

The Lost Gold Mine of Pitt Lake

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Chapter 1 - The Mythology

Introduction

In 1967, I was transferred from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Burnaby Detachment's prestigious and newly-formed plain clothes Burglary Detail (a branch of the General Investigation Section) to New Westminster Detachment (called The Court House) where my primary duty consisted of escorting dangerous prisoners back and forth between Oakalla Prison Farm and the British Columbia Penitentiary to the court house for trial. The force intended the transfer to be punishment for placing two incorrect "false" statements in a police report.

The demotion failed in that I enjoyed my time at the new and less stressful posting. It was on a quiet day that Corporal Frank Bacon called me into his office for assistance in cleaning out an old vault. He unlocked a door off his office and led me up a circular staircase to a room containing manuscripts of criminal trials dating back almost 100 years. As we sorted through the musty files, my superior casually mentioned that an old Katzie Indian named Slumach had been hung from a rafter above the vault's stairwell for murdering another Indian who had supposedly followed him to a gold mine on Pitt Lake. That brief conversation was the first time I had ever heard of Slumach or the Lost Mine of Pitt Lake. My subsequent transfer to Haney Detachment in Maple Ridge resulted in my writing a short book about Slumach and his Lost Mine in 1972 - and its final chapter is yet to be written.

The Legend

The fact that people like a good mystery is undoubtedly why the Lost Mine of Pitt Lake tale has persisted for more than a century. Since the 1890s prospectors have been making vain attempts to locate this lost Eldorado which allegedly nestles in the treacherous Pitt Range some 35 miles north-east of Vancouver. The arrival each spring of both seasoned and amateur gold hunters into the libraries and newspaper offices of New Westminster and Vancouver is a sure sign that the search is still far from over. The many legends together with newspaper men's fanciful accounts of the story make it impossible for these adventurous groups to separate entirely the fact from the fiction.

The legend of the mine and its finder, an Indian named Slumach, began in the Royal City of New Westminster in 1889 when the Indian supposedly burst into a saloon and ordered a round of drinks for everyone present. He was carrying a haversack packed with nuggets the size of walnuts which he scattered in all directions as he painted the town red for the next few days. His coming and going into the city, with each visit longer and wilder, persisted for a year-and-a-half during which time the Indian made 16 visits. The police suspected that Slumach was murdering and then robbing prospectors for the gold.

A Constable Grainger was assigned to the case. Disguised as a prospector who had struck it rich he became a bosom pal of the Salish big spender. The constable soon learned that he was not the only

one interested in Slumach. Molly Tynan, an attractive half Irish half Chinese lass, announced her intention of claiming the Indian as her own personal property. Molly had arrived in New Westminster while Slumach was away. She was determined to seize upon the one chance in a lifetime to get rich quick. She had handled the toughest of men from the Barbary Coast to Alaska and figured Slumach would be no problem. Besides she packed a mean-looking pistol in the pocket of her skirt and planned to use it on Slumach once he had taken her to the mine. Things backfired for Molly and her body was recovered from the Fraser River by fishermen. A knife was found protruding from her back. Constable Grainger was able to prove that the knife belonged to Slumach and he was thus able to have Slumach hung for murder. So much for the legend.

The New Westminster Mainland Guardian

Discovery of Diggings at Pitt River - 10 November, 1869 - Page 3 - An Indian brought in a good prospect of gold a few days ago which he states he found in a little stream on the north side of Pitt Lake. He has volunteered to lead a party to the place and arrangements are being made for their immediate departure. The event has created considerable excitement in this city.

The New Westminster Daily Columbian & Victoria Colonist Reports

Shot Dead - 9 September, 1890 - Louis Bee, a half-breed, is deliberately shot and killed by an insane Indian named Slumach at Lillooet Slough. A terrible unpremeditated murder was committed yesterday afternoon at a point on Lillooet Slough (afterwards Alouette), not far from Pitt River, and some two and a half miles above Pitt River Bridge. An Indian named Slumach, aged about sixty years, was hunting in this neighbourhood, and coming out of the bush, with his double-barrelled shotgun in hand, found several other Indians trout fishing on the banks of the Slough.

A half-breed named Louis Bee sauntered up to Slumach and asked him in a casual way what he was shooting around here. Without a moment's warning, or any preliminary sign of anger, Slumach instantly levelled his gun at Bee and fired. Just before the discharge of the piece, Bee held up his hands and begged Slumach not to shoot. The distance between the two men was so short that the whole charge entered the victim's body, just under the arm pit, behind the shoulder-blade. Death was instantaneous, and Bee fell without a moan and weltering in his blood, while his murderer coolly proceeded to reload his piece.



One of the Indians who witnessed the awful deed immediately fled, not only to give the alarm, but from motives of personal safety. He describes the countenance of the murderer after the act was committed as resembling that of an incarnate demon. Slumach is insane, and what he had done seemed to have kindled all the wild disorderly fancies of madness in the maniac's brain and lit up his eyes with a ferocious gleam that boded no good to anyone whom he should encounter when his gun was reloaded. Slumach slowly retreated to the impenetrable and pathless jungle surrounding that part of Lillooet Slough and plunging into

its gloomy recesses was lost to sight and is still at large.

The Murder of Louie Bee - 10 September, 1890 - Through the courtesy of L.F. Bonson, who placed his fine steam launch at the coroner's disposal, Captain Pittendrigh and his attendants were enabled to perform the journey yesterday from the city to the scene of the Indian murder at Pitt River in an expeditious and comfortable manner. Long before the fatal spot was reached, the Indians could be heard chanting a loud strange death song, or coronach, for the untimely death of their comrade Louis Bee. The party from the city, on arriving at the place where the murder occurred, found a number of Indians congregated together, and apparently suffering from fear to a considerable extent. Enquiry developed the fact that none of them dared to pursue the murderer through the bush, and their terror of him had been very much increased by the appearance of Slumach the day following the murder, and his appropriation of the murdered man's remains. He placed the body in a canoe and set out in the direction of the lake with it. It was suspected that Slumach's intention was to drop the body overboard in deep water, and Captain Pittendrigh, acting on the supposition, set the Indians to work dragging the river for the corpse. The latest news received states that the body was recovered, and was in the custody of friends in the neighbourhood of the spot where the tragic occurrence happened.

The Indian witnesses who came to the city with the first information of the crime, was taken to the city lock-up this morning for safekeeping, by order of William Moresby.

Captain Pittendrigh and jury returned from the Pitt River last night. This morning a new jury was summonsed to proceed to view the remains of Bee.

Coroner's Inquest - 11 September, 1890 - A coroner's inquest was held yesterday in the committee rooms at the City Hall upon the body of Louis Bee, the half-breed who was murdered last Monday afternoon at Pitt River by an Indian named Slumach, and whose remains were brought to the city yesterday. Dr. Walker performed the post-mortem examination, and found the bone of the upper left arm to have been shattered by the passage of the ball, which had entered the side of the deceased, fractured the fifth rib, penetrating the right side of the heart, and torn the lungs. The bullet was found embedded in the right lung. Death, in the doctor's opinion must have been instantaneous. Charlie Seymour, an Indian, was the principal witness examined by the jury.

The jury returned a verdict of wilful murder against the Indian Slumach.

The body of the murdered man was coffined, and taken home by the Indians for internment in their own cemetery near the entrance to Pitt Lake. Mr. Moresby and two special officers left immediately this morning by steamer for the scene of the murder.

They were to be met by the Chief of the Indians with a selected posse of men, and the search for Slumach will be prosecuted unceasingly until he is captured.

Still at Large - 12 September, 1890 - Slumach, the murderer of Louis Bee is still at large, and there is no immediate prospect of his capture, unless he is driven by starvation into the haunts of men. Mr. Moresby went up to Pitt Lake yesterday and continued the search for him, but with no success. Just before Mr. Moresby arrived, the Indians saw Slumach in his cabin, but he quickly plunged into the bush again, and was not visible during the remainder of the day. On examining the cabin Mr. Moresby found a can of powder and a large quantity of provisions which he destroyed, and then to prevent Slumach returning there for shelter, the

shack was burned to the ground. His canoe was also destroyed.

Slumach will now have to keep to the woods until cold weather and starvation drives him in. Mr. Moresby left for Pitt Lake again this morning and may not return for several days. He is determined to bring him to justice, and will, if he can, obtain the assistance required.

The Indians are all afraid of the murderer, and decline to assist in beating the bush for him as he is well armed and has lots of ammunition. Slumach is a desperate character and is credited by the Indians with another murder committed years ago and under similar circumstances. Although a view of the murderer's friends say he is insane, dozens of Indians who know him, say otherwise, and declare he is only a bloodthirsty old villain.

Slumach the Murderer Still at Large - 16 September, 1890 - Indians who know him well say he had committed four or five murders during the last 25 years.

His last murder, previous to the killing of Louis Bee, was committed about six years ago when he is said to have killed an Indian without any apparent cause. He fled to the mountains and remained in seclusion for a whole year, and then suddenly returned on day and took possession of his cabin and lived quietly until the perpetration of his last crime.

Slumach is looked upon by the Indians as a very wonderful person, being able to endure the greatest of hardships without any apparent inconvenience. As a hunter he is without equal, and he is adept at making fires in the primitive manner, using two sticks and rubbing the same together until the friction ignites the wood. He is said to be without fear of man or beast and to be possessed of a nature vicious in the extreme.

He was armed with his deadly rifle, and was too far away to permit of an exchange of bullets. Of the nearer approach of his pursurers he quietly retreated into the impregnable fastness among the stupendous precipices that frown upon the lake at that neighbourhood. He has not since been seen.

Slumach's Action - 19 September, 1890 - The Indians say that Slumach has always acted strangely, and at irregular intervals would withdraw himself alone in the forests that border the locale and remain there for weeks, reappearing at the end of those periods of aberration looking haggard, and more like a savage beast than a human being. In spite of his lunacy however, the maniac never displayed any signs of hostility, nor gave indications that his freedom was dangerous to human life.

He is described as a very powerful man and is rather dreaded by his own Indian friends.

It is of the utmost importance that fishing and hunting parties going into this region should keep a most vigilant lookout as the murderer is still roaming the woods armed with a shotgun, and as far as can be learned, with plenty of ammunition.

The Indian who informed Mr.

Starved Out - 25 October, 1890 - The Indian Slumach, who attained to ghastly celebrity some weeks ago by wantonly murdering a young half-breed named Louis Bee, has been suffering terrible privations in the mountain fastness around the shores of Pitt Lake, whither he retired after the murder and set the power of the law at defiance. A month ago, Mr. P. McTiernan, Indian Agent here, had a conference with the members of the tribe at Pitt Lake and succeeded in convincing them of their duty to deliver Slumach over to the law. From that

day no assistance was given to the outlaw, and probably on that account he was forced to give himself up yesterday to the police. Yesterday, he sent his nephew for the Indian Agent, who went up to Pitt Lake accompanied by two Indian policemen, and to them the desperate fugitive quietly surrendered. He had eaten nothing for several days and was in a terrible state of emaciation and thoroughly exhausted.

His ammunition was all gone and his clothing in rags and he presented a very wild and weatherworn aspect.

Slumach was at once brought to the city and placed under the care of the physicians at the Provincial jail.

At latest accounts to-day, Slumach was in a very precarious condition, his vitality being almost spent. The doctors do not care to express an opinion as to his chances of recovery, but it is understood that they are very small. Should he recover he will be given a preliminary trial, and then remanded for trial at the assizes in November.

The Trial

District Court - 3 November, 1890 - The murderer, Slumach, was up in the district court before Captain Pitendrigh, J.P., for a preliminary hearing. Several witnesses were examined and a mass of evidence taken down and the magistrate sent Slumach up for trial at the approaching assizes.

