



1-24-1880

Alaska. Its Mines and Other Resources, Described in a Lecture at Handel and Hayden Hall, by Prof. John Muir.

John Muir

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/jmb>

Recommended Citation

Muir, John, "Alaska. Its Mines and Other Resources, Described in a Lecture at Handel and Hayden Hall, by Prof. John Muir." (1880).
John Muir: A Reading Bibliography by Kimes. 656.
<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/jmb/656>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the John Muir Papers at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in John Muir: A Reading Bibliography by Kimes by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact mgibney@pacific.edu.

ALASKA.

Its Mines and Other Resources, Described in a Lecture at Handel and Haydn Hall, by Prof. John Muir.

Notwithstanding bad weather, the announcement of a lecture on the mines and resources of Alaska, by Prof. John Muir, drew a large audience to Handel and Haydn hall last night, among those present several being ladies.

The lecturer started out by showing the important part which glaciers perform in exposing the veins of mineral which are contained in the earth's crust, not by sinking shafts, but in eroding the mountains, wearing them away and laying bare the different strata. Other agencies, as atmospheric influences, drops of rain and torrents of water are continually making changes in the conformation of the surface of the earth, but none are so powerful as the immense mantle of ice which moves on and on forever, grinding away the mountains by its great weight, often equal to more than 100 tons to the square foot. The entire west coast of the American continent, from N. lat. 35 to Sitka, shows glacial action in an unmistakable manner. This whole region was once covered with a vast sheet or mantle of ice without any signs of animal or vegetable life. In the onward roll of ages the long winter began to break and the summer succeeding the glacial period to come on. It came slowly but steadily, and the ice fields began to melt and to move, first disappearing from the valleys, then from the sunny sides of the hills and mountains, until now of the sixty-five glaciers in California all are found on the shaded sides of the mountains. These glaciers in their movements wear off the material of the mountains and, grinding it up, the particles are carried down by the water to the bottoms of the canyons, and that not taken to the ocean and lost to man is deposited along the river in placers. The movement of the glaciers is so slow as to be almost imperceptible, some of those in the Sierras going at a rate not exceeding one mile in 500 years.

The speaker's description of the region of country embracing the gold and silver bearing sections of Mexico, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho and Montana, was graphic and full of interest, and he clearly showed that the geological and mineralogical formation in British Columbia and Alaska is the same, only the veins were more concealed by vegetable matter owing to the greater moisture prevailing and inducing the growth of vegetation. The mineral belt doubtless extends to Alaska and the mill on Baranoff Island near Sitka is on the same great lead as those in Nevada.

Of the resources of the Territory of Alaska other than gold and silver, he spoke briefly. Copper is found to some extent and may be discovered in paying quantities. Iron is abundant, whole mountains of almost pure iron ore being found in some parts, while along the coast and in all the rivers fish of different varieties abound. The whole country is timbered, and it is destined to become the greatest lumbering region of the world. Fur bearing animals are found in great numbers, and the tax paid by the Alaska Commercial company to the government on the fur seals caught is equivalent to four per cent. per annum on the seven millions paid for the territory. The agricultural resources are not great, though some food roots and vegetables are grown easily; cereals and fruits do not flourish.

In conclusion Prof. Muir thanked the people of Portland for their kind treatment of him, and the audience for attendance and attention, and bade them good-bye.