

LIFE AFTER THE STRIKE

Skookum Jim moved away and built a large house for his wife and daughter. He spent his winters hunting and trapping. Each spring he returned to the Klondike. Highly regarded by his people, Skookum Jim was known as a generous family man. He had the foresight to place what remained of his fortune in trust, and when he died in 1916 he left a substantial sum in trust for the benefit of Yukon Indians. For his role, Skookum Jim Mason was designated a Person of National Historic Significance and he is an inductee in the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame.

George Carmack died a rich man in Vancouver in 1922. His second wife, Marguerite, inherited his wealth. Even though his first wife, Kate, may very well have been the person who actually discovered the gold claim that made them all rich, George gave her nothing when they parted.

Kate Carmack could not produce legal documents to prove she had ever been married to George. Because of this, she was entitled to nothing by law and was left penniless. She returned to her Tagish clan and lived off a government pension in a cabin that Skookum Jim built for her. In 1920, Kate died during a flu epidemic. She was 63.

ALL: North in the Klondike - up that way,
 Gold was discovered one summer's day
 And it kindled a rush for "gold or bust"

SOLO 1: It was eighteen ninety six – August.

ALL BOYS: Who discovered that gold in Rabbit Creek?
 Skookum Jim on a lucky streak!

ALL GIRLS: A First Nations fellow – Skookum Jim?

ALL BOYS: That's what they say, and it could have been him.

ALL GIRLS: Who discovered that gold so long ago?

SOLO 2: There is debate – so we really don't know.

ALL BOYS: It could have been his sister Kate.

ALL GIRLS: It could have been Kate – or maybe her mate.

ALL BOYS: Kate was salmon fishing in the deep Klondike.
 Her brother dropped in, and they searched for a strike.
 And one of the group struck placer gold.
 Maybe one, maybe all – as the story is told.

ALL GIRLS: Now Kate was married to George Carmack.
His skin was white, not brown or black,
So the claim was registered in his name.

SOLO 3: That name still lives in Gold Rush fame.

ALL: Who discovered that gold in Rabbit Creek?
Skookum Jim on a lucky streak?
Or it could have been his sister Kate.
Could have been Kate – or maybe her mate.

ALL BOYS: They renamed Rabbit Creek – Bonanza.
Bonanza Creek – an extravaganza!
Then folks from all over the world rushed in
Panning for gold and wanting to win.

ALL GIRLS: Stamperders flocked to Dawson City.
River-rafting solo or in committee.
Overlanders came from Edmonton
To mine for gold in the midnight sun.

ALL: Who discovered that gold in Rabbit Creek?
Skookum Jim on a lucky streak?
Or it could have been his sister Kate.
Could have been Kate – or maybe her mate.

ALL BOYS: Old time miners were "Sourdoughs"
Tenderfoot miners were "Chee-chakos"

ALL GIRLS: All of them panned, and dug, and pitched,
But few of them ended up rich.

ALL: And which of our discoverers ended up rich?
Well, all of them, but here's the glitch:
Jim saved his fortune, but still lived well
And when he died, his last farewell...

ALL BOYS: Left money, in trust, for the native clans
To benefit his Yukon fans.

ALL GIRLS: But sister Kate didn't fare so well.
Her fortunes rose and her fortunes fell.

ALL BOYS: Although it was not her intention,
George left her to live on a government pension,

ALL GIRLS: Alone in a cabin that was rather grim.

SOLO 4: A cabin owned by her brother, Jim.

ALL: Who discovered that gold in Rabbit Creek?
Skookum Jim on a lucky streak?
Or it could have been his sister Kate.
Could have been Kate – or maybe her mate.

ALL BOYS: George married again and enjoyed his life.
Left all his money to the second wife.
As far as we know, he never looked back
As his first wife lived in a humble shack.

ALL GIRLS: Now there must be lessons here to learn
About fairness, kindness, and concern,
About what's wrong or right to do,

SOLO 5: But we'll leave those answers up to you!

ALL: Who discovered that gold in Rabbit Creek?
Skookum Jim on a lucky streak?
Or it could have been his sister Kate.
Could have been Kate – or maybe her mate.

ALL BOYS: Who discovered that gold? It's a mystery!
Long lost in Gold Rush history.

ALL GIRLS: The truth's up north, buried under the snow.

ALL: So I guess we'll never really know.

*(Slow down the reading of last line, enunciating "never,
really, know")*