The prisoner was greatly improved in health since the surrender and will be strong enough to undergo the tedium of the assize trial this month. Slumach is rather an intelligent looking man of about sixty years of age. His face expressed a great deal of determination, even ferocity. he sat in court listening to the evidence this morning with the utmost apathy.

A number of Indians occupied seats and took a great deal of interest in the proceedings.

The Case of Slumach - 11 November, 1890 - Slumach, the murderer of Louis Bee, now confined in the Provincial gaol awaiting trial at the Assizes which opens to-morrow, is in a very bad state of health, and may not be in fit condition to appear for trial at this term. He is very weak and does not seem to gather strength so rapidly as might be expected, considering the attention and comforts he receives from the medical superintendent and gaol officials.

Mr. McTernan, Indian Agent, is of the opinion that Slumach will not live long in confinement, and it is a well known fact that an Indian sentenced to a long term of imprisonment soon pines away and dies. It now looks as if Slumach will not be able to stand trial at the coming assizes, and should this turn out to be the case it is pretty certain that he will escape the gallows by death from natural causes.

Fall Assizes - 14 November, 1890 - Court resumed sittings at 10:30 o'clock. – The crown prosecutor asked the arraignment of Slumach for murder. Mr. T. C. Anderson, defending counsel, asked that the case be adjourned until next assizes, on the ground that there were two important witnesses for the defense, Moody, an Indian, and Florence Reed, who could not possibly be obtained in time for this assize, but could be produced at the next sitting of the court. The affidavits of Slumach and his daughter Annie, were produced and read.

Mr. Moresby said he could produce both the witnesses required by the defense by 11 o'clock to-morrow and his Lordship therefore adjourned the court until that time.

Fall Assizes (Mr. Justice Tyrwhitt Drake presiding) - 15

November, 1890 - The Slumach case occupied the attention of the court to-day. The evidence had to be nearly all interpreted.

There were several Indian witnesses examined at length and they gave minute particulars of the tragedy.

It came out in the evidence, that Bee, the victim of the murder, was in the habit of blustering at, and threatening almost everyone with whom he came in contact. Against Slumach he indulged something like a grudge, and for some time there was bad blood between them. The Indians who were with Bee at the time of the murder were fishing, and on Slumach emerging from the adjacent woods, a slight altercation ensued between him and Bee, with the result that Slumach shot him dead.

The jury retired at 3:45, and after being out 15 minutes, returned with the verdict of guilty. His Lordship sentenced Slumach to be hanged on January 16 next.



The Evidence of Charlie Seymour

"I remember the 8th day of September last. I went up in a canoe with Louie Bee from the place where we were living on Pitt River to look at our sturgeon lines. Louie was the only one with me in the canoe. We went up about two miles when we got to the lines. We found there was no bait on the hooks. We went up a little further and saw a canoe come near. We hailed it and it contained the Chief of the Katzie tribe. His wife was along with him. We had a conversation for a few minutes. He then left us going downstream. We went upstream immediately after parting. I heard the report of a gun on the opposite shore. That is the left hand side going upstream. Louie Bee proposed to go across to where the shot was fired as he thought it might be white men there. When we go to the shore I saw the prisoner Slumach coming out of the long grass and I told Louie Bee he was coming. Then I caught a glimpse of a canoe hauled up partly on the shore. When Slumach got near Louie Bee asked him what he was firing at. He gave no answer but kept walking up towards our canoe until he reached the edge of the river. He was preparing his gun, that is preparing it in position to shoot. Without any further word he presented his gun at Louie Bee the deceased and fired. Slumach then ran toward his canoe, took out his ammunition, and reloaded. After the shot was fired I saw blood coming out of Louie Bee's arm at the back of the shoulder. He gasped hold of the side of the canoe and after a few seconds fell overboard and sank in about two and a half feet of water. The canoe was afloat and about 15 or 16 feet from the shore. The water here is shallow for some distance out. I jumped on shore immediately after Louie Bee was shot as I was afraid of getting shot as well as Louie Bee who had given no provocation whatsoever and the prisoner was putting powder in his gun again. The gun was a percussion single barreled one.

I asked the prisoner as I jumped on shore why he had shot the deceased. He said he wanted to drive us away that he did not want any persons to go up there. I waited in the grass hidden for a short time to see what Slumach would do. He was holding his gun during the time I was hid which was about twenty minutes. I thought I might be shot so I down the shore and then walked over the railway bridge and up to my house. When I got near I hollered out to the women that Slumach had killed Louie Bee. The women came out and went with me to my

house. I then started to come down here and arrived at the city at dark and reported the circumstances to the Indian Agent. I met no one on my way down. I told my wife what had happened and there was an old man in the camp in another compartment but he did not hear. I remained in the city all night and returned with the Coroner. When we arrived we could not find the body as the tide was high. I commenced searching for the body and shortly after found it and a young man who was with me fired off his gun to attract attention. The body was in the deeper water owing to the rise in the tide. I recognized Louie Bee's axe in Slumach's house when Mr. Moresby searched it. We had a bottle in the canoe for killing sturgeon. These things were in the canoe when I jumped out. Louie Bee only said to Slumach 'What are you shooting at?'. Louie had no club in his hand. I was in the stern and Louie Bee in the bow. Louie being in the bow of the canoe was nearer to Slumach. He was sideways to him. I cannot say if the Coquitlam Chief had any whiskey or not in his canoe as we were some distance from each other. I had no whiskey that day. I was with Louie Bee all day and he had not had any whiskey either. There was none to be got. The prisoner Slumach now before the court is the man who shot Louie Bee. On recovering his body I brought it down to Westminster as directed by the Coroner. (To the accused Slumach) I did not hear Louie Bee call you any names.

I was in the canoe that brought the body of Louie Bee down to New Westminster. It was the same body that was taken by Mr. Moresby from the canoe and placed in an out house on Front Street and on which the postmortem by the doctor was made. This took place on the 10th day of September, 1890."

The Evidence of Katzie Chief Swanaset

"I remember Monday the 8th day of September last past. I was coming down the Pitt River on that day. My wife was with me in the canoe. I met the deceased Louie Bee and Seymour. Louie Bee spoke to me saying 'Clahowya, Tihee.' I then answered 'Clahowya, Louie.' The canoes did not get together. They were some distance apart. After we had parted some distance downstream I heard the echo of a shot fired away in the mountain. I know the prisoner. I did not see him on that day. Louie Bee was sober when I spoke to him as also was Seymour."

The Evidence of R. Eden Walker, Medical Doctor

I saith I practice in British Columbia. I remember making a post mortem examination on the body of Louie Bee on the 10th day of September last. The body was in an out house on Front Street lying in shirt, waistcoat, and pants and covered with blankets. The clothes were wet as if the body had recently been in the water. On examining the body I found a wound on the outer side of the left shoulder. On following the wound down I found it passed through the upper part of the arm bone into the chest through the left lung through the upper part of the heart and through the right lung into the right plural cavity where I found part of the bullet which had caused the wound. Death was caused by the wound in the heart. There was no trace of the deceased having taken any alcohol beverage within several hours before death. The body was that of a well nourished man."



Paid the Penalty - 16 January, 1891 - Slumach, the murderer of Louis Bee, pays the penalty of his crime. Old Slumach was hanged in the yard of the provincial gaol this morning at 8 o'clock, for the murder of Sept. 8th last, of Louis Bee, a half-breed.

The particulars of the murder are briefly as follows... Pierre, the Indian catechist - medicine man, slept in the same cell with Slumach, and prayed with him day and night, and it is satisfactory to know that the labor of the good priest and his assistant was not in vain.

The condemned man retired to rest at an early hour last night and slept well.

Slumach awakened early and immediately went into devotional exercises with his spiritual attendants, after which breakfast was brought in and he ate with apparent relish.

A few minutes before 7 o'clock Father Morgan baptised Slumach, who professed his belief in Christianity and the hope of salvation. Prayers continued until the arrival of the hangman to pinion him, and to this operation he submitted without a murmur. All being in readiness a few minutes before 8 o'clock, the procession was formed and proceeded to the scaffold. Mr. Sheriff Armstrong led the way, followed by Mr. Wm. Moresby, governor of the jail and the deputy sheriff, next came Slumach, supported by gaolers Burr and Connor, and followed by the hangman, masked and hooded.

Father Morgan, Pierre, Dr. J.M. McLean, Dr. Walker, and a number of constables brought up the rear of the procession.

Slumach walked firmly up the steps leading to the platform, and faced the crowd below. The hangman quickly adjusted the noose, and Father Morgan commenced a prayer. Then the black cap was put on, and at 8 o'clock exactly, the bolt was drawn, the trap fell, and Slumach had paid the penalty of his crime.

The hanging was very ably managed, and beyond a few twitchings of the hands and feet, the body remained perfectly still after the drop. In three minutes and fifty-eight seconds life was pronounced extinct, but it was more than twenty minutes before the body was cut down and placed in the coffin.

Coroner Pittendrigh and a jury viewed the body and brought in the usual verdict. Slumach's neck was broken in the fall, and death must have been painless. The drop was eight feet five inches. Over fifty persons witnessed the hanging, and a large crowd gathered outside the jail, and remained there until the black flag was hoisted. Among the crowd on the street were several Indian women, relatives of Slumach, who waited around the jail for more than an hour after the execution.

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Chapter 2 - Early Newspaper Articles

'Volcanic' Brown Lost in Mountains: Prospecting in Pitt Lake Country and Not Seen Since Middle of August



Grand Forks Gazette - November 6, 1931 - "Volcanic" R.A. Brown, who has made his home 12 miles north of Grand Forks for the past 40 years, and famous both as a prospector and herb-doctor, is again reported lost in the hills near the coast.

Search Parties Out - The following dispatch appeared in Tuesday's Daily Province: R.A. "Volcanic" Brown, 86, prospector, is believed lost in the mountains north of Pitt Lake, and a party left Vancouver this morning to look for him. The party, headed by Game Warden G.C. Stevenson and Provincial Constable E. Murphy of Vancouver, is going here by boat.

The aged prospector was last seen in the Pitt country on August 17. A prospector named Swanson, who was on his way out sold him beans and rice to add to his food supply. It is believed that Brown's food would last him only until about the middle of September unless he shot some game. Brown intimated to Swanson that he would try and cross the big glacier before snow set in. The search party is equipped with snowshoes as they expect to find deep drifts. Brown, it is believed, may be marooned in a shack about twenty miles from the head of Pitt lake.

Lost six Years Ago - Brown was lost in the Pitt Lake country about six years ago, and a search party of police found him slowly progressing over a glacier. One of his toes had been frost bitten and he had amputated it. He was warned then of the great risk.....

The party that went in to search for old Volcanic Brown in 1928 was made of Herman Gardner, Constable Spud Murphy, Alvin Patterson, Caleb Gardner and Harry Corder. They started their journey by heading north from Pitt Lake and then climbing up to the headwaters of Seven Mile Creek where they crossed the divide to Homestead Glacier until they arrived in a place called Porcupine Valley. From there they crossed the seven miles that make up Stave Glacier when they arrived at the place where the Stave Glacier ended and the Upper Stave River formed. Here they found the remains of what was Volcanic Brown's last camp. In the remains of his camp the party made a remarkable discovery that was once again able to prove (the existence) of a lost mine. They found a glass jar containing eleven ounces of gold which had been hammered out of a vein. Volcanic Brown was never found. His body is believed to be frozen deep in one of the crevasses which make up the giant Stave Glacier.

Volcanic Brown does indeed have to be the Pitt Lake's most famous victim by far. He is very well known in the province of British Columbia because of his famous prospect in the Princeton area known as Copper Mountain.

