

Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

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LOOKING BACK IN B.C. | CURSE HAUNTS LOST GOLD MINE

(This is the second part of John Pearson's story of the Lost Creek mine in the Pitt lake mountains)

A well known prospector from San Francisco, W. Jackson, apparently discovered Slumach's Lost Creek gold mine in the forbidden Pitt Lake mountains, and came out without losing his life. But the two or three month hardship in the wilderness impaired his health to such a degree that he could never return to his fabulous strike.

When his health failed to improve after three years, he wrote a letter to a Mr. Hill, who had grubstaked him at one time, directing him to the fabulous mine.

This is the letter that lured 11 known prospectors to their death, and perhaps as many as 21.

"...I had been out over two months running short of grub. I had lived mostly on fresh meat for one can't carry much of a pack in those hills. I found a few very promising ledges and colors in the little cracks but nothing I cared to stay with. I had almost made up my mind to light out the next day. I climbed up to the top of a sharp ridge and looked down into the canyon or valley about one mile and a half long, and what struck me as singular, it appeared to have no outlet for the little creek that flowed at the bottom.

"Afterwards I found that the creek entered a ... (box canyon) and was lost. After some difficulty I found my way down to the creek. The water was almost white, the formation for the most part had been slate and granite, but where I found a kind of schist and slate formation.

Yellow with gold

"Now comes the interesting part. I had only a small prospecting pan but found colors at once right on the surface and such colors they were. I knew then I had struck it right at last. In going up stream I came to a place where the bedrock was bare, and there, you could hardly believe me, the bedrock was yellow with gold. Some of the nuggets were as big as walnuts and there were many chunks carrying quartz. After sizing it up, I saw there were millions stowed around in the little cracks.

"On account of the weight, I buried part of the gold at the foot of a large tent shaped rock facing the creek. You can't miss it, there is a mark cut in it. Taking with me what I supposed to be ten thousand dollars, but afterwards it proved to be a little over eight thousand dollars.

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"After three days of hard travelling, it would not have been over two days good going, but the way was rough and I was not feeling well. I arrived at the lake and while resting there was taken sick and I have never been able to return, and now I fear I never shall.

"I am alone in the world, no relatives, no one to look after me for anything. Of course I have never spoken of this find for fear of it being discovered. It has caused me many anxious hours, but the place is so well guarded by surrounding ridges and mountains that it should not be found for many years, unless someone knew it being there.

"O, now I wish I could go with you to show you this wonderful place, for I cannot give you the exact direction, and it may take you a year or two to find it.

"Don't give up but keep at it and you will be repaid beyond your wildest dreams.

"I believe any further direction would only tend to confuse it, so I will only suggest further that you go alone or at least only take only one or two trusty Indians to pack food and no one need to know that you are going on a hunting trip until you find the place and get everything for yourself.

"When you find it and I am sure you will, should you care to see me, advertise in the "Frisco Examiner," and if I am living, I will either come to see you, or let you know where to find me, but once more I say to you don't fail to look this great property up and don't give up until you find it. Now goodbye and may success attend you.

"Yours truly, W. Jackson."

Lost mine

Shortly after writing the original letter, Walter Jackson died, and in 1904, a Mr. Hill turned up in New Westminster. He is supposed to have made several trips into the Pitt Lake mountains without finding any trace of the lost gold mine and gave up in disgust.

Not long after Mr. Hill's departure, copies of the famous Jackson letter began flooding the country accompanied by a map. Mr Jackson did not ever mention about any map and it must be assumed it was a fake.

The copies of the letter and map were offered for sale at \$5 in Seattle and it makes one wonder if Mr. Hill had something to do with it.

The next 15 years saw a steady stream of prospectors combing the formidable Pitt Lake mountains for the fabulous lost

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gold mine, and a great number never returned.

In 1923, a copy of Jackson's letter came into the hands of "Volcanic" Brown, a well-known Kootenay prospector. After obtaining all available information, Brown put his faith in the legend and in 1924 started out in quest of the lost mine.

For the next six summers he roamed the Pitt Lake mountains looking for the mine, returning each fall convinced he was finally closing in on the fabulous gold stream.

But in September, 1930, Brown failed to come out and when nothing was heard of him by November, a search party went in looking for him. After nearly a month they came upon his last camp near the headwaters of Stave Lake [?]. The camp was abandoned and the search party found a collapsed tent, a shotgun, some cooking utensils, and a glass jar with eleven ounces of raw gold.

Never seen again

But there was no sign of Volcanic Brown, nor was he ever seen again. Old Slumach's curse had chalked up yet another victim.

It is almost certain that many Indians knew the whereabouts of the gold mine, but would not venture near it on account of Slumach's curse and the belief that "Gold means death."

However, the late Chief August Jack Khahtsahlano said in 1951: "I hunted the mine many times. One time when I was alone I was sure I was near the gold. I found the three tell-tale peaks. I tried to move forward to spot the tent rock but I couldn't. A heavy black cloud came down around me and moved me away and away. I decided to leave. I'll never go back."