

## ***The History of the Iditarod Gold Strike and Development of the Iditarod Trail as told in old newspaper stories***

***Introduction: News of the Iditarod gold strike in 1909 was printed in newspapers all over the United States. Below is a sample of some of the intriguing stories written about this important event.***

*9/29/1909 newspaper article from The Daily Missoulian, Missoula Mont., page 1:*

### **IDITAROD STAMPEDE TO RIVAL DAWSON RUSH**

Fairbanks, Alaska, Sept. 28. – The stampede to the Iditarod country promises to rival the rush to Dawson in the days of the Klondike boom. The steamer Reliance, which arrived today from Innoko, fully confirms the report of rich placers on Otter creek, a tributary of the Iditarod, to which 1,000 miners have gone from Fairbanks during the summer. Fifteen hundred men are camped on the creek.

Pay is outlined one mile in length and 600 feet wide, 3 cents to \$1.25 to the pan at a depth of three to five feet. There is gold in every hole sunk and bedrock is reached at 14 to 17 feet. Prices of supplies and food in the new camp are very high owing to the approach of winter.

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*9/30/1909 newspaper article from The Wenatchee Daily World, Wenatchee, Wash., page 1:*

### **PAY STREAK OF SIX MILES**

#### **Gold Seekers in Iditarod Country Find Wealth.**

Fairbanks, Alaska, Sept. 30. – Reports from the Iditarod country, toward which the latest gold stampede has set in indicate that the pay streak extends for a distance of six miles. Previous reports outlined the pay for a distance of only one mile. Thirty-two holes sunk to bedrock, a distance of from 14 to 17 feet, are all producing gold in paying quantities. Some are rocking out \$3 to the square foot. Owing to low water the country is difficult of access. Provisions are getting low, resulting in increased prices.

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## **Rich Strikes in Alaska.**

According to all of the stories which are now coming out of Alaska, both by wire, by letter and by the mouths of those returning from the north, it appears that the strike made last summer on the Iditarod, a tributary of the Innoko, promises to be the greatest that has been made in Alaska since the opening of the Tanana country.

It appears further that the stampede to the new camp, which it was slow in starting, has now assumed large proportions, hundreds of men having left Fairbanks recently for the Iditarod country. This is typical of a mining country. It seems to be one of the inevitable things that a wild stampede can be started upon a baseless rumor, or on the very slightest of foundations, while reports of really rich strikes are received at the start with considerable skepticism, and the movement is often delayed, to the deep regret of those who have taken the determination to be led off on no more wild stampedes just late enough to get left out of the only good thing that really materialized.

There is at present ground for believing that the strikes on the Iditarod are real and important. Those who are on the ground have given as little news as possible to the public generally, but have written letters to their personal friends in Fairbanks, which resulted in bringing about the present rush. According to these letters, the ground is shallow and the pay deep, making it an ideal poor man's proposition, for it requires no capital to develop a claim to the paying point. The particular thing which arouses some skepticism was that the reports were almost too good to be true.

On the outside the tendency is always to discount stories of rich strikes in the North, which uniformly realize just about the time the season is about to close and the winter set in. Yet there is reason for this. When strikes are made it is generally after a season's prospecting, and those on the ground are too busy to go out as long as there is a chance to work to an advantage. The news of the great strike on the Klondike did not reach the outside world until midwinter, and it was after the river closed before the word reached even Circle City. – Seattle Post Intelligencer.

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*11/8/1909 newspaper article from The Salt Lake Herald-Republican, Salt lake City, Utah, page 1:*

## **MINERS READY FOR RUSH**

**Reported Strikes of Gold in the Iditarod Causes Many to Start for the Field.**

SEATTLE, Wash., Nov. 7. – According to S. H. Ewing, a prominent business man of Nome, who arrived on the steamer Senator today, a general exodus of miners is expected from the Seward peninsula to the new gold field on the Iditarod as soon as cold weather sets in. Navigation on the rivers has already closed, and hundreds of men who are anxious to go to the new diggings are waiting for a heavy fall of snow, so that trails may be broken and the long journey can be made overland.

The reports received at Nome and other Seward peninsula towns concerning the Iditarod strike have caused great excitement among the miners, and the stampede promises to eclipse the famous rush to the Klondike. The fever has spread to Fairbanks and the Tanana district, where many prospectors are pulling up their stakes and heading toward the Iditarod county.

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*5/11/1910 newspaper article from The Bemidji Daily Pioneer, Bemidji, Minn., page 3:*

## **ALASKA RIVERS BREAKING UP**

**Rush for New Gold Fields Will Begin Shortly.**

Fairbanks, Alaska, May 11. – The ice on the Chena river has begun to break up in front of Fairbanks and before the end of the week navigation will begin on the Tanana and the lower Yukon.

The first boats are scheduled to leave Fairbanks Thursday and with their departure will begin the big stampede to the Iditarod gold fields discovered late last fall. Two thousand prospectors have already made arrangements to go down the river to the Iditarod country.

