



Alaska State Legislature

1975

Source:

HCR 69

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 69

Congratulating the White Pass & Yukon Route on the occasion of its Diamond Jubilee.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS July 29, 1975 marks the 75th anniversary of the completion of the famed White Pass & Yukon Railroad built to provide transportation to the Klondike gold fields; and

WHEREAS the first rails were laid on May 27, 1898 in Skagway; never were there fewer than 1,000 men, and sometimes as many as 1,900, employed in laying the rails to the summit of White Pass, a distance of 20 miles by rail; it was a monumental undertaking: the roadbed had to be hand hewn and blasted out of granite for almost every one of those miles; over 450 tons of explosives were used between Skagway and Lake Bennett, British Columbia, 40 miles from tidewater on the Lynn Canal at the head of Southeast Alaska's "Inside Passage"; and

WHEREAS, on February 16, 1899, rails reached the summit; by July 6 of that year the Skagway to Lake Bennett section was completed; within the next year materials were shipped down the lakes to Whitehorse, the head of navigation on the Yukon River, and construction started south from Whitehorse and north from Bennett; the rails finally were joined July 29, 1900, at Carcross, thus linking Skagway and Whitehorse with 110 miles of steel; and

WHEREAS, because enormous amounts of material had to be moved to the construction camps on the Alaska Highway, the U. S. Army took control of the railroad at the outbreak of World War II; when it was returned to its owners at war's end, the roadbed was rebuilt and rolling stock had been added; and

WHEREAS the 1950's brought "containerization" of freight and the replacement of steampower by diesel; today the railroad is a year-round operation hauling the majority of the freight entering the Yukon and Northern British Columbia and large amounts of lead, zinc ore and asbestos from the Yukon and B.C.; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the hauling of freight, the railroad provides daily passenger service and during the summer months is best known to the traveling public because this unique narrow gauge railway enables thousands of tourists annually to view the spectacular vistas of mountains and canyons visible from along the "Route of the Trail of '98"; without question, this railroad trip is one of the scenic wonders not to be missed by visitors to Alaska and the Yukon;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that 75 years after the driving of the "Golden Spike" at Carcross, on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of the White Pass & Yukon Route, it pauses to acknowledge the enormous contribution this railroad, and the other transportation services in addition to rail the parent company now provides -- maritime, pipeline and truck -- have made to the development of Alaska and the Yukon; the White Pass & Yukon Route has, in fact, become one of the historic landmarks of this "Great Land" that we proudly share with our Canadian neighbors, particularly those residing in the Yukon Territory and the Province of British Columbia.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the President and Chairman of the Board of the White Pass & Yukon Route, Ltd.; to the superintendents of the railroad in Skagway and Whitehorse; and to the respective mayors of Whitehorse, Carcross, and Skagway.