

SHELTER POINT - AN HISTORIC HUB

Shelter Point's sunny beaches have always attracted attention but their unique configuration has shaped its history.

Large ground depressions point to a First Nations village site here (1300 BC) - people drawn by the protected location and nearby ocean and forest bounty.

The first recorded (absentee) owner of the area was a Mr. Hogan (1870's) whose estate holdings eventually reverted to the government for unpaid taxes in 1915. The Johnson family later acquired all of Shelter Point and lived in a small cabin there.

The families who farmed Upper Gillies Bay (High Road) eagerly anticipated summer picnics at Shelter Point. Dominion Day (July 1st) picnics were community potluck affairs. Children would race down the mossy road to swim, go fishing or play sports. Young people would walk around Dick Island. All returned to huge tables spread with home-made fare and a bonfire. Crowding onto a flat deck truck made the bumpy uphill return easier.

The need for convenient steamship transportation prompted Peter Staaf to supervise construction of a 600-foot wharf on the north side of Dick Island in 1912. Only two ships docked before it was destroyed in a 1916 fire. The seven pilings still standing are a testament to the toughness of African gumwood.



Shelter Point's beach configuration proved an ideal location for log dumps with booming areas just offshore. Bunkhouses were constructed, many later being converted into houses. One was divided to become the concession/caretaker's residence (which burned in 2012).

The last remaining house - Mrs. Dolman's cottage nestled among the firs next to the concession parking area - was a familiar sight in recent memory. Husband Al had operated a Home Oil fuel tank depot (near the boat launch ramps) for years. Customers would fill up and leave their money in an honour system cash box.

In 1972 the area became a regional park (Harwood Park). Most commercial operations had been phased out including Howie Barbour's log dump lease (nature trail beach) which had helped boost park revenues.

A proposal for the park to become a BC provincial campground was rejected by islanders and, in 1986, it was renamed Shelter Point Park.

Although its use has changed through the years Shelter Point remains a continuing hub of island activities.

Peter Lock

Texada Island Heritage Society