

Lines 471–74: “He learned to bite the ice out with his teeth when it collected between his toes; and when he was thirsty and there was a thick scum of ice over the water hole, he would break it by rearing and striking it with stiff fore legs. His most conspicuous trait was an ability to scent the wind and forecast it a night in advance.”

All of these activities—except for the ice-breaking—were also recorded by other Northland writers.

III. “THE DOMINANT PRIMORDIAL BEAST”

Line 505: “Lake Le Barge”

This thirty-mile-long lake—immortalized by Robert Service in his poem “The Cremation of Sam McGee”—was named by explorer William H. Dall in 1870 for Michael Laberge, who had been involved in the 1865 attempt to string a telegraph line across Alaska and the Bering Strait. Laberge never saw the lake that bears his name. American Indians in the region called it Kluk-tas-si, a name that has never been satisfactorily translated.

Line 505: “a wind that cut like a white-hot knife”

Laberge is notorious for its fierce winds. On 30 September 1897, Jack London and his partners were forced to pull into a cove to avoid destruction by a gale on the lake.

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