

ED RUSS - "THE MAN BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD"

Edward Russ (b. 1875) arrived on Texada in 1895 enticed by Ed Blewett's tales of opportunity. His previous mining experience in the US southwest helped Ed and partner Charlie Rabson win the New Years Day (1900) drilling contest in Van Anda. About 300 spectators watched from the porch of the Marble Bay Hotel as the pair hand-drilled 23 1/2 inches in 15 minutes to win the \$25 grand prize.

Seeking a homestead in 1910, Ed pre-empted a 1/2-section in the Upper Gillies Bay farm belt and built a log cabin on a rocky outcropping. He married but his wife died soon after bearing a son, Frank, who Ed raised on his own.

The father and son (age 11) continued to prospect in the mountains north of Powell River. Their camp grub consisted of beans, salt pork, flour, baking powder, tea, bacon and salt. Ed lost Frank in WW II when his ship, the *St Croix*, was torpedoed.

Ed sold the farm to Bennie Bell and lived in a 16 x 20 foot cedar shake cabin "by the side of the road" at the head of Gillies Bay (sea-side of the present "Old School").

Ed lived a simple, relaxed life in his spotless cabin. Two beds (one for visitors), a cookstove, table and pantry shelves filled the interior. Clothing and utensils hung from the rafters and old Christmas cards decorated one wall.

Travellers to Gillies Bay would have to pass by his cabin and Ed would always invite them onto his porch for a cup of tea and conversation. Visitors often viewed his "hope chest" which stood on end in his smokehouse. It was the casket built by friend Bill Stromberg, painted in a bright green by Ed.

In later years Ed could be seen hiking with bushy white beard and walking stick. He often wore his signature "beret" made from the cut-off legs of long johns.

When he died in 1957 Ed Russ's body was laid in his green coffin on boughs of cedar with prospector's pick in hand, as requested. Although seemingly well-equipped for mining heaven's "streets of gold", Ed once remarked that it would be too much work. "It's the finding of the gold that matters!"

