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JIMMY KANE WRANGLLED FOR JACK DALTON

By Jane Gaffin

(Information for this piece relied on **Crazy Cooks and Gold Miners** by Joyce Yardley, Hancock House, 1993; **Guide to the Yukon-Klondike Mines** by G.P. Henley, Province Publishing Co., 1897; **Yukon Places and Names** by R.C. "Bob" Coutts, PR Services, 2003; *Jimmy Kane* by Cal Waddington, *Alaska Sportsman*, February, 1968; *Pioneer Packhorses in Alaska* by E.J. Glave, *The Century Magazine*, September, 1892; **Ghost Town Trails of the Yukon** by Don Sawatsky, Stagecoach Publishing Company, 1975; **Prelude to Bonanza** by Allen Wright, Studio North reprint, 1992; **The Story of the Gun**, a four-part series A&E Network Home Video Production, produced by Greystone Communications, 1996; Christopher di Armani, personal communications, October, 2005.)

Nobody knows exactly when Hchwa-sene was born. But he was believed to have been 15 years old in 1898, the year a moustached North West Mounted Police officer at Dalton Post bestowed a strange, unfamiliar-sounding name on the young Yukon Indian lad.

The white man, who had difficulty pronouncing, much less spelling, Hchwa-sene's guttural Indian name, simplified matters. The policeman invented a new name on the spot and in his ledger scrawled "Jimmy Kane" which henceforth became the boy's official white-man name.

Jimmy Kane (Hall of Fame) was born about 1883 in an important village near what would later become Dalton Post, on the route of the present-day Haines Highway, built as a 1942 war-time link between the Alaska Highway at Haines Junction and the Alaska coastal community of Haines.

All that existed about a mile below where John "Jack" Dalton would build his post was the Indian village called Nesketaheen, which also corresponds with the accepted spelling of a beautiful nearby lake (NTS map 115A).

However, the spelling varied for the ancient Indian village as Neskatahin and Weskatahin. Whichever, the village undoubtedly existed long before the first documentation of 1852 because Neska-Ta-Heen was the important meeting place for trade between the coastal Chilkat Tlingits and the interior Indians, who were people of the woods and were known as Stick Indians.

Neskataheen was Jimmy's home, near good salmon fishing and big-and-small game hunting territory, close to the British Columbia border. His home was on a crude trail that led to the

Alaskan coastal village of Haines Mission. The Presbyterian missionary site, established in 1881 at the neck of the peninsula dividing the mouth of the Chilkat River from Lynn Canal, was later incorporated into the city of Haines.

The trail was used by trailblazer Jack Dalton, before and during the great Klondike gold rush of 1896 to 1898 to trade with the interior Indians. He also drove cattle inland to the Yukon River where the animals were rafted down the Yukon River to a slaughter slough north of Carmacks and the meat shipped to Dawson City to feed the throngs of hungry gold rushers.

Cattle, horses, sheep--even reindeer--were herded over the trail which had been trod by coastal Chilkat Indians as a means of trading goods with inland Indians long before the white men appeared.

An 1897 **Guide to the Yukon-Klondike Mines** promoted the Dalton Trail as a possible route for goldseekers. It read:

"The trail (so far as there is a trail) is from the head of the western arm of Lynn Canal and starts at Portage Cove, across the peninsula to the eastern banks of the Chilkat River, then along the banks of the river for six miles, when it crosses and follows the western bank for about 30 miles to Klukwan on the Kleheena River.

"(T)hence six or eight miles to the British line, thence about 150 miles to the Dalton Trading Post on a branch of the Alsec River, thence in a northerly direction about 160 miles to Fort Selkirk at the mouth of the Pelly River.

"This is a favourite route for livestock. There is a good deal of timber along the route and large stretches of open grass land are met."

