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ALASKA'S INDEPENDENTLY OWNED NEWSPAPER

READING THE NORTH Books by or about Alaskans

Icebound Empire, Third Edition

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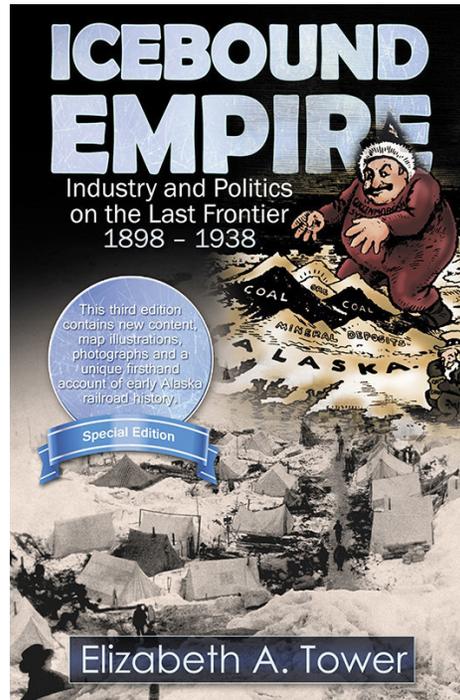
Old Stone Press, \$24.95

Kindle edition, \$9.99

The blurb: Icebound Empire is about industry and politics on the Last Frontier. It is the epic story of three men caught up in the early 20th-century battle for control of Alaska's land and resources. George Cheever Hazelet, Stephen Birch and David Henry Jarvis were prime movers in the most ambitious early Alaska development initiative — the Morgan-Guggenheim Alaska Syndicate. These three men convinced New York investors to provide capital to build the Kennecott copper mines and the Copper River and Northwestern Railway, but opposition from political opportunists, Eastern conservationists and muckraking journalists stifled further industrial development on the Last Frontier.

Excerpt: Introduction

Icebound Empire gold lured thousands of men and women north in 1898 to Alaska, a vast, underdeveloped subcontinent that the United States had owned for 30 years but made little effort to understand or develop. Most of the gold seekers retreated to their home states or countries after a year or two of adventure and privation but a few stayed, captivated by the challenges that this new land presented. These new Alaskans assumed naively that Alaska could be developed by the same means that had been successful in developing the western states. They expected the federal government to be generous in granting land for mines and farms, and in subsidizing private railroads. But times had changed. Populist movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries viewed big business, especially railroad trusts, with suspicion. Furthermore, Easterners, seeing that most of



the land in their states was already privately owned, started advocating that more federal land in the West should be reserved for public use. Icebound Empire tells the stories of three men whose plans for developing Alaska were thwarted or altered by the trust-busters, muckrakers and conservationists of the early twentieth century.

George Cheever Hazelet came north in 1898, fell in love with the land, and stayed to mold modern Alaska. Hazelet and his partner, A.J. Meals, reached the interior rivers by dragging sleds over Valdez Glacier rather than by climbing the more popular Chilkoot Pass. They never reached the Klondike, but were among the few that found and developed gold mines in the Copper River country. Hazelet's vision for Alaska transcended mining and spurred him on to build cities where families like his could live better lives.

Captain David Henry Jarvis acquired a comprehensive understanding of Alaska's potential while serving as an officer in the United States Revenue Marine from 1887 to 1902 and as customs collector for Alaska from 1902 to 1905. Jarvis' bravery and executive ability earned him nationwide popularity and the respect of President Theodore Roosevelt, but also marked him as a target for vicious muckraking.

Stephen Birch found his fortune in Alaska — in copper rather than gold. With the assistance of wealthy friends he succeeded in developing highly productive copper mines, but took the profits from those mines elsewhere when the federal government blocked further industrial development in Alaska.

These three men were associated in the most ambitious of the early Alaska development schemes, the Morgan-Guggenheim Alaska Syndicate, and were implicated in its most dramatic episode — the shootout in Keystone Canyon near Valdez. This volume also contains brief biographical sketches of other developers and politicians who cooperated with, or opposed, Hazelet, Jarvis and Birch during their efforts to build an industrial empire in Alaska.

(George Cheever Hazelet wrote): North to Alaska, February 17, 1898 — Left home this day for Alaska, 4:35 PM. Have thought before that I had endured many hard things in this life, but never came across anything like parting from my family. I walked to school with my boys to say goodbye out of sight of my wife.... The only thought that keeps me up is that I am going for the good of them and their darling mother.... I left the house with dire forebodings, but somehow since the train has pulled out, I have gained confidence, and especially determination. Determination to go forward and make one great effort to place my family on the plane to which they belong.