

# Games About Mining

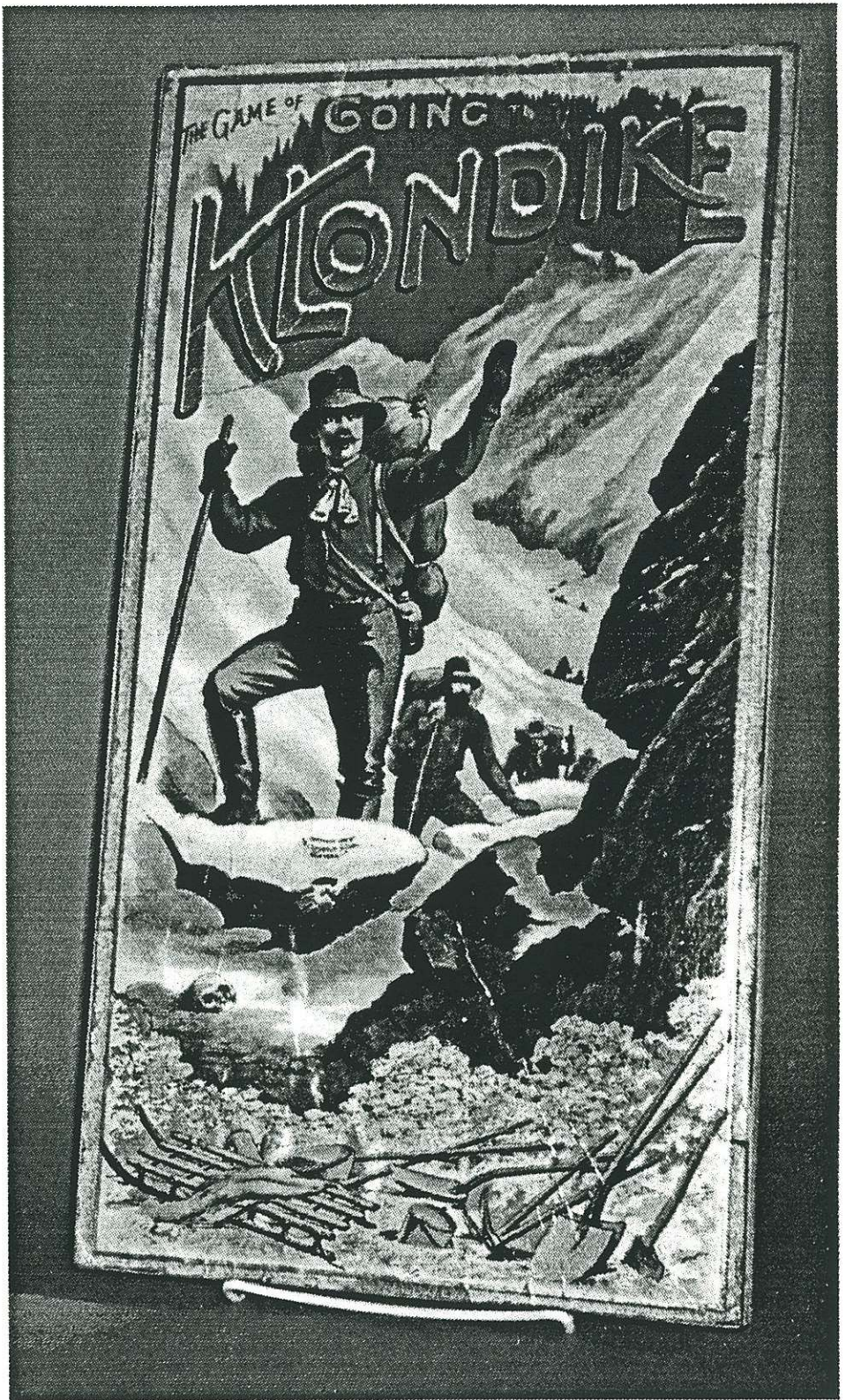
*Jim Van fleet*

The mining industry is not noted for its fun and games, and few would consider mining work as representative on an enjoyable pastime. However, the promise of wealth and the lure of adventure deep underground or in frozen, far-off places are an undeniable part of mining history and lore. And as with most phenomena that have seized the imagination of humans young and old, the mining theme found its way into games.

