

Discovery Claim National Historic Site Commemorative Integrity Statement

National Historic Site Objectives

The National Historic Site Policy outlines three objectives for National Historic Sites. These are:

- * *To foster knowledge and appreciation of Canada's past through a national program of historical commemoration.*
- * *To ensure the commemorative integrity of national historic sites administered by Parks Canada by protecting and presenting them for the benefit, education and enjoyment of this and future generations, in a manner that respects the significant and irreplaceable legacy represented by these places and their associated resources.*
- * *To encourage and support the protection and presentation by others of places of national historic significance that are not administered by Parks Canada*

Commemoration focuses on what is nationally significant about a site, and includes protection as well as presentation. The National Historic Sites Policy states that;

protection and presentation are fundamental to commemoration since without protection there can be no historic site to be enjoyed, and without presentation there can be no understanding of why the site is important to our history and, hence, to all Canadians.

Discovery post where
Carmack staked the first
claim on Bonanza Creek in
August, 1896.
YA , VPL Collection, 1990



Definition and Purpose of Commemorative Integrity

The purpose of a statement of commemorative integrity is to focus our management of a site on what is most important; and to ensure that we address the whole (the "site"), not just the parts (the "individual resources"). For national historic sites commemorative integrity is key to developing and implementing work plans, along with service to clients and ensuring efficient use of public funds. Commemorative integrity is also the basis for reporting to Canadians on the state of their national historic sites.

Commemorative integrity is used to describe the health or wholeness of a national historic site. A national historic site possesses commemorative integrity when the historic values and those cultural resources symbolizing or representing its importance are not impaired or under threat, when the reasons for the site's national historic significance are effectively communicated to the public, and when the site's heritage values are respected by all whose decisions or actions affect the site.

To effectively focus on commemorative integrity it is necessary to identify and evaluate those characteristics of a site that led to its designation by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Those characteristics that make the site of importance to all Canadians are level 1 cultural resources. Characteristics of the site determined to have a cultural value of regional or local importance are level 2 cultural resources.

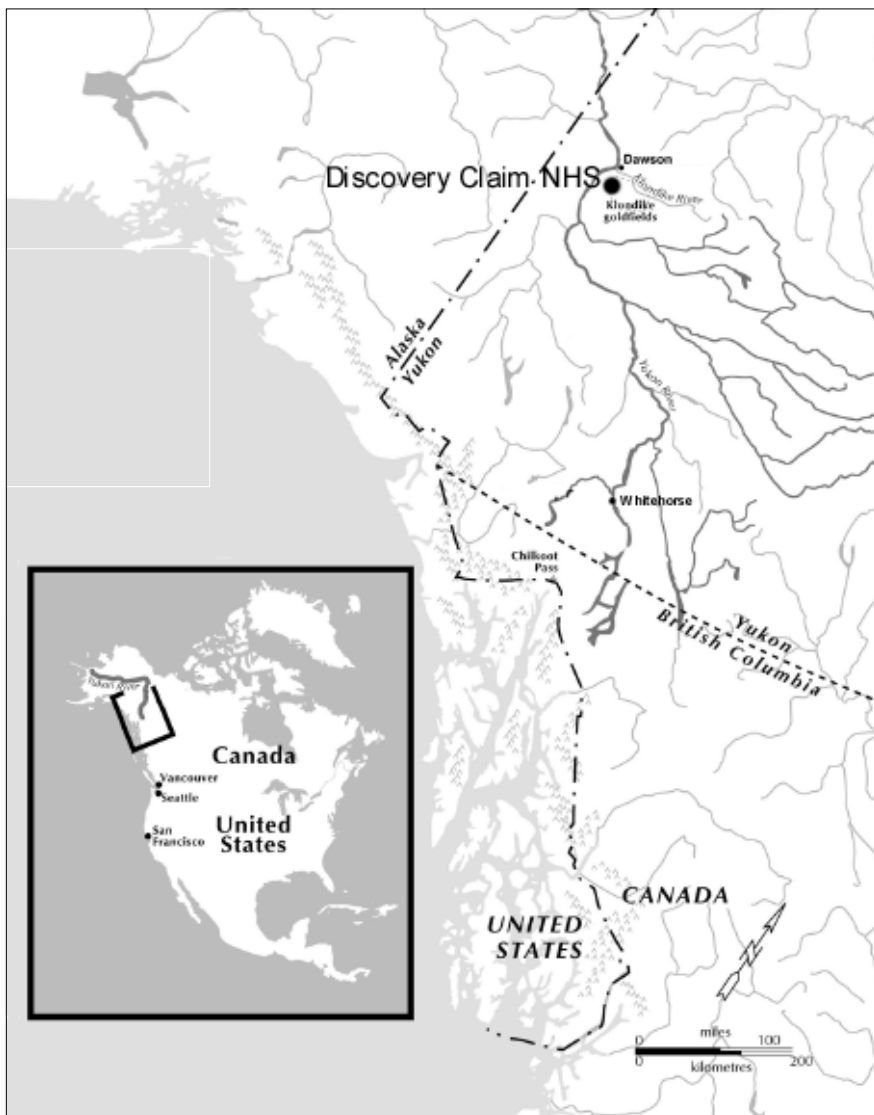
All level 1 and 2 cultural resources will be managed under the principles of the Parks Canada Cultural Resource Management Policy.

