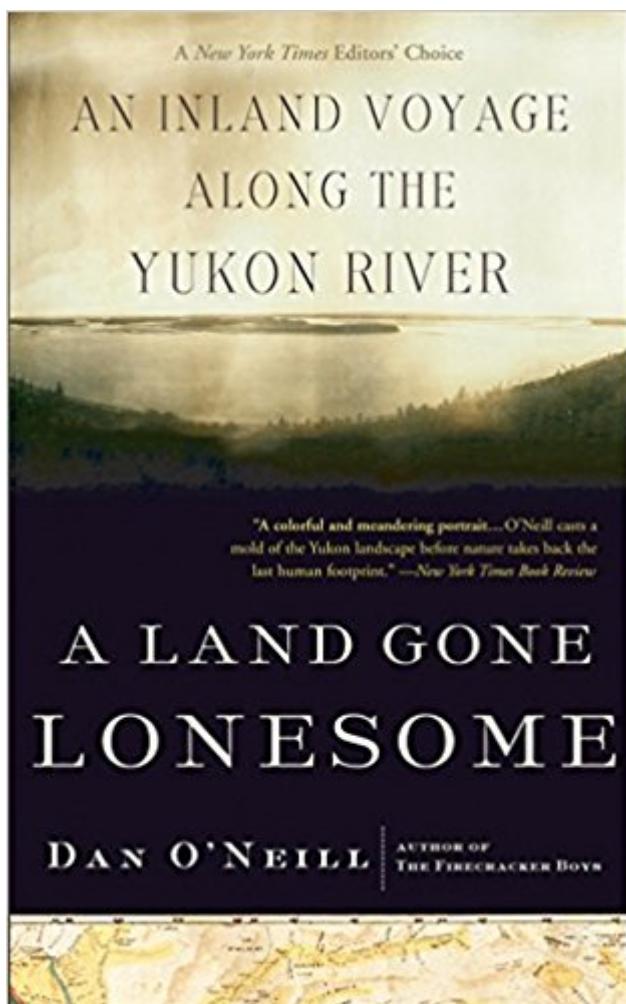


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# A Land Gone Lonesome: An Inland Voyage Along The Yukon River



## Synopsis

In his square-sterned canoe, Alaskan author Dan O'Neill set off from Dawson, Yukon Territory, onetime site of the Klondike gold rush, to trace the majestic Yukon River. His journey downriver to Circle City, Alaska, is an expedition into the history of the river and its land, and a record of the inimitable and little known inhabitants of the region. With the distinct perspective of an insider, *A Land Gone Lonesome* gives us an intelligent, rhapsodic-and ultimately, probably the last-portrait of the Yukon and its authentic inhabitants.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Outdoorsman O'Neill (*The Last Giant of Beringia*) steers his canoe through the history and topography of the Yukon River, which runs through Canada and Alaska, letting its course carry his witty travelogue. Drawing from legend, interview and observation, he evokes the river's rustic majesty and the spartan dignity of its vestigial towns, briefly fed by the frenzied Gold Rush of the 1890s. His engaging account of the river's history punctuates its backwater charm, pulling readers into a realm of frigid wilderness and frontier stakeouts. He captures the hardiness of its scattered dwellers in vignettes of outmoded customs and bawdy tourist traditions, including the tale of someone chugging an amputated-toe cocktail in the Canadian town of Dawson. Exploring the conflict between nature and society, O'Neill writes of legendary holdouts (such as crusty Dick Cook, who he acknowledges was also a subject of John McPhee) who chafe at federal mandates that threaten their hardscrabble homesteads. O'Neill's meditations on the river branch into epic themes of self-reliance, heroism and humanity. Poetic renderings of creeks, camps and log cabin

settlements bestow a refined gloss on rough terrain, reviving the moribund spirit of the "ghost river connecting ghost towns." (June) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

O'Neill, who lives in a log cabin in Fairbanks, Alaska, chronicles his journey along the Yukon River in a canoe and his forays into the wilderness into which the river takes him. His exciting trip begins in Dawson, Yukon Territory, and ends in Circle City, Alaska. O'Neill gives readers a brief history of the land and then proceeds to describe the beauty of the woods, water, birds, bears, and bluffs. O'Neill is charmed by the characters he meets along the way, including Randy Brown, who lived in a six-by-nine-foot cabin before marrying a schoolteacher, and Charlie Kidd, who walked 120 miles in snowshoes over the Woodchopper Trail once a year rather than make the trip by boat or dog teams. Then there's Dick Cook, who "looked like a marooned pirate in Birkenstocks, a castaway scavenger of random goods." O'Neill's love of the land shines through on every page. George CohenCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book gave me a good view of bureaucracy at work. It's a before and after view of the rivers feeding the Yukon and the people living in a subsistence way of life. Gradually, as the government moved in and moved the subsistence folks out and now no one lives out there. A way of life destroyed. The river was full of life, but now with no one living out there, it's gone lonesome.

