

JACKSON (D. – CA. 1906)

An individual most commonly known by only the last name of Jackson is the undisputed successor in the saga of the Pitt Lake Legend. Following in Slumach's footsteps, Jackson has undeniably gained legendary status that equals, if not exceeds that of his Native predecessor.

Although there are a variety of entertaining accounts describing how Jackson initially became involved in the legend and located his elusive creek laden with millions of dollars worth of gold there is, not surprisingly, very little that has or can actually be confirmed about him. Some believe that his last name was not Jackson but rather Hill or Hall. Most agree that his first name was either John or William. Regardless of the cycle of debate, I will continue with tradition and refer to the mysterious prospector as Jackson.

Did Jackson find a hidden creek full of gold on his own accord? Or did he kill his Native guide and bury him at the foot of a tent shaped rock after being shown the location?

The most recognized basic recital is that Jackson located a creek laden with gold nuggets somewhere in the mountains beyond the head of Pitt Lake. Loading up with as much gold as he could carry from the creek he started back towards civilization. Unable to continue with his full load he buried a substantial quantity under a tent shaped rock somewhere between the source and the head of Pitt Lake. Jackson returned to San Francisco where he died before he could return to the site.

Prior to his death he wrote a letter to an unknown friend giving directions to the location of both the tent shaped rock and the gold laden creek. This letter is commonly referred to as the 'Jackson' letter. Some written accounts strongly suggest that a crude map accompanied his letter.

According to all accounts Jackson died in San Francisco sometime around the turn of the century. In an attempt to determine the date and under what circumstances he

died I contacted the Department of Public Health Bureau of Records in San Francisco and requested a search for the death certificate of one John or William Jackson. The years searched were from 1891 to 1916.

The bureau responded to my request by stating that all local records prior to April 18, 1906 were destroyed in the great San Francisco fire of that year. They further informed me that they were unable to locate any record of any John or William Jackson for the years 1906 to 1916.

Again, that ever frustrating shadow that obscures the facts remained except in this particular case it produced an unexpected dilemma. There are no records of either a John or a William Jackson in the City or County of San Francisco and therefore one can neither prove nor disprove the existence of Jackson or accurately research the accounts written about him. Given these findings, one can only assume that Jackson died in San Francisco sometime prior to April 18, 1906.

It is interesting to note two curiosities found in the BC Archives during the course of my research which may be of interest to anyone interested in conducting further research into Jackson. First, a 50 year old man identified only as Jackson, his first name is listed as unknown, died in New Westminster on August

21, 1902. Second, in the collection of Attorney Generals Correspondence 1872–1937, there is a reference to a 1905 murder of an individual named Jackson.

Regardless of the varied accounts describing Jackson's activities and the lack of any specific dates Jackson's undisputed claim to fame is definitely based almost entirely on the infamous letter he wrote prior to his death. The following is a copy of Jackson's letter, courtesy of well known and respected historian and author, Mr. Bill Barlee. This copy was date stamped May 28, 1924 by the Gold Commissioners office in Grand Forks, B.C. The 1924 letter is a type written copy of Jackson's original letter and includes all errors in grammar and spelling found in the original letter. The missing word is smudged and illegible on the original letter so I have simply labelled and highlighted the missing word as (unknown).



Barlee's original at the end.

Some believe that the Jackson letter is legitimate while others believe that it was a hoax perpetrated by the early media in an attempt to increase newspaper sales by adding to the rumors surrounding Slumach. Skeptics that disagree with the authenticity of Jackson's letter argue the point that if there is a canyon one and one half miles in length containing a creek full of gold, why has it not been found by one of the suspected tens of thousands who have searched for it for the better part of a century? One must take into consideration that the letter was written from memory by a dying man without the assistance of any topographical maps. A letter written under these conditions is not very likely to be anywhere near as accurate as most who try and follow the directions outlined in it would hope it to be.

Jackson died during a time period when an influenza epidemic was taking more lives than all other illnesses combined. It is most probable that he was suffering from influenza when he wrote his letter. It is not uncommon for a person with any type of terminal illness to also deteriorate mentally. Fevers are characteristic of virtually all illnesses which when left unchecked or are untreatable ultimately cause hallucinations of varying degrees of intensity. Jackson's deteriorating health undoubtedly affected his memory which would account for the elusive and somewhat distorted directions given in his letter. With fading memory Jackson provided what he believed to be sufficient information and directions for the recipient of his letter to follow and find the location of his rich placer discovery. I am confident that the interpretation of the following points alone will offer consideration of the accuracy of the directions given in the letter under the suspected circumstances.

