

New Westminster Exploring Association

— *The British Columbian*, September 3rd, 1864, page 3 —

The managing committee of this association held a meeting yesterday, when the following interesting report from Mr. John Hall was presented. It is in contemplation to send out another party in the course of the next week, should the committee be able to secure the services of suitable persons, but the great scarcity of men willing to go upon such business just now has materially retarded the operations of the association. We may mention that some of the most likely looking specimens brought down by Mr. Hall are in the assay office, and their value will probably be known shortly:

New Westminster, August 29th, 1864.
*To the President, Vice-President and Members of
the Exploration Committee.*

Gentlemen, — In accordance with the understanding entered into with you, I have the honour to report that I left New Westminster on Thursday, the 18th inst. [in the same month], at 1 o'clock p.m., in company with *Old Shnatt* [Chief Shnatt of the Squamish Band who in 1866 built a Catholic mission chapel in what is now North Vancouver], and two Squamish Indians. I reached Point Grey the same night where I camped. In crossing English Bay in the morning passed large numbers of Squamish Indians fishing, and the Indians with me held passing conversations with every canoe, telling them, as I afterwards understood, that we were going up their river in search of gold; and they in reply reiterating, as long as they were within hailing distance that if the whites found any there would be so many coming that they would destroy all their "*muck-a-muck*" [Chinook word for 'food']. At about 5 o'clock in the afternoon reached the head of Howe Sound, where I found the Squamish River diverted into a number of streams, divided by islands formed by the alluvial deposits of the river. The valley of the river seems to be about 10 miles in width, and covered with a light growth of alder, spruce, pine, &c. Along these flats there are numerous Indian ranches, from the mouth to the forks, and the character of the country is the same. I camped about three miles up the river on Friday night, and reached the forks about noon on Saturday. Here is a very extensive flat, timbered principally with alder, spruce, &c., and is good, rich soil, although I think there are portions of it overflowed. The forks is about 12 miles distant from the head of Howe Sound, but from the very rapid water in portions of the river, where poles had to be used instead of paddles, it is difficult to estimate distances. I remained some time at the forks, and found that the chief, *Ceatholanach*, expressed the same opinions held by his tribe, and which had previously been told me at every village, that it would be a great injury if gold was found on their river, as there would be so many whites coming in that their hunting and fishing grounds would be destroyed; and they instanced Fraser River as an example. I told them in reply that the discovery of gold, on the contrary, would be a great advantage to them; they must raise more *wapitoe*s [Chinook word for 'potatoes'], which would bring a high price; they could sell everything at home for *chickamin* [Chinook word for 'money']; they would get comfortable clothes, and many other advantages; but the greatest thing of all would be that Governor Seymour would protect them in their just rights, so long as they obeyed his laws, the same as if they were white men. I prospected several of the numerous bars between the mouth of the river and the forks, and found abundance of black sand, but no gold, and also quantities of detached pieces of quartz, specimens of which are in your hands. I left the forks the same evening and camped about 3 miles up the north fork, which still is called the Squamish, the southern branch being called the Cheakomas [*sic* Cheakamus]. I should have mentioned that the course of the river from its mouth to the forks is nearly due north; and that portion of the river which I had now entered was nearly north-west, without any islands, and not very rapid. There are Indian settlements dotted all along on both sides of the river. After getting up about 8 or 10 miles I prospected a stream on the west side of the river, and found the colour of gold. While at this stream I sent a note to New Westminster. This portion of the river is about 4 chains in width [1 chain = 66 feet], and the valley still continues to be about 10 or 12 miles wide, mostly timbered with alder, popular, some spruce, and vine maple: the spurs with fir. The Indians say there is grass back next to the mountains on the east side. I still think some of it is liable to be overflowed at high water. I camped for the nights few miles below what is called the Sea-shell valley, where there is a Squamish ranch. The mountains to the west become depressed along this valley, and there is a trail used by the Sea-shell tribe and the Squamish which enables them to reach the coast. The mountains in the distance were closing in to the banks of the river; and on emerging from the valley the river becomes very rapid. At the head of the valley there are numerous small islands and bars, several of which I prospected for gold, with the usual want of success, although each panful would wash-down to about half its quantity of black sand. I stopped at a ranch at the mouth of the Sea-shell Creek, which empties into the Squamish near the head of the valley, and, was delayed some time with long stories of the most contradictory kind about the upper part of the river; all agreed that it was very rapid, which proved to be true. These Indians would be

