

KLONDIKE

Gold Rush

CENTENNIAL

BELLE OF DAWSON, QUEEN OF THE YUKON, FLOWER OF THE NORTH

BY JAMES BLEDSOE

Yes. Yes. It was me and you, Kate. Going there for a while. If you weren't with your swarthy Greek, your cowboy prince, your "yam and yelly man," or the whole damned Bend Fire Department, then you were with me. . . .

This is a side-bar story of the Klondike gold rush. It calls attention to massive changes going on throughout the West. On one hand, all the initial search for gold centered around the prospector's small-scale transactions, where his nerve and muscle constantly validated or modified his acquired knowledge. In that sense, the Klondike gold rush was one of the last great adventures of a dying century. It manifested all the stark symptoms of the extreme form of individual enterprise.

On the other hand, the Klondike gold rush is the story of extreme forms of corporate activity and bureaucratic management, of activity organized from faraway board rooms, of burly men retiring after a lobster Newburg dinner to the library for cigars and cognac to decide questions about

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Kathleen Elo

the influx of foreign capital and the precise organization of humans and nature.

To both these worlds enter the stepdaughter of a wealthy Spokane nabob, one Kathleen Eloisa Rockwell. At first blush she appears to be nothing more than an actress who showed a willingness to be part of any make-believe that could be invented for a cultural group. Yet a closer look indicates that her life was a subplot of the whole Klondike gold rush story and latter-day legend. Her story involves the fortunes and misfortunes of a character literally invented for her—Klondike Kate. Her character combines the festival or carnival queen or mock queen role with the traditional queen whose private and corporate health are intertwined.

As a carnival or mock queen, Kathleen Eloisa Rockwell ensured her place in Klondike history the night she first introduced her flame dance in Dawson at the Savoy Theater in October 1900. Historian Francis Backhouse writes:

Heads turned the moment Kate walked out on stage in her brief, form-fitting costume covered with red sequins and glittering rhinestones. Pink tights sheathed her legs, and a black satin cape hung from her shoulders. She stopped in the centre of the platform and faced the men who packed the theater. As she stood there, motionless, staring out into the darkened hall, voices hushed, and the clinking of bottles and squeaking of chairs ceased. The room grew charged with anticipation as the seconds ticked by. Kate held her stance, riveting the audience with her gaze.

Suddenly, with one fluid movement, she let the cape slip from her shoulders and plucked up a cane attached to more than two hundred yards of red chiffon. Arms outstretched, she started to turn, and the gauzy material slowly rose in the air. Offstage, a single violin cut the silence, its long, keening notes sending shivers up every spine.

She floated dreamily about the stage in a rising tide of crimson until, all at once, the rest of the orchestra broke loose. Lifted by a whirlwind of music, she began to leap and twirl, weaving the fabric this way and that.

Faster and faster she spun and the stage became a sea of fire as the blazing cloth surged around the red-haired, red-garbed dancer. Sweat glistened on her face. The watchers in front could almost feel the heat. And then, as if consumed by the fire of her passionate performance, she dropped to the floor, motionless once more, while the chiffon drifted down around her.

As a traditional queen, Kathleen Eloisa Rockwell ensured her place in Klondike mythology the night she was crowned Klondike Kate, "Queen of the Yukon." She was crowned with

a tin can by a barroom full of sourdoughs in Dawson on Christmas Eve 1900.

At her coronation, she wore the shiny tin crown rakishly upon her head, with 50 lighted Christmas candles sticking to its points like a birthday cake. She appeared as a shining apparition, all silvery and white, dressed in a flowing, low-cut gown from Worth's in Paris and costing \$1,500. Her gown had a sweeping train and was trimmed in rhinestones and seed pearls. Against the candlelight, her bright red hair seemed on fire. Kate, flushed and glad to be alive, laughed and nodded to all the men. That night everyone was happy and it seemed that all the world was in love. Toasting their Yukon darling again, the sourdoughs lined up for the Grand March. A tinny band struck up a snappy chord and the high-stepping Kate led the march around and around the room to the music of John Philip Sousa.

