

# Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

“LONE PROSPECTOR” FIRST TO DISCOVER PITT LAKE GLACIER; STANFORD COREY, 77, HAS EXPLORED ALL WAY TO ARTIC

BY LAURENCE DONOVAN

Pitt Lake Glacier, if it may so be designated for lack of other nomenclature, hailed as a recent discovery by a party headed by George Platser, of tropical valley fame, was first discovered 26 years ago. Through the trail-less wilderness around the head of Pitt Lake, Fire Lake, the headwaters of the Stave, the Lillooet, and the Pitt rivers, a lone prospector, possibly the most remarkable of all the pioneer miners of British Columbia left the peculiar marks of his blaze. Somewhere in that tangle of mountain meadows, giant windfalls, rich outcropping strata of minerals and glaze ice, today there is declared to be a cache containing tools and a hundred pounds of powder, placed there years ago by this prospector. The discovery of the great glacier never was announced by this singular placer miner of the hills, for to him a glacier was just a glacier, just as the Yukon was only the Yukon when he brought the first gold from that afterwards famous territory to be essayed at Victoria when “northern gold” was regarded as of doubtful value.

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Stanford Corey, 77 years old, his luxuriant grey beard beginning to take on the colour of the myriad snow he has crossed, is going prospecting again in a few days. He is going alone. Maybe he will return in a week, or a month, or a year. It doesn't matter. For the lone trails, that area has no trails at all, are as familiar to him as are the streets of Vancouver to a taxicab driver.

The blaze marks of Stanford Corey's axe, his own peculiar mark, are on trees northward from the Fraser River to the mouth of the MacKenzie River inside the Artic Circle. Here and there throughout the grim northland are caches of tools and powder, some buried and forgotten, others are remembered, and one of these caches is high up toward what may be designated as “Pitt Lake Glacier,” until a better name is applied, discovered or rediscovered this summer as reported exclusively in the *Evening Sun*. For Corey on 15 different occasions crossed the Great Glacier since he first blazed a trail from the head of Pitt Lake to Howe Sound at Squamish 14 years ago, at which time he took four months for the crossing of what is now declared to be a possible great summer playground for future tourist development.

**“Lone Prospector” first to discover Pitt Lake Glacier**

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## *Came here in 1867*

Out of the backwoods on New Brunswick Corey came to British Columbia in 1867. He became a placer miner. For 59 years he has crossed and recrossed the mountain ranges of B.C., the Yukon and northern territories, his wandering blaze marks scattered throughout all of the land that is known as the "Far North."

In 1899 he spent four months crossing from the head of Pitt Lake to Howe Sound. He had been to the head of Stave Lake and along the Pitt River, and he had crossed the "Pitt Lake Glacier" and another mountain of ice alone. Again and again he has taken that same general trail, and during all of the three score years, he says he had not seen the marks of any other person ever having entered the land. Only his own blaze marks growing dimmer and dimmer, but recognizable through the years.

## *Minerals are there*

Corey, who claims to be the first prospector bringing gold south from the Yukon territory in the early eightieth, to have it assayed at Victoria, because the value of northern gold was doubted in those days, says that there are outcroppings of valuable minerals in narrow stratas in the upper Pitt Lake country.

However, Corey does not believe there is possibility of any great strike in that region and that the only workable minerals will be subject to this kind of investment that will that will develop comparatively low-grade mines. Again, he admits some rich discoveries might be made, as much of this is a glacial country.

Corey says the newly-discovered great glacier is not extremely difficult of access.

## *One wonderful meadow*

At one point, says Corey, there is a great flat at the base of the mountain where the avalanches of the years have cleared the land as cleanly as though by a giant broadaxe, and in the seasons when the snowfall is not heavy becomes a beautiful meadow. This area is between the glacier and Pemberton meadows.

Over the last 50-year period, Corey believes the great glacier has remained about the same, receding in years of light

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snowfalls and spreading again when the snowfall has been heavy and the summer thaw and flowage is increased. In the days when Corey first entered this region, wolves, and grizzlies abounded, he says, and it is still the haunt of many bighorns and goats.

## *Once made his stake*

One Corey made his stake. Oh, maybe it was a few thousands, or a hundred thousand. It doesn't matter. Anyway, for four years the lone prospector vanished from the land in which he had pioneered. In that four years he lived under 17 flags and in one country where there was no flag.

"I wanted to see the world," he explained. "For four years I travelled and studied and enlarged my views of life. And then, first thing I knew, I was carrying a 60-pound pack in the Cariboo and enjoying life again.

"No. Never made much of it. You see, the season for placer mining is short and the winters have used up all I've panned out in the summers. Got hung up this year. Didn't get started early enough and, besides, I am beginning to get a bit tippy. Can't keep my balance so well walking trees across the burrows and over the canyons. Get a bit dizzy and have to be more careful.

## *Soon going again*

"But I'm going to get away again in a few days now. After I had been out a few days this year I met with a little accident. Fell from a log and ran a snag through my ear. Couldn't get it out and was several days in the bush.

"It penetrated more than an inch into my ear and I've been all summer getting fit to go again. But it's all right now. Going alone? Of course. Companionship in the bush doesn't lighten the pack any. The man who pioneers doesn't know what it means to turn back and I tried taking someone along only twice. Both times it didn't turn out well. They wanted to get out. So I prefer to be alone. Then I can come back when I get ready."

When in Vancouver, Corey makes his headquarters at a private home on Georgia Street East. He is a bent figure of a man, blue eyes set in a skin tanned to the colour of parchment, but his eyes are clear, steady and undimmed. Possibly he never will be immortalized in history. But then, again, he may be.

Note: Stanford Corey died in Vancouver in the spring of 1932, 80 years old.