

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Olympia Washington

BilAnalysis

BilNo. SCR 8410

July 1997, Klondike Gold Rush Centennial Year
Brief title

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BACKGROUND:

The S.S. Portland docked in Seattle the morning of July 17, 1897, transporting more than one ton of gold from the Klondike that ushered a flurry of economic activity in the Puget Sound area as tens of thousands of gold hungry cheechakos flooded through Seattle and Tacoma on their way to the fabled gold fields of the Klondike and other areas of Yukon Territory, Canada.

The primary route to the Yukon was by steamer from Puget Sound to Skagway or Dyea, Alaska and by land over either the Golden Stair of Chilkoot Pass or White Pass to Lake Lindeman or Lake Bennett where boats and rafts were constructed by the gold seekers awaiting the 1898 spring thaw when they could float northward down the Yukon River through Miles Canyon, Rink Rapids and Five Finger Rapid on their way to the fabled gold fields. After the 1898 spring thaw a second major route open to the Yukon by steamer from Puget Sound to the mouth of the Yukon River on the Bering Strait and upstream to the fabled gold fields.

The flurry of economic activity, outfitting and transporting gold hungry cheechakos to the Yukon transformed Seattle from a sleepy frontier town on Puget Sound to the robust gateway to the Klondike and ended the great 1890's depression. This transforming event was celebrated by Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exhibition in 1909 on the newly opened campus of the University of Washington at its present site north of Portage Bay, after moving from what has become known as the University tract in downtown Seattle.

On July 19, 1997, the Spirit of '98 will reenact the arrival of the S.S. Portland 100 years and two days after the original landing. Planning for this event began two years ago by the board of directors of the Klondike Centennial Committee of Washington, the Klondike Centennial Committee of Alaska, the Washington State Office of the Secretary of State, the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, and private businesses.

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SUMMARY:

The Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Washington resolve that The Rush is On- and proclaim the Klondike Gold Rush Centennial Year to commence in July of 1997.