From then on Kate's life offers all the double plots and events needed to bridge the old American West and the new American West by continuous parallel of interface between myth and realism, order and anarchy, between new and old technologies, or between esteemed sacred icons and disappointing tourist kitsch. In every later episode of her life, Klondike Kate can be seen as the traditional queen whose private and corporate (that of her whole queenhood) health are intertwined.

Eloisa Rockwell



AN ASAHEL CURTIS PHOTOGRAPH OF AN EARLY SKAGWAY STREET SCENE: MATCH-BOX SHACKS; ROUGH-CUT SIDING, TARPAPER ROOFS, HAND-PAINTED SIGNS, LUMBER-STREWN STREETS AND THE CONSTANT RATTLE OF FREIGHT WAGONS COMING UP FROM THE WHARVES.

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A Dawson Dance Hall Girl

KATE'S LIFE illustrates the peculiar blend of private adventure and corporate business that gave Old West dance hall girls an appeal far greater than their limited economic importance.

One photograph of Kate taken at the turn of the century shows her in a white gown showing off her hourglass figure. This picture provides a vision of the female anatomy that gives a chastely moral depiction while keeping the pervasive themes of Klondike whoring, hustling and seduction in the background.

Kate was always "where it was at," long before almost anyone else knew it. Artistically, Kate's life shows us that what is disposable, insignificant, ephemeral, dead or forgotten influences our sense of reality and self more profoundly than we might imagine. For instance, the extreme forms of individual enterprise and the extreme forms of corporate activity that marked the Klondike gold rush as an important transitional episode in the American West blended together perfectly in a shopping and gift-giving habit Kate took up in later life.

There were and still are secondhand stores and junk shops all over the West—archaeological middens of our own western ancestors. Kate would plunge in and purchase old-fashioned beaded bags, figurines, pieces of glassware and other trinkets that she would then give away to people as "authentic" souvenirs of her days in the Yukon. At the time, all these trinkets were nothing more than the middenheap's litter. But Kate saw in the junk a nest of stories. She recreated and gave new birth to this litter. By giving them to friends and strangers with her "Queen-of-the-Yukon" seal of approval, she was simply dumping them back into the market as valuable goods.

Dawson as Finishing School

IN ALL THE earlier gold rushes, men had been able to move around. The 49ers going after the mother lode in California could move about and steer clear of—or interact with—the floozies and shills at will. The point is, they had a clear choice. If monotony weighed heavily upon them, they could mount a horse or catch a stagecoach for the next town or perhaps go to San Francisco for a few days of harmless revelry. The same was true at Virginia City and Leadville or anywhere else. The West was open for men to roam most of the year. In the Yukon it was different. There was only Dawson when the long, fierce arctic winter clamped down. Then the gamblers and entertainers had a wealthy captive audience unlike any in the world.

Booze in the Klondike served as a ghostly paradigm of community. Indeed, "hoochinoo" or "hootch" for short, is both an Alaskan contribution to American slang and a word derived from the name of a small coastal town, Hootzmahoo. The dance hall girls and the box hustlers were the bridge to this community. Kate learned early on how to be a good listener. She could read the grammar of moods. In the

Klondike her work was to dance, sing, and act as camp

psychologist—the role of the festival queen made popular in later years by Marlene Dietrich when she sang, "See What the Boys in the Backroom Will Have." In the outside world, Kate's work was to keep the legend of the Klondike alive—the role of the corporate queen—like a more user-friendly version of Joan Crawford as chairwoman of the Pepsi Corporation.

The Klondike and its principal city, Dawson, formed a sort of finishing school for Kate as she readied herself for her role as a transitional figure in the modern American West. And although she spent the rest of her life preserving the dominant mythology of the Klondike, Kate herself kept finding new stories to inhabit.

Stories detail the fact that as a mining boomtown Dawson was an odd sort of place. It was a New Jerusalem, full of incongruities; it was a town dedicated exclusively to the unburying of bullion that would soon be reburied in treasury vaults; it was a town dedicated to the production of gold, hardly a useful element and only valuable because of the mistrust people have for the promises of bankers and the promissory notes of their governments. It was also an American town living under the Union Jack.