Old Chief's Secret Told, Claim Posted Fabled Mine Needs No Guardian Ghosts: Nature's Barriers Block Seekers of Gold by Bill Ryan

Province News Team Discovers How 21 May Have Perished

The Province - April 23, 1952 - The ghosts that guard Slumach's Lost Creek mine, that have warded off a horde of searchers moiling for its gold, are not spirits... they are the forces of nature, in savage combination.

Giant snags and windfalls, night temperatures that dip lower than 12 below freezing in April, yawning canyons that loom at your feet unexpectedly, treacherous snow crevices which could swallow a man while the backs of his companions were turned, snow and rockslides, all lined the trail that carried a Province news team to what may be the fabulous lost creek mine.

Last Wednesday when Province photographer Ray Munro, guide Tommy Williams and this reporter turned our backs on Pitt Lake and began climbing, the lake looked like a minature Lake Louise in the bright sunshine. Our spirits rode high.

West Shore - Four days later when we came out of the woods, Williams had two wrenched knees and assorted bruises, Munro's stomach was acting up and his shoulder was stiff, this reporter had a stiff right ankle and innumerable cuts and slivers. All of us were wet through, had torn clothes and legs like rubber.

Our Associated Air Taxi aircraft had dropped us on the west shore of Pitt Lake, about ten miles from the south end of the lake, near the point where the lake takes a sharp swing north-westward. You start climbing the moment you step ashore.

An overgrown trail, steep and pitted with rocks, carried us to about the 1500-foot level. On our backs we carried each about 30 pounds: canned beans, dehydrated soup, ready-mix pancake batter, spagetti, a 303 army rifle and automatic shot gun, axe, knives, compass, prospector's permits, staking tags, etc.

A leaping, boiling stream blocked our path and we were not able to follow the route that our guide knew best. We cut through a wild tangle of windfalls, covering half a mile in two and a half hours.

Wednesday evening, deep in giant red and yellow cedar and fir which would bring a handsome price on the lumber market, we pitched out first camp. Our camp was just within the snow line. We laid out cedar bough beds and turned in at 8 p.m.

Uncertain about bears, and having only two sleeping bags, we each stood four hours guard duty during the night. It passed without incident.

Thursday we threaded our way through a winter wonderland. But the melting corn snow gave way incessantly underfoot and progress was slow. We wound through the trees over a slight grade that

lies between a mountain rim on either side with the roar of the wild stream we had been unable to cross constantly in our ears from the left. Munro took compass readings throughout, and Williams was constantly checking landmarks he knew, mountain peaks and blazed trees. We took turns in breaking a trail.

For a time even Williams was lost - then, suddenly, we came to a gentle down slope, and a level area beside the foaming creek.

Williams excitedly peered through the trees and upward, pointed and said: "There it is!"

Munro and I dropped our packs and followed his finger. One thousand feet above us, near the top of a soaring peak whose top and flanks were completely covered in snow, we saw a sheer bluff, and faintly visible, below it, a ledge.

To the Right - "I knew I could find it." beamed Williams. "I told you I could find it."

"Somewhere over here," he added, pointing to the right. "Slumach is supposed to have buried a seal skin full of gold beneath a big blazed tree. He had taken too much gold on one of his trips and couldn't carry it out. Slumach's son told my father about it."

But the mine was the main objective and we turned to the creek. We felled a tree across it and clambered to the other shore. We made camp quickly, and took only one pack of supplies and started on the last 1000 feet.

The slope was a 60-degree angle, all snow. The usual route, said the son of Chief Coquitlam Williams, lies to the right, up an easier slope to the crest of the mountain, along the top and then in a circle downward to the bluff and the edge.

Made Footholes - We were able to kick and punch footholes in the snow, however, so we headed straight up. We changed course constantly to avoid fissures in the snow. There were many slips and slides. We literally crawled up 1000 feet on our hands and knees.

Throughout the climb Munro and I repeatedly stopped to catch our wind. Tommy, 59 years, spry by virtue of the centuries that his people have spent in taming the wilderness, plodded on methodically, ceaselessly.

It was bitter cold. We were wet, legs like rubber. Williams casually mentioned that he thought a toe and finger were frozen. Two of his fingers were frozen to almost twice their size.

The roar of water sounded above us, and we reached a spot, below a bluff, where the stream had broken through the snow and cascaded over the bluff. We edged out on a snow bridge, but couldn't reach the stream for fear of falling through the snow and into the rocky canyon below. We chewed on snow.

Williams looked about him frantically, trudged a few paces to the right onto the small ledge, and turned to us with an enigmatic smile.

"This is it - this is Slumach's mine," he said simply.

"I knew the snow would be too deep. But below us is the creek. It runs out of a hole in that rock."

It was, we agreed, about 4,000 feet up. Below us, across from us, all about us lay silence and the beauty of winter in the mountains.

Up the Bluff - And beneath our feet - if our information was authentic - there might be lode gold.

While Munro and Williams explored below, I worked my way up the bluff and reached a point near the crest of the peak. With a hatchet I blazed a tree, attached out metal staking tag and wrote on the white wood the other necessary information. The stake number is A86075. The claim blankets an area 2300 feet up the side of the mountain, 920 feet to the right of the stream and 400 feet to the left of the stream.

On a whim we called it "Rymu Coquitlam."

The formal papers have gone to the Gold Commissioner's office in New Westminster.

From the walls of the canyon we clawed out moss and a few chips of rock and - wet through and evening winds whipping about us - we headed down. On the way down we staked a second post and corner posts.

Williams, carrying a gold pan filled with moss, slipped. He slid 100 yards down the steep slope but was stopped by a tree. The pan tobogganed another 100 yards down the slope, spewing moss.

We reached camp wet, breathless and worn.

Repeated attempts to start a fire failed. Finally, a few drops of gasoline we had did the trick. The fire was laid on two heavy logs we had chopped so as not to sink into the snow. We stripped what wet clothes we could spare, hung them about the fire and dived for the sleeping bags. Supper was cold beans.

That night there was an incident. I awoke to find Williams and Munro thrashing about in their sleeping bag. Williams had awakened to find a small animal - he thought a martin or a fisher - trying to crawl under the sleeping bag. In the pitch darkness, awakened abruptly, our nerves jangled. The animal fled.

Even in the bags our knees and feet were cold, although we were fully clothed.

Williams had another bad fall, overbalanced by his pack, on the way out and wrenched his knee. For a moment we thought he had broken his leg.

It was like stepping from winter into summer as we passed out of the snow line on Friday.

From our moss samples we panned a fine black sand.

Our plane was to rendezvous with us at the lake at 3 p.m. Saturday. It failed to appear.

Food was low and we considered building a raft to pole the ten miles down the lake, in the event a mistake had been made about the rendezvous day. We learned later high winds in Vancouver had prevented our plane from taking off.

While we waited on Sunday a yellow Moth seaplane passed up the other side of the lake. We fired a red flare to attract him but he passed on.

Sunday sharp at 3 p.m. a twin-engine Cessna skimmed over the mountains and dropped to the lake.

That is the story, factually as it happened, and factually as it was told to me.

Is it the fabulous Lost Creek Mine of Slumach, who killed to protect his secret? And whether it is the mine or not, is there gold beneath the snows?

Gold has been taken out of the area, but no one can honestly answer these questions at this time. But when the snows melt this summer, you may be sure, two Province newsmen and the 59-year-old-son

of an Indian chief will go back to that bleak, remote bluff and ledge.

Over the Rainbow...to Slumach's Lost Mine **Another B.C. Police Story** by Cecil Clark

The Daily Colonist - November 2, 1968 - A few weeks ago a fellow scribbler here in town happened to bring up that perennial conversation piece... Slumach's lost mine. Mainly because, in the passing this past summer of my old friend, ex-game inspector George Stevenson, another link in the Slumach story was severed.

For George once headed the search party that struggled across mountain torrents and over the seven-mile-wide Stave Glacier in an unsuccessful search for an old prospector called "Volcanic" Brown, whose mysterious comings and goings gave that he was close to the secret of the fabulous mine.

Of course Brown was only one of many in the past half century whose gold hunting zeal was inspired by the legend. Maybe you have heard the Slumach story or stories. Because there were variations.

The true part is that in September, 1890 an Indian called Slumach, who trapped and hunted around Pitt Lake, took exception to a wise crack made by a 24-year-old French Canadian called Louis Bee. Slumach shot and killed Bee, and after trial and conviction, was hanged at New Westminster in January, 1891.

It was a good many years after Slumach's demise that the story got abroad that he had been seen on occasion with quite a poke of gold. Finally the tale resolved itself into a fabulously rich mine, the secret of the whereabouts buried with Slumach.

A variation to the story is that Slumach's squaw knew too much about its location, so he drowned her in Pitt Lake. Soon after that he took another wife. She too got nosy and met the same fate. This, in rather repetitious fashion, went on until he got rid of no less than six women!

How he managed to keep all this a secret is rather extraordinary, for we were very good at holding inquests even in those days. True he had a wife who drowned in the lake, but an inquest proved it was accidental.

Another tale is that when Slumach was on trial his squaw paddled down to New Westminster with "a canoe load of nuggets" to bribe the jury.

You can quite easily see where this sort of thing will lead you, once you get into the spirit of it. For instance, years ago, Maizie Hurley, publisher of the Native Voice, referred to the death of William Pierre (supposedly the oldest member of the Squamish band) she had this to say: Pierre was one of an Indian family that knew the secrets of the mine and who had seen its discoverer, a murderer named Slumach, make bullets of gold."

The next paragraph went on to note that 21 white prospectors had died searching for the mine.

You can see that "golden bullets" touch was enough to set another stampede for Pitt Lake. That 21 deaths was also sheer invention, for I checked it. There have been quite a few hunters lost in that

region, and one or two succumbed.

Another version is that Slumach, just before his execution, told his son the exact location of the mine, warning him never to divulge the information to a white man. The son eventually disobeyed his father's wish and offered to show a white man where the gold came from. As the result of which, so the story goes, in 1903, John Jackson, a veteran Alaskan prospector, came out of the Pitt country with a fistful of gold and a shut mouth. Seems that after finding the mine he shot the Indian guide. Later, it was alleged, Jackson deposited about \$10,000 in the San Francisco branch of the Bank of British North America.

Then a year or two later, just before his death in Seattle, Jackson is supposed to have drawn the mine's location on a map which he gave to a man named Shotwell. Copies of this map seem to have popped up from time to time in the next 25 year around Vancouver. Which accounts for all these people with the "inside track" picking their way over the ice fields of the Upper Pitt River Country.

Some were crazy, like old Volcanic Brown who never gave a hint of his destination and never recorded a claim. Finally, about 40 years ago, he lost his life on Stave Glacier.

Brown (who discovered the Volcanic mine in the south east Kootenay country) had his personal version of the Slumach story. Seems that one evening many many years ago he turned up at a Kootenay hunting lodge occupied that week by four Nelson businessmen. After a stiff rum and a hot meal he garrulously told the hunters how he once met the ailing granddaughter of Slumach. Being a bit of a herbalist old Brown cured the girl of her malady, and in gratitude she told him the location of her grampa's mine.

Anyway, that's the story one of the Nelson men later retold.

"Volcanic" by the way, was the discoverer of the Copper Mountain property near Princeton. Though it's now closed down it was a big producer for years. I think the Granby Company gave the old man \$75,000 for his claims. Of course with a quick onrush of money we all have equally quick recollection of something we want most in life.

In old Brown's case it was a complete set of gold teeth - uppers and lowers. Which he found easier to replace than his toes. Because once, at the headwaters of the Pitt, when they got frozen he amputated them with a jackknife.

Tough as all get out, he then manfully made his way out to Seven Mile Creek where there was then a fish hatchery.