Jack Dalton (1855-1944) was personable, confident and of average height. He wore a black wide-brimmed hat, suspenders, holstered Colt revolver under his right arm, calf-high moose skin moccasins and sported a luxurious flowing blond moustache.

History hints at, but can't confirm, that he may have been forced to runaway from his Oklahoma home for shooting a man when he was 15 years old, perhaps in self-defense.

Another story cropped up that he had to leave Oregon Territory to escape prosecution and/or lynching for a shooting escapade. An erroneous tale was told that Dalton had worked on a ranch under the assumed name of Miller. Why he would change his name in Oregon Territory than revert to the name Dalton in Alaska makes no sense. A man could run but he couldn't hide from a U.S. Marshal.

The story goes that he had fled Oregon Territory in 1882 after fatally shooting a man. But the urban legend is riddled with an many holes as was the fictitious victim. For starters, there is no such handgun as a Colt Bulldog with which to do the deed. It was nearly four years before Dalton reached Alaska. The rest of the story has to be discounted as one told by a Burns County, Oregon, blowhard who was seeking glory for himself while discrediting Dalton, who, by then, was heralded as a folk hero.

Another story that Dalton went to San Francisco in 1883 and hired on with a sealing vessel that wintered in the miserable climes and conditions at Herschel Island, off the northern tip of the Yukon District, is also dubious.

Dalton has come down through history with a reputation for trouble. The fabled stories may have been garbled with the troubles he encountered in Haines Mission for shooting a man and a Juneau vigilante group threatening to lynch him after a court acquitted him of murder.

He also is sometimes confused with the members of the infamous American desperado gang comprised of leader Robert Dalton (1870-1892) and brothers Emmett and Grattan Dalton. The younger Dalton boys were still in the cradle when Jack Dalton left home about 1870 and was roaming throughout the American West during its most lawless period as a cowboy and a frontiersman.

At one point, Dalton was based in the booming mining camp of Juneau, originally named Harrisburg after Richard Harris who with his partner, Joseph Juneau, discovered gold and staked their claims in 1880.

There, Dalton engaged in a little gold mining, a little trading, a little fishing. One account indicates that Dalton was tried and acquitted for accidentally shooting Daniel McGinnis, reputed as a troublesome cannery store clerk who was purported to be telling tales to incite the Indians to take up arms against Dalton and oppose him as a trader of goods.

In a picture taken of him at Dalton Post circa 1898, he is shown wearing his trusty Colt revolver high under his right arm like a working man does, not like a gunslinger. The affordable, reliable Colt six-shooters and Winchester rifles, which took centre stage as the tools of the American West, were brought with the frontiersmen, lawmen and criminals alike as they pushed northward. Both firearms are etched in the American psyche and are mentioned frequently as the guns of choice carried by early explorers who preceded the Klondike gold rush.

Dalton first came to Alaska in 1886, signing on as camp cook and worker with the heavy-set Lt. Frederick Schwatka who was leading a *New York Times* scientific expedition up Mount St. Elias, the prominent 18,000-foot peak that can be seen from the Gulf of Alaska. Only one member of the team had alpine experience, and the attempt to scale North America's third highest peak failed in less than two weeks.

Dalton, who relished exploration along the coast, had another opportunity to join an exploration party in 1890. As an excellent trailmate and competent bushman, he was the perfect person to set off on this wilderness adventure that would significantly impact Alaska and Yukon history.

Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper of New York* was sponsoring an expedition to explore interior Alaska and record the headwaters and tributaries of the Yukon, Copper, Alsek and Chilkat rivers.

One expeditionary was English-born Edward James Glave, a versatile and talented explorer, artist and journalist. He was 22 years old when a six-year African assignment began in 1884. The Bureau of the International Association of Brussels sent him to the Congo River

to serve as an associate under explorer Dr. Henry Stanley, along with a New York reporter, Alfred Schanz.