A sound grasp of historic value is essential to ensuring commemorative integrity. This includes a definition of what constitutes the extent of the nationally-designated historic place. The Parks Canada Cultural Resource Management Policy requires that evaluation of resources not only determine their levels, but "what it is that constitutes their value", that is to say, what particular qualities and features make up the historic character of the cultural resource. Historic value can reflect both physical (tangible or artifactual) as well as symbolic (intangible or associative) attributes. It can be derived from an association with many periods in history, a single episode, or from the interaction of nature and human activities.

It is those level 1 values, that is those attributes of resources or messages recommended by the HSMBC and approved by the Minister, that shall be the highest management priority for Parks Canada. These values and the threats to them are described in more detail in "Commemorative Integrity Values and Objectives".

Discovery Claim National Historic Site is a legally defined mining claim, approximately 500 ft. X 2000 feet, fifteen kilometres up Bonanza Creek from its confluence with the Klondike River. Originally staked on August 17, 1896 by

Discovery Claim, in the Klondike goldfields, is just outside of Dawson, Yukon. Lost Moose



George Carmack as one half of the discovery claim on what became known as Bonanza Creek, the claim was the site of the original gold discovery by Keish ["Skookum" Jim Mason] which sparked the Klondike Gold Rush. The claim, along with the rest of Bonanza Creek, was actively mined through the twentieth century, originally by labour-intensive hand mining techniques and subsequently by mechanized dredges.

A block of land covering five placer mining claims, including Discovery Claim, were withdrawn from further staking in 1971. Existing claims within the reserve were respected. Two claims in the reserve, including Discovery Claim, remain active mining claims in 2000. Parks Canada manages the non-alienated portions of the reserve, three claims. In March, 1996 rights to Discovery Claim were transferred from the estate of Art Fry to the Klondyke Centennial Society, a local non-profit heritage group. Discovery Claim National Historic Site is managed by the Klondyke Centennial Society, though the reserve and the rest of Bonanza Creek valley contribute to the commemorative integrity of Discovery Claim.

Other groups with an interest in the character of Discovery Claim and the Discovery Claim Reserve include Parks Canada, the Klondike Placer Miners's Association, mining companies and individual claim holders. This Commemorative Integrity Statement is limited to those resources directly associated with the Discovery Claim. However, its historical context and general management are considered within the broader holdings of the Discovery Claim reserve and the Bonanza Creek Valley.



Interpretation programs at Discovery Claim NHS focus on the early period when hand mining methods predominated.
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Commemorative Intent Statement

Commemorative Intent describes the reasons for the site's national significance, it is a statement of what is nationally significant about this site. It refers specifically to the reasons for this site's national significance, as determined by the ministerially-approved recommendations of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC).

The discovery of gold in the Yukon was first commemorated as an event by the HSMBC in 1927. Appendix A describes subsequent HSMBC deliberations. In 1996 the Discovery Claim was transferred to the Klondyke Centennial Society and in 1998 the HSMBC recommended that the claim be recognized as a National Historic Site. The site joins a complex of national historic sites related to the Klondike Gold Rush. These sites, consider the social, economic, and political components shaping the Yukon region over the last century. The HSMBC Minutes on the gold discovery make clear their three-fold interest in commemorating:

- the role of discovery in sparking the Klondike Gold Rush.
- the distinct cultural perspectives of Aboriginal people and western newcomers on the event.
- the economic and administrative development of the Yukon

From this background the statement of commemorative intent for Discovery Claim, the site of the first discovery claim recorded on Bonanza Creek, can be determined as:

Discovery Claim is a site of national significance because:

- **it is the site where gold was discovered on the afternoon of August 16, 1896, the event which triggered the Klondike gold rush;**
- **economically and administratively, the site marks the beginning of the development of the Yukon;**
- **for the Aboriginal people, this piece of land is an affirmation of their cultural values and world view; from a western perspective, the site affirms the nineteenth century belief that through hard work and perseverance one could rise from poverty to riches.**

Commemorative Integrity

The National Historic Sites Policy states that a national historic site has commemorative integrity if:

1. the resources that symbolize or represent its importance are not impaired or under threat,
2. the reasons for the site's national historic significance are effectively communicated to the public, and
3. the site's heritage values are respected by all whose decisions or actions affect the site.

These three elements cover the major responsibilities of Parks Canada in the management of a national historic site. To measure the success and effectiveness of this management, commemorative integrity indicators have been identified and listed after each of three elements have been described. Therefore, at Discovery Claim, commemorative integrity will be ensured when:

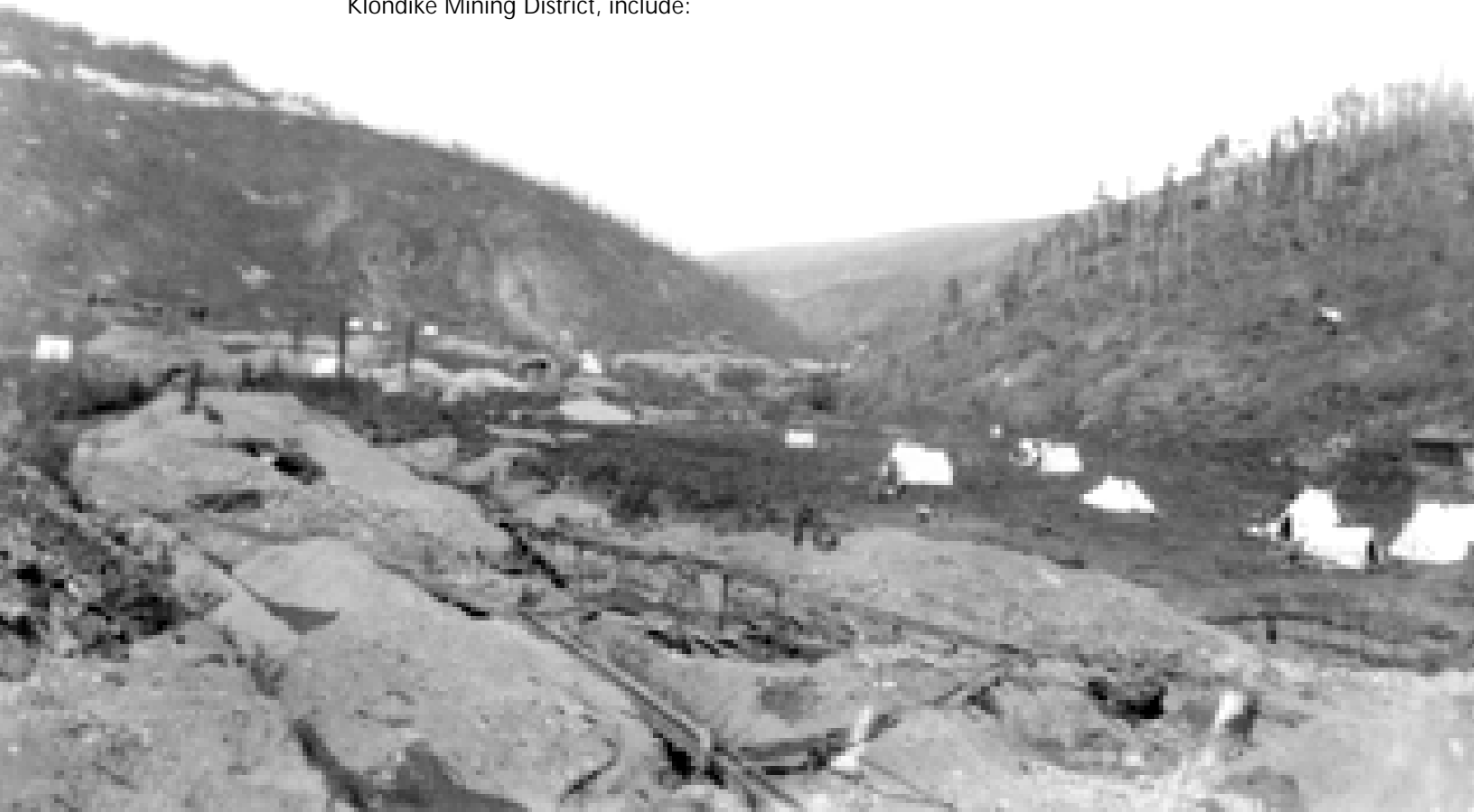
1. Definition of Historic Values - Resources that symbolize or represent the national significance of Discovery Claim are not impaired or under threat