Finally, as I mentioned, there came a day when he didn't come out and the searchers (Game Warden George Stevenson and trapper Roy McMaster) after a gruelling trip over Stave Glacier, came upon his tent collapsed under the weight of snow. They figured the old man had left it too late (it was November) and knowing he would either starve or freeze to death, had set out in the teeth of a blizzard and maybe gone down a crevasse.

While I am digressing from a down to earth analysis of the Slumach story, let me give you one of the little known anecdotes. Keep in mind that the Slumach story has appeared nearly 40 times in B.C. newspapers since 1900. So it was not unnatural in 1952, that a couple of staffers on a Vancouver daily came up with the bright idea for a feature. They hired a float plane, and taking along a photographer and the grandson of Chief Capilano, made a landing on Pitt Lake. The quartet climbed a little rocky rise, and there the boy was pictured pointing to the ground. The cutline read: "He identifies the lost mine." Of course the boy knew as much about Slumach's mine as he did of

calculus. However the story hit the front page the next day.

Then shifted to page 2 for two more days.

Among the interested readers were the members of the Alpine Club some of whose members went out a week later to have a look see. Upshot was one of them staked a claim. Whereupon, believe it or not, our two diligent newsmen floated the Lost Creek Mine Ltd.

Alas, however, that fall the company suspended operations after its solicitor announced in the press quote "investigation shows no commercial ore" unquote.

This little paragraph was conveniently buried on page 31 because it also embodied the comment that a cease and desist order had been received from B.C.'s superintendent of brokers.

Which was no worse than a real "wildy" published in Liberty magazine some years ago. This time the Vancouver author even supplied photographs. One was of Slumach, looking between 25 and 30 and smoking a cigarette. The writer went to town on the "missing wives" angle. This time they were white girls, lured from Vancouver to the trackless wilds of Pitt Lake. He had pictures of three of them, dressed in the style of about 1914. Just to clinch the matter, the author claimed the B.C. provincial police sent Constable Eric Grainger (in plain clothes) to shadow the girls to Pitt Lake. Grainger was to keep in touch from time to time with his immediate superior, Sergeant Hilton of the Missing Persons Bureau.

This was a script that really went haywire, for if this was a picture of Slumach as a young man, it was taken nine years before photography was invented! A little research would have shown the author that when Slumach was hanged in January 1891, he was frail, tottery, white haired and ... 81 years old. Needless to say there never was a Constable Grainger on the B.C. Police, nor a Sergeant Hilton, nor for that matter, a Missing Persons Bureau.

It's very little trouble really to find the full details of the life and times of Slumach, in the back issues of New Westminster's Columbian.

After Slumach shot Bee he took to the hills, the police after him. At one time in the hunt there was a long distance exchange of shots, then Slumach disappeared again.

"O.K." said Bill Moresby, the district head of the force "let's not waste our time. He's old, out of grub, and when it gets cold he'll walk in and give himself up.

Which is exactly what happened. Poor old Slumach was tried and convicted in the lex talionis style of the Victorian area, and duly hanged by the neck.

It was said at the time that the man who hanged him was the same character who hanged Louis Riel. I haven't checked this out but it can easily be done.

I remember years ago talking over the Slumach case with Bruce A. "Pinkie" McKelvie, and he was of the opinion that maybe, years before, Slumach had bushwhacked some returning Cariboo miner and cashed in a few nuggets when he visited New Westminster which gave rise to the mine story.

Major J.S. Matthews, Vancouver's city archivist was another who doubted there ever was a mine. Of the same opinion was Tom Elliott, one-time advisor to the B.C.- Yukon Chamber of Mines.

It must take a lot of brains, sweat and money to extract any noticeable amount of gold from a quartz operation. Can you image Slumach's one-man operation? When you figure that he was so primitive in his ways that he was the last person in his band to use matches. He still used the bowcord and drill

practice of his ancestors, literally rubbing sticks together.

But, human nature being what it is, the story will come up again and again. My delving into the available record only leads me to Betsy Prigg's historic conclusion about Sairey Gramps friend, Mrs. Harris: "I don't believe there is no such a person."

The Lost Gold Mine of Pitt Lake

Chapter 3 - Transfer to Maple Ridge Detachment

After a brief stint working as a clerk at the Sub Division Office located on the second floor of a building on 6th Street near 6th Ave (where I spent every spare moment downstairs working with the Identification Section (police photographers), I was transferred to Haney Detachment in Maple Ridge in whose jurisdiction lay Pitt Lake and where my duties soon brought me into contact with Indians residing on the Katzie Indian Reserve.

My very first priority at my new posting was to read all the police complaint sheets going back for several months. Several dealt with an ongoing investigation involving Joachim Pierre, the Katzie Chief, and a television cameraman. Apparently the news reporter had gone onto the reserve and started taking footage without first asking Joe's permission. Joe asked him to leave. The man refused whereupon Joe took an axe and totally and forever changed the appearance of his vehicle. As I drove through the reservation, I saw a big Indian with a couple of thirty pound salmon dangling on the middle finger of each hand coming up from the wharf. From the description, I knew it had to be Joe. He gave me a sideways glance and as he did so I shouted to him, "Do you know where I might borrow an axe?" He grinned from ear to ear and motioned me over to the house where he introduced me to his wife Agnes and their several children. We soon became good friends and when on graveyard shift I'd often drop down to Agnes and Joe's place for an early morning coffee. During these visits, the Pierre family always managed to steer the conversation around to Old Slumach and his Lost Gold Mine of Pitt Lake. One day Agnes and I drove to Mission to meet her Uncle Clinton and Aunt Mandy Charnley. I learned that 'Aunt' Mandy had slipped and fallen on a patch of ice while crossing the Fraser River when only seventeen years of age. Despite this handicap, she married, learned to read braille, and raise three children. An avid bingo player, she was able to play several cards at the same time. 'Aunt' Mandy was Joe's Aunt, and her Father was Peter Pierre - the last to talk with Slumach before he went to the gallows. He was also the man that helped famed anthropologist Dr. Diamond Jenness write the book titled 'Faith of a Coast Salish Indian'.

During this time Staff Sergeant Roland Harding, the non-commissioned officer in charge of Maple Ridge Detachment, wrote an article titled 'Old Slumach' for the 'RCMP Quarterly' magazine. He allowed me to photocopy the file of newspaper clippings he had used as his source of research material and thus I started my own Slumach file. It was through Harding that I was introduced, by way of correspondence, to Cecil Clark, an ex-Superintendent in the now defunct British Columbia Provincial Police. Clark, aware of



my interest in Slumach, provided me with a snap of "Volcanic" Brown when he wrote to me about a story I was writing about Bill Miner, Canada's first train robber.

My very first excursion halfway up Pitt Lake was with Joe. He took me as a passenger in his fish boat from Katzie Indian Reserve #1, located at the south end of Bonson Road in Pitt Meadows, down the Fraser River and then up the Lower Pitt River to about halfway up Pitt Lake to examine and photograph pictographs (ancient Indian rock paintings) on the west side of Pitt Lake and opposite Goose Island. As the boat reached the north end of the Lower Pitt River, Joe managed to hit a deadhead (submerged log) which resulted in him receiving a broken nose and two black eyes. Almost immediately Joe beached the boat on the north side of the river opposite the Pitt Lake boat launch for lunch and to examine the damage to face and boat. It was called Katzie Indian Reserve #4. It was over a beer and a sandwich that Joe told me that Slumach's cabin had been located very near to

where we were dining. I learned afterwards that his fish boat had to be recaulked from bow to stern. For the next several months I was the brunt of several jokes, "Don't mess with Copper Waite, did you see what he did to the Chief?" After the meal, we proceeded eastward before turning straight north and up the narrow channel to the lake being careful to stay east of the buoys to avoid grounding the boat in the mud flats. A short time later I was able to photograph several ancient Indian rock paintings, called pictographs, which were made from a concoction of grease and red ochre. Joe informed me that Pitt Lake was the largest tidal lake in the world. I was surprised to see several Arbutus trees growing on the cliffs just above the pictographs.



A short time later the detachment received a complaint of someone pitt

lamping deer (shooting them at night with the aid of a vehicle's headlights) at the top end of the lake. Harding, aware of my interest in Slumach and the Pitt Lake Lost Gold Mine, permitted Constable Dick Brock and I to take the police boat to the north end of the lake to carry out an investigation and to familiarize ourselves with the boat, the terrain, and the tidal lake in the event of a disaster. We discovered that the only couple living at Alvin, a former logging community some 7 miles from the head of the lake, were Muriel and Bill Keillor. The couple looked after the provincial fish hatchery. When Dick and I brought up the purpose of our trip, Bill laughed and informed us that he was the culprit and that he'd only shoot a buck for meat. Our trip up the lake was without incident but the trip home was quite dangerous as winds picked up when we were halfway down the lake and within minutes the waves were six feet high. The rough waters almost doubled the length of time for the return trip and when we did finally land it was almost dark and both gas tanks were almost empty.



It was Bill who explained that the Upper Pitt River Valley was first homesteaded by German settlers wanting to 'hide out' during the Second World War. Bill talked about several interesting characters - one of whom was a veteran of the First World War who had taught drill to a young Adolf Hitler. The Alvin Post Office and Patterson Creek were both named after Alvin Patterson, an early settler in the Upper Pitt River Valley. The name of Marcus Cox also came up in the conversation. Cox was an Indian prospector who had once been married to a German Princess. The pair eventually split up. She

spent the remainder of her life in Vancouver reading tarot cards for a living while he managed to make enough working an old mine to pay for his grub. Bill informed Dick and I that there was a beautiful hot springs just underneath the logging bridge that spanned the Upper Pitt River at narrow Second Canyon a few miles above Alvin.

A few days after Dick's and my trip to the head of the lake, I casually mentioned to Andy Heatherington, the Superintendent in charge of Golden Ears Park, that there were supposedly hot springs at Second Canyon at the top end of Pitt Lake. A few days later Andy, local mountain climber John Hume, Constable Ron Hurt, and I took the park branch's boat to the head of the lake where we were picked up by Bill Keillor and driven to Second Canyon. Before leaving the logging road, Bill told us that the road builders had discovered several 'sulphur holes' in the course of road construction. He went on to say that the holes were usually a couple of feet in diameter and 'God only knows how many feet deep' and that if we stumbled into one it would mean certain death. After crossing the bridge and parking the truck, we followed along an overgrown trail to the south of the road until reaching some steep cliffs. We all used a climbing rope to get down the 20 foot cliff to the river shore. We then walked upstream until almost directly underneath the bridge to investigate the hot springs and



name them 'Broiled Frog Hot Springs' in honour of an unfortunate amphibian that had jumped into the boiling waters.

In September of 1968 a senior member from Vancouver requested he be taken by boat to the head of the lake for a day's salmon fishing. Newly married, I decided to take my wife Carol along and introduce her to the awesome beauty of the Upper Pitt Valley. I was motoring up the long channel at the bottom end of the lake when we happened to notice some huge white birds flying some distance in front of us. I increased the boat's speed and had closed on the birds to where we were able to

identify them as Trumpeter Swans. I had totally forgotten about the tide flats to the west of the channel. I managed to hit them at almost full speed and everyone was thrown quite violently towards the front of the boat. Carol bit her tongue quite badly. Although the boat's prop was slightly bent, the senior member and I were able to get the boat back into deep water so we could continue on our way. At the top end of the lake, my wife and I left the other chap to fish while we started walking along the logging road towards Alvin. It was an incredibly hot clear sunny blue sky postcard making day. The salmon were in full spawn and there were black bear dropping everywhere which made us both extremely nervous. Bald Eagles lined both sides of the river feeding on spawned out salmon. We were often able to walk within 20 feet of several of the big birds. This was due to their being so full of fish that they were having difficulty in getting airborne. They



would quack and run along the shoreline flapping their wings until tiring and coming to a halt. They had the appearance of overloaded B25 bomber planes. I had some time previously made arrangements with Bill to pick us up in the fish hatchery truck and transport us to the more interesting spots in the Upper Pitt Valley. We must have walked more than halfway to Alvin before being picked up by Bill who had gotten the pickup time wrong. For some reason Bill also made the mistake of believing Carol was my kid brother instead of my wife and his language was most colourful from the pickup point until reaching his cabin at Alvin. We went in for a cup of tea and a bite to eat with Muriel during which time Carol removed her toque and several layers of clothing revealing a woman's figure which left Bill absolutely mute for several minutes. Bill was an invaluable source of information about the area and after lunch he first took us for a drive north on a logging road which crossed over the Upper Pitt River at Second Canyon. He explained to Carol that the area smelt heavily of sulphur (rotten eggs) because of the hot springs located directly underneath the bridge. We continued to the end of the logging road and watched several black bears foraging on grasses in a logged off area just off the side of the road. We later took another logging road which yielded an excellent view of Remote Peak. On our way back down the mountain a wolf ran out onto the road immediately in front of the truck and refused to jump back into the ditch. Instead it raced in front of the vehicle and for a short time was clocked at 40 miles per hour.