"A LAND GONE LONESOME" describes what happened in the years after "COMING INTO THE COUNTRY" depicted the alteration of life styles of "bush-dwellers, hermits, miners, trappers, and visitors to the region by the lawyers, politicians, and bureaucrats divvying up Alaska to make way for the pipeline from the North Slope. Shortly before McPhee's book, I kayaked through this region three times on my final journey of 2,000 miles down the river to the ocean, so these books were of interest and informative to me as I knew some of the people affected by the new rulings of government power. These books depict a lot about how those in political power use and abuse those powers to force their personal ideas and philosophies on others trying to escape the clutches of such webs of governmental control.

Ahh, the unintended consequences of self perpetuating bureaucracy. Alaska is different. Her parks and protected areas should be as well. Great narrative, incredible characters, and a harrowing bear

attack. Sad that my generation will be the last to witness people of this mettle- who are able to engage in a true subsistence lifestyle that requires the tenacity and character described in these pages.

Not what I thought, although a canoe is the chosen form of transport this book is more a history of the Yukon than a paddling adventure. If the Yukon and the adventurers who settled there are your interest this is great book if you are interested in canoe/kayak adventures then this is not the book for you. This came up on numerous website searches for canoe/kayak adventures so not the authors fault more poor classification.

In *A Land Gone Lonesome* Dan O'Neill floats the Yukon River area visited by John McPhee over 30 years earlier. The differences over time are striking as are the differences in the authors. While McPhee was a perceptive visitor spinning a great tale, O'Neill is a long time resident, and his narration reveals a deep love of the land coupled with a keen eye towards historical perspective. He discusses in detail the effects of the National Park Service's administration, or perhaps mis-administration. If you liked McPhee, you'll love O'Neill. O'Neill has a comfortable free-flowing style appropriate for a tale about Alaska's greatest river. If you are into rural lifestyles, Alaska history, the Yukon River, or Alaska wilderness - this is a must read.

Dan O'Neill is an adventurer, a historian, a "floater" (as Yukon River canoe campers are called), and an advocate for a people whose names may be last seen in these pages. This book is ostensibly a story about a float trip O'Neill makes from Dawson, in Canada's Yukon Territory, to Circle, in Alaska, through the Yukon Charley Rivers National Preserve, administered by the National Parks Service. Actually, it is seven trips condensed into one. O'Neill is the spiritual descendant of John McPhee, whom he quotes extensively as the base-line Yukon River interpreter. The reader may be forgiven if he believes that he will be treated to a combination of float trip travelogue and history of the places and people who make the country what it is. Little by little we learn that O'Neill wants to do more than report; he intends to make a statement and to leave an impact. O'Neill makes (and re-makes) a compelling case that the National Parks Service is egregiously mismanaging the wilderness it is supposed to be protecting. The NPS faces the same conflict in the Yukon Charley Rivers National Preserve that it has in other national parks. How do you preserve a natural area for people to enjoy in perpetuity when each person who visits incrementally damages the area? O'Neill argues that the Yukon Charley Rivers National Preserve differs so radically from the nation's other parks that it

requires fresh thinking and a more tailored conservation regime. The lament implicit in the title is that this dramatically attractive land, inhospitable as it is, once was home to scores of rugged, subsistence pioneers, and could safely be so again under a more creative land use policy. The enduring legacy of Dan O'Neill's book will not be his administrative prescriptions, though, but his deft, economical, and often sardonic descriptions of the land and its people. We learn a great deal about the geologic history of the region, including the fact that prior to the last ice age, the river ran southward, opposite its current direction. We learn where the gold-bearing strata are located and how they were exploited during the gold rush. We trap martin and lynx, and catch king salmon to feed ourselves and chum salmon to feed our dogs, We meet characters that couldn't conceivably be made up, like Dick Cook, whom we admire for his resourcefulness and indomitable spirit, and whose body we last see face down in the river that supported him. We poke through trash middens in a sort of contemporary archaeology, and learn how to handle irascible settlers and even more irascible grizzlies.O'Neill treats us to a world which few of us are likely ever to see. "Moose, wolf, and bear have signed the mud registry in recent weeks, and I make my own prints, climb the bank, and look for a trail..." He faithfully reports and interprets his observations and gently constructs his arguments. Regrettably, however, he is not a gifted writer, and this deficiency occasionally shows, as in his purple descriptions of scenery. "The river is molten gold...the sky is a dazzling, luminous yellow where fiery clouds flash gilded edges...then I remember that the whole spinning world is a miracle, and that sometimes reality dawns more golden than dreams." And then there is the occasional error that an editor should have caught, "Sudden death killed forty-four of the fifty-five Alaskans who died in boating accidents between 2001 and 2003..." The reader may well wonder how death can be the cause of death.I recommend "A Land Gone Lonesome" to armchair "floaters" and all who are curious about the forced depopulation of the upper Yukon watershed. You will meet the colorful denizens of a world just recently past, and the remarkable stage they have exited. And if you become motivated to visit the Yukon for yourself, you can thank McPhee and O'Neill for their contrasting depictions of the Yukon River and its fatal attraction.

My husband can't put this book down. Lots of great history and trip information that is very helpful for our trip.

Very interesting and educational especially for me who is not familiar with the history and geography of Alaska.It is amazing how this people who lived there fought for theirlives in this harsh enviroment.It is sorry that the goverment is more interested in searching for oil there that to preserve

this unic land and help more people who want to stay there.What I find a little negative in this book is the missing of photos of the Alascan landscape

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