Resources imbued with these level 1 historic values are those that symbolize or represent Discovery Claim's national significance. These cultural resources are thus instrumental in, or integral to, the designation of national historic significance. At Discovery Claim these resources include the actual site of the gold discovery and the setting of the claim within the valley of Bonanza Creek and the relict cultural landscape of the valley. Landscape features, in-situ resources and collected objects relating to this period have level 1 attributes. Because of their relationship to the national historic significance of Discovery Claim these resources are the cultural resource management focus. It is these features which shaped the experience and subsequently defined the memories, stories and history of the discovery. The following level 1 cultural resources must not be threatened or impaired:

1.1.a. Designated Place - Values

Discovery Claim gains its value as a historic place because of its association with the original gold discovery which sparked the Klondike Gold Rush. Those physical features which define the national historic significance of the site, a placer mining claim on Bonanza Creek in the Klondike Mining District, include:

A panoramic view of Bonanza Creek between Discovery Claim and the Forks of Bonanza and Eldorado Creeks in August, 1898.
- T. Adney, *The Klondike Stampede*



- the visual character of the claim including, the relict mining landscape, surrounding hills, passage of the creek especially its location, character and flow rate, its location in the valley, and the character of the neighbouring claims and their active mining landscape,
- its location within the confines of the creek valley amongst the ridges of the Klondike River watershed,
- the viewscape of the surrounding landscape indicating placer gold mining activity,
- the legally defined boundary of Discovery Claim, and
- those surviving features related to the exploration, staking and labour-intensive hand mining of the claim.

The associative value of historic place or that "geographical area that has been modified, influenced, or given special cultural meaning by people (Guiding Principles, p. 119) at Discovery Claim comes from its association with the acts of discovery and staking that led to the Klondike Gold Rush, the economic and administrative development of the Yukon and its illustration of aboriginal and western beliefs.

1.1.b. Historic Place - Objectives

The Historic Place will be protected when:

- the ownership of the claim and the clarification of its boundaries are clearly established.
- the character of Discovery Claim NHS is maintained. Those elements of the local landscape which give Discovery Claim NHS its spirit of place are respected by the owners and neighbouring owners and operators along Bonanza Creek.
- the presence and values of the landscape character of the claim are respected by future developments.
- The cultural integrity of the Discovery Claim is respected and fostered by working with owner/claimholders of neighbouring lands and mining claims.
- a strategy for the protection, maintenance and monitoring of the claim is in place.
- a strategy for the effective understanding and communication of the values of the National Historic Site is in place.





A section of *Plan of Placer Mining Claims on part of Bonanza Creek in the Klondike Mining District of the Yukon Territory* based on William Ogilvie's 1897 survey. This piece shows George Carmack's and "Skookum" Jim Mason's (Tagish Jim on the survey) claims.
- CLSR, Plan no. 8284

2. Reasons for the Site's National Historic Significance are effectively communicated to the public

The second element of commemorative integrity focuses on the effective communication of the reasons for the site's national historic significance. Each of the elements of commemorative intent forms an important component of the messages which must be delivered if the site is to have commemorative integrity. This means that visitors to the site must understand not only the events and people associated with the discovery, but also the effect of the Klondike Gold Rush in shaping aspects of Canadian history.

Effective communication of national messages also implies that messages are based on research, knowledge, and awareness and sensitivity to current historiography regarding the elements of commemoration. It also suggests that presentation is balanced. This means that various perspectives on the events associated with the site are communicated. Moreover, the individual components of the story should not be treated in isolation, but are integrated into the presentation of the history of the site as a whole.

Further changes to the site over time are important to communicating the full story of this place. In the case of Discovery Claim, the commemorative intent very broadly speaks to the meeting of cultures at the time of discovery and places emphasis on a specific time periods, i.e. 1870 - 1896 for exploration and prospecting and 1896-1905 to describe the character of activity at the site. Presentation of the site's evolution over time will be important to communicating a full understanding of the national historic significance of this activity.