pleased if gold were found, provided the Government would make an arrangement with them securing them in their claims, as they are afraid without that the white men would come in such numbers that they would take everything away from them. Heavy rain this afternoon (Monday): camped early under a tree not far from where the *Chilacotens* [*sic* Chilcotins] killed some Squamish last spring. *Shnatt* of his own accord kept watch all night, waking me up sometimes to inquire if the *tenass* [Chinook word for 'small'] musket was ready for use; however nothing troubled us. Started again on Tuesday morning. The stream very rapid, and the mountains closing rapidly in, leaving the valley about one mile in width. The river is spread into many rivulets through this valley, although the main stream is easily distinguishable. During this forenoon I arrived at Bok's camp and found him at home, and, with the extraordinary mode of communicating intelligence these Indians possess, he had heard that *Shnatt* and I were coming two days before. After a long *waw-waw* [Chinook word for 'talk'] he agreed to go with me, and take one of his sons along. I on my part, in the event of minerals being found, engaged to go and tell Governor Seymour to prevent white men from taking away his hunting ground and giving him nothing for it. Besides I agreed to give him \$5; and further, if anything valuable was found, he was to get a good *potlatch* [Chinook word for 'gift'] from the *Tyhees* [Chinook word for 'chiefs'] at New Westminster. My canoe being too small for the rapid water I borrowed his canoe, a fine large one, and proceeding on until dark made a good distance. We started at daylight, and in a short time arrived at the head of navigation and at the mouth of the Great Canyon. The mountains at this place become the banks of the river, rising almost perpendicularly for hundreds of feet, and then sloping at an angle for thousands of feet above, in solemn, gloomy grandeur, while the river, being now confined to one narrow channel, comes rushing down in a foaming torrent, carrying everything before its impetuous course. We left the canoe and started with all the Indians packing the tools and three days' provisions. Bok and his son led the way along the precipitous banks of the river, passing, along narrow ledges, overhanging fearful precipices, with the agility of mountain goats. We camped in a basin of over 100 acres in extent, surrounded with a wall of rocks. In the morning two of the New Westminster Indians gave out, and they returned to the canoe. I and Bok and his son proceeded on in the bed of a mountain torrent, which at his time only conveyed a small quantity water. There are numerous canyons on this stream, and the usual and only way to get on was to ascend the sides of the mountain in places known to Bok to be practicable. The course we steered was nearly north from the river. In consequence of the Indians giving out I had no tools to prospect with but the hammer which I carried along. There are ledges and reefs of quartz, more or less pure, extending for miles through this portion of the mountain, samples of which I have brought down with me. There are strong indications of minerals of various kinds, and I may say the quartz reefs appear interminable. After going in this direction for two days we arrived at an immense fissure in the mountains, in which was snow which had lain there from time immemorial, full 100 feet in depth, and at the bottom a beautiful tunnel was formed by a hot spring issuing somewhere in the mountains. I put my hands in it and it was quite warm, and thick with a reddish substance, which stuck to my fingers; a sample of which I have also brought. Bok was anxious for me to go on, but I concluded to return, in order to get rid of the idlers, who were at the canoe eating the provisions, and would expect to get pay for very day we were out. On the way down Bok's canoe got damaged, which cost me five dollars to put him in good temper again. We parted good friends, with an invitation to return again and get on to the head waters of the Squamish, where the lake is, and the water runs the other way. It took about nine hours coming down the river to the head of Howe Sound, arriving here on Saturday, making the round trip in ten days. In conclusion, I will merely observe that it would require one or two months to prospect those mountains, and if the quartz should prove valuable there is sufficient quantity to keep a large population employed for the next century.

**I am, Gentlemen,
your obed't serv't,
John Hall**

P.S. — I should have mentioned, in justice to the quartz reefs, that I only could obtain specimens from portions of the reef that protruded from the lode, or were detached by the action of the elements.

J. H.