with only her dogs, from Dawson to Nome. We do not know where she landed once she left the Central area.”

According to Irvine, her grandmother Gladys grew up, married and had two children, a son and a daughter. And when B. J. was ready to leave Alaska for good, he went to live with Gladys in Seattle. By then she was a grandmother herself.

“He passed away when I was just two years old,” said Irvine, “on July 17, 1949, at the age of 81. The cause of death was prostate cancer. He was cremated and his ashes are buried between the graves of his wife and his son in Lake View Cemetery in Seattle.”

As for Gladys, Irvine remembers her as a “beloved grandmother” who lived to 95 years old. She died in Spokane, Washington, on November 24, 1991.

In the summer of 2001, Sally Irvine and her husband Rick visited Alaska for the first time. They drove the Steese Highway to Central and took the 8-mile spur road that leads to Circle Hot Springs. There they stayed one night in the hotel that Bigger John Bower, ever remembered as “Billy Bowers,” helped to build.

<http://library.state.ak.us/hist/cent/020-0069.jpg>





**Wintertime scene of mounds of gold-bearing sand at Cleary Creek, Alaska, near Fairbanks. Alaska State Library, Alaska Purchase Centennial Collection.**



Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

**Cleary Creek was among the richest gold-bearing streams in the Fairbanks Mining District. Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks.**

**Collection Name:**



**Identifier:**



**Title:**



**Description:**



**Creator:**

[Albert Johnson Photograph Collection, 1905-1917](#)

[UAF-1989-0166-57-Print](#)

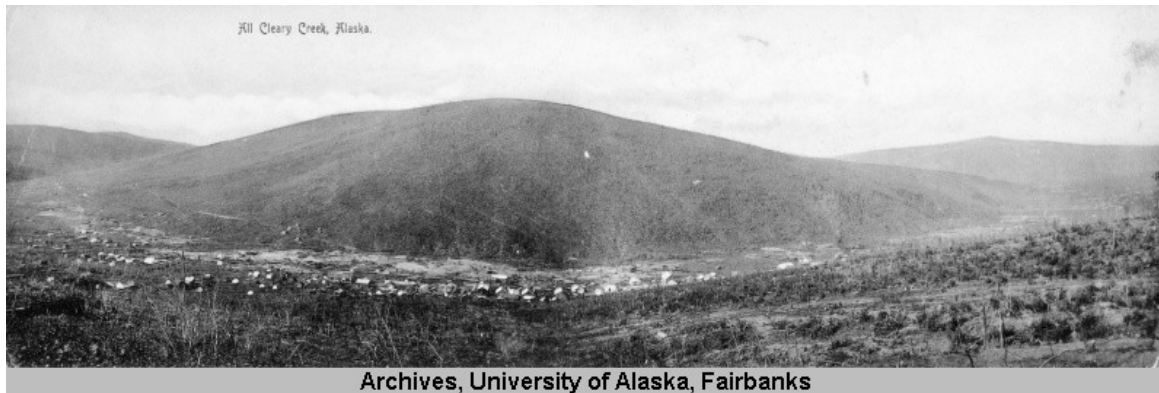
[Discovery, Cleary Creek](#)

[Title taken](#) from [caption](#).





[Johnson, Albert J.](#)



## The letters:



**Cleary Creek, and the town that grew up around the strike, was named for prospector Frank Cleary, who was the brother of Isabelle Barnette. She and her husband E.T. Barnette were the founders of Fairbanks. Cleary is credited with laying out the town site plan in the spring of 1903.**

Collection Name:	<a href="#">Albert Johnson Photograph Collection, 1905-1917</a>
 Identifier:	<a href="#">UAF-1989-0166-81-Print</a>
 Title:	All <a href="#">Cleary Creek, Alaska</a>
 Description:	<a href="#">Title taken</a> from <a href="#">caption</a> . <a href="#">Indexer's note</a> : This <a href="#">panorama appears</a> to <a href="#">show</a> the <a href="#">entire town</a> of <a href="#">Cleary</a> in the <a href="#">distance</a> . <a href="#">Johnson, Albert J.</a>
 Creator:	

Cleary City Alaska Dec 2. 1909

Miss Gladys Bower

Seattle Wash.