The detachment members and staff knew that Harding had written an article on the Lost Mine and that I was determined that I was going to redicover the lost bullion. One day civilian member Marg Leisen mentioned to me that Harry Corder had managed the fish hatchery at the top end of Pitt Lake and that her Mother had been raised at Alvin. At that sometimes I sometimes worked with Al Burnet, a 'rookie' cop who room and boarded with 'Old Harry'. One evening Al and I dropped over to listen to yarns about his time at the hatchery. He explained that he had been one of the search party that brought out Brown in 1928. He began digging through his momentos and gave me a picture that had been taken of the search party.

In 1970 I moved to Ottawa to take courses in police photography and identification. One evening, while browsing through my 'Slumach' file, I came across a 1951 newspaper clipping about a sixty-eight year old prospector by the name of Duncan E. McPhaden. That article stated that McPhaden, a bachelor and former deputy registrar at the supreme and county courts in New Westminster, had tumbled off a twenty foot cliff while searching for the fabulous 'Lost Creek Mine' at the mouth of Pitt Lake. He had struck his back on a huge rock but had managed to drag his pain-wracked body back to his isolated cabin. There he had remained for two days, in a semi-conscious state, before making a desperate bid for aid. On hands and knees, he crawled down to his boat, painfully managed to start the motor, and was heading down the lake when he was spotted and rescued by loggers. The account mentioned that McPhaden had spent the last ten summers of his



retirement in the Pitt Lake area searching for the lost mine. The article also supplied his address, so for lack of something better to do, I wrote him a letter, well-knowing that if he were still alive, he would be eighty-seven years old.

Several months passed, and one day I received a registered letter from the aged prospector. A few days after receiving the letter, Carol and I were invited out to a social function in Ottawa. At the party a stranger came up to me and started a conversation. When I mentioned that I had been stationed in Maple Ridge, B.C., he asked if that was anywhere near Pitt Lake. When I answered in the affirmative, he told me that his grandfather's brother had spent years looking for a lost gold mine and that the old man's name was Dunc McPhaden. I was flabbergasted, as was he, when I told him that I had just received a letter from that very person and that I had it in my possession. With that, I handed him the letter!

While stationed at Ottawa, I telephoned the wife of Dr. Diamond Jenness. She was thrilled that there was someone living in the capital that knew something about the achievements of her late husband. She lived in Wakefield, Quebec, just across the Ottawa River. She insisted that I pay her a visit and go through Dr. Jenness' notebooks for clues to my project. Unfortunately, I never took her up on the offer.

The Lost Gold Mine of Pitt Lake

Chapter 4 - Return to Maple Ridge

The following summer, I resigned from the police force and returned to Maple Ridge and worked for two months for Andy as a Park Ranger while making the necessary contacts to open a camera store downtown Maple Ridge. It was during this time that I began investigating mines around the Lower Pitt River and Pitt Lake. Probably by far the most spectacular was the mine owned by the Pitt Ming Company Limited on the east side of Pitt Lake near its mouth. Originally known as the Golden Ears Mine it was apparently first worked in 1897. In 1915, the mine, then owned by the Viking Mining Company, erected an aerial tramway to a bunker on the lake. In 1921 the mine again changed hands and by the summer of 1929 between 20 and 30 men were employed to put up a hydro-electric plant, a 600 cubic foot compressor, and a concentrator building. The average of several hundred samples gave \$1.20 in gold and \$2.40 in silver to the ton and yielded 3.9 percent copper. Everything may have gone well and the mine could have started to show a profit had not the depression of the dirty thirties knocked the props out from under the project bringing operations to a standstill. The mine has been dormant ever since.



I made a couple of hikes up to this mine during July or August. The first time was with John Hume and we walked in from the Pitt Lake boat launch. The second time was in Andy Heatherington park boat. The second group consisted of Carol, Andy, John, and Gary Cleave. The purpose of my hikes was primarily for the purpose of gathering material and photographs for 'the book' project. We found one drift that went in for about twenty feet. Immediately in front of the drift was a deep shaft that contained a ladder. When we threw rocks down the shaft, it took considerable time before it splashed into water. The man-made cave was wet and eerie - and contained huge two inch long beetles in its nooks and crannies. Our flashlights revealed a pale blue seam which I took to be evidence of copper deposits. We found one bunk house that was still barely standing some distance from the shaft and cave. We discovered one flat area that at an earlier time had buildings and a ball diamond.

Within days of opening my new store the detachment commander telephoned me to say that Duncan McPhaden was in his office with a big bundle of papers. He had come out on the bus from New Westminster. I met him at the police station and we went for coffee and a chat. I learned that thirty years earlier, he had been in the same vault I had helped tidy up and that he had laboriously copied the transcripts from Slumach's trial, and it was these that he had with him now. I was dead broke and didn't have the money to photocopy his entire file. Instead, I copied only the more interesting transcripts from the trial. The time passed too quickly and I had little opportunity to go over them before he caught the bus back to New Westminster. I never saw Duncan again but I had learned from him that there was much more to Slumach and his gold mine than just legend.

To help make the book a success, I had to interview several people. On the very top of the list was Mandy Charnley. One day I drove out to the Katzie Indian Reserve in Pitt Meadows to ask Agnes

Pierre if she would drive with me to Mission to interview her Aunt Amanda Charnley. I was surprized and deeply honoured when Joe taped me on the shoulder and presented me with a woollen sweater. A few days later Agnes and I drove to Mission and I taped and took pictures of 'Aunt' Mandy - daughter of Peter Pierre who was the nephew of Slumach - for inclusion in the book.

"Here is what my Father told me about Slumach, the killing of Louie Bee, and the gold that Slumach found in the Pitt Country.

My Father, Peter Pierre, a catechist from the Roman Catholic Order of Mary Immaculate and Medicine Man of the Katzie Indian Reserve, was Slumach's nephew.

Father said that Charlie Slumach at the time of the shooting of Bee was closer to eighty than to sixty and that he was a crippled and harmless old widower who lived at the bottom end of Pitt Lake in a shack which was on the abandoned Silver Creek Indian Reserve. He had a brother named Smum-qua and a married daughter Mary living at Cowichan on Vancouver Island.

My Father spent the last week of Slumach's life with him in prison teaching him religion and preparing him for the hereafter. It was during that week that Slumach told him what had happened at Alouette Slough. He said that he had been heading up the Lower Pitt River in his canoe to his cabin when he spotted a deer. He shot at the animal from his canoe and then pulled in to beach to see if he had hit the animal. Seeing blood he ventured into the bush to look for the wounded animal. After a lengthy and futile search he was returning to his canoe when he saw two Indians in a canoe out on the water. One was Louis Boulrier, a half French half Kanaka, often called Bee for short, and the other was Charlie Seymour, an Indian from Harrison Mills. Slumach told Peter that Boulrier held a grudge against him and stepping ashore came at him wielding an axe and shouting, 'I'm going to chop your damn head off.' Slumach said he raised his shotgun out of sheer fright and fired point blank at Boulrier killing him instantly. Seymour, the only witness, disappeared into the bush. Slumach placed Boulrier's body into the victim's own canoe and set it in midstream to drift down to the fishing party. Slumach did not accompany the body because he feared Boulrier's friends might mob him. He then got into his own canoe and paddled upstream to his cabin.

The following day a boat came out to Slumach's home. The occupants or posse merely fired shots into the house which resulted in Slumach escaping out the back door and hiding under a fallen tree. The group aboard the boat disgusted Peter by the irresponsible manner in which they carried out their duties. To ensure that Slumach would not return to his home for shelter they burned it to the ground.

It was to Peter that Slumach eventually surrendered. Peter persuaded his uncle to give himself up to the Indian agent. My Father went into the bush after his uncle without a gun despite warnings from the posse. Peter told them that he was going to see his uncle and not some wild animal. He found Slumach half-starved hidden under a fallen tree. According to my Father there was only the hangman, Father Morgan, and himself that actually witnessed the hanging of his uncle although a great many were present outside the gallows. When the hangman was placing the hood over Slumach's head the old Indian asked him in Chinook not to waste any time. At that moment my Father closed his eyes and began to pray with Father Morgan. When he opened his eyes all he could see was the dangling rope. Slumach was buried in an unknown grave in the prison cemetery in Sapperton despite attempts by his daughter to get possession of his body to give him a proper burial.

It was during my Father's stay in prison that Slumach told him about finding gold in the Pitt Country. Slumach told my Father that only on one occasion did he ever take gold out of the Pitt. He said he had met Port Douglas Indians from the head of Harrison Lake coming off Glacier Lake and down

Patterson Creek into the Upper Pitt Valley. They told him that they had taken horses part way but had driven them back towards Port Douglas and had crossed Glacier Lake on foot. They gave him a handful of bullets noulded from gold which they had found in Third Canyon. Slumach spent the night in the canyon and slept on a bench-shaped rock on the west side of the river. The rock was covered with a rust-coloured moss. When he awoke around 5 a.m. he could scarcely see the sun coming over three mountain peaks for the east wall of the canyon. During this time he was still shrouded in darkness. As it became lighter Slumach could see in his own surroundings. Peeling the moss off his rock bed he saw a yellow metal. He dug out some stake nuggets with a pen knife and half-filled his shot bag with them. He sold the half-filled shot bag, which was about the same size as a ten pound sugar bag, to a store keeper in New Westminster for \$27. The store keeper went back to England a short time after the purchase. That, claimed Slumach, was the only gold that he ever took out of the Pitt country. Sitting on the cell bench Slumach drew a map for Peter of the location where he found the nuggets. Peter memorized the drawing and then destroyed it. Years later he redrew the map. A daughter traced out three copies; however the original and the copies were destroyed in the 1930s in a house fire.

It was only days after the 'Aunt' Mandy interview that Carol and I were blessed with our first child - a daughter - which co-insided with a tragic car accident involving three generations of the Pierre family. Agnes called me with the horrific news that Joe, Joe's mother Minnie, and Agnes and Joe's son Andrew had all been killed when the station wagon in which they were riding went over a steep embankment on the Mission side of the Stave Lake Bridge.



