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SLUMACH LEGEND REFUSES TO DIE

BOOK REVIEW BY FRED CURTIN

Slumach's Gold, by Rick Antonson, Mary Trainer and Brian Antonson, 55 pages, \$1.50, paper.

No new maps of information are offered in this little booklet, but the authors have done a credible job in amassing all the fact, fiction and legend about B.C.'s most famous lost mine.

They have uncovered just about everything there is to know about the Indian Slumach who was believed to have discovered a creek bed with nuggets as big as walnuts.

According to the legend Slumach would spend his gold freely in the Royal City's saloons and then entice a young woman to accompany him to the diggings where he would murder her.

There is ample evidence that the Indian Slumach existed and that he was hanged in the old provincial jail on Jan. 16, 1891.

However he was not hanged for the murder of one of these women, as legend would have it, but for the shotgun slaying of a halfbreed.

There is no gold, no high living, nor any women in the facts that can be ascertained about Slumach.

And the authors point out that if any Indian was parting with nuggets in saloon bars it would not escape the police or the press. Gold was big news. And there was never a mention of Slumach's gold in any of the old editions of The Columbian.

The authors believe they have to write off any possible association of Slumach with any lost mine and any curse he might have put on it.

And what is even more depressing, they produce geological reports indicating there is no gold-bearing rock in the Pitt Lake area.

But the authors are convinced there is gold somewhere in that vast rugged area north of the Pitt.

In 1901, an Alaskan miner named John Jackson heard of the rumour of Slumach's mine and went looking for it. That fall he deposited \$9,750 in the Bank of British North America and the authors say there is evidence he took considerable gold with him to San Francisco. Jackson never get back to the Pitt but a letter he later wrote to a friend in Seattle, describing the mine caused considerable interest in that city.

Twenty years later another well-known prospector, R.A. (Volcanic) Brown started his search for the mine. He disappeared in 1930 and his body was never found. However, his last camp was located on an ice field at the head of Stave River. There

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was a glass jar containing 11 ounces of gold.

We don't know how many people have died under Slumach's curse while searching for the mine. Some say 24 and others 36.

And no doubt there will be more in the future.

It is hardly likely that this little booklet will touch off another gold rush but it will stir up a lot of new interest in an old legend that just won't die.