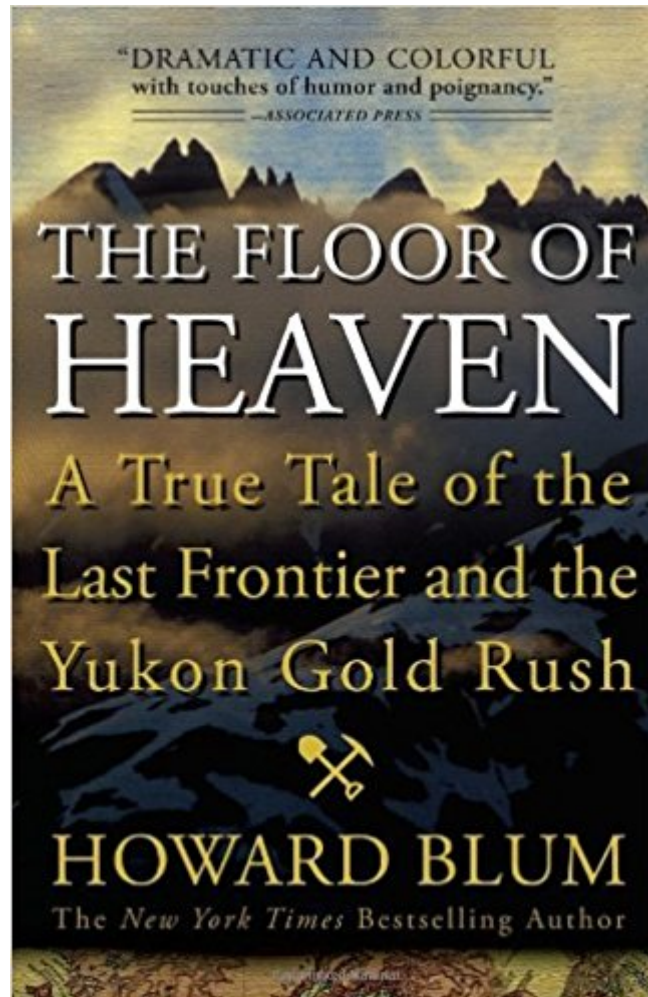


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The Floor Of Heaven: A True Tale Of The Last Frontier And The Yukon Gold Rush



Synopsis

It is the last decade of the 19th century. The Wild West has been tamed and its fierce, independent and often violent larger-than-life figures – “gun-toting wanderers, trappers, prospectors, Indian fighters, cowboys, and lawmen” – are now victims of their own success. They are heroes who’ve outlived their usefulness. But then gold is discovered in Alaska and the adjacent Canadian Klondike and a new frontier suddenly looms – an immense unexplored territory filled with frozen waterways, dark spruce forests, and towering mountains capped by glistening layers of snow and ice.

“Klondicitis,” a giddy mix of greed and lust for adventure, ignites a stampede. Fleeing the depths of a worldwide economic depression and driven by starry-eyed visions of vast wealth, tens of thousands rush northward. Joining this throng of greenhorns and grifters, whores and highwaymen, sourdoughs and seers are three unforgettable men. In a true-life tale that rivets from the first page, we meet Charlie Siringo, a top-hand sharp-shooting cowboy who, after futilely trying to settle down with his new bride, becomes one of the Pinkerton Detective Agency’s shrewdest; George Carmack, a California-born American Marine who’s adopted by an Indian tribe, raises a family with a Taglish squaw, makes the discovery that starts off the Yukon Gold Rush – and becomes fabulously rich; and Soapy Smith, a sly and inventive predator-conman who rules a vast criminal empire. As we follow this trio’s lives, we’re led inexorably into a perplexing mystery. A fortune in gold bars has somehow been stolen from the fortress-like Treadwell Mine in Juneau, Alaska, with no clues as to how the thieves made off with such an immensely heavy cargo. To many it appears that the crime will never be solved. But the Pinkerton Agency has a reputation for finding the answers that elude others. Charged with getting the job done is Charlie Siringo who discovers that, to run the thieves to ground, he must embark on a rugged cross-territory odyssey that will lead him across frigid waters and through a frozen wilderness. Ultimately, he’ll have his quarry in his sights. But then an additional challenge will present itself. He must face down Soapy Smith and his gang of 300 cutthroats. Hanging in the balance: George Carmack’s fortune in gold. At once a compelling true-life mystery and an unforgettable portrait of a time in America’s history when thousands were fired with a vision of riches so unimaginable as to be worth any price, *The Floor of Heaven* is also an exhilarating tribute to the courage and undaunted spirit of the men and women who helped shape America.