My Dear Daughter Gladys:

I will write just a few lines I have not heard from you for so long The last letter I had from you was dated Oct 29 1907 I have been expecting a

letter and your picture for a long time but I have not received either I was hoping to go out and see you this Fall but I cannot get away but I think I will be able to go next July after the clean up. The summer was so dry we could not get water to sluice our dirt with so we could not get out the dust until this winter and for that reason we could not get any money. I will send you twenty dollars for xmas I am awful sorrow I can't send any more but I hope it will help you to enjoy your xmas and I do hope you will answer this letter and let me know all about yourself and I will write you a long letter next time. I will write your Grand Mother a few lines also so hoping to hear from you soon.

I am as ever your Loving Father B. J. Bower

\* \* \*

Letter not dated, postmark 12/4/1909, Chatanika, Alaska

Miss Gladys Bower, Seattle, Wn

My Dear Daughter Gladys;

I have been looking for a letter from you for such a long time and still there is none course I received your New Year's card and am very thankful for the same but sorrow I never get a letters from you. I wrote you last October and have not as yet received an answer to that letter have been looking for an answer in every mail but none comes so I will try again I would write to you before this but I am awful busy I have to work 12 hours a day and Sundays as well today is the first Sunday I have had this year. I have charge of all the machinery that is why my hrs are so long. The work is not so hard as in the drifts in the winter but it requires all a persons time for I have to do the repairing after working

hours. We had some awful cold weather here this winter. 68 degrees below zero but it is fine now I seen by the paper it was very cold in Seattle this Winter. I have seven partners this winter. Six of them are Swede boys and one is an Englishman we call the Company The Tillicum Mining Co. we have lay a claim down the creek from where we are working now 3 has gone down to sink a shaft to bedrock there if we work there this summer I don't think I can come out to see you for we will have to pump water all the time so we will have to work all the time How would you like to come in here and spend the summer with me if I cannot come out to see you I should like very much to have you come and spend the summer with me at least. My partners would like to see you also they told me to be sure and give you their best regards. I sent you \$10 in the last letter I wrote to you did you get it I do wish I could hear from you regarding some of the letters I wrote to you have gone to the dead letter office and come back to me so I don't know if you get my letters or not so do write to me and tell me if you should like to come to see me this summer so if I cannot come out to see you I will send you the money to make the trip with. Tell me all about your Aunt Lucy, Gertrude, Henry, Lewis and all the folks and tell me all about yourself for you don't know how anxious I am about you and how I long to see and be with you. Tell me if you are going to school next time I will try and write you a long letter so do answer this one soon






From your Loving Father B. J. Bower

Address to Cleary City, Fairbanks District, Alaska

\* \* \*



**A shipment of gold dust from the Iditarod gold fields arrives in Seward by dog team on December 23, 1910. The photo by Lillie N. Gordon reads, "1/2 ton gold dust largest shipment ever carried by dog team in Alaska value \$210,000." Seward Community Library Association.**

 <b>Collection Name:</b>	<u>Robert McEanenev, Photographs 1904-1913.</u>
 <b>Identifier:</b>	<u>SCL-38-30</u>
 <b>Title:</b>	<u>1/2 Ton of Gold Dust, 12/23/1910.</u>
 <b>Description:</b>	<u>Title taken from front. Sled dog teams line up on Fourth Avenue in front of Brown &amp; Hawkins after bringing a load of gold dust in from the Iditarod gold fields. Seward, Alaska. The caption on the photo reads: "1/2 ton gold dust largest shipment ever carried by dog team in Alaska vlaue \$210,000. Consigned to Brown and Hawkins arrived in Seward From Iditarod Dec 23, 1910." Photographer's #142. Original photograph size: 5" x 7".</u>
 <b>Creator:</b>	<u>Gordon, Lillie N.</u>



**Ruby, Alaska, in October 1911, one month after Billy Bowers arrived. Note many newly constructed buildings and canvas tents. The sternwheeler *Sarah*, with three barges, is just offshore. Photo by Basil Clemons. Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks.**

**Collection Name:**

Candace Waugaman Collection



**Identifier:**

UAF-2003-183-22



**Title:**

Ruby, Alaska, Oct. 1911



**Description:**

Title from caption.

Photograph of the gold rush town of Ruby, Alaska showing many newly constructed buildings and many canvas tents. The sternwheeler Sarah with three barges is just off shore.



