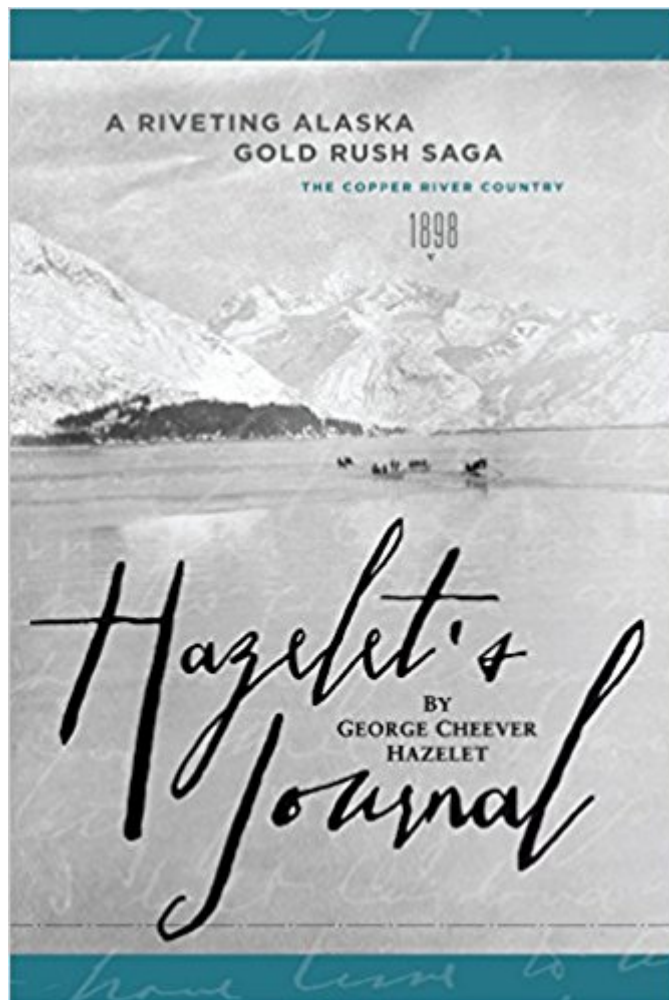


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Hazelet's Journal



Synopsis

Hazelet's Journal is a riveting Alaska Gold Rush saga that takes place in the Copper River Country 1898 to 1902. It is a remarkable true story, not only about a man and his family, but about a nation finding its way into the twentieth century. It is a timeless story about a restless nation and the great American spirit that our country was founded upon. It's a true, unedited American story, told in the journalist's original voice, now captured for generations to come.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Clarion Review HISTORY Hazelet's Journal: A Riveting Alaska Gold Rush Saga George Cheever Hazelet John Clark, editor Douglas Keeney, contributor Old Stone Press 978-1-938462-00-9 Five Stars (out of Five) Step aside, Jack London, and make room at the bar for George Cheever Hazelet. John Clark's marvelous edit of the journals his great-grandfather penned during the Alaskan Gold Rush are every bit as exciting and authentic as what the author of *White Fang* and *The Call of the Wild* wrote. Contemporary in experience and outlook, George Cheever Hazelet should have been the chronicler of the Klondike. He may yet become that. Beautifully written and lightly edited in order to maintain the pace and emotion of the entries--some hurried, some pensive--Hazelet's Journal is primary-source history at its finest. This is not some musty pile of scribbles left to gather dust but a vibrant document into which generations of the family have breathed life. Clark, a printer by profession, has completed a task begun by his great-grandfather on a train leaving his Midwest home in 1898, and he has done so with a light yet deft hand. Clark's recruitment of Douglas Keeney--a noted historian, author, and a founder of the Military Channel--to

present the prologue adds both gravitas and an independent point of view to introduce the narrative. Clark resisted the urge to "clean up" the journals, noting with unnecessary apology his "editorial decision to leave the journal entries, in almost every instance, exactly as my great-grandfather wrote them." Not that Hazelet's work needs much correction. This was no schoolboy adventurer. Hazelet was a college graduate, businessman, husband, father of two, and school principal before heading off to seek his fortune in the Alaskan wilderness at age thirty-seven. His was a journey of desperate necessity, an attempt to recoup losses sustained in the depression of the late 1890s and to

