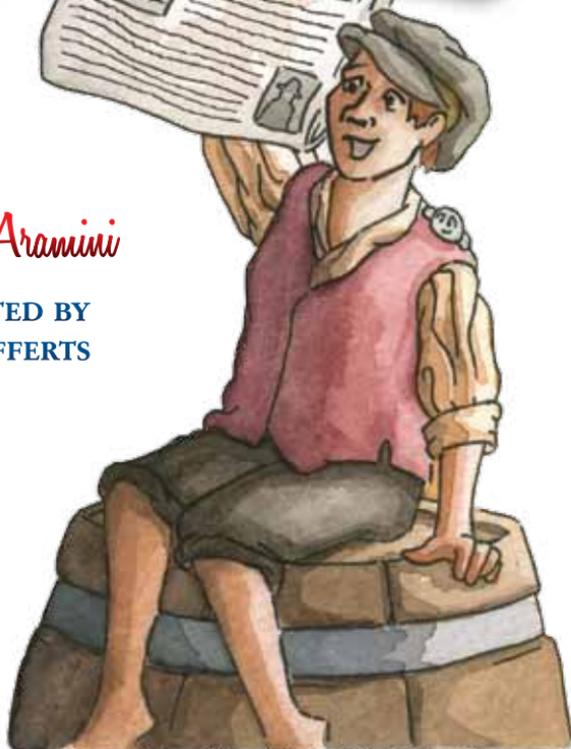


by Jamie Aramini

ILLUSTRATED BY
EMILY LEFFERTS



The Adventures of Munford
THE KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH

Written by Jamie Aramini

Illustrated by Emily Lefferts

Munford character and concepts created by George Wiggers

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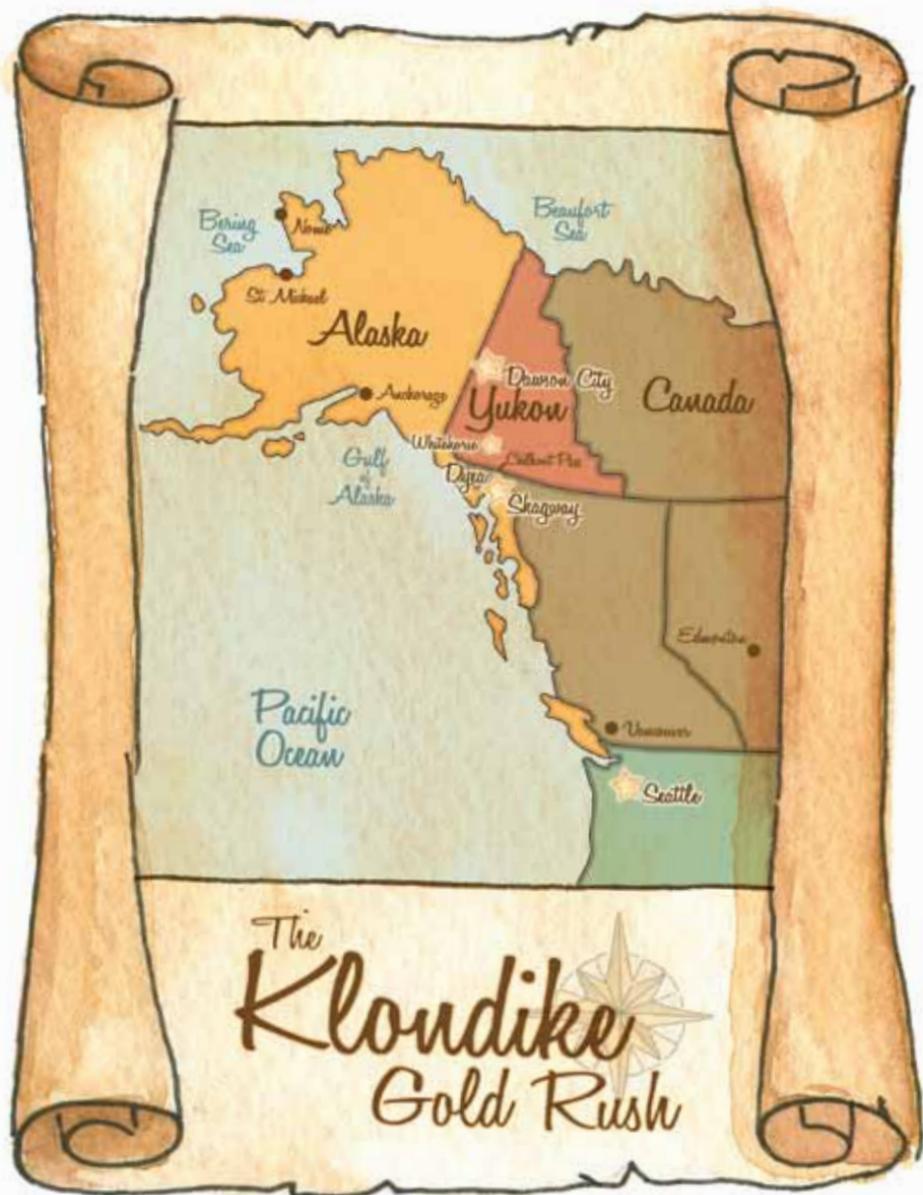
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DEDICATION