1.2.a. Moveable Resources - Values

Discovery Claim was created by the staking of the claim in August, 1896 and its subsequent registration with Inspector Constantine, NWMP, the Mining Recorder at Forty Mile. It was the application to register and announcement of the gold find on this claim which drew initial attention to the Klondike region, leading to the Klondike Gold Rush. The legal boundary of the claim and those authentic documents recording its initial legal survey and mining record are therefore, level 1 resources.

Because the claim has been mined several times through the twentieth century, there are no known moveable resources in-situ. However, collected moveable resources directly related to the initial prospecting and staking of the claim and the subsequent labour-intensive hand mining of the claim (1896-1905) would also be level 1 resources. No inventory of these resources is presently available.

1.2.b. Moveable Resources - Objectives

The level 1 moveable resources of Discovery Claim NHS will have integrity when:

- Original documentation noting the first registration of the claim and defining its legal boundaries is protected.
- they have been identified and evaluated and are protected and maintained.
- strategies are in place for effective presentation of the reasons for national historic significance.
- access is ensured for research and presentation.

2.1 Nationally Significant Messages - Values

To achieve commemorative integrity the following learning objectives for Discovery Claim National Historic Site must be understood by the audience:

1. The staking of a discovery claim on Bonanza Creek sparked the Klondike Gold Rush

Messages supporting the learning objective include:

- * Exploration of the Yukon basin was part of the expansion of the western mining frontier into the north. In the period 1870 through the mid-1890s prospectors such as Robert Henderson systematically explored the upper reaches of the Yukon River looking for gold. Their actions were representative of the individualistic opportunism that characterised the economic and administrative development of the west and north in the nineteenth century.

2. The announcement of the gold find initiated the economic and administrative development of the Yukon Territory

Messages supporting the learning objective include:

- * Discovery Claim was the hub of the subsequent economic and administrative development of Yukon. With limited capital and constrained by significant geographic, climatic and environmental factors the miners developed a host of innovative approaches and equipment to successfully mine gold.
- * The mining of gold shaped the Yukon's economic and administrative infrastructure. The influx of miners initiated the development of an economic infrastructure designed to link the goldfields to the larger world. Transportation, warehousing, banks and retailers quickly offered the world's goods in exchange for gold. Government administration developed quickly to guarantee Canadian sovereignty, security of investment and the introduction and protection of private property. With the focus on gold and economic development however, the rights of aboriginal people were generally overlooked.

3. The discovery of gold on Bonanza Creek represents a nationally significant example of the meeting between distinct cultures

Messages supporting the learning objective include:

- * Discovery Claim affirms aboriginal cultural values and world view about service to community and family. Gaining direction from his frog spirit helper - Keish ["Skookum" Jim Mason] discovered the gold on August 16, 1896. By living a life respectful of his social obligations, his spirit helper directed him to the gold and allowed him to become wealthy, for a time, and to give back to his community.
- * Discovery Claim affirms the nineteenth century western belief that hard work and perseverance will lead an individual to riches. George Carmack's staking of discovery claim and the subsequent rush to the Klondike reflects western society's expectations that individual action was a powerful tool in economic and administrative development. The placer claim regulations governing staking and mining are reflective of this belief. The resulting character of labour-intensive mining operations similarly reflected the individualistic nature of the Klondike Gold Rush.

2.1 Nationally Significant Messages - Objectives

The reasons for Discovery Claim's national historic significance will be effectively presented when as many Canadians as possible:

- understand the site's national significance and its role in Canadian history.
- have knowledge of the linkages between messages of national significance and the site's level 1 resources and other related resources.
- and when measures and measurement processes are in place to determine the effectiveness of message delivery.