"beKirkus Review: An introspective collection of journal entries from a traveler in the Alaskan Gold Rush. George Cheever Hazelet was born in Senecaville, Ohio, in 1861, and when it was time for him to attend college, he, like many others at that time, migrated west, receiving his college degree in Iowa. He began a career as a schoolteacher, but eventually, he became the principal of his local school district. He was well on his way to becoming a town leader in Atkinson, Neb., but before the age of 40, he dedicated his life to a different venture: securing a fortune in the Klondike Gold Rush. Along with his partner, Andrew Jackson "Jack" Meals, a Nebraska farmer with no formal education, Hazelet traveled to Alaska in 1898 to attempt gold prospecting. This intriguing collection of journal entries includes small details that allow readers to get to know Hazelet more intimately: the type of dessert he's eating on a particular night or how he's noticed his face is puffier and older when he looks in the mirror. Editor/publisher Clark, Hazelet's great-grandson, has successfully encapsulated his ancestor's expedition in literary form. The entries engagingly reflect on the hardships of a life digging for gold: "The weather has been extremely cold the past few days / Am quite sure it must be down to forty degrees below zero / The water drove us out of the shaft and we are in hopes that these cold days will freeze it down." Readers may find Hazelet's journal to be captivating reading, as it promises more excitement at every turn. At one point, Hazelet provides a lucid description of encountering a glacier, and a sight of nature's beauty and bounty that he's never seen before. At another, he describes racing down the rapids in his boat at "breakneck" speed, waves crashing into his vessel. An engaging piece of nonfiction about one man's prospecting adventures.

John Clark received a BA in fine arts from the University of New Mexico and successfully built and ran a printing and manufacturing company located in Louisville, Kentucky, for twenty-seven years. Today, he is the president of the Port Valdez Company, which traces its land holdings to George Cheever Hazelet and his partner Andrew Jackson Meals original scripting of 720 acres in Valdez, Alaska, at the turn of the twentieth century. He also is the founder of Old Stone Press. He and his wife, Gretchen, live in Louisville, Kentucky.

wonderful book about the struggles of early Alaska pioneers

George Cheever Hazelet was a former school principle and business owner living with his wife and two sons in Nebraska in 1897. His business collapsed that year due to the financial panic and economic downturn that swept the country in the mid-1890s. Hazelet felt his opportunity to get his family back to their previous economic status was to try his hand at prospecting as part of the Alaska-Yukon Gold Rush. He left his family behind and struck out with his partner, Andrew Jackson Meals, for Alaska. An educated man, Hazelet kept a detailed journal of his experiences. Hazelet and Meals outfitted in Seattle. Most of the thousands of prospectors who were headed for the Klondike landed in Skagway or Dyea (in southeast Alaska) to take either the White Pass or Chilkoot trails to the Yukon River, then raft down to Dawson (in the Yukon Territory, Canada). The Hazelet party was one of the fewer numbers who landed in Valdez, Alaska to climb the Valdez Glacier and cross over the mountains to the headwaters of the Copper River. In Hazelet's Journal, you'll read about the struggle to overcome the terrain, the climate, and the loneliness of prospecting the Alaska wilderness. Mortal danger exists on a daily basis from river crossings, freezing temperatures, and claim jumpers. Hazelet is straightforward in his entries, his journals are engaging yet hyperbole is refreshingly absent. His descriptions ring true. This is a primary source document at its entertaining best. George Hazelet did not "strike it rich" in Alaska in that he was not able to set up a commercial mining operation. He and his partner did, however, homestead 720 acres in what is today the city of Valdez, Alaska. Hazelet and Meals returned to Alaska with their families and left behind a legacy that is part of the collective history of the 49th state. Editor J.H. Clark is George Hazelet's great grandson. He is also president of the Port Valdez Company, which traces its history back to those original 720 acres of land and the various other business ventures started by George Hazelet. Clark has done a wonderful job of editing and publishing "Hazelet's Journal," keeping the original voice of the author. I must also comment that the book is beautifully formatted, with dozens of historic photos, and maps that can only be described as works of art. My only criticism of the work is that I would have liked to see a more in-depth introductory chapter on the various gold strikes in Alaska and the Yukon. For those that are not familiar with this segment of American History, I would recommend also reading "Klondike: The Last Great Gold Rush" by Pierre Berton. But even still, this does not detract from "Hazelet's Journal," as few are familiar with the exploration of the Copper River Country.

