

Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

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CURSE OF THE LOST MINE BY JON FERRY

— FIRST IN A SERIES

GOLD FEVER! | LOOKING FOR LOST CREEK MINE

Gold Fever!

They call in B.C.'s Bermuda Triangle—where monsters appear and humans disappear.

But they don't vanish at sea. They go missing on land in some of this province's wildest, roughest terrain.

It's the treacherous Pitt Lake mountain country at Vancouver's back door, only 35 kilometres from downtown New Westminster.

At least 30 people are said to have died over the last 80 years amidst the swirling mists, craggy precipices and tangled windfalls of this territory.

Prospectors and glory-seekers, hookers and historians, all were lured into the mountains by the tale of a satanic Indian and his multi-million-dollar cache of gold.

All were victims of the curse of Slumach's Lost Creek Mine, a buried "glory hole" said to contain nuggets the size of hen's eggs.

Slumach's story is part history, mostly myth and reads like a schoolboy's adventure book.

The only irrefutable fact is that he was hanged for the murder of half-breed Louis Bee in the Royal City on January 16, 1891.

But legend has it he struck gold in the Pitt Lake mountain range during the 1880s and liked to swagger around boomtown New Westminster loaded with nuggets.

Old Slumach is reported to have had a keen thirst for firewater and carefree ladies.

Rumour has it that he took several of these young ladies with him to his Pitt Lake mine and they never returned.

The body of one, Molly Tynan, was later said to have been found by police floating in Pitt Lake, Slumach's dagger, legend has it, still buried in her heart.

As the legend grew there were stories of secret maps, deathbed letters, and documented searches.

In 1901 Alaskan miner John Jackson was believed to have discovered the gold.

But Jackson never recovered from his expedition, dying three years late, a sick and ruined man.

Then there were the searches of flamboyant Kootenay pros-

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pector Volcanic Brown in the 1920s and 1930s.

During one trek, Brown was severely frost-bitten and had several of his toes amputated. Undaunted he returned the next year—and then disappeared.

And then there was The Province's own expedition in 1952 with reporter Bill Ryan and photographer Ray Munro.

That expedition was led by Tommy Williams, grandson of Chief Coquitlam, Williams, who claimed he knew Slumach.

The Province team staked claims throughout the area the following year but finally were forced to concede defeat.

The Province has again contracted Slumach's infectious gold bug, and mounted another, all-out search in partnership with television station CKVU.

This time CKVU expedition leader Dale Robins, TV cameraman Richard Paris and the Province news team believed they had an ace-in-the hole.

Among with them was a man blessed with glittering gold mining expertise and psychic powers dating back at least a dozen years.

He is Abbotsford prospector Gary McIsaac, who pinpointed what he believed to be the mine after examining aerial maps of the Pitt Mountain area.

McIsaac, 40, also said he witnessed a vision of Slumach standing by the tent-shaped rock that marked his glory hole.

"There was a cave, you could actually see an Indian standing by the cave and he had a tomahawk in his hand."

The magnificent seven of the Province-CKVU team were a cheery bunch who called themselves the Raiders of the Lost Mine.

But we also knew that, with the exception of McIsaac and Coquitlam rescue expert Dan Cook, we were amateur bushmen in terrain best suited to the bear and the mountain goat.

And there was always the curse Slumach himself put on the mine: "When I die, so does my mine."