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I Married The Klondike



Synopsis

In 1907, Laura Beatrice Berton, a 29-year-old kindergarten teacher, left her comfortable life in Toronto Ontario to teach in a Yukon mining town. She fell in love with the North--and with a northerner--and made Dawson City her home for the next 25 years. *I Married the Klondike* is her classic and enduring memoir. When she first arrived by steamboat in Dawson City, Berton expected to find a rough mining town full of grizzled miners, scarlet-clad Mounties and dance-hall girls. And while these and other memorable characters did abound, she quickly discovered why the town was nicknamed the "Paris of the North." Although the gold rush was over, the townsfolk still clung to the lavishness of the city's golden era and the young teacher soon found herself hosting tea parties once a month, attending formal dinners, dancing the minuet at fancy balls and going on elaborate sleighing parties. In the background a famous poet wrote ballads on his cabin wall, an archbishop lost on the tundra ate his boots to survive and men living on dreams of riches grew old panning the creeks for gold. While thousands of people left the Klondike each October on the "last boat out" and Dawson City slowly decayed around her, the author remained true to her northern home. Humorous, poignant and filled with stories of both drudgery and decadence, *I Married the Klondike* is an unforgettable book by a brave and intelligent woman. "I have read many books on the Yukon, but this is different. It is the gallant personality of the author which shines on every page, and makes her chronicle a saga of the High North."--Robert Service, poet "The Cremation of Sam McGee"

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Customer Reviews

What a fascinating look at life in the north. This book shattered my assumptions about life in this

part of the world. The author gave a very realistic view of the highlights of life in a very harsh environment as well as the day-to-day challenges and pleasures of such a life. The colorful descriptions provide a very realistic picture without becoming cumbersome. This book also helped me look differently at the pleasures and challenges in my own life. Great read!

Like most people my age, I've seen old movies depicting the Gold Rush, but they were nothing compared to this delightful account of the author's experiences in Dawson and Whitehorse, in the Yukon. From page one to the end, I FELT the cold of the North, learned about the vegetation and moreso, shared in the life of the pioneers AFTER the Gold Rush. Such hearty men and women gave of themselves in the search for gold, few, very few becoming rich. Yet, they all seem to have enriched my life thanks to their determination and stamina despite all odds. To read of the social differences that the citizens upheld in Dawson gives one a thoughtful look at the upper classes, who brought their prejudices with them to Dawson. Yet, with time, as the gold became more and more rare, the population dwindled and with it the many differences, which had segregated the classes. Abandoned homes, run-down shacks, empty stores finally gave way to social values, which brought the remaining residents together. As the author mentions, one could not walk down the street of Dawson without saying "hello" to everyone since the life of one touched the life of the others. With only 800 persons left in town, all knew one another and social standing gave way to familial attitudes. It was no longer necessary to give the telephone operator a number, only the name of the person to whom one wanted to speak need be mentioned and the phone rang at the other end. Tragedy and hardships took hold of the life of everyone, but friendship and helpfulness prevailed as their numbers dwindled. A beautiful read, which has opened my mind and heart to these pioneers, who are our ancestors.

Dawson City, 1898: Raging gold fever and hearts full of hope. Dawson City, early 1900s: The gold boom is bust, but a few hardy locals try to carry the history forward. Laura Berton arrived in Dawson City a few years after the gold boom but was still able to experience all that the "Paris of the North" had to offer. Raging snowstorms and months of perpetual twilight and darkness? Nothing a few grand balls, costume parties, and endless social tea parties can't cure! Make no mistake, Berton's book is very honest about life in Dawson City over 100 years ago. Men literally froze to death and shifty miner-types frightened single women. Illnesses ravaged the town population at times and in the end it was a tough economy "on the Outside" that finally forced the Berton family to leave Dawson City for good. Although this book is considered a Canadian classic, I must confess I had

never even heard of this book until my Alaska-traveling parents brought it back to me as a gift. While I might not have been able to see the Yukon for myself, this gem of a book was just the thing to carry my imagination to another time and place. A time and place I thought I might want to visit, but now I'm happy to be living with all the modern conveniences in my life right now.

This is a wonderful warm story about the gold rush in Alaska. I love the story of the gold rush and this book put a new twist on it. Her husband has written the best history of that time period of anyone.

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