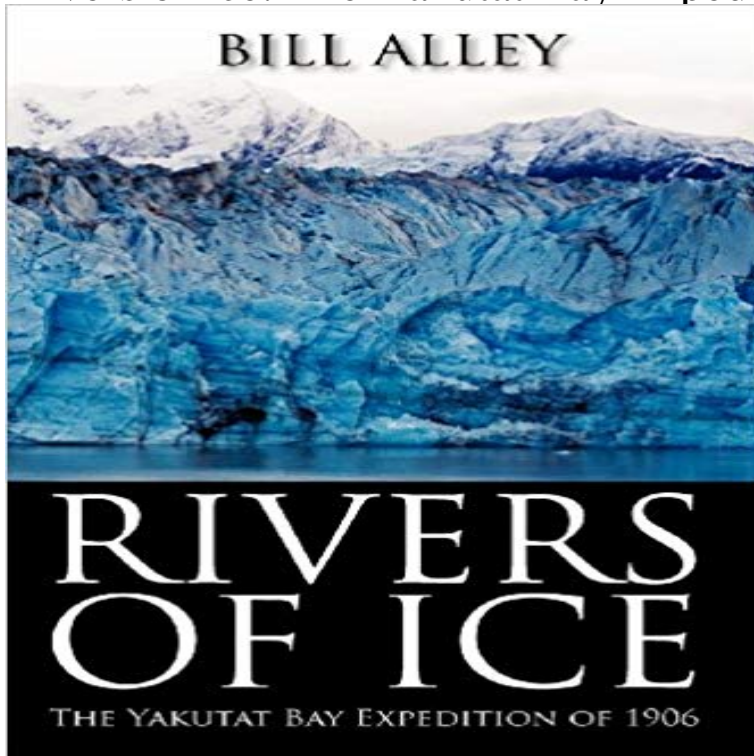


Rivers of Ice: The Yakutat Bay Expedition of 1906



In 1906 Cornell University Prof. Ralph S. Tarr, with the backing of the United States Geological Survey, led an expedition to Alaskas Yakutat Bay region to conduct the first thorough mapping and measurements of the many glaciers surrounding the bay. The mountains surrounding Alaskas Yakutat and Disenchantment Bays are some of the most heavily glaciated in the North America and boast the continents largest piedmont and tidal glaciers. Drawing heavily on the journals, diaries and letters of three of the expeditions participants, including the authors grandfather, Rivers of Ice describes the hardships, difficulties and disappointments of exploration in a barren land of ice, often in the words of the participants themselves. Great detail is given of the harsh conditions, ranging from nearly incessant rain, packing the many supplies up routes with no trails to places no human had ever before set foot, and a harrowing rescue of Prof. Tarr from entombment under a glacier after falling into a swift glacial stream. Rivers of Ice shines a light on the different perceptions of the native Tlingit that inhabit Yakutat. Prof. Tarr exhibits a nineteenth century prejudice toward the Tlingit which is seen in counterpoint to that of one of his local guides, Bill Thompson, who had spent years living among the natives. It was Thompsons objections to Tarrs racism that ultimately led to Thompsons break with Tarr at the expeditions conclusion. Rivers of Ice is liberally illustrated with photographs of the expedition and the village of Yakutat, taken by Bill Thompson and the expeditions young photographer.

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