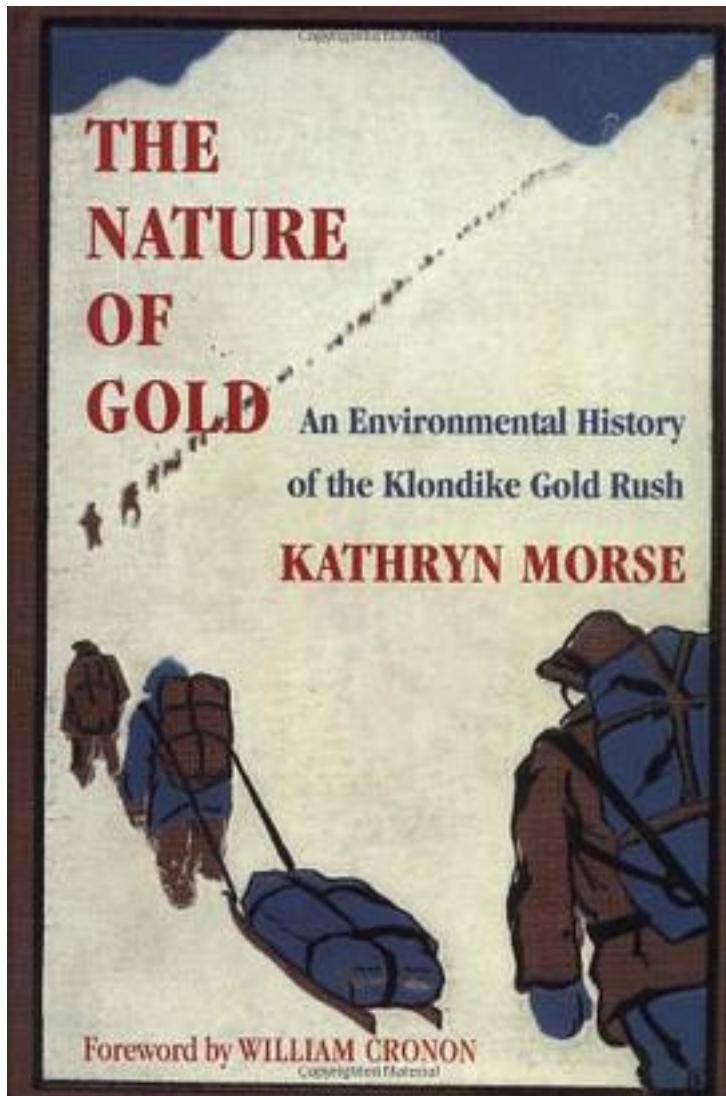


# The Nature of Gold



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In 1896, a small group of prospectors discovered a stunningly rich pocket of gold at the confluence of the Klondike and Yukon rivers, and in the following two years thousands of individuals traveled to the area, hoping to find wealth in a rugged and challenging setting. Ever since that time, the Klondike Gold Rush - especially as portrayed in photographs of long lines of gold seekers marching up Chilkoot Pass - has had a hold on the popular imagination. In this first environmental history of the gold rush, Kathryn Morse describes how the miners got to the Klondike, the mining technologies they employed, and the complex networks by which they obtained food, clothing, and tools. She looks at the political and economic debates surrounding the valuation of gold and the emerging industrial economy that exploited its extraction in Alaska, and explores the ways in which a web of connections among America's transportation, supply, and marketing industries linked miners to other industrial and agricultural labourers across the country. The profound economic and cultural transformations that supported the Alaska-Yukon gold rush ultimately reverberate to modern times. The story Morse tells is often narrated through the diaries and letters of the miners themselves. The daunting challenges of travelling, working, and surviving in the raw wilderness are illustrated not only by the miners' compelling accounts but by newspaper reports and advertisements. Seattle played a key role as "gateway to the Klondike." A public relations campaign lured potential miners to the West and local businesses seized the opportunity to make large profits while thousands of gold seekers streamed through Seattle. The drama of the miners' journeys north, their trials along the gold creeks, and their encounters with an extreme climate will appeal not only to scholars of the western environment and of late-19th-century industrialism, but to readers interested in reliving the vivid adventure of the West's last great gold rush. Kathryn Morse is assistant professor of history at Middlebury College in Vermont.

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