

HARRY WHITNEY TREAT

Entrepreneur Extraordinaire

Harry Whitney Treat was a young man described in the newspapers of the day as a “New York Financier.” As the old saying goes, “chance favours the prepared” and Harry Whitney Treat appears to have been born prepared and blessed with enormous entrepreneurial energy.

Chance came in the form of Ed Blewett, a promoter who, in 1896, was attempting to find investors for his two mines on Texada. Blewett travelled to Victoria and Seattle and seems to have been unsuccessful for he continued east by train with his samples of peacock ore from the Copper Queen.

The story is that Ed Blewett met Harry Treat on the train during Treat’s honeymoon. What ever the circumstance, Blewett and Treat formed a partnership that would last for years.

The Van Anda Copper and Gold Company was created and Treat was able to secure appropriate financing. Treat returned to Texada with Blewett and they developed three mines: the Little Billie, the Copper Queen and later the Cornell.

With Treat as the spearhead for the Van Anda Copper and Gold Company they moved aggressively in their underground operations. They developed a narrow gage railway to move their product to the ore dumps on Van Anda Bay. By 1900 they began construction of a smelter to concentrate their ore, and to do contract smelting for other mines on the island. The smelter was located above the wharf in Van Anda.

Mr. J.S. Helmken visited Texada in 1899. Helmken had been the speaker of the Provincial Legislature and on this occasion wrote to the editor of the Colonist in Victoria. He called Mr. Treat, “The Magician” and talked about Treat with his invisible wand and his Aladdin’s caves of copper, gold and silver. Inside the smelter was “a volcano – a molten lively fluid, as liquid as water but a good deal hotter.”

Peter Kenny

Texada Island Heritage Society

