

## TEXADA'S LITTLE CHURCH

In Van Anda before 1900 church services were held in the mess hall of Van Anda Copper and Gold Company which was also shared with the first school classes.

This early congregation of about 55 souls met with ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in 1899 and obtained a \$200 grant toward the construction of a town church and manse.

Six days later the mine company offered a piece of land on the hill above "Sawmill Cove." Donations for the building were solicited from all the local mine worksites and collection boxes were placed around town.

A Ladies' Aid Society raised \$109 toward the minister's salary. Mr. J.A. Menzie was contracted to build the church for \$550, a task completed in just sixty days with much community participation (see photo).

The new church's steeple boasted a bell and a \$50 organ (complete with mouse) rested inside. Services commenced in 1900 with Reverend WH Madill officiating.



The tall white spire became a landmark for passing mariners. In future years Mrs. Grace Pringle lit a coal oil lamp nightly in the manse window which served as a beacon for ships entering the harbour. Since 1920 her husband, Reverend George Pringle, had operated from Van Anda which became the home port of his coastal missionary ship *Sky Pilot*.

Tragedy occurred in 1942 when a westerly wind fanned the flames of a nearby brush fire igniting the steeple which crashed flaming into the church completely destroying the prominent landmark.

After World War II Reverend SA Good led an initiative to rebuild on the old site. The ladies' auxiliary raised \$1500 and the new church was ready by 1954. In 1958 CP Rail donated a bell to replace the one melted in the fire.

Over the years Texadans have taken good care of their little church. A basement area and parking lot were blasted from the bedrock (over 200 blasting holes were drilled!). The church was renovated and enlarged and beautiful stained glass windows and pews were obtained from the Bralorne Mining Community Church in 1973 when the town closed down.

Today Texada's United Church stands as another testament to community pride and community effort.