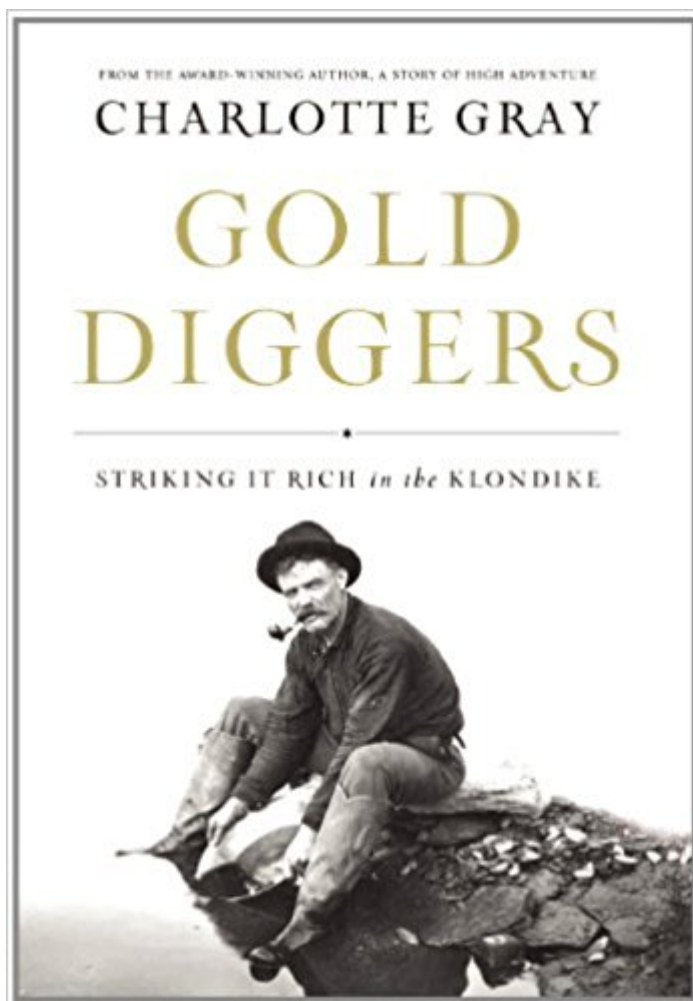


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# Gold Diggers: Striking It Rich In The Klondike



## Synopsis

Between 1896 and 1899, thousands of people lured by gold braved a grueling journey into the remote wilderness of North America. Within two years, Dawson City, in the Canadian Yukon, grew from a mining camp of four hundred to a raucous town of more than thirty thousand. The stampede to the Klondike was the last great gold rush in history. Scurvy, dysentery, frostbite, and starvation stalked all who dared to be in Dawson. And yet the possibilities attracted people from all walks of life. *Gold Diggers* is the remarkable story of the Klondike Gold Rush told through the lives of six very different people: the miner William Haskell; the saintly priest Father Judge; the savvy twenty-four-year-old businesswoman Belinda Mulrooney; the imperious British journalist Flora Shaw; spit-and-polish Sam Steele of the Mounties; and, most famous, the writer Jack London, who left without gold but with the stories that would make him a legend. Brilliantly interweaving their experiences, Charlotte Gray presents a fascinating panorama of a subarctic town, drawing on letters, memoirs, newspaper articles, and stories and handsomely illustrated with more than sixty original photographs and maps.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Charlotte Gray, one of Canada's pre-eminent biographers and historians, has won many awards for her work, including the prestigious Pierre Berton Award for a body of historical writing, the Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-Fiction, the Ottawa Book Award and the CAA Birks Family Foundation Award for Biography. Over nine books, she has brought our past to life. Gray is a Member of the Order of Canada and was a panelist on the 2013 edition of CBC Radio's Canada

Reads. She lives in Ottawa. Steven Cooper is a reporter for WKMG TV in Orlando. A native of Boston, he is also the author of *With You in Spirit* and *Saving Valencia*. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

