

GILLIES BAY

The New Town on Texada

While the community of Van Anda (originally Van Anda and Texada City) have been in existence for more than one hundred and ten years and Blubber Bay has been in existence as a small community for approximately one hundred years, the community of Gillies Bay is relatively new.

First Nations people travelled to the bay. There are fish weirs in the bay and a few artifacts have been found by residents.

Dr. J.R. Sanderson, a teacher working in Vancouver, purchased property on Gillies Bay for a summer home in 1925. Some of his friends joined him and further cottages were built. By 1939 the Powell River News called Gillies Bay a “popular summer resort.”

Most of the people at Gillies Bay were summer residents, but there were a number of farms in the area and at least one log dump.

The big change arrived in 1951 when Texada Mines chose to develop their iron ore deposits north and west of Gillies Bay. The company made the low land at the head of Gillies Bay the site for bunkhouses, kitchens, stores and offices. The hillside overlooking the bay was surveyed into lots.

The Heritage Society has a few evocative photographs of rows of 1950s house trailers in early Gillies Bay.

Texada Mines closed in 1976 and in 1977 the company sold its equipment and moved off Texada. The Island lost approximately \$2,750,000.00 in annual payroll (1976 dollars). When they closed Texada Mines owned: the medical clinic, the community hall, the ball park, the fire hall, the street lights and the cablevision system in Gillies Bay. The company sold each asset for one dollar to the community.

The origin of the name of Gillies Bay is unknown. A number of suggestions have been advanced, but none has received historical support.

Peter Kenny

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