On April 15, 1905, the day after he wrote this letter, Stanley died in Dawson’s Good Samaritan Hospital, of acute tuberculosis. He was twenty years old. Following his death, George left Dawson to accept the position as the first schoolteacher at the newly built St. John’s Episcopal Mission at Eagle Village, in Alaska, a hundred miles northwest of Dawson and just eleven miles west of the Canadian border.

**Government and Mission Teacher at Eagle, 1905–8**

In 1905, about 150 Alaska Natives lived at Eagle Village, and roughly thirty children attended the Episcopal mission school housed in St. John’s chapel. Three miles downriver from the village was Eagle City, incorporated in 1901. A trading post existed there by 1880, and settlers and prospectors began arriving after the Fortymile gold strike of 1886. The town soon grew into an important centre of transportation and commerce. Fort Egbert, built in 1899, became the US Army headquarters for the Alaska Interior, as well as the US customs port of entry from Dawson, and was the first station on the telegraph line through British Columbia to Dawson and Alaska. The line, built by the US Army Signal Corps for the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System, reached Eagle in 1900 and, by 1903, had been extended to St. Michael, Valdez, and Nome.

In 1900, Congress enacted the Alaska Civil Code, and Eagle was chosen as the seat of Alaska’s Third Judicial District. James Wickersham was appointed as judge for the district, which at the time covered the Interior as well as south-central Alaska. The appointment came without federal funding. Eagle had no school, court house, or public building, no wagon road or marked trail, until Wickersham levied and collected license fees to begin a program of construction. Prior to his arrival, Eagle had its own approach to justice. Communally elected settlers, miners, and traders held court, murderers were hanged, and lesser miscreants were dispatched “downriver” to any place other than Eagle. Wickersham’s first court sessions at Eagle were overwhelmed with cases involving alcohol smuggling, prostitution, and mining claims, which meant that trials were often severely delayed.

In 1899, news of the discovery of gold at Nome brought an end to the Klondike gold rush and drew prospectors away from Eagle. Only a few years later, gold was discovered at Fairbanks, further eroding the town’s population, and, in 1903, Judge Wickersham elected to move his court from Eagle to Fairbanks. Thus, by the time George arrived at Eagle, the town’s fortunes had declined. The Episcopal Church had, however, established a presence there in 1902, founding St. John’s Mission at Eagle Village, while the white residents of Eagle City had their own Episcopal church, St. Paul’s, as well as an incorporated “public” school. Alaska Native children were not permitted to attend the school, and their parents and other family members came to town only to do work, to trade at the stores, or to receive medical attention.
“Summer 1906,” Alice wrote. “Dear Mr. Boulter in the midst of his faithful dogs while they are having their dinner. Taken in front of one of the several roadhouses, an attractive log cabin where he stayed several days before journeying on. ‘X’ is a tramp dog, very hungry.” Haly’s Road House, pictured here, was located at Fort Yukon. Collection of Alice A. Boulter.

Although George had been engaged by the Episcopal Church to teach at the school at St. John’s Mission, in Eagle Village, he also served as the government teacher at the city school, which put him in contact with both the Native and white communities. The lines of separation between the two can be glimpsed in an article George wrote for *The Alaskan Churchman*, “Christmas at Eagle, 1906,” which appeared in the May 1907 issue:

The service for the white people at the town church on Sunday, December 23, 1906, was the commencement of the Christmas festival and our log church was crowded, fully 70 people being present. The offering, which was on behalf of the Christmas supper to be given to the Indians, amounted to the generous sum of $29.

On Christmas Eve the Arctic Brotherhood held its usual Christmas entertainment to which everyone was invited.1 It is the custom here for friends, when giving a Christmas present, to attach it to the tree to be presented by Santa Claus. As there are not many white women and children in Eagle, it gave me much pleasure on behalf of the Eagle mission to attach a small present to the tree for each of them from the goods sent in last summer by the various branches of the Women’s Auxiliary.

1 Founded at the turn of the century, the Arctic Brotherhood was a convivial fraternal organization whose purpose, according to the preamble of its constitution, was “to encourage and promote social and intellectual intercourse and benevolence among its members, and to advance the interests of its members and those of the Northwest Section of North America.” Membership was limited to white males over the age of eighteen who lived in communities located north of the 54th parallel, whether in Alaska, British Columbia, the Yukon, or the Northwest Territories. For further information, see http://www.arcticbrotherhood.com/history.htm.
I devoted Christmas Day entirely to the Indians. Church service was held in the morning and all the Indians seemed to feel the spirit of Christmas and had bought themselves ribbons, etc. for the occasion, and although their finery was of a cheap nature yet they looked bright and cheerful. After the service we decorated the Christmas tree, and when finished it looked very nice as so many pretty decorations were sent on its behalf. I am glad to say there was not much sickness here at Christmas, only one old man being too sick to be at the church where the festivities were held. Several of the Eagle ladies had made cakes for the Indians’ supper and these, added to the meat sandwiches, biscuits, oranges, apples, nuts, candy, etc. furnished an excellent supper, which I hardly need tell you was heartily partaken of.

