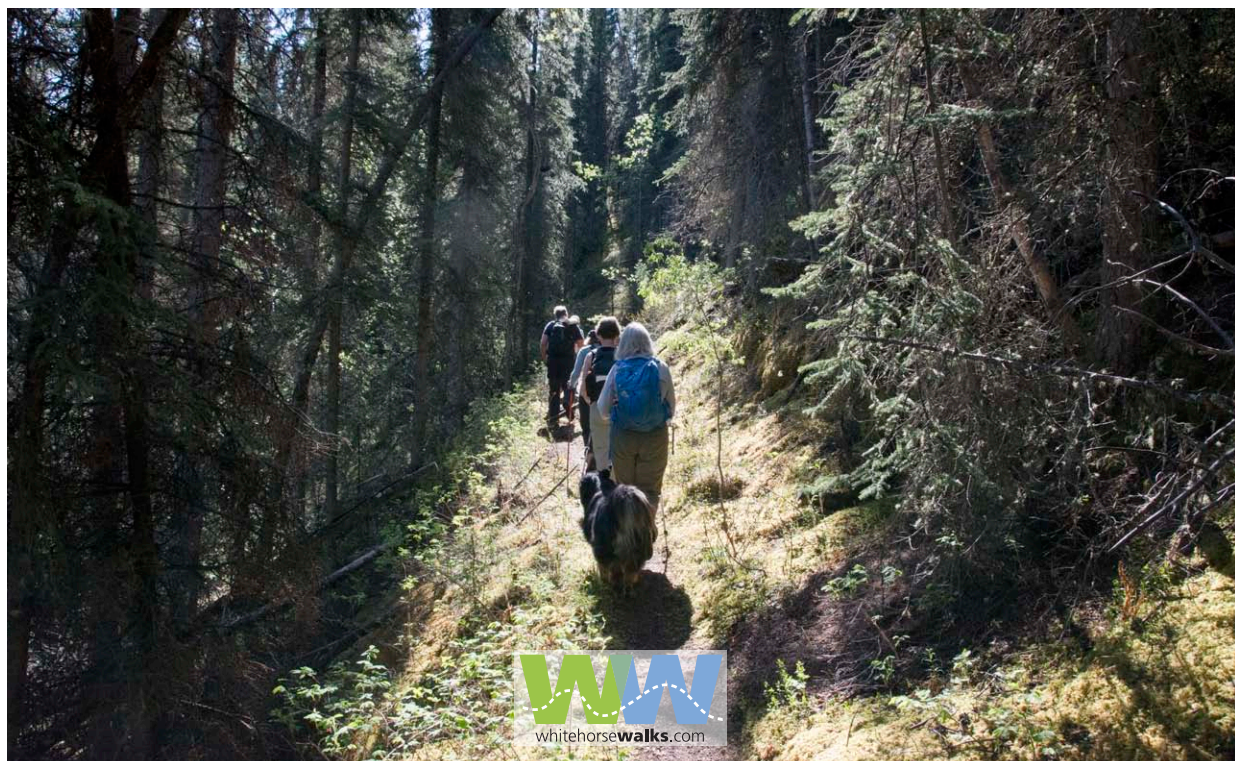




Yukon Archives, Eric Hegg fonds, #2582







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**Top:** Hepburn Tramway. The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, Andrew S. Grant fonds, Accession 1973-5003 Box 2

**Front top:** Fire-killed slope clearly shows the tramway on the escarpment. About 1900. Yukon Archives, Eric Hegg fonds, #2582

**Front bottom:** Walking up the tramway slope, 2016, Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com



## Executive Summary

The Hepburn Tramway was one of a pair of tramways built, used, sold and abandoned in the late 1800s. A couple of the Chadburn ski trails follow sections of the Macaulay Tramway and there's a short piece behind FH Collins, but it's not a place where we say, "let's go for a walk on the Macaulay Tramway."

What happened to the Hepburn Tramway? Why was it ignored all these years, almost forgotten, mostly unseen? Was it poorly designed, unwisely choosing unstable slopes?

It turns out that it was overtaken by many events along its length. Luckily for us, an almost 3-km section above Miles Canyon lay virtually unused for about 120 years, except by horse riders and a few walkers. This report is to unravel some of the mystery around this historic artifact, using archival photos to tell the story of the tramway and to get people walking.

The magic of the tramway is its location along the Schwatka Lake and Miles Canyon, a gradual, easily walkable grade with the potential to restore it as a community historical walk. How do we do this?

**F**irst, create public discussion around reviving the tramway route as a walking destination. Stories from those who grew up here are that people used to walk more and farther than today. They'd certainly walk to the canyon from town. This is an ability we should emulate. Tourists, many who are seniors, might stay longer with this easy, safe, healthy, low-cost activity; there's also some who would visit just because we have a historical walk. Talk with, lobby, elected officials and staff in various levels of government.

**S**econd, from American Laundry to Miles Canyon is a big focus of this tramway project. The original 116-year-old abandoned tramway bed should be left as natural as possible; brushing and shovel work would be the primary tools. Key task is re-establishing the Miles Canyon and American Laundry endings.

Designate the whole area between Miles Canyon and the American Laundry as a walking area, a community attraction. Nice well-marked, interpreted walks should be developed, using existing trails.

The gravel pit being proposed at the top of the slope over the tramway should be denied. It's not appropriate for such an important recreation area.

**T**hird, from Miles Canyon, along Schwatka Lake, to Robert Service Campground should be a child-senior friendly promenade. Like the Millennium Trail, it would get people out walking. People used to be able to walk along the river here but these days the wider road has an almost vehicles-only feeling.

As a key piece of a Yukon River Trail, the many parking spots, interpretive viewpoints and picnic spots, would encourage people to walk. The style of trail could be dirt to start with, becoming more formal if use dictates. Key tasks here are re-establishing a route passing by Yukon Energy; reclaiming a walking path along the narrow Schwatka Lake road; stabilizing the slope above the Goat Trail; and interpreting the tramway through the woods near the end of Schwatka Lake.

This report has five sections: background to this project; then it follows the tramway from the American Laundry to Miles Canyon; a look around Miles Canyon; and then Miles Canyon to Robert Service Campground. Lastly, there's back matter about my *whitehorsewalks.com* walking project and some suggested loop walking trails here on the west side of the river. **For more go to [http://whitehorsewalks.com/\\_walkingIdeas/HepburnTramway.html](http://whitehorsewalks.com/_walkingIdeas/HepburnTramway.html)**



Top: Crossing the Goat Trail, 2005, Peter Long, *whitehorseWalks.com*

**What was the one thing about the Yukon that more of us should take advantage of?**

*Ellen Davignon replied, “More of us should make the time to get into the Yukon’s backcountry. There you can experience spectacular and unfamiliar scenery, as well as discover evidence of historical industry, long since abandoned and slowly but surely being reabsorbed into the landscape.”*

*Yukon, North of Ordinary, v. 10, i. 2, summer 2016*

As we started to explore for a west-side Yukon River trail above Miles Canyon, we found a delightful trail up the side of the escarpment. We’d stumbled on the Hepburn Tramway, built in 1897-98, abandoned in 1899 and generally forgotten. What a treat! This is exactly what Ellen talks about.

Following the tramway through the woods, we were very surprised to find that a 2.6-km-long section was still in great shape. So I decided to learn more about Hepburn’s tramway and its missing pieces.

I call this document *Forgotten Trails* because they are hiding in plain sight. We read a lot about the Macaulay Tramway, but little about the Hepburn Tramway, built about the same time. Another forgotten trail here is the telegraph line that runs through the area along the river, strung through the trees or on the ground.

The area is within the Kwanlin Dün and Ta’an Kwäch’än Council traditional territories. Did earlier explorers use First Nation trails for portages on the west side of the river? An 1899 map for the railway shows a ‘pack trail’ joining the Hepburn Tramway. Was this a traditional route?

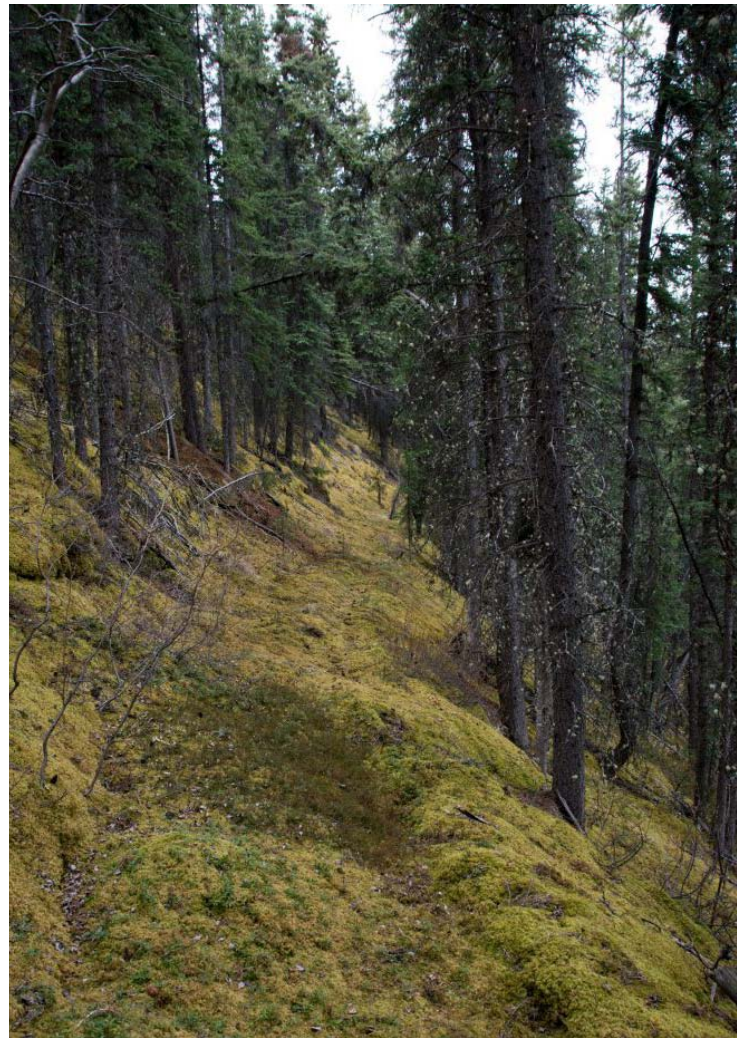
We have a unique opportunity to create a walking destination with an authentic historical focus. The tramway itself may not be historically significant, however, the tramway route, with its well-engineered low grade, will be a walk that many will want to do.

Thanks to my hiking buddies and my history buddies for their patience as we explored/bushwhacked and chatted about the tramway. Thanks to archive and museum staff who were always helpful and understanding. I hope others feel nostalgic seeing these tramway photos from the early days.

This annotated pictorial tour of the tramway is a taster, not a comprehensive history. Seeing the old photos will give historians and storytellers, elders and seniors an opportunity to share memories of this area.

There’s no formal walking group to spearhead this project. So this PDF is to get people talking about the concept, to walk the west side trails above the canyon, to work lobbying contacts, to help make this happen. Talk to your friends; to the City’s recreation, planning, economic development, sustainability departments; talk to mayor and council. Talk to friends in other local governments. Share your thoughts on making the Hepburn Tramway and the west side canyon a historical walking destination. Together we can make this happen.

**Top:** Moss-covered tramway route descending escarpment, 2016, Peter Long, [whitehorseWalks.com](http://whitehorseWalks.com)





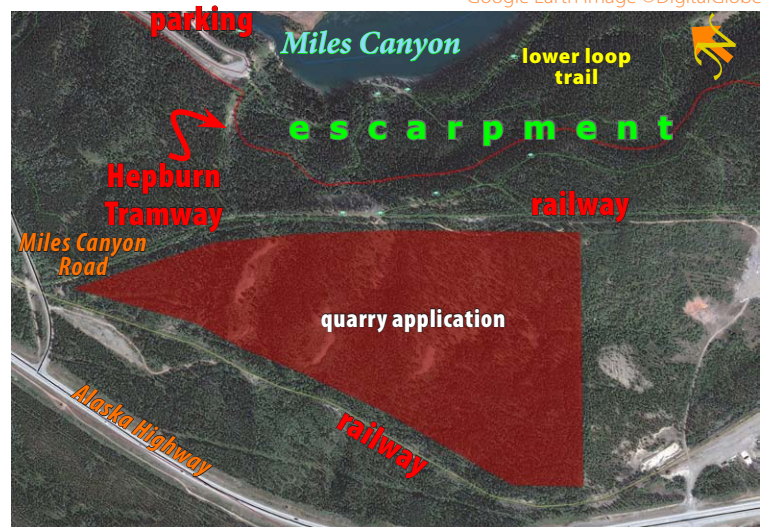
## Quarry above canyon is inappropriate

The proposed quarry requires rezoning an area of FD (developable land) to IQ (quarry). It could affect the recreational potential of the Miles Canyon area and future Hepburn Tramway use.

Its YESAB heritage resource study doesn't mention the Hepburn Tramway running less than 100 m from the northeast side of the proposed quarry. With respect to the tramway, the proposal is confusing, talking about the railway right of way as the old tramway, with a railway bed photo misidentified as being tramway. The Hepburn Tramway continues to be a forgotten trail (it's actually just below the NE side of the railway ROW.)

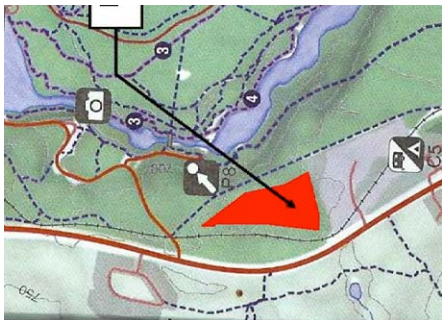
The project speaks of a 45-year life, on land bordered by *railway rights-of-way, an old pipeline right-of-way, and WPYRR titled land.*

However, the railway bed is built on the top of the very steep slope. If land owners ever restrict public use, we



could lose the ability to cross the area. A solution would be to create a PG-zoned border (greenspace) on the proposed quarry side of the ROWs/titled land.

In reality, a quarry is an inappropriate use here and should be denied. Let the planning department, mayor and council know if you think this quarry is appropriate beside one of Whitehorse's significant recreation/tourism areas.



## Utah Flats White Pass and Yukon Route Siding Area Gravel Pit (YESAB application)

**Q:** Please provide reclamation and closure plans for the site.

**A:** ..., at a minimum we have committed to re-contour the site to eliminate steep and unstable slopes, to spread stockpiled organic materials on the surface, and to reseed the site if that is what the CoW wishes to be done.

**Q:** ...Project is near...recreation areas...provide...:

a) any known concerns from... recreation users regarding... air quality;

**A:** We are not aware of concerns from local residents regarding air quality.

a) any known concerns from ...recreation users regarding ... project noise;

**A:** We will rely on the Seeking Views and Information period in the YESAA process as a way to seek opinions and concerns...

## 7.2.3 Public Safety and Conflicts with Trail Users

Public safety will be one of the principle criteria for the layout and design of quarry pits. Norcope will clear all vegetation in a 10-20 m wide zone around excavated areas to ensure that the pit edges are clearly visible, and the pit will be constructed to minimize the creation of vertical pit walls (wall slopes will be made as gradual as is practically possible).

While there does not appear to be heavy use of the two nearby trails, we will protect them for continued public use. To reduce negative impacts to trail users, and for safety, we will leave a 20 m treed buffer (no clearing) between trails and cleared areas around the pit, and we will post signs alerting trail users to the presence of the pit.

You can follow the progress of Project 2015-0167 on the YESAB Online Registry here:

<http://yesabregistry.ca:80/wfm/Project/nullifrm8qefv0>.



## Special designation: no motorized vehicles

The Whitehorse South Neighbourhood Trail Task Force was to start in June, 2016. The City trail task force process is to determine what the community wants to see happen with area trails and greenspaces. In particular, it will assess trails above Miles Canyon. However, the task force had to be postponed until the fall. Meanwhile, recent heavy dirt bike usage has created new trails and torn up old trails.

Motorized trail use here doesn't feel right — the area below is too small for long-term motorized interest and the area above is too flat. Miles Canyon is one of the city's featured attractions. Think of which is more appropriate: rutted, widening trails, erosion, bare slopes, ATVs, noise, pollution.... or...

*It's the great, big, broad land 'way up yonder,  
It's the forests where silence has lease;  
It's the beauty that thrills me with wonder,  
It's the stillness that fills me with peace.*

*Robert W. Service, The Spell of the Yukon*

Walk the *Miles Canyon lower loop* (p. 44). We could designate a second low route along the telegraph line near the foot of the hills; clean up trails; put park benches at views; ensure access to river, canyon walls, old forest...

Walk the *Miles Canyon Figure 8 loop* (p. 43) to see the potential of the broader area. At 6.4 km, this loop can be hiked in just over a couple of hours.

Let city trails staff, trail task force members, mayor and council know what you think is the best use of the area.




**Photos:** Organic forest floor is more suitable for light use such as walking. Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com, 2016



## Story of the tramway

The photo (right) shows a section of Hepburn Tramway we found on our first hike.

This turned out to be the very prominent piece showing as the almost horizontal line on the bottom photo. (Throughout, I'll use this red arrow  to point out the tramway.) Looking at old photos, one can see why Macaulay paid Hepburn \$60,000—over a million dollars in today's money!

Few images are available of the Hepburn Tramway when it was in use; abandoned, it seems to have been forgotten, ignored. It even gets confused with the nearby railway bed.

Until now this obscurity has been the area's protection. City OCPs have declared it mainly for horse riding, although parts weren't even used for that. But as horse use petered out, few cared about it, until recently.

Looking to identify a good destination walk, we started to explore. It was obvious from the start that there was an good story here, and it was just as obvious that Miles Canyon provided a rather neat place to tell it.

Read Michael Gate's History hunting article:

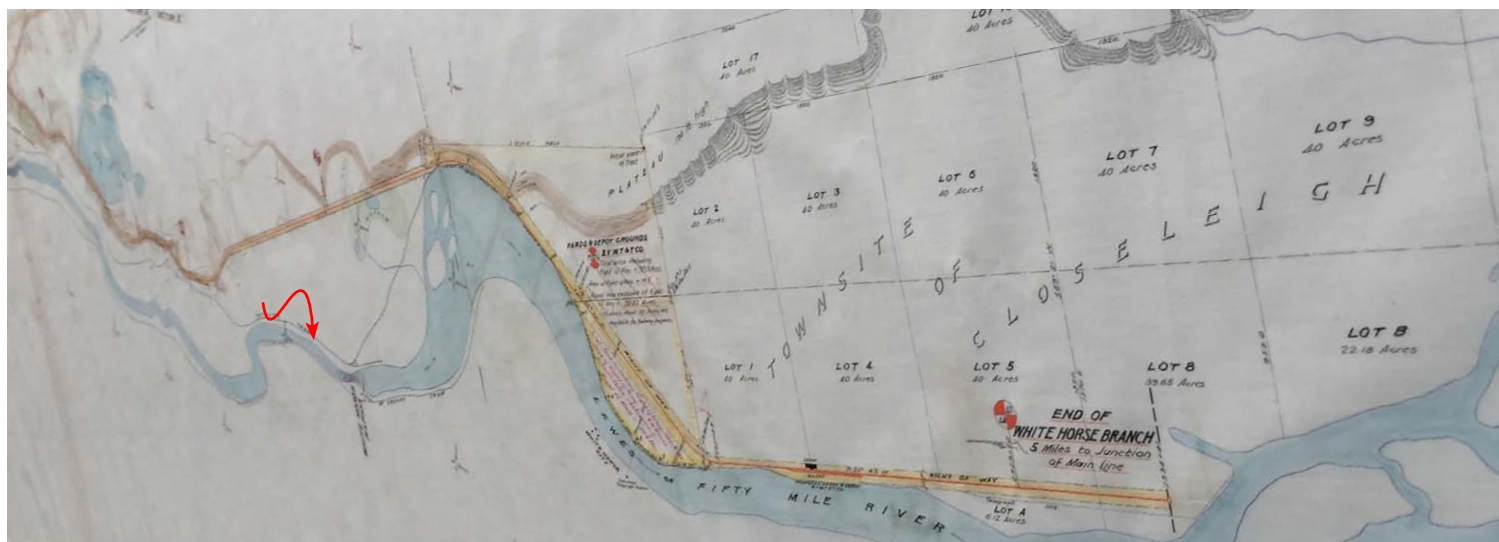
<http://www.yukon-news.com/letters-opinions/history-hunting-on-the-hepburn-trail/>

**Top:** Tramway ascending escarpment, 2016. Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com

**Bottom:** Yarmouth County Museum and Archives. E.A. Hegg (Illustrator), *Souvenir of Alaska and Yukon Territory*. Skaguay, Alaska, 1900 (Y MS1 645.2, YCMA)







## Preserving our treasures

Maps can give a great sense of discovery. The above 1899, 8.7-m-long map shows the last 21 miles of railway bed into the Townsite of Closeleigh on the banks of the Lewes or Fifty Mile River; it also shows both tramways.

People give archives treasures they feel have an innate sense of importance, whether a map, a photo, a diary,... It's a privilege to find, to read, even to touch these things! Luckily, there are people whose passion is to work in libraries, archives and museums to preserve and help access these treasures.

Here on the west side of Miles Canyon, between neglect, light use by a few local residents, the care of the riding stable people and photographs, we have a treasure. Is it the most significant artifact in Whitehorse? Obviously not. Think of it as a neat walk with a historical flavour!

The Macaulay Tramway except at Canyon City, and the well-known piece of trail behind FH Collins and the 2.4 km stretch along the Red and Yellow ski trails.

If we develop the tramway and trails on the west side of Miles Canyon as natural walks, they will become a magnet for walkers, both locals and tourists.

There's many stories to pursue, not only about the Hepburn Tramway, but about traditional trail use. There's also geography, geology, forest fires, river travel, rapids, portages, water levels, the single wire

telegraph routes, the railway and its telegraph/telephone lines, oil pipeline, largest Alaska Highway camp, the American Laundry site, Mounted Police cabins, float planes, hydro generation, the Miles Canyon Road and people's stories of the area.