For Joey and James

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Josh and Cindy Wiggers for trusting me with your dream of Munford. I am honored to have the privilege to write this book.



The
Klondike
Gold Rush

Table of Contents

<i>Chapter One:</i>	SEATTLE	7
<i>Chapter Two:</i>	GETTING READY	19
<i>Chapter Three:</i>	ALL ABOARD	27
<i>Chapter Four:</i>	SKAGWAY	37
<i>Chapter Five:</i>	DYEA	49
<i>Chapter Six:</i>	ALEX McDONALD	59
<i>Chapter Seven:</i>	THE GOLDEN STAIRCASE	69
<i>Chapter Eight:</i>	LAKE BENNETT	79
<i>Chapter Nine:</i>	THE WHITEHORSE RAPIDS	89
<i>Chapter Ten:</i>	DAWSON CITY	99
<i>Chapter Eleven:</i>	GOLD DUST	109
<i>Chapter Twelve:</i>	PANNING FOR GOLD	119
<i>Chapter Thirteen:</i>	NUGGETS OF GOLD	127
<i>Epilogue:</i>	A NOTE FROM GRANDPA GILBERT	135
<i>The Klondike Gold Rush:</i>	FASCINATING FACTS	139
<i>Author's Note:</i>	SHARING THE VISION OF MUNFORD	140



“Extra! Extra! Read all about it!” A newspaper boy shouted from the street corner. I worked my way closer to him.

“Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold!” the headline read. “The steamship *Portland* arrives today with nearly a ton of gold,” I read from the smaller print below the headline.

Gold. I think I heard that word a hundred times today. It is the talk of the town. It doesn’t matter where I am. The store clerk, the bank teller, the stable boy—everybody has got gold on the brain.

I wanted to know more, so I floated over to the seaport. When the *Portland* docked, I would have more answers.

