

**JOHNNIE
WALKER**

RED LABEL SCOTCH WHISKY



John Walker & Sons, Ltd.
DISTILLERS,
KILMARNOCK, SCOTLAND.

PACIFIC

Venturing North

Snapshots of life for Black and Asian Yukoners

1896-1975

Venturing North

Snapshots of life for Black and Asian Yukoners
1896-1975



Hidden Histories
Society Yukon

www.hhsy.org



Cover photo: Lucile and Charles Hunter stamped to the Klondike via the challenging Stikine Trail in 1897—among very few black people trekking north. She was the first female member granted honorary membership by the Yukon Order of Pioneers. This photo is of 80 year-old Lucile in her home on Strickland Street in Whitehorse, 1960. Lucile's home burnt down in 1961. She died in 1972, aged 94.

Yukon Archives, Richard Harrington fonds, 79/27 #277

Above: This man, known only as "Black Prince," is shown here in a Dawson dog yard during the Gold Rush. He was a well-known local boxer and worked as a server at the Monte Carlo saloon.

Yukon Archives, Tappan Adney fonds, 81-9 #153

Introduction

Many cultures have contributed to the rich fabric of Yukon history. However, these stories have remained largely untold until recently. Hidden Histories Society Yukon (HHSY) is a non-profit organization dedicated to uncovering previously under-represented histories in the Yukon. Our particular focus is on the history of Black and Asian peoples who have either lived permanently or resided temporarily in the Yukon since the Klondike Gold Rush.

Over the last 20 years HHSY has conducted research into the history of both groups, finding a treasure trove of photographs and archival records. We have worked with descendants of several families to share their stories on our website (hhsy.org) and on pop-up displays. This memory book, funded by a Yukon125 grant, features photographs not previously shared that are in the Yukon Archives or outside institutions. The photos, featuring Black and Asian people, provide a glimpse of their lives in the Yukon from the Klondike Gold Rush 1975.

The Yukon offered the promise of new opportunities. Black and Asian people who arrived in the Yukon still faced discrimination, but they sometimes found fewer restrictions on the work or business ventures available to them. The photos show that by the early 1900s, Black and Asian people were working as gold miners, barbers, waiters, cooks, musicians, small business owners, labourers and household servants.

There were not many Black and Asian people in the Yukon until the last 20 years. The populations in the 1901 census indicated a total of 195 Chinese, Japanese, East Asian and

Black people living in the Yukon, out of a total population of about 27,000. In part due to discriminatory Canadian restrictions on immigration, this number slowly declined to almost zero until the 1961 census, which shows an increased population of 159 Chinese, Japanese, South Asian and Black people.

Due to these small populations neither Black or Asian people established their own settlements as they did in other areas of the country, such as Amber Valley in Alberta or Africville in Nova Scotia. They lived and worked the major communities of Dawson, Whitehorse and Mayo.

The photos featured in this collection have stories to tell. Unfortunately, many of these photos have not been identified. We may know when they were taken and by whom, but not who the people are. Most archival institutions rely on donations by private individuals. Unfortunately, until the 1990s many donors were not encouraged to review donated photographs to improve identification. The stories behind the photographs are even harder to find or to clarify without a clear indication of ethnicity, surname or location.

The book is meant to provide a window into the diversity of life in the Yukon and bring these photos into the public eye. We ask for readers' help to identify the people and stories behind them.

The photographs were compiled by Peggy D'Orsay, the layout designed by Paul Gowdie and the captions written by Karen Routledge.



Miners working a claim on Hunker Creek during the Klondike Gold Rush, c.1899. These men had likely hiked over the Chilkoot Trail to seek their fortune.

University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, AWC0441



At the Cozy Lunch Room, one of dozens of roadhouses in the Klondike during the Gold Rush. The woman may be Lucile Hunter, who operated a restaurant on Bonanza Creek where she

and her husband had mining claims. She would spend the rest of her life in the Yukon.

