



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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## Rand-McNally Official 24 x 36 map of Alaska . . . 1897 . . .

**Stock#:** 43307  
**Map Maker:** Rand McNally & Company  
**Date:** 1897  
**Place:** Chicago  
**Color:** Color  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 34.5 x 22.5 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### Description:

Rare early (unrecorded?) variant edition of one of the first maps showing the routes to the Alaska and Klondike Gold Regions.

Important early map of Alaska and the Yukon Territory, highlighting the routes to the Gold Mining Regions in Alaska and the Klondike, but pre-dating a number of the locations of important routes.

The map shows many of the earliest routes to the Klondike, including:

- "Possible Route from Calgary"
- Route from Seattle and San Francisco
- Route From Seattle

This is the earliest variant of the map we have seen and is apparently unrecorded. We note a later state of the 1897 issue of the map, published by Rand McNally with the title "Official Map" and for the Chicago Tribune, on which a number of additional routes to the gold regions have been added, including:

- A route from Edmonton
- Removal of the word "Possible" from the Calgary route
- Adding a route from Edmonton to Ft. Selkirk via the Pelly River
- Route south from the MacKenzie River and Ft. Mc Pherson to the Beaver River.

In describing the regular 1897 edition of the map, Streeter noted: "No route from Skagway over the White Pass is noted yet, and on the Chilkoot Pass route there is a prominent legend, "Healy's Store." While the later 1897 states of the map named "Skaguay," this early variant edition pre-dates the appearance of



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"Skaguay" on the map.

Also, the Yukon is still shown as a "District" of Canada's Northwest Territories and not a territory in its own right (The district officially became the "Yukon Territory" on June 13, 1898).

The Chilkoot Pass (and from 1898 the nearby White Pass) soon became the main entry point into the Yukon. As shown on the map prospectors would sail from San Francisco, Seattle, Vancouver or Victoria up to the American ports of Skagway and Dyea, whereupon they would make the grueling ascent over the mountains into Canadian territory. This bi-national route was by far the fastest way to the Klondike, but was initially caught up in political uncertainty.

Relations between the United States and Canada in the region were initially tense. The Alaska-Canada Boundary was disputed between the nations. The U.S. threatened to block off the ports of Skagway and Dyea to Canadian and British vessels if those nations did not respect American sovereignty over the area. In turn, the Canadians were weary of having their territory inundated by thousands of American prospectors (and their firearms). During this time, 'All-Canadian routes' were opened up to the Yukon, being the river passages from Edmonton and Calgary shown on this map. However, the extremely long travel time and arduous portages of these routes rendered them impractical.

Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed, and American and Canadian officials reached something of a 'gentlemen's agreement', whereby the Canadians could use Dyea as a duty free port in exchange for not openly questioning U.S. control of the area, while the American authorities agreed to monitor and police some of the more unsavory elements of the American prospector community before they entered Canadian territory.

Another route to the goldfields is also shown on the map. In the summer months, the Yukon River was navigable by paddle wheeler from its mouth all the way up to Whitehorse, Yukon (up river from the Klondike). While lengthy, this route was the least arduous, as a prospector could travel the entire route from San Francisco to Dawson City by boat, in relative comfort. This was also the preferred way of accessing the American gold finds on the lower Yukon River.

The Klondike Gold Rush (1896-99) was one of the most sensational events of the fin de siècle period. Gold was first discovered in the Klondike in what was then Canada's Northwest Territory on August 16, 1896. News quickly spread across North America from what was about the most remote corner of the continent. Newspapers exaggerated the potential of the bonanza in an effort to sell copies, and a mass sensation was born.

Over 100,000 people headed towards the Yukon. However the region proved so difficult to reach that only



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30,000 prospectors and 'entrepreneurs' actually arrived in the area near Dawson City. Only 4,000 prospectors managed to discover gold. The Yukon proved to be nothing like what the El Dorado promised by the newspapers.

Gold had also been discovered at Nome in far western Alaska and in the lower reaches of the Yukon. However, it was not until 1899, when the bubble burst in the Klondike, that this region received great attention. As shown on the map, even as early as 1897, prospectors were sailing to St. Michael, Alaska, where local guides from the Yip'ik nation would help them cope with the extremely rugged topography and harsh climate. Proper guidance was absolutely necessary, as illustrated by an incident in October 1897, when 1,800 would-be miners en route to the Klondike were stranded on the Yukon River as it suddenly froze up for the season. Most had to return to St. Michael, abandoning their valuable equipment, while only 43 of these men managed to arrive in Dawson City that season.

While the standard 1897 map is quite rare, it appears that this early variant edition may be unrecorded. We note that Rumsey, Stanford, the Huntington, University of Alaska and others all describe and illustrate the later state of the 1897 map.

To date, we have not located any other extent examples of this rare early state.

**Detailed Condition:**