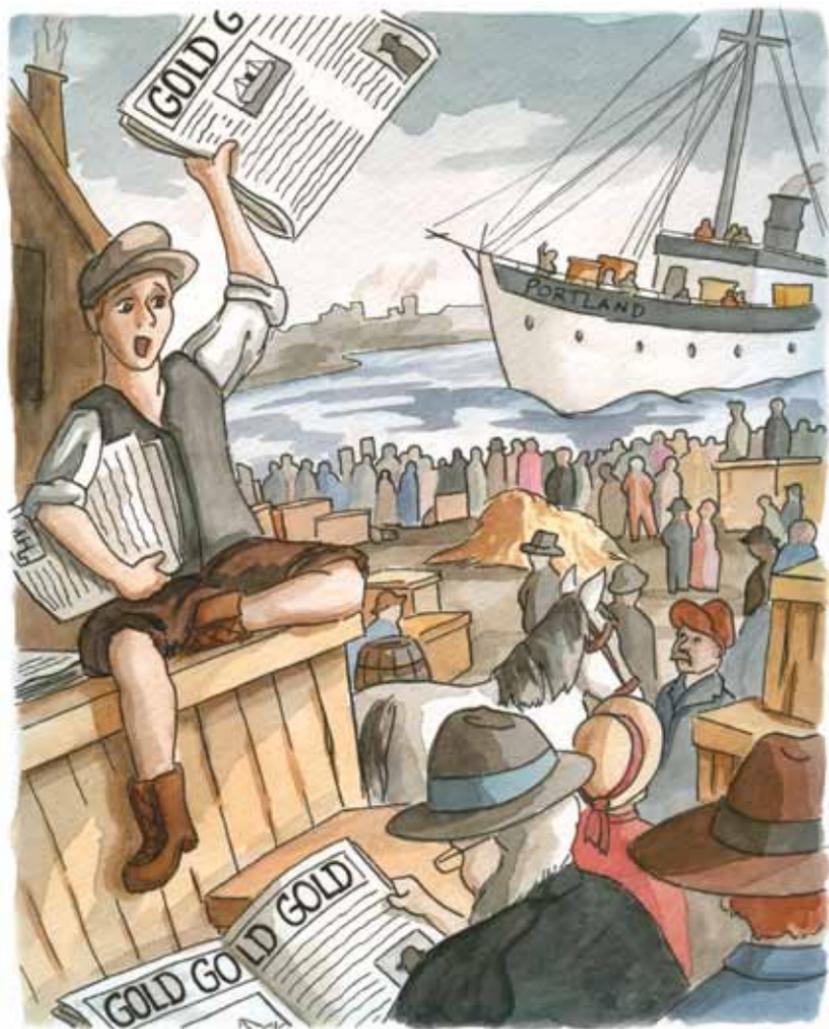
Have you ever been to a seaport? It is a busy place. There are lots of boats and people. Things are being unloaded from some boats, while other boats are just getting packed to head out to sea.

You have to squeeze your way through all the people. Many of them are there to say goodbye to someone who is setting sail. Some are there trying to barter for a ticket so they can set out on an adventure of their own.

There are animals everywhere: dogs, cats, chickens in cages getting loaded onto boats—and the fish! The whole place stinks of fish. Some of the boats sell the day's catch right there on the dock.

As you can tell, a seaport is usually a busy place. Today, this one was even busier. It looked like everyone in town had come to watch for the *Portland's* arrival. Everyone wanted to see it for themselves.

Not in a long time had anything this exciting happened in Seattle. Did I tell you that I'm describing Seattle, Washington? Do you know where that is? The first time I heard of it, I thought it was part of Washington, D.C. Turns out I was wrong about that.



Washington is a state on the other side of the country from Washington D.C. Seattle is a city inside of Washington state. All of those Washingtons can really be confusing. Just look on a map and it should clear things up.

Let's get back to the subject at hand. The Seattle seaport was hopping with people. It was July 1897, but no one seemed to mind the warm summer weather. Times were tough in this small town. Washington had only been a state for a few years, so the economy was still getting established. A good job and a steady income were hard to get. Most people were just barely getting by. Now you understand why gold had caused such a frenzy!

The *Portland*, fresh from the Alaskan coast, would dock soon. "A million dollars worth of gold," I overheard someone say. I had never heard of so much gold, and I guess I wasn't the only one. Thousands of people pushed their way down to the docks to see it for themselves. There was a feeling of hope in the air. Everyone wondered if heading north and looking for gold might be the answer to their problems.

As the *Portland* docked, the crowd pushed closer for a better look. Huge wooden crates were stacked on the ship. Armed guards stood by as the passengers disembarked. “Disembark” is just a fancy word that means they were getting off of the ship.

“Is it true?” someone from the crowd shouted. “Is there really a ton of gold on that ship?”

“I’m afraid you’ve been misinformed,” said one of the passengers with a raised voice. The crowd went silent. “I’d say there’s probably closer to two tons.” With that, he let out a cheer. The rest of the passengers cheered along with him. Soon the crowd joined in.

Two tons of gold! I slipped away from the crowd. An idea was starting to form in my mind, and I knew just whom I needed to talk to about it—my Grandpa Gilbert. He would be able to tell me everything I needed to know about gold and what I could do to get some of my own.

You might remember Grandpa from one of my other adventures. He is someone I can always count on to give me advice. Of course, he isn’t really my grandfather. I am a water molecule, after all. All

of us water molecules are the same age. We just get recycled through the water cycle again and again. We don't have family like you do, either. I just call Gilbert "Grandpa" because he is a wise explorer, famous for his travels in the world of water molecules.

