

Red and Yellow Gold

Mining and fishing became Alaska's major industries as whale oil drastically declined in value and demand for furs diminished.

Untapped Wealth

Except for furs, the Russians did little to exploit the resources in their North American colony. They promoted the fish and mineral resources during negotiations to sell Alaska. Americans were already capitalizing on fish caught in Alaskan waters and gold fever had set in with the 1849 California Gold Rush.

Yellow Gold

American prospectors headed to Alaska as soon as the Treaty of Cession was signed. They found gold south of Sitka and organized Alaska's first mining district. An enterprising mining engineer, George Pils, hired Tlingits to bring him ore samples and sent prospectors to investigate promising sites. Hired by Pils, Chief Kawa'ée guided Joe Juneau and Richard Harris to the gold near present-day Juneau. This discovery spurred searches for gold across Alaska and many rich deposits were found.



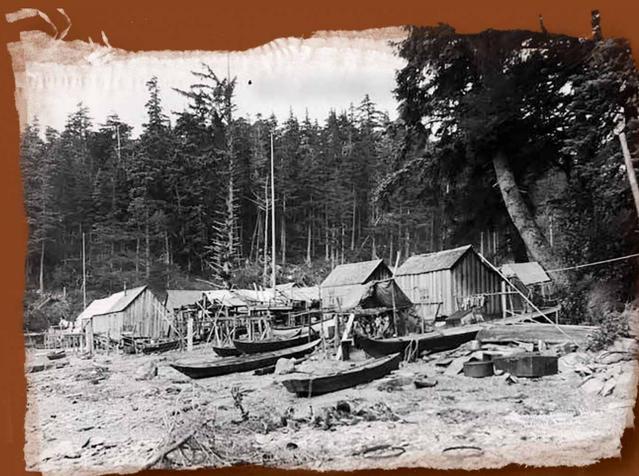
Chief Kawa'ée
Photo courtesy Alaska State Library, ASL-P45-0124, and Clarence L. Andrews Photograph Collection, ca. 1890-1900, ASL-PCA-45

Red Gold

After the Treaty of Cession was signed, more fishing ships headed to Alaska's waters. A market for canned salmon grew rapidly, so companies built canneries and hired an international workforce. Native people worked long hours at dangerous jobs for low wages, while having their claims to fishing streams ignored. Some canneries obstructed river mouths, hindering fish passage to spawning grounds until the U.S. Government created fish reserves and outlawed barricades at the mouths of the streams.



George Pils
Photo courtesy Alaska State Library, ASL-P45-0124, and Clarence L. Andrews Photograph Collection, ca. 1890-1900, ASL-PCA-45



Summer Tlingit fishing village for employees of salmon cannery, Funter Bay, Alaska, 1915.
Photo courtesy Alaska State Library, ASL-P45-0124, and Clarence L. Andrews Photograph Collection, ca. 1890-1900, ASL-PCA-45

Timeline:

March 30, 1867	April 9, 1867	June 20, 1867	October 18, 1867	July 27, 1868	July 27, 1868	August 1, 1868	August 15, 1868
Seward and de Stoeckl negotiate Treaty of Cession	U.S. Senate ratifies treaty	Russia and U.S. exchange ratifications	Ceremonial transfer of territory at Sitka	Congress appropriates \$7.2 million to complete purchase	Congress passes Customs Act for Alaska	U.S. Treasury issues check	Russia cashes check

150th Anniversary
Alaska Treaty of Cession
1867~2017