Yukon Archives, Kinsey & Kinsey fonds, PHO 24 82/318 #250



In April 1906, six Sikh men travelled from Vancouver to the Yukon. Five of them were reportedly brothers. After briefly renting a house in Whitehorse, they found jobs with a mining company. Other groups of Sikhs arrived later that spring.

University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW41981

Three months after the men in the above photo arrived, the police forced many Sikhs to leave the Yukon. In July 1906, the RCMP transported 15 Sikhs from Dawson to Whitehorse and sent them back to Vancouver. In the photo opposite, the men are loading wood to power the boiler of the police steamer S.S. *Vidette*. Yukon newspapers openly stated that these men were unwelcome here, and in 1908, Canada all but stopped immigration from India.

Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary, CU1298864. Note: This photo was taken in black and white and later hand tinted, so the colours may be inaccurate.





Many visitors and new residents in Dawson were astounded by the size of vegetables that could be grown in the long summer days. Here, two boys stand next to a display of Yukon produce on August 28, 1906.

YA, J. B. Tyrrell fonds, 82/15 PHO 157 #404



These two studio photos were likely taken in the early 1900s by E.J. Hamacher, who settled in Whitehorse during the Klondike Gold Rush. The women's names are unknown.

YA, E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen collection), 2002/118 PHO 581 #562 (two women) and #553 (woman in white dress)



Little is known about this photo, but it was likely taken in the Klondike in the early 1900s. It appears to be in the gold fields, although the men are not dressed for mining.

YA, Victoria Faulkner fonds, PHO 226 83/50 #425



People listening to the first radio in their Mayo mining camp in the 1920s. The Japanese man, Kay Yasunaga, was a well-known cook at several mining camps near Mayo and Dawson. He returned to Japan in his old age.

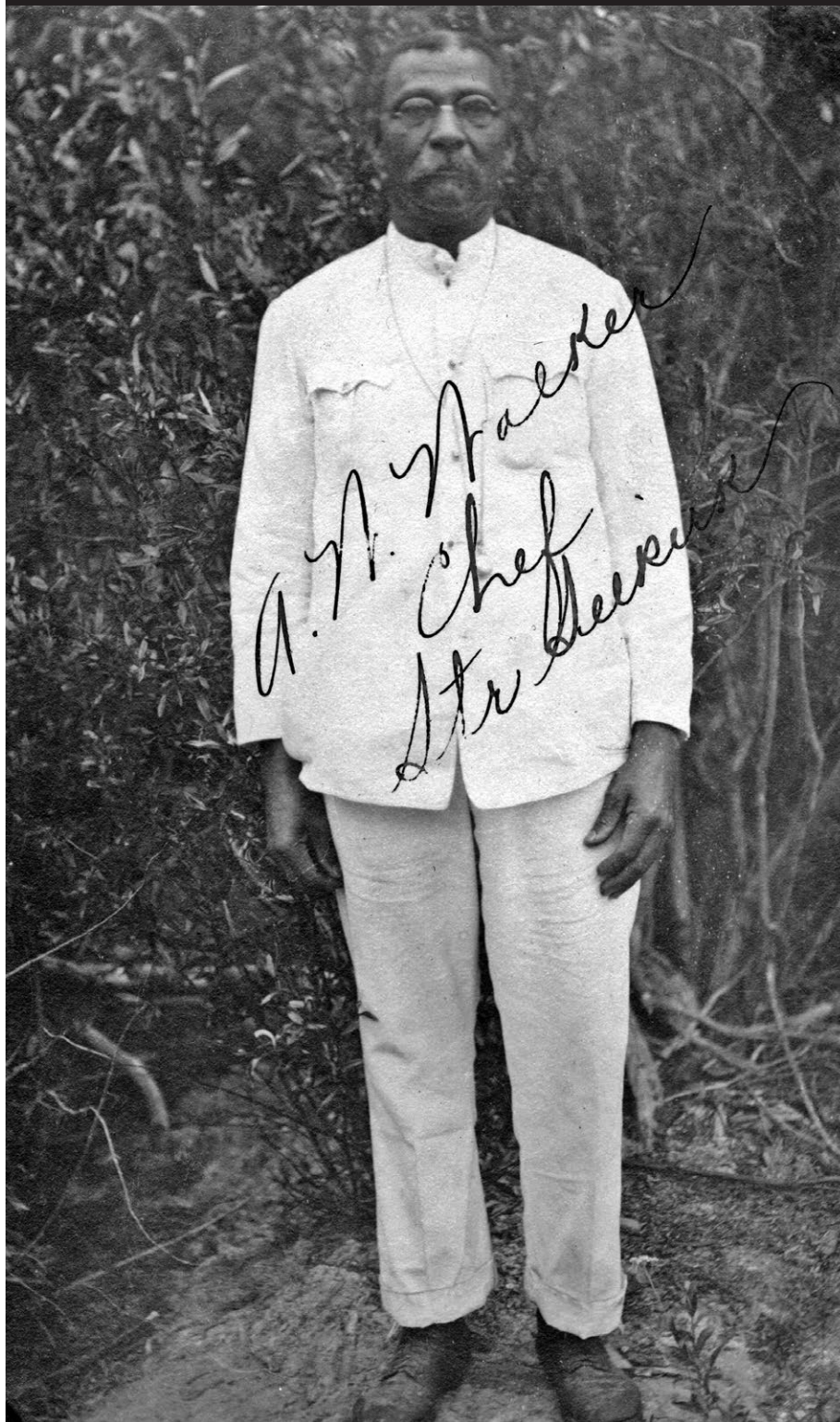
L to R Front: Jim Finnigan, Adolph Wesche, Alex Berry, Clyde Wann. L to R Back: Clem Sinyard, Kay Yasunaga, Bill Jefferies, Thelma Jefferies, and Andy Norman who owned the radio.