Glave was on a well-received North American lecture tour in 1889 when he eagerly accepted the invitation to join the six-man Exploring Expedition as executive officer. During his journey, Glave was to write and illustrate reports for the paper. He was exhilarated at the thought of going into raw country and erasing the hypothetical geographical features from the incomplete maps and penciling in blank spots with existing mountains, lakes and waterways which belonged there.

Other party members were leader E. Hazard Wells and journalist Alfred Schanz who split off with a third member in Kusawa Lake country in British Yukon District to investigate Tanana country in the upper Yukon River basin of Alaska; Glave and Dalton turned attention towards the Alsek River, which they hoped would take them back to the Pacific Ocean.

It was after two congenial years on the trail together, Glave wrote glowing reports about Dalton that puts to rest any erroneous accounts about his character and explains why he always came out on top of any gun fights.

"He was a most desirable partner, having excellent judgment, cool and deliberate in time of danger, and possessed great tact in dealing with the Indians. He thoroughly understood horses, was as good as any Indian in a cottonwood dugout or skin canoe, and as a camp cook I never met his equal."

At the relevant time, the Chilkat Tlingit Indians jealously guarded the Chilkat, Chilkoot and White passes, the three main corridors leading over the Coast Mountains to the interior where trade was carried out with other Indian clans.

Coastal Indians came mainly with blankets, guns, powder, tobacco and oil extracted from the tiny candle fish which run in May, thus dubbing the routes the "grease trails". Their return trips consisted of 100-pound packs laden with lumps and nuggets of copper as well as furs and hides of bear, lynx, wolverines, fox, otter, beaver and mink.

The long-time trade monopoly over the Chilkat Trail would be breached after the Glave-Dalton reconnaissance party explored the area.

One of Glave's humorous anecdotes as the contingent started out appeared under the banner *Interior Alaska* in *The Alaskan*, September 13, 1890: "...Dalton and I decided to stay to see the last of the caravan and pick up any odds and ends that might be left behind; we found plenty of this material with which we brought up the rear of the procession, loaded with a curious assortment of property.

"Dalton carried three pairs of snowshoes, one gold pan, one bread pan, four saucepans (all about the same size strung from our waist on a belt), besides which he had a rifle, revolver, ammunition, etc. I was loaded with one bucket, one big kettle, teapot, blankets, sack of books, camera, overcoat and a wild duck.

"We had pots and pans, whose musical melodies might have aptly served as the heralding

strains of the Salvation Army; but the climax of our eccentric march was reached when Dalton packed me and my load on his back across a stream.

"How glad I was that no camera fiend was nigh to have taken that perambulatory mass of grotesquely smothered humanity!"

Glave and Dalton, who, eventually, exploring alone on their way home, had come upon a village at the end of Klukshu Lake. From there, they followed a trail roughly 35 miles and came upon another settlement, Neska-Ta-Heen, the headquarters of the Stick Indians, who were all downriver 60 miles at their fishing camp. Neska-Ta-Heen was composed of a dozen large and small houses, each accommodating several families which translated into a great quantity of people, as in 100-120 people.

Up to this point, river travel had not been possible and the two men had to stick to the trail. Now, though the river was wild, its volume had increased considerably and Glave reported seeing occasional dugout canoes.

This sighting sparked the idea that any means of travel trumped walking with heavy packs and gear dangling from their belts. They had to do some tough bargaining and pay what Glave said to be "an exorbitant sum" to secure a canoe and services of a medicine man. But Shank proved himself an excellent river man and undoubtedly worth whatever the price to take them safely downriver.

Shank knew the river and gleefully recounted a list of accidents and drownings that had occurred in the raging, dangerous white water as their sturdy canoe plunged, bobbed and swirled down the Tatshenshini-Elsek system to the river's mouth. There, they were spit out at Dry Bay and walked up the beach some five miles to the nearest trading post on Yakutat Bay, northwest of Haines Mission.

After coming out with sore backs, the two men were convinced that the use of packhorses would be a practical transportation method for moving about the fertile valleys.

