

MINING SPORTS ON TEXADA

This month's photo shows the spirited New Years day 1900 festivities outside the newly-built Marble Bay Hotel.

On January 15, 1900, Van Anda's *Coast Miner* newspaper reported that 300 spectators assembled to "witness a drilling contest and enjoy themselves socially betweenwhiles."

Drilling contests were popular at the turn of the century and champion rock drillers competed for substantial prizes. A 1907 event in Butte, Montana, for example, attracted 25,000 spectators who watched the team of McIvor and Pickens win \$1,250 by drilling 45 31/32 inches in 15 minutes.

Van Anda's prize money of \$25 was won by the two-man double-jack team of Charlie Rabson (who kept up continuous hammering) and Ed Russ who changed drill after drill without missing a stroke. Their 23 1/8 inch hole beat the two opposing teams who managed only 15 inch holes, one team breaking their hammer as well as several drill heads.

Hand drilling required teamwork, skill, speed and endurance. The best drillers, using 8 lb hammers, could strike the custom-forged drill steels 60 to 70 hits per minute.



The newspaper reported that Frank Carpenter, who poured water into the drill holes, suffered "heroic martyrdom" as muddy water splashed into his face, eyes, nose and mouth with a "continuous volley."

Another event, the tug-o-war, dissolved into a laughing melee as the two teams grabbed bystanders to help them, sometimes using nearby trees and rocks as anchors. As it was impossible to declare a winner, the prize money was scrambled, the one team collecting 60 cents and the other 45 cents. Afterwards, Mr. A Walters invite everyone into the hotel for refreshments.

"Industrial Sports" were revived on Texada in 1969's Texada Days celebrations. They commenced at 10 am on Dick Island with long hole drilling (won by Al Gartner and N McKenzie), jackleg drilling (won by Steve Butz) and hand mucking (speed shovelling "muck" into an ore cart) won by Fred Beachkowski.

Mining sports still survive. Last June Timmins, Ontario, hosted a competition that included jackleg drilling with celebrity, professional and women's categories.

It is interesting to note that the challenging work of the hard rock miner was once a celebrated spectator sport on Texada.