3. The Sites heritage values are respected in all decisions and actions affecting the site

3.1 Heritage Values

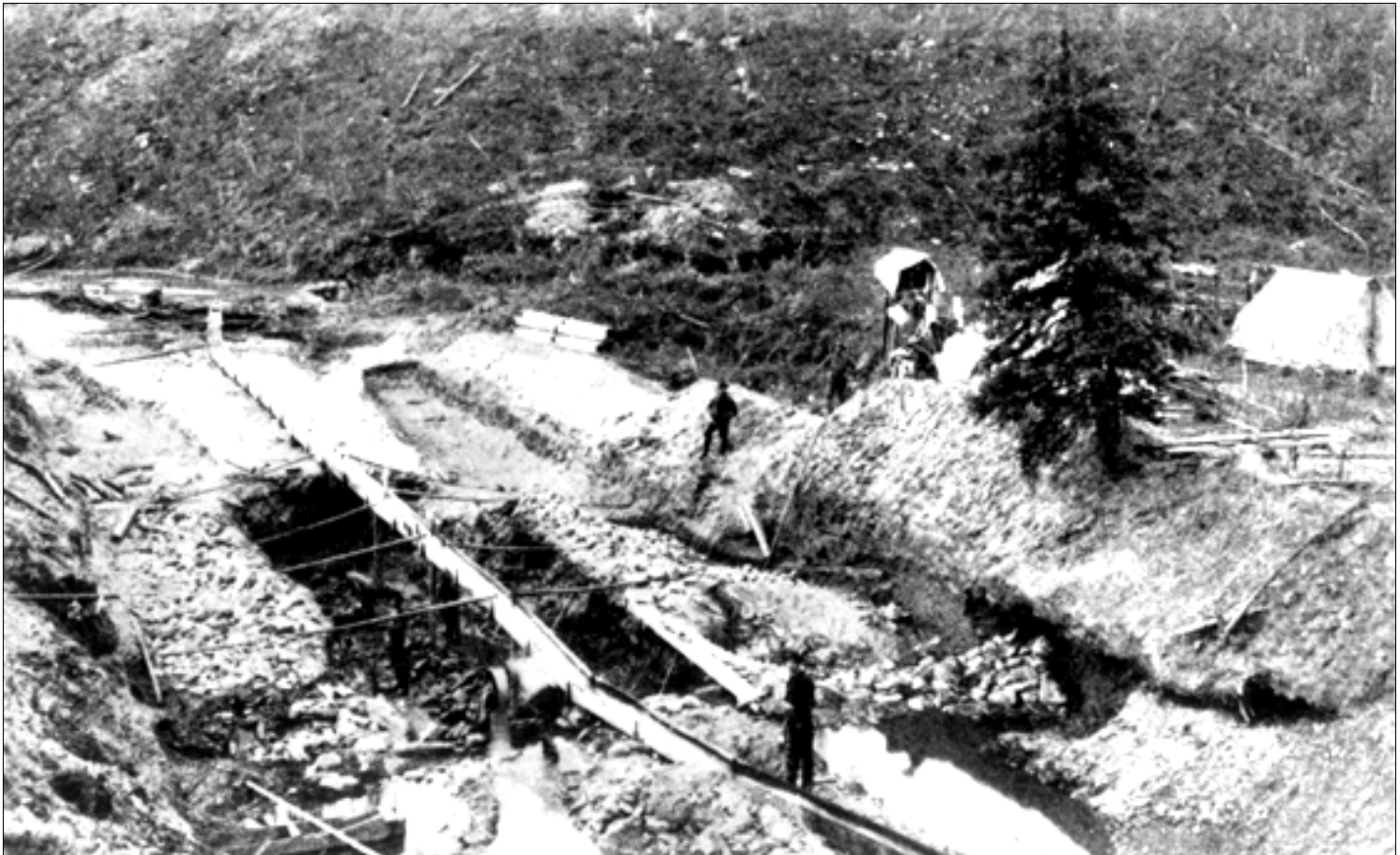
Discovery Claim NHS is a partnered heritage place, one part of a system of national and international heritage places in Canada. The natural and cultural heritage represented by these places is our legacy as Canadians and a significant element of Canadian identity.

Other heritage values associated with Discovery Claim NHS include its membership in the larger family of national historic sites, and its specific relationships to national historic sites and other heritage attractions in the Yukon and northern British Columbia. These values include the historical thematic relationships between gold rush sites and plaques (Chilkoot Trail NHS, Dawson Historical Complex NHS, Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park [USNPS], Fort Selkirk Heritage Site, Canyon City Heritage Site, Thirty Mile Heritage River, plaques for William Ogilvie, Joseph Tyrell and Keish ["Skookum" Jim Mason]) and sites associated with the consolidation of gold mining operations (Dredge #4 NHS, Joe Boyle plaque) and regional transportation linkages (Ridge Road trail); and other related mining heritage sites (Upper Bonanza Reserve, Bear Creek camp, and Klondike Visitor's Association free claim).

