



Legend of War Creek

Randall Reneau

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This fast-paced and entertaining adventure leads into a world of surprise discoveries, dangerous scenarios, and dead spirits.

An old Washington mountain landmark holds adventure and ghostly secrets for a group of enterprising miners in Randall Reneau's fast-paced *Legend of War Creek*.

In 1882, Joe La Fleur, an army guide, discovers a major quartz vein in the mountains of Washington. His findings are published in the mission report, kicking off a major gold rush in the area. Yet the directions to the first location, the War Creek vein, are lost. In the present, mining company head Trace Brandon rediscovers information on the War Creek area and sets out with some friends to try to locate it. Their journey leads them into a world of surprise discoveries, dangerous scenarios, and the truth about the dead spirits that supposedly haunt the War Creek area.

It's clear from reading *Legend of War Creek* that Reneau is a lover of traditional adventure fiction. References to characters such as Tom Horn, John Wayne, and Errol Flynn appear throughout the prose. The most exciting parts, from braving the natural elements of the high ranges to learning from the local natives about mysterious deaths, are all combined to make for a very fast-paced thriller. Subplots include Trace's battles with shareholder Peter Pantelli over control of their mining company, plus the ex-convict father of one of Trace's deceased former employees who is out to get revenge on Trace, whom he blames for his son's death. *The Legend of War Creek* has a concise structure that seems familiar to fans of traditional literary adventure tales but with some new surprises included.

It's this unique mix that gives *Legend of War Creek* its main appeal. The supernatural subplot—especially chilling when Trace and companion Will Coffee find a corpse with an arrowhead caught in his leg among some real gold deposits at the La Fleur vein—gives the narrative some unique color. The details of geology and geography, such as Trace and Will's use of engineering equipment and topographic maps, also help make the book more believable, perhaps because they come from a writer who has experience in the field.

Yet some of this color is lost in the diction and out-of-date dialogue passages. Too often, phrases like “wearing his trusty Smith and Wesson .357 Magnum,” “Let's make tracks,” and “You're not going all *Hocus Pocus* on me” appear, sounding old-hat and cliché. The adventures into War Creek are more interesting than the characters themselves, as the figures of nice-guy Trace and rotten, greedy Peter Pantelli seem a bit too familiar as regular good- and bad-guy archetypes without much originality.

Legend of War Creek is very entertaining. It's a journey worth reading to see what secrets this mysterious location holds.

JAMES BURT (July 29, 2015)

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