This article is by no means an exhaustive history or even a complete listing of games about mining. For an excellent start, I surveyed the members of the American Game Collectors Association, and Bill Alexander searched his computerized Game Catalog for the words "Klondike" and "gold." I retrieved the following listings related to gold mining. I've added brief annotations for games I am familiar with:

## **Game of Going to the Klondike**

McLoughlin Brothers, 1898. 10" X 19". Roy and Grace Olsen were kind enough to send me information and photographs of two large and beautiful games. This game box bears a beautiful and dramatic lithograph of miners crossing a snowy mountain pass, and stumbling upon the remains of a miner's camp; shovels, picks, gold pan, and \*heaps\* of gold nuggets. Almost lost in the splendor of it is the forlorn skull of the previous owner. The board itself is the typical track game, showing various routes to the Alaskan gold fields.



*Game of Going Klondike (box). Roy and Grace Olsen collection.*

## The Klondike Nugget Game

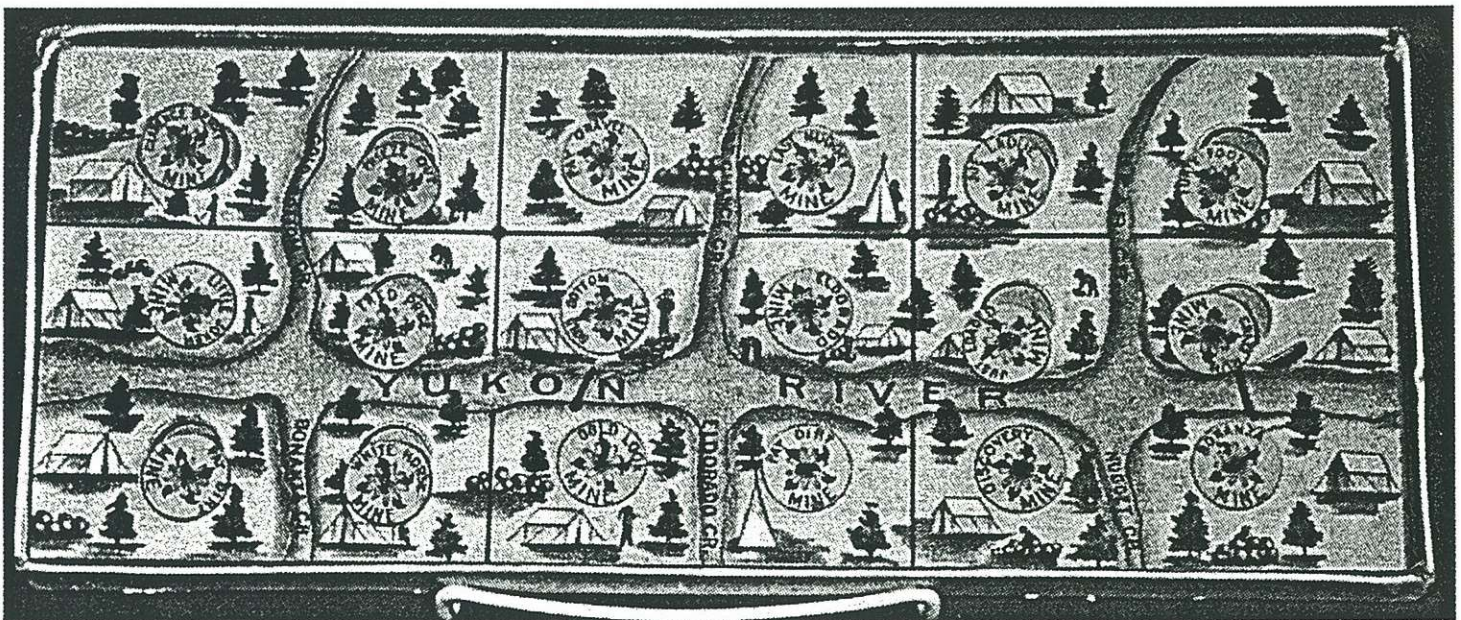
Maker and date unknown, c. 1895. 15" X 6". It can be seen that the fascination of the gold rush and the call of the Klondike at the end of the last century held a special appeal, and many parlor games tried to capture this excitement for those who had to stay at home. Most of these

games had little to do with the actual experience of mining in the Klondike and Yukon territories in 1895. The **Klondike Nugget Game** has a board which depicts mining camps neatly lining the Yukon River, into which flows such fanciful tributaries as "Eldorado Creek," "Bonanza Creek," and "Nugget Creek." The cover shows that same lucky miner, still