After supper came the chief event of the evening, the distribution of gifts. I was able to give each Indian a useful present from the contents of the Auxiliary boxes. These consisted chiefly of clothing, which was badly needed by the majority of them. It caused me some anxiety as to how to distribute these gifts without showing some partiality, but I think it was successful as they all appeared delighted with what they received. The evening wound up with a few games, after which the Indians dispersed to their various cabins, having spent (what they themselves declare) the best Christmas they ever had.

The first item of George’s correspondence that has come down to us is a letter dated March 1907.

George E. Boulter to John Wood, Church Missions House, New York

Eagle, March 25, 1907

It is a long time since I have written to you and probably you would like to know how the mission is getting on.

We have had a long and severe winter. It is the worst I have experienced during the past nine years. The weather has been very cold, and in addition we have had an unusual amount of wind. This is not only unpleasant but it is dangerous to travel in a high wind when the temperature is 50 or 60 below zero. Owing to the quantity of snow and the blizzards there are immense snowdrifts in Eagle and some of the cabins are nearly buried.

The town church is somewhat exposed to the wind and it has been very difficult at times for the congregation to reach it because of the drifts. The white people have not attended church as often as they might have, but now that the evenings are getting lighter the attendance is improving. I regret to say that there are too many Sunday card parties here which keep a number of people away from church. The services for the Indians have been far more encouraging. They look forward to these and are always present unless prevented by illness.

There is a deal of sickness among the Indians, not only in Eagle but in most of the settlements on the Yukon. I have written to the Government suggesting

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2 At the time, the expression “a deal of” was used in the sense of “a good deal of.”
that a hospital be built up here. There is no doctor between Eagle and Fort Gibbon at Tanana, a distance of nearly 700 miles. Indians frequently travel long distances to see the army doctor in Eagle, but as he is unable to place them in the military hospital any relief afforded them is seldom permanent. Nearly all the Indians have consumption in one form or another, and were the children, when they first show signs of it, placed in a sanatorium it might be the means of checking and eradicating this dreadful disease. Many Indians in the out-lying country are troubled with eye diseases and some are blind. I think this must be partly due to the excessive smoke from their camp fires and to the smoke from the open fires built inside their tents.

There are 19 scholars in the Indian school here. The majority are bright and intelligent, but unfortunately two-thirds of them show signs of having consumption. They take a great interest in the school and are progressing rapidly in reading, writing and geography. In arithmetic, however, they seem to remain at a stand-still. They do not seem to comprehend any figures beyond the hundreds. The Indians are not very musical yet they take delight in singing and are very fond of some English hymns—“Gospel Bells” perhaps being their favorite.

The Mackenzie River Indians visited Eagle a few weeks ago. They did not stay long, however, as their women and children were left behind without food. They stayed here only long enough to purchase supplies and sell their furs before starting back on their 300-mile journey.

The river will open about the middle of May and I need hardly tell you how we are looking forward to that event.

Despite his association with St. John’s Mission, it seems that George was drawn to government service, perhaps recognizing that such work might broaden his range of duties. At the end of 1907, he wrote to Elmer E. Brown, the commissioner of the United States Bureau of Education, regarding future employment with the Alaska School Service.

Boulter to Elmer E. Brown, Commissioner of Education, Washington, DC

Eagle, December 31, 1907

In reference to the letter which I received from the Bureau of Education dated June 13, 1907, referring to my travelling both summer and winter, I would appreciate knowing when any probable new duties will be assigned to me. Correspondence between Eagle and outside points taking such a long time, I would like to know as early as possible so that I can make arrangements to leave Eagle at any time you think fit.

I have now taught school at Eagle for nearly three years and feel confident that I am qualified to serve the Bureau of Education in a more active capacity. The condition of the natives is perhaps better known to me than to the majority of Alaskans as I have studied their language and lived among them. I have been
used to travelling with a dog team (often under the most adverse conditions) and am thoroughly inured to the climatic conditions of northern Alaska.

In June 1908, George resigned his position at Eagle and wrote to George C. Thomas, the treasurer of the Board of Missions, in New York:

I am writing to inform you that I shall be leaving the mission staff on June 30, 1908. I have been offered and have accepted an appointment by the Government as Assistant Superintendent under the Bureau of Education and shall be leaving Eagle in a few weeks. My new work will keep me in constant touch with the missions in which I shall always take the greatest interest. I had hoped to have gone Outside this summer, but now I shall be unable to.¹

Will you therefore kindly forward to me my salary which I have not received since November 30, 1907. Please address it to Eagle, from which place I will have it forwarded to me.

George’s annual salary at the Eagle mission had been $800, which worked out to less than $70 each month. His new government position under W. T. Lopp, the superintendent of schools for Alaska’s Northern District, was $125 per month. In September 1908, Peter T. Rowe, Episcopal Bishop of Alaska, wrote to Commissioner Brown about George’s new position, commenting that “I regret the loss of Mr. George Boulter from my own field of work, but feel his usefulness will be more extensive and that in a wider way his influence will be felt among the natives of the interior of Alaska. He is a good man and will undoubtedly forward the work that you have entrusted to him.”