I can't remember who introduced me to Danny Scooch, an ex-miner who had become fascinated with the Lost Mine Legend. Originally from Kayville, Saskatchewan, Danny had worked in mines in both the Yukon and British Columbia in his youth. In 1947 Danny arrived in Vancouver and started drinking heavily and soon became a hopeless alcoholic and for the next 22 years was in and out of jails and hospitals as a result of his sickness. In 1969 he was sent to Miracle Valley, an alcoholic treatment facility in Mission. He left after only 17 days cured of his illness. In the early part of 1971 Danny married and shortly afterwards began reading the bible. At the same time he began having strange dreams about a mine. The dreams depicted a mine with skeletons, gold bullion, and antiques including a small cannon. He was even able to visualize the shape of the mine, its depth, and

its distance from a river. In June of 1971 Danny visited Sheridan Hill in Pitt Polder with his nephew James Harahuc and at that time realized that the area was the same as that depicted in his dreams. Incredibly he was able to walk straight to a huge fallen cedar tree which covered a huge reservoir of water. Danny pointed to it and told his nephew that this was the mine. They cut a twenty foot pole and began probing into ten feet in diameter hole but were unable to touch the bottom. The man-made shaft was located less than a fifteen minute walk from the dykes which hold back the Lower Pitt River and only 3-4 stone throws from the river itself.

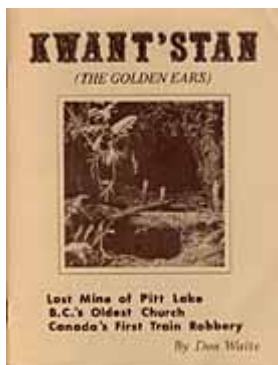
A few days later the pair returned with a syphoning hose, pumps, and other paraphernalia. In the meantime Scooch had checked with the B.C. Department of Mines in an effort to learn the background history of his discovery but was told that his discovery had never before been reported.



As a result he staked the entire vicinity. Danny and Jim were able to syphon water from the hole to a depth of about 30 feet before their small the pump refused to draw water any higher up the hose. Before Danny had the time to get back to the mine the rainy season had set and kept filling the shaft up with water.

That winter Danny spent some time at the New Westminster Public Library pondering over the mass of information about the 'Lost Mine of Pitt Lake'. Much to his amazement he found a newspaper article written about Wally Lund, the same Lund who was now his Father-in-Law. Danny wrote to his wife's Father residing in Laird, Saskatchewan, and told him about his dreams and about his find only to learn that Wally's mine and his were only a few hundred yards apart.

The following summer Danny returned with a more powerful pump and managed to get to the bottom of his mine. One of his assistants who helped pack in the larger pump was my own Father who was out for a visit from Ontario to see his first grandchild. Once the shaft was free of water just below the 30 foot level, Danny and Jim discovered a drift going off in a southerly direction. The entrance to this drift was blocked by rotting timbers, mud, and rock and what appeared to be a wooden platform or trap door where the drift began. While cleaning out some of the debris the two came across a huge wooden bucket about the size of a washing machine. Danny took it to the Fort Langley Museum and learned that the bucket may have been made at the fort cooperage as early as the 1850s. Danny then learned from a B. C. Department of Mines Annual Report that many Chinese, former railway labourers recruited for the building of the Canadian Pacific's transcontinental Railway, had made several test holes on Sheridan Hill looking for copper. This made perfectly good sense as many of the mountain sides had green stains - evidence of copper deposits.



Over the next several months I wrote the book titled 'Kwant'stan', the Coast Salish or Halkomelem name for the Golden Ears Mountains, meaning 'the Four Sisters', with stories about the Maple Ridge's Anglican Church of St. John the Divine, B.C.'s oldest church, the 'Lost Mine of Pitt Lake', and Bill Miner, who pulled Canada's first train robbery at Silverdale, just west of Mission. The first printing of 300 copies was produced in Maurice Staudt's Print Shop (now Jim's Pizza Restaurant) on 224 Street in August, 1972. Despite the confusing title the first printing, selling for \$2.00 per copy, sold out in less than a month through only two outlets - my store and Hamilton Harvey Department Store (now the site of the Maple Ridge Bingoplex). The

following month, Marjorie Dunning, Editor/Owner of the Gazette, Haney's only newspaper, did a second slightly revised edition titled 'Kwant'Stan (The Golden Ears)' of 500 copies for Christmas. Almost immediately Bill Bryan and Max Burnham, the co-owners of Western Heritage Supply, agreed to purchase the entire run at double my production cost. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. One evening Bill and xxx dropped over to my store. I asked the purpose of the visit and learned that they had decided to come over from Langley with the idea of attempting to talk me into writing a series of 6" x 9" 96 page paperback 'history' books to compete with the Frank Anderson collection. That evening they picked me up after supper and parked in the entrance to historic Haney House, convinced me to start writing books on the Fraser Canyon, the Cariboo and the Similkameen.

A short time before the run of 3,000 copies of the book, now retitled 'Tales of the Golden Ears Illustrated', David Weedmark, a local fisherman and a store customer, mentioned that he and his brother Dwight would like to make a trip to the head of the lake. By this time I had purchased a dirt bike and was anxious to take it on the trip. Dave and his brother borrowed a couple of dirt bikes and we loaded them onto the fish boat. On the way up the lake we checked out the Indian pictographs before tying up at the wharf at the head of the lake. We slept on the boat but were up and on the logging road at dawn. My primary objective was to take several new photographs for inclusion in the new book. We crossed the logging bridge at Second Canyon and a few miles further north decided to try and get down to the Upper Pitt River. We got into troubles almost immediately in that we managed to get down a couple of canyons but were unable to climb back up. In a few instances we literally jumped from cliff walls into tall tree tops and shinnied down to the ground. We got down to the edge of the river and, since it wasn't all that wide and because it appeared shallow, we decided to wade across to the other side and walk downriver back to the road and then follow up the road and collect the bikes.



Maurice Staudt, a local printer, and I printed, collated, stapled and trimmed the first edition of books in a little print shop located in the back of Maple Ridge Printers (now Jim's Pizza) of 224th Street. The Gazette Newspaper contracted with me to do a second edition a few months later. Here are some extracts from this book:

The publication of Kwant'stan resulted in several people getting in touch with me about the mine of the next few years.

The Jackson Letter *I had been out for over two months and found myself 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 creeks but nothing I cared to stay with. I had almost made up my mind to light out the next day. I climbed to the top of a sharp ridge and looked down into the canyon or valley about one and a half miles long, and what struck me as singular, it appeared to have no outlet for the creek that flowed at the bottom. Afterwards I found that the creek entered a ----- 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. Now comes the interesting part. I had only a small prospecting pan but I found colors at once right at the surface, and such colors they were. I knew then that I had struck it right at last. In going upstream 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 was as big as walnuts and there were many chunks carrying quartz. After sizing it up, I saw there was 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 (in gold) but afterwards it proved to be a little over eight thousand dollars. After three days 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 never since been able to return, and now I fear I never shall. I am alone in the world, no relatives,*

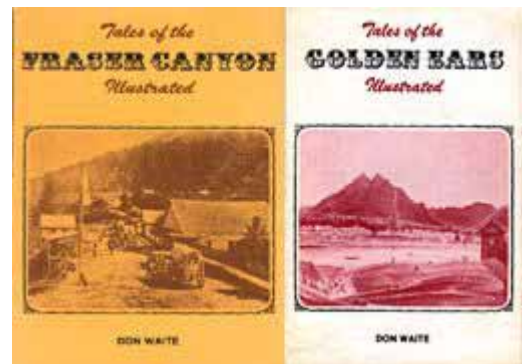
no one to look after me for anything. Of course I have never spoken of this find during any of this time for fear of it being discovered. It has caused me many anxious hours, but the place is so well guarded by surrounding ridges and mountains that it should not be found for many years, unless someone knew of it being there. Oh, how I wish I could go with you to show you this wonderful place, for I cannot give you any exact directions, and it may take a year or more to find. Don't give up but keep at it and you will be repaid beyond your wildest dreams. I believe any further directions would only tend to confuse it, so I will only suggest further that you go alone or at least only take one or two trusty Indians to pack food and no one need know but that you are going on a hunting triop until you find the place and get everything for yourself. Whwen you find it and I am sure you will, should you care to see me, advertise in the 'Frisco Exam.,' and if I am still living I will either come to see you, or let you know where you can find me, but once more I say to you, don't fail to look this great opportunity up and don't give up until you find it.

Now good bye and may success attend you.

Yours truly,

W. Jackson

In July, 1975, I did a revised title of the original book but this time called in 'Tales of the Golden Ears Illustrated'. This 6" x 9" paperback was 'perfect' bound (should be called imperfect bound since it literally fell apart) and was contracted out to Camart Studios in New Westminster. Rick Antonson (afterwards President and CEO Tourism Vancouver) was their Marketing Manager. The previous fall I had contracted Camart to do a 5,000 run of "Tales of the Fraser Valley Illustrated" and expected the two books to have the look of an upcoming series. I made the big mistake of placing 16 page colour signature on the inside of the book and opted to run pink and black duotone on the front cover. The colour on the inside increased the price to \$7.95. With the increased price and the "pink" cover with a sketch of Fort Langley in the early days, I couldn't give the book away never mind sell it. No one ever picked it up to check out the content on the inside. The project was an expensive learning experience since most of books had to be remaindered (sold below cost).



A short time after the release of the 'dog' title, William F. Cull, a mailman from New Westminster, contacted me about the lost mine. He stated that he had become intrigued with the legend in the late 1950s from reading newspaper clippings, and, as a result, had made several trips by helicopter into the remote wilderness. On one trip, Cull spent 10-12 days exploring and discovered a very weathered pick and shovel hidden in a crevice near the base of a tent-shaped rock, located near the top of the divide between the Pitt and Stave watersheds. Clearly visible on this rock was the letter 'J'. The eight inch long vertical portion of the 'J' was natural but the top of the letter and the hook at the bottom had been obviously chiselled by the original owner of the pick. Cull told me that he planned to charter a helicopter and go in again once the snow melted; he



invited me to go along for the trip. IBy coincidence, my Father was once again visiting with me from Ontario. Familiar with the story, he accompanied me to the airport, and when Cull's partner refused to get into the chopper, my Dad took his place. The flight into the Pitt and Stave Regions became a highlight in his life. Unfortunately, Cull opted to fly in too early in the year, and the snow was too deep around the base of the rock and I was unable to locate and photograph the 'J' letter in the rock.



Upon my return to my studio, I learned that one of my clients had fallen into Alouette River and managed to submerge her expensive 35 mm Leica camera. She had left me a message to visit her upon my return in the hope that I could salvage her equipment. During the visit I casually mentioned that I had earlier in the day flown right over the

home in a helicopter on my way to search for the lost gold mine of Pitt Lake. Her husband overheard the conversation and moments later returned and plunked down a huge raw gold nugget on the table. He told me that the three inch long nugget had been found in the Klondike and that it been in the family for several years. I asked him to loan it to me. He agreed but explained that if the nugget disappeared I'd owe him \$20,000. The following morning I went to work and as always joined several of my cronies for the usual 10:00 A.M. coffee break. I was getting quite a ribbing from everyone until I swore all to secrecy and then placed the nugget on the table. Non-believers became believers within seconds as I went on to describe the creek that was laden with walnut-sized nuggets of pure gold. I told them that Cull had given me the nugget as a memento to his discovery and that I was planning to purchase a new vehicle with my gift. My jeweller friend offered to purchase it and any other nuggets I could acquire on a cash no questions asked basis. I told him I'd make enquiries and then went back to work. Hiker John Hume was somewhat skeptical and insisted on taking his penknife to the nugget to convince himself that the rock was indeed gold and not some other 'similar' metal. I left everyone convinced that the Mother Lode had been found. Secrets about the 'Lost Mine of Pitt Lake' - at least in Maple Ridge in 1975 - were never kept and for several days I was asked my almost everyone with whom I came into contact if I could show them the nugget.