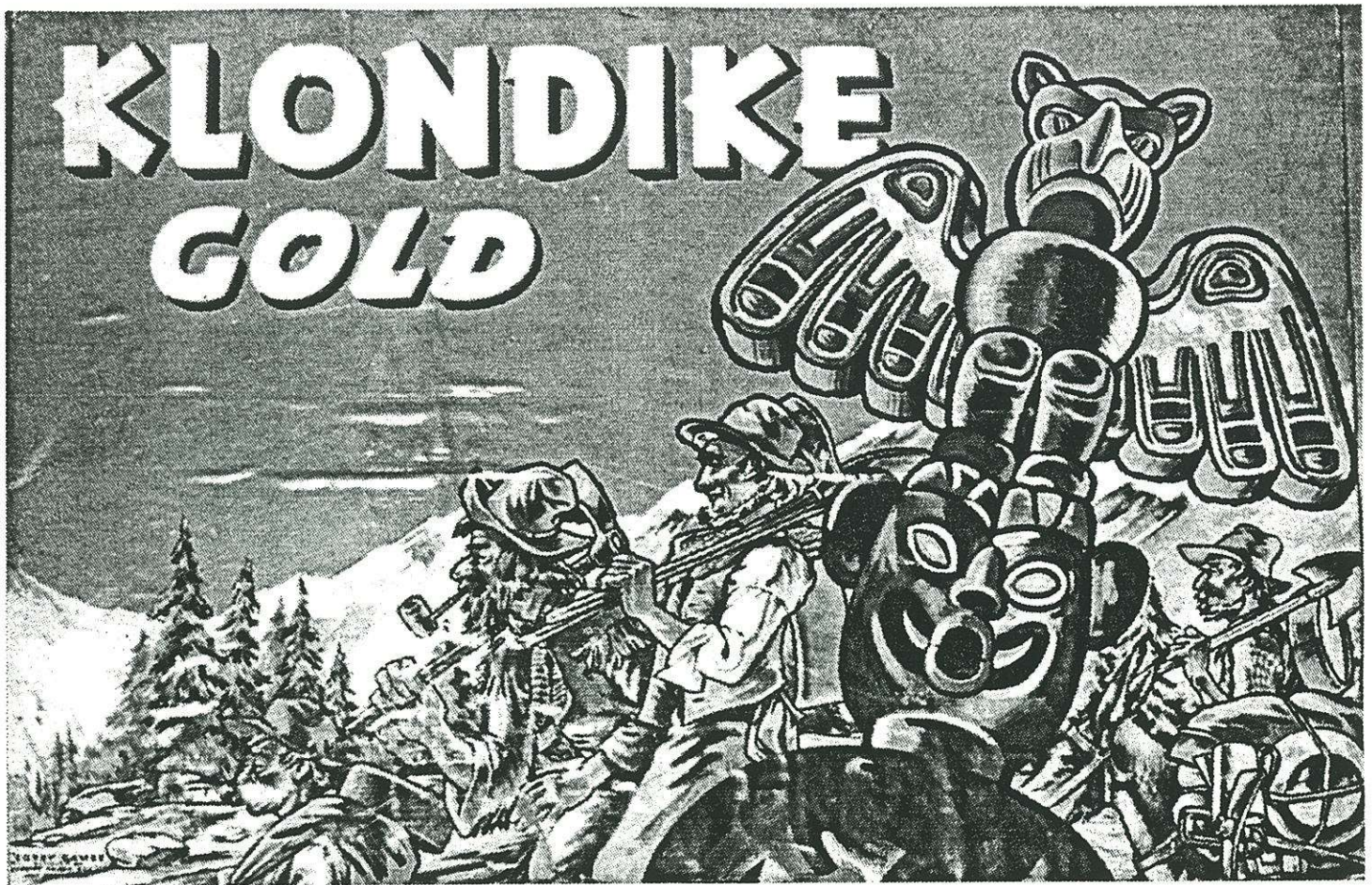
hauling around "The Boss Nugget". The sunset over the mountains is nothing less than an aurora proclaiming "GOLD". This game might have actually been fun to play; the instructions describe the board setup, with hidden gold nuggets and "mine covers." Players took turns opening the mines with small "pick axe" implements.



