

# Miscellanea

FROM A LETTER BY A.C. [FRED] ROGERS, COWICHAN BEACH, 3 JUNE 2008.

... After the startling photos in *The Province* [23 April 1952], a mountain-climbing friend [Howie Rode] suggested we should take a trip up there and see what this group did. I recall it was April when we made the trip in Howie's canoe from Gillies Quarry on the Pitt. It was a considerable distance. We were prepared to stay overnight at Defrauder Creek in a cabin abandoned by the loggers. The cabin was in fair condition and we started hiking up the logging road.

After about a mile we came to snow and the trail was well packed by the other men. Black film tabs from Speed Graphic press cameras littered the trail. The snow became a lot deeper but it was now packed and easy going. Their trail ended where a tree was cut for a mining claim post. But this wasn't legal with just one post. Howie had a prospector's license so we spent the following day cutting trails and marking the required claim posts.

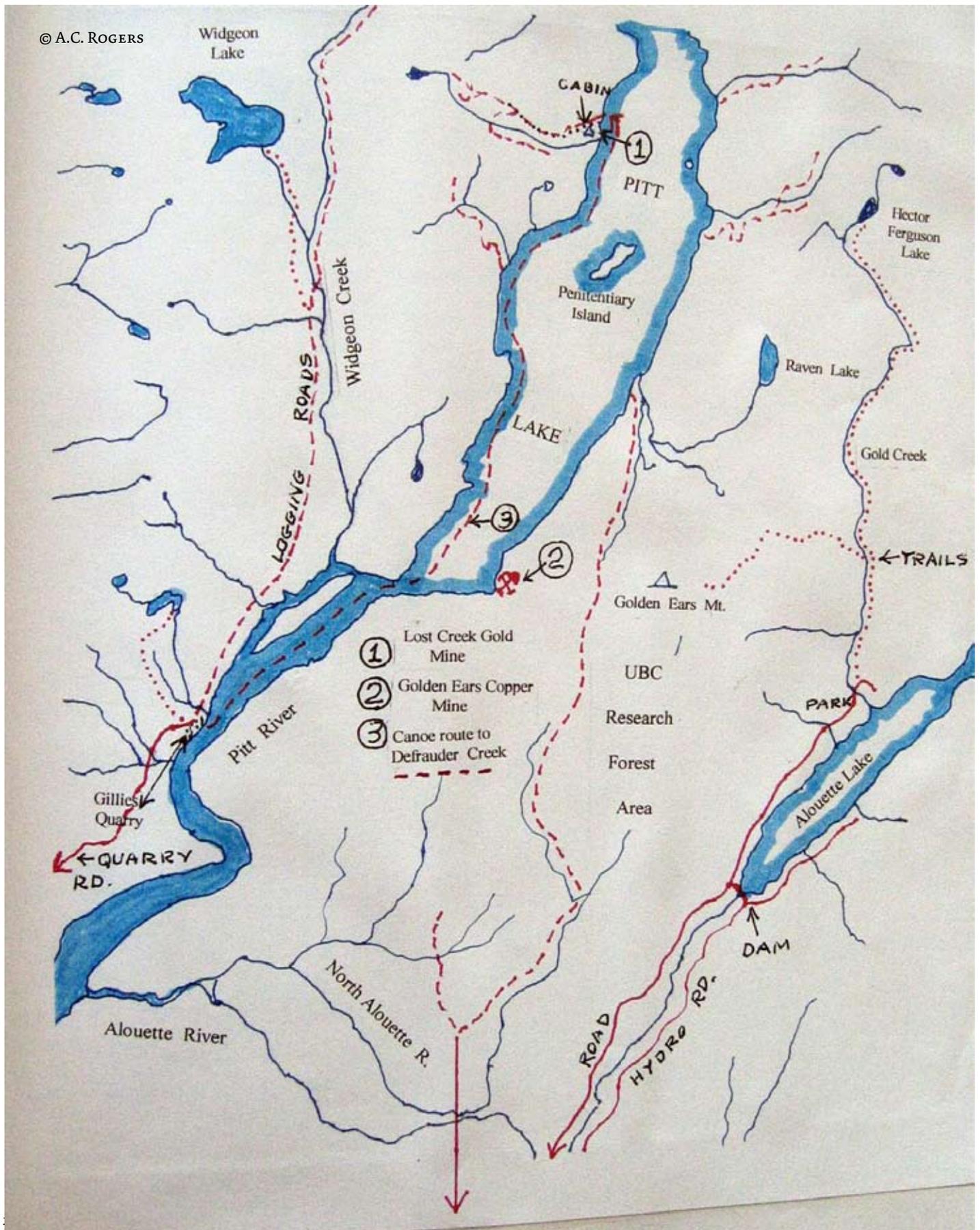
After staking the claim posts we returned to our canoe. The weather had changed and it looked ugly. The lake can be a real beast and it was dangerous. So we hugged the shore in case of a spill. About half way down, a roaring hail storm came up the lake and we covered ourselves. That hail was roaring but ended soon so we safely reached the car and home.

