

A TRIP TO TEXADA – 1911

Texada Island has attracted admirers for well over a century. An early account of an excursion by Orville Deville appeared in the August 1911 issue of *BC Magazine*.

Deville arrived from Vancouver via Union Steamship (\$4.50 return) at Van Anda, “a mining town ... rock-clad and sombre [but when] summer waves its magic wand the barrenness disappears, the orchards are a profusion of blossoms.” The town of 400 boasted “all the modern conveniences of sewerage and waterworks.”

Deville noted that Marble Bay mine was “one of the most successful on the island” but the looming mountain of crushed rock output from the Cornell mine was more impressive.

Although the hill-top Central Road from Van Anda was nearing completion, the author travelled on the old trail to Gillies Bay. He later climbed the “Sumner extension” up to the (High Road) farms. “Creeks purl through small defiles and lose

themselves in the dank grass of the beaver meadows. There are small lakes where trout abound and it is no feat to hook 50 or 60 of the finny tribe.”

In places, settlers’ cabins were seen, “marvels of neatness made from peeled tamarac, floored and roofed with shakes, the settlers producing everything but the windows and sills.” He noted that many “settlers” also worked in the mines.

Upon arrival at Gillies Bay Deville described “a picture of such beauty and restfulness as would invoke unstinted praise.” Just north was a “great hill [that] looms like a giant sentinel.” Within its crust “is hidden the iron ore sufficient, it is said, to run the mine night and day for a hundred years.”

Deville envisioned a future “beehive of industry” - hundreds of men daily employed, a thriving town and a commercial port. As the land remained property of the mine and timber licensees, plans were underway to petition the “Provincial House” demanding more acreage be released for sale.

Recalling how Vancouver itself was only forest just 35 years previous, Deville foresaw a great potential. “If hundreds of Vancouver people knew what a summer resort this was they would be here in numbers every year.” “There is no better land in the province.”

Peter Lock

Texada Island Heritage Society

