

# Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

*Columbian 10 June 1961*

IS THIS LOST CREEK GOLD MINE? A MAN'S DREAM SAYS IT IS

Do you believe in dreams?

Wally Lund of Haney does and if a dream of his comes true the secret of the fabulous Lost Creek Mine will be revealed.

This mine, in the Pitt area, where legend says gold nuggets as big as walnuts may be gathered by the handful, has been sought for over 70 years.

Twenty-three prospectors have died in fruitless treks through the unbelievable rugged country beyond Pitt Lake. They started on their fateful expeditions, some with tattered maps, others with hope and prayers, only to disappear in the wilds or to be found dead on trails fit for only bears and goats.

For over 70 years, the mystery of Salish Indian Slumach's mine has remained unsolved.

Slumach is said to have murdered on separate occasions nine women he took to the mine to help him carry out his gold. The bodies of two were found floating in the Fraser River.

Dead women don't talk seems to have been Slumach's reasoning.

According to Wally Lund the mine lies below Pitt Lake within an hour from New Westminster. A dream he had has convinced him of this. Last week he led a Columbian expedition to the scene to convince men, he said, to stop wasting their lives in further futile searches.

A story of pages two and three tells of the results of this expedition.

It also explores some new theories on the whereabouts of the mine—theories based on the murder for which Slumach was hanged in New Westminster in 1891.

A MAN'S DREAM, A THEORY ABOUT MURDER, A FRESH FACT TAKE US TO A PROMISE OF FABULOUS RICHES, LESS THAN AN HOUR FROM THIS CITY.

BY E.A. McLELLAN

They're all wet about the whereabouts of Slumach's fabulous Lost Creek Gold Mine.

For over 70 years, the searches undertaken in the trackless wastes beyond Pitt Lake, an area fit for only bears and goats, have been useless from the beginning. And 23 men, engaged in these hunts, have died needlessly.

**Is this Lost Creek Gold Mine? A man's dream says it is**

# Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

Instead of exhausting weeks of travel and unbelievable privation, they should have searched an area where Slumach committed his last murder.

\*\*\*

By car this area is a half hour from New Westminster, followed by a 20-minute walk and a 15-minute climb. The terrain will be found fit for human from 70 to seven years of age. That this is where Slumach's gold mine will be found is my conclusion after an investigation of available facts, after listening to the account of a dream and hearing a theory concerning the death of nine women.

## *A shooting, a hanging*

Let's begin with the available facts.

A Salish Indian named Slumach was hanged in the provincial jail at New Westminster (later the T.J. Trapp Technical School) on January 16, 1891. His crime: the murder of half-breed Louis Bee at Lillooet Slough at the Pitt River on September 8, 1890.

Reading from the files of the British Columbian, we are given this information:

Principal witness to the shooting, an Indian Charles Seymour, told a coroner's inquest on September 11, 1890, that was entirely unpremeditated, as shown by the sudden manner in which the murderer committed the act.

On the afternoon of September 8, a number of Indians, among them Louis Bee, were fishing for trout in the Lillooet Slough near Pitt River and while they were thus engaged Slumach came out of the bush and approached the group. Bee went toward Slumach and after a minute or two asked him in a casual manner what he was shooting around there. Without a moment's warning or any preliminary sign of anger, Slumach instantly levelled his gun at Bee and fired.

Just before the discharge, 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.

Witness Seymour's story as to the motive was that the victim Bee, had a habit of "blustering at and threatening almost everyone he came in contact with."

Let us dwell a moment on this matter of a motive for it has much to do with our tale.

According to the Victoria Daily Colonist, this was the actual exchange between the slayer and the victim: "Who are you going to kill today? Sneered Louis (Bee) as he eyed gun-car-

# Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

rying Slumach that afternoon on Lillooet Slough.” “You,” snapped Slumach and promptly shot Louis dead.

Now we are asked to believe that this taunt of Bee’s was reason enough for Slumach to shoot his tormentor and in so doing commit himself to the life of a fugitive in the weeks that followed, and bring about the physical wreckage that finally surrendered to the law.

Slumach was described as a “rather intelligent man of about 60.” He had also another distinction. He was a man with a gold mine, the worth of which is estimated to be \$100,000,000.

Would a rich, intelligent man lightly throw away such a future? Was Bee’s expedition one for trout, or was he fishing for something much more exciting?

Was he so near to Slumach’s secret, that murder was the only way left to Slumach to protect his find?

That would have been motive enough. And certainly, for Slumach, the fateful decision would be reached instantly. Had he not already murdered nine women to protect this same secret?

Well, here I must ask you to step in the realm of both fiction and fact.

