

CHARLES ANDERSON - TEXADA'S LUCKY SWEDE

Charlie Anderson was the most famous of Texada's gold seekers but his reputation was earned elsewhere and many details of his life remain a mystery.

Born in Sweden in 1859, Charlie left for America in 1887 and was drawn to the Klondike gold rush ten years later. Charlie made his "grubstake" working his claim at Forty Mile Bar in the Yukon.

One night, however, he took a chance and blew \$800 buying the "worthless" Eldorado #29 claim from a pair of down-and-out miners. The chance paid off. He "struck it rich" earning his nickname "Lucky Swede."

Charlie left the Yukon shortly after and toured Europe with a million dollars and his new wife, Grace Drummond, a Dawson City dance hall girl.

Details are sketchy but it appears that Charlie paid \$50,000 to either marry her or to get rid of her (?). Another rumour says that she demanded her weight in gold to seal the deal.

With 31/2 coal oil tins full of gold dust Charlie returned to San Francisco in 1899 and invested his remaining fortune in real estate (a turreted mansion and hotels). Unfortunately he lost it all when his properties were destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and fire.

Some say he relocated to Texada immediately after, perhaps lured by stories of the fabled "lost gold mine" which he never found. Others say that he worked at Britannia mine and in Sapperton first.

Henry Liebich remembered his house on Smelter Avenue. Others say Charlie lived at Blubber Bay in a cabin on the Fogh property and took meals at Mrs Blanchard's. Joe Pillat remembered him working as a bull cook at the Alberta Logging camp in Gillies Bay in 1920.

A *Province* interview in 1925 commented on Charlie's "unusual energy" when he visited Vancouver at age 65 to buy fruit trees for his "little ranch on Texada."

Charlie with his pointy beard was remembered as a "ladies' man" by Marion Little. Always optimistic, he claimed his facial hair was to "keep away the girls" and vowed not to shave until he struck it rich again.

He never did. Charlie died in 1939. On his deathbed he mused, "I've got many good miles ahead of me."

His gravestone in Texada's Woodland Cemetery reads "Klondyke Pioneer."