Here's some things to think about:

- Identify route of both tramways, especially the landings.
- Devise Tramway/Yukon River Trail logos for medallions, signs. Aspects of the Marathon Trail are called Tramway Trail. Tramway name should be reserved for the actual tramway.
- Identify an existing end-to-end Hepburn Tramway loop using: escarpments, Ear Lake, railway, Marathon Trail.
- Pursue photo, stories from various archival collections, senior's groups,... Get high resolution scans to improve this pdf and identify mystery location pictures. Keep PDF up-to-date.
- Don't do major trail work without planning. Keep the patina of time, the moss, the sense of the old forest slopes.
- Follow original route as much as possible, staying close to the river. Where not possible, explain and reconnect asap.
- At Miles Canyon parking area, brush temporary entrance route onto tramway and the early narrow trail. Identify and brush out the section directly from parking area.
- At American Laundry, improve road down to river; brush out tramway; develop entrance to escarpment trail.
- Develop a few viewpoints to reproduce classic old photos; think picnic, benches, parking where appropriate.
- Work with Schwatka Lake planning committee to develop a walking trail along the lake as a priority.
- Connect Robert Service Campground to Schwatka Lake, avoiding the current walk-along-the-road route.
- Keep south end of Miles Canyon Road open in winter.

**Top:** The British Yukon Mining trading of transportation company, A.B. Lyons, Surveyor, 1899. Yukon Archives, Map R-90.



Current condition of tramway

This Google Earth diagram gives a summary of findings so far. Without identifying exact route from Grant Cabin to the end, the 8 km length is approximate.

The landing below the rapids is likely to be somewhere in Robert Service Campground/Yukon Energy Complex, along the Millennium Trail.

**KEY section:** Develop route between campground and across from LNG plant, then through woods to start of lake above power canal of dam.

Route not yet found after Grant Cabin. Possibly under water at places, possibly in the wood, or under the road. Early air photos after the war years show many roads.

**KEY section:** Schwatka area plan needs to develop a route along the water.

Needs heavy brushing. Should this section be preserved, interpreted as is?

Goat Trail is tramway. **KEY section:** Important to repair the hill above the trail. Alternate routings are complex, much less desirable; Hepburn's route was the best solution.

Good shape, but becomes narrow. Improve switchback that offers a way up to the road. Where Goat Trail joins switchback, it's out of character for a safe, easily walkable tramway.

Miles Canyon Road, access to parking lot covered over tramway in this area. Signage could link the northern and southern sections of tramway.

**KEY section:** Tramway overgrown but can be more or less followed. Step 1: flag, restore minimal trail. Later: brush out, rebuild to make welcoming. Interpret second landing/ industrial story.

**Proposed Utah Landing quarry above canyon could affect recreational use in the Miles Canyon area.**

**Much new dirt bike trail use; there's no motorized trail so not allowed under the trail plan and bylaws. Not best place to develop a motorized playground.**

Tramway narrows; deadfalls, debris from long-ago construction at top of slope.

Good shape, minor brushing.

Needs some brushing.

**KEY section:** Needs heavy brushing.

Area covered by activities of American Laundry and Whitehorse Copper pumphouse.





## Hepburn Tramway historical walk, and the Yukon River Trail

The tramway trail is important because:

- It's good for *Magic and Mystery!*
- It creates a focus for a Robert Service Campground to Miles Canyon promenade for non-athletic walkers.
- There's an original 3-km section from the Miles Canyon parking lot to the American Laundry, and it has a 6.5-km loop walk, returning by separate scenic trails. (*Miles Canyon Figure 8*, p. 43).
- This 3 km of tramway has mostly been well-preserved through light use.
- Retaining original grade of tramway will insure an easy walk and, as in archival images, will offer an iconic, easy-to-promote trail image.
- The tramway adds value to the already rich heritage and geological stories of Miles Canyon.
- American Laundry site perfect for interpretation.
- The 2010 OCP suggests a possible boat launch at American Laundry, meaning road maintenance.
- With road access at both Miles Canyon and American Laundry, one-way walks are possible.



- It creates a healthy, active, free, stay-another-day activity for visitors, especially those at Wolf Creek Campground.
- A walking trail to Miles Canyon will very much enhance the options for KDFN's C31 land.
- It could be a project for First Nation partnerships.
- Linking Downtown to Miles Canyon to Wolf Creek by staying near the Yukon River makes tourist-friendly (p. 40-41) longer walks.
- Whitehorse South residents could walk to Miles Canyon, the East side trails, and even downtown.

Google Earth image ©DigitalGlobe



**Top:** Hepburn Tramway showing on hill behind; Robert Lowe on right. E.J. Hamacher, MacBride Museum of Yukon History Coll. 1989-2-1-130  
**Bottom:** Google Earth imagery; 3 km of Hepburn Tramway above Miles Canyon becomes destination. Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com



## The two tramways: Macaulay and Hepburn

At the start of the Gold Rush (1898–99) most people who travelled from Skagway and Dyea to the Klondike would have had to stop above Miles Canyon to portage around the Canyon and rapids.

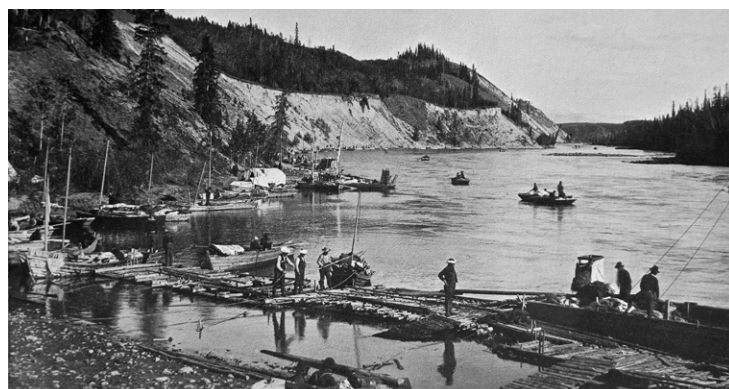
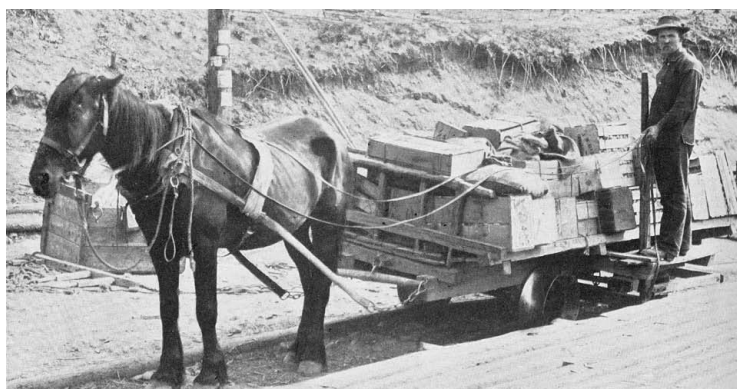
Norman Macaulay's tramway, on the east side of the Yukon River, ran from Canyon City to White Horse Landing below the rapids.

A competitor, John Hepburn, built the Miles Canyon and Lewes River Tramway Inc. (referred to as the Hepburn Tramway today), running along the west shore of the Yukon River, along the route of an old

portage trail. Stiff competition eventually forced the two operators to come to an agreement and in June, 1899, Macaulay bought out Hepburn, continuing to operate both tramways until he sold them to the railway which removed the assets, but left the tramway rails and the beds.

On June 7, 1900, the first train arrived in Whitehorse. Soon most Upper Yukon River steamers and the tramways were out of business.

Almost 120 years later, parts of the two routes are still used as recreational trails.



**Top, r:** Goetzman photo, Michael Gates Collection

**Top, l:** Yarmouth County Museum and Archives.

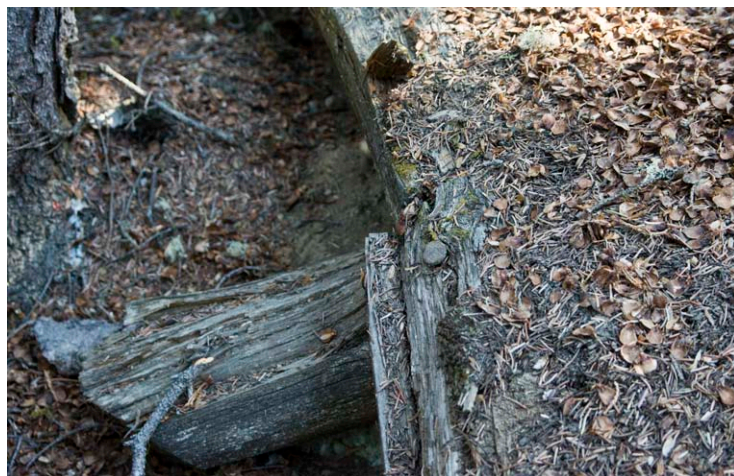
E.A. Hegg (Illustrator), *Souvenir of Alaska and Yukon Territory. Skaguay, Alaska, 1900* (Y MS1 645.2, YCMA)

**Middle, l:** Boats and scows lining riverbank above Canyon City waiting for pilot, 1898, MacBride Museum of Yukon History Coll. 1989-3-1-340

**Middle, r:** S.S. William Ogilvie, Australian and Nora at Canyon City. H.C. Barley. MacBride Museum of Yukon History Coll., 1989-9-1-343

**Bottom:** Canyon City, 1898, Goetzman photo, Michael Gates Collection





## One distinction between the two tramways

Seeing the difference between the 2 tramway photos often involves using the shape of the rails.

The Hepburn used timbers, squared on two sides, as rails. The Macaulay (p. 8) used half log or rounded wood rails. As we hiked, we saw many pieces of squared wood and pieces of notched cross ties with nails. Most of the remaining wood is badly disintegrated as one would expect from wood laying in the ground after almost 120 years.

**Top, l:** MacBride Museum of Yukon History Coll., 1990-23-1a-151

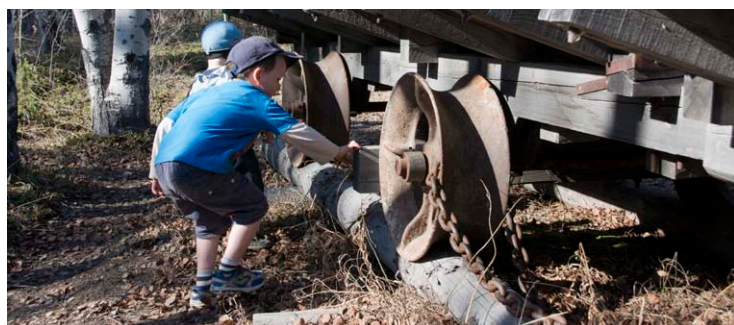
**Bottom, l:** Squared top and side is clearly seen. Bruce Barrett

**Top, r:** For economy of effort, only 2 sides were flattened. Peter Long, [whitehorseWalks.com](http://whitehorseWalks.com), 2016

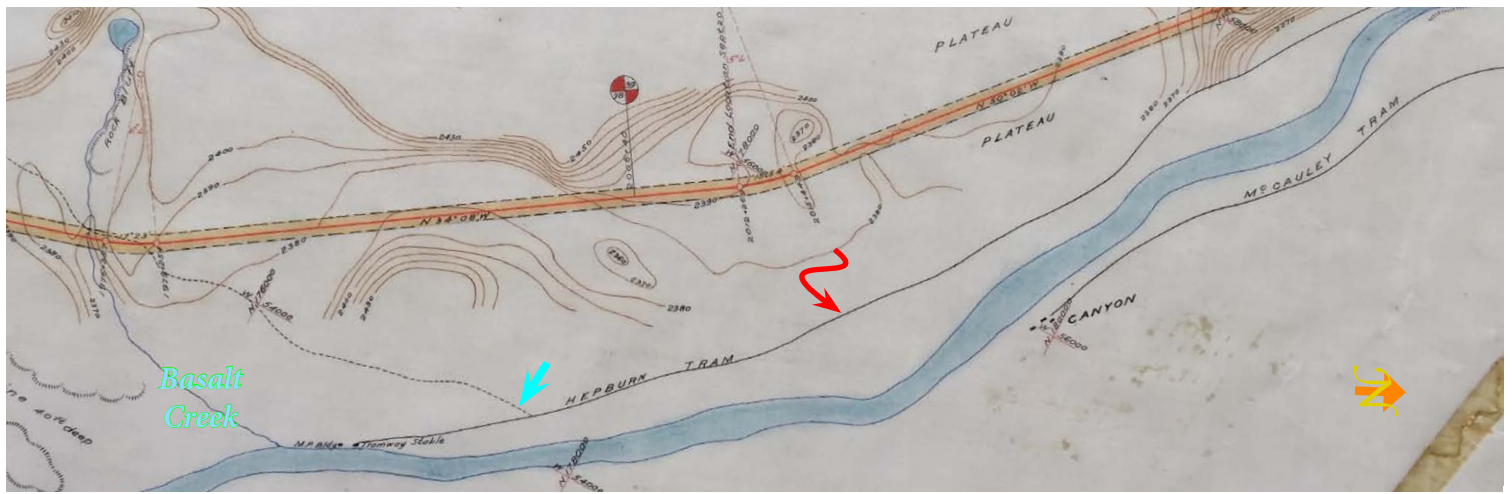
**2nd, r:** A spike held the joined rails on the cross ties. Peter Long, [whitehorseWalks.com](http://whitehorseWalks.com), 2016

**3rd, r:** Hepburn Tramway cart displayed in MacBride Museum's yard.

**Bottom, r:** Macaulay Tramway cart at Canyon City. Peter Long, [whitehorseWalks.com](http://whitehorseWalks.com), 2014







## The starting point of the Hepburn Tramway

On the above 1899 map, the upstream terminus shows an M.P. building and a stable. The dashed line (cyan arrow) indicates a pack trail.

*Are there other mentions of an M.P. building here? Perhaps there's a photo somewhere of these two buildings? Is this part of the portage the tramway was said to follow? Who made it? How old is it? Where does it go? Is the dashed white trail highlighted on the air photo the pack trail. This is still somewhat visible today.*

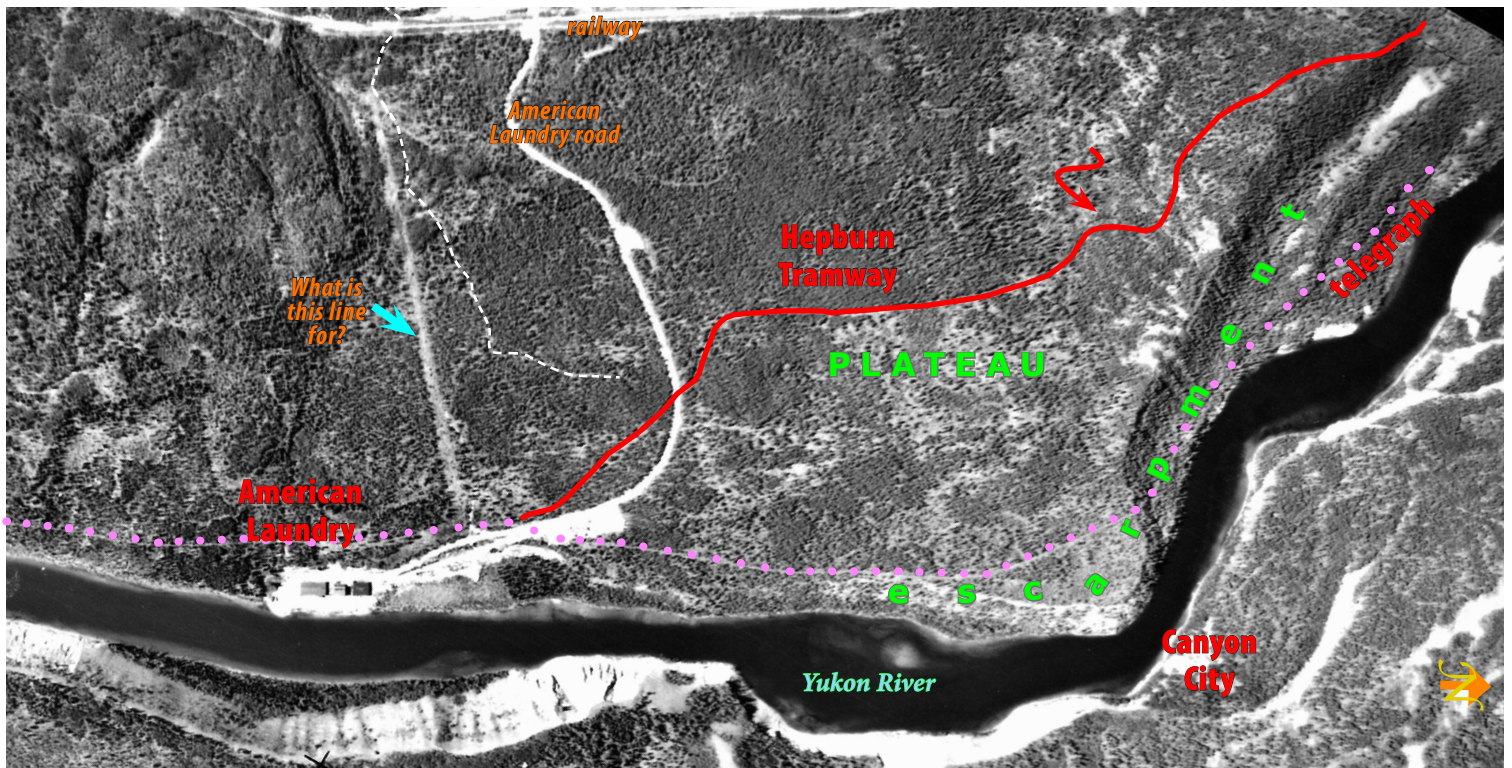
From a business perspective, it made sense for Hepburn to put his landing around a bend and upstream of Canyon City to scoop the business. No wonder Macaulay bought him out!

In the 1952 air photo below, the Hepburn Tramway is the red line. The telegraph is shown as a pink dotted line. A comparison of the map above and the air photo shows that the route of the railway looks accurate, but river and tramway are approximate.

One line so prominent in 1952, is almost invisible today. (It's not the same as a more recent line between the laundry site and the road.) More mysteries!

This PDF is in order as you'd walk to the other end. Map orientation is generally downtown to the left, but will be reversed when comparing to 1899 map.

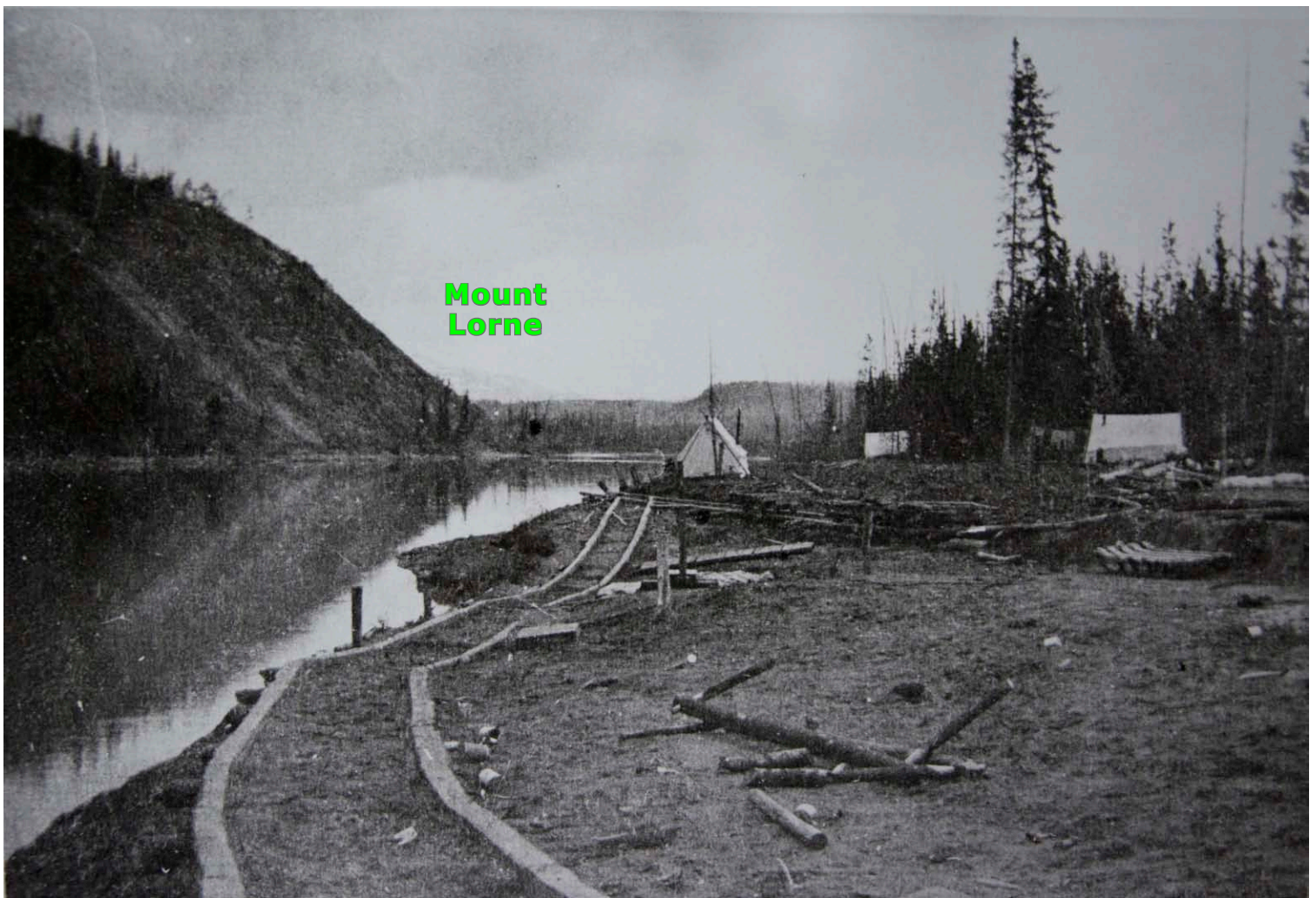
*American Laundry road and the tramway and trail entrances need work to make them more usable.*



Top: The British Yukon Mining trading of transportation company, A.B. Lyons, Surveyor, 1899. Yukon Archives, Map R-90.