Slumach first burst into the public eye in New Westminster with a pack full of gold and a liking for wine, women, and song.

The saloon [tables?], during his visits, rattled with his gold, some of the nuggets as big as walnuts, which he rolled to the bartenders as other men might spin coins.

Many tried to gain his secret, but always tight-lipped Slumach would suddenly disappear when his gold ran low. It is said he had a canoe hidden in bushes above the city and would paddle away just before sunup when the morning mist added to his protection.

Each time he left, it was noted some days later that one of the local women, often a waitress and usually an Indian, had left town.

It was Indian custom to take a squaw on forest trips to repair moccasins and clothes, gather fuel, cook meals and help with making and breaking camp.

But one the body of one of them was found floating in the Fraser River, this indicated that more than Indian custom was involved.

Slumach was in town at that time on one of his orgies. Of-

## Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

ficers found raw gold in the clothing of the dead woman. Her identity was established as Susan Jenner. Like Slumach she was a Salish Indian.

The constable went looking for Slumach, found him, and took him to view Susan's remains.

Slumach reluctantly admitted Susan had volunteered to be his companion on his last trip. While floating down the Fraser on their way back, Susan had fallen overboard and drowned.

Just a little mishap he hadn't thought worth mentioning, he explained.

Suspicious as they were, the authority could prove nothing. Slumach was allowed to go.

But Constable Eric Grainger was detailed to shadow Slumach while Sgt. Harold Nichol, in charge of missing person's bureau, was launched on a check through his files.

Slumach gave Grainger the slip on his next trip but Nichol was rewarded by the revelation that eight women had disappeared approximately the same date Slumach was absent from town.

Uncouth and unattractive as he apparently was, it is said that Slumach exercised a curious fascination over young women. He could take his pick on many, all eager to be his helpers, on his trips. It is said too, that Slumach had an eye for beauty, all his women being considered pretty.

On his next, and apparent last spending spree in New Westminster, Slumach was confronted with the body of still another woman. This one, identified as Molly Tynan, also found floating in the river, were a knife that had been plunged through the back into the heart.

The story goes that it was Slumach's hunting knife and this apparently leads to the popular misconception that the Indian was hanged for his murder. But the fuzzy blending of fiction and fact at this point leaves one to imagine that Slumach managed to squirm out of this rather nasty spot. It is documented fact the murder sending him to the gallows was that of Louis Bee; the place, Lillooet Slough.

This name, Lillooet Slough, is something I want to tell you about later. It proved to be a turning point in my investigation of fancy and fact surrounding the Lost Creek Gold Mine.

But first I want to introduce you to a man named Wally Lund, for it was he who reawakened the entire subject of Slumach's mine.

# Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

\*\*\*

In a newspaper office it is not unusual to meet some very unusual people. And they have many strange tales to tell, things they will tell to no rational person but will tell to a newspaper editor.

Wally Lund's opening gambit was: "I want to tell you about a dream I've had."

I glanced furtively about for an escape, but there were no reporters in sight. Then he delivered his haymaker.

"I know where Slumach's lost gold mine is."

Instantly ensnared I said, "Sit down, tell me all about it."

"First," he said, "you should know about the dream that came true. It was back in 1940, near The Pas, in the spring. I was trapping muskrats and sleeping out in a tent nights. I dreamed of an angel floating above me. I thought 'It is so pretty, if I could get someone like that for my wife, I would even get married.'"

Two weeks later, travelling from The Pas to Prince Rupert, he stopped off in Winnipeg to see his brother, and there he met the girl of his dreams, "truly an angel on earth."

There followed a story of a happily married life, of six wonderful children. Finally I could hold back no longer. "The gold," I demanded, "I want to know about the gold!"

Mr. Lund settled back. He knew he had me properly primed.

"Ah, yes, Slumach. Well, you know the old Indian was hanged right here in New Westminster for the murder of nine women."

This, as I have said, is not factual. But I let him go on without interruption.

A dream combined with two visits to a likely site had convinced Wally Lund, then of 21168 Wickland Road, Haney, that he had found the site of the ancient mine.

Mr. Lund, a fisherman and carpenter who had prospected in various parts of the west, in his 65 or more years, said he had read a magazine article about the mine. He was convinced the mine was not beyond Pitt Lake.

While operating along the Pitt River, some two years ago, he discovered a narrow gorge. Its turquoise coloured cliffs, evidently copper discolouration, looked promising.

He investigated and after walking up two seemingly carved giant steps, found two vertical holes about four feet in diameter. These lead down into an underground cavern at the

# Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

head of the gorge.

He said he investigated briefly and found a four foot ledge below the openings about 12 feet down.

Last spring he again investigated but still could not tackle a descent on his own.