**Creator:**

Clemons, Basil

Ruby, Alaska

Sep 22, 1912

Miss Gladys Bower

Seattle, WN

My Dear Daughter Gladys:

I just received your letter dated Aug. 20<sup>th</sup> today it was the most welcome letter I have received since the last one I received from you and that is about two years ago. I was on Donaldson Creek, a tributary of the Kuskokwim River there. I was about 80 miles from a post office and I lost your letter before I got a chance to answer it and I could not remember your address so that is the reason I have not written to you. I was awful sorrow and do hope it will never occur again. I am very sorrow to hear of Gertrudes being sick and also that Henry is having trouble with his leg. I do hope he will be cured this time. I am awfully glad to know this is your sophomore year at colage. I guess my Dear Daughter you think you have a very neglectful Father and I cannot blame you but I hope to see you in a year or so and then I will explain that which I cannot by writing for it would take sheets of paper so I will just say this, I have been very unlucky since I left Seattle in getting ahead financially. I guess I have been too anxious and taken too long a chances and then again I have been wrong in my judgment in fact it seems the fates are against me so far. I thought I was going to make a few thousand dollars on the Cleary Creek but we had too much water to contend with so I did not make a cent there. Then I went to the Iditerod and Kuskokwim County but I could not do any good there. I was there 15 months then I came here to Ruby. I have interests in about 50 claims here and hope to be able to get enough out of them to make good all my arrears to you all it would be no use for me to go back to Seattle unless I could for at my trade I could only make enough for us to live on and not a very good living at that so I am staying in Alaska doing my very best to make some money for you. As you are all I have in this world to work for and try and make happy and you do not know how bad I am longing for the day to come that I can be with you again. I never have in all these years I have been away from you went to sleep without thinking of you, your Mother, Edwin and Loraine.



Your sister you never saw. She died in November before you were born at the age of 6 months. I landed in Ruby on the 5<sup>th</sup> of Sep 1911 and I have did well in procuring mining interests but I do not know yet if I will make anything out of them but it looks as though I would and you will see me very soon after I do. Yes I have many partners in fact I hardly know 1/2 of them. The claims are all from 4 to 8 claim associations and I got the most of my interests for representing them. I lived pretty near all last winter in a tent. I have a small boiler to thaw the ground with, 3 big dogs to pull it around with and to haul provisions when there is snow. The mines are all from 30 to 60 miles from Ruby and 4 mountain ranges to cross so you see it is very expensive to get supplies. It is 45 miles to my ground that I think will turn out all right. One of our partners has been very obstinate and contrary but I think he has seen his error and will do better from now on he would not work and he would not let any of the rest of us work the ground this summer but I guess we will have from 1/2 to a mile of it working this winter. We have let lays on 1/2 mile of it now and 3 different outfits are getting started to work. We get 25% of all the gold they take out so if they all work this winter I should have some money next spring. I worked 6 weeks this summer and took out \$304.00 with my little boiler on the ground we let the lays on now it is awfully hard for me to explain conditions to you so you can understand them. The claim we let on lays contains 80 acres. 1320 ft across the valley and 2640 ft up and down stream and is owned by 5 of us. I only own 1/8 of it I sand the shaft we found the pay in for 1/2 of one claim (20 acres is a claim) I also received 1/2 of 1 claim in 3 other associations claims from the same party now the claims are not divided so any one owning an interest in a claim can keep the rest from working that claim. (that is one of the association claim evils) now I suppose you wonder why I am not going to work myself and take out some money. Now I have the hardest kind of work from now until the New Year. I have ground I staked myself

enough to keep me jumping to represent and prospect. So I will be living in a tent again until then (New Year) or longer and some of it is 130 miles from here and I think I have a good chance to find some more ground that will be valuable if I don't then I will come back to where we have ground that prospects good and work the rest of the winter on it. I think 5 of the claims I own interests in will prove valuable if they do I am satisfied but it will take a lot of work yet to tell and I have been fooled so often I don't figure on them any more until I am sure. If I could sell any for a reasonable price I would but you cannot sell anything here until you have them fully developed and that is what I want to do this winter. Develop them and try and get the money I should like awfully well to send you some money this Fall but I have not got any to send and I could not raise any on my ground just now in the condition it is in if I can I will send you all I can raise but I don't have any hope of being able to do so before Xmas at least if the lay men stays and works. By that time I may be able to realize on some of it. Money is awful scarce and hard to get here. I had a letter from the fellow that went to Dawson with me and I asked him to try and find your address for me so I could write to you. I do hope we will keep in communication from this on and always write your address on the bottom of your letters and just write to me ever so often for I am awful glad to get a letter from you and just ask me any question you like and I will do my best to answer it and explain anything you would like to know to the best of my ability. Hoping you will excuse me writing of both pages but it would take so much paper it would make the letter so bulky if I only used one. Give my Love to all the folks and answer soon. I remain as ever yours