*The Klondike Nugget Game (box). Roy and Grace Olsen collection.*



*Klondike Nugget Game (board). Roy and Grace Olsen collection.*



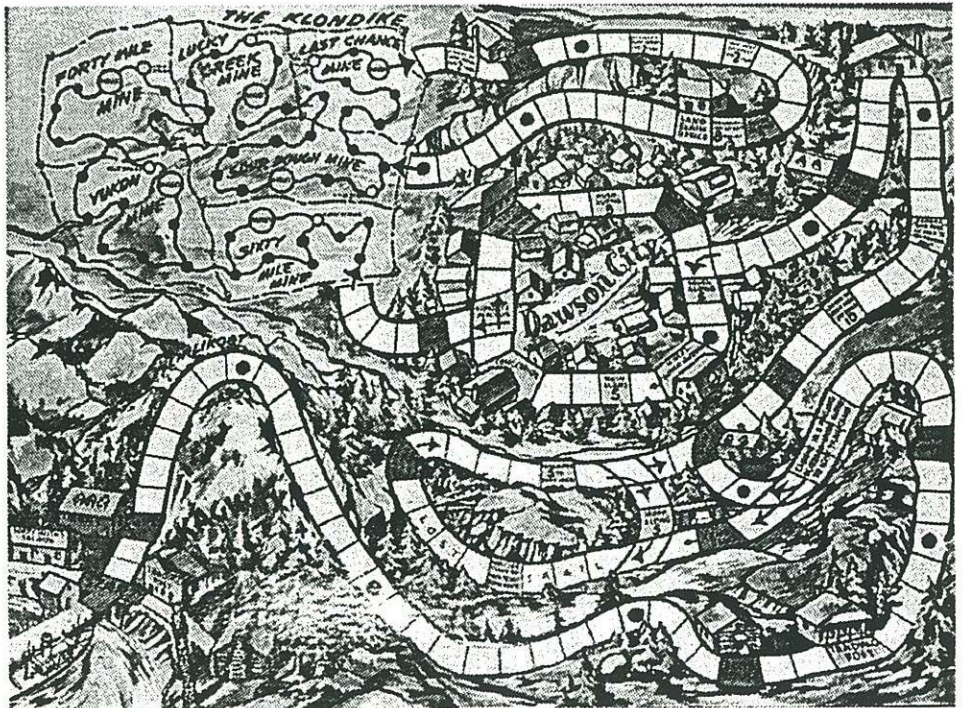
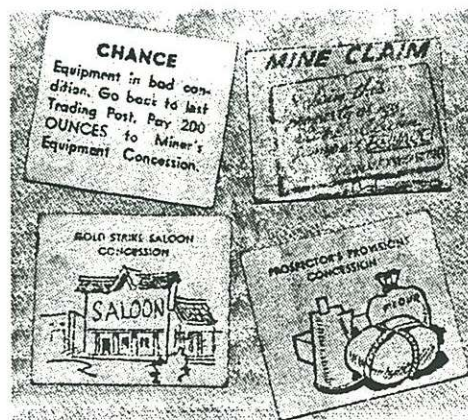
*Klondike Gold: game box (above), cards (below left), and board (below right).*

