

\$250,000 WHARF MISSING

So proclaimed the *Powell River News* headline on December 5, 1956, reporting the overnight disappearance of the Texada Mine dock.

The 500-foot structure was constructed only four years earlier but its pilings rested on clay amidst accumulated tailings. Under pressure from a 60-mph gale, the fill probably slumped down the steep undersea slope taking the wharf pilings with it. By morning one could just make out the top of the 50-foot steel tower (at the end of the wharf) poking out above the waves.

Mine administrator Charles Guhne was awakened by a frantic night watchman who reported the news shortly after 1:30 am. Guhne went back to sleep.

Selecting a secure site for an ore-loading facility on Texada's west coast had been a challenge from the start. By 1893 Puget Sound Iron Company had used "an endless chain of buckets" to move ore down to the beach at the loading site at Welcome Bay.

Although the shore installations burned down that year, manager W.H. ("Pop") Lee proceeded enthusiastically with new schemes. A 1901 plan to haul ore via tramway to Gillies Bay four miles away was proposed (but never built). Gillies Bay was thought to be "...the nearest point at which a safe landing can be assured at all stages of the wind and tide".



However, the 1907 Ministry of Mines report stated that a 1 1/4 mile long tramway and a 400-foot wharf with two large bunkers had been built at Cox's Lagoon, one mile south of the old wharf site. The previous site would "...not be used, because, during the stormy weather of the winter time, it offers no protection to vessels".

Horses pulled ore carts from Paxton, Prescott and Lake mines to the "head sheave" (a huge wheel) which lowered the carts to the wharf below and raised the empties. In time, production slowed, then ceased. Fire destroyed the mine structures in 1922.

The opening of Texada Mines in 1952 necessitated a new wharf (the one that slipped away). In 1962 new contracts were negotiated which resulted in construction of a \$700,000 bulk cargo berth which could accommodate ships up to 830 feet long.

After modern upgrades and re-construction, the present wharf seems to be "on a firm footing" and should be around for awhile.

Peter Lock

Texada Island Heritage Society

Correction from November's Museum Musings: That the elegant cabinet for the Jack Leslie ships was designed and crafted by Dave and Brenda Rairie. Also an extended thank you to Arron Rairie for his assistance.