

The railroad hauls to the summit of the pass for one cent a pound or one-half of the toll authorized by Secretary Bliss for the privilege of dragging one's own freight over the toll road. The freighters carry for two cents a pound from the summit to Bennett. The expenses of the round trip are about \$20; receipts under best conditions, which are the exception, may amount to \$200. If there were a sufficient quantity of freight there would be a bonanza in the business for a freighter with ten or more four-horse teams. As it is, the freighters alternate between excessive earnings and inability to pay their teamsters or other bills, none of them being organizations with large capital. The snow trail is not in good condition until February and begins to soften the latter part of April. The lakes are deep and well warmed during the long summer days, but in early winter the first sharp frost covers them with a thin crust of ice. On this a blanket of snow falls, which delays further freezing and presses the thin ice below the water, so that beneath the snow there is oftentimes slush two or three feet deep. Horses and men break through the upper snow, and the resulting wetting is dangerous with the thermometer 20° or more more below zero and the wind blowing.

The railroad is a great example of engineering and constructive skill. It would have been a great feat to grade forty miles and build twenty over a similar rocky pass under the most favorable conditions, but this work was done in seven months, in a region without laborers, one thousand miles from supplies, three to four thousand miles from rolling mills and car shops, and against fearful climatic conditions. Day after day fresh snow drifted over the road bed and day after day it had to be shovelled off, sometimes to a depth of six to eight feet. Supplies, bridge timbers, fire wood even, for the enormous camps had to be carried over almost impassable snow trails. There were days when men could not work on account of the storms or the intense cold, but they had to be fed and warmed.

The road begins on deep water, a mile from Skagway. A shelf is blasted along the face of the cliff, and this beginning is typical of the twenty miles to the summit. High above the valley, on a maximum grade almost the whole distance, the road sweeps around two different forks of the Skagway river, adding six miles to its length but making it possible to reach the summit of 2,885 feet without switch back. It has however been questioned by able engineers whether this was the best location. The strata dip from east to west, and the other side of the valley would give a stable instead of unstable ledge. The west side is also the sunny and protected side, freer from ice and snow,