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*6/2/1910 newspaper article from The San Francisco Call, San Francisco, Calif., page 9:*

### **ALASKA PLACERS TO BE SURVEYED**

Seattle, June 1. – Surveys of the placer gold districts of the upper Susitna and the Iditarod will be made by the United States this summer.

Fred Moffet, who will make the initial reconnaissance of the Susitna headwaters, sailed for Alaska today and will be followed by D. C. Witherspoon, who will have charge of the mapping. They will have 15 men in their survey party.

Moffet will also make geological observations in the district south of the Alaska range and east of Mount McKinley. The Iditarod survey will be made by A. C. Maddren, who will leave Seattle about June 15.

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*9/16/1910 newspaper article from The San Juan Islander, Friday Harbor, Wash., page 2:*

### **To Start Iditarod Trail**

Seward, Sept. 12. – Maj. W. P. Richardson, United States road commissioner for Alaska, cables from Valdez that work will be begun at once on a winter mail trail between Seward and the Iditarod.

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*11/28/1910 newspaper article from The Seattle Star, Seattle, Wash., page 8:*

### **3,000 WINTER IN THE IDITAROD**

Dawson, Nov. 28. – It is estimated 3,000 people are wintering in the Iditarod country. Harold Malstrom, who has just arrived from there, claims very few people left the diggings this fall. Pay has been found in the Kuskokwim district, across the divide, and a general rush from Iditarod is expected, according to Malstrom.

He states that the biggest cleanup in the Iditarod country was made by Frank Manley, who has realized in the neighborhood of \$3,000,000 in the Marietta claim.

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*3/10/1911 newspaper article from The Salt Lake Tribune, Salt Lake City, Utah, page 1:*

**BODY OF PROSPECTOR FOUND FROZEN ON TRAIL**  
**Death Comes to John Olson While Sitting on Sled in Wilds of Alaska.**

SEATTLE, Wash., March 9. – Members of the Alaska road commission party which surveyed the proposed road between Nome and Seward arrived in Seattle today and reported finding the body of John Olson, a prospector, on the trail near Distaket [Dishkaket], sixty miles from Iditarod, late in January. The body, frozen stiff, was in a sitting attitude on a sled.

The proposed Nome-Seward wagon road, for which congress has appropriated \$50,000, is to pass through the Kuskokwim and Iditarod diggings. The surveyors, eight men with a caravan of forty-two dogs, left Nome November 15 and reached Seward February 25. They lived in the open, the temperature sometimes reaching 60 degrees below zero. The road will be 513 miles long and the route is perfectly feasible.

Hundreds of men are prospecting along the tributaries of the Kuskokwim and some have made good strikes. In the Iditarod there is a scarcity of food, which the Esquimaux mitigated by driving in 150 reindeer to be slaughtered. The supply of whiskey, beer and cigars is ample.

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*5/9/1913 newspaper article from The Tensas Gazette, St. Joseph, Louisiana, page 3:*

**Dogs Lead to Victims of Blizzard.**

Seward, Alaska. – Guided by pack dogs more than 100 miles, rescuers recovered the bodies of C. C. Chittick and John Kesler, who perished in a blizzard in the Happy river country, 250 miles from Seward.

Three days after they had left a road house on the Iditarod trail, four dogs in harness belonging to the men returned. Rescuers, led by the dogs, set out and were guided to a huge snow drift, under which lay the bodies of the blizzard victims.

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*1/10/1917 newspaper article from The Seattle Star, Seattle, Wash., page 10:*

**SHORT NEWS**

WELLS-FARGO brought \$550,000 in gold dust over the Iditarod trail to Seward for transportation to Seward on the Mariposa Monday.

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*2/28/1918 newspaper article from The Ogden Standard, Ogden, Utah, page 2:*

## **GOLD SHIPMENT FROM IDITAROD**

SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 27. – Details of the shipment of \$500,000 in gold bullion, weighing 2500 pounds, through tremendous snow barriers from Iditarod, Alaska, to Seattle, a distance of 1045 miles, have been made known by the Alaska Commercial company offices here.

The shipment was started December 5, 1917, from the Riley placer holdings in the Iditarod district. Dog teams took it to Tanana, and regular horse-drawn stages to Fairbanks and Chitna [Chitina]. It was then loaded on the Copper River railroad for the seacoast, 131 miles distant.

At Parson's and Yost's stations between Iditarod and Tanana, there was one snowfall of thirty-six inches in twenty-four hours. Because of this it took the dogs twenty-four hours to make twelve miles one day and fifteen hours to make sixteen miles the next. During the battle with this storm, R. D. Menzie, who had charge of the shipment, dislocated his shoulder while aiding in shifting the load. He was forced to ride three and a half hours before he could obtain relief.

While it was being taken on the horse drawn stages the bullion had to be cached in the snow and left alone several times while the drivers went to distant road houses for fresh horses. The shipment reached Seattle February 2, 1918.

The stage between Chitna [Chitina] and Fairbanks, a distance of 310 miles, is drawn by four horses. A single horse stage lines operates between Fairbanks and Tanana, a distance of 161 miles.