Dawson was your basic, real live, "open 24 hours a day" oxymoron. It was a town under the midnight sun in summer



Private collection



LEFT: A "LAUNDERED" DAWSON DANCE HALL POSTCARD. ALL THE CORNS AND BLISTERED FEET HAVE BEEN EDITED OUT OF THE PHOTO AND THE PERVERSIVE THEMES OF KLONDIKE WHORING, HUSTLING AND SEDUCTION HAVE BEEN TASTEFULLY REMOVED.

OPPOSITE PAGE: KLONDIKE KATE AS SHE WOULD HAVE LOOKED WHEN THE MINERS HAILED HER AS "THE BELLE OF DAWSON," "THE QUEEN OF THE YUKON," AND "THE FLOWER OF THE NORTH."

and under the aurora borealis in winter. Dawson was an incubator for frozen fiction, freeze-dried mythology. The town's dance hall girls were just extensions of its incongruities and paradoxes. Dawson dance hall doxies were the good-bad girls you could tell your "Baby, it's cold outside" troubles to. Dawson dance hall girls were the toll bridge between the frozen north and "a hot time in the old town tonight."

Yet Kate spent the rest of her life laundering this naughty aspect of Klondike mythology. She lost out in Hollywood because she wanted to stick to one version of the truth. Kate bore the burden of settlement and, at great cost, formed an enduring bond with the Northland itself. She had the wit to recognize that a mining boomtown, like any human relationship with nature, is as much social and ideological as it is physical. One effect of Kate's queenly role was to divert attention away from the hurdy-gurdy, soiled-dove image of these women by calling attention to them instead as newly-envisioned aesthetic objects. In all her later retelling of the stories of the Yukon women she met, Kate filtered out the stories of the menstrual cramps, the vaginal itch, the TB coughs, the swollen faces from a pimp's beating, or the corns and blistered feet from dancing with men all night.

Instead of historical scholarship, Kate worked at giving her audience aesthetic instruction about the Klondike era. She acted as a spokeswoman for the life-style of all dance hall girls, unequivocally endorsing all Klondike dance hall girls as of the highest type and the finest people she ever knew. She shamelessly lived with a man out of wedlock for several years, both in the Yukon and the States, during the very straight-laced wind-up years of the Victorian age, and boasted about it in print.

After leaving the Northland she spent the rest of her life polishing and promoting the legend of Klondike Kate. She did an excellent job of convincing a generation of journalists, Hollywood screenwriters, and television producers that she had been hailed as the "Belle of Dawson," the "Queen of the Klondike," and the "Flower of the North."

Klondike Kate Rockwell's life bridged the gap between the old West and the new West; from America's old rootless, boomtown extravagance to our current need to think of the American West as a great and clean good place. How did Klondike Kate weigh the two images that are equally part of our heritage?

First, Kate was an artist at a time when the notion of art itself was in transition. The genuine story of her times lay in the inspiration she certainly found in low culture and "pop kulch," not in high art. She was an artist who made bridges between old and new experience. "Kate was always on stage," said one of her would-be biographers. In a changing world, new art is always needed to turn our perceptions to the next definitive moment.

Second, it is characteristic of all social processes that they become visible and conspicuous just about at the moment of their demise—e.g., all the kids with tattoos on their bodies today. Klondike Kate's continued publicity success throughout her life had to do with the fact that she always showed up just as one phenomenon was about to transform into something else; just where mechanical devices began to mask human labor, just where nature was becoming machine or just where nature halted the progress of machines. These technologies that masked human