Howie Rode asked me if I wanted to be a partner in the claim but I told him I think this is a publicity stunt to promote newspaper sales. I know a lot of mining history with vivid stories from BC. I also liked exploring abandoned mine sights but would never enter one, knowing it could be fatal.

So Howie filed the claim and then told the newspaper men that their claim wasn't recognized by omission. They were raving mad. But when it settled down they paid \$5000 to Howie. He was lucky and I said I have no regrets about it. We often went climbing mountains with the Canadian Alpine Club which the both of us were active members....

**Following a map and the unpublished original text of the story by Fred Rogers.**

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## SOME ADVENTURES OF THE AUTHOR

© A.C. (Fred) Rogers

I hope you enjoyed the last episode of the adventures of the *Province* newspaper reports about the elderly Indian relatives of ill-fated Slumach. It is a dramatic story alright, but filled with fiction. I used that nice word in place of plain bullshit. Oh, they went up Pitt Lake and ventured up Defrauder Creek as the map shows. But the story was badly exaggerated. The *Vancouver Province* men were taken in. As mentioned in one page, the stream and rivers flowing into Pitt Lake had been worked over the late 1850s and 60s by experienced placer miners who flooded into British Columbia at that time from the United States.

I don't think the *Province* men though anyone would venture up to see actually what that party did. It was about a week after the April 22 and 23 [1952] reports that Howie Rode phoned me. "Fred, did you read that story about the Indian guide taking the reporters up Pitt Lake to Slumach's old gold mine?" I said I sure did. "What do you make of it?" So, Howie is a mountaineer and any excuse is enough to get him exploring. We often went climbing the mountains together and sometimes leading members of the Canadian Alpine Club outings.

I now go back to that time we explored Defrauder Creek to see what they [the *Province* people] accomplished there. The newspaper ran an advertisement selling shares in the mine [Slumach Lost Creek Mine]. They did suggest it was purely speculative. They didn't pan for gold or find any mining debris. There was a heavy snowfall that winter and cold weather delayed the runoff. But the story sucked in many gullible investors.

Howie also carried a prospectors mining permit, but I didn't at that time. Howie asked if I was willing to go up Pitt Lake. So we made plans if the weather permitted. He had a canoe, and after launching it at Gillies quarry up Pitt River Saturday morning we started up the long trip.

We were lucky that the lake wasn't windy or rough so we hugged the shoreline taking no chances of trouble. We didn't know what to expect but we found a good building there for a night camp. A truck logging operation had a road up the valley which was still in good shape. After a mile or so we came to snow. The road was not overgrown as the paper reports claimed to make their adventure more daring. We knew we were in the right place. Their photo tabs from pictures taken with a Speed Graphic camera were lying on

"This is Lost Creek Mine,"  
*Province* 22 April 1952.

"Old Chief's Secret Told,"  
*Province* 23 April 1952.

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the snow. They had tramped a good trail for us to follow, and eventually, after maybe another mile, the trail ended in snow about three or four feet deep. More film tabs were lying there. Howie examined the small tree they cut down to make the initial post. Their mining tab was nailed on, but there were no signs of trails beyond that point.

So, Howie got an idea. He knew they didn't mark out the other tree posts as required to stake a claim. If they had, the trails would show. So Howie asked me if I wanted to go 50-50 with him to stake this claim properly. I suggested this was a real publicity stunt but I helped him. He had a long wire on a spool to correctly measure the distance to mark other posts we cut from small trees. It was hard work breaking trail in deep snow, but we finished the work and returned to our cabin, late, tired, and hungry.

The next morning we started for home. The weather had changed and it looked like trouble. Before we were halfway down the lake, a nasty hailstorm was coming up the lake. We could hear the roar as it came on, thick and heavy. We covered our heads and took it easy until it passed after 15 minutes or more. From then on we had no trouble.

Howie wanted to know if I wanted to go to the mining office with him and register the claim. I didn't bother, and shortly after a few days he broke the news to the *Province*. All hell broke out, so he told me. They were raving mad and threatening. But when they cooled down they found out that they didn't properly stake a claim. So they got Howie and offered him \$500 for him to sign it over, which he did. "Well Fred," he said, "you missed half a share of that outing." It didn't bother me. We were still friends. But I decided I would get a miners licence. If I found something hiking I could get samples, and if it proved out, I could claim it.

I don't know if the *Province* men returned. Maybe they did. But they did have a claim to work on after purchasing it. But what about the investors? They had no claim. No hope of having their money refunded. It was the same old story—buyer beware.