

Miscellanea

THE GOLDEN MOUNTAINS, CHRONICLES OF VALLEY AND COAST MINES

Charles A. Miller, 1973

page 68. Chapter 12. "Volcanic Brown's Last Trip."

My Father [Albert G. Miller], on this particular afternoon [late November 1911], was in the main office, taking down figures from one of the blueprints used in the building of the [new lumber mill at the mouth of the Stave River]. At that specific moment he was being assisted by two of the office accountants who also served as draftsmen in the drawing of the plans for the mill; their names were Butler and Lewthwaite. The afternoon was drawing on to early evening twilight when two men walked into the office and struck up conversation with those within. They were roughly and raggedly dressed with their shoes badly worn and showing the effects of much tough and rugged walking.

It soon became apparent one of these two men was badly used up, being very tired and suffering from a very bad case of influenza, or what in those days was known as "la grippe". They related they had been prospecting in the Stave hills, had run out of food, had made their way, under very arduous conditions to Stave Falls, where they were allowed to ride on a wagon part way to Ruskin then continued on foot to where they now were. They related they were hungry, wet, cold and had no money and were hoping to get a ride into Vancouver on the first freight train that came along. It was at this point that one of them said they were not exactly without means and from a jacket pocket removed a goodly sized buckskin pouch and with a melodramatic flourish untied the thong that closed the neck of the pouch, then threw a cascade of gold nuggets across the blueprints on the drafting table!!! The general manager, from his office, was now brought into the picture and immediately made preparations for the two men to be fed and then taken to a warm room within the hotel. Here they received new clothing and shoes from the store and given enough cash to purchase tickets on the evening train to get in to Vancouver. During this period the manager was doing his best to extract information as to where the gold had been obtained. Very little became known with the exception of giving their names, which were Shotwell and Harrington, that they had gone into the mountainous Stave area via Pitt Lake and were now on their way to Seattle and possibly San Francisco. Before leaving to catch their train they gave the manager several small nuggets to pay for what they had received.

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From information gleaned over the succeeding years it became known that they both did get as far as Seattle. Here Shotwell went into hospital and died shortly thereafter, evidently from the ‘flu or “la grippe”, which he had contracted on their arduous trip out from the headwaters of the Stave River. Harrington disappeared and was never seen or recognized in the Ruskin and Stave area again.

It can be well imagined, amongst the men in the office building where the dramatic display of the nuggets took place, as to where they might have been found. It is universally known that gold from any particular region in the world can be recognized by authoritative mineralogists. When the nuggets, given to the manager for purchases etc. made by the two men, were taken to the department of mines in Vancouver, it was made known that this gold was very similar to that which had been found, in small quantities, in the coastal mountain area of Pitt and Stave Lakes. Further conjecture implied it could well have come from the fabled “lost mine” of Pitt Lake.