

From Blubber Bay to the World

Who knew in 1907 that the Vancouver syndicate formed that year to mine and process Blubber Bay limestone would eventually see their company grow into a multi-national shipping conglomerate!

By 1916 the Pacific Lime Company had become the largest lime producer in BC. As well, their lumber mill could turn out 40-foot lengths at a capacity of 40,000 feet a day. In addition to exporting building materials, laths and railroad ties, the mill produced barrel staves for the local limeworks.

Pacific Lime president Edward D. Kingsley soon realized that getting the products to market from Texada Island would be a major consideration. The company purchased a steamship (the *Queen City*) and two barges, the *Iwalani* and the *Baramba* - a former 1887 Canadian Pacific sternwheeler. (The *Iwalani* burned and sank in 1920 and eight years later the *Baramba* was abandoned on the beach in Sturt Bay.)

In 1919 a brand-new ship (the *E.D. Kingsley*) was contracted from Fort William, Ontario to serve as a coastal freighter. Captain Michael Uldall relaxed onboard in the spacious master's quarters (nicknamed "the bungalow") which was considered to be the most luxurious on the coast.

By 1920 the newly-incorporated Kingsley Navigation Company served the BC and US west coasts, carrying lime (from Blubber Bay), lumber (Vancouver, Blubber Bay, Dollarton, Genoa Bay, Chemainus, Port Alberni, Victoria), grain (Vancouver), pulp (Port Alice, Woodfibre), canned fish and asphalt shingles (Sidney). Glycerine (for explosives), asphalt, oil, vegetables, canned goods and dried fruit were transported back from San Francisco on the return trip.

In 1928 the Seattle-based ship *El Cicuta* was purchased and renamed *Texada*. Unfortunately *Texada* seemed to attract

trouble, colliding with a freighter under the Lions Gate Bridge in 1930, drifting onto the rocks at Deadman's Island (Vancouver) in 1936 and, later that year, striking a reef in Puget Sound causing a seven-month repair wait.

By 1932 Kingsley Navigation had expanded to the east coast via the Panama Canal. Operations were suspended in WWII when its fleet was requisitioned for supply ships. When the war ended the company morphed again into a major shipping agent representing countless international companies.

A very successful history for a Texada company that started with a simple limestone deposit in Blubber Bay.

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Texada Island Heritage Society