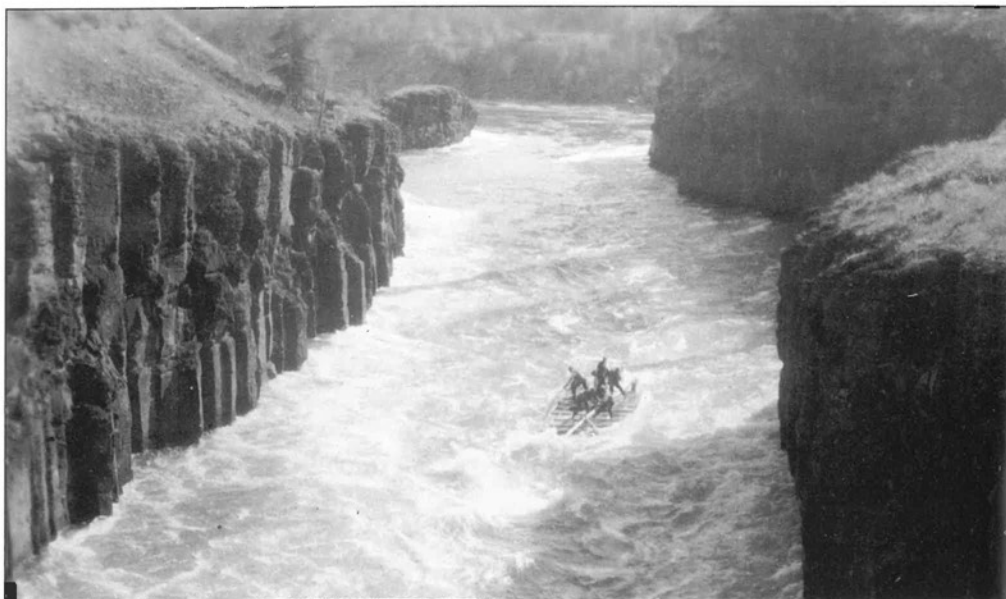
*Instead
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labor also created new opportunities for Klondike Kate. Take, for example, the following sound bite and publicity man's dream: a surprised ticket agent for Northwest Airlines picks up the telephone one day to hear Kate's husky voice declare:

Sister, put Kate Rockwell Matson down on that 1:45 flight tomorrow afternoon. I'm going to New York and the telegram I'm holding here says your plane will get me there with time to spare. I'm going to be on the "We the People" radio broadcast Tuesday. This'll be the first time I've been in a plane, too—think of that—and me with experiences that would fill a library.

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Consider, too, just when Kate would turn up on the scene. Sometimes it was at the point of Nature Becoming Machine. Kate first came to the Klondike along with the locomotive whistle via the White Pass and Yukon Railroad in 1900, just as the glory days of the early gold rush were winding down and the corporate buyouts with their accompanying hydraulic mining and large-scale dredging operations were starting up.

Sometimes it was at the point of Nature Temporarily Halting the Progress of Machines. To reach Dawson from the shores of Lake Bennett, Kate had to take a riverboat down the Yukon and run the terrible gauntlet at Miles Canyon and the boiling White Horse Rapids. Hundreds of boats had already been wrecked there and inexperienced men had been lost at these two spots on the river. The tragedy and chaos of Miles Canyon and White Horse Rapids had caused the Mounties to take their own safety measures. The Mounties' rule declared: "No women or children will be taken through the canyon in the boats. If they are strong enough to come to the Klondike, then they can walk the five miles of grassy bank to the foot of the White Horse."

If Kate heard the rule, she ignored it or figured it didn't apply to her. Rules, after all, were things to be broken. When the Mounties turned her away from the boats, telling her it was too dangerous for a woman, she thought it was ridiculous. After trying out her Irish temper and then her full charm, and seeing that neither approach would work, she reached into her bag of tricks for an old-fashioned coyote stunt—use cunning to outwit a fool.

She went back to town and found an old flannel shirt and a pair of overalls. Climbing into these, she tucked her long red hair into a tattered fur cap, smudged dirt on her face, and returned to the boat landing. A crowd of Yukoners was clustered on the bank, waiting for a big barge to cast off. At first Kate held back because Mounties were still patrolling the shoreline. Then she edged toward the front of the

crowd. Just as the deckhand tossed off the ropes and the barge began drifting away from the riverbank, Kate swiftly and gracefully raced across the shoreline and leaped lightly onto the barge's deck. A Mountie swung around as Kate was in midair. He gave out an angry shout and jumped up and down, his face turning as red as his tunic.