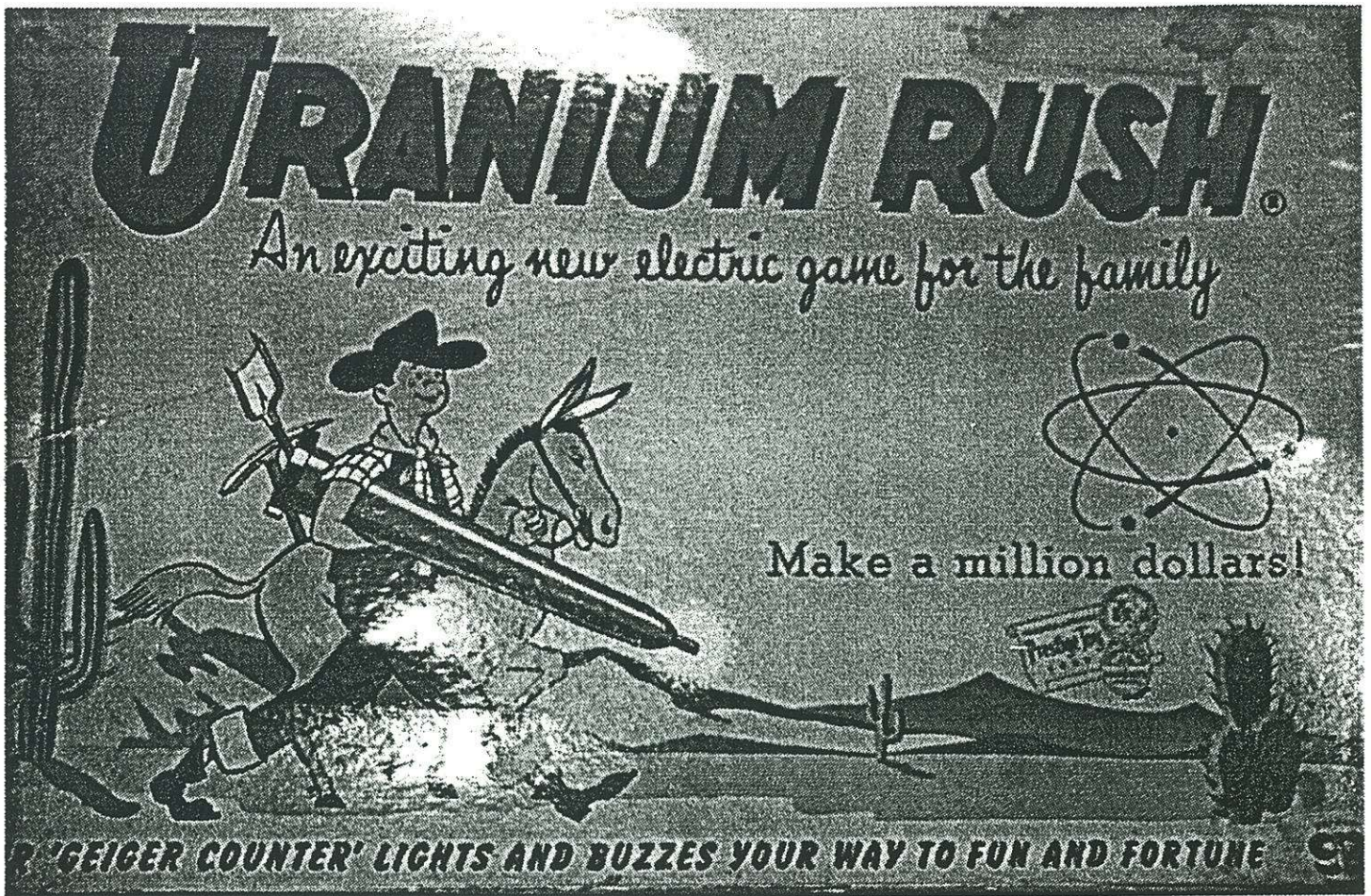
## Klondike Gold

Corey Game Co. (Division of Quality Paper box Co.), Boston, MA, 1943. The large game box (15" X 22 1/2") has rather garish artwork, and shows more blue sky than a Klondike miner probably saw in a year. The game is a typical track game, from the Alaskan port town of Skagway, over the Chilkoot Pass and on to the Klondike.

The playing cards for this game caricature the hardships and necessities of the prospector's life; high prices

for essential goods and supplies, the danger of claim jumpers, and the need for a good saloon!