Lucky for me, Grandpa was in Seattle. He had blown in with a thunderstorm just last week. Now he was hanging out in a watering trough over in the center of town. I hitched a ride on a nearby horse, hoping it would stop for a drink so I could talk to Grandpa.



When we arrived at the trough, I slipped down into the water with a drip of the horse's sweat. (Kind of gross, I know.) As soon as I spotted Grandpa, I told him everything I knew. I was so excited that it came out in a bit of a jumble, "Gold...Klondike...*Portland*... Two tons!"

"Whoa there! Slow down," Grandpa said. "You're talking too fast."

I repeated my story, slowly this time. When I got to the part about the two tons, Grandpa interrupted me. "So it is true then? Two tons of gold. That sure will change things around here."

I had a silly question. I really hated to ask it, but I needed to know. "What exactly is gold, Grandpa?"

"Gold is just a metal," he answered.

"Why all the fuss, then?"

"Because it is a valuable metal. It is pretty hard to come by, which makes it worth a lot. It is used as money."

I had more questions about this metal. "Where does it come from?" I asked.

Grandpa was quick to answer, “The ground. There are tiny little bits of it in most soil.”

What? You could find gold in most soil? “I better start digging!”

Grandpa laughed. “Hang on there. I said there are tiny bits of gold. What you are looking for is a gold deposit—a place where there is a lot of gold.”

I was starting to get impatient. “Where would that be?”

“Well, there are gold deposits all over the world—South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, California. Most of them, though, have already been mined. The trick is to find a place that hasn’t yet been mined. The gold that was on the *Portland* came from Canada, from a region called the Klondike. There are already a few mines set up there, but there could still be some gold left to discover.”

This was just what I needed to hear. “Grandpa! Come on! We need to get to the Klondike and fast!”

He laughed a big laugh. “And that’s why it’s called a gold rush.”

“A gold rush?” I thought I had heard the term before, but I couldn’t remember.

“This is when big groups of people hurry to look for gold. It’s a rush of people in a rush to find gold,” Grandpa smiled.

I definitely wanted to be a part of the rush. I had gold fever! “What do you say, Gramps? Will you come to the Klondike with me and join the gold rush?”

“I’m afraid you’ll have to go this one alone, Munford. I’ve been part of a gold rush before. It isn’t as much fun as it sounds, you know.”

I sensed a story coming on. Grandpa Gilbert had a good story for every occasion. “Another gold rush? Where? When?”

Grandpa leaned back in the rocking chair and took a deep breath. He closed his eyes. I could tell he was remembering. “It was 1849. The first bits of gold dust were found in southern California. Pretty soon someone had found whole nuggets. It wasn’t long before folks from all over—including me—were headed to California to find a piece of their own. Of course, there isn’t much a water molecule like me or you can do with gold. Even so, it sure is easy to get swept up in the adventure of it all.” Grandpa sighed.

“Forty-niners, we were called. There were so many of us! Everyone needed supplies and food and a place to sleep. It was a mess. You could hardly afford to buy a donkey out there. By the time I arrived, most of the good spots had already been taken. People were killing each other over ‘em, too. What a mess.”

“A mess. Yes. I think you already said that. What about the gold?” Sometimes you had to steer Grandpa in the right direction to get the answer you wanted.

“Oh, right. The gold. I found a few small bits. Not even enough to cover the cost of my supplies. I did meet some nice people, though, a lot of scoundrels, too. If they couldn’t find any gold of their own, some seemed content to steal whatever they could to make up for it!”

So Grandpa hadn’t found gold after all. It would be different for me. It wasn’t 1849 anymore. Not to mention I would be in Canada, not California. Surely I would find something.

Grandpa left me with a few parting words. “It will be quite an adventure, Munford. Be careful

whom you trust. Sometimes people get all wrapped up in gold fever and forget their manners. You better get moving, though! Every moment wasted is a gold claim lost.”

He didn't have to tell me twice. I was ready to go, but how would I get out of the trough? Soon enough, the horse took another big drink of the water, lapping me up with it. I held on to his lips with all my might. I didn't want to get stuck in his stomach, that's for sure! I kept holding on to his lips as the horse and his owner trotted down the street, taking me with them.