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Customer Reviews

I've never written a book review before, so excuse me if I'm not on par with the other reviewers. I'm a modern guy and I like TV more than anything, so my measure of a book is how engrossing it is and how much it manages to pry me away from the television. "The Floor of Heaven" is pretty damn good. The back of the book compares it to "a horseless-carriage episode of 24." I've never watched 24, but I can definitely see them squeezing one or two seasons out of this book for television. What's hard is trying to criticize this book. It's based on a true story. So, I'm looking at how it's presented, and if it's a story worth listening to. The answer to both is, "Yes." First we're introduced to the three main characters a Cowboy, a Conman, and a Dreamer, and they are very interesting individuals. Once I was invested, I couldn't wait for all three to crash into each other in Alaska. There are a handful of really great tales inside, but the main story is the "Great Gold Robbery" in the middle of the book. That part is what peeled me away from the TV for the longest time. It's pretty ingenious how the thieves stole the gold, and tracking down the perpetrators has the detectives tossed around Alaska and in some tight spots. "Is this book going to turn into Treasure of the Sierra Madre?" I thought it would, but no it doesn't. Greed plays only a tiny part. I was going to give this book 4-Stars. I thought I'd learn about all the different techniques prospectors used for mining gold or how they survived in the wilderness. There wasn't much new to learn. I'm giving it 5-Stars, because Charlie Siringo is my new hero. He's not Batman, he's just a cowboy/detective with his wits, and he favors caution over resorting to violence.

I am, like a previous reviewer, a tour guide and naturalist in Alaska and the Yukon. Let's get straight to the point: this book is lying when it claims to be "A True Tale Of The Last Frontier And The Yukon Gold Rush". The author clearly made up events. Just as offensive to us who love this northern

region, the author didn't even bother to learn some basics about the area's geography and ecology...and so he gets some things very wrong. Observe:p. 106 "Dark herd of walrus pounded through the water like a freight train. And beyond the horizon...was the gold town of Juneau, Alaska". Walrus do not live anywhere near Juneau and the Inside Passage; they live far away on the western Alaska coasts of the Bering Sea and Chukchi Sea. The author should have spent 10 seconds looking at a walrus range map, easily Googled.p. 216 Describing a whale hunt: ""Sighting carefully, he took a bead on a broad spot right behind where he imagined the gills might be." Whales don't even have gills. Fish have gills, and whales are not fish - they are mammals.p. 217 After sailing into an inlet, "A swift inland river pulled them along to the banks of an Indian village." A swift river never pulls the boat along when you go upstream from salt water; just the opposite - the downstream current fights you and tries to push you back out to the coast.p. 257 The author states that the Klondike (aka Thronduke) River is 50 miles north of the settlement of Fortymile. Wrong - it is near Dawson City, way SOUTH of the old Fortymile village. Look at any map; the Klondike River enters the Yukon River near Dawson City.p. 286 Describing George Carmacks out prospecting: "As before, George was pulled toward Eldorado Creek.

Howard Blum is candid about his intent with the writing of *The Floor of Heaven*. In his note on sources he says he wanted to write a true story about the early days of the old west and of the far north. "True" is a key word here because stories of that period are notoriously embellished by participants and observers. Finding the truth in the accounts of the time is a treacherous journey. Blum knows this and realized from the outset that he would have to proceed cautiously. I believe he has assembled his material, carefully vetted it, and written his story as he intended it to be. It is fine investigative reporting. *The Floor of Heaven* is subtitled as a true tale of the American West and the Yukon gold rush. It's an intriguing story of three men very different in mind-set and integrity who eventually are drawn together by their individual aspirations. It's a story of a hard-working miner who strikes it big and needs the protection of a dedicated detective from a ruthless robber and con-man. Blum puts it all together in a masterful, exciting book. I got a true sense of the time frame. Even the font at the beginning of each chapter made me think "old west." The individuals were carefully crafted as genuine pioneer characters and the dialogue was authentic and believable. The events were familiar milestones in American history. It all came off believable, but I had a problem with the overall feel of the book. The author didn't draw me into the grit and turmoil of the old west and early Alaska. When I read Jack London my hands and feet become icy, I feel cold snow on my neck, and I smell a wood fire and frying bacon. I see spreads of impenetrable forest, heavy snow, and frigid

mountain peaks.

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