

Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

GARIBALDI GLORY HOLE

ALL THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS ADD TO THE LEGEND OF GOLD CAYON

BY MARK HUME

Without a doubt he is a man given to exaggeration, a man who makes incredible statements without substantiation—and if his claims were made about anything other than a legendary lost gold mine they would be dismissed out of hand.

But when retired federal civil servant Stuart Brown says he has found Slumach's gold canyon, a treasure that many have allegedly died trying to find, a treasure worth millions, you have to listen because stranger tales have come true in this world and he just might be telling the truth.

He has no proof; not a single nugget, no dust, not even the tiniest ore sample. But he says the gold is there. He's seen it sparkling in the water of a wilderness creek somewhere north of Pitt Lake in Garibaldi Park.

That's where it should be according to the legend of the old Indian, Slumach, who was hanged for murder in 1890 [sic]. And that's where it should be according to the hundreds who have searched for it in vain over the years.

They say, a Californian man named John Jackson found it in 1903, but nobody knows for sure. He died shortly after depositing \$10,000 worth of gold in the bank,

One man, Volcanic Brown, claimed he found it. He came out with gold to prove it but went back into the rugged terrain in the summer of 1930 and never returned. Those who went to rescue him found his tent buried under October snow.

There was no sign of Volcanic, the old prospector who said he'd been tipped off by Slumach's granddaughter, but in his tent they found a glass jar containing 11 ounces of coarse gold.

It was gold, according to newspaper reports, "that appeared to have been hammered out of a solid vein, for it still bore traces of quartz."

And so it has gone. Gold and death fanning the coals of the legend every time the fire was about out.

The great thing is that unanswered questions don't knock down a legend, they build it up.

Things have been quiet up north of Pitt Lake in recent years, but there have been prospectors there every summer, poking about in little creeks and streams, stumbling down gullies, scanning the rocks, always hoping for that dull glint of color.

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Garibaldi Glory Hole

Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

Brown, a former Vancouverite who now lives in Ottawa, was one such prospector in the summer of 1974.

In a canyon, where the run-off waters from a melting snow-field ran together, he looked down and found it. A glory hole brimming with nuggets.

But now the story gets really curious, for Brown, talking in a telephone interview from his home, says he looked at the gold, made note of its location and then walked away!

He says he found the precious metal within the boundaries of a provincial park (there are two in the area, Garibaldi and Golden Ears) and he knew full well it was against the law to remove samples.

So Brown left the gold and for the last four years he's been trying to persuade the government to let him mine it.

"If they want conclusive evidence they can have it," says Brown. "But they'll have to give me a very precise clear letter. I would like some assurance that I would be protected and reimbursed for my expenses,"

In a trip to Victoria last summer Brown failed in attempts to get the type of bargain he was looking for and returned to Ottawa empty-handed.

Did he deserve any better?

James Fyles, deputy minister of mines and petroleum resources, says he listened to Brown's incredible story but then turned away the fortune hunter and would-be gold miner.

Fyles said he offered to send a geologist into the area with Brown to confirm the richness of the deposits, but this was rejected.

Fyles wanted an ore sample. Brown had none.

And then Brown asked for money, or at least for a promise of reimbursement. The government should pay him \$10,000, he said, to cover his expenses in locating the treasure. Then he'd tell where the canyon was and the province could take appropriate action.

"I have estimated the value of the surface gold at two billion dollars so I think some immediate action should be taken to protect the park and the interests of the people of the province," said Brown in a letter.

He added that others have been searching for the lost mine and sooner or later someone will stumble across it, as he had.

"It is very unlikely that anyone discovering it will follow the procedures I have in coming to you."

Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

“In fact, I could remove 100 pounds per trip worth about \$300,000 without disclosing anything and sell on the black market.”

He warned Fyles that once word of his find was out, there would be a stampede into the area, a modern-day gold rush.

But Fyles said he could not help, he was in no position to sign any agreement with Brown and certainly could not make any commitments for \$10,000.

Fyles is highly sceptical of Brown’s claim, largely because he cannot imagine why a man who says he knows where he can pick up \$300,000 worth of gold would be haggling with the government in an effort to get \$10,000.

“It is not gold country. And yet there are all kinds of surprises in the geological world and it just may be the he’s right.”

When Brown left Fyles’ office he went to see Ray Lowrey, in the provincial parks operations division.

Brown had taught at the University of B.C. before joining the federal government and Lowrey had been a student of his.

Lowrey says Brown is an intelligent and well-educated man—but dismisses his story as lacking credibility.

Lowrey asked for proof of the discovery but got none.

“I needed something I could get my teeth into, even one nugget.”

Officially Lowrey has simply rejected Brown’s of a fantastic gold deposit in Garibaldi Park, and his department is planning no action on the matter.

Lowrey doesn’t believe there’s a lost gold mine in Garibaldi Park, “but anything is possible.”

Legends thrive on the unexplained, he adds, “and probably 10 or 15 years after Mr. Brown dies the stories will start about the lost mine he found.”

It won’t take that long, however, for there is already a story about a lost mine and Stuart Brown, the elderly man who says he walked away from a billion-dollar fortune, is now part of the Slumach legend—gold or no [gold].