At the last day of 1975 I sold my camera store and portrait studio and on the first day of 1976 Carol and I took possession of first home. I had earlier entered into a contract with the Municipality of Langley to write that areas early history over the next two years. It was during this time that I reread the transcripts of the Slumach trial that had been so laboriously copied by Dunc McPhaden. I happened to notice that one of the main families in the early history of Fort Langley and Fort Yale happened to be Allard. In checking over the transcripts I noticed that Jason Ovid Allard, a son of Ovid Allard the Chief Factor at Fort Langley in the fort's earliest beginnings, was the translator at the Slumach trial. McPhaden's transcripts also contained much information about the trial never before published. Unfortunately, I had not been able to afford the cost to have the

entire file photocopied. As a result I drove into the old court house in New Westminster to see some of the people with whom I had worked when I was a policeman. I was shocked to learn that the file

had been pulled and sent to Ottawa. Despite a great deal of effort, I was never able to locate the whereabouts of the missing documents. One of the staff suggested to me that it had been destroyed!

The Lost Gold Mine of Pitt Lake

Chapter 5 - Amanda Charnley's Tapes

Sometime after the third or fourth printing of the 'Slumach' book, Mike Collier, President of Yaletown Productions, came out to talk to me doing a movie on the Slumach gold mine. I negotiated an arrangement whereby I would do the interview with the understanding that Mandy would be paid \$150 to do a taping session. The taped interview took place in my home. Several years later Mike finally managed to produce a 50 minute video titled 'Curse of the Lost Creek Mine' starring Donnelly Rhodes as the Storyteller.

Interview with Amanda Charnley **Daughter of Peter Pierre, Slumach's Nephew**

Recorded April 26, 1978 at Don Waite's residence (in Maple Ridge)

[For transcript <http://www.slumach.ca> Aunt Mandys' Interviews]

The Lost Gold Mine of Pitt Lake

Chapter 6 - G. Stuart Brown's Letters

In August, 1981, **G. Stuart Brown**, a retired civil servant, stopped in at my office with some incredible statements about the lost mine. Brown, a former Vancouverite then living in Ottawa, told me that he had discovered the mine, located within a park, during the summer of 1974. He had attempted to negotiate a deal with the provincial government, but was turned down, and as a result, he gave the story to a Victoria newspaper in the fall of 1978. The release did not result in any great gold rush to his goldfields.

Upon his return to the nation's capital, Brown mailed me copies of the exchange of correspondence between himself and the government. Here are some excerpts from Brown's letters:

September 24, 1974 - 'As a former resident and active survey officer in British Columbia, I came to know many areas of your province very well. During forest survey work, I became interested in minerals and for several years carried a prospector's licence.

My work in Ottawa has continued to involve me in survey work in all provinces but it was not until this summer that I was able to take time to investigate properly certain locations in which I had previously been interested. To be brief, I have come up with some extremely startling results, which have shaken me thoroughly.

There is one problem. The particular spot of extreme interest is within the confines of one of your provincial parks and prospecting, removal of samples, and mine development is therefore against the law.

I do not wish in any way to flout the laws of the province so I am writing you. My request is that I be able to bring out loose surface samples to you and then have the situation discussed with your cabinet. For emphasis, I would that there is over twenty billion dollars involved, much of it loose on the surface. Appearance indicate much more, even to hundreds of billions and this could make the Klondike and Cariboo appear like peanuts.

Please, above all else, keep this confidential, for several reasons. if news breaks, hordes of people will be in there and you will loose control. Moreover, I could have removed \$100,000 easily in one trip (50 lbs. = 800 oz. pure) with little risk of being caught. If I could, so could others and few would honour the law as outlined (see italics above). Please communicate with me only through my home address. My office mail is pre-opened by staff before reaching my desk and I would prefer the whole situation remain confidential between us until I can produce samples to prove my find. Things can in this way, then, proceed in a legal manner.

Regardless of the above, this news will make headlines if it breaks - and it will. When the news media gets it, things will go wild. I am only human and the fame of such an event is too much to pass up.

Can you get me a permit to bring out loose samples? If so, will you?'

October 24, 1974 - I have reread my letter of September 24 and your answer of September 30 regarding staking a mineral claims and removal of samples from provincial parks in British Columbia.

My purpose in writing to you at this time was to obtain permission to remove loose surface samples and bring them to you as proof of the find and as a basis from which to further developments might progress. I have offered to keep this confidential until I delivered these samples to you and therefore as long as necessary to set up suitable controls to prevent pilfering and what might be chaos resulting in the loss of lives. It is apparent to me that I have been unable to impress upon you the significance of the find. If the information that I have given you with the general idea of the location were released to the public, I doubt if your laws would in any way be respected.

I have, therefore, no intention of releasing to anyone any further information on the subject and will proceed as circumstances dictate at the time each decision is necessary. I fully realize that in your position you cannot afford to make mistakes and it is for this reason that I have agreed to keep this confidential until your government can agree on a course of action. If you wish to issue me with permission to collect and bring representative samples to you, I am willing to do this still. If this permission is not forthcoming, matters will develop anyway, but in a controlled manner. I think I have been most considerate so far in keeping things under control; but this can only be a matter of time.'

November 15, 1974 -

And so ends Brown's line of communication with the government. Embittered, he decided not to reveal the location of the mine. Anticipating a revised edition, this time titled 'The Fraser Valley Story', I wrote Brown, now living in retirement in Kelowna, B.C. in 1986 seeking permission to publish excerpts from his correspondence with the politicians. Upon receipt of my letter, Brown drove to Maple Ridge for a face-to-face discussion about the possibility of his taking me to the location of 'Slumach's Gold Canyon'.

At the end of August, Brown, Victor Loffler of Mission, and I left Pitt Meadows in a van enroute to Pemberton and Mount Currie. From there, we drove along a logging road towards Fire Lake. We left this main artery but managed to drive another mile before coming upon a washed-out section of abandoned logging road. We donned our packs and set out for Fire Lake. After eight hours of walking, we reached Fire Lake. Brown, 69 years of age and a victim of Parkinson's Disease, had set the pace. I was the one with the problem. Because my old hiking boots were totally worn out and leaked badly, I had purchased a new pair of boots some weeks prior to our trip. I thought I had broken them in but I was wrong. By the time we reached Fire Lake my feet were so badly blistered I could hardly stand let alone walk. Assessing the situation, we decided to retrace our steps to the end of the logging road and pitch camp.

The next morning Brown advised us that we still had several strenuous miles of climbing before reaching our destination. Consequently, we decided to abandon the attempt to visit 'Slumach's Gold Canyon' by van and by foot.

Upon our return to Pitt Meadows, I suggested we go in by helicopter. I got in touch with Steven Wright, President of Wright Aviation Ltd. (now Vancouver Helicopters) and he agreed to meet us in a pub in New Westminster. Over a beer, Brown stated that he wanted half of anything that was brought out and that Vic and I could have the remaining 25 percent each. I explained the purpose of the visit and Steve offered to 'roll the dice' and give us a flight into Terra Rosa Lake. I told Steve that

if Vic and I came back with any gold we'd cut him in for a third of the 50 percent. I didn't know it at the time but learned later that Steve knew much more about the mine than I thought.

The next day we arranged to have a helicopter take us to the canyon the following morning. Although the weather had been clear blue sky for 40 days, the morning of our flight in was overcast with a low cloud ceiling in the mountains and as a result the pilot was reluctant to land his ship. Despite a half hour search up and down several ravines in the helicopter, Brown did not pinpoint any familiar landmarks and was disgusted that his credibility was in question.

That evening I interviewed Brown about his background. Born in 1916 in Basswood, Manitoba, Brown was awarded the Governor General's award for proficiency upon graduating with senior matriculation from the Minnedosa Collegiate Institute in 1937. A year and a half later, Brown went to work at the Brandon Mental Hospital, where his future wife was training as a student nurse. He graduated from the hospital in 1941 with a certificate in psychiatric nursing.

Brown joined the Royal Canadian Air Force that same year and began his ground training and theory at Saskatchewan prior to his initial flight training and navigational studies at the Air Observer's School in Regina. Transferred to England, Brown flew 17 bombing missions over Germany before a plane he was navigating was shot down within 40 miles of its target of Nuremberg. Brown bailed out at 19,000 feet. He was held a prisoner of war for the next 21 months by the Germans. Shortly after his return to Canada, he was posted to Jericho Beach in Vancouver.

In the fall of 1945, Brown enrolled at the University of British Columbia under the rehabilitation program. He graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree in 1947, a Bachelor of Science in Forestry in 1948, and a Master of Science in Forest Entomology in 1951 with his thesis being the sawfly. Brown taught entomology courses at the university while taking his master's degree. Upon leaving university, Brown was employed by the provincial government to do insect research. In 1956 Brown was promoted to the Officer in Charge of plant quarantine for plants being imported into Canada (from 1957 - 1960). In 1961, he was transferred to Ottawa as the Assistant Chief of Plant Quarantine for the Dominion; but a year later he applied for and became Co-ordinator of Surveys for Introduced Plant Pests and Disease. He held his position until his retirement in 1977. It was while at his last post that his work involved the use of six-in-to-the-mile stereoscopic air photos.

Brown first became interested in the Slumach Lost Gold Mine in 1949 while working in the municipalities of Port Coquitlam and Mission for his thesis on the sawfly. One of his associates proposed they take a two week holiday and go prospecting. He abandoned any idea of the mine upon his transfer to Ottawa.

It was not until 1974 that he again took up the search, after spending the winter of 1973-74 pinpointing the most likely location (bearing in mind Jackson's letter and 'Doc' Brown's last camp) on topographical maps and stereoscopic air photos. His first attempt in June was a failure because of deep snow. He returned in mid-August and located both 'Doc' Brown's last camp - and the gold canyon. He brought out ten pounds of nuggets.

Following Brown's departure for home, Vic and I talked things over and, since the weather was once again blue sky sunny, we decided to go in again by helicopter for two days of exploration. On September 5, we drove into New Westminster to Steve operations base located in a hanger which was at one time the property of the British Columbia Penitentiary. While I was preoccupied with loading supplies and camera gear, Victor entered into conversations with a couple of chaps that were about to depart in another helicopter. I didn't know it at the time but the other machine

contained the crew and cameraman for the final shots for Mike Colliers' movie. As we flew out of New Westminster to the north-east, I noticed the other helicopter that appeared to be on an almost identical course as our own. They were heading up to the Misty Icefields hoping to get the final footage for the completion of the movie 'Curse of the Lost Creek Mine' which included Dick Hamilton. He had visited me earlier in the year and had told me that he had crossed the Stave Glacier to the Misty icefields with a Peter McIlvaney and had found a three foot high cairn inside of which was a bell at the 7,300 foot level. The pair thought the cairn may have been placed over top of a grave.

The pilot landed Vic and I in a small valley west of Terra Rosa Lake where we set up our base camp. Between 10:00 A.M. and 8:00 P.M. we climbed and then descended three boulder-strewn ravines. It took us ten hours to examine on foot what we had easily covered a few days earlier by helicopter in 20 minutes. In many places the boulders were the size of a house. Weather conditions were probably the best they had been in years, for there was hardly any snow. The climbing was dangerous as snow melt had left many of the boulders covered with pea-sized pebbles which acted like ball-bearings under our boots. One ravine had three sink holes or run-off traps which contained nothing but earth and rock. We did see some promising quartz outcroppings - and some of the terrain showed signs of recent seismic (earthquake) activity. The only wildlife that we encountered were rock picas and a black bear.



From one ravine we looked out to the southeast and saw three mountain peaks (southeast of Terra Rosa Lake). We were also able to see the snout of Terra Rosa Glacier.

The following day we climbed other ravines and were able, upon reaching one summit, to look down onto Stave Glacier and the headwaters of Stave River (actually a large glacier-fed lake). Vic and I split up to make our descent. I managed to get down my route all right but Vic, after scrambling two-thirds the way down his, hit a box canyon which was impassable. He had to reascend this ravine and try a second one. It also became impassable, so he again retraced his way and finally, came down out the way way as had I. We reached base camp and managed to eat before the arrival of the pickup helicopter.

