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HAS "LOST CREEK MINE" CLAIMED 21ST VICTIM?

Legend has it that 20 men have died hunting for a fabulous "Lost Creek Mine" in the mountain wilderness 45 miles north of here [New Westminster]. Was Alfred Gaspard the 21st?

RCMP Constable John Dowsett and guide Stan Zepeski have set out to find out.

This much was known: Gaspard, 60-year-old prospector, packed his gear 16 months ago and headed for the upper reaches of the Pitt River. He has not been seen or heard from since.

Gaspard himself had a premonition that he would become a part of the fateful legend. He left a note saying: "By the time you read this I will have passed to the great beyond."

That note, left with friends, was opened in February.

Dowsett and guide made an aerial survey of the area but the snow had wiped out any clues Gaspard may have left.

The deep snow finally left the mountains in June but heavy foliage covered the trail.

The leaves have fallen now and on this wet, overcast October day, Dowsett and Zepeski started out by boat. When they reach the head of Pitt Lake, they will strike into the mountains on foot. They expect to be gone two weeks.

The legend of Lost Creek Mine goes back more than 60 years. The gist of it is that an Indian named Slumach appeared in New Westminster with a hefty poke of gold. He made several trips back into the bus, returning each time with a sackful of yellow dust.

He was hanged, the legend says, in 1892 [sic] after confessing he had murdered eight women. His secret died with him. On each trip to the mine he had taken an Indian woman. None returned.

Since then, according to the legend, 20 men have died in the search for the lode. One of the prospectors stumbled out of the mountain country with a poke of \$10,000. He died insane. He babbled a story that the creek of riches lost itself in a gold-lined tunnel.

There is perhaps more than a legend to the story. Certainly men have disappeared without trace in that forbidden area.

Friends said Gaspard was fascinated with the tale. He had himself flown to the Pitt Lake headwaters a year ago last July and weeks later a second plane dropped him 400 pounds of food. Other prospectors saw him two or three days later, trudging north, bent under his pack. After that—nothing.

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