

# Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

Colonist 29 March 1953

## BLUEBEARD OF PITT LAKE OR THE LOST GOLD MINE

BY L.O. TEMPLE

Enthusiastic tourists have been known, after a visit to British Columbia, to say the province has "everything." Of course, local residents have known that for years! Quite a few, both among natives, immigrants, and tourists, however, have never heard of a B.C. prototype of the legendary "bluebeard," who was hanged at New Westminster over 50 years ago. He might have been termed a bluebeard with improvements; he started by executing wives, came to a well-deserved end for murdering a man, and indirectly was probably responsible for a number of men since. In fact, another victim was probably added to his score this winter! We hasten to add that he wasn't native to this province but came from east of the Rockies originally.

### *Gold Hunters*

Known by the euphonious name of "Slum," he prospected the mountains north of Pitt Lake year after year during the nineties, like many other gold hunters. Unlike the majority, after a few years he started coming out in the fall with gold dust and nuggets in quantities sufficient to spend the following winter having a high time in New Westminster and Vancouver. Each spring, broke, he would again set out for the mountains with his Indian wife; they would go to the head of Pitt Lake by canoe, and then take to the tall timber. Of course he was frequently followed by envious fellow prospectors but always managed to elude them not far from the lake. Back he'd come when the leaves began to fall with a poke of nice new gold to another winter's celebration.

### *Excess Cargo*

However, he wasn't as fortunate with his wives. In fact, they never succeeded in sharing the celebration; every year they got themselves drowned somewhere near Siwash Rock, near the south end of Pitt Lake. At this point no more heavy packing was required and Slum could get the gold back to civilization easily by himself. Finally he overreached himself by applying the same technique to a trailing half-breed prospector that he had successfully used for his wives for several years; he drowned him near the same old Siwash Rock. This time it was the case of the pitcher going too often to the well, and after a chase he was caught by Constable Moresby of the Provincial Police. In due course he was convicted and hanged, about 1900, but he never told where he used to get the gold.

## **Bluebeard of Pitt Lake Or the Lost Gold Mine**

# Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

## *Search Failed*

Logically, that should have ended the death that he had been causing, but human nature being what it is, men having been dying ever since, trying to find what has come to be known as the lost Pitt Lake Mine. The first of a respectable list was an old Yukon sourdough named John Jackson, who came down from the north in 1903, heard about Slum's continuous supply of nuggets and set off up Pitt Lake that spring. Months later he crawled into an Indian camp at the head of the lake. With him he had a heavy bag, which he wouldn't let out of his sight while the natives nursed him until he was well enough to get out to the railroad. He went to San Francisco, where he deposited \$8,700 in the branch of the Bank of British North America.

## *Sold His Map*

He wrote a friend named Shotwell, in Alaska, enclosing a map, and then died from the effects of his trip to the bonanza. Shotwell sold his share in the map to a Seattle man, who made several unsuccessful trips. In Jackson's letter to Shotwell he said the gold was in handfuls, but unfortunately some of the letter was illegible and the map had been drawn from memory, after he got back, and was hard to understand. At any rate, no one has found the gold yet, although some 20 people have presumably been killed trying. They go into the tangled web of mountain valleys north of the lake, and they just don't come back. It's a rugged country, and there is a lot of it. In the mid-thirties another sourdough with the picturesque name of Volcanic Brown spent a summer there, and came out with feet frozen. He tried again the following season, and didn't come back. His frozen corpse may lie in the depth of a glazier, or his bleached bones may be disintegrating at the bottom of some cliff; there are many ways to die in the rocky defiles and precipitous peaks of the coast range.

## *Latest Victim*

Recently another seeker for the Pitt Lake gold hasn't come out. A police search was considered; but it would be looking for a needle in the proverbial haystack to find a man in those mountain masses. No doubt the bones of this latest prospector will be uncovered, but it is doubtful if they are ever seen by anyone but a roaming bear or wolf. No doubt some day a new gold rush may start into the country north of Pitt Lake: but according to the record piled up so far, there are many easier and less dangerous ways to get rich. After all, if you lose out on your ticket on the Irish sweepstakes, you only lost three and a half bucks, and you don't have to climb a lot of perpendicular pieces of real estate to do it!