

## THE CHANGING FACE OF GILLIES BAY

Gillies Bay today presents a view