Bishop Rowe had, in fact, invited this loss. At the time, the church was attempting to assert its control over schooling carried out at mission stations. On April 1, 1908, Rowe had written to Harlan Updegraff, chief of the Alaska Division, in Seattle. It was a cordial letter, but in it the bishop stated:

I feel obliged to ask you to accept the resignations of the following teachers at the close of the present term: Mr. George E. Boulter, Eagle; Miss Lizzie Woods, Fort Yukon; Miss Farthing, Nenana; Miss Green, Anvik. I do this for the following reason: each one is a missionary teacher, and as such our Board does not want them to act in any dual capacity. But I would like to have the privilege of nominating some persons for the above respective places, if I can in due time. Please let me know whether you can accede to this or not.

In regard to Mrs. Carr at Circle, while she is acting solely as a Government teacher, I feel obliged to ask you to accept her resignation for the reason that she is most unsatisfactory. You will have to take my word for this which is in the interest of the school at Circle. I hope you will do so. There is a Miss Owen who has taught for some years in the Presbyterian Industrial School whom I would like to nominate for Tanana or Circle—which one preferably, I will inform you later.

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¹ “Outside” referred to any destination outside Alaska and the Yukon.
I am informed by Mr. George Boulter that you are considering him for the appointment in the interior of Alaska, and I can heartily recommend him. There is only one qualification in regard to which I am unable to speak positively, and that is the necessary administrative ability. He may have it, but I am not sure.4

Updegraff forwarded Bishop Rowe’s letter to the commissioner of education, Elmer Brown, who replied to it in late June. His letter is worth reproducing in full:

Washington, D.C.
June 25, 1908

The Right Rev. P. T. Rowe, D.D.
Sitka, Alaska

My dear Bishop Rowe:

In compliance with the request contained in your letter of April 1st, the resignations of Mr. George E. Boulter, Miss Lizzie J. Woods, Miss Annie C. Farthing, Miss A. Green and of Mrs. A. M. Carr, as teachers of the schools at Eagle, Yukon, Nenana, Anvik and Circle respectively will be accepted, and I shall be pleased to consider for appointment to the vacancies thus created persons nominated by you.

I enclose herewith forms of application for appointment in the Alaska School Service for the use of persons whom you may select. In this connection, permit me respectfully to invite your consideration of certain principles, the adoption of which with reference to the teachers appointed by this Bureau in compliance with your request will tend to maintain uniformity of administration throughout the Alaska School Service.

1. That all persons nominated by you shall be subject to the same standard of qualifications as other applicants for appointment in the Alaska School Service, and, if appointed shall receive appointment in the same manner as other appointees.

2. That all appointees who have been nominated by you shall be subject in all respects to the rules and regulation relating to teachers in the Alaska School Service, and shall be under the immediate control of the District Superintendent of Schools, or of one of his assistances.

3. That at the close of each term of school all such appointees shall be required to apply for reappointment or to tender their resignation in the same manner as other appointees.

4 “Miss Green” is, of course, Alice. As we will see, in consequence of Rowe’s request, after her first year of teaching at Anvik (1907–8), she was employed by the church, not the government. Regarding Mrs. Carr, see George’s letter to Elmer Brown of August 3, 1908, not far below, as well as his letter to Updegraff of October 16, 1909, in which George indicates that it was Rowe who originally recommended her. George did, of course, prove a capable administrator, as Updegraff may already have suspected.
4. That a reasonable amount of time outside of school hours of such appointees shall be under the control of the Government.

5. That in all matters undertaken by the Government, actions by such appointees shall be through official channels, and that responsibility to the Government shall be maintained.

In explanation of the fourth and fifth of the above paragraphs, I have to state that my plans for the future extension of the Alaska School Service include the general oversight of the natives of Alaska, in addition to the providing of schools for them. Permit me to state that in formulating the above principles it is not my intention unduly to emphasize the authority of the Bureau of Education, but to establish a clearly defined base for future cooperation. If these principles meet with your approval, I shall be pleased to receive your acceptance of them.

Assuring you of my appreciation of your cooperation, I am

Very truly yours,
Elmer E. Brown
Commissioner of Education

Ultimately, the Bureau of Education would continue to operate schools at Circle, Eagle, Fort Yukon, and Nenana, as well as at Kokrines, Rampart, Stevens Village, and Tanana. But it was against the backdrop of this struggle for control that George would step into his new position.

Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Northern District, 1908–10

In August 1908, in his new role as assistant superintendent, George wrote to Commissioner Brown to report on his initial thoughts and impressions.

Boulter to Elmer E. Brown
Tanana, August 3, 1908

I left Eagle on July 21st, and as there was no steamboat going down river for nearly a week I bought a boat and proceeded down river as far as Fort Yukon. My expenses were not heavy as I was hospitably entertained at Nation, Circle and Fort Yukon. I regret to say that the school at Circle is in a very unsatisfactory condition. Mrs. Carr, who has now resigned, appears to have taken little or no interest in the school, and, according to the residents of Circle, the school was not in session half of the appointed time. Although there is a mission school building which could have been used and which is roomy and comfortable, Mrs.