Jackson specifically stated that the water in the creek was almost white. He would not have used this term lightly as a general reference. Almost every creek in the search region flows down very steep inclines producing white water. His description is very specific and was intended to identify the specific location of the creek.

Secondly, Jackson writes that the location is a two or three day hike from the lake and it may take a year or more to find. In addition to giving the approximate distance from the lake, which does put the location somewhere in the Stave Glacier region, he is likely trying to say that the location is under a blanket of snow and ice that does not necessarily melt sufficiently each and every year to expose the creek.

Thirdly, Jackson unmistakably places an extremely high value on a tent shaped rock. Not only because he buried

part of his gold there but also because it is a significant directional indicator to the location of the gold bearing creek itself.

I have seen a dozen or so tent shaped rocks within the general search area. Some of these tent shaped rocks are as large as modern houses. The only location that I am aware of in the entire search area that contains any rock that is suitable enough to fit Jackson's description is indeed very distinct.

The location of what I refer to as the "Jackson rock" is of interest to at least three independent search parties that I am aware of. The location was initially provided to me by two prospectors who had searched the surrounding area several times throughout the years. They claim to have located the "Jackson rock" by following the directions given on what they identified as a very old crude map drawn on a deer hide. The two prospectors were convinced that the deer hide map had been drawn by Jackson himself.

Unfortunately the existence of the map could not be confirmed. The one prospector no longer had possession of the hide map. He claimed that it had either been lost or destroyed by his former spouse during a family break-up years prior to our meeting. The prospectors were continuing their search based on memory. This is the only piece of indirect information that suggests at a circumstantial level that Jackson may have provided a crude map with his letter. The particular "Jackson rock" to which I refer is in fact huge. It sits alone on a bench not far from Iceworm Creek and definitely seems to be out of place in its surroundings. It is similar in appearance and somewhat larger than the Native "standing rock" west of Keremeos, B.C..

The "Jackson rock" measures approximately 100 feet by 100 feet at the base by 70 feet in height. It has a slight overhang or lean in a southerly direction. On the ground a few feet out from the base but still just under the peak of the overhang are several very old fire pits spaced out to form the shape of a semi-circle or arch.

At the base, on one side of the "Jackson rock" is an obviously old depression measuring approximately 4 feet by 3 feet by 1 foot in depth. The depression is not a natural occurrence. The ground cover that has re-established itself over the depression suggests that the hole had been dug many decades earlier. About 30 feet to one side of the "Jackson rock" are two slabs of rock leaning together that definitely give appearance of a pup-tent. These slabs measure approximately 8 feet by 8 feet in length by 5 feet in height. One can actually crawl inside

this natural rock structure. This itself is undeniably a tent shaped rock without comparison.

I am fairly confident that this rock formation is the tent shaped rock that Jackson was referring to simply because of the hundreds of tent shaped rocks in the search area this is the only one that is definitely unique, can not be missed, and is within the travel distance identified in his letter. And, these are the only two rocks on the entire bench.

No marks have been located or identified on either the "Jackson rock" or the tent shaped slabs. However, the inside of the slabs unfortunately were not examined. Jackson literally wrote that there was a mark cut out "in" the rock not "on" the rock. It has been suggested that the mark may actually be on the inside of the slabs. Only a re-examination of the site can determine if Jackson literally meant "in" or "on" the rock.

I have been independently advised that the ashes from the fire pits were carbon dated a few years ago. The carbon dating results identified the ashes as being circa very early 1800s.

The location of this site combined with the carbon dating results and Duff's documentation, discussed in the previous chapter, are strong indicators that this location is not only of interest to the Jackson portion of the Pitt Lake Legend it, may also be of significant historical value related to Native culture and history.

The Archaeology department at The University of British Columbia was unaware of this site when I contacted them. Subsequent consultation with an independent archaeologist has proven to be most interesting and enlightening.

Without physically examining this site, the archaeological consultant is confident that the location may actually be an undocumented site of an ancient Native seasonal hunting camp. This opinion is based on several factors of which two principle ones are notable for the subject of this writing.

Firstly, the semi-circle of old fire pits are strong indicators that the pits were used by Native hunting parties for drying meat hung over the boulder. Native hunting parties commonly dried their meat at the site of their seasonal hunting camps because they were able to pack out far greater quantities of dried meat than fresh meat to the main encampment or settlement.