This is an absolutely beautiful book! From the cover to the print font and style of the writing, I love everything about it. It is a wonderful first-hand account of all the trials and hardships endured by the men (and women) who headed up to the Yukon in Alaska in the late 1900s to mine for gold. The journal was kept on an almost daily basis by George Cheever Hazelet and was later transcribed by family members. It is full of interesting tales of the daily struggles encountered on the trail, while pulling (by hand in his case) a 150-200 lb. sled behind you for hundreds of miles in freezing weather. There are humorous tales as well as tales of suffering along the way. His touching words regarding his wife and children, from whom he is separated for many long months, tug at the heart. It's a richly detailed historical documentation of this period, and the growth that came to Alaska in the following years. There are many wonderful photos included. This is definitely a must read for anyone interested in this time period and/or the Yukon gold rush. I almost want to read again, I enjoyed it so much. Highly recommended.

First off, the book itself is a work of art: paper, binding, typeface, typesetting, photographs, index, contents--all done to a superior level seldom seen in this e-book era. Booklovers will appreciate the sensual pleasures of handling an object created with the respect and skill a book deserves. Next, the journal entries will transport you to a time when any self-reliant man could be expected to build a boat or a house using hand tools, haul tons of supplies up a glacier, assay minerals, argue a court case, break an animal to harness, survey virgin territory or anything else unpredictable pioneer life demanded at the moment. And nothing is done once, every journey is filled with back and forth movements, two steps up and one step back, everything is built and rebuilt and moved, every plan is made, unmade and remade. Pretty much every journal entry begins with a problem: shaft flooded, ice broke, storm, no supplies, boat wrecked; then describes the solution. The author sighs about how hard everything is, then guesses he's better off than the people who failed, and that he hopes he can take tomorrow's problems. It brings home the staggering amount of work and uncertainty involved even for a minor, failed mining venture. An interesting comparison is to the semi-fiction account in *The Floor of Heaven*. That book also describes incredible perseverance and hardship, but it tells you, it doesn't show you. It spends much of its time inside its characters' heads or in dialog. The reader is given over-arching information unavailable to any character. Hazelet's Journal is nothing but the facts, recorded at the time by a single protagonist. One of the most interesting aspects of this book, as in the great series *Deadwood*, is the amazingly rapid development from a few men tramping through mud and ice, sleeping in dirt-floored tents when they were lucky, to houses, wharves, courts, trails and townsites. The quantum leap in conditions from

Hazelet's first trip to his claim in 1898 to his second in 1900 is staggering. Hazelet himself changes dramatically, and not in good ways. We like him a lot when he is on the bottom. He writes constantly and sincerely of his worries for his wife and family. When he tastes a little short-lived success, he switches to boasting how much his wife worries about him and describes with satisfaction giving her a good scolding. In his first year in Alaska, he treats every death of a prospector as a tragedy, later he laughs off a companion's drowning as too much "swhiskey". The humble adventurer at the start who gets along with everyone and is moved by the simple Christian faith of "Indian Charlie," who forgives white men who stole from him, is replaced by a guy making grim, swaggering threats to claim jumpers; and blustering to an Indian chief that he will shoot any Indian caught stealing supplies. Reading between the lines, Hazelet appears to position himself as an agent for distant monied interests against the independent prospectors. He is constantly networking to get into the politicized interests attracted to the mineral wealth of Alaska, but he also retains one foot in the local populist community. Nevertheless, this is the same person, neither saint nor sinner. In this almost embarrassingly intimate journal, written with clear honesty, we see the gamut of his character. I suspect few of us would show as well overall, despite his human flaws. This book has a wealth of detailed primary information to fascinate historians, and the human detail to retain the interest of general readers. I recommend this book highly.

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