They recognized the potential of establishing their own trade with the Indians. In view of an increasing mining population, they entertained the idea of a transportation route to freight supplies from trailhead at the deep-sea port of Pyramid Harbour to Fort Selkirk on the Yukon River, a distance of 300 miles.

Glave wrote in his *Pioneer Packhorses* article that defective transport was the sole reason for the undeveloped and unexplored state of the land.

"The Indian carrier was the only means of transportation; he controlled the situation, and commanded most exorbitant pay. Moreover, his arrogance, inconsistency, cunning and general unreliability are ever on the alert to thwart the white man."

Glave, the expedition boss, wanted to keep any party venturing inland in small numbers to avoid trouble and alarm. He decided that Dalton, an expert horseman and explorer, would be his sole companion, although they did hire two Chilkat guides and an interpreter for two dollars a day plus board.

Glave and Dalton had gone to Seattle, Washington, where they bought four short, chunky horses, weighing about 900 pounds each, pack saddles, harnesses, ample provisions and ammunition. They then sailed north through the thousand miles of the Inland Passage up the coast to Pyramid Harbour, the best point for starting into the interior with horses.

"No horses had ever been taken into the country, and old miners, traders and prospectors openly pitied our ignorance in imagining the possibility of taking pack animals over the Coast Range," wrote Glave.

"The (Coast) Indians ridiculed the idea of such an experiment; they told us of deep, swift streams flowing across our path, the rocky paths so steep that the Indian hunter could climb in safety only by creeping on his hands and knees.

"Finding that their discouraging reports failed to influence us, the Chilkat Indians, foreseeing that our venture, if successful, would greatly injure their interests by establishing a dangerous competition against their present monopoly, held meetings on the subject.

"(R)umour reached us that our further advance would be resisted. However, when we were ready, and we saddled up, buckled on our pistol-belts, and proceeded on our journey without any attempt at hindrance save by verbal demonstration."

This second journey in May, 1891, was to check out the feasibility of going over the trail with livestock. Initially, the packhorses furiously protested the experiment of being strapped into snowshoes before the trek in the soft snow at the 4,750-foot level of Chilkat summit. *"We gave them daily instruction in this novel accomplishment till each horse was an expert,"* enthused Glave.

After four days travel, the two white men and three Chilkats reached a bluff overlooking Neska-Ta-Heen, the most important rendezvous place for the natives. During the winter, the interior natives hunted and trapped in small parties, returning to the village with their fur harvest. The Chilkats came to the village from the coast with products for exchange. To retain a stronghold, the Chilkats tenaciously prevented the interior natives from venturing to the coast for trading purposes.

The Glave-Dalton party announced their presence to the friendly inhabitants at Neska-Ta-Heen by firing several rifle shots. Their arrival created much excitement, mainly because of the horses. The Indians had never witnessed such large, snorting, hornless creatures. For lack of a better term they tagged the animals "harklane ketl", meaning big dogs.

It was a place of plenty, and the natives ate well. The rivers teemed with salmon and the land was bountiful with berries and beasts. The white men were welcomed good-naturedly. The old chief Warsaine portioned off a corner of his hut for them, and the chief's wife even consented to be photographed.

Their Chilkat guides, whose value was dubious anyway, had gone home. But the white men couldn't convince any of the Stick Indians to guide them into the White River country, for fear of the regional warlike Indians who had in the distant past swept in on and killed peaceful Neska-Ta-Heen villagers.

"The Chilkats (had) followed the most difficult trails, hoping that the horses would be a failure," Glave remarked. "(A)nd they sought out the longest possible routes, hoping to prolong the journey because of the (\$2) per diem basis of their pay."

By the time they reached Neska-Ta-Heen, the Chilkats saw the futility of trying to discourage the white men's vigorous mode of travel and returned to the coast. By then, Glave and Dalton already had concluded they could take a fully loaded packhorse train from the coast to Neska-Ta-Heen in seven days.

