

THE VAN ANDA SAWMILL

For the first part of the twentieth century the Carter Brothers' sawmill at the outlet of Van Anda Creek was one of the town's best known landmarks (photo).



Passengers arriving at the Van Anda wharf would note the tall brick chimney and hear the screech of the steam-powered saw blades, a quite different scene from the tranquil one today.

Henry and John Carter bought the mill in 1899 from the Grant brothers of Comox who had run the mill for 20 years at a Cumberland coal mine. Along with it came George McLeod to help set up the operation. McLeod, however, was soon lured away by Texada's mineral possibilities and became a prominent island prospector.

The economic boom due to the mining activities caused a huge local demand for sawn lumber for houses, shops and for mine supporting timbers. In addition, nearby logging sites such as Lang Bay, Stillwater and the new mill at Powell River needed lumber to build camps and houses.

Initially "Steamboat Bob" (Walter Pinnock) would tow the milled wood across Malaspina Strait with his driftwood-fuelled, steam-powered boat, *Wood Nymph*. Later, Bill Young and Bill Kirkness rivalled for towing contracts.

With a sawmill close by logging on Texada took off. Nearby trees were felled, some towed along the rocky shore by hand. The first log boom received by the mill was from Myrtle Point (350,000 board feet - one week's supply).

Fuel for the steam plant was supplied by Chinese labourers and others who cut 4-foot cordwood and hauled it to the mill by horsepower.

The Carters enthusiastically joined community affairs, locating their house on the creek bank just upstream of the mill. John ran the mill while brother Henry acted as a mine recorder, helped establish the Texada Gun Club, served on the School Board and became Justice of the Peace.

Before the mill closed in 1923 it is said that the very last load of lumber was floated around Texada to construct the first house in Gillies Bay - Dr Sanderson's.

With the economy slumping the sawmill was eventually demolished, only its chimney remaining. It stood for years after as a reminder of the valuable enterprise that helped create Texada's boom times.