Bottom: © Department of Natural Resources Canada. All Rights reserved. A13476\_167 1952





### Photo of upstream terminus found

Hunting, always hunting, I looked at a binder of photos in the Yukon Historic Sites office and there it was — the upstream terminus. As I take quick and dirty pictures with poor lighting I hope that

someone will commission a set of good quality digital scans of these pictures. It will enhance the story. For now, we no longer need to wonder where the tramway started.



**Top:** Upstream terminus of Hepburn Tramway at American Laundry, Mount Lorne in back. Yukon Archives. J.E. Beatty fonds, 82/390, #4  
**Bottom:** Looking south, American Laundry, Mount Lorne, Fox Haven escarpment at back. Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com, 2016





### Ascending the plateau

It's easy to follow the tramway through the woods except for the initial part where the American Laundry road was built over the tramway trail.

If you are curious about the tramway, but have mobility issues, you could get out and walk a bit on the tramway where it cuts the American Laundry road.



Google Earth image ©DigitalGlobe

At the edge of the escarpment, the tramway trail encounters a junction, with the tramway going straight ahead and down. One trail goes left, up towards the railway/oil pipeline route above the escarpment. The other trail branches right, following the edge of the escarpment and rejoining the tramway back at the American Laundry.

The story of the riding stable and its use of the area has still to be recorded. It's important enough that the last 2 OCPs have said that the Hepburn Tramway was for horse riding. They certainly left us a legacy of well-maintained trails.



Top: Tramway route near American Laundry road, Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com, 2016

Bottom: Tramway route, Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com, 2016





### A treasure found: a tram at top of escarpment

**D**oug Davidge pointed out to me that the tramway photo above is credited as taken at Bennett, B.C. But he felt that the background looked like Grey Mountain and the rolling terrain around Chadburn and Chadden lakes.

The photo (right) was taken on a hike along the escarpment trail at a great viewpoint, a nice picnic spot. The binoculars on the Google Earth image (below) marks the spot.

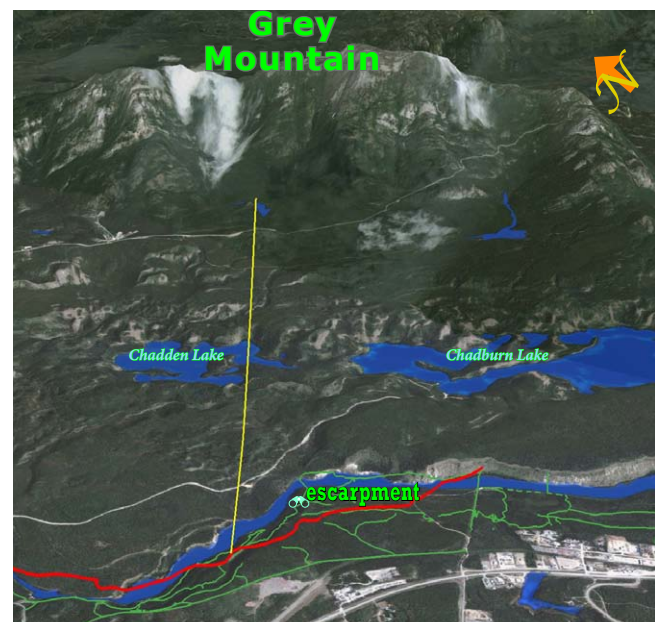
The yellow line on the Google Earth image shows vantage where archival photo was probably taken. The cart was carrying 4 people, likely back to the start of the tramway. Might this be the only photo of a horse and tram on the Hepburn Tramway?

Working on this document has been a learning experience. With no trees in the way, views from the slope were clear in 1898–99. Photos of the escarpment tell of a recent fire. This became a dating tool for the pictures; the burned forest being harvested for fuel, the trees growing up, eventually obscuring the tramway's distinctive slash across the hill, so visible in early photos.

**Top:** Image I-50652 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives

**Middle:** Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com

**Bottom:** Google Earth imagery map, Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com



Google Earth image ©DigitalGlobe



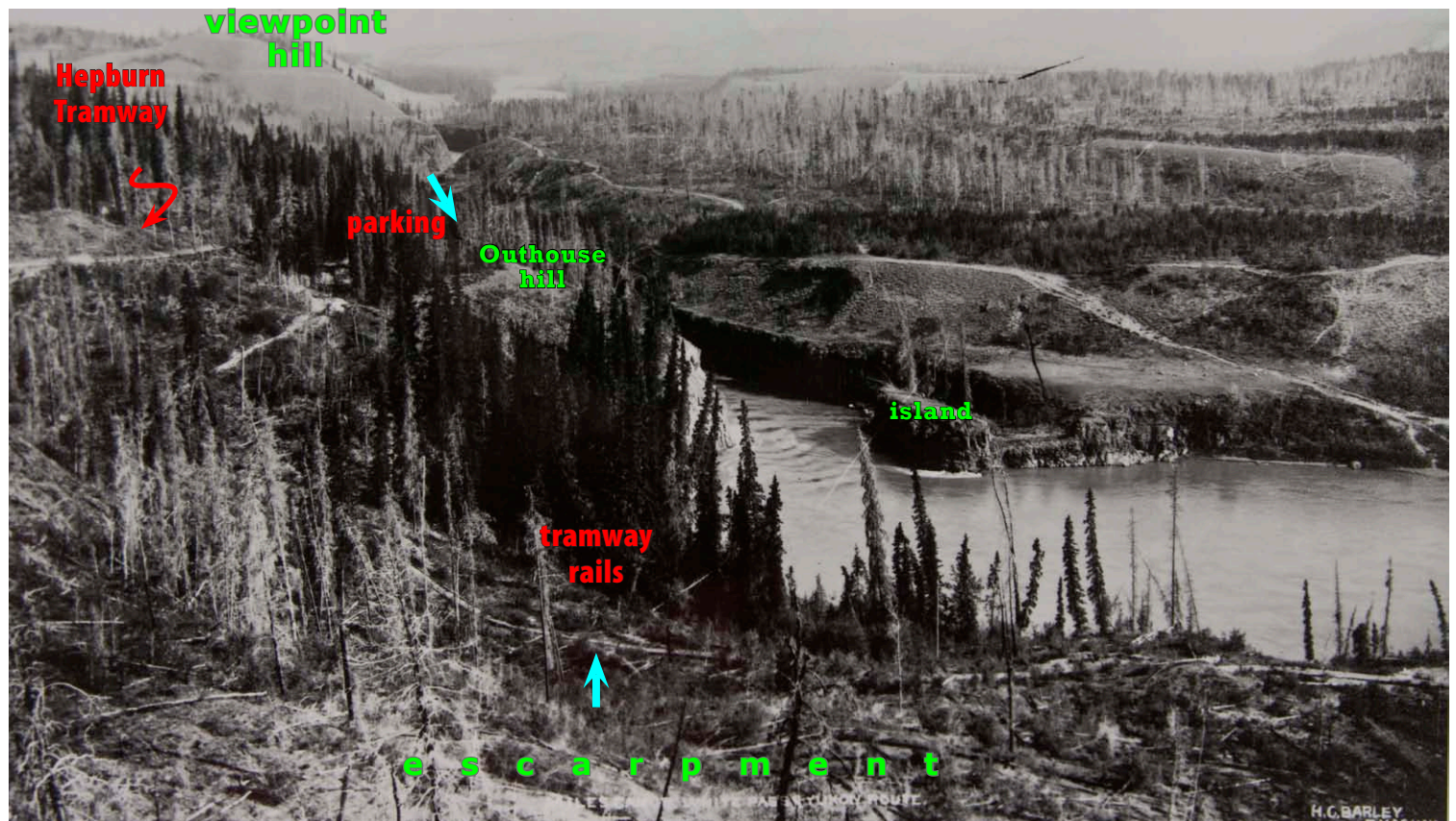
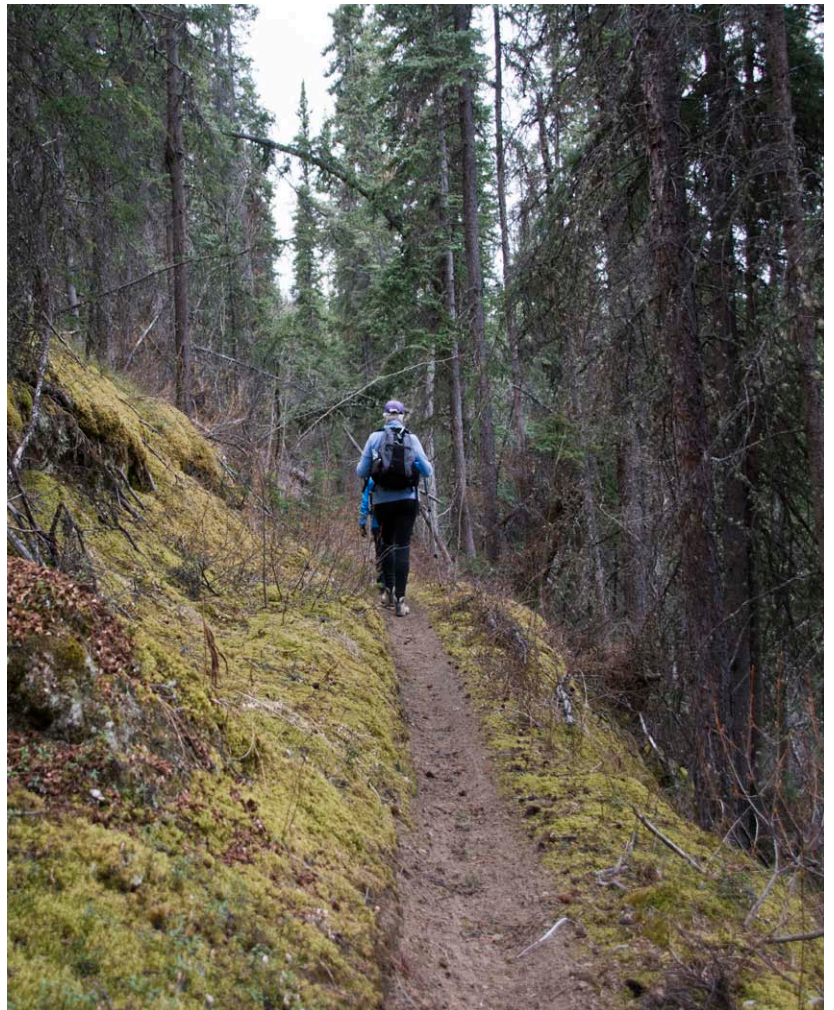
## Descending the escarpment

As you walk down, note the steep side of the escarpment dropping below the tramway; the original builders did a good job of taming the slope.

Coming down is a pretty easy until the tramway gets much narrower, eventually being blocked by downed trees. At the flagging, it's easier to descend to the trail just below.

Looking down in the photo below, we see a trail down by the river, coming from the Miles Canyon parking area. Was this a second landing for the tramway, a last chance for people who may have missed the upper landings to bring their goods up to the main tramway....similar to a railway wye? The photo shows logs defining a trail.

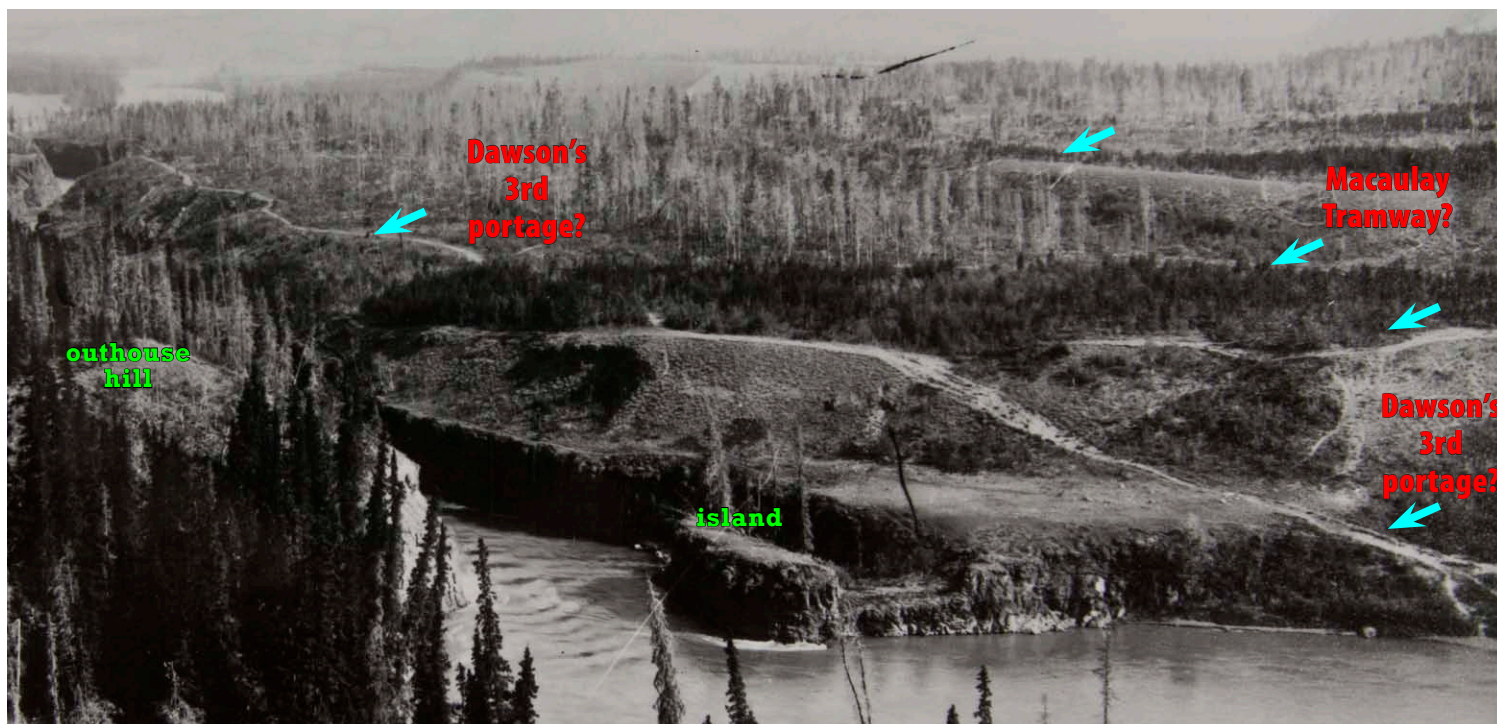
This would have been the last spot on the western side of the river before the canyon and rapids.



Middle: Descending to the canyon, Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com

Bottom: Entrance to Miles Canyon; tramways are visible on both sides of the river, June 1900. Yukon Archives. H.C. Barley Fonds, #4831





To Miles Canyon



## Historic portages

The top photo (crop of bottom photo on previous page) focuses on the east-side of the river. The caption mentions tramways on both sides, however, the many tracks present lots of questions.

*"Most prospectors portaged around these barriers following the traditional native portage trails. Dawson (1889) in 1887 and Schwatka (1893) in 1883 document windlasses and log roll-ways set up along this section of the river by prospectors to aid in the portage of their boats and cargo.*

*"Dawson (1889), who was travelling upriver, reported three portages between the start of the White Horse Rapids and the*

*end of Miles Canyon. The first portage was on the west bank of the Yukon River enabling travellers to avoid the White Horse Rapids. Approximately 1.2km above the Rapids was another short portage of 40m. The third portage, which avoids Miles Canyon, was located on the east bank of the river before entering the Canyon. A windlass was set up at this point to haul boats for portage up the steep basalt banks."*

It looks like Tappen Adney's 1887 portage photo showing stampedeers was taken at Dawson's 3rd portage. But what about the other tracks? Were they part of traditional First Nation trails?

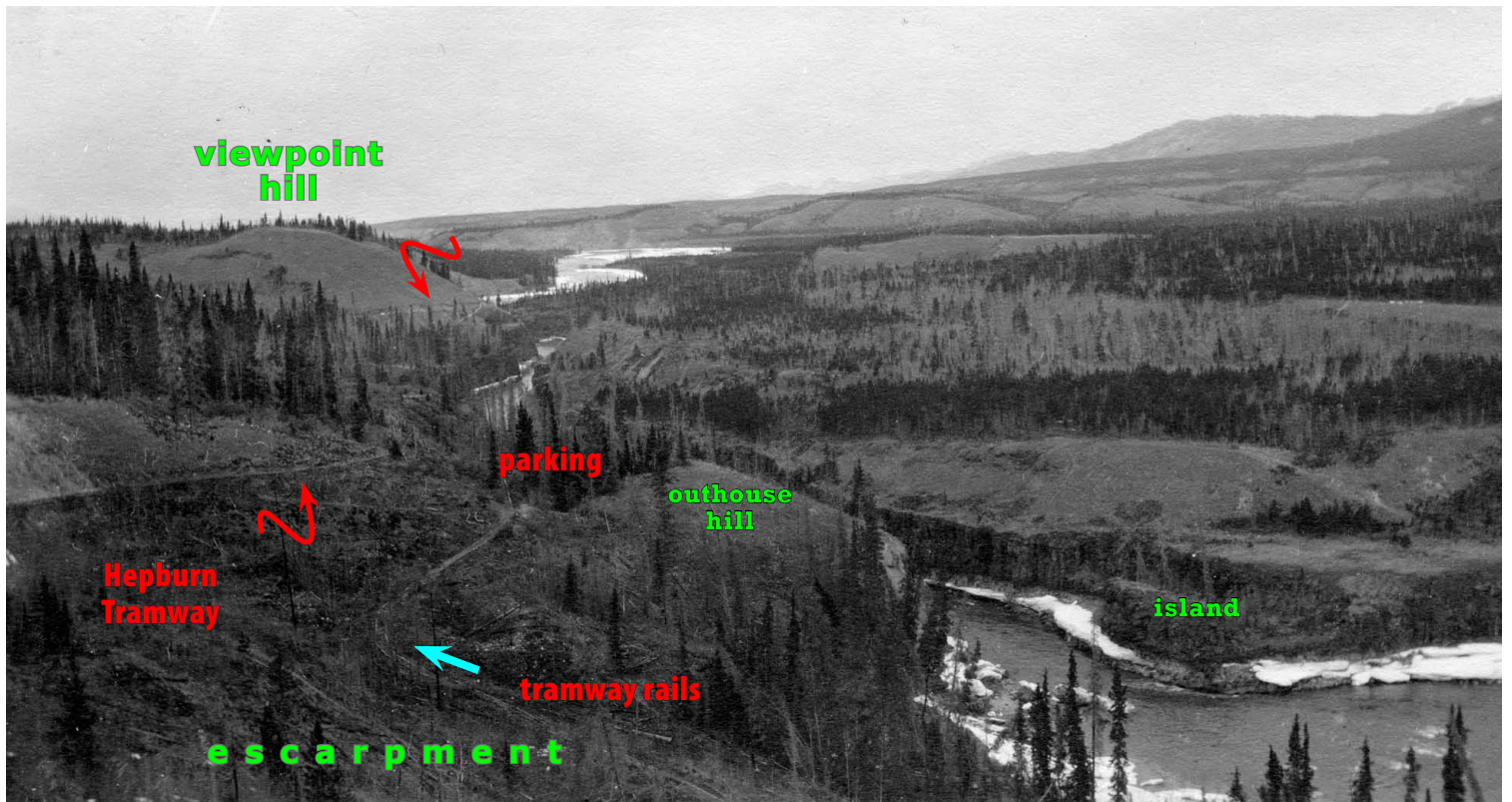
**Top:** Entrance to Miles Canyon; tramways are visible on both sides of the river, June 1900. Yukon Archives. H.C. Barley Fonds, #4831, cropped

**Bottom, l:** At the head of the canyon, 2016. Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com

**Bottom, r:** Portage at head of the canyon, 1897. The Klondike Stampede, by Tappen Adney. Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1900. (archive.org)

**Quote:** On the periphery of the Klondike Gold Rush: Canyon City, an archaeological perspective. T.J. Hammer. Yukon Tourism, Heritage Branch





### Coming down into Miles Canyon

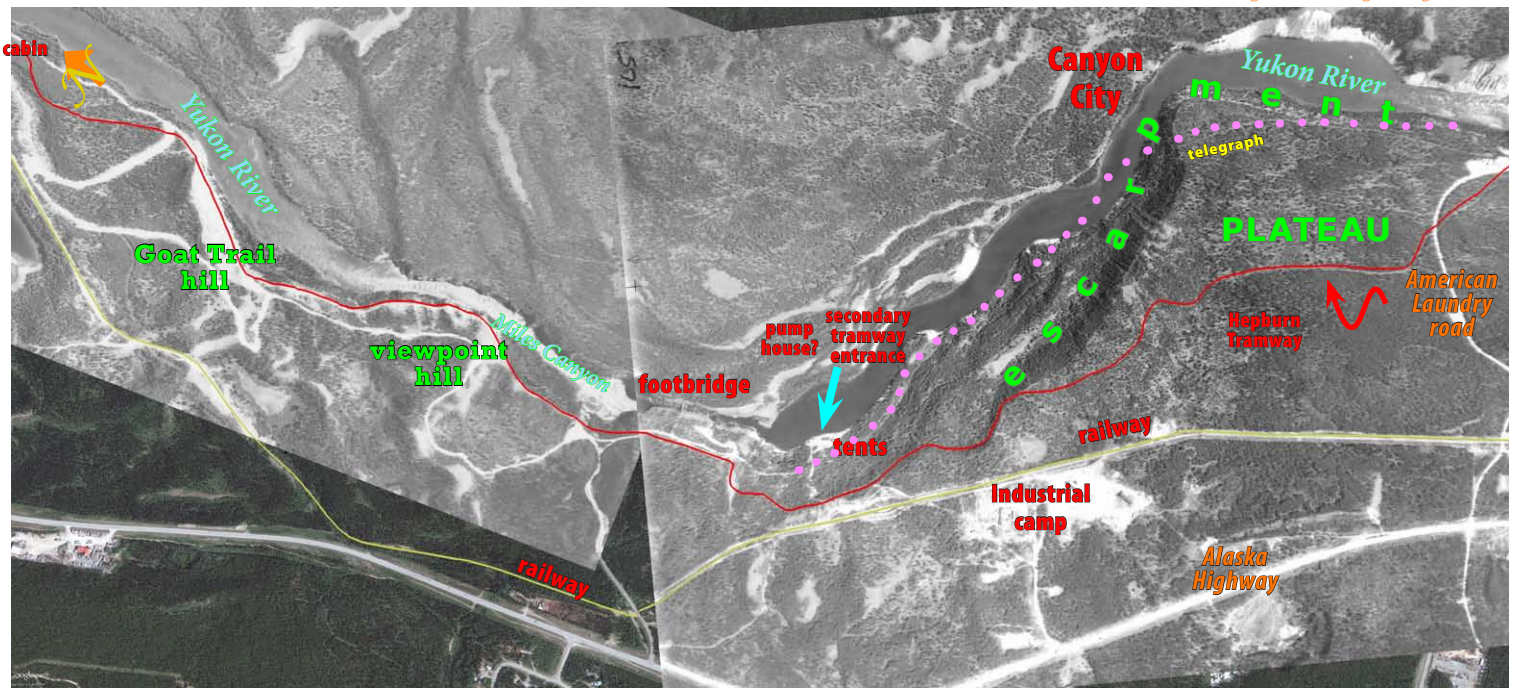
The top photo was taken years later, the tramway rails still in place but in disarray. The portage opposite is no longer used; the trees are much larger. The elegance of the almost horizontal grade coming into the Miles Canyon is what I hope we restore.

