

# Minto Detachment, Yukon Territory

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Minto Detachment, 1949-1954, must be one of the shortest-lived detachments on record. Only two members were ever stationed there, and few residents of the Yukon today know of its existence. For this reason, I think it is worth reporting on.

Many years had passed since the Yukon goldrush, but the pulse of the territory remained strong. Dawson City, capital and hub of the gold fields, and Whitehorse, terminal point of the White Pass Railway from Skagway, Alaska, provided a reasonable economy. The Yukon River and its large tributaries served as highways. The CN telegraph line to Dawson through Whitehorse provided the communication link within the Yukon and with the outside world. World War II was over, and events that would affect Yukon residents were getting ready to unfold.

Completed in 1943, the Alcan Highway opened up the Yukon to the south and it wasn't long before the quantity and quality of available goods improved substantially. The Warnake silver and lead mines in the Mayo area were sold to the United Keno Hill Mines, and the production of ore concentrate increased dramatically. Steamboats carried passengers and freight on the river system from Whitehorse to Dawson and Mayo, and on their return trips, brought the ore concentrate to be shipped by rail to Skagway and by ocean liners south for refining. Heavily loaded and pushing 100-ton

barges, these steamboats burned cordwood to produce steam and their progress upriver was very slow because of frequent stops to load the cordwood by hand. The repeated handling of the ore from shore to boat at Mayo, from small boats to large boats at Stewart, and from boat to rail in Whitehorse was very costly. The mining company lobbied for a highway connecting Mayo to Minto, a distance of 90 miles which would allow the ore to be trucked in hours rather than days by paddle wheel. Construction of the road began in 1948. Anticipating Minto as its terminus, a new townsite was laid out on the flat valley floor, one mile back from the river. An airstrip long enough to accommodate DC 3s and larger aircraft was constructed adjacent to the river. The Government fire warden, Larry Requa, was the first tenant of the new townsite. His station consisted of a one-bedroom frame house, a garage/ware-



Minto Detachment office in corner of living room, 1950.