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# I Married The Klondike



## Synopsis

In 1907, Laura Beatrice Berton, a 29-year-old kindergarten teacher, left her comfortable life in Toronto Ontario to teach in a Yukon mining town. She fell in love with the North--and with a northerner--and made Dawson City her home for the next 25 years. *I Married the Klondike* is her classic and enduring memoir. When she first arrived by steamboat in Dawson City, Berton expected to find a rough mining town full of grizzled miners, scarlet-clad Mounties and dance-hall girls. And while these and other memorable characters did abound, she quickly discovered why the town was nicknamed the "Paris of the North." Although the gold rush was over, the townsfolk still clung to the lavishness of the city's golden era and the young teacher soon found herself hosting tea parties once a month, attending formal dinners, dancing the minuet at fancy balls and going on elaborate sleighing parties. In the background a famous poet wrote ballads on his cabin wall, an archbishop lost on the tundra ate his boots to survive and men living on dreams of riches grew old panning the creeks for gold. While thousands of people left the Klondike each October on the "last boat out" and Dawson City slowly decayed around her, the author remained true to her northern home. Humorous, poignant and filled with stories of both drudgery and decadence, *I Married the Klondike* is an unforgettable book by a brave and intelligent woman. "I have read many books on the Yukon, but this is different. It is the gallant personality of the author which shines on every page, and makes her chronicle a saga of the High North."--Robert Service, poet "The Cremation of Sam McGee"

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In 1907, Laura Beatrice Berton, a 29-year-old kindergarten teacher, left her comfortable life in

Toronto to teach in a rough Yukon mining town. She fell in love with the North--and with a northerner--and made Dawson City her home for the next 25 years. *I Married the Klondike* is her classic and enduring memoir.

A sparkling and equal parts visually gorgeous and gory telling that illustrates the energy, endurance and courage of those spunky and even glamorous but more often glamorless early settlers of the Klondike. This was an adventure that was hard to put down and even sad to leave.

What a fascinating look at life in the north. This book shattered my assumptions about life in this part of the world. The author gave a very realistic view of the highlights of life in a very harsh environment as well as the day-to-day challenges and pleasures of such a life. The colorful descriptions provide a very realistic picture without becoming cumberson. This book also helped me look differently at the pleasures and challenges in my own life. Great read!

I ordered this book because I had been to Skagway, Alaska and knew this book was about living in the Klondike. I enjoyed this book, but not as much as I thought I would. The things the author talked about were interesting, but the style of writing was a little drab.

This is a wonderful warm story about the gold rush in Alaska. I love the story of the gold rush and this book put a new twist on it. Her husband has written the best history of that time period of anyone.

After visiting Dawson City, it was such fun to read about life around the turn of the century in this new town! I was surprised that many residents were so cosmopolitan.

Dawson City, 1898: Raging gold fever and hearts full of hope. Dawson City, early 1900s: The gold boom is bust, but a few hardy locals try to carry the history forward. Laura Berton arrived in Dawson City a few years after the gold boom but was still able to experience all that the "Paris of the North" had to offer. Raging snowstorms and months of perpetual twilight and darkness? Nothing a few grand balls, costume parties, and endless social tea parties can't cure! Make no mistake, Berton's book is very honest about life in Dawson City over 100 years ago. Men literally froze to death and shifty miner-types frightened single women. Illnesses ravaged the town population at times and in the end it was a tough economy "on the Outside" that finally forced the Berton family to leave

Dawson City for good. Although this book is considered a Canadian classic, I must confess I had never even heard of this book until my Alaska-traveling parents brought it back to me as a gift. While I might not have been able to see the Yukon for myself, this gem of a book was just the thing to carry my imagination to another time and place. A time and place I thought I might want to visit, but now I'm happy to be living with all the modern conveniences in my life right now.

Like most people my age, I've seen old movies depicting the Gold Rush, but they were nothing compared to this delightful account of the author's experiences in Dawson and Whitehorse, in the Yukon. From page one to the end, I FELT the cold of the North, learned about the vegetation and moreso, shared in the life of the pioneers AFTER the Gold Rush. Such hearty men and women gave of themselves in the search for gold, few, very few becoming rich. Yet, they all seem to have enriched my life thanks to their determination and stamina despite all odds. To read of the social differences that the citizens upheld in Dawson gives one a thoughtful look at the upper classes, who brought their prejudices with them to Dawson. Yet, with time, as the gold became more and more rare, the population dwindled and with it the many differences, which had segregated the classes. Abandoned homes, run-down shacks, empty stores finally gave way to social values, which brought the remaining residents together. As the author mentions, one could not walk down the street of Dawson without saying "hello" to everyone since the life of one touched the life of the others. With only 800 persons left in town, all knew one another and social standing gave way to familial attitudes. It was no longer necessary to give the telephone operator a number, only the name of the person to whom one wanted to speak need be mentioned and the phone rang at the other end. Tragedy and hardships took hold of the life of everyone, but friendship and helpfulness prevailed as their numbers dwindled. A beautiful read, which has opened my mind and heart to these pioneers, who are our ancestors.

I wanted to learn more about Yukon history after reading *The Floor of Heaven: A True Tale of the Last Frontier and the Yukon Gold Rush* by Howard Blum. This is an excellent follow-up from an unusual source, the female perspective. Women were few and far between in Yukon history. Laura Beatrice Berton provides rich geographical and social details what life was like from 1907 until about 1932. Unlike many embellished Yukon tales, I believe Mrs. Berton's story to be entirely true. She didn't mince words, often using humor to describe bleak situations or colorful characters. While this book could and should be read by both sexes, male readers might get bogged down with chapters centering around Dawson City's social events and prominent citizens. Mrs. Berton seemed very

proud of her social status within the community. I found the constant name-dropping and social mores a bit tedious, even though her notes are an important historical contribution. Surprisingly, she never mentions the names of her two children, and includes few of their family activities.

Regardless, readers will enjoy Mrs. Berton's personable, down-to-earth account of a unique time and place.

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