The problem section (last 300 m) can still be mostly followed as a narrow road edged into the hill, full of trees, coming into the road just above the outhouses. A temporary entrance to the tramway can be used.



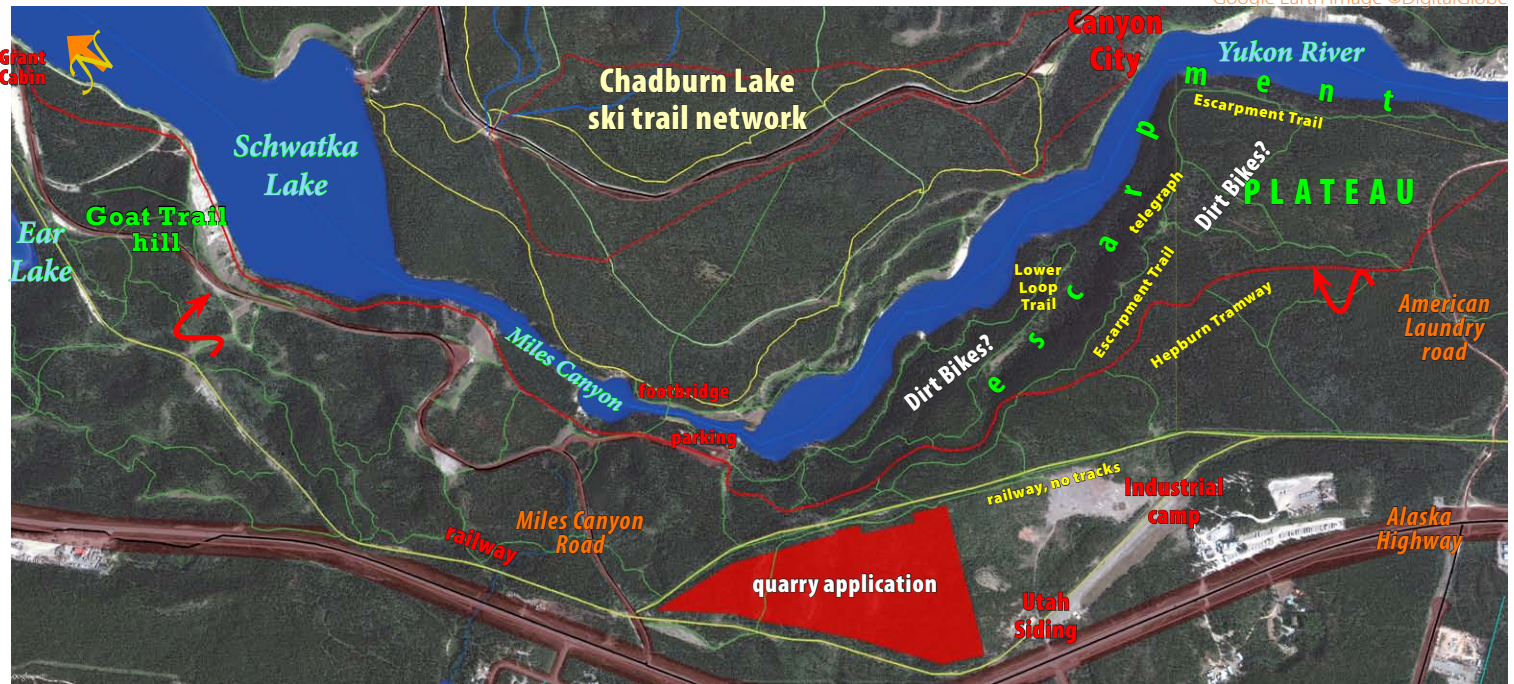
**Top:** Looking towards today's Miles Canyon parking lot, Hepburn Tramway at left. MacBride Museum of Yukon History Coll., 1989-6-1-86  
**Bottom 2:** Tramway route is all but hidden. Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com, 2016





To Miles Canyon

Google Earth image ©DigitalGlobe



## Decades of change at Miles Canyon

The 1950 air photo (top) helps show changes in the area. It makes it easier to understand things on the next pages. The tramway is really a story of different industrial activities over many decades.

There's a slope in many photos that reflects change. The cover photo shows the slope as burnt forest with the tramway as a clear slash. Sometimes, the slash of the tramway is a shadowy line through trees.

Right from the beginning when the railway built over the top of the slope, the tramway was changing. Even today, there's a request to build a quarry just behind the headwall of the slope.

In some photos the lower slope is empty, then there's a framed structure, tents, trails, roads and later what looks like a pump house. Trees grow up and the tramway again disappears from the slope, as it is today. Much of the tramway was affected by the automobile and its roads. One of today's threat is dirt bikes.

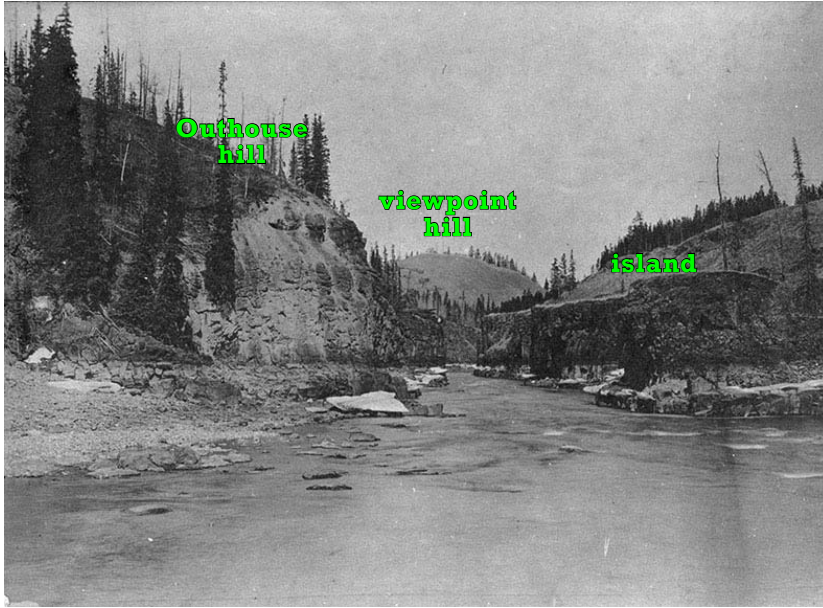
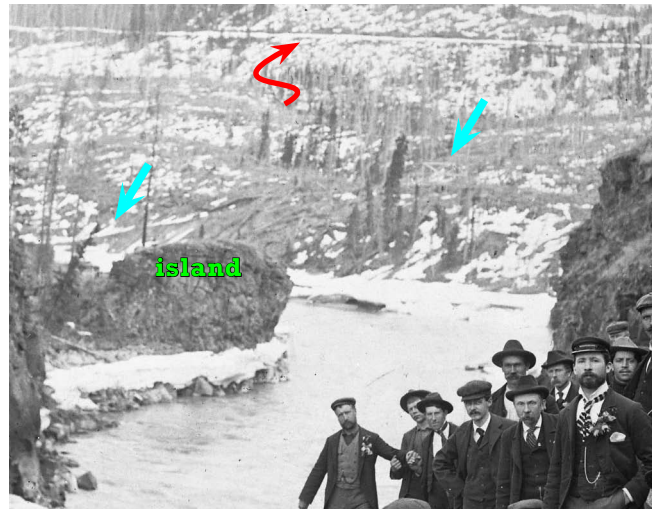
**Top:** © Department of Natural Resources Canada. All Rights reserved. A12788-91&100, 1950. Overlaid with trails in Google Earth

**Bottom:** Some of the many trails on both sides of the canyon. In Google Earth.



## A second tramway landing before the canyon

The canyon, top left, really shows the changeable water levels. In close crops of photos from p. 7 and p. 23 is a tent frame, then just an empty slope; both show a road heading left, down to the water. At one point there's a large tent on the slope (bottom photo). Was this part of the second landing mentioned earlier? What's on the lower part of the escarpment slope becomes one way to date photos.



Top: Looking down into the canyon, May 13. 1908. Ogilvie, W. / Library and Archives Canada / PA-102050

Bottom: Barge going through the white water in the canyon. J.J. McJury, photographer. 1898. Yukon Archives, C.J. Scoins collection # 1662



## Miles Canyon

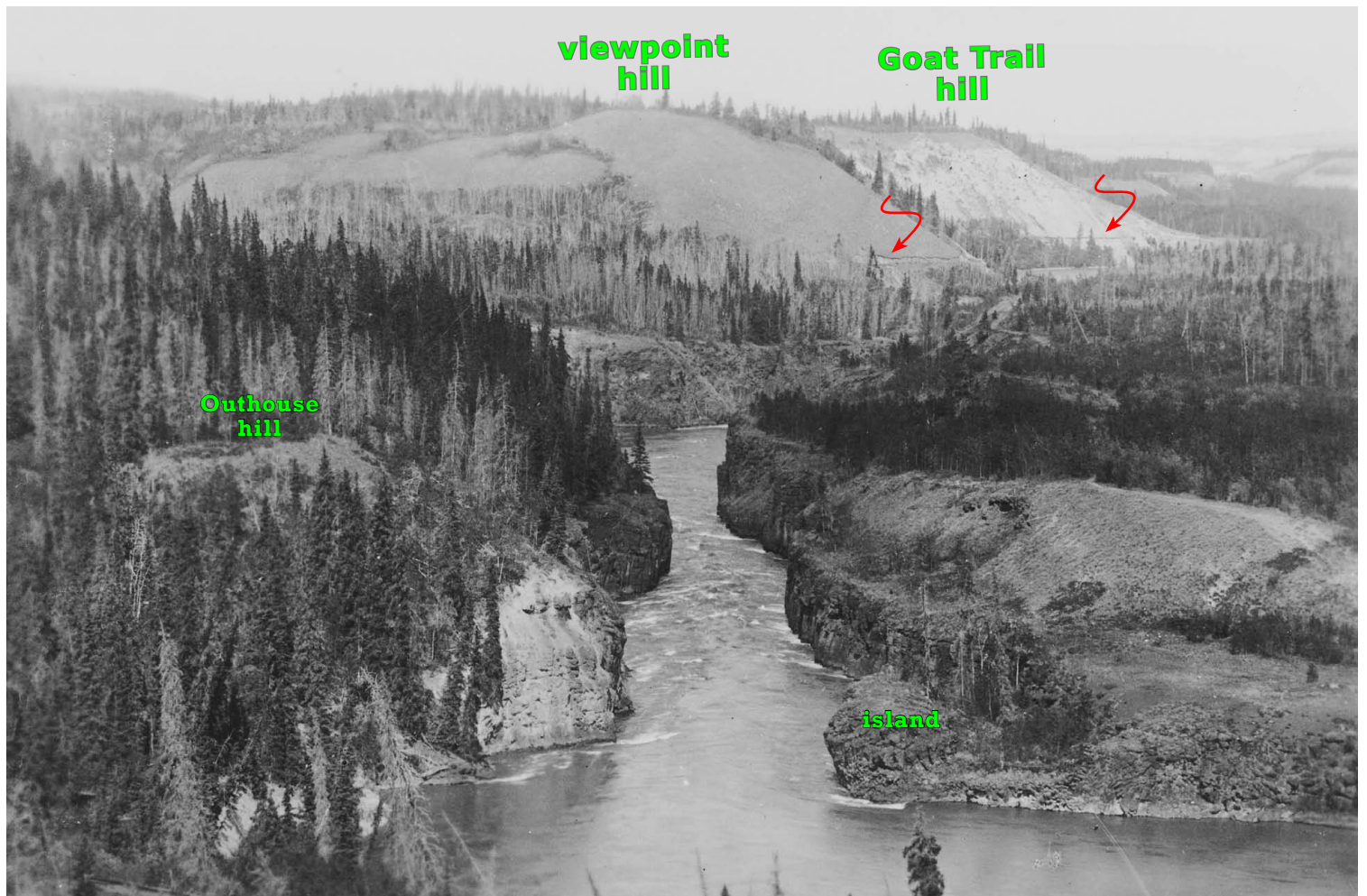
Heading downstream, we will follow the river as it enters the canyon. There are still tramway sections we can visit. Up on the hill behind the steamboat is probably where the bottom photo was taken from.

Note the river — sometimes tame, sometimes rough.

Compare the basalt columns then with the canyon today.

Time of year, water flow and the dam are the players here.

The tramway was important in the early use of Miles Canyon for recreation. Some came by rail, some on foot.



**Top:** Steamer Clifford Sifton Shooting Miles Canyon, City of Vancouver Archives, Out p-800

**Bottom:** Miles Canyon at low water, spring 1899. Yukon Archives, Emil Forrest fonds (80/60) #7





## Early use of the canyon

The lower photo was taken at just below where the group in the top photo are perched.

*"Today was Mr. Hamacher's 'Camera Picnic' and it was a real success," Puckett wrote on July 25, 1907. "All of us, clutching our cameras and our lunches, boarded the train and rode out to Miles Canyon.*

*"Once there we climbed and explored and took pictures and posed and ate lunch and finally, sunburnt and more than a little grubby, caught the afternoon train back."*

After at least three volcanic events, layers allow comparing heights. Water levels fluctuate but the dashed line gives a sense effect of the dam on water levels.



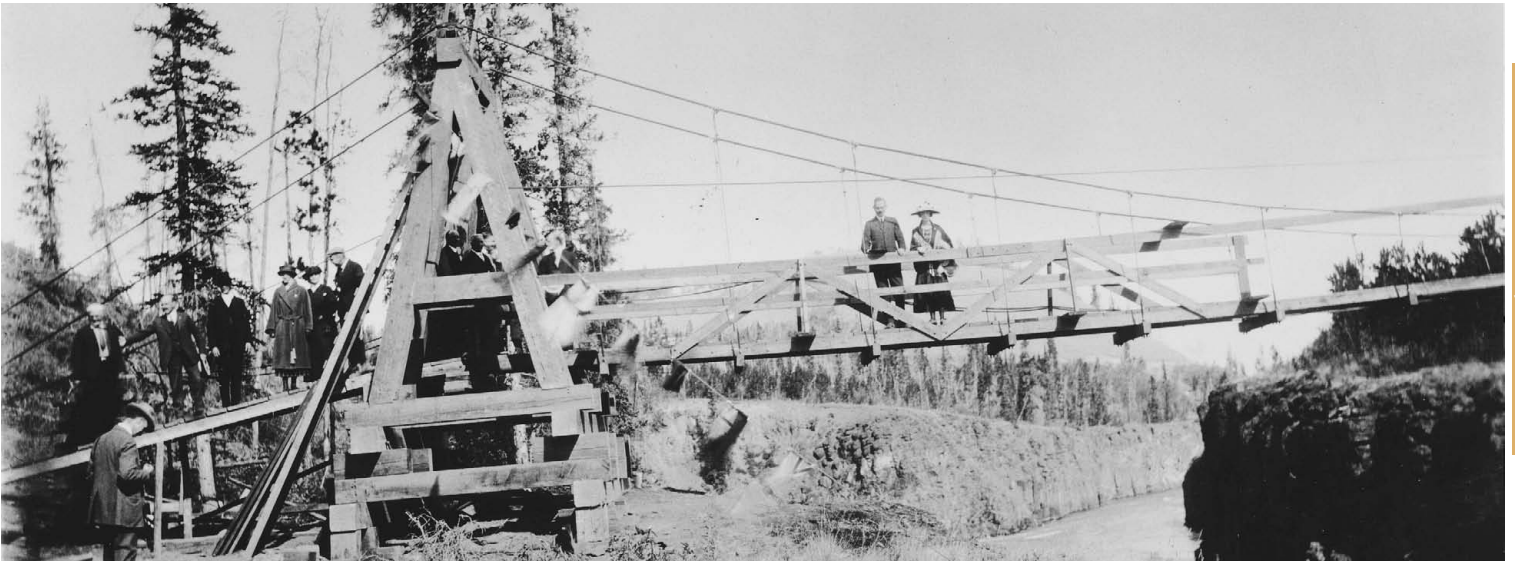
**Top:** Basalt cliffs made a great backdrop. Yukon Archives. E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen collection), 2002/118 #1103

**Bottom:** Hamacher had a Kodak dealership. Yukon Archives. E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen collection), 2002/118 #408

**Quote:** Yukon News, August 20, 2008. MacBride Museum's Sourdough Stories.

**Inset:** Water level near trailhead kiosk, July 16, 2016. Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com





Miles Canyon

## 1922, first bridge over the Yukon River

Reflecting the canyon's importance to locals, the 1922, 26-metre-long Robert E. Lowe suspension bridge was the first to span the Yukon River. The spectacular cliffs still get used as backdrops today.

*While the footbridge is closed this fall, could we redo the stairs from the parking lot to the canyon, making it much more accessible.*

*Also, the Yukon River Trail Marathon descends to the footbridge on a steep, slippery rocky trail that should be looked at for long-term sustainability and safety.*



**Top:** Wedding, , August 18, 2007. Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com

**Middle:** Lord and Lady Byng at dedication of Robert E. Lowe bridge, 1922. Yukon Archives, Bud and Jean (Connolly) Harbottle fonds, #6127

**Bottom:** Blue Moon hike, 2014. Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com



## Obscuring the tramway: industry and time

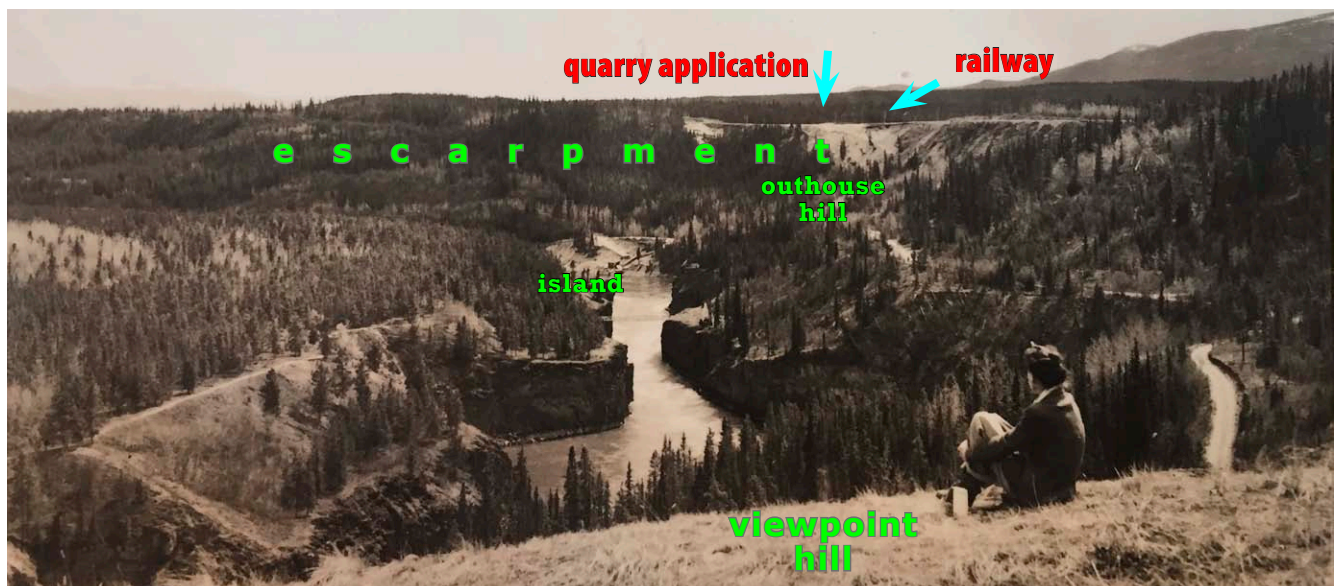
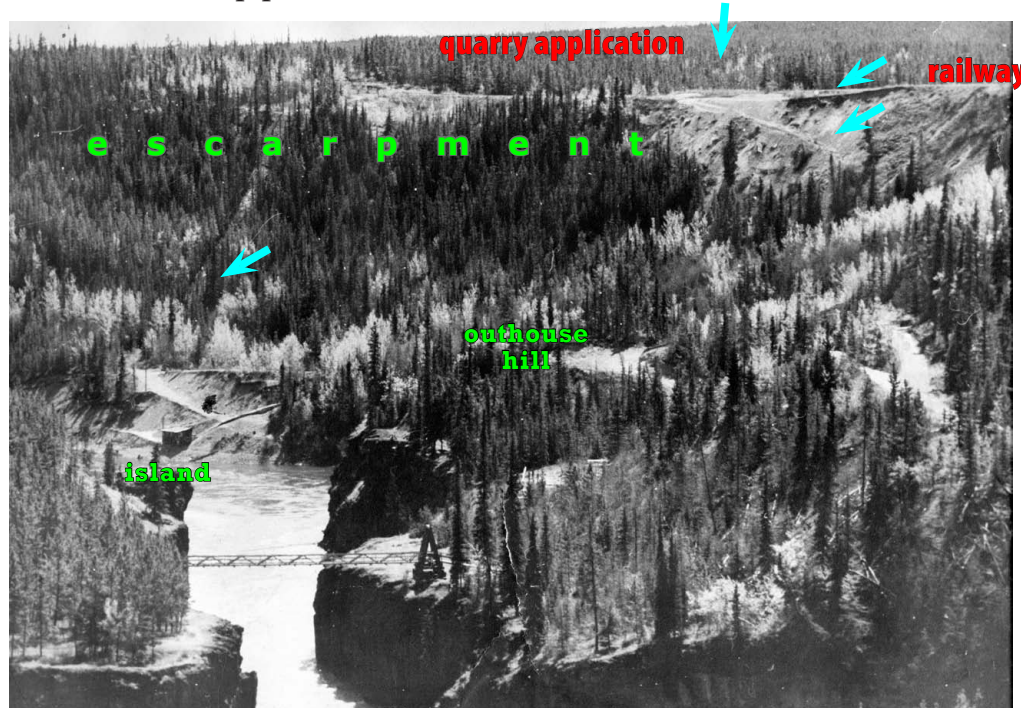
Events on the slope help date photos. Over time the growing forest better hid the tramway route. These two photos show disturbances above the section of tramway coming into Miles Canyon. In 1898-99, the railway bed was built at the top of the slope; a later roadway descended from it.