When she got to Dawson Kate worked the wolf whistle to her advantage while carefully avoiding the sound of the police whistle. She met up with and eventually bankrolled a swarthy young Greek immigrant bartender to the tune of \$150,000. His name was Alexander Pantages. From Kate's generous grubstake, Pantages went on to build the largest theater chain ever owned by one man. After having been jilted by Pantages, she again made an appearance just when the vulture-like process of the Los Angeles legal system was about to wet its beak in Pantages's theatrical empire. Kate turned up at court and sat behind Pantages at his scandalous trial for alleged rape and assault just before his financial demise and the great stock market crash of 1929.

Then on to another transitional role. Back in the lower 48, at age 39, Kate elopes with a 20-year-old wrangler named Floyd Warner and tries her hand at ranching in eastern Oregon—"one of those spur-of-the-moment and spur-of-the-horse things." When that doesn't work out, she becomes Aunt Kate—a crone in training—and falls into some high-contrast movie of her own making, cooking and waiting on tables in dingy eastern Oregon cafes and construction camps throughout the West.

Kate's story next sets the stage for tender romance and one of the Northland's fondest legends. A three-year-old newspaper reaches an isolated miner's cabin in the Klondike. The story chronicles Kate's travels to Los Angeles to see the Pantages trial and reports that she is down on her luck and homeless. From the far-off Yukon, Johnny "the Silent Swede"

Matson, Kate's "yam and yelly man" from the old days in Dawson, reads of her presence at the Pantages trial and says to himself, "By golly, that girl is in trouble." He then writes her a love letter, offers to take care of her, and proposes marriage. The couple are married in Vancouver, British Columbia, by the Reverend George Pringle, the famed "sky pilot of the Yukon." In photographs Kate shows off her gold nugget wedding ring and gold nugget necklace from her husband's mine. Then she returns to Bend, Oregon. Her love affair and marriage to Johnny Matson helps carry on the "Queen of the Yukon" legend and brings it to a romantic, fairy-tale conclusion that secures it for all time. Moreover, this legend provides an alternative for Johnny Matson's individualism in its most radical mountain-man form . . . the American West's standard country-and-western-song lament of isolation and loneliness is turned back into a song of love and community.

In effect, Kate's story becomes the perennial, slow-news-day content for a number of mass media technologies, all with voracious appetites. Her marriage to Matson returns her to the limelight as a full-fledged celebrity so that throughout the remainder of her long life popular magazines, Sunday supplements, and syndicated columns devoted space to retelling the legend of Klondike Kate and her love idyll.

In her newfound career as a celebrity link between the old and new Wests, Kate's byword was, "Mush on and smile." She had another promotional photograph made of herself later in life that she sold or gave away as souvenirs to people she considered worthy. The postcard represents a wonderfully incongruous bridge, juxtaposing the old and new Wests that Kate knew only too well—the old West when Kate was young and the new West when she was old. She handwrote the slogan, "Mush on and smile" across the bottom of the postcard.

Back home in Bend, Oregon, the firemen in the local fire station once lustily serenaded her as "the fireman's bride," then they dragged her from her home, clapped a helmet on her head, and paraded her along Wall Street riding on a fire truck while the sirens blew and people all over town came rushing out to see what the commotion was about. After that, Kate made a habit of showing up at fires late at night and serving coffee and doughnuts to the fire department.

When she periodically visited Portland, the local cops would always send a patrol car for her at the edge of town because she claimed she was afraid of driving in heavy traffic. From the end of World War II until her death in 1957 she made numerous paid public appearances, was the grand marshal of many a parade, and participated in pioneer pageants, festivals and centennial celebrations, and grand openings of new restaurants, supermarkets, and shopping centers.

When Kate was 81 and living in Sweet Home, Oregon, the headlines told of how the "Queen of the Yukon" had gone offstage for good. She had died in her sleep. But even after her death Kate had a few more curtain calls. Consider the episode that occurred in 1961, after fire had indeed consumed her passionate performance. Although legal hassles had postponed the scattering of her ashes for more than four years, rumors of the event were always kicking around the newsrooms in Portland and Seattle. Her ashes were finally scattered on the high desert in the dead of winter.

