

THE HAMMOND HOUSE

Zippering along the “Misty Meadows Causeway” (the straight stretch halfway between Van Anda and Gillies Bay) it’s easy to miss the historic Hammond House. Overlooking the swamp (once pastureland) the log cabin has stood at least 118 years.

Jack Hammond (a CPR tunnel blaster born in Manitoba in 1871) met his wife, 17-year-old May Mathers, while constructing a 64-foot schooner in Vancouver Island’s Nimpkish Valley. The failure of their coastal freight-hauling enterprise led them to abandon the sea and settle down to homestead on Texada’s Lot 273.

They set to work creating a house, barn, orchards, vegetable gardens and hay fields for livestock (chickens, ducks, pigs, sheep, a cow, a team of oxen and a horse).



As a girl, longtime Van Anda resident Florrie Young remembered the cabin construction. An elderly man on crutches - dubbed “Swanny” (perhaps prospector Robert Swan) - directed younger builders. The walls were fashioned from square hand-hewn logs with interlocking dove-tail joints.

Bill Young remembered visiting the family in 1898, the house by then well-weathered. All the furniture - bed, benches, rocking chair - was handmade from local materials.

In 1902 the Hammonds loaded all their livestock and possessions onto a log raft and had Jack Deighton tow them to Nelson Island. The farm was rented out then later sold to John Campbell Tait who established a dairy farm.

The road to the homestead was later continued to Gillies Bay via a curious S-bend around the cabin which became known as “Andy’s Corner” (after Andy Van Vianen who raised dairy cattle there).

The Hammond House is probably the oldest dovetail log building on its original site on the coast of BC. For the past 45 years it has been owned by the Zaikow family who have restored and maintained this valuable part of Texada’s history. In 1982 Ernie Sellentin replaced its rotting foundation logs using a broad axe, retaining the classic interlocking corners.

In recent years, Jack and May Hammond’s children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have visited the restored home and have enjoyed pears and apples picked from the trees their ancestors planted over 100 years ago.

(Thanks to John Zaikow for the information)

Peter Lock

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