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THE STORY OF BAR ROCK

Writing in *The North American Indian*, R. D. Cummings has a most interesting bit of history for the public. Whether Stanley Park is in Everett or Seattle we are not certain, but we presume it to be in the former city as there is where *The North American Indian* is published. We do not often make reprints, but we consider this article worthy of an exception to our rule. The article follows:

Hundreds of years ago, before Stanley Park was known or even thought of, nature and man began the preparation of many of the exhibits that are there displayed. They were all unwittingly prepared it is true, but they have contributed their shares of interest that make the Park what it is today to natives and visitors alike. The huge spruce and fir trees protruded their infant limbs above the surface of the ground long before Columbus discovered America. Totem poles were carved and painted in their crude forms and colors hundreds of years before the coming of the white man to British Columbia. The Big Bar rock was carved for the Park by an Indian who never saw a white man and who never dreamed of any other human social condition than that of which he formed a primitive part, much less of his efforts being exhibited as a work of art in more polished years to come.

There is nothing mysterious, however, attached to the Big Bar rock, beyond the fact that the name and personality of the artist is unknown. He came, left his footprints and disappeared. He is lost in the maze of recent antiquity, because no records have been kept by the Indians of the doings of their geniuses. The tracings of the rock are, no doubt, the work of an artist of not so very long ago, who sought an outlet for his bubbling and confined genius through the only medium open to him in his time. He felt the urge and responded as best he could. He, no doubt, experienced the same aspirations and promptings that produce the artists of today, notwithstanding the most overwhelming and discouraging of all odds. He might have found an outlet in the painting of figures on rocks, as others did, but he was a sculptor as well as a painter, and his calling was to carve on stone.

In their day the Indians had reached a standard of social refinement that is worthy of note. We can read such an elevation of mind "between the lines" of the "hieroglyphics" which cover one surface of the Big Bar stone. Their thoughts had reached a standard far above the level of the savage. There is nothing of a vulgar nature attached to the carvings such as one might expect from a crude brain, and which, indeed, is often met with even among civilized people of today. The artist has left us a monument to his honor that can be displayed without embarrassment in any publicly-frequented place in the world. Had he been commissioned to do the work for exhibition he could not have done better. We must conclude that Indian "civilization" is very old or the rock carvings are very recent.

The carvings appear to be recent, because they picture figures of birds and animals extant today in the Big Bar country. There is the eagle, the big horn, the goat, the toad, just as they are at present. There are other unfinished drawings, as though the artist had been interrupted in his work or had died when his story was but half written. Some attempts have been made to create animals that could not exist, which are perhaps only incomplete pictures of an inventive brain reaching out for something new to produce.

The mystery and antiquity of the stone disappear when it is examined carefully, but the value remains none the less in the fact that it is the work of an unknown artist who, although his personality has vanished, has perpetuated himself on the imperishable rocks, and to whom we are forever indebted for an historical monument, whose value can scarcely be estimated. We can only vision the artist idling his valueless time over a work of love with his crude tools—flint for a chisel and stone for a mallet—and picking away at a task that called for a martyrdom of patience and a wealth of uncultured skill that had at least got far beyond the vulgar stage of human society. He was carving an exhibit for Stanley Park in a century to come, while the idea of fame or reward was as far remote from his childish brain as the stars were above his head.

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