



THE ALLURE OF TEXADA - 1890's

Imagine that, 150 years ago, the very name "Texada" was sparking excitement up and down the coast.

After the rich iron deposit was discovered in 1871 marble quarries opened, the Little Billie mine was producing, lime kilns appeared near Blubber Bay and, most spectacularly, "goose egg" size gold nuggets were found.

Prospectors rushed to the island.

The Texada frenzy prompted Courtenay/Comox's *Weekly News* to send a reporter to Texada in 1893 to check out the island scene.

He found it quite pleasant. "Washed by the Gulf Streams" and with only half the rainfall, it's warmer than places nearby. An ideal climate.

He found Texada to be "a mountain of rocks with no flat or arable land." One could wind about and over the piled rocks covered with moss following deer paths providing one's shoes "are studded with plenty of nails to prevent slipping."

The few and low cedars furnish a "beautiful park-like appearance with little or no underbrush" that would be suitable for raising sheep. "It is surprising that this industry has never been attempted here" as there are no destructive animals.

Prospectors continued to arrive to search for riches, however. In fact, the gold finds were so frequent that, in 1889, a group of miners asked the BC government to refuse land grants for farming settlers, fearing that they would interfere with mining operations.

Despite this, our 1893 reporter found a few early settlers already established. The Raper family lived near the iron mines and CR Miller had resided for 6 years with his wife who "appears contented and is happier away from the world's madding strife than she would be in it."

A German bachelor, Laurence Souveren, planned to dig a mile-long ditch to drain the 70-acre swampland he found in the "bosom of the mountain." His neighbour, Ned Barney, had settled on 10 acres.

The reporter claimed it was debatable which side of Texada was better. The west side is the "most pleasant" part while the east side "has the advantage of having (Alaska) steamers frequently pass."

Although the rush of mineral claims continued through the turn of the century, it's doubtful that many of the prospectors brought sheep!

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