YA, Bill Hare fonds 82/418 #6765



This photo was taken in Dawson on September 17, 1914. By this time, the gold rush was over and Dawson was a small community dependent on corporate mining. The people – and their dogs – are not named.

YA, Margretta Gaundroue collection, PHO 17 82/219 #58



Above: From the late 1800s to the 1950s, riverboats connected the Yukon with the outside world. They brought supplies to communities and shipped out gold and ore. Several Black Yukoners worked on the boats as cooks, messhands and deckhands. The crew in this early 1900s image are all unidentified, but the cook may be a younger A. W. Walker.

YA, William Peter fonds, PHO 232 83/77 #65

Left: A. W. Walker, pictured here, was the head cook on the Yukon riverboat S.S. *Selkirk*. His assistant, Antone (Tony) Mabins, was also Black. In 1918, Walker and Mabins both perished on the way to Seattle for the winter when their ship *Princess Sophia* sank, leaving no survivors.

YA, Roy S. Minter fonds, PHO 537 92/15 #1013



Left: Two unnamed cooks at the Flora Dora hotel in Dawson, c. 1942-1943. Men with Japanese or Chinese ancestry often cooked and ran restaurants in North American mining towns, in part due to discrimination in hiring for other jobs.

YA, W. C. Cameron fonds, 93/77 PHO 183 #52



The cookhouse staff posed in front of the mess hall at Wernecke mining camp, c.1926-1930. L-R: Shiuhyi (Jimmy) Sugiyama, Ken McRae, [William S. Hare?], Masayuki (Massa) Sakata and Gerry Hough. Massa Sakata lived in the Yukon from 1907-1974 and was widely respected as a hard-working and generous man.

YA, Bill Hare fonds, 82/148 #6960

Kenzaburo Yoshida, also known as Ken or King, with Dave Broadfoot in the 1930s. Yoshida's family moved to Whitehorse when he was a child. He later ran the City Café and founded the Whitehorse Inn. He moved back to Japan soon after this photo was taken, but returned to visit friends in 1972 and stayed at his old hotel.

YA, Laurie P. Todd fonds, 81/30 #8979





George Nagano, son George, babysitter Betty Kika and daughter Jean at a Sunday school picnic in Mayo, 1937. George Sr. was then running the G.N. Café in Mayo.

G.A. McIntyre Collection, Mayo Historical Society



Ken Schellinger and Shiuhyi (Jimmy) Sugiyama, 1938. Jimmy Sugiyama ran the Galena Hotel in Keno, where he was remembered for providing free meals to those in need. He later

became a successful miner when he and his partner struck a rich silver vein on Galena Hill.

A.K. Schellinger collection, Mayo Historical Society.



The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941 led to a massive effort to construct a road through Canada to Alaska. A third of the American soldiers who built the Alaska Highway were Black. Their regiments were commanded by white officers and they often received substandard equipment. Here, a group of African American soldiers marches back to camp for a lunch break on 6 October 1942.

Margaret D'Orsay press photo collection

This famous photograph shows Corporal Refines Sims Jr. (left) shaking hands with Private Alfred Jalufka on 25 October 1942. When their regiments met up near Beaver Creek, the road was complete. This photograph depicted the two men as equals even

though the U.S. Army was segregated at the time. The courage and hard work of African American soldiers in the Yukon was one factor leading to the integration of the U.S. military in 1948.

Margaret D'Orsay press photo collection





Jim and Diamond Quong at a Board of Trade banquet at the Whitehorse Inn Ballroom in 1948. The Quongs raised their four children in Whitehorse, where Jim was an engineer and civil servant. He first came to the Yukon in 1942 to work on the Alaska

Highway, and was involved with the design and construction of most of the bridges along it.

YA, Rolf and Margaret Hougen fonds, 82/346 PHO 43 #169

Men playing cards in the lobby of Royal Alexandra Hotel in Dawson. This photo was taken around 1950 when Dawson was struggling. Gold mining was less profitable, the Alaska Highway had bypassed Dawson, and the Yukon's capital was about to move to Whitehorse.

YA, Henderson family fonds, 82/204 PHO 8 #43





Harvey Burian (left) with his mother and father in the summer of 1953 on Front Street in Mayo. Reinhold "Renny" Burian immigrated from Germany as a child and Miyo "Mary" Yoshida was born in Vancouver. They met after coming north in the 1930s. Renny was a

woodcutter on the Stewart River and Mary worked in her brother-in-law George Nagano's café. They owned this 1949 Chevy half-ton pickup for over two decades. Harvey learned to drive on it.

Harvey Burian private collection.



T. C. Richards bought the Whitehorse Inn and City Café from Kenzaburo Yoshida, using thousands of dollars he had won in a poker game as a down payment. This composite photograph shows the employees of Richards' many businesses in the 1950s, including eight Chinese employees.

YA, W.C. Cameron fonds, 93/77 #39





In 1967, to celebrate 100 years of Canadian Confederation, caravans of trucks carrying exhibits about Canada travelled around the country. Here, Margaret Burrows (left) and Norma Beyer pose with a Confederation Caravan sign at the Watson Lake signpost forest, July 1967.

YA, Whitehorse Star Ltd. fonds, PHO 187 82/563 f. 30 #41



High school student Tyrone (Bill) Johnson in the woodshop at F.H. Collins in the 1970s.

YA, Photography Unit fonds, 81/18 f19 #34.



Jujiro Wada travelled over 40,000 km by dogsled in Alaska and the Yukon. He was born in Ehime, Japan in 1875 and came to the United States as a stowaway. He worked on an Arctic whaling ship, learned to live off the land from Inuvialuit, and returned to the North after his contract was up. He sent letters and money to his mother in Japan for the rest of her life.

YA, Charles Tennant fonds, 95/33 #7



**Hidden Histories
Society Yukon**

www.hhsy.org