Glave later confirmed: *"Our successful experiment wrests from the Chilkat Indians the control of the road to the interior; the bolted gate hitherto guarded by them, to the exclusion of enterprise and progress, has swung back at the approach of the pack horses."*

They had carried on alone, fortuitously meeting some Indians going out to sheep hunt in Kluane country. The Indians agreed to guide them over a segment of the trail to the large lake in exchange for the horses carrying their packs.

After the Indians departed their company, Glave and Dalton found a dugout canoe stashed in the foliage. Kluane Lake was glassy calm and they decided to go for a paddle.

The lake has a nasty characteristic of churning up unexpectedly into a tempest of white caps. Baling did no good. They were forced to jump overboard into the paralyzingly cold water, overturn the craft, and, while clinging for dear life, guide the boat toward shore.

Miraculously, the bedraggled, water-logged explorers did manage to reach shore and fling their exhausted bodies on a rock. A water-sealed bag with blankets, notebooks and camera was salvaged. But they lost such irreplaceable items as Dalton's watch and chain, compass and sextant, as well as rifles, ammo, cooking utensils, gold pans and miners' picks. Luckily, the great part of their gear had been left behind with the hobbled horses.

By now, it was late in the season and winter was nigh. It was time to leave the spectacular country that was indelibly ingrained in both men's minds.

They headed for the coast over the same route as that of their inward journey, riding the horses except when encountering three snow storms and four-foot deep drifts in Chilkat Pass of the Coast Mountains.

Glave never saw interior Alaska and British Yukon again. He had chosen to leave the North in the fall of 1891. Back on another expedition in Africa, which he seemed to prefer over the North, and he died suddenly at age 32 in Underhill, Matadi, Belgian Congo on May 12, 1895.

The enterprising Dalton remained in the country and began improving the primitive trail, which widened in places into decent wagon-wheel ruts. While planning his trade and freighting business, he observed that this was the only feasible route over which sizeable herds of livestock could be moved to the goldfields.

By 1896, he had established trading posts along the route: one was Dalton Cache, built an inch from the international border where the present-day U.S. Custom station is located at

Pleasant Camp, Mile 40 on the Haines Highway; another was Dalton Post, the abandoned site on a spur road off the Haines Highway; and a third at Champagne, an Indian village on the Alaska Highway.

Possibly, a small herd of cattle was taken over the trail in 1895. But the first significant cattle drive on record was in the summer of 1896. The herders were Willis Thorpe, two sons and two other men. One was a butcher. Bob Coutts' research could not ascertain if Dalton owned the 40 head and had hired these men; or were the cowboys paying toll to drive the freight-packing steers over the trail to Carmacks for butchering. Whichever, the men and meat were said to have arrived in Dawson in early September, 1896.

Dalton was a businessman and had to be tougher than the next guy to survive the rigours of the north country. Rightly or wrongly, he had earned a reputation as a rascal. The trail over which he had seized control using his own sweat and ingenuity was easy to follow and prospectors hardly needed a guide to do it.

But Dalton assumed the guise of a mandatory guide who must be paid to take people over his trail. It wasn't until late in his enterprise that he was granted official permission from the United States government to levy fees on the American side. Under a Canadian district act he could not collect fees on the Yukon side of the border.

The toll rates for passage in 1899 varied from 20 cents for a person with less than a 25-pound pack (Alaska natives were free) to \$2.50 per large livestock and \$10.00 for a four-horse team with sled or wagon, unloaded of course.

"Dalton made his money by charging between \$2 and \$2.50 a head toll on all livestock and men and there is no record of anyone having argued the point," wrote Don Sawatsky in **Ghost Town Trails of the Yukon**. *"Either this was because it was a fair price or because of Jack Dalton's reputation that no man crossed him."*

Further, when improving the rough path he had purposely designed the Dalton Trail in such fashion that prospectors were forced to overnight at his log hotel which he had built on the banks of the Tatshenshini close to Neska-Ta-Heen.