The day was overcast, with snow falling on the ridges. Ironically, the person who did the deed was a total stranger who just happened to be going in that direction and had agreed to carry out the task. News accounts state that the stranger was surprised at the color of Kate's ashes as they were

*When she
got to Dawson
Kate worked the wolf
whistle to her advantage while
carefully avoiding the sound
of the police
whistle.*



OPPOSITE PAGE: SUPPLY RAFT RUNNING THE MILES CANYON RAPIDS WHICH, FOR AN EIGHTH OF A MILE, IS A SEETHING RIDGE OF TURBULENCE RUNNING DOWN THE CENTER OF A CANYON—THE YUKON RIVER COMPRESSED; BOILING WATER, RAW STRENGTH AND WEIRD LIGHT.

LEFT: THIS HOLLYWOOD PUBLICITY STILL SHOWS KATE DEMONSTRATING THE PROPER TECHNIQUE FOR ROLLING YOUR OWN CIGARETTES FROM A PACKAGE OF BULL DURHAM.

blown to the wind among the sagebrush. It was high noon during a desert storm. "There was a slight wind . . . and it was a perfect setting for anyone who felt that the desert in storm was magnificent."

Counterpoint to the Old West of Men

TO UNDERSTAND THIS, consider how Kate employed props: the saloon, the train, the boat, the theater, the courtroom, the small cafe, the telephone, the telegraph, the radio, the airplane, the television and all the other items she would use in her stage shows or street theater performances. Kate played all these venues, but always with a uniquely feminine twist. All the stories about Kate's life are organized around certain habitations that make her life peculiarly transitional. Most of the old West stories of Kate tell of the action usually happening inside; inside theaters and saloons, or inside the claustrophobic box where she hustled champagne, or inside railway

trains. We constantly see the juxtaposition between her chance to entertain or be a companion offset against the awful solitude of the Yukon's cold tundra.

Although Klondike women were sexually potent and dangerous, they were not denied access to the premodern virtues the old West supposedly embodied. Klondike Kate was neither a whore nor a madonna, neither a schoolteacher nor a nun, nor a tourist, nor a pioneer housewife. She was a piece of work, and she was her own gal. And she played her part as a transitional figure on many levels.

Klondike Kate's role in bankrolling Alexander Pantages helped bridge the gap between one of the structures of art and science in the 20th century, taking a small-time theater operator and transforming him into a theater magnate. And with well-honed irony, her bankrolling of Pantages also allows another less well-told story to be brought to light, the story of a darker side of the old West—the cruel and violent side of men who did not turn their hostility against such culturally permissible targets as Indians, animals and Mexicans, but against the women they had allegedly placed on pedestals.

Western men, with most of their premodern virtues still intact, often became brutal or violent. Through the long season of Western history there are many accounts where they dominate woman not by moral force but by brute force. Kate built her own fortune in Dawson by spending time box hustling with the help of her lover, Alexander Pantages, who at that time was a singing waiter who would carry the miner's poke or the champagne between bar and box. When Kate finally left Dawson for good, she took a \$150,000 nest egg with her.



OPPOSITE PAGE:
THOROUGHLY
MODERN
KLONDIKE
KATE; MILK-
SHAKE, STRAW,
FLOWERED
DRESS,
PAINTED NAILS
AND TWINKLY
EYES.

ABOVE: ALEXANDER PANTAGES AS HE LOOKED TOWARD THE END OF HIS LIFE. FROM KLONDIKE KATE'S DAWSON GRUBSTAKE, PANTAGES WENT ON TO BUILD THE LARGEST PRIVATELY OWNED THEATER CHAIN IN THE WORLD.

RIGHT: THE PANTAGES THEATER IN SEATTLE, KNOWN AS THE PALOMAR. THE PALOMAR WAS A COMBINED THEATER-OFFICE BLOCK—TERRA COTTA FANTASY AND MAGICAL DELIGHT FOR THEATERGOERS COUPLED WITH PANTAGES'S HARDBOILED UNDERSTANDING OF DOWNTOWN REAL ESTATE MARKETS.



Special Collections, Washington State Historical Society

Pantages created his own autonomy and individualism as much from Kate's initial grubstake and his treatment of her as from any of the values he might have derived from his personal combat with nature or his experiences in the budding entertainment market. Kate's grubstake enabled Pantages to go from rags to riches in five years. But he was a man without illusions or conscience. Pantages, writes historian Ellis Lucia, "possessed a toughness and native cynicism derived from a lifetime of rubbing elbows with gamblers, pugs, pimps and whores." Said another way, he spent much of his life involved with people in the black market, or in a market undergoing transition from illegitimate to legitimate.