In March of 1987 I gave a story to Hillary Downing of the Ridge/Meadows Times to promote my new books which ended up being titled: "Prospector says nearing final chapter - There's gold in them hills"

Don Waite has been chasing rainbows for more than 10 years, but the Maple Ridge writer and photographer thinks he's getting closer and closer to the pot of gold.

The legend of the lost Pitt Lake gold mine has captured the imagination of hundreds since stories began to appear in the 1890s of an old Indian who periodically came out from the mountains surrounding Pitt Lake with a haversack stuffed with gold.

Old Slumach was hanged in 1891 at the B.C. Penitentiary on charges he murdered a young Indian from the Katzie Reserve. With Slumach went the secrets of his gold.



But this summer, in his third edition of a book on the lost gold mine, Waite hopes to reveal the secret.

A former member of the R.C.M.P., Waite first became intrigued by the lost gold story in 1967 when he was employed to clean out the vault at the B.C. Penitentiary. In a dusty file, Waite found the records of Slumach's trial. Something in that file struck a chord. later transferred to the detachment in Haney, Waite found himself taking every opportunity to discuss the lost mine with local prospectors and members of the Katzie Reserve.

He later quit the RCMP and, in 1972, published his first book - Kwantstan, which includes the story of the Lost Lake gold mine.

Since then, Waite's research has become more intensive.

Last summer, he made five trips into the highest reaches of the North Pitt Lake area with a helicopter. And Waite has covered almost every inch of the land on foot. On one occasion, he and several other hikers climbed 10,000 vertical feet up and down steep ravines in a single day.

According to Waite, nearly 20 people - most of them gold seekers - have died in the near impenetrable forest where the mine is believed to be located.

But Waite is not alone in his search.

At a meeting in January of the Lost Mine of Pitt Lake Club seven die-hard believers turned up.

While many scoff and call the gold mine pure legend, Waite says there is good reason to believe there is gold up there.

Like a true prospector he keeps most of his reasons a secret, but Waite said the Port Douglas Indians from the Harrison Lake area were known to use bullets moulded from gold. The stories of Slumach's walnut sized gold nuggets are well documented in news accounts from that period, and in 1930 when searchers found the last camp of a prospector who died looking for the gold, they found a glass jar filled with 11 ounces of coarse gold.

After nearly ten years of searching, Waite won't say why he suddenly feels close to the jackpot. In the next few months, he plans to return to the lakeshore with a 70-year-old prospector who Waite says once found the gold mine "and then lost it". He offers no further explanation.

But if the stories of gold are pure legend, old Slumach has already given Waite a streak of good fortune. Since writing his first book on the mine, he has gone on to write several more including his latest on the Cariboo Gold Rush and a book on North American birds.

I might just be chasing rainbows," said Waite with a shrug, "but what to hell, I like what I'm doing."

The article was riddled with errors and misquotes which totally upset Stu Brown. He wrote me a short terse letter complaining that I had stolen 'his thunder' and that he no longer wanted anything to do with me.

The Lost Gold Mine of Pitt Lake

Chapter 7 - The Discovery Channel

In March of 1996 I received a called from Peter Pongratz who explained that he was from the Discovery Channel in Munich, Germany, but was in Vancouver doing research for a possible documentary on the 'Lost Mine of Pitt Lake'. He made arrangements to drive out to Maple Ridge to meet me.

Peter wanted to know if I knew where Slumach was hung. I told him about my 'vault' story when I was a young policeman in New Westminster. I explained to Peter that I believed the circular 3-4 storey vault had been torn down several years ago. One day not long afterwards I happened to be in New Westminster and took a drive along Carnarvon Street to have a look at the building where I had escorted so many dangerous criminals. I was surprised to see that the vault was still standing. I went into the building, took an elevator to the third floor, and discovered that the very floor which some 35 years earlier had housed the trial manuscripts from the Province's earliest beginnings had been recently renovated and was being used as a Day Care Center. The secretary at the desk was somewhat alarmed when I explained that an old Indian named Slumach had perhaps been hung within 20 feet of where she was seated.

On April 12, 1996, I chaired a meeting with Katzie Elders to get their feedback on the proposed visit of the German camera crew. Several members addressed the gathering and indicated that they were opposed to the making of a film for the Discovery Chanel. The following day I sent a fax to the Tandem Film Production Company in Germany and conveyed the wishes of the Katzie Elders to them.

Despite my fax the Discovery Channel decided to go ahead and make the film. They came out sometime in August. By coincidence my wife Tina was in New Westminster and happened to see Peter Pontratz in the vicinity of the old Royal City court house.

The Lost Gold Mine of Pitt Lake

Chapter 8 - The Discovery Channel

My Last Hurrah at Finding the Mother Lode

It wasn't until the last weekend of August and the first weekend of September, 2000, that I was able to make what were probably my final two trips to the top end of Pitt Lake. My long standing friend



Vic Loffler agreed to put himself and his catacraft at my disposal to take my two sons and I to explore the favourite haunts of my youth. Vic and I decided to make a recognizance trip in his catacraft to the top end of the lake and to Alvin to reacquaint ourselves with the vicinity and attempt to find transportation and accommodation for the following long weekend. We visited with the Gerack family, owners of the Pitt River Resort, who agreed to pick us up at a prearranged time from the boat dock at the top end of the lake the following weekend.

Vic and I, along with my sons Kevin and Nathan, retraced our trip from the previous weekend and set up a 12 foot by 12 foot tent on the lawn at the Pitt River Resort. Once camp was set up, I visited with Frank Gerack Sr. and showed him my hard cover book containing over 200 pages of photocopied newspaper clippings and letters about the Lost Gold Mine. Frank told me that several geologists had spent over 50 hours of helicopter time checking out every nook and cranny within a 50 mile radius of the resort. He also mentioned that he had seen a Royal Engineer map which had plotted out an old Indian trail connecting the Pitt and Stave Valleys via Corbould or Seven Mile Creek.

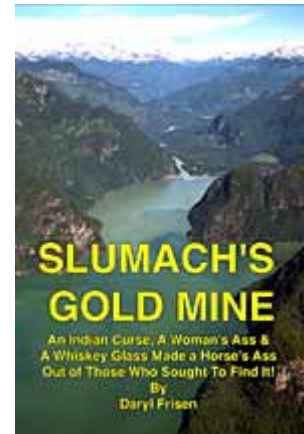
There was a glitch in my trip to Alvin. I had made arrangements for James Laird, a geologist, to make the trip with us. He had gotten in touch with me the day before explaining that he would not be able to come up to the head of the lake until the following day. We all sat around the following day but Jim didn't show. While Vic and I sat around camp, my sons fished Corbould Creek. The following day Peter Velner, the 'prospector' who had played a role in the Discovery Channels "The Mystery of Old Slumach" offered to take Vic, Kevin, Nathan and I to do some trout fishing in Cougar Lake. As an ex-bird photographer, I was most impressed when suddenly a flock of Vaux's Swift descended out of nowhere like a black cloud to feast on mosquitoes and then just as suddenly vanish into thin air. Everyone caught fish except Nathan. The following day Peter drove us to the new bridge which crossed over Second Canyon. Peter explained that heavy snows and floods had badly damaged the original bridge, located a short distance up river, and that it had been dismantled. The highlight of the trip was relaxing in the hot springs with my two sons - truly a 'golden moment' in my life.

Three weeks later I decided to make a flight into northern British Columbia to take stock air photos

to add to my web site inventory. With just a slight diversion the pilot was able to fly over the Corbould Valley towards Port Douglas permitting me to take photographs in an effort to locate a possible Indian or Royal Engineer Trail between the two areas. The area was incredibly vast with several glaciers and a high altitude lake. I initially believed I had flown Tera Rosa Lake but learned later that it was Thomas Lake.

Perhaps the time has come to turn the challenge of searching for 'Slumach's Lost Mine of Pitt Lake' over to a younger generation. Daryl Friesen first contacted me several years ago and tried to pick my brain to get clues of the mine's existence. At the time he was in his late 'teens. He has since then devoted his time to pursuing lost treasures from around the world and now has a web site, soon to be renamed 'losttreasuresofworld.com' in which he buys/trades/sells anything to do with treasure hunting around the world. It is his dream to publish as complete a book as possible about Pitt Lake and the people who have lived in the Upper River River Valley over the past 150 years.

For the time being his web site resides at: [Spindle Explorations](#)



Go here to read about Daryl's lost mine stories: [Slumach's Gold Mine](#)

To set the record straight, the graphics on the front cover of Daryl's proposed book are mine, not his!

Early in 2001 I had a call from Robert W. Nicholson from Midway, B.C. He had been the one with the stereoscopic air photos of the Upper Pitt Lake region at the 'Inaugural Meeting of Members of the Lost Pitt Lake Club' back in 1986. He called saying that he would be mailing down my autographed copy of Charles A. Miller's book 'The Golden Mountains - Chronicles of valley and coast mines' which he had borrowed from that meeting. He went on to explain that he had published a book titled 'Stolen Innocence - Organized child sex abuse in British Columbia Exposed' and he too was now hoping to write a book about the 'Lost Mine'. Rob had logged in the Upper Pitt in the....

On Friday, August 16, 2002, I was flying an assignment in the southeast corner of Vancouver. It was a beautiful clear day with unlimited visibility with the result that I climbed to 12,000 feet in order to capture the entire City of Vancouver in a single image. During the shoot, I heard chatter of a helicopter crash at the top end of Pitt Lake and casually remarked to my pilot that I had written about that area in a book and wondered if the occupants of the aircraft would be anyone I knew. A short time later I observed the twin-bladed yellow rescue helicopter from Comox transiting towards Langley and then later towards North Vancouver.



That night I had an e-mail from Daryl Friesen acknowledging that he and his buddy had gone down in a Robinson R44 helicopter within walking distance of a B52 Bomber that had crashed during the Second World War. Daryl explained that he, his friend, and the pilot had walked away from the crash uninjured and then walked over to the

downed bomber while awaiting rescue. A sudden gust of wind upon landing had been the cause of the helicopter accident.

That evening Tina and I attended a barbeque and were surprised at just how quickly things cooled down right after sundown. The next morning my son Nathan called me and explained that he and 7 friends had taken a speed boat up to the top end of Pitt Lake the previous day. They had managed to pass the boat through both the First Canyon and the Second Canyon without mishap. On the return back through the Second Canyon they had stopped and hiked back to the hot springs for a relaxing couple of hours. About midway between the two canyons, the boat's operator took a wrong channel and hit a log with disastrous results.

The boat sank in twenty seconds. Everyone managed to scramble ashore but all clothing and food floated away when the boat went down. It soon became apparent to the group that they were totally unprepared for a night in the bush. They had two pair of shoes between the 8 of them and the men didn't even have T-shirts. They immediately began collecting firewood and soon had a fire going. It was decided that two of the men would hike downriver to Alvin for help. By this time it was after 8 pm and it was beginning to get dark. They walked as far as the First Canyon and then opted to swim the canyon. They made it through but were caught in darkness so decided to huddle down for the night and wait for sunrise. They were soaked through and didn't have any matches or lighter to start a fire. In swimming the canyon one of the pair lost his shoes.

The next morning they found the logging road and, each with one shoe, hoofed it the 4-5 miles to Alvin. They told the people at the lodge of their predicament and a logging helicopter flew back and brought out the other 6 in two trips. Nathan said that the first thing he observed when the sun came up was a black bear club on the opposite side of the river from the camp. When he brought his observation to the two young women in the group, one of them literally freaked right out. Nathan said that the attempt to sleep on the rocky shore in only shorts was nothing short of a nightmare. To date the \$60,000 speed boat is still in the river. It had all of 10 hours on the motor - half of which were acquired in the trip up the lake.