That is where Dalton established his trading post about 1893 to barter with the inland Indians. Nearby was a base camp where he wintered his pack horses for many years.

A North West Mounted Police post was built there in 1897, which was 21-year-old Jack Dempster's first posting when coming to the Yukon the same year and is probably the moustached officer who gave Hchwa-sene his new name of Jimmy Kane.

Dalton Post was never a big settlement. An October 4, 1898 census taken of the permanent inhabitants living in and around the post listed three white men and more than a hundred Stick Indians.

Several years prior to the police post's closure in 1904, Dalton's client base had dried up as the bloom faded from the Klondike rose. Goldseekers had rushed off to the Alaskan goldfields.

Although the Dalton Trail was the longest route to the interior and on to the Klondike goldfields, it was conducive for moving livestock and a far sight easier and cheaper trip than hiring Indian packers and enduring the numerous hard climbs necessary to wrestle 2,000 pounds of supplies over the Chilkoot Pass, or even the White Pass where hundreds of horses perished. Yet the Dalton Trail never gained the popularity of the other two competitive routes.

Dalton, who had leased land in Haines in 1896, became a hotelier and trader in the coastal village until he left Alaska in 1919 for the Lower 48 States. In 1921, he supposedly spirited off on a South American diamond hunt for a group of promoters based in Yakima, Washington.

Even though the mainstream of the gold rush circumvented the trail bearing his name, he lived a string of adventures during a colourful career and died a moderately wealthy man in San Francisco in 1944 at age 89.

Former Dezadeash Lodge owner Cal Waddington had the rare treat of hearing first-hand accounts about Dalton and pre-Dalton days from his friend Jimmy Kane. The writer picked up the thread of the fascinating--sometimes humorous--story in an *Alaskan Sportsman* article.

"Jimmy remembers Jack Dalton well, for two reasons. First, it was the summer of his introduction to hunting, on the Tatshenshini River, an event that took place when a boy became a man--at around fourteen years of age. Secondly, Jack Dalton was the first white man Jimmy Kane had ever seen."

He loved recalling that event, added Waddington. *"(H)e tells of his fear when word leaked along the trading route from the Coast that a man--all white--was approaching. Everyone was certain that the man and his white companion were sick, and perhaps carrying that sickness to their village."*

Waddington related how Jimmy's eyes grew larger when he talked of Dalton and his strange habit of bathing in a large tin tub. *"It was the only chance the people of the village had to see the pale man in the all-together, and Jimmy remembers snickering behind a tree at Dalton's pink nakedness."*

The villagers soon found that Dalton meant business as the still-standing log buildings of Dalton Post began to appear, he wrote. *"Then to the people's horror, strange, snorting, hornless animals were brought to the post, the first horses to be seen there."*

Jimmy chuckled when he told of the coming of these horses. Later came the cattle. *"(B)ut by then the Indians were used to surprises, and were becoming immune, so the bawling cattle attracted only mild curiosity. Jimmy Kane was hired by Dalton as a hand, and was put to work wrangling horses and assisting on the trading pack train."*

This job, noted Waddington, kept the young Jimmy busy until the rush for gold slowly dwindled, and Dalton Trail was abandoned.

Jimmy was living on that trail, close to his birthplace, across the Haines Highway from

Dezadeash Lake at Dezadeash Lodge in his wee cabin, equipped with a cracked stove that allowed the fire light to shadow dance on the log walls.

When he was 85, Jimmy was described as hale and hearty, strongly built. Another Indian admiringly described him as "much man". His thick hair was white, his skin a deep walnut brown, his strong white teeth worn down to almost half their original length, and lines crinkled the corners of his eyes with much smiling.