In *Gold Diggers*, published in 2010, author Charlotte Gray crafts a fascinating history of the Klondike Gold Rush. Covering the period from June 1896 to the Summer of 1899, Gray charts the trajectory of gold fever in the Yukon Territory from its boom to its bust. I first became aware of this book through the television miniseries *Klondike*, a highly fictionalized adaptation produced for the Discovery Channel (which is very good, by the way; rent it if you haven't seen it). I'm a huge fan of the author Jack London and his stories and essays about the Klondike. I was eager to learn the truth behind the fiction, and Gray's account does not disappoint. The real history that she presents in *Gold Diggers* is every bit as exciting, fascinating, and incredible as London's wildest literary interpretations. Gray approaches the subject as a group biography, intertwining the lives of six diverse Gold rush participants: prospector Bill Haskell, author Jack London, entrepreneur Belinda Mulrooney, Jesuit priest Father William Judge, British journalist Flora Shaw, and Officer Sam Steele of the North-West Mounted Police. Although these six larger-than-life personages get the most attention, there are plenty of supporting characters that stand out as well, from government bureaucrats to newspaper editors to dance hall girls to "Klondike Kings" who struck it rich. In fact, it's often difficult to remember who Gray's six primary subjects are, because what really comes through is the story of a community. *Gold Diggers* is first and foremost the biography of a town: Dawson City. Gray relates the life of this remote mining outpost from its origins as a mud flat at the confluence of two rivers to its dubious distinction as the "Paris of the North" to its eventual mass abandonment in favor of the next big score. At first I wasn't very impressed by Gray's approach. The initial chapters concentrate solely on Bill Haskell's journey to the Klondike. Having read everything that London ever wrote, Haskell's adventures sounded rather familiar, and Gray relies so heavily on Haskell's memoir that I wondered why I shouldn't just read that instead. However, once Haskell arrives in the Yukon and Gray begins to broaden her scope, I was hooked. I've read several biographies of London, but Gray opened my eyes to specific details about his Klondike experience that often get left out of the more general cradle-to-the-grave accounts. At times Gray takes some artistic license with her material, describing

the thoughts in her subject's heads or minute details of their daily activities that wouldn't normally make it into the history books. She has a knack for combining historical facts with descriptive passages of literary quality. Where the book really succeeds is in its establishment of atmosphere. You truly get a sense of what it felt like to walk the muddy streets of Dawson, dance in its smoky saloons, hike a frozen river at 50 below, or hunker down in a drafty cabin for a long, lonely winter. You become so involved with the lives of Dawson's inhabitants that after a while you feel like a citizen yourself. Gray vividly recreates the Klondike in all of its beauty, adventure, and filth. The book ends with a "whatever happened to . . . " essay on the six main characters and an extensive bibliography of Gray's sources. As satisfying as this book is, she has inspired me to want to learn more. Anyone interested in the Klondike Gold Rush will love *Gold Diggers*. Even if you're only slightly intrigued by this episode of history, give this book a try and you too may be stricken with gold fever.

I had a history prof in college who was loved and respected by all who were lucky enough to get in his class. He didn't want to screw up any body's gpa, so he frequently cancelled semester finals. His respect was not based on being a softie. No, this man made his mark because he KNEW history. He'd insert into every lecture a nugget of a human interest; something that had no meaning in the "big picture" but made it a lot more interesting and fun to read. Charlotte Gray does the same thing, showing the Big Picture of how the Klondike affected both Canada and the US, but as well the human profile. The shrewdness of Belinda Montgomery, the hardships of even successful miners like Bill Haskell, the driven almost obsessed vision of Sam Steele. Excellent read

another great book

I loved this book. While it has history it is not a dull history book and the history is indeed interesting. The book details the lives of different people enveloped in the gold rush from a wonderful clergyman, a young Irish woman with a keen sense for business, successful and not so successful miners plus those who went there with no knowledge of mining or life in the very rugged north. The book is very well written and weaves the history, the town of Dawson, and the individual characters together seamlessly.

I always had a vague idea as to what the Klondike gold rush was all about. Ms Gray provides a

comprehensive overview of what it was like to be there in the late 19th century.

This is a terrific book that is well written and a fascinating read that provides an excellent overview of numerous aspects of Klondike Gold Rush. The author relied on private diaries, letters, and interviews to give new and fascinating insights about the lives of prominent participants in the Gold Rush. I highly recommend this book.

Ordered the book after watching the tv mini series and found the book much better than the series. A greatly overlooked period of North American history "Gold Diggers" answered a lot of questions. And sent me on a search for other books on the same topic, Suddenly my library has gone from zero Yukon gold rush books to 5, all covering different but also overlapping topics of the gold rush. Very happy with it!

I watched "Klondike" on television and got hooked...so I bought the book. This was an in-depth story. You got to know the characters and really got a feel for the gritty life of the people in the gold rush, the good, the bad and the ugly. Read this book if you really want to know what the northern frontier was like at the turn of the 20th century.

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