

JOHN ANTLE and TEXADA'S COLUMBIA HOSPITAL

When Tacoma Steel ceased its Marble Bay operations in 1907 Texada City's opera house was donated to Reverend John Antle's newly-established Columbia Coast Mission for use as a hospital.

Antle (1865-1949) was a rough and ready Newfoundlander ordained in the Church of England and serving as a priest in Vancouver. He was alerted to the unmet needs of the people on BC's remote coast when, in 1904, the Union Steamship *Cassiar* arrived in Vancouver with four dead loggers aboard.

With a donation of \$100 from the Anglican diocese Antle and his 9-year old son outfitted a 16-foot racing dinghy (the *Laverock*) with a "new-fangled" 3/4 horsepower gas engine. They embarked on a daring 800 km journey to assess the needs of the logging and mining camps, canneries, lighthouses and First Nations villages upcoast.

Antle's forceful presentation of his findings resulted in the formation of the Columbia Coast Mission and the launching of the 60-foot ship *Columbia* in 1905. Captained by Antle, it was a floating dispensary, emergency ward, ambulance, chapel and library.

The *Columbia* became a welcome visitor for upcoast residents who would step on board for ceremonies (weddings, christenings, funerals) or social events such as movies or visits with Santa.

CCM hospitals were established at Rock Bay, Alert Bay, Van Anda and (later) Garden Bay. Bishop Perrin of Vancouver opened Texada's hospital which employed doctors Keith and MacDermott and nurses Beatty and Franklin.

Their first winter of 1907/08 was a challenge when temperatures plunged. The 13 patients shared 3 hot water bottles while Dr. MacDermott thawed the pipes.

Van Anda's hospital often hosted Reverend Antle's successor - the energetic but inexperienced Alan Greene. The nurses taught the student missionary to help as an anaesthetist when in port.

Greene loved a practical joke. He slept in any vacant hospital beds - even the morgue - and was once mistaken for a corpse when several men entered at night to measure the body for a coffin. Greene moaned and sat up suddenly causing the shocked men to bolt for the door!

Van Anda's hospital closed in 1920 and the CCM ceased its marine service in 1969.

A stained glass window in a Hamilton, Ontario church commemorates Antle's life work - bringing companionship, medical help and inspiration to the lonely men and women of BC's coast.

