

TEXADA “ERAS TOUR” CONTINUES - PART 2

THE ERA OF BOOMTOWN VAN ANDA

It was serendipity. Who would have predicted that mining promoter Ed Blewett's chance encounter on a train with honeymooners Harry and Olive Treat in 1896 would give birth to the “boomtown” of Van Anda. Their pooled investments in their Van Anda Copper and Gold Company resulted in the Little Billy, Copper Queen and Cornell mines becoming the largest producers on Texada. A smelter and sawmill soon followed and Van Anda was on her way to prosperity!

“Over 40 new houses have been built ... and still they come,” reported the town's newspaper, *Coast Miner*, in 1900.

Bakeries, shoe repair, outfitters, hotels, barbers, you-name-it, all added to the bustle. Money was raised to build a church. The Treats' former residence (the “honeymoon cottage”) became Texada's first school in 1898. Attempts were made to connect the buildings with planking but getting around in the early days usually involved stumps and mud holes.

Chinese mine workers lived in a settlement at Emily Lake. Many cut and hauled 4-foot cordwood to supply the steam power needed at the mines.

The Van Anda wharf was always busy as Union Steamships brought food, equipment, news and visitors. “Boat Nights” were eagerly anticipated community events.

The town's social life was in full swing with dances and concerts. The Treats hosted popular community parties at their lakeside cabin.

Meanwhile on the other side of the “great divide” (AKA Van Anda Creek) the town of Texada City grew.

From his stately white “Astor House” (built 1899) JJ Palmer looked down on his successful Marble Bay Mine operations. Tons of ore were shipped out via Sturt Bay along with the limestone processed at the shoreline kilns and stuffed into barrels fabricated at the company's cooorage.

An (unrealistic) city grid plan was drawn up in 1900 and the grand Marble Bay Hotel was built - “one of the finest on the coast.”

Good times were not forgotten as the company provided the site for Texada's opera house (later hospital).

The town's reputation as a “red hot, lively, thriving mining town” [PR Digester newsletter] continued for as long as the mines operated.

Next month - The Quiet Era

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