

## TEXADA'S RAILROADS

Although no passengers ever "rode the rails" many are surprised to learn that Texada boasted several rail lines in the past, all associated with mining activity.

The most visible remains of the railways can be seen today in Van Anda. The cut between the TACT building and the Telus centre reveals the path of the Marble Bay Mine tramway that ran 2000 feet to the loading docks in Sturt Bay.

At Emily (Turtle) Lake in 1903, work started on a tramline from the Cornell mine 2 km to the loading dock in Van Anda Bay. The 3-foot gauge line right-of-way is easily viewed today next to the walk to the lake and forms the pathway along its northern edge. A spur line from the Copper Queen mine ran to the cliff face above then lowered the ore using a "link-motion hoist" down to the waiting carts on the main Cornell line. Horse power pulled the carts back until steam power arrived in 1914. Two Davenport locomotives were ordered from Anyox, B.C. and reassembled in Van Anda. They made only two trips then mysteriously sat unused for years in the engine shed until they were sold for scrap.

In 1901 the Nanaimo Free Press reported that a rail line would be graded on the west coast from the Paxton and Prescott iron mines to Gillies Bay and that two locomotives would be ordered. This never happened. Horse carts were used instead. Tramways were constructed from the mines to a dock at the beach and one at Cox's Lagoon.

In the 1950's the iron mine constructed extensive rail lines underground powered by five battery locomotives. In 1968 the entire system was sold, replaced by trackless ore carriers.

Meanwhile at Blubber Bay by 1951 BC Cement had constructed about three miles of three-foot gauge track from the quarry to the crushing plant, wharf and machine shop with up to five locomotives in operation over those years. The rails were removed in 1953 to be replaced by Euclid trucks but fragments of the old railway line may still be seen.

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