

GILLIES BAY - A BRIEF HISTORY

The tranquility of Gillies Bay lay virtually undisturbed for centuries until the sound of axe and saw echoed from the nearby hills.

By 1907 the Alberta Logging Company had built a 3,000-foot skid road to move logs across the lowlands to the bay itself. Log booms covered part of the bay while bunkhouses occupied its head.

Gillies Bay's first "summer resident" was Dr. Roy Sanderson, principal of Vancouver's King Edward High School. He sought a climate agreeable to his son who had a bronchial condition. The environment of Gillies Bay was recommended by his friend, Rev. George Pringle of the Columbia Coast Mission.

Tenting on the beach in 1923, Sanderson fell in love with the bay and negotiated to purchase a quarter section of George McLeod's (west side) holdings in 1925. On an ideal, chosen spot on the beachfront Dr. Sanderson built the first house in Gillies Bay (now renovated but still standing). Lumber was rafted around the island from Carters' sawmill in Van Anda.

In those days transport to Gillies Bay was either overland on a rough trail from Van Anda (having arrived via Union Steamship from Vancouver) or alternatively by sea, arriving at a float anchored in the middle of the bay (followed by a rowboat ride to shore, sometimes in wild weather).



Dr. Sanderson was later instrumental in securing an improved float. His son Alan, a ham radio operator, would receive ETA's radioed from the ships expected, reducing unpleasant wait times for outbound passengers on the exposed raft.

Dr. Sanderson and partners formed the Gillies Bay Summer Resort Ltd. and subdivided the acreage, offering lots for sale to school colleagues. Shore lots (60' x 120') were \$250. He advertised that Gillies Bay was "not far enough to be inconvenient and yet not near enough to be too convenient. Think it over for the wife's sake." Some called it "teachers' paradise". Bunkhouses originally used by Alberta Logging were purchased and moved to become summer cabins (some are still in use).

In 1951, as Texada Mines planned its nearby venture, Dr. Sanderson sold the company his remaining property which was then subdivided into the town of Gillies Bay as we know it today.

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