Looking the second tramway landing, later photos show what looks like substantial side hill cuts and clearing of bush (most likely done by heavy equipment), and structures looking like a pumphouse and with an enclosed pipeline. Was

this for the camp that used to be near today's Utah Siding? There is a straight line feature going up the steep hillside on the left of the photo — a large diameter water line?

Slides from these projects covered part of the tramway trail, causing its narrowing and subsequent loss of favour as a horse route for the riding stable. In a couple of places, trees and shrubs have grown right in the tramway bed such as here at Miles Canyon, even better hiding the tramway.

Note: today's shoreline and ramps down to the water reflect higher water levels resulting from the dam.



Top: Looking into the area where the road goes. MacBride Museum of Yukon History Coll, 1989-4-92

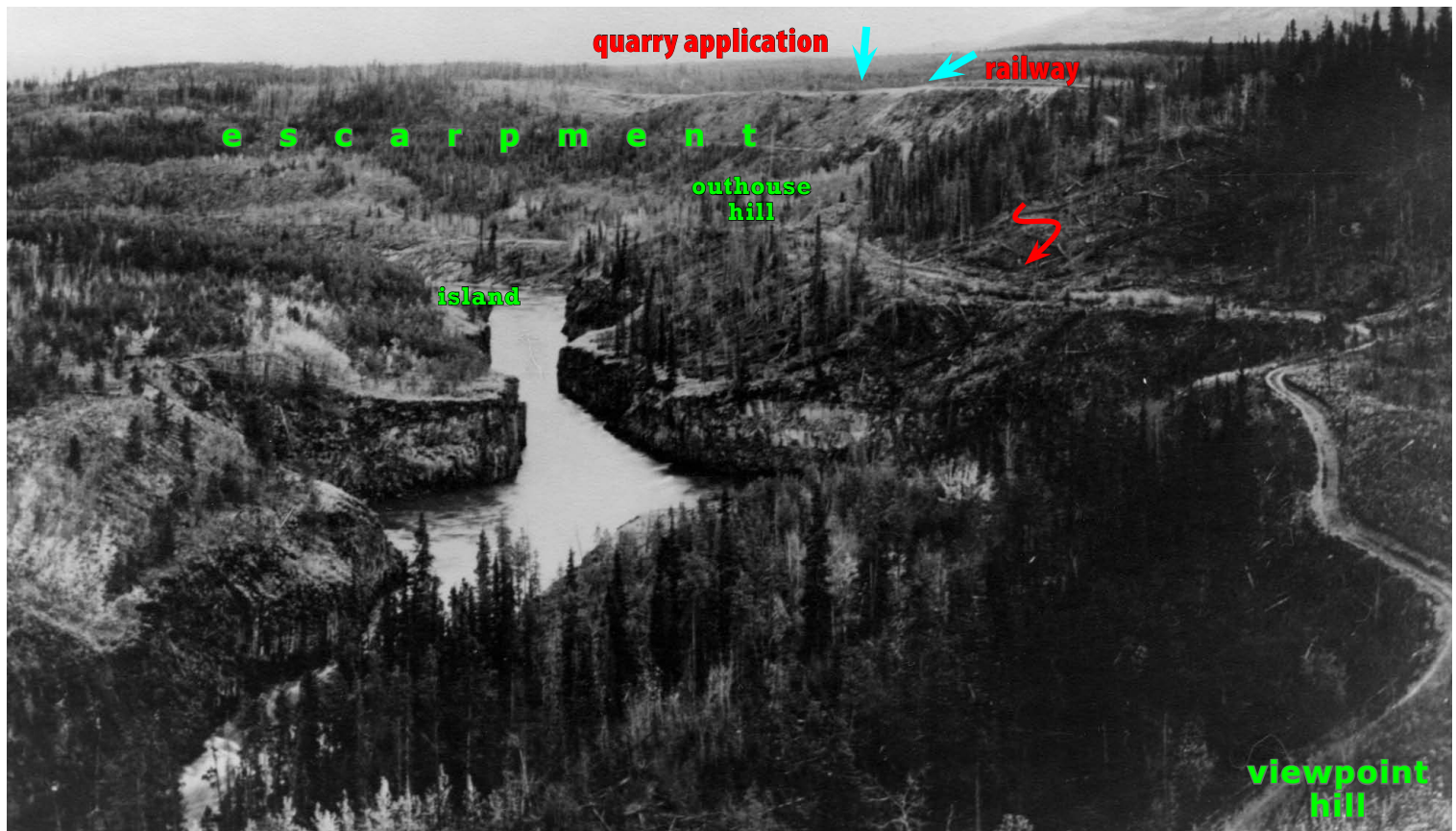
Bottom: Mary Tidd looking out over the canyon from the viewpoint. Yukon Archives, Claude and Mary Tidd fonds, #8291



## Passing through the canyon

The beauty of the canyon has been a draw for a long time. The abandoned tramway was one way of getting to the canyon from town. Remember that this is before the Robert Campbell Bridge was built.

The railway bed is visible in the top photo, without the descending roadway; the tramway is not obscured by trees; it's a double track in the foreground; there's no structures at the lower landing — putting the date as before the 2 pictures on the previous page.



to Robert Service Campground

Top: Looking into Miles Canyon from today's viewpoint on road. MacBride Museum of Yukon History Coll., 1989-4-90.

Bottom: Looking into the exit from Miles Canyon from the top of goat trail hill. MacBride Museum of Yukon History Coll., 2008-22-160



## A new road

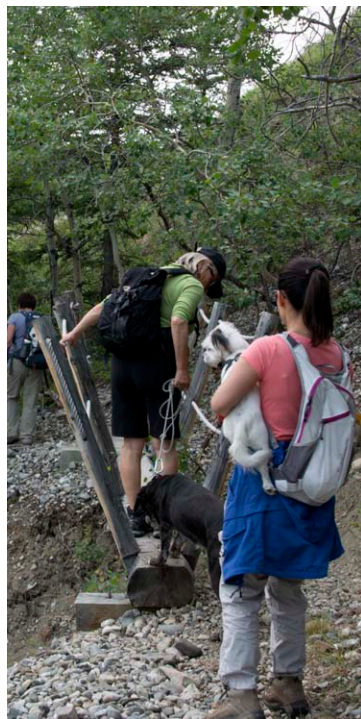
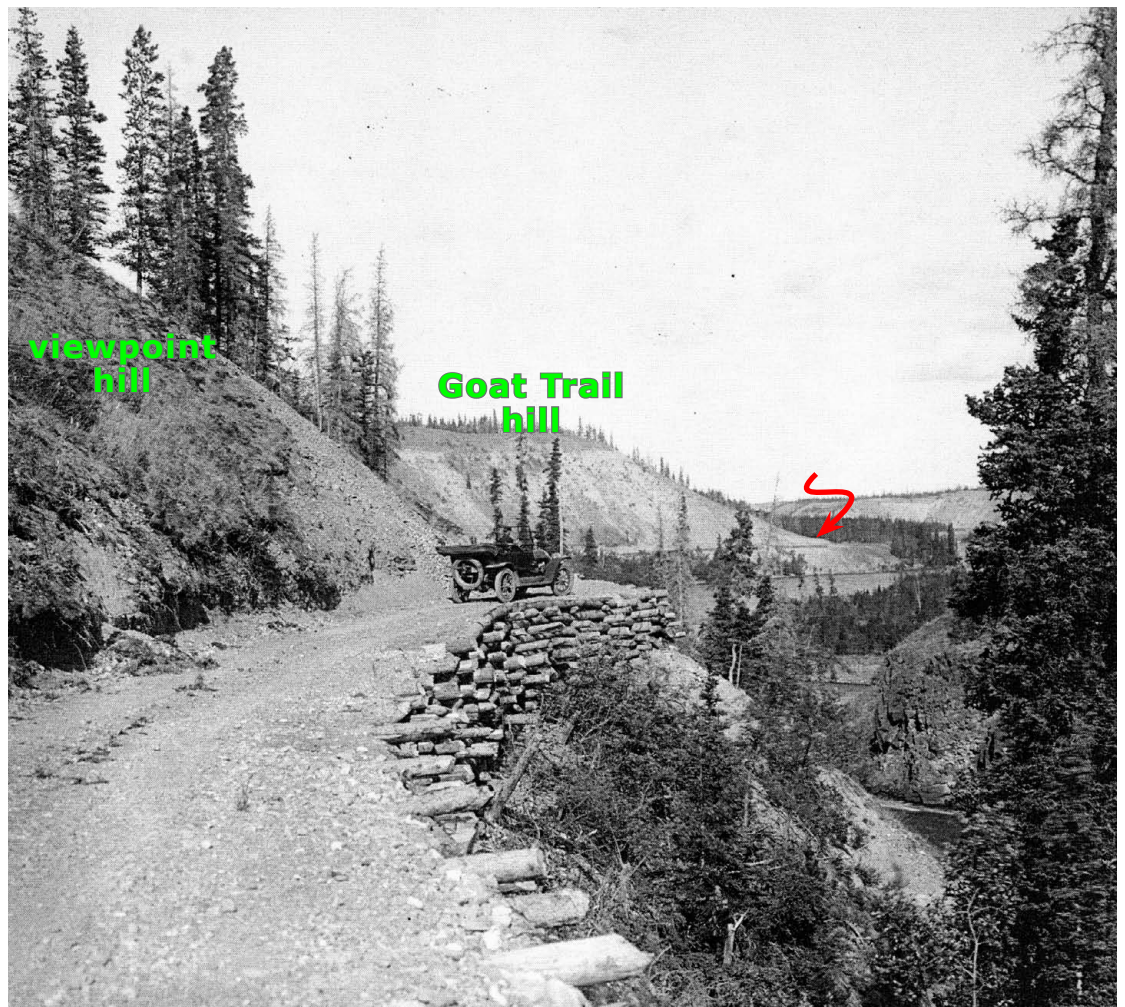
*Whitehorse Star:*

*grading done on proposed new scenic automobile road between Whitehorse and Miles Canyon, will follow the route of the old tramway in places (Oct. 13, 1916)*

*rock blasting crews started work on the Miles Canyon boulevard (May 4, 1917)*

*Supt Cash made the trip by auto from Whitehorse to Miles Canyon in 40 minutes (July 6, 1917)*

A fortuitous vehicle route in earlier days, it will be proven unsustainable. In places, today's tramway trail is reduced to a narrow footpath, at one point even requiring a small footbridge; in others it's needed rerouting.



**Side:** Small footbridge, Peter Long, [whitehorseWalks.com](http://whitehorseWalks.com)

**Top:** Leaving canyon over log-cribbed road. Yukon Archives. E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen collection), 2002/118 #1016

**Bottom:** Using a log base for road at canyon. Yukon Archives. E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen collection), 2002/118 #1014



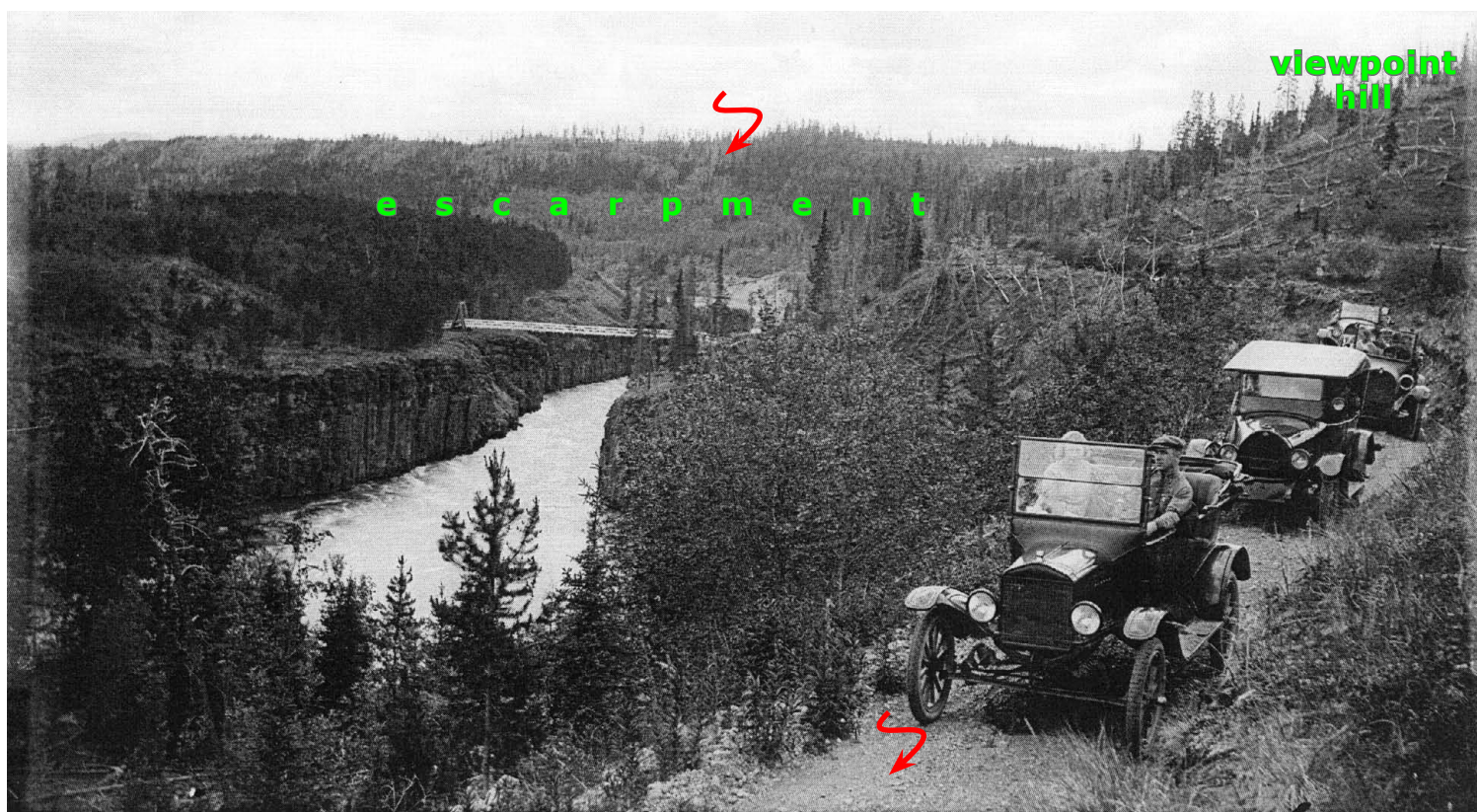


### Early Miles Canyon Boulevard

Apparently, people would get together and go for drives out to the canyon. It would be interesting to find out how long the road over the tramway lasted.

Was it moved because of failure of the cribbing, or because they wanted a wider road?

Note that in the lower photo, the tramway is almost hidden by the growth on the escarpment slope.



Top: Coming to Miles Canyon, ca. 1925. Yukon Archives. E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen collection), 2002/118 #269

Bottom: Leaving Miles Canyon, ca. 1925. Yukon Archives. E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen collection), 2002/118 #268

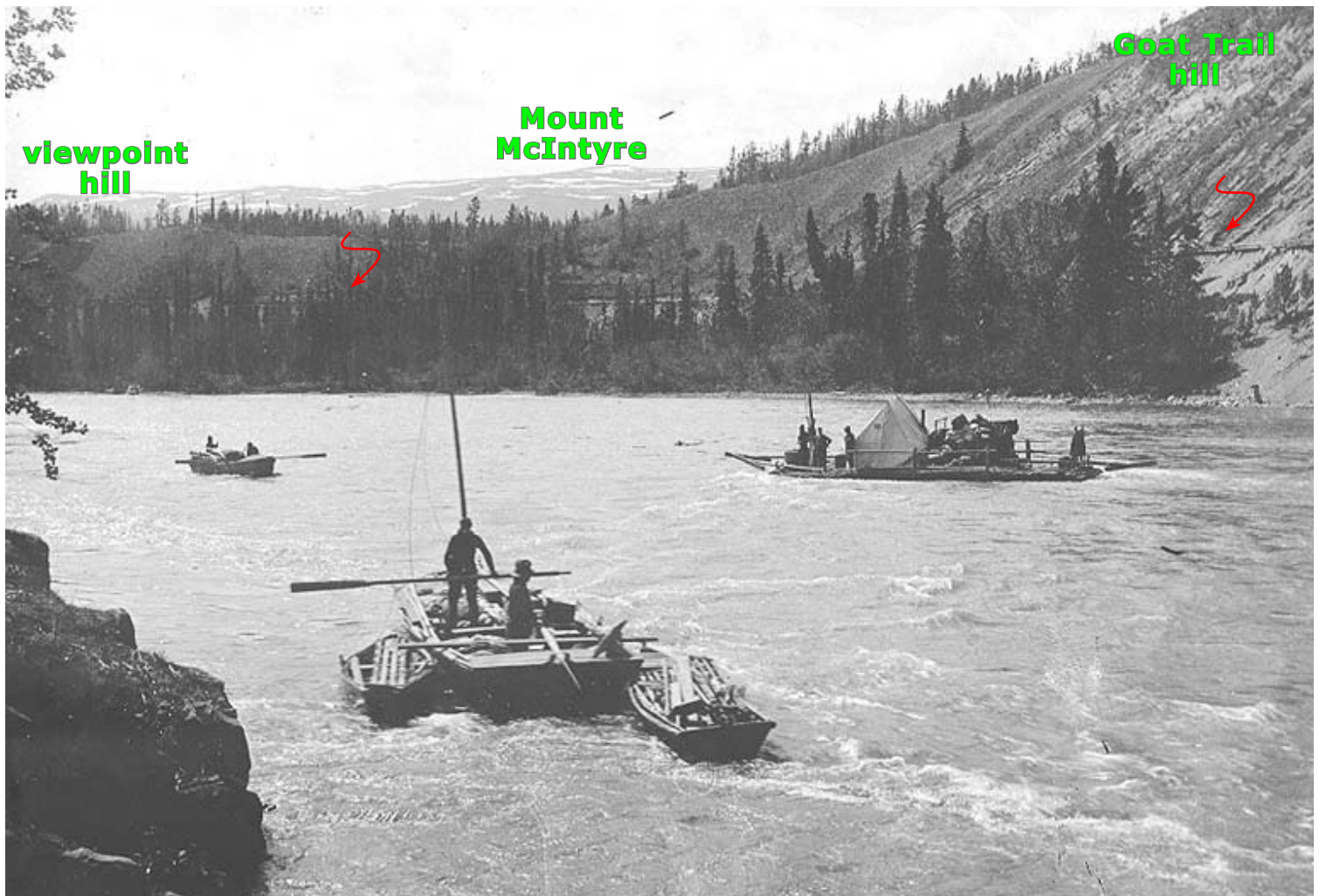




### Below the canyon: Squaw Rapids.

The 1899 photo above shows the small steamer *Olive May*, roped to shore in obvious distress and grounded in the Yukon River below Miles

Canyon. It also shows the tramway (red arrow). The tramway appears as a level, well-engineered side hill cut elevated along the west bank. The lower photo shows what looks like a side railing.



Top: Yukon Archives. E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen collection), 2002/118 #930

Bottom: Squaw Rapids between Miles Canyon and White Horse Rapids, 1898, E.A. Hegg. Univ. of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Hegg 2159B





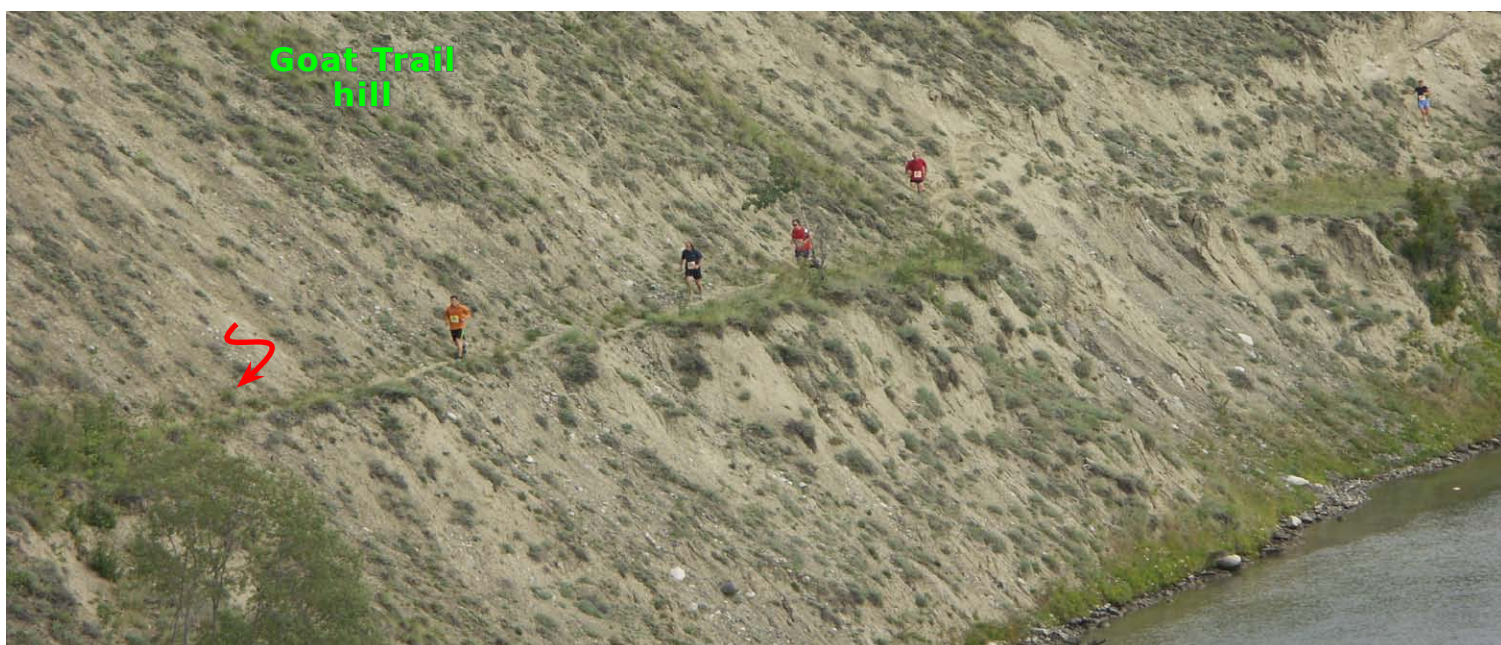
### From tramway to roadway to Goat Trail

The top photo shows one reason why this section of tramway didn't survive! The weight of the road and cribbing, the weight of vehicles and the construction process to build the road doomed this route.

