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OLD SLUMACH'S CURSE DOGS PROSPECTORS; LOST CREEK GOLD MEANT VIOLENT DEATH

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(Second of two articles)

[The first, Legend of Fabulous Lost Creek Mine Bared for the First Time by Indian Chief; "No White Man Will Find it", appeared on 21 December 1951]

Old Slumach, the killer Indian who found fabulous Lost Creek mine, deep in the Pitt Lake mountains, was the first of five men who actually took gold from the hidden mine—and died for it.

Slumach was hanged for murder. Legend says he was defending his secret.

The other four—Slumach's whiskey-loving son, a careless halfbreed and two US prospectors—also were doomed by the mine. They took out gold. Later, one was murdered, two vanished mysteriously and the last died from the tortures of the wilderness travel.

Broke Promise

The Indian legend, now being told for the first time by Chief Khahtsahlano, claims none of these tragedies would have occurred if Slumach's son had kept the promise his father whispered to him shortly before he dropped through the trapdoor on the gallows at New Westminster.

Old Slumach told his son to go to the mine only if times were bad. Young Slumach made a bee-line from the gallows to the mine.

Young Slumach lugged gold away from the rockbound creek but soon found it would buy everything but the firewater he craved. He found a halfbreed working for a New Westminster dentist, who agreed to buy the whiskey in return for "lots a gold."

Young Slumach and the unidentified halfbreed headed to the Pitt River by canoe. Three days later the halfbreed laded with gold, returned to New Westminster alone. Young Slumach had vanished.

No More Work

Annoyed by the halfbreed's absence, the dentist fire him upon his return. The halfbreed's reply was: "That's all right. I don't have to work any more."

Astounded, the dentist asked for an explanation. I've got all the gold I want. I show you."

Old Slumach's curse dogs prospectors

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The halfbreed showed the amazed dentist the pile of nuggets. All were the size of walnuts. The dentist warned him that he would be killed for his gold. The halfbreed turned the poke over to the dentist for safekeeping, giving him a share and insisting: "Lots more."

Indians say the halfbreed journeyed into the rugged Pitt Mountains each August and returned with more gold. Then the curse of Old Slumach caught him. He was seen no more.

Told Prospector

The dentist one day did dental work for a prospector that he attended school with in the United States. The prospector had been seeking minerals without luck. The dentist laughingly told his old chum the he (the dentist) did his prospecting right in his office and showed the halfbreed's gold. He willingly answered all questions put to him by his friend.

It was August, and the prospector jumped into his canoe and paddled up the Pitt. He found the halfbreed's canoe under brush and watched the man leave with gold. The next year he followed the halfbreed but lost him in the rugged country.

Then the following year—1903—he recruited a US friend (identified a John Jackson in Indian legends) and the two followed the halfbreed to the fabulous creek. Legend says one of the two Americans became excited, drew his revolver, and killed the breed.

The Americans turned quickly to the gold. They buried a pan of nuggets under the tent rock along with an axe, mining hammer, and the halfbreed's body. They placed a cross mark on one end of the huge rock and left.

The Indians claim the two men each toted \$20,000 in gold on the outward march. One disappeared. Only Jackson got down to New Westminster and he travelled quickly to his California home. He returned to the mine several times for gold and on his last trip broke his leg in the hazardous country and was turned back to health by Indians. He returned to California and died soon after.

Old newspapers credit an Alaskan prospector named John Jackson with taking out \$10,000 worth of gold in 1903 and later dying in California.

The Indians claim that Jackson made two crude maps of the area where he said fantastic piles of gold nuggets still remained. He gave one to the nurse that was with him in his last days, the other to an old friend named Shotwell in Seattle.

Indians claim neither the nurse nor Shotwell made attempts

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to find the gold, but both sold copies of the maps at \$500 each. This prompted about 40 U.S. prospecting parties to pour into B.C.'s Pitt Lake mountains, seeking, but never finding, the gold of Old Slumach.

Countless tales of misery and hardship are told by the scores upon scores of prospectors who have tried to find the gold since 1903. Many have stumbled out of the area as beaten and broken men, and at least 21 men never came back out of the mountains.

A colourful old prospector called "Volcanic Brown" was convinced he would find the mine—like the majority of gold hunters he was positive he had a hunch that would click.

Made Four Trips

Brown made four trips into the area between 1932 and 1938. On the third trip out he was crippled with badly frozen feet. He did not come out after the fourth trip.

Cyril Walters, 3694 West Sixteenth, who possessed a copy of one of Jackson's letters, is a sign painter, who has spent more than 27 summers seeking Lost Creek mine. He is going out again next summer.

Despite warnings from men like City Archivist Major J.S. Mathews and Tom Elliott, mining adviser to the B.C. Yukon Chamber of mines that no such mine exists (and vehement counter arguments from people like Maisey Armitage-Moore, publisher of the Native Voice and Chief Khahtsahlano that it will be found), the lost mine of Old Slumach will probably [feed?] the imagination of gold hungry folk for many years to come.

Indian Hopeful

Any day now, B.C. Indians expect to hear that a prospector—one with Indian blood—has beaten the ghost of Old Slumach and pounded a stake into the bed of Lost Creek.

Simon Pierre, the late medicine man at Silver Creek Reserve, who passed the full legend on to Khahtsahlano used to tell about the time he and other Indians guided a white prospector into the mountains and came face to face with the ghost.

"We sat around the fire one night and the ghost of Slumach appeared. It told us not to take the white man further. We left the prospector alone and returned. White man went no further, so he lived."