The relict cultural landscape surrounding Discovery Claim NHS contributes to the understanding of the significance of gold mining in the Yukon. Those elements enhancing understanding include the confined linear space of the Bonanza Creek valley, typical of the Klondike mining district, that is defined by the dredged valley bottom and surmounted by the treed slopes and crowns of the surrounding hills; the vermiculated deposits of dredge tailings, the scarred hillsides and the evidence of mining operations, both surficial and buried.

This understanding is also enhanced by the Parks Canada collection of level 2 resources related to the theme of hand mining in the Yukon. These include equipment and material representative of the full range of hand mining operations, i.e. prospecting, sinking of shafts, thawing and the clean-up with good informational value for presentation and research.

Discovery Claim in the
summer of 1897.
- T. Adney, *The Klondike
Stampede*



The site's other heritage values also encompass several level 2 messages of importance to an understanding of the site and its contexts. These include the important contributions of the natural history and ecology of the site to the development of the relict cultural landscape of Discovery Claim NHS.

A further value is the importance of community involvement in the enhancement and delivery of commemorative integrity at Discovery Claim. This includes the importance of community understanding of and support for the Klondyke Centennial Society in its stewardship of Discovery Claim NHS.

3.2. Heritage Values - Objectives

The other heritage values of the site will be respected and maintained when:

- The Klondyke Centennial Society is working cooperatively with other stakeholders to protect and present the full history and heritage of Discovery Claim.
- Level 2 resources are managed according to the Cultural Resource Management Policy;
- the level 2 messages pertaining to Discovery Claim and the post-1905 mining history are communicated to the public;
- The natural history of the site and its contribution to the relict cultural landscape are acknowledged.
- Discovery Claim's relationship with other NHS and heritage sites in the Yukon is effectively communicated but do not overwhelm level 1 messages.
- Discovery Claim's membership in the larger family of national historic sites is communicated.

The Klondyke Centennial Society has focused community interest on Discovery Claim and organized a variety of public events to celebrate its importance. This event in the summer of 1998 brought together many groups in Dawson.
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Appendix A: HSMBC Recommendations on Discovery Claim

YUKON GOLD DISCOVERY

To the memory of the indomitable prospectors and miners, who braving extreme dangers and untold hardships, crossed over the Chilkat and Chilkoot passes into the unexplored valley of the Yukon, and thus paved the way for the discovery in 1896 of the rich gold fields with which the names Robert Henderson and George W. Carmacks are inseparably connected.

Plaque text of 1927

DISCOVERY CLAIM

Tipped off by veteran prospector Bob Henderson, George Carmacks and his fishing partners, Skookum Jim and Tagish Charlie, searched the creek gravels of this area. On August 17, 1896, they found gold and staked the first four claims. A few days later at Fortymile, Carmacks, in his own name, registered the Discovery Claim where this monument stands. Within days Bonanza and Eldorado Creeks had been staked from end to end and when the news reached the outside the KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH was on.

Plaque text of 1958

The commemoration of the discovery of gold in the Yukon was first proposed by the Acting Gold Commissioner, G.I. McLean, in October, 1925. The HSMBC approved this idea at its meeting in May, 1926.

In its first experience, the HSMBC spent almost a year collecting fascinating letters from Yukon old timers and miners and reviewed historical sources. F.W. Howay, the Board member for British Columbia, soon became well aware of the difficulties and thankless task of assigning credit for the famous discovery. However, he eventually prepared a commemorative plaque text in February, 1927. Because of the difficulties, Howay made a point of avoiding the discovery itself and focused on the exploration activity which was less troublesome. In a Feb. 21, 1930 letter to J.B. Harkin, the Canadian Parks Commissioner, he wrote; We are purposely avoiding the Klondike rush of '98 and doing homage to those who pioneered the way. The bronze plaque was placed in the doorway of the Territorial Administration Building on Discovery Day, 1932.

Twenty-seven years later, as part of the general evaluation of sites related to the Klondike Gold Rush, the HSMBC decided to tackle this thorny issue once again. At their 1959 meetings they recommended the commemoration of the Original Gold Discovery in the Klondike. On July 2, 1962, the new plaque, located on one below, adjacent to the original Discovery Claim, was unveiled by Klondike old-timer, Harry Leamon.

It was only in 1971, however, that a reserve on the lands in the vicinity of Discovery Claim was established and lapsed claims within it were transferred to Parks Canada to become the Discovery Claim Reserve. The Klondyke Centennial Society is currently the holder of the original Discovery Claim within this reserve.