The Goat Trail traversed the exposed, steep clay banks, following the route of the tramway above Schwatzka Lake. The Yukon River Trail Marathon

now bypasses the Goat Trail using a new City trail, called "Tramway Trail", that goes away from the river, eventually crossing over the top of the hill — the abandoned tramway is again abandoned!

Doing a good restoration here is critical; stabilizing the bank above through plantings will be important. This will ensure there's a walkable grade for the entire 8 km of tramway.



**Top:** On today's Goat Trail hill. Yukon Archives. E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen collection), 2002/118 #1010

**Bottom:** Goat Trail. Yukon River Trail Marathon runners on the remnants of the Hepburn Tramway. 2005. Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com



## Between Goat Trail hill and Grant Cabin

Not in as good shape as the tramway upriver; the left photo could have been taken in this area.

**Submission, Schwatka Lake Plan, 2014; Lease Area 6, by Doug Davidge**

The Hepburn Tramway traverses from the steep side hill cut below Miles Canyon across a level forested area towards the Mile Canyon Road and what is known today as the Grant Cabin. This portion of the trail falls within the Draft Schwatka Lake Area Plan's "Lease Area 6". Today one can find a well-concealed but visible raised linear feature running in a straight line through the Lease Area.

The remains of the trail were recently traversed and a number of GPS waypoints were collected as shown below. Along this traverse the remains of what is believed to be the Hepburn Trail are visible in several places.

The linear feature is about 1.0–1.2m wide and has a height ranging from 0.25–0.3m and runs straight for a distance of about 320m. Although the timber rails used to construct the tramway in 1898 have long since rotted away, what remains and is visible at some locations does give a "straight edged" appearance.

Where the Hepburn Trail approaches the present day Miles Canyon Road at the north end of the Lease Area 6, the remnants of the old trail turns to the Northeast and parallels



the road for a short distance (approximately 130m). Here the trail is much harder to detect and eventually is obliterated by the steep side slope fill from the existing roadway.



Google Earth image ©DigitalGlobe

**Top r:** Canada. Dept. of Interior / Library and Archives Canada / PA-044644



(Photos by D. Davidge, 2014)

**Row 1, l:** Looking south where the Hepburn Trail leaves the clay cliffs area at the south end of Lease Area 6.

**Row 1, r:** A view looking north showing the remains of the Hepburn Tramway including a 1m scale bar showing approximate width of the raised linear feature and extent of vegetation cover.

**Row 2, r:** A 2nd example of a visible raised linear feature, approximately 1m in width with evidence of shallow trenches on both sides of the raised trail bed.

**Row 2, r:** A view looking north along the Hepburn Tramway showing how it is completely overgrown.

**Side Column:** Google earth imagery with GPS markers of tramway



## Schwatka Lake: where's the tramway?

Finding the rest of the tramway today is difficult because much happened along today's Schwatka Lake. After the train came to town in 1900, the tramways were abandoned. People continued to use them as can be seen from the well-packed path between the rails in the photo on the right.

With the dam being built in the late 1950s, most of this part of the tramway could be under the waters of Schwatka Lake, or as seen on the next page, under the Miles Canyon Road.

But maybe in spots, the tramway is still be there in the woods, slowly fading to obscurity. More exploration is needed, both walking and perhaps using maps or legal survey documents. It would be nice to find pre-war aerial photos. Early air photos from 1946, 1950, 1952 —pre-dam but post war — show many candidates for the tramway, but these haven't been verified to see which of the many shadowy lines might be Hepburn Tramway.



**Top:** Mother on tram line around rapids. [Mrs. Phelps.]. In today's Robert Service Campground? Yukon Archives, John Scott fonds 89/31 #121  
**Middle:** The British Yukon Mining trading of transportation company, A.B. Lyons, Surveyor, 1899. Yukon Archives, Map R-90.  
**Bottom:** © Department of Natural Resources Canada. All Rights reserved. A12788-99 1950.





### Favorite riverside walk overrun by progress

Photos of people on the tramway show it must have been a nice outing to walk by the river. But the new road helped make the Hepburn Tramway a soon to be forgotten piece of Whitehorse history.

People who grew up here later tell that they used to walk to Miles Canyon, sometimes by road, sometimes by the railway tracks.

A great community walk, a promenade, could be built along the lake, essentially following the original tramway.



**Top:** Walkers. MacBride Museum of Yukon History Coll, 1989-3-1-344

**Middle:** Two women, two kids and a man on tramway above rapids, E.J. Hamacher. MacBride Museum of Yukon History Coll, 1989-4-549

**Bottom, l:** Miles Canyon road and tramway. Yukon Archives. E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen collection), 2002/118 #957

**Bottom, r:** Four cars along river. Yukon Archives. E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen collection), 2002/118 #398



## White Horse Rapids

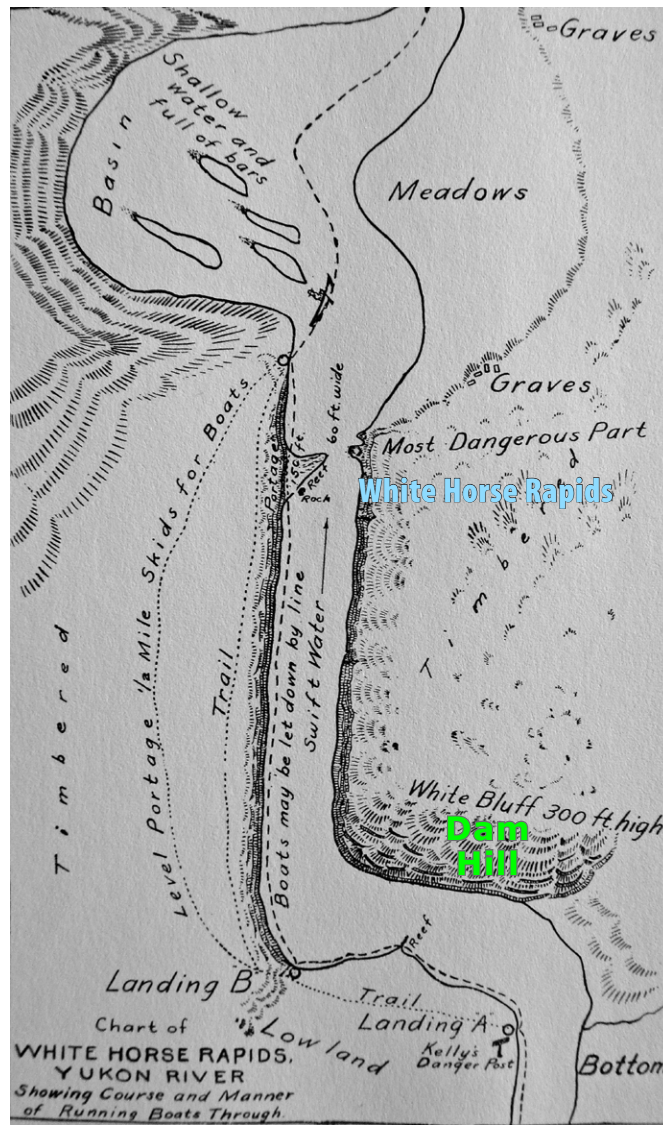
One piece missing from the tramway story was where it ended after the White Horse Rapids.

The 1900 map (r) from Hegg's book, and the 1946 air photo suggest today's Yukon Energy/Robert Service Campground.

There were many First Nations camps along this section of river and one of these, Kwanlin, was at the site of the present-day Robert Service Campground.

The photo below with the far off bluffs look promising to be in the area.

By 1946, nearly 50 years of community and wartime use had hidden the spot.



airport bluffs?

to Robert Service Campground

Top: E. A. Hegg (Illustrator), *Souvenir of Alaska and Yukon Territory*. Skaguay, Alaska; 1900 Yarmouth County Museum and Archives (YMS1 645.2, YCMA)

Right: © Department of Natural Resources Canada. All Rights reserved. A10563-29, 1946

Bottom: Drying goods after a wreck at White Horse Rapids, E.A. Hegg, 1898. Univ. of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Hegg 719a



## A community attraction

It's fun to try to determine locations for some of the river pictures. Today, much of the Tramway along Schwatka Lake is under water, under the dam or lost in the edge of the Robert Service Campground/ Yukon Energy Complex.

Hanging out at the rapids stayed a popular activity. Few tramway photos seem to have been taken really early. Often Hepburn Tramway photos are pieces of distant background scenery.

Looking at the old pictures does allow links between pictures to be made. Good scans and large enlargements can show hidden treats.



Top: MacBride Museum of Yukon History Coll, 2006-27-461

Bottom: Sight-seers and photographers, at what is now the site of Schwatka Lake, eagerly wait for the sternwheeler "Clifford Sifton" to emerge from Miles Canyon, July 24, 1900. Yukon Archives. E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen collection), 2002/118 #410



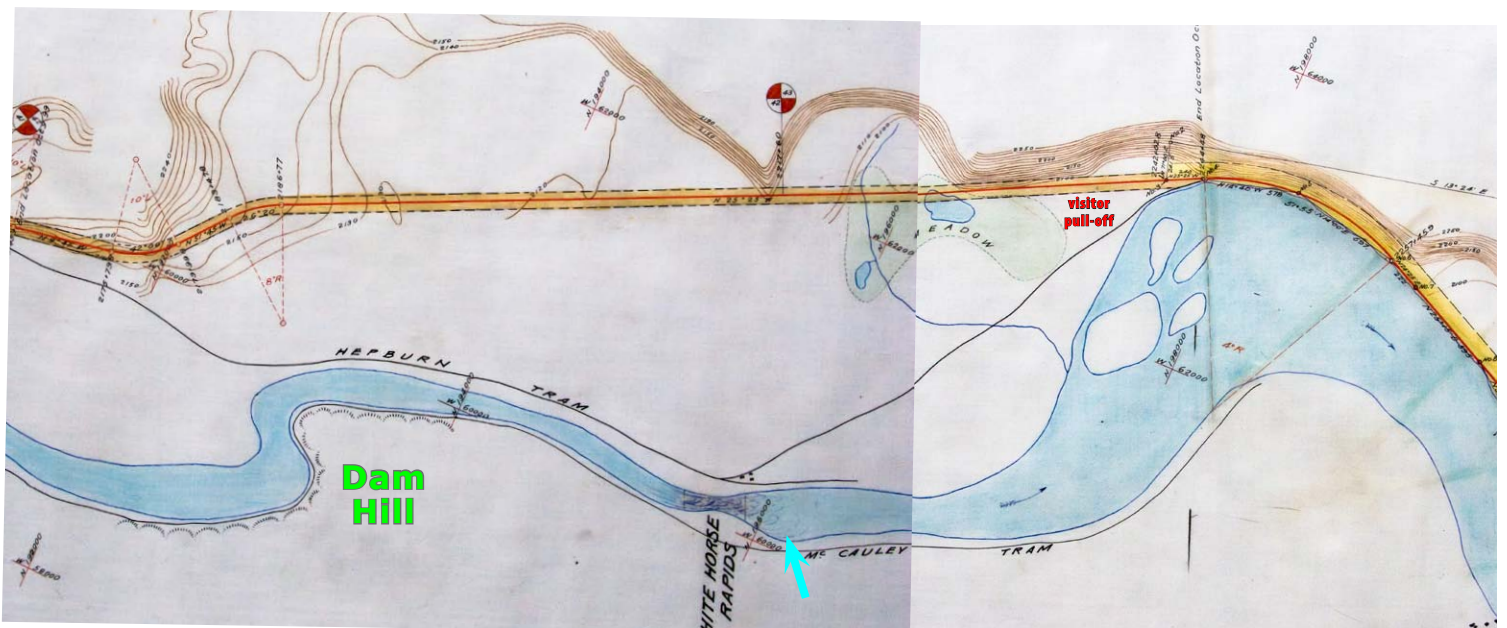


## Pinpointing the landing

In the top photo of the Macaulay tramway, one can see the river, people sitting and watching the goings-on on the river and the other (west) side of the river. There's also cabins, piles of boxes and supplies and what looks like the tramway. The river is very narrow here and, given there seems to be spectators

watching something, this is probably not far below the narrow White Horse Rapids gap (no doubt watching who makes it and who does not).

Below 1899 map suggests a double ending to the tramway, with a few buildings by the rapids landing. The arrow below could be the camera's aim.



**Top:** Macaulay tramway; N.W.M.P. log cabins and stacks of freight on far bank. 1898. Yukon Archives, Eric Hegg fonds, #2583  
**Bottom:** The British Yukon Mining trading of transportation company, A.B. Lyons, Surveyor, 1899. Yukon Archives, Map R-90





airport bluffs



### Another view of the landing

The 1899 map, p.33, shows a landing some 200 m long. It also shows a continuation of the tramway over to near today's visitor pull-off.

*Are there people around who remember early days near today's Robert Service Campground?*

airport bluffs



**Inset:** Hills behind the ball diamonds, Robert Service Way. Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com, 2016

**Top:** Reloading boats. Library and Archives Canada/Yukon News

**Bottom:** Same spot; men, scows, boats, gear on shoreline. Yukon Archives. E.J. Hamacher fonds (Margaret and Rolf Hougen collection), 2002/118 #42





### Backgrounds: another landing photo

In the top photo, the cabins in the background look like the N.W.M.P. cabins referenced by the photo on p. 33, making this yet another photo of the Hepburn Tramway landing. A thorough search will

probably unearth even more photos showing the Hepburn Tramway in the background.

The photo below reminds us of the hoards of people, and all their supplies, on their way to the Klondike who needed the tramways' services.



to Robert Service Campground

**Top:** First landing after rapids; tents, cabins on far west bank. 1898. Yukon Archives, University of Alaska Archives photograph collection, #3128

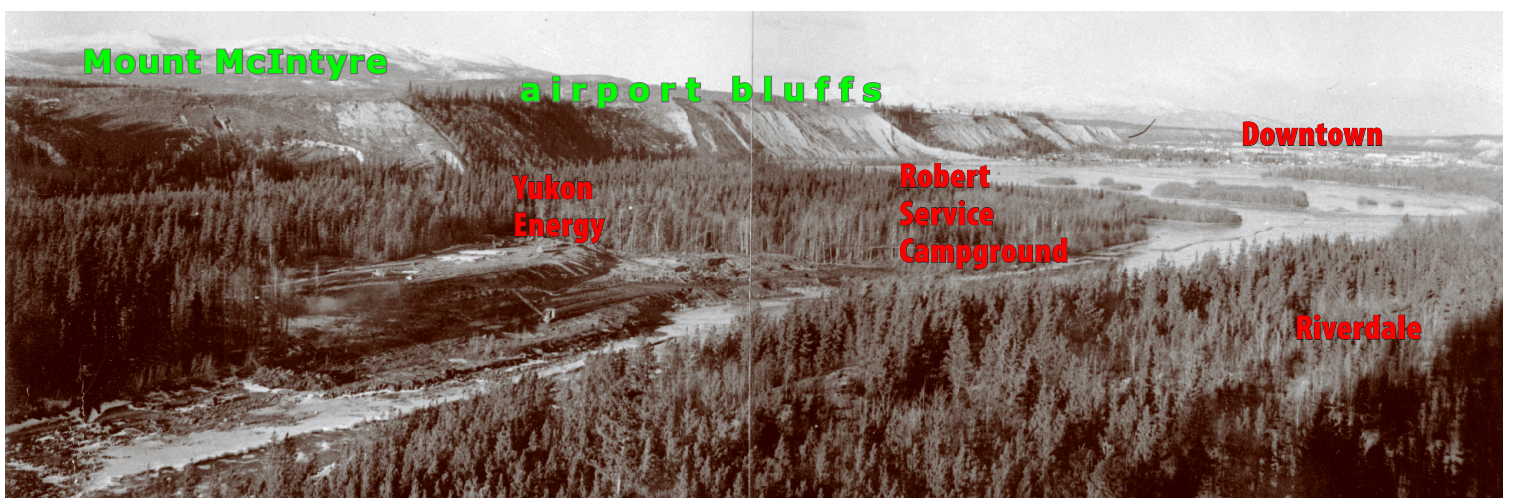
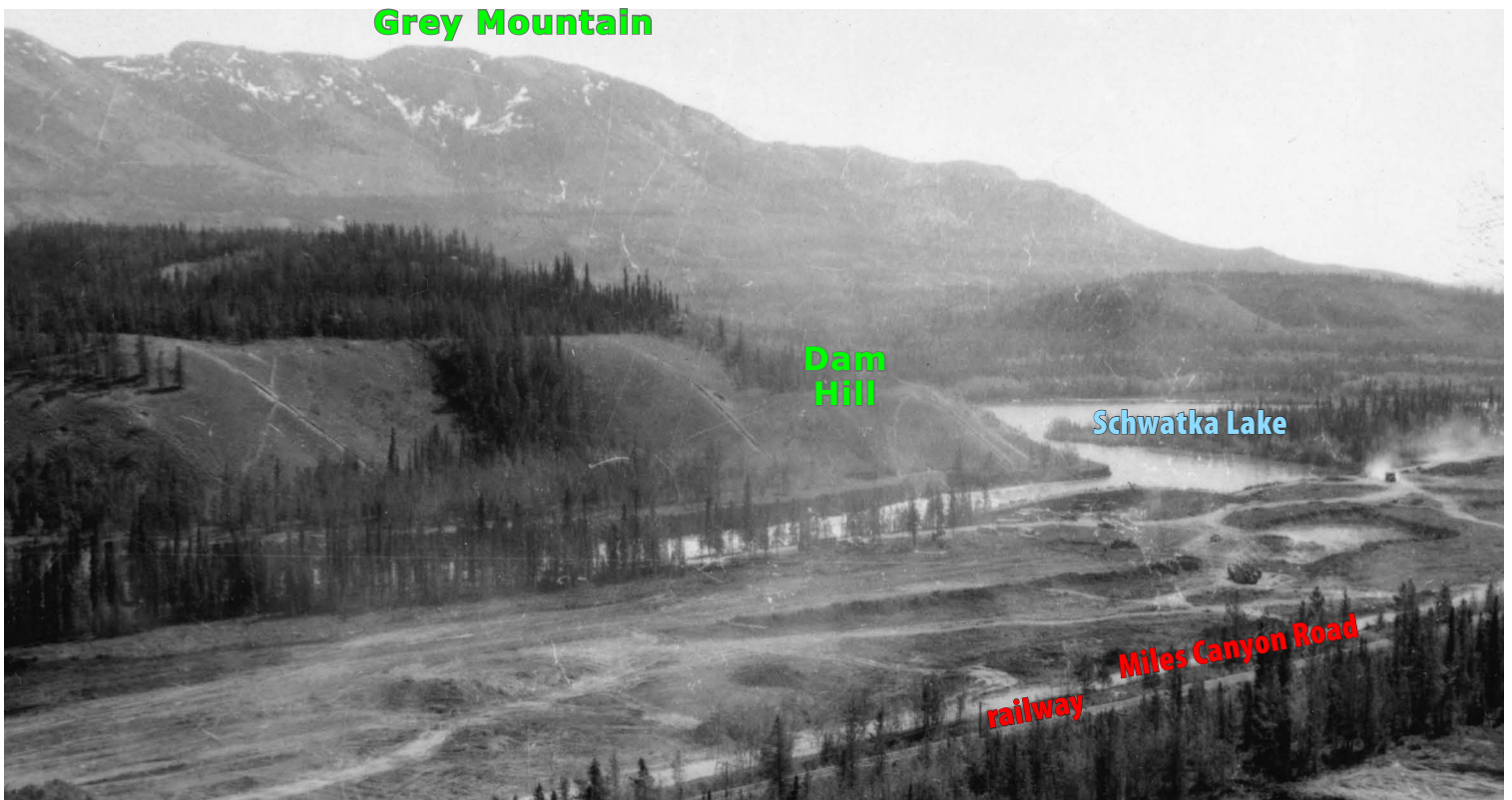
**Bottom:** A fully loaded scow heading for the Klondike, 1900. City of Vancouver Archives, Out N781



## Building the dam, taming the rapids

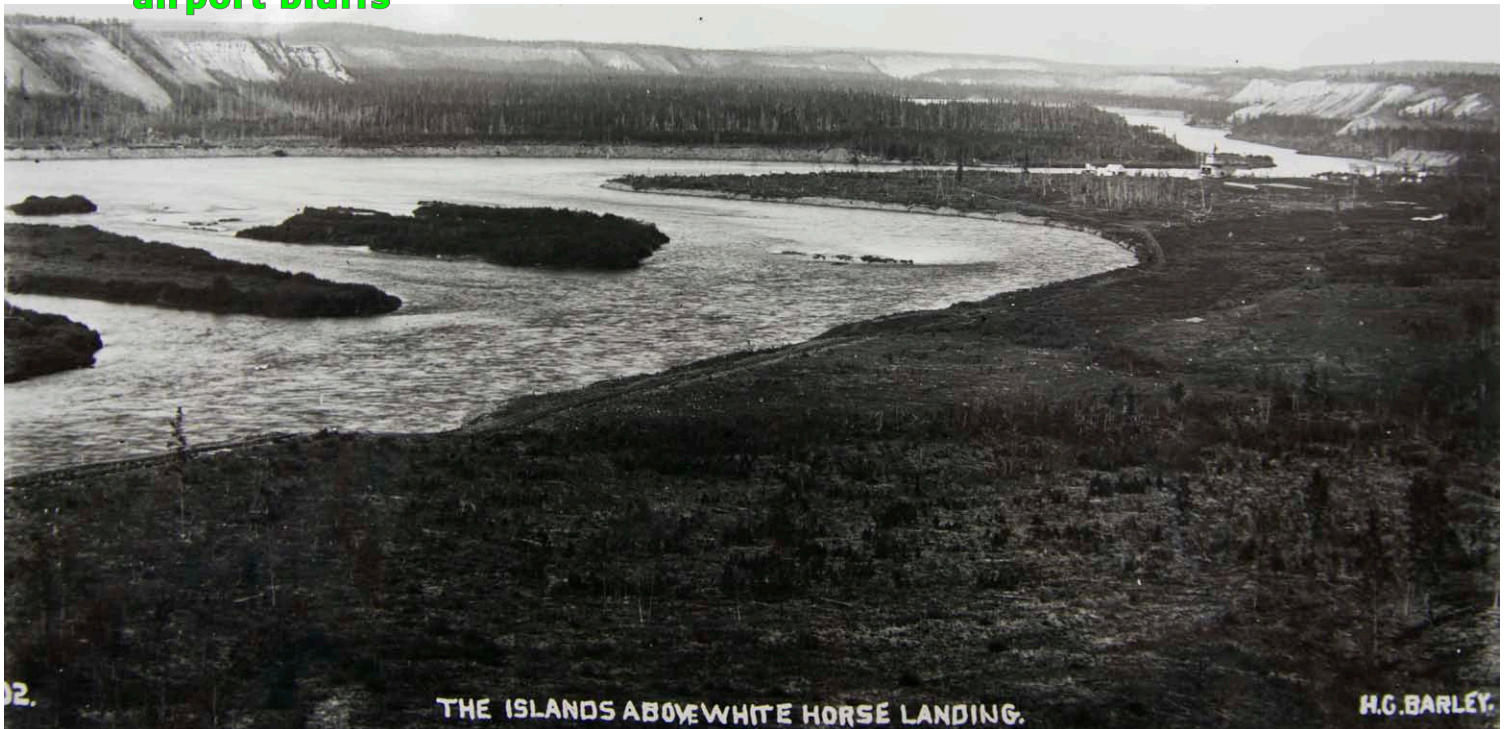
Photos from the early stage of building the hydro dam at White Horse Rapids show one of the last looks at where both tramways came through the area.