He was an engaging man, still wresting a living from the land. He had traplines and always hankered to go prospecting, which he did sometimes with his brother, Bobby (Hall of Fame).

Jimmy would visit the nearby Dezadeash Lodge and regale the owners with intriguing tales about his childhood and his people. But he always had his priorities straight.

"Last winter (1967), sitting in the warmth of the lodge at Dezadeash Lake, looking out on a typical Yukon winter storm, the temperature was forty below, and the wind from the north blew a steady thirty miles per hour, we saw Jimmy there, coming in from his trapline trail, walking against the wind--his sled, pack and dogs behind him," Waddington recounted.

"We ran to the door and yelled over the storm for him to come in for a hot cup of coffee. We got a cheery wave, a smile, and "Good! Good! Soon as I light my fire!" He continued the one hundred odd yards to his cabin, struck his fire--and took care of his dogs. Not until then did he come to warm himself with our coffee and conversation."

Jimmy Kane liked to prospect around the Dezadeash area. It seems he was always trying to persuade Cal Waddington's father-in-law Gordon Yardley at the Dezadeash Lodge to investigate one mineral showing or another that he thought "look pretty good to me".

Gordon's wife, Joyce, a natural storyteller, added spice to the Jimmy Kane prospecting ventures with an anecdote in her book **Crazy Cooks and Gold Miners**. The Sixties were a time when lots of prospecting was going on in the Tatshenshini Valley, especially for copper which was high in price and in big demand, she related.

Jimmy was aware of this. One day when he dropped by for coffee, he said to Gordon, *"I know where there's copper not far from here--cross the Tatshenshini. I see it long time ago. Maybe you better stake him."*

Gordon was aware of the spot to which Jimmy was referring. *"I thought of that from time to time, Jimmy. Just haven't had the time to do anything about it."*

Joyce asked why her husband didn't make the time and go with Jimmy. *"It doesn't take that long to stake a few claims."*

Gordon half-jokingly made an offer. *"You and Jimmy go stake it, and I'll sell it for you."*

By now, Joyce was keen. In the spring of 1967, Gordon drove Joyce and Jimmy out in the pickup to stake the ground. They tramped around in the snow, cut stakes, paced off the distances, and drove their stakes in the ground.

Dead tired, they slept under a big tree for shelter that night. The Yardleys rolled out their toasty-warm sleeping bags where the ground was dry under spreading branches. Jimmy, under another tree, rolled up in nothing but a blanket. But this "much man" knew what he was doing. *"He slept like a log,"* recalled Joyce, who had needlessly worried if he would be warm enough.

The next day they built their fire, ate breakfast, finished the staking task and drove home, unaware those claims would soon be the centrepiece for the founding of a junior mining company.

One day, a fellow the Yardleys knew as a mining promoter booked a room at their lodge. Johnny Amato, always looking for a deal on a mining property, casually asked if Gordon Yardley happened to know of any copper showings around that part of the country. Gordon said he did, and Amato wanted to deal. But Gordon hadn't given much thought to a price for the claims recorded in J. Yardley's and J. Kane's names.

"I think I'll form a company on the property," Amato was quoted as announcing. *"I can pay you in shares--or part shares, part cash--you name it."*

Gordon said he wasn't interested in shares but would give him a good deal on this one. He threw out the arbitrary figure of \$5,000. Cash. Johnny didn't blink and wrote a cheque right there in the Dezadeash Lodge café.

The next time the Yardleys were in Whitehorse, they went to the bank, half expecting the cheque to be rubber. But it was good. They deposited half to their account and took the other \$2,500 back to their friend Jimmy Kane who wasn't used to money matters and asked the Yardleys to be his banker.

"(G)et a little bit at a time--when I need it, you know?"