Still he was intrigued. The Indian Slumach, he said, had been able to visit his mine and return to New Westminster in 48 hours paddling a canoe, each time loaded with gold but minus a “wife.” The distance to the gorge, he felt, was about right for this length of time.

Then, two months later he had a dream in which he again entered the gorge. This time the gorge was a castle with carved rock steps. In front of the steps was a sandbar—and there were pieces of decayed rope lying on it.

This led him to his theory that the old Indian had had help in excavating the gold from the caverns. No man could go down and up on his own. He would have to lower someone else down and pull him up with the gold. And the wily old Indian had chosen women for this task as they were nice and light and more easily murdered. For once having seen such a rich cache no one could be expected to keep the secret, no one except perhaps the owner.

And why had Lund come to tell me about this. His reason was humanitarian. So many lives had been lost searching badlands where the mine did not exist, it was time someone put a stop to it.

He was leaving in a few days for a job in the north. Would I please tell the public where the mine really was so that no more lives would be lost?

It seemed a worthy enough request, but first some checking would have to be done to see whether his theory hold water.

It was in the course of this that the business of the name Lillooet Slough came up.

I felt it would be an interesting coincidence if it were found that Slumach murdered Bee in the area where Wally Lund claimed the gold mine to be. But no map of that area bore that name.

Feelers were put out along the waterfront and Captain Gordon Cooper of Westminster Tug Boat Company came up with the answer.

“Old timers have always referred to the Alouette River, where it drains into the Pitt, as the Lillooet Slough. Sailing that part of the river, my father would point it out giving that name.

## Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

When I learned differently, I would point out to him that it was the Alouette. 'It's always been called the Lillooet Slough,' was his only reply."

That was the clincher. The Alouette, or Lillooet, where the murder occurred is less than two miles Wally Lund's Lost Creek Gold Mine.

It was decided then and there to put together a safari. It would have to be a very special one. We were going into an area upon which Slumach had placed his death curse.

Naturally a photographer was the first consideration. Columbian's photo man Basil King agreed.

My wife, Shirley, and two children, Michael, 12, and Robbie, 8, demanded to go along. Our dog Teddy was also insistent.

Wally Lund of course would guide us.

We needed a man with a rope, not enough to hang us, just enough to get down that hole.

Gerard Bloem of Vancouver was contacted. His hobbies are bird watching, rocks, and wild plants and, of course, hiking. Yes, he and his wife Trudy would come along. But please make it clear, not because of any dream sequence, rather a chance for a pleasant hike, and maybe a bird or two not seen lately.

That completed, we looked to our provisions. A picnic lunch was decided upon. Clothing: sport shirts and shorts for the young ones.

We were well prepared. At quarter of 12, last Saturday, without benefit of darkness and morning mist, we had left our marshalling point, The British Columbian.

No helicopters for us—we climbed in our cars, drove out the Lougheed Highway across the Pitt River, turned left at Harris Road, crossed the Alouette Bridge and stopped at the Pitt dyke road.

Here we were confronted with a problem. No unauthorized cars on the dyke. Fortunately a farm vehicle appeared. The driver unlocked the gate and we hitched a ride.

We are travelling now in a north-easterly direction toward Pitt Lake. After two miles we have come to the base of Sheridan Hill on our left, a 400-foot rock.

Slumach is hinting his mine was beyond Pitt Lake, was said to have talked about a creek coming out of a hole in a cliff at the 4000-foot level. Sending his inquisitors into such a deadly area, 3600 feet higher than the real altitude, no doubt tickled the perverted fancy of the wily old rascal.

## Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

From the base of Sheridan Hill the story of our climb is best told in the pictures accompanying this article. [The photographs did not copy well on the microfilm and are not worth reproducing.]

When we looked in that hole and measured it to be 30 feet in depth we knew that no human would chance going down. So it naturally fell to a photographer to make the descent.

If you look carefully at the picture, and realize that it was taken straight down you will get some idea of the cavern. The lip that shows is the entrance of another tunnel, leading away from the main cavern. Photographer King believes it turns almost immediately upward.

It does seem that a stream from above gushed from it, boiled the 30 feet up the tunnel, and, as it spewed out smoothed a curvature in the cliff face, seen in some of the pictures.

At the base of the shaft Basil King found himself standing on loose rock.

Gold, of course, does not lie on the surface of anything for very long. It will be necessary to bring up the debris, including the two sapling poles which seem to have no business being there.

On the bedrock, will be, should be, may be found the gold—that death-dealing wonderful stuff.

As soon as this paper's out, I'm on my way with my mining licence, my staking tags and Wally Lund's dream.

If you get there before me, good hunting!