Minister of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources, Walter Dinsdale, remarked at the unveiling: This is where the most famous gold rush in Canadian history began....The Discovery Claim filed by Carmack is the first Discovery claim in the Klondike field to be recorded.... While this historic site preserves and identifies the Klondike Discovery claim, it is implicitly dedicated to the prospector of Canada, the restless explorer who has blazed trails into the farthest corners of our mineral-rich nation.

Thus the 1962 commemoration retained the original purpose of commemorating exploration and, with the explicit note on the Klondike Gold Rush and the names of the aboriginal participants, added additional meanings to the commemorative intent of the Discovery Claim site.

This commemorative intent was enhanced when the HSMBC met in Dawson, in 1967. There, they laid the plans for a major commemoration of the full extent of the Gold Rush and its impact on Canadian history.

In the early 1970s, growing awareness of First Nations' issues in the Yukon also led to a re-consideration of the Discovery Claim commemoration. Extensive and detailed research by a Parks Canada historian in the historic record provided an answer to the touchy question of discovery. On the strength of this work the Board recommended:

- (1) that the plaque to Discovery Claim be replaced by one bearing a new inscription recognizing Skookum Jim as the discoverer of gold on Bonanza Creek...;
- (2) that due credit should be given to Skookum Jim in the interpretation of the Gold Rush in the proposed new Park.

After considerable local controversy, the Minister approved a new plaque text in 1972. This plaque replaced the 1962 effort and was erected on the Discovery Claim Reserve in the later 1970s. The new text clarifies the roles of the individuals involved, but otherwise made no significant additions to commemorative intent.

In 1981 the HSMBC recommended yet another text revision to the commemorative plaque. As before this revision sought to appropriately represent all groups involved in the history of the Yukon basin from 1875 to 1900 and to set this history within a larger historical context. Although approved, this plaque has not yet been erected.

Discovery Claim was noted by the Board again in 1987 when it recommended a modest level of interpretation ... to focus on the character of mining activity during the period of labour intensive mining in the Klondike (1896-1905). This recommendation included explicit direction to do this interpretation as a complement to the gold rush history presented in Dawson.

The ongoing consideration of the Discovery Claim commemoration by the HSMBC to the mid-1990s had centered on two main features; the efforts of early prospectors and miners to find and develop northern mineral resources and the actual gold discovery that led to the Klondike Gold Rush.

While the discovery of gold in the Klondike had long been considered an event of national historic significance, the site itself was not designated until July, 1998. The Board's recommended that Discovery Claim be considered a site of national historic significance because "[the site] marks the beginning of the [economic and administrative] development of the Yukon. For the Aboriginal People, this piece of land is an affirmation of their cultural values and world view. That this discovery and the approximate location had been foretold to Skookum Jim by his frog helper... imparts to this ground significance for the Aboriginal community. From an economic and administrative perspective, Discovery Claim and the three other claims which were filed on the same day by Carmack, Skookum Jim and Dawson Charlie (sic), mark the hub from which all else followed. From a western perspective, the site affirms the nineteenth century belief that through hard work and perseverance one could rise from poverty to riches."

This most recent designation affirms the importance of the Discovery Claim site as a place where different cultures met and shared a significant experience but with culturally distinct understandings of its importance.

DISCOVERY CLAIM

The names Robert Henderson, Skookum Jim, Tagish Charlie and George Carmacks are inextricably linked to the discovery of gold on Bonanza Creek. Henderson was the first to systematically explore the gold bearing potential of the region, only to have the major find elude him. Then on 17 August 1896 Jim struck gold, and with his companions Charlie and Carmacks staked the first claims. A few days later at Forty Mile, Carmacks in his own name registered the Discovery Claim where this monument stands. Within days Bonanza and Eldorado Creeks had been staked and when the news reached the outside the Klondike Gold Rush was on.

Plaque text of 1972

YUKON GOLD DISCOVERY

The discovery of gold on Bonanza Creek in 1896 and the rush to the Klondike in 1897-98 marked the culmination of 20 years of prospecting and mining in the Yukon. Although gold was reported in the region in the 1840s it was not until the 1870s that the area attracted men who were interested in the mineral potential of the Yukon. Their coming was part of the northward extension of the western gold mining frontier. The precursors of 1897-98 - white and native, male and female, prospector, miner, missionary and entrepreneur - laid the groundwork for the great Yukon gold rush.

Plaque text of 1981 (not yet erected)