

VIOLET SEAMAN

In researching Texada's written past the name of Violet Seaman is frequently encountered. Her 1946-47 "Texada Narratives" appeared regularly in the *Powell River News* and gave form and colour to Texada's early history.

Violet was the granddaughter of James Raper, cousin of the legendary prospector Alfred. In 1893 grandfather James sailed his "little sloop" with wife, Catherine (nee Jenkins), to Texada's west coast.

James worked at his cousin's Texada Gold and Silver Mining Company and as a watchman at the iron mine. He built a log cabin between Kirk and Priest Lakes, the Rapers being the only family in the area at that time.

Violet's mother told her tales of grandmother Catherine instructing her daughters in sewing and baking. Grandfather James carved little wooden dolls for the girls. Her mother remembered being impressed with the huge waterwheel at the Victoria gold mine where her father worked.

In 1898 the family moved to town when James became foreman of the Van Anda Copper and Gold Company. There they enjoyed a large garden and orchard with a huge English walnut tree. These remembrances were the tales Violet heard as a child, no doubt sparking her interest in the island's past.



In July of 1946 Violet Seaman sent her "Texada Narratives" to the PR News. They tell of pioneers (Black Jack McLeod, Walter Planta, Jim McKimmie and others). Her descriptions of Van Anda social life in the 1900's reveal the camaraderie and pride of a small coastal mining town.

Her accounts of Texada's history are varied and colourful. Some examples: in describing the future of the iron mine, she wrote:

Soon the magic wand of industry will wave over the sleeping body of ore.

When summarizing the colourful names of mining claims:

Romance in the original meaning splashes the hues where seekers of glittering rock tear at the earth.

In subsequent years Violet, together with her second husband, Reverend George Keenlyside, worked with the Central Mainland Mission for the United Church of Canada. Her 1987 book *They Also Came* is a tribute to women's missionary work on the BC coast.

Violet Seaman died in 1987 but her vibrant 1940's "Narratives" enable us to appreciate Texada's history as seen from the point of view of a pioneer granddaughter.

(photo: Violet Bain with her daughter Violet (Seaman))