Joyce set the stage. *"Once a month, Jimmy used to get his government check in the mail, and he was off to the Junction. There he had lots of friends, just waiting to help him spend his money in the beer parlour."*

"If he had any left to buy a few groceries after that, he was lucky. I guess Jimmy was afraid his \$2,500 would slip out of his hands the same way. Periodically, after that, Jimmy would come down to our house on the meadow and get some money from us, usually \$100 at a time."

One day his son Harvey drove him to their house. He said he was going to the Junction. The Yardleys assumed he wanted a hundred dollars or so. Instead, he asked for a thousand in one shot. He had some bills to pay and wanted to buy groceries, he said. It was his money, but visions of his money going down the drain quickly swirled around in the bankers' minds.

It was about ten days before the Yardleys saw Jimmy again. *"Gordon was up at the lodge fixing a tire in the yard when one of the tanker trucks that hauled fuel from Haines every day pulled up, and out climbed Jimmy,"* explained Joyce.

"He saw Gordon working on the tire and came over. He looked pretty saggy, walking across the yard; all his usual bounce was gone. He had one whopper of a hangover."

Gordon greeted him with: *"Well, hi there, Jimmy, how's the world treating you?"*

"Not very good, Gordon," responded Jimmy. *"I tell ya, boy, it's sure pretty tough to be rich."*

The upshot of the staking story was that the day after the mining promoter paid them \$5,000 for 16 claims covering copper mineralization in the Tatshenshini River area, Johnny Amato immediately off-loaded the property for the tune of \$35,000 to a Whitehorse mining man.

Charlie Shandalla staked 186 additional claims, bringing the total to 202. On September 27, 1967, he incorporated them into Jackpot Copper Mines Ltd. The name was an instant hit and captured the investor community's imagination.

The Jackpot Copper property was located eight miles southwest of Historical Mile 106 of the Haines Road, the mineralized showings located near the confluence of the Tatshenshini River and Pirate Creek. The south end of the claim group was about three and a half miles north of the Yukon's border with British Columbia.

Access to the property was from Mile 106 by a 12-mile truck road west to the old Dalton Post, across the Tatshenshini River and southwest to the property.

Whitehorse-based consulting geologist Bob Hilker described the Tatshenshini as the main obstacle because of the river's swiftness and depth during spring run-off and when flash flooding occurs during the rain storms in the surrounding mountains.

The nearest community to the property was Haines Junction at Mile 159 where the Haines Road intersects the Alaska Highway. Services available at Dezadeash Lodge, located at Historical Mile 125 on the Haines Road, include food, lodging, minor repairs, gasoline and telephone from May through October.

Jackpot Copper's glory days petered out as do most penny stock plays, and Jimmy Kane was not known to have suffered any more windfalls. But he did live in his hale and hearty state to about 1986, reaching the calculated age of 103. He was laid to rest at Champagne, which hosts a large Indian burial ground complete with individual spirit houses.

Kane Creek (NTS map 115A), a namesake of the Kane family, flows into Village Creek, which flows into the Tatshenshini River near the site of their old homeplace, Nesketaheen. The ancient village, once an important rendezvous trading point between coastal and interior Indians prior to the white man's arrival, was deserted for unknown reasons in the early 1900s.

Jimmy Kane and his brother Bobby Kane, both prospectors in the Dezadeash area, were inducted into the Yukon Prospectors' Association's Hall of Fame in 1988. Their names are inscribed on a brass plate attached to the Hall of Fame artpiece on display in the foyer of the Yukon government administration building. Their names also are engraved in the base of the bronze prospector statue that watches over downtown Whitehorse from Main Street and

Third Avenue.

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See related articles *George Holt: First White Man Over the Chilkoot Pass; Edmond Bean Led First Prospecting Party Over Chilkoot Pass; George Finch: One of First Prospectors, 1873-74; The Trading Trio of Arthur Harper, Al Mayo and Jack McQuesten.*

For further information about Dalton see Jane Gaffin's article titled *Jack Dalton: The North's Invincible Hero No Gunslinger* at <http://www.diarmani.com>

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