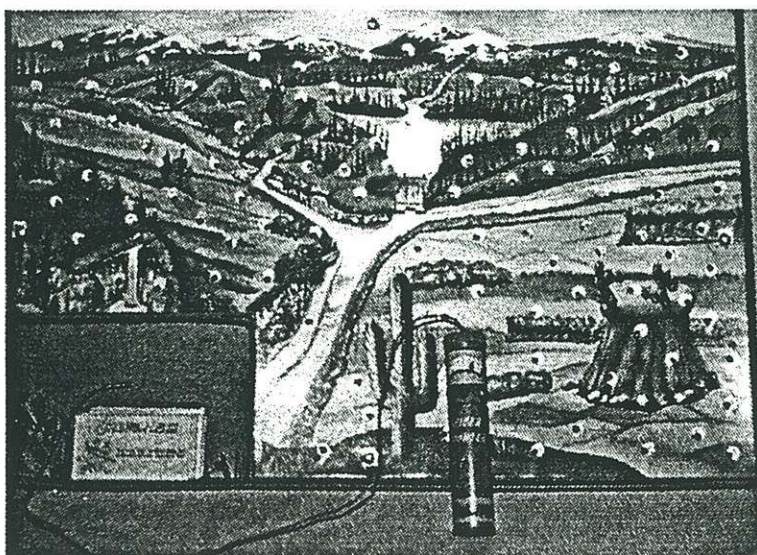
I have Bruce Whitehill, AGCA member, author, and self-styled "big Game hunter," to thank for a much more recent entry into the category of mining games, reflecting more modern tastes in precious minerals:

### Uranium Rush

Gardner Games, Chicago, c.1955. 14" X 21 1/4". This is an

electric game, complete with a geiger counter" implement for checking the radioactivity of the holes in the board!

The playing cards show that even as late as the 1950's, the problems and hardships of the miner still revolved around claim jumping, staying out of jail, and taking care of some pretty expensive equipment!



## Klondike Puzzle

Novelty Capsule Co., c. 1880. Thanks to Erika Wilson for a description of this game. The box measures 2 5/8" X 6 1/4", and reads:

The object of this game is to get the three gold bugs into Klondike through the pass.

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Patent applied for  
Novelty Capsule Co.  
Alliance, O.  
Price 10 cents

"This puzzle is a family piece and must have been my grandfather's when he was a child in the 1870's. It is made of quite sturdy cardboard, with yellow paper glued over.

The inside floor of the box has a little naturalistic colored geographical print with the following labeled: Skaguay [sic] Trail, Chilcoot Pass, Yukon River. The raised, gold cup in the center - made of cardboard - is gold painted and lettered KLONDIKE inside.

Only one of the original gold bugs survives, a lead-weighted 'jumping bean.'"

## Game of Klondike or a Trip to the Gold Fields of Alaska

(by Chas. W. Kennard)  
American Toy Co., c. 1897.

## The Klondike Miner

Milton Bradley, c. 1900.

## The Gold Hunter

Milton Bradley, c. 1900. The small box depicts a lone miner panning for gold.

## The Gold Rush

Gold Mine Card Co., Fenton, Michigan, [nd]. This card game may be unique, in that the dark blue box cover accurately depicts a miner wearing a cloth cap and oil wick lamps, as used by Michigan miners.

## Game of Klondike

E.I. Horsman, 1897. Roy and Grace Olsen sent a photograph of this card game, with numbered cards showing famous gold-camp personalities and the necessary tools of the trade.

One could not make it over the winter passes to the Alaskan gold fields without card No. 5, that essential pack animal, the "burrough" [sic].

## The Gold Hunters: a Game of Adventure

Parker Brothers, c. 1902. This is typical of the glamourization of the quest for gold. The 13 3/4" square box lid shows the obligatory vignette of a miner who has panned out a huge nugget of gold. There is a second vignette of a hardy northern hunter or guide, and the background is scenery around the Yukon River.

## Klondike

Parker Brothers, 1895.

## Klondike Puzzle

Parker Brothers, 1898.

Coal mining, much less glamorous than the search for precious metals, is depicted in very few games. The major game manufacturers probably saw little profit to be made from a game idealizing the gritty, dangerous occupation of mining coal. Of course, this is my own favorite historical subject, and I still hope some of our readers can advise me of any board or card games depicting coal mining. The only item in my collection is a wooden sliding puzzle advertising the products of a local coal company.

## Acknowledgments:

Thanks again to AGCA members Bill Alexander, Toy and Grace Olsen, Bruce Whitehill, and Erika Wilson for their assistance, information, and interest.

## References:

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