Secondly, the preferred meat of the Natives identified as having traditional access to the area was black bear,

closely followed by mountain-goat. The location is almost in the center of an area still well known for both species. The location is not far off of the Iceworm Creek trail that leads from Glacier Lake to the Pitt River.

As a general point of interest, the archaeologist has additionally expressed an interest in the possible association of this site to the Native tribe identified as the Squalls by Duff in the previous chapter.

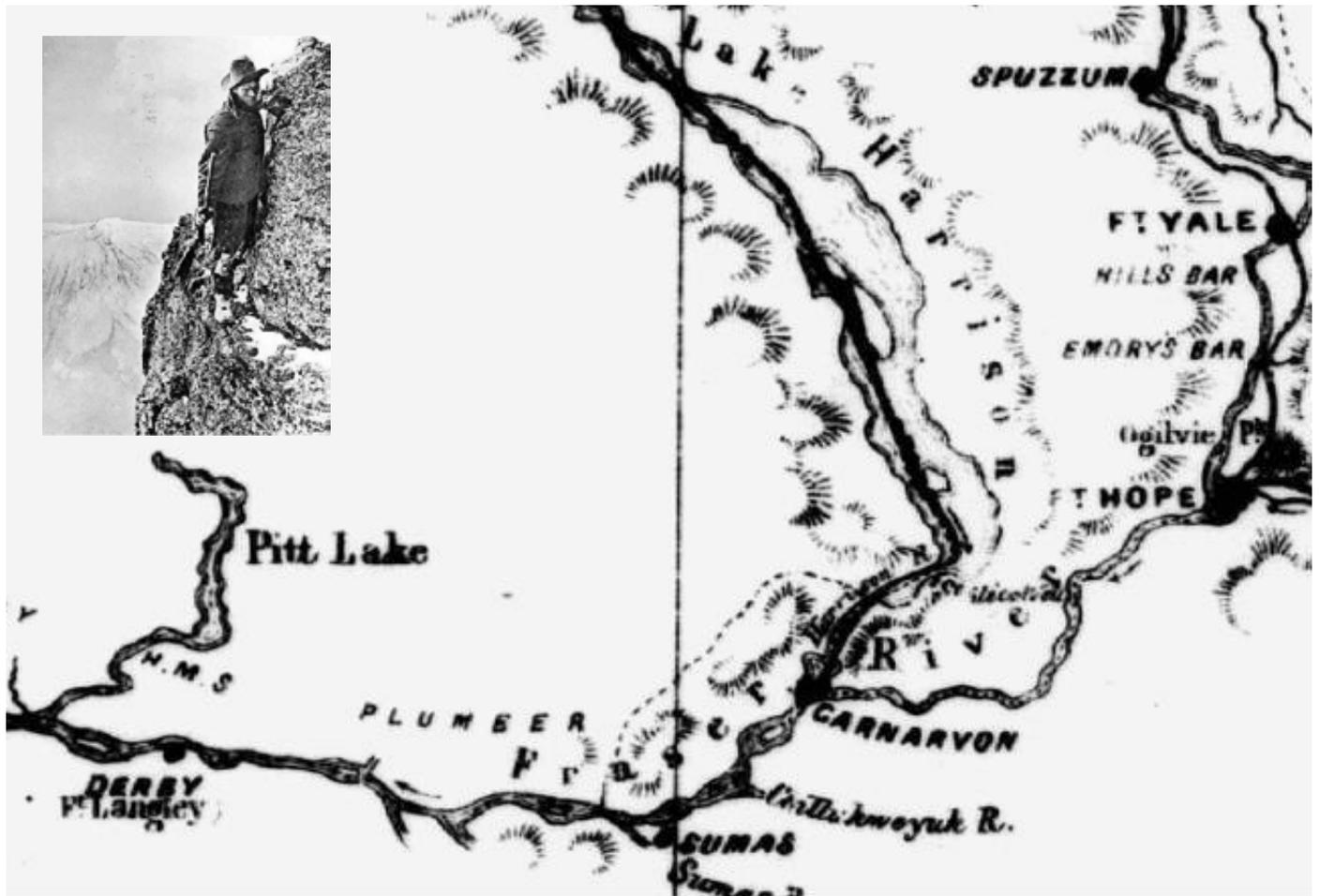
The archaeologist's professional opinion, even without physical assessment of the sight, does, in itself, offer an interesting correlation to the fact that Slumach met a Port Douglas Native hunting party and Jackson tells his friend to take trustworthy Natives and only tell people he is going on a hunting trip. As a final reference to Jackson's letter it is curious to note that he did not identify any lake by name and simply referred to the location of the creek as being two or three days from "the lake."

