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Tony Troseth

Tom Duncan, narrator and interviewer

Neville Jacobs, narrator and interviewer

Series: Sourdoughs speak

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The narrator said the settlement of the Interior began with the Klondike Gold Rush. Duncan said the Klondike happened in 1898 and there were plenty of men here in the Interior before then. Some men came up after the Cassiar strike in the 1860s which followed the 1849 gold strike in California. Neville said if you go back far enough the history of Fairbanks and the settling of the Interior began in the 1500s when Coronado swept across Mexico looking for the legend of El Dorado. The first gold strike in the west happened in 1849 in California and some of the miners continued north. There was a big strike on the Stikine River in British Columbia in 1861 and then the Cassiar district was discovered in 1871.

The miners continued north until they reached the basin of the Yukon River. The Yukon rises in northwestern Canada and flows in Alaska. Discussion about the routes to the gold fields. In 1880 Harrison and Juneau discovered gold in the area later to be known as Juneau. These mines are hard rock. In the Interior there is placer mining. In the 1880s men moved up to the creeks flowing into the Yukon. In 1884 there was a discovery in the Forty Mile country. Miners were already nearby so when the Forty Mile discovery happened there was a small rush to that area. In 1893 there was a rich discovery in Alaska on Birch Creek. By 1894 Circle City on the Yukon was a bustling city. There was a great deal of activity in Alaska before the Klondike. The Klondike discovery did bring in thousands of men in a rush for gold unlike anything before. The men kept moving over the trails for many months pouring into the creeks of the Yukon.

In the 1890s George Carmack who was from California. He made his way from Juneau to Dyea. He married a woman from the upper Yukon. On the Yukon he had a small cabin which serviced as a trading post. In 1895 a prospector, Bob Henderson, made a small gold strike. Henderson passed a stream where Carmack and his relatives were fishing. Henderson invited Carmack to come up to his area to stake some claims. Carmack and two of his relatives headed up to Henderson's creek. After making poor prospects they went back over the mountain and stopped to hunt a moose. One of the men took a pan and panned out some gold. It was rich pay. Carmack recorded a discovery claim for himself and his two Native relatives. The region became to be known as the Klondike. Records show there were 1500 men in the basin at that time. Men from up and down the Yukon made their way to the area. Dawson came into being in 1896. In 1896 and 1897 miners worked the ground. In 1897 the first miners shipped their gold

dust down the river to St. Michael and eventually Seattle and San Francisco. They arrived in July 1897. The miners told stories about the gold discoveries. Each ship carried over three quarters of a million dollars. Extra ships were added to the Alaska run. The rush was on. Many who came soon left. The different routes to the gold fields are described including over the Chilkoot Pass. The alternate route was the White Pass Route (later called the dead horse trail). Some men felt the White Pass was easier. Avalanches happened on the trails. Tony Troseth was one of the men who followed the trails. He was born in 1873 in Norway. He came to North Dakota when he was nineteen and left for the Klondike when he was twenty-five years old in 1898.

Tony Troseth was interviewed at the Pioneer Home in Fairbanks just before he celebrated his 98th birthday in July, 1971. Troseth said he came up to the Klondike in 1898. His brother and another man from North Dakota joined him for the trip. They went to Tacoma to purchase equipment. They left Seattle on the 26th of January 1898. They came to Skagway and took the Dyea trail. They walked over the Chilkoot Pass. They were seventeen or eighteen miles above Dawson on the Yukon. Troseth was asked why the Klondike Gold Rush swept the country with such force. Troseth said life was hard in the United States at the time. Neville said some writers suggested that some of the news was sensationalized to create business for the outfitter companies. The businesses for outfitting did thrive. A typical outfit had hundreds of pounds of equipment. It all had to be packed in heavy duck canvas. Troseth said there was heavy snow on the Chilkoot Pass. He talked about the conditions on the trail. Men brought up their loads to the top of the pass and laid them in the snow until all of their supplies were at the top. Troseth said there was a rope to hang onto when you walked up the trail. Duncan said Troseth saw many stakes for miles around when he made it to the Klondike. He worked for someone on one of the richest claims in the Klondike, the number 16 El Dorado. He dug for three winters and then worked the sluice boxes in the summer. They had ten to eleven mules loaded with gold when they cleaned up in the spring. At Forty Mile another miner named Carl Anderson worked for wages on a claim. One day two prospectors sold a claim on El Dorado to him which they thought was worthless. Anderson tested his claim. He dug deeper than anyone else and got down to bedrock. His claim eventually yielded one and a quarter million dollars. Many others weren't so fortunate. There were other strikes in Bettles and Nome. Troseth stayed behind to work. He also went to Nome. In Cleary Creek he finally hit pay dirt. It was developed after the rush to Pedro Creek. Today Cleary is a ghost town. During WWII gold mining came to a halt. Equipment was appropriated by the government for the war effort. By 1941 the mining operations around Fairbanks had produced over 100 million dollars in gold. Cleary Summit is described. Pedro Creek was the first creek to produce gold in the Fairbanks area.

In 1897 E.T. Barnette sailed a riverboat on the Yukon River to Dawson. He was a businessman and explorer. In the mountains at the headwaters of the Tanana copper had been discovered. There was an overland trail from Valdez to Eagle. Barnette foresaw a need for a trading post in this area. He sailed the Lavelle Young up the Yukon and Tanana in 1901. He wanted to reach the trail crossing the Tanana, but faltered at the rapids on the Tanana. A prospector and his partner saw a plume of smoke rising from the river. They traveled down to the steamer which was on the Chena. Barnette decided to build a post. Pedro and Gilmore continued to prospect. Barnette traded with the Tanana Indians. Barnette and his wife mushed to Valdez with a load of furs. His brother-in-law, Cleary, stayed in Fairbanks. Barnette was

assembling another load in St. Michael in 1902. Wickersham arrived in St. Michael and told Barnette about his plans to establish recording offices and mining districts throughout Alaska. Wickersham asked Barnette to name his trading post after a friend, Charles W. Fairbanks who later became vice-president. On July 27th Pedro hit pay dirt. He traveled into the trading post and told Cleary he had hit it big. Cleary began mining in the next watershed. A few men at the trading post said they would keep it quiet but word leaked out and prospectors began to arrive. In September 1902 Barnette arrived back and intended to go further up the Tanana but instead they found a stampede going and decided to stay. The town grew quickly.