

A Book Review— **North of 53°**

**BAWDY, BRAWLING
ALASKA DREW BOTH SAINTS
AND SINNERS**

**"WARNING: A WORD TO THE
W I S E S H O U L D B E
S U F F I C I E N T . A L L
C O N F I D E N C E S H A R K S ,
B U N C O M E N , S U R E - T H I N G
M E N A N D A L L O T H E R
O B J E C T I O N A L C H A R A C T E R S
A R E N O T I F I E D T O L E A V E
S K A G W A Y A N D T H E W H I T E
P A S S . F A I L U R E T O C O M P L Y
W I T H T H E W A R N I N G W I L L B E
F O L L O W E D B Y P R O M P T
A C T I O N .
S I G N E D C O M M I T T E E O F
1 0 1 "**

The stakes were high — and they brought both scoundrels and heroes. In **NORTH OF 53°: The Wild Days of the Alaska-Yukon Mining Frontier 1870-1914** (Macmillan, January 2) William R. Hunt tells the story of the gold seekers who braved uncharted country, subarctic climate and swindlers' wiles to open America's northern frontier.

Hunt's people-centered history brings alive the rough, dangerous lives of the miners, showing how a variety of gold-smitten characters went about discovering digging, stealing and spending their wealth. It is also the story of the transformation of the prospectors into pioneers who built cities in the wilderness and created law and order.

Drawing from letters and diaries, newspapers and court records, Hunt recreates the bawdy world where a "Committee of 101" formed their own law to fight the crooked political machine of Skagway's notorious "Soapy" Smith, and where prostitutes brightened the miners' lives with diversions such as the annual "Pretzle Ball" held for faithful customers.

He introduces men like Ebenezer T. Barnette, founder of Fairbanks and swindler par excellence, Swiftwater Bill Gates, whose amorous adventures brought fame that outshone his millions, and "Tex" Rickard, who later left Nome's Northern Saloon to found Madison Square Garden. Writers Jack London, Robert Service and Rex Beach, Judges Will Ballou and James Wickersham, and the nameless men and women who survived the rigors to build a new civilization are other participants in the whirlwind saga of Alaska.

William R. Hunt, professor of history at the University of Alaska, has published over 30 articles and is an active member of eight historical societies. He has been commissioned by the national bicentennial committee to write the official state history of Alaska.

NORTH OF 53°

The Wild Days

of the Alaska-Yukon

Mining Frontier 1870-1914

by William R. Hunt

\$12.95

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