There's an opportunity for some oral history work to talk with people who lived in Whitehorse in the pre-war and pre-dam days to tell some stories, show some photos.



1957: Three views showing the fate of the Hepburn as it arrived at White Horse Rapids. Courtesy Yukon Energy.





## Today's Millennium Trail was once a gold rush thoroughfare

by Michael Gates, History Hunter, Yukon News, September 4, 2015

*Time and technology have blurred the remains of the old tram line. Some of it now lies at the bottom of Schwatka Lake. Road and dam construction has obliterated some of it. The decaying rails that I witnessed in 1977 are now gone, having rotted into the forest floor.*

*The next time you walk along the Millennium Trail .... remind yourself that .... you are walking on the remains of the old track bed.*

<http://www.yukon-news.com/letters-opinions/todays-millennium-trail-was-once-a-gold-rush-thoroughfare/>

I hope that showing Macaulay tramway photos results in a Macaulay map, and like the Hepburn Tramway, a Macaulay Tramway walk. We could even make a Two Tramways loop, connecting through Miles Canyon and using the Millennium Trail.



**Top:** The islands above White Horse Landing. A sternwheeler is docked at the landing which is composed of a few tents and log buildings. The Macaulay Tramway follows the river, 1899. Yukon Archives. H.C. Barley Fonds, #5534

**Bottom:** Martha Louise Black(l) and other members of the IODE. MacBride Museum of Yukon History Coll, 1989-4-427





## Mysteries about the tramway

Where was this photo taken? The ghostly outline of the clay cliff should help, but hasn't. And what about contradictory stories about timing of tramways and which opened first?

One Miles Canyon viewpoint sign says, *"After Macaulay was established, John Hepburn built a competing tramway along the route of an old portage trail on the opposite riverbank."*

A number of accounts talk about the tramway being windlass powered. Maps show the tramway with incorrect routes. It has a very curious history.

**Gleaned from articles in the Victoria Daily Colonist:**

**November 28, 1897:** Hepburn pilots a party through White Horse Rapids. The boat capsized, but Mounted Police stationed there pulled them out of the icy water. One member of the party, Frank Anthony of Seattle, drowns, and the entire outfit is lost.

**December 10, 1897:** Hepburn reports that he had the right-of-way

blasted, the roadbed graded, and ties laid for the tramway between the Whitehorse Rapids and Miles Canyon, a distance of three miles (4.8 km). He was back in the British Columbia capital to purchase horses, wheels and axles for tram carts, which would be constructed using local material once he returned to the Yukon.

**May 19, 1898:** Correspondent E.C. Howe reports that "...Macaulay's tramway at White Horse Rapids will not be completed in time to be opened for transportation this season, but that the Hepburn tramway is now completed and will prove a great convenience to Dawson bound pilgrims."

**July 10, 1898:** Article asserts that Hepburn was the first to build and operate a tramway around the rapids.

**On the periphery of the Klondike Gold Rush – Canyon City, an archaeological perspective, by Thomas J. Hammer:** From all accounts it is clear that Macaulay's tramway company...was in operation by the spring of 1898....

:While Macaulay built and completed his tramline, John Hepburn struggled to finish construction of a second tramline located on the west bank 1 km upriver from Macaulay's, which he began in 1897. It was not completed until after November of 1898 (Wood 1898a: 38) and probably was not open for business until the spring of 1899.

**Top:** Shows the tramway in good shape and likely still in use by walkers. Univ. of Washington Libraries. Special Collections, UW17881



## Other trails

There are a number of spots along the west side of the river where the old telegraph wire is visible; viewpoint panels about the wire and the maintenance work to keep it running would be interesting at a couple of spots. Is this the same telegraph system mentioned in the Canyon City stories?

*As early as May of 1901, a line running east from Fort Egbert had connected with the Canadian telegraph running from Dawson to Whitehorse to Skagway. From there, a message sent from Interior Alaska could go to Seattle by steamer, be sent on by telegraph, and reach Washington, D.C., within four days of origination. When the Canadians completed their line between Atlin and Quesnel, British Columbia, in September of 1901, a message from Alaska could go by wire all the way to Washington.*

<http://www.akhistorycourse.org/americas-territory/alaskas-heritage/chapter-4-13-communications>

What were the lines along the railway tracks on the telephone poles (right photo)?

Where was the Macaulay Tramway route where it's under Schwatka Lake?

Other trails are the oil pipeline route that mostly followed the railway tracks. We hear stories about the Canol pipeline. Did these use the same pipeline route?

Why did WP&YR move the tracks to the highway?

Various accounts talk about the river travel, the places where portages were used to get around various rapids. Likely stories differed depending on when the authors went through, water levels...



Top: Telegraph wire, Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com, 2016

Bottom: Poles and wires along railway, Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com, 2016





Trail maintenance needs a lot of community participation; east side of the Yukon River Trail; Peter Long, whitehorseWalks.com

## Whitehorsewalks: a walker's point of view

**W**hitehorseWalks.com is my project to share my love of walking, to make walking better.

I could go on and discuss the importance of walking to health. Hardly a day goes by without walking getting mentioned. We used to walk everywhere, but somehow with the arrival of cars, we seem to be losing the love of walking.

Walking trails in the north are important — some people are fearful about the wilderness, wildlife (bears!) and getting lost. Well-built, attractive, well-interpreted trails can encourage people to be more adventurous, to choose to walk, to get out in nature. One of my projects is to find these walks.

Developing walking trails benefits not only ourselves, but also tourism. Good walking trails will encourage visitors to spend more time here in nature-based fitness activities — a stay-another-day focus.

Ensuring our walking trails are well-marked, and where possible, year-round accessible, is important. Smartphone apps are good, but battery life is not good enough yet, nor does everyone own one. Paper maps are good when all trails are shown.

The system of occasional signposts and trailhead kiosks is not enough; using a medallion-style of

waymarking gives a confidence-building way of ensuring people don't get lost in the maze of trails.

With many trails in back of residences, good signage is critical; public walkways need to be brushed out and obvious, with signage at both ends.

Look at other walking related things on my website such as my Yukon Walking Strategy.

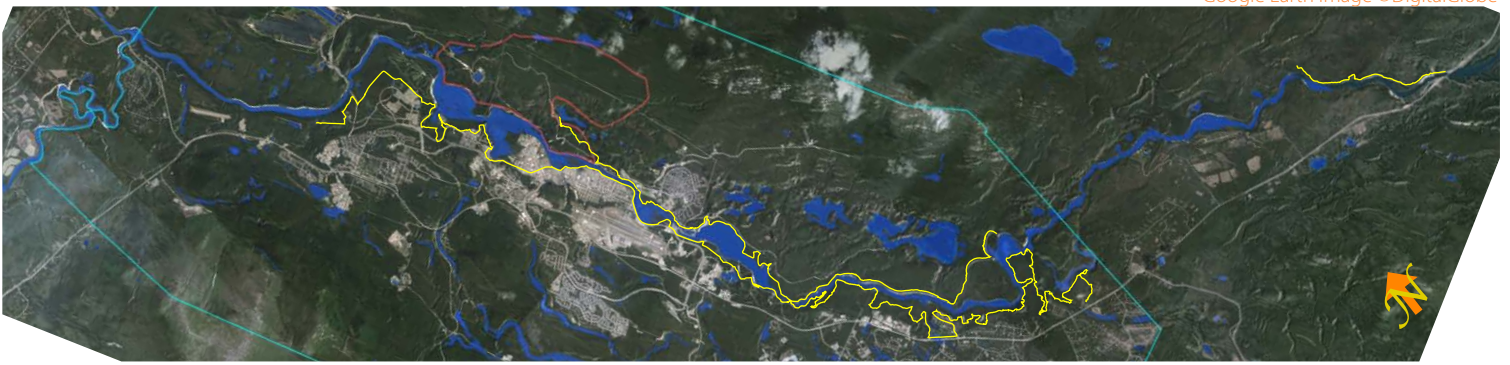
Peter Long, June, 2016

The *Volkssport Federation* is an international organization with members in over 40 countries. It has identified Permanent Trail #283 as a 10-km loop using downtown streets and the Millennium Trail as Whitehorse's sole club-accredited trail. It satisfies its Capital City, Trans Canada Trail, and Murals and Community Programs. Ten kilometres is its minimum trail length.

It further notes "Due to the high cost of travel in the north, walkers are strongly urged to contact the Director or the CVF Office for further information and updates before committing to travel arrangements."

We can offer much better than this to our visitors!





## Yukon River Trail

**K**wanlin Dün elders tell us that the foot trail that follows the Yukon River was the traditional trail from Ta'an Man (Lake Laberge) in the north, to Tàkwädàdà (Marsh Lake) in the south. This is the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

A Yukon River Trail would be well-used and a must-do in people's list of Whitehorse walking trails. Some will do the whole route, but most will do smaller stages.

I see the importance of longer walks and with a group of friends, I've been exploring along the river looking for trails and needed connections.

Reviving this traditional route is a great community project. A starting point is connecting existing pieces of named and unnamed riverside trails and then work getting the route closer to the river (yellow lines on map above). *Lobbying steps* include:

- Choose a very distinctive signage that can be used on signposts along the way. Is there a First Nation name appropriate for this trail?
- Work with First Nations to connect segments.
- Yukon Heritage and the First Nations should protect the Hepburn Tramway and traditional trails around the southwest side of Miles Canyon.
- The Fall 2106 **Whitehorse South Neighbourhood Trail Task Force** can address better trail connections, possibly through tenure negotiations, and certainly by creative trail work.
- The **Urban Containment Boundary North Expansion Study** (red line above) needs to recommend how the trail can stay along the river.

We hiked around the Isle of Man a few years ago. Residents needed economic development. They decided to designate a coastal trail by identifying existing trails, and then connecting the missing pieces — at first taking the trail inland then back to the coast, then by building bridges, switchbacks and by obtaining landowner permissions to move fences. The result, ***Raad ny Foillan***, is 152 km long. We spent 11 days on the island hiking around the coastal trail.

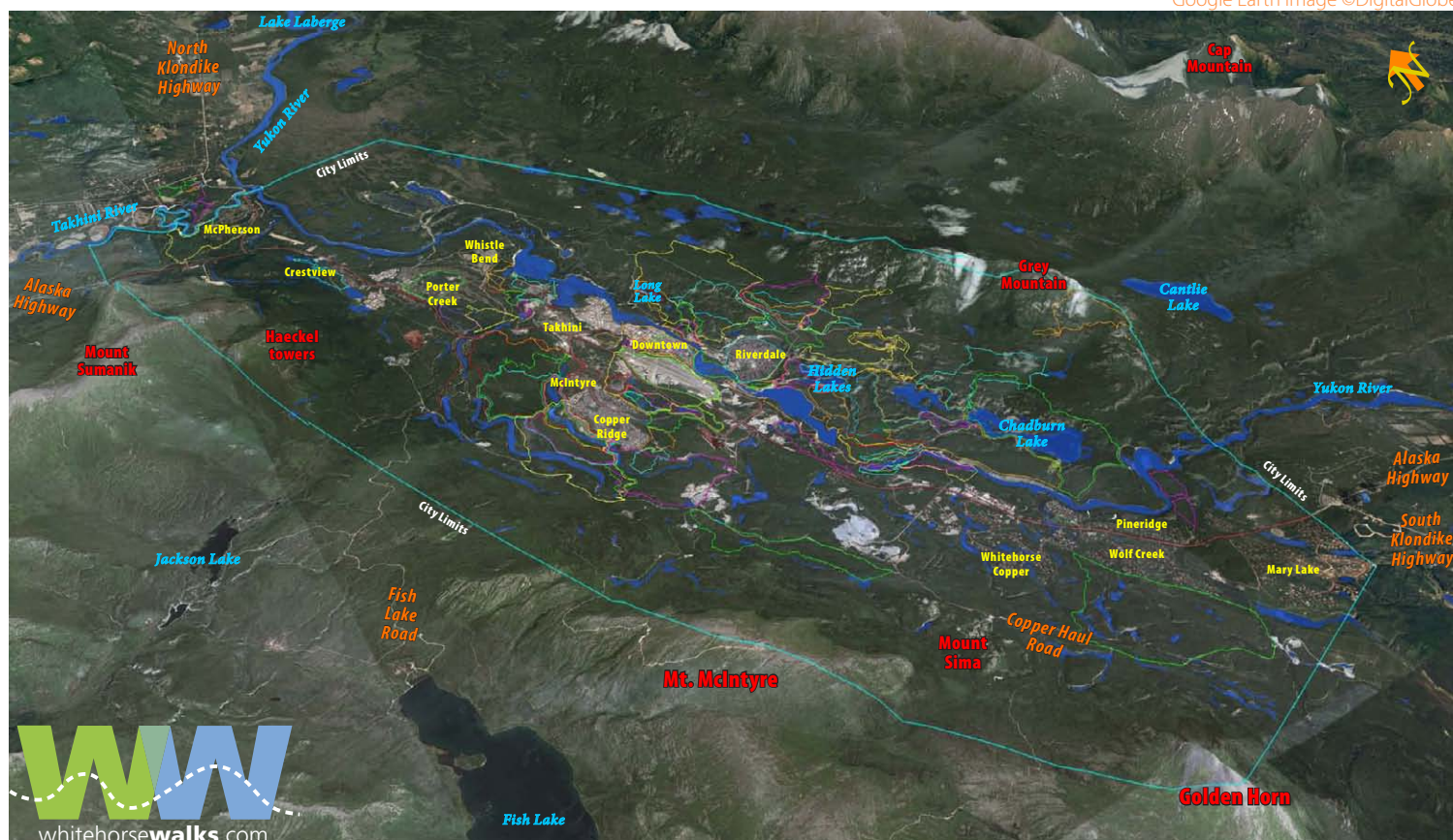


- The **Chadburn Lake Park Planning** process must identify the Yukon River Trail through the park.
- Marwell is both a significant obstruction and interesting wetland/industrial lands opportunity.
- The **Neighbourhood Trail Task Force for Porter Creek and McIntyre Creek** needs to ensure that the Yukon River Trail passes through Range Point, Whistle Bend and Porter Creek.
- A Fall 2016 trail Task Force in the North end of town needs to bring the trail to the city limits.
- The Schwatka Lake Committee needs to build a lakeside trail, a promenade.

A Yukon River Trail loop between the Yukon River and Robert Campbell bridges would be about 100 km.

Walking the individual trail segments, passing through the many different landscapes, will be popular for locals and tourists. You'll truly feel that you are in a 'wilderness city' as you walk high up on the escarpments above the river gazing over impressive valley views, the basalt walls of Miles Canyon, Grey Mountain; the walk along Wolf Creek is exceptional. Interpretive opportunities abound.





## Loop walking trails

As part of whitehorsewalks, I've been identifying attractive walks, loop walks (I've over 80 so far), by looking at different parts of the city for walks/hikes.

This is not meant to be a definitive set of walks; I continue to learn constraints, routings with better views, and even new routes. Think of this as a prototype for an inventory of walks. This will make it easier to choose walks, to discuss trails!

By highlighting routes with their lengths, people can see on a map trails they have walked, as well as others that might appeal to them, walks that work with their daily time constraints. They can learn new walks in their own neighbourhood and in other parts of the city. A different walk each week would make a great healthy lifestyle resolution!

To better understand loop walks, look at \*Ireland's work on trails like their *Loop Walks Key Criteria*.

The international walking group \*\*Volkssport discusses their trail needs: minimum for a walking day event is 10 km. A shorter distance (5 to 9 km) and a longer distance up to 50 km can also be offered.

\*[http://www.irishtrails.ie/National\\_Trails\\_Office/Publications/Trail\\_Development/](http://www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/Publications/Trail_Development/)

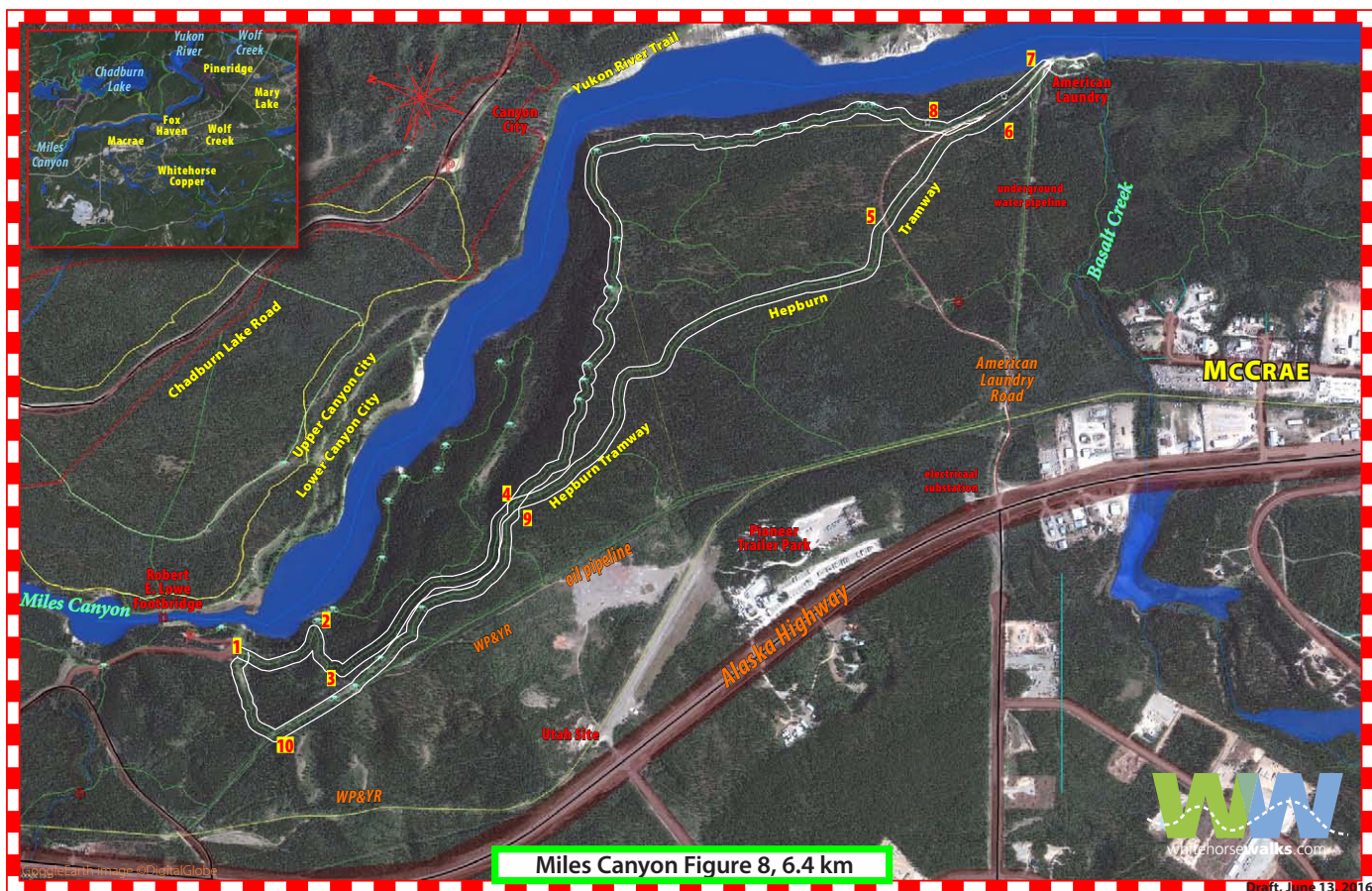
\*\*<http://walkalberta.ca/What-is-Volkssport.php>

[http://whitehorsewalks.com/\\_loops/LoopWalkingTrails.html](http://whitehorsewalks.com/_loops/LoopWalkingTrails.html)

In picking loops I look for:

- short and long loops: morning- and afternoon-long walk/hikes, and day-long hikes, obvious ones where possible.
- a strong selection of neighbourhood loops — in a wilderness city, one shouldn't have to get in a vehicle and drive to have a good walk.
- a choice of experiences, such as urban sidewalk or paved trail or back country trails, different terrains; longer, diverse walks. In reality, most trails I've chosen are in the woods.
- parts of the city mapped on the Whitehorse Trails app, the paper Whitehorse Trail Guide and the Whitehorse Nordic Centre trail map.
- views, neat forests, creeks, ponds, hillsides, alpine, nice trails.
- trails that see year-round use; trails that work well in winter and in the shoulder season of icy, slippery mud; working with snowbikes to keep a small intimate trail footprint packed down.
- loops that connect areas and neighbourhoods, with a goal of a interconnected Whitehorse walking network.
- walks that both tourists and locals say "wow".





## - Miles Canyon Figure 8, 6.4 km

*This loop has variety. Except for a few hills it's mostly gradual climbs and descents. Nice, considering the height gained.*

*You walk along the Yukon River through old forest; walk the bed of the Hepburn Tramway; follow a route likely used when First Nations would walk from Marsh Lake; pass stretches of the old telegraph line; overlook the basalt walls of Miles Canyon with Flat and Pilot mountains as a backdrop; look down on Canyon City and the Macaulay Tramway; pass artifacts from when American Laundry was the largest camp on the wartime Alaska Highway project; walk beside the decommissioned oil pipeline route; walk on the old railway bed; walk alongside poles with many telephone wires; see out over Schwatka Lake. You even cross the 135° meridian a few times.*

Park at the Miles Canyon Parking lot.

**1:** The trail starts behind the big rocks at the outhouses. Follow a dirt road-like trail down to a prominent viewpoint overlooking the river. You'll pass a couple of side roads on your right.

**2:** Note the pipe in the water. A water pipe from years back? Go back the way you came about 20 metres and take the dirt road sharply up the hill. There's lots of blowdowns but it's easy to get around them.

**3:** Watch for some flagging tape on your left, following it a short distance into the woods. Looking up at the hillside you'll see the line of the tramway. Climb up to the line of the tramway. Follow the tramway ledge about 1 km, passing a couple of side trails. The tramway bed gets wider as you ascend. Keep following it up until you arrive at the top.

**4:** At this 3-way trail junction, there will be a trail going uphill to the right, and one going out along the escarpment to the left. Stay straight on the middle choice, staying on the tramway, passing a couple of small side trails, and a back road. The tramway will be easy to follow as it is an obvious raised bed, with a ditch at times alongside it from where they took the dirt for fill.

**5:** At the American Laundry road, cross and reconnect with the tramway again behind a small dirt berm on the other side of the road. Eventually you'll arrive where the tramway gets buried in trees.

**6:** Follow the trail through the trees, following the raised bed. It could be nicer with some trail work here, so just cross over to the American Laundry road running alongside on your left and go down to the water.

**7:** Wander and explore the concrete pads and Basalt Creek at the far end of the open area. Then return up the road going back to the highway. Follow it for xxx m and watch for a trail in the ditch heading along the river. You can drop down to the path but it eventually comes almost to the level of the road, then veers away from the road.

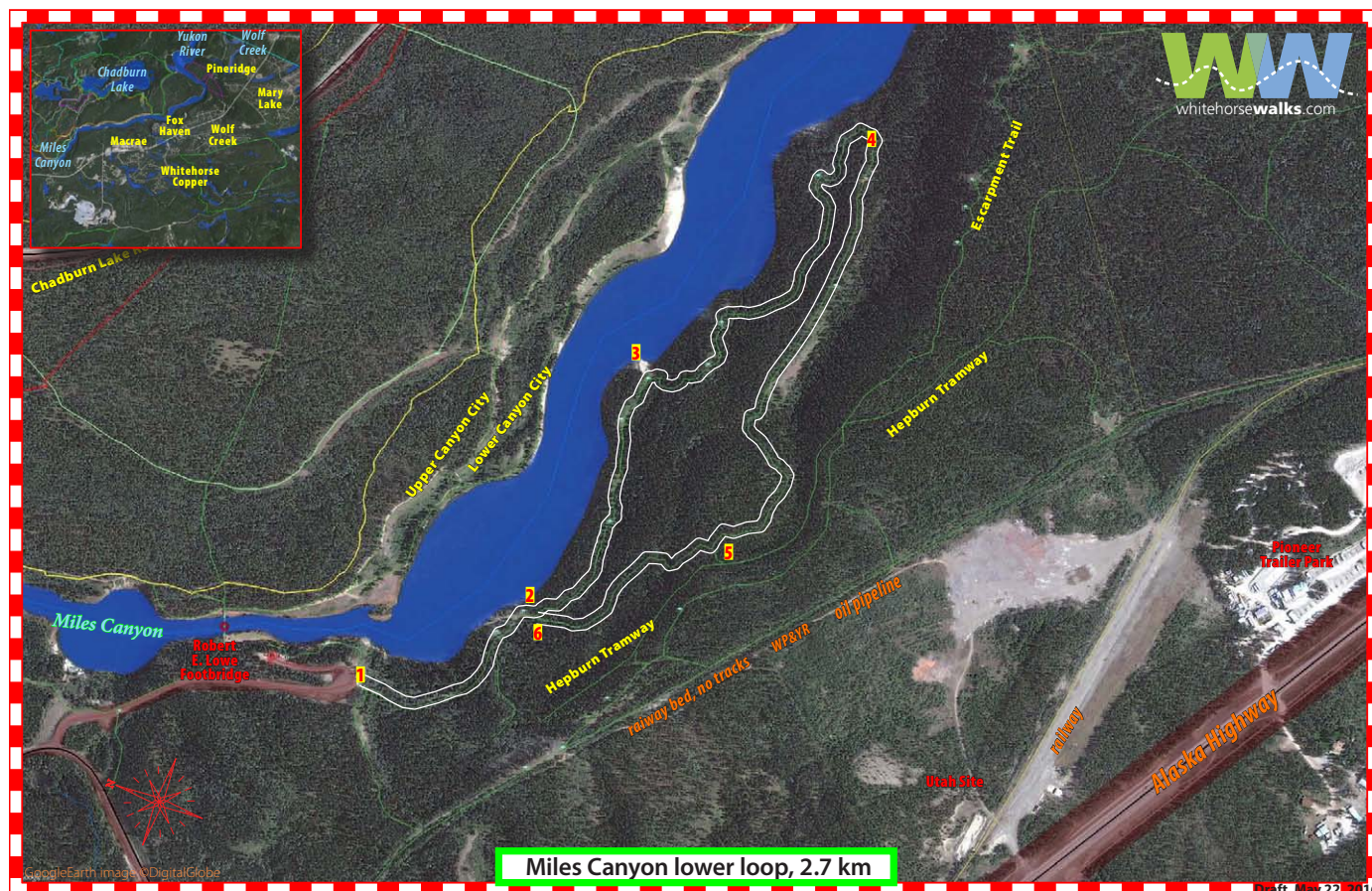
**8:** Drop down to the trail and follow it up along the escarpment noting the views of the river and Canyon City and the trails on the other side. While it gains a lot of altitude, it's generally a gradual ascent. There will be a couple of great viewing/picnic spots. Keep going until you arrive back at the tramway at the edge of the escarpment, at the 3-way junction.

**9:** Cross and follow the trail up the hill, eventually following the old WP&YR railbed/oil pipeline route. Keep going. There will be a couple of expansive views out over the canyon and Schwatka Lake. On your left the land is proposed to be a gravel quarry.

**10:** Watch for a small dirt trail on your right. Follow this trail downhill until you arrive back at the outhouse spot where you started. You have just crossed over where the tramway came through in the early days.

*This trail be improved in a number of spots. This is just a proof of concept!*





## - Miles Canyon lower loop, 2.7 km

*This loop is tough. It's a lot of climbs and descents.*

*You walk beside the Yukon River in some old forest; pass stretches of the old telegraph line; have neat views overlooking the basalt walls at the start of Miles Canyon with Flat and Pilot mountains as a backdrop; look across at Canyon City and the Macaulay Tramway.*

*Park at Miles Canyon.*

**1:** The trail starts behind the big rocks at the outhouses. Follow a dirt road-like trail out to a prominent viewpoint overlooking the river. You'll pass a couple of side roads on your right.

**2:** Note the pipe in the water. A water pipe from years past when there was a pumphouse and piping here, likely feeding a camp up on the highway. Take the lower trail along the river. This section will need trail help.

**3:** Here is where the lower landing of the tramway may have been. Tramway rails led up to join main tramway by the outhouse area. The telegraph wire passes through the lower valley along here. This could be an alternate easier route for some walkers.

**4:** Hills will need trail help. You'll pass through an area of trail workings with lots of exploratory attempts.

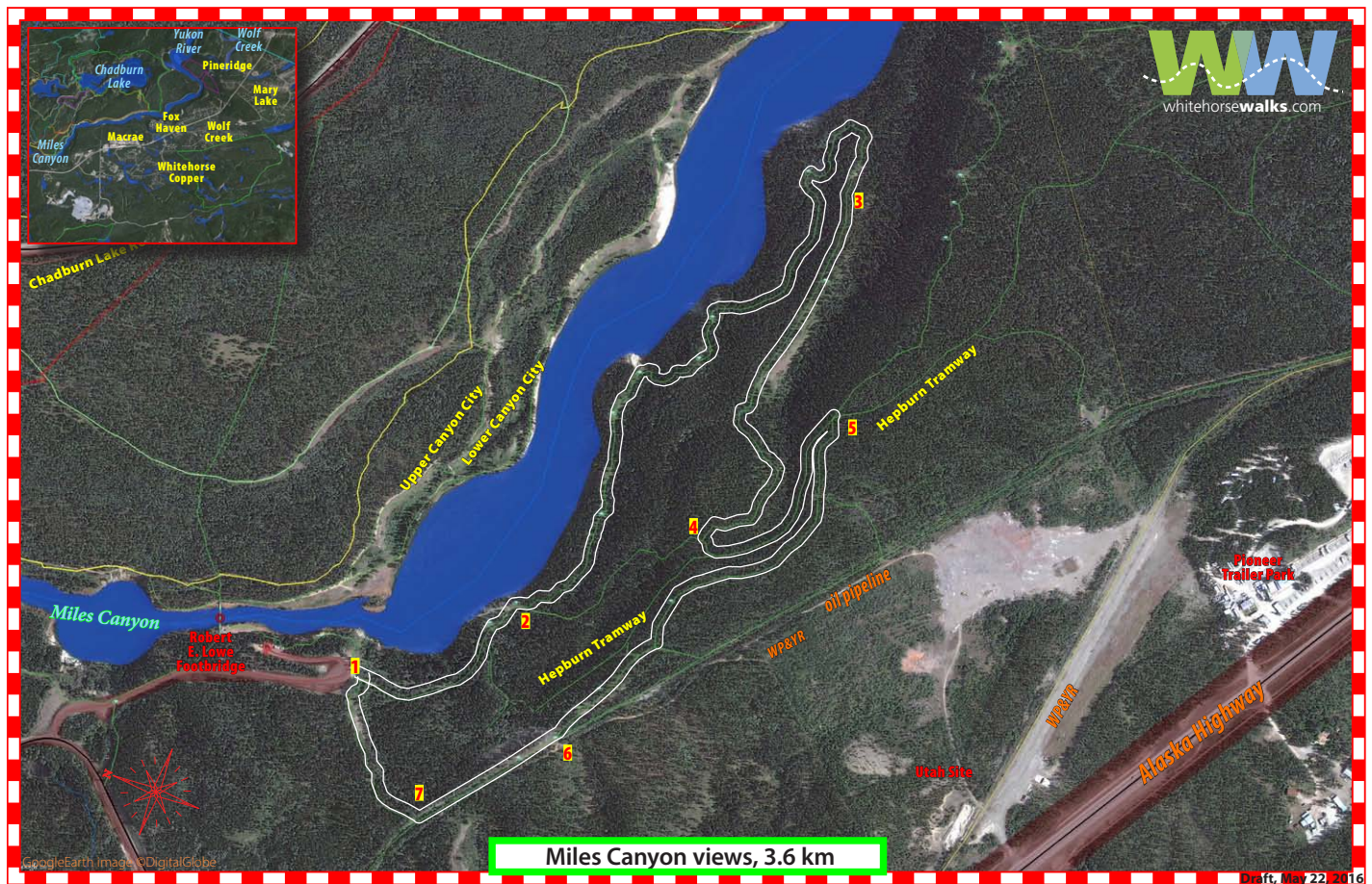
**5:** You'll reach a 4-way trail junction with the Hepburn Tramway. But this is a short hike so instead, turn back and take the 4th option back downhill in the direction of the parking lot. Follow this trail downhill.

**6:** When you reach the nice open viewpoint with the pipe in the water,

turn left and follow the trail back to the outhouse spot where you started.

*This trail could be improved in a number of spots. More professional trail building needs to happen before the area is totally changed*





## - Miles Canyon Views, 3.6 km

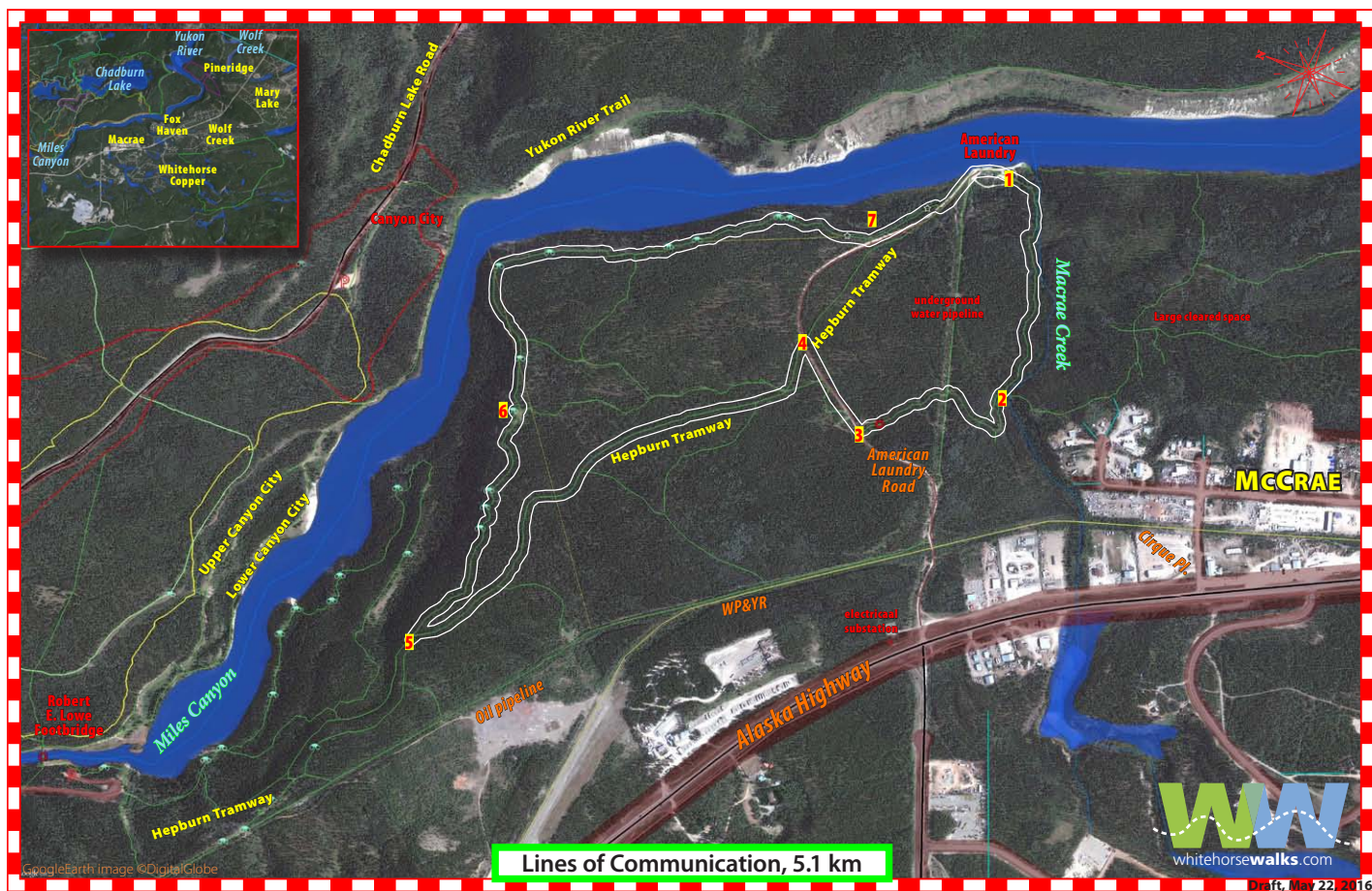
*This trail goes through a nice area. It's so close to Miles Canyon and yet so different than the east side of the river trails. Old forest, thick moss, dense blowdown areas, high escarpments and great viewpoints have this trail providing another interesting segment of the Yukon River Trail.*

*Park at Miles Canyon.*

- 1: The trail starts behind the big rocks at the outhouses. Follow it out to a nice viewpoint overlooking the river.
- 2: The trail splits here. Follow the left branch out along the river. Lots of dirt bike use makes some of the hills dusty and rocky. Nice river views in places, with many ups and downs. A couple of the hills could easily have a bypass.
- 3: New trail construction seems to be happening. Preplanning could make this less messy. The hike along this ridge has nice views looking up at the escarpment.
- 4: At the intersection you'll take the Hepburn Tramway trail up to the top of the escarpment. It's a beautiful section of trail.
- 5: At the top of the escarpment turn right and ascend to the next level.
- 6: Shortly after connecting to the WP&YR rail bed / oil pipeline route you'll see great views over the canyon and beyond over Schwatka Lake. On your left the land is proposed to be a gravel quarry.
- 7: Watch for this side trail which takes you through a nice forest trail and right back to the starting point.

*This trail could be improved in a number of spots. More professional trail building needs to happen before the area is totally changed*





## - Lines of Communication, 5.1 km

*This loop is a real delight. Except for a few small hills it's mostly gradual climbs and descents. Nice, considering the height gained.*

*You walk beside a small creek in some old forest; wonder at the old rough dirt roads; walk a pristine section of the old Hepburn Tramway; follow a route likely used when First Nations would walk from Marsh Lake; pass stretches of the old telegraph line; have neat views overlooking the basalt walls at the start of Miles Canyon with Flat and Pilot mountains as a backdrop; look across at Canyon City and the Macaulay Tramway; pass artifacts from when American Laundry was the largest camp on the wartime Alaska Highway building project. You even cross the 135° meridian a few times.*

Park at the foot of the American Laundry road, right at the river. The road is in very rough shape and could be worse when wet!

**1:** Start at the back of the large open expanse where Macrae Creek empties into the river. The first part of the hike is a gradually climbing stretch up along the creek for about 700 metres.

**2:** Turn right at the T-junction. (Turning left takes you to a spot where you can jump the creek to get to trails in back of Macrae). Follow the track about .5 km until you intersect the American Laundry Road. The wide straight cleared route you'll cross was the route of a buried water pipeline from a pumphouse at American Laundry, going up to water tanks at the open pit mine at Whitehorse Copper.

**3:** Turn right when you get to the road and head back towards the river. Bypass a couple of dirt road-type of trails and look for the Hepburn Tramway crossing at a sharp angle on the left side of the road. The tramway will be an obvious raised bed, with a ditch at times alongside it from where they used the dirt for fill.

**4:** Turn left onto the tramway. Every once in a while you'll see some of

the old squared timbers used for rails. *Needs a tramway story here.*

**5:** After about 1.5 km, watch for a trail coming in at a sharp angle from the right and take it. (You will have missed it if you find yourself walking downhill beside a steep slope. About 1 km later, it comes out at Miles Canyon.) The trail that goes off to the right follows the edge of the escarpment south (upstream). At the second of two obvious view points, about 700 metres from the turnoff, the main trail goes down a steep hill to the right.

**6:** As you start down the hill, immediately take the small trail that goes off to the left. The trail descends gently along the escarpment edge high above the river, with nice views of Canyon City and the high escarpment on the opposite side. The Yukon River Trail above Canyon City is beautiful, but strenuous; from this side you see why!

As you descend, watch for pieces of the telegraph wire strung through the trees.

**7:** After about 1.2 km the trail comes out at the American Laundry road. If it's wet and the trail becomes waterlogged, then climb up to the road at this point and finish the hike on the road.

Otherwise, follow the trail below the road; various artifacts hint at untold stories of the use of this site as a laundry, a pumphouse, and for a short while, it might have been the landing for the tramway. After about 200 metres you'll lose the trail and must climb up a short bank to the road.

*The trail ending should be improved to stay on the trail all the way to the river.*

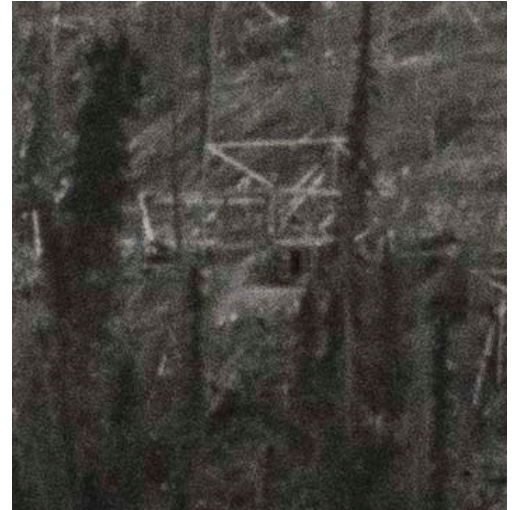


## 2017 what's been learned since

A thread to follow is around further changes at Miles Canyon. I've heard that when the dam was built and water levels rose, slumping started to happen along the western escarpment slope. Fear of caused White Pass to reroute their tracks out to the highway. There was drilling in the area as part of geotechnical explorations around slope stability.

A second new piece of information came from looking more closely into a photo (the cover photo no less) and seeing a cellar below the cabin at the foot of the escarpment.

While data is not easy to track down, talking to forestry and wildlife experts confirm that the open nature of the slope in 1898 was consistant with a forest fire.



Yukon Archives, Eric Hegg fonds, #2582