When Pantages first got his start in show business, most entertainers were let in the back door and went out the same way as soon as their performance was over. By the late 1920s, however, the game had changed. Suddenly entertainers were becoming more than mere celebrities. They were sought after by the rich and famous as a means to promote some corporate enterprise or give a legitimate front to a once-shady past.

So the scene at Pantages's 1929 trial in the hallway of the Los Angeles court building is another interesting psychological bridge between Victorian manners and modern-day customs. The story goes that when Pantages and Kate passed each other in the hallway of the courthouse, Pantages looked the other way to avoid meeting Kate's eyes. Shortly afterwards, Kate was photographed with tears in her eyes, steadfastly quoting the code of the Klondike: "A sourdough will never squeal." Here was Klondike gold money going in opposite directions. The scorned entrepreneurial bankroller and the successfully bankrolled multimillionaire with a convenient memory loss. Part of Kate's heart was always there in the Yukon, and it molded and flavored her entire life.

Kate's was a complex personality. Why did she always return to the cabarets and variety halls where she took up with strange and questionable characters, sacrificing professional standards for the sake of money and excitement? Was she just lucky or did she really know that oftentimes the objects and images that are usually deemed worthy representatives of a period's high culture and eternal truth are not the images that really last?

There is another black and white photograph of Kate—my own personal favorite—that was taken toward the end of her life. It shows her sipping a milkshake through a straw. She has a twinkle in her eyes, and her fingernails look to be freshly

painted—probably bright red. Kate was a transitional old West/new West figure. She was a working girl who used what she had to good advantage. And she took the image of the dance hall girl from a cliché to an archetype.

We can see in Klondike Kate's biography one of those Darwinesque charts showing the common ancestor of several species of modern female entertainer. Kate was the prototype of the turn-of-the-century party girl. She was a box hustler, and she knew all the "singling out" techniques for fleecing a sourdough's poke. Women like Kate were the forerunners of the B-girl and the taxi dancer of later years, and the Gypsy Rose Lee-type stripper—"Keep your skirts high enough to keep the boys interested, but low enough to keep the cops away." Kate was the prototype for movie starlets like Jane Russell and Alexis Smith, the Vargas pinup girl, the naughty calendar girl, the Hugh Hefner and Bob Guccione centerfolds, the Playboy bunnies, Gloria Steinem and women's lib, and finally again, the liberated woman telling the rest of the world to stand back and watch her smoke.

In the final tally, Klondike Kate's story is a biographical bridge from a choice generation. Kate lived and survived under two distinctly different civilizations, going with a flair from small-town horse-and-buggy days in Spokane and the wild frontier of Skagway and Dawson to megacorporation telephones, radio, television and screaming jets.



h, Kate, you could turn cartwheels and double flips . . . tricks unknown to common man. You could grubstake a rake or fleece a sourdough. I haven't had as much fun bellying up to a bar since. But I'm never far from joining the myth of good ol' Kate, mashing on and smiling, come what may, across the bridge from the old West to the new. The Victorian age made you fidget, Kitty dear, and I am sure no one heard the boom of the jet breaking the sound barrier above as we thumped and bumped across the barroom floor to become yet another immortal metaphor, our beaded memories and trinket symmetries served up exciting from another Mr. Big, always there . . . another secondhand store. . . .

And that, Texas, is tough linen.

James Bledsoe is president of Bledsoe's Northwest Excursions, Inc. His company specializes in historical tours and "eco-tours" in Washington. He is currently finishing work on a book about Coyote, the trickster, entitled, *If You Break It, He Will Come*.



M. Weschke photo, private collection

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COVER: Celilo Falls in the mid 1930s, 20 years before it was obliterated by construction of The Dalles Dam. This hand-tinted photograph is from a series of postcard pictures taken along the route of the scenic Columbia River Highway, on the Oregon side of the river. See related story beginning on page 4. (Special Collections, Washington State Historical Society)