TEXADA “ERAS TOUR” CONTINUES - PART 3

THE “QUIET” ERA

The closing of Van Anda mines by 1919 marked the end of the “boomtown.”

“Marble Bay Mine is now deserted, its abandoned machinery slowly sinks into decay,” moaned the PR Digester (1929).

Despite bucket brigades working valiantly to fight the flames, devastating fires in 1910, 1912 and 1917 destroyed much of the town centre. Another tragedy was the sinking of the Union Steamship *Cheslakee* at the Van Anda wharf.

Still Texada attracted new residents.

Farming families settled in several places: Hammonds and Burditts (near Oasis), Woodheads (Crescent Bay), Bell (Central Road) to name just a few. A small Swedish neighbourhood gathered in “Upper Gillies Bay” (High Road). To export their produce a 600-foot wharf was built at Shelter Point in 1912.

While most Texadans continued to “make do” through the depression, solitary prospectors never gave up the hope of “striking it rich.”

Some entrepreneurs decided to strike it rich their own way with a 3-storey whisky still in Pocahontas Bay. It lasted through the US Prohibition years (1918-1928) with their “moonshine” smuggled down the coast to thirsty Americans.

The main focus of island activity moved west to Blubber Bay. The settlement blossomed after 1910 when Pacific Lime took over limestone and sawmill operations and established a pleasant company town with gardens, houses, school, postoffice and general store. It became Texada’s social centre with Saturday’s community dances.

Things grew nasty in 1938 when management locked out the striking employees and evicted them from company housing. The conflict exposed the aggressive use of strike-breakers, provincial police and courts to suppress the workers.

However other industries struggled on. Limestone quarries (BC Cement, McLeod’s - Beale’s) continued. As well, early hand loggers had set the scene for Texada’s forest industry with an eventual 13 companies operating here by the 1950’s.

Meanwhile in sunny Gillies Bay, Vancouver school principal, Dr Sanderson, bought acreage in 1925 and offered seashore lots for $250. The Bay’s first summer residents!

Next month : Texada Bounces Back!

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