Loving Father B J Bower  
Ruby, Alaska

P.S. I will send you a little — M—

\* \* \*

Ruby Alaska Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>, 1913

Miss Gladys Bower  
Seattle, Wash

My Dear Daughter Gladys:

I just returned from my hunting trip yesterday and I was awful glad to receive two letters from you I was glad to hear that you received a letter from Frank. I have not received any in answer to the one I wrote him in answer to the one I sent you. No you need not send his letters to me unless there should be something in them you did not understand and perhaps I could explain it to you his life and environment are so different from yours that I expect it will be hard for you to understand each other at first at least through correspondence. He has been on a farm all his life consequently he can write of nothing else and you not knowing any of the people there it makes it harder for you both to write interesting letters to each other but I can assure you he would do anything in his power for you for he has always wanted me to bring you and go back to him and once you seen him I am sure you would like him although the ways and customs of the people are much different there than in Washington even the vegetation is different. I hope we shall be able to visit him next Fall then you would understand each other and not seem like strangers. I am very glad you are going to school but sorrow your chum Mary is not there with you (not wishing to retard her education in the least) for companionship to you. Yes I am very much interested in the subjects you are studdying. Chemistry, geology and civil engineering

were my hobby but I never had the opportunity to study them. I never read but very little medieval history. I have Dana's geology and I am very much interested in it. I read very little fiction but I never pass up a magazine. My favorites are 1st Preview of Reviews, the Worlds Working Everybody's and others of that type about all the news of the world I get is through the magazines and I always buy them when I can get them it is very interesting and perhaps a hobby of mine to seek for facts on any subject hence I should of liked to study science for I like to see anything done scientifically and exact. Pardon me for referring to myself but I wish to state when I was in Seattle I was considered to be one of the best mechanics there at my trade and the cause was I think I always tried to do my work scientifically and would study out at nights where I could improve on it. There was no roof so complicated but I could cut every rafter on the ground before the foundation of the building was laid, no stairs so complicated but I could get out every piece of them in the shop hence I think by trying to be exact seeking facts and science in my work is the reason I excelled so many of my craftsmen perhaps this is not interesting to you but I wish you to know or rather to aquatint you of some of my past life and of the channels of my thoughts. I am glad to know you can read and write French. I wish you could speak it also I wanted your Mother to learn you and Edwin to speak French she said she would when you were older I wanted her to learn me so she said something to me in French and told me to repeat it well I did it so bad she had to laugh at me and she would not try it any more. I thought I would learn some French at least when she would try to learn you and Edwin but I never heard her say a word of French to either of you. Does Chris still play his tricks on pat I think him very impudent to play the same trick on Pat every night and Pat a very forgetful dog if he cannot remember the trick that was played on him the night before and get wise. I had a dog that was tricky like Chris. I called him Trixy. If another dog

had anything to eat on a bone you could bet Trixy would have it in a jiffy. He died from getting porcupine quills in him. He was the best dog I ever owned. All of your letters are very interesting to me. Just tell me of anything at all that happens and I should be pleased to know what books you read and of the subjects treated by them for I should know more the channels of thought you are interested in and also I should be interested in the high school doings I am sure I could compare them with my school days and note the progression there of. I write a great deal about myself to you because I wish you to understand me or rather get aquatinted and know more about me. I have not received an answer from Lucy as yet to my last letter to her and I wrote Raymond also and I have not received an answer from him yet. I hope he will not be disappointed in his job. I have not got my return from the dust I sent out to Frisco yet. I am going to the creeks day after tomorrow but expect to be back to Ruby in a week for a day or so again before I go for the winter. I will mail you another letter the same time I do this one in it I will tell you about my hunt and try and give you the information you ask about the animals and vegetable live of Alaska. It would be too bulky for one envelope hence the two letters. With love to you all I remain as ever your loving father

BJ Bower

Ruby, Alaska

P.S. you must excuse bad writing, spelling, and composition for I am not very good at composing my thoughts and feelings and desires — but I hope you can understand them. BJB

\* \* \*

June 7, 1914

Miss Gladys Bower

Seattle, Wash.

My Dear Daughter Gladys:

I have just received your letter of May 18. I am in Ruby now had to make a business trip. I got here the eve of the 5<sup>th</sup> and will leave tomorrow again for the Creeks. I told you a great deal in my last letter about our ditch, well a little more about it now. We had quite a time with it had to work 1 24 hr shift on it but we conquered it at last and put up our sluice boxes to start shoveling in and what do you think! We found our bedrock drain frozen solid it is about 1000 ft long. The creek galvanized up so bad this winter that it backed the water up in the bedrock drain and it of course froze solid and it is a blind drain (a blind drain is one that is covered up. In fact there is 6 to 8 ft of tailings on top of it) and it is both impossible to thaw it out or dig it out. The only thing we could do is to dig another one. Will take perhaps a week so I guess they will be shoveling in the sluice boxes by the time I get back. It takes two days to make the trip. The trail is in awful shape. I was awful tired when I got to town. I left the claim at noon Friday and only went to Discovery Long Creek. 10 miles so the next day I had to make 30 miles but going out I will only go 20 miles each day. I was down to the fish camp where I have my dogs to see them and I thought they were going to eat me up. They were so glad to see me. They just barked and raised — when I left. They are just as fat as pigs and have a fine place. I just received a letter from Belle with yours. While quite interesting to me I don't know as there is anything in it that would interest you that you don't know as she said you and Florence write each other every week and says she certainly expects to see you and I this fall and I hope she will not be disappointed. I suppose that fat check you spoke about in the letter before the last one is about exhausted by this



time. I should send you some money if I thought you needed it real bad but if I did I would have to borrow it and pay 2% per month interest on it so I will wait until we get some claimed up will perhaps be a month yet before I can send it without borrowing if I get a letter from you before asking for some money I will send it but I will not borrow any unless I do. You know it is an awful long time to be without any income from Sep 1<sup>st</sup> to probably June 15 but I think we will be able to work until Oct 1<sup>st</sup> this year as we have or think we have the ground sluiced down low enough so it will thaw the bedrock on enough to keep us going until then. You know the ground is thawed generally we can sluice as long as the water runs. I told you all about how we are getting along in my last letter. I think it was dated of June 1<sup>st</sup> so I will only say we are getting along better than we expected. Except the trouble with our bedrock drain & judge by your letter that you will surely be glad when your term of school is over. Well I used to be very glad also and our terms only lasted 6 months and I was equally as glad when school began again. How long does it or will it take Mary to graduate from the normal school? I just imagine what a good time you had at Lucy's. 15 of you at one time reminds of the days when the county fairs are on at home. I don't know if they still have them or not. That was the time of year everybody went visiting and what houses full of people there would be first at our house and then another for about a month. I also note with pleasure your description of the party given by the Girls Club to the senior girls. Being initiated in a Sunday School sounds funny to me. I never heard of a Sunday school that had an initiatory ceremony before but I guess I am away behind the times. There is two churches here in Ruby. Catholic and Presbyterian. As I have written all I can think of at present I will close hoping you will excuse bum writing and etc. And keep writing so prompt.

With love to you all I remain as ever your loving father

B. J. Bower

p.s. will write again as soon as I get back to the creeks. B

## **LINKS:**

**Alaska History and Cultural Studies:**

[www.akhistorycourse.org/articles/article.php?artID=226](http://www.akhistorycourse.org/articles/article.php?artID=226)

**To purchase a copy of the 1904 Tanana Gold Fields map by Frank J. Cleary:**

[www.alaskahistorystore.org/map035.html](http://www.alaskahistorystore.org/map035.html)

## **Visit the library for more information:**

Alaska's libraries include audio, visual, and written material about the various gold rushes in Alaska. Visit your local library or go online to see what's available in holdings all over the state. Take these simple steps:

1. Access **SLED** (State Library Electronic Doorway) at <http://sled.alaska.edu/library.html>.
2. Click on the listing for **ALNCat** (the Alaska Library Network Catalog) to view the Basic Search window.

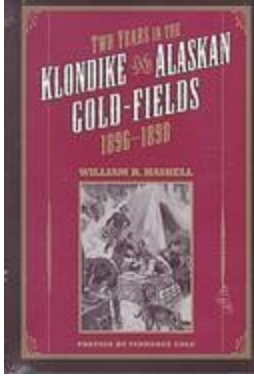
Go to the Keyword field, and type in **ALASKA GOLD**. Refine your search for information on specific rushes, such as Iditarod, Ruby, or Fairbanks.

## **More Reading:**

Eakin, Henry M. *The Iditarod-Ruby Region, Alaska*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914.

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