The only reference that I can find that places Jackson at Pitt Lake is found in a story which again features Slumach's nephew, Peter Pierre. Peter Pierre claimed to have found Jackson on the eastern shore of Pitt Lake across from Little Goose Island in 1903. Jackson was physically exhausted and extremely sick. He claimed to have been helped to the lake shore by and old Native women. As Pierre paddled the canoe down the Lake, Jackson told him about dense fogs, impenetrable underbrush, unbelievable "Devils club" and other hardships he had endured.

On the trip down the Lake Jackson also made reference to hot springs. There are two known locations of hot spring in the general search area. One is located on the west side of the upper Pitt River, north of Alvin, a short distance upstream from where the main logging road bridge crosses the river. The second is located at the junction of the North and South Sloquet Creeks. There is also rumored to be a third hot spring located somewhere in the Iceworm Creek area. This third hot spring, being located in the same area as what I have referred to as the "Jackson rock" does prove uniquely interesting.

During the time period in which Jackson was undoubtedly involved in his adventures there was an extensive prospecting frenzy taking place in the upper Harrison Lake area, specifically in the vicinity of Fire Mountain.

In addition to the mineral finds in the Harrison Lake area, Port Douglas at the north end of Harrison Lake had been the prospectors' gateway to the northern gold fields. The entire area had been and was once again



Section of one of the earlier maps of B.C. produced by the British Royal Navy and British Royal Engineers on November 1859. Jackson would not have had access to any maps with noticeable more detail. Inset: 1899 photograph of a prospector in the Stikine area of B.C. Jackson may very well have taken similar risks descending into his gold-laden creek from the sharp ridge above.

swarming with prospectors and fortune hunters. Harrison Lake was commonly referred to as 'the lake' simply because everyone knew the location being referred to.

No one really knows anything about Jackson's background. It is definitely not out of the question to suggest that he was one of the countless prospectors combing the area around the upper Harrison Lake area during the 1890s and early 1900s.

Jackson states in his letter he had been prospecting for over two months. It is highly probable that he began prospecting in the Harrison Lake area. Expanding his search area over a two month period, he ultimately made his discovery somewhere between Fire Mountain and the upper Pitt River.

After discovering his bonanza, he made a rational decision to make his way back towards civilization via an alternate and unfamiliar route instead of going back in the direction of Port Douglas and Harrison Lake.

His choice of direction using an alternate route that ultimately ended at Pitt Lake would have been made in order to avoid the hordes of prospectors concentrated in the area between Harrison Lake and the upper Stave River. By avoiding as many of these prospectors as possible Jackson would have significantly reduced his chances of being robbed or otherwise having his discovery prematurely identified.

Many historical accounts describing prospectors' activities identify the paranoia aspect of their lives. These early prospectors constantly took excessive precautions against being followed to their secret locations. Many of them would frequently travel miles and often days out of their way to avoid detection. Given the mother lode that Jackson writes about, it is more than probable that he took all precautions he considered necessary to avoid detection.



Photograph taken in a small valley near Stave Glacier. The Devils Club in this photo is approximately 10 feet tall and several inches in diameter. It is so large that it dwarves the two men barely visible in the upper left of the photograph.



Aerial photograph showing a small creek disappearing and then reappearing several hundred feet away. Numerous creeks in the search area flow intermittently through subterranean channels. Some of the smaller creeks simply disappear underground.

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I had been out over two months and found myself running short of grub. I had lived mostly on fresh meat for one cant 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 up to the top of a sharp ridge and looked down into the canyon or valley about one mile and a half long, and what struck me as singular, it appeared to have no outlet for the little 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 and granite, but there I found a kind of schist and slate formation. Now comes the interesting part. I had only a small prospecting pan but I found colors at once right on the surface, and such colors they were. I knew then that I had struck it right at last. In going up stream 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 cant miss it. There is a mark cut out 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 have 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 all 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. O, 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. Dont 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 trip until you find the place and get everything for yourself. When you find it and I am sure you will, should you care to see me, advertise in the 'Frisco Examr.,' and if I am living I will either come to see you, or let you know where to find me, but once more I say to you, dont fail to look this great property up and dont give up until you find it.

Now good bye and may success attend you.

Yours truly,

W. Jackson

This letter has been reprinted verbatim from the original, complete with mistakes in punctuation and grammar. The copy was enclosed in one of the letters from Brown which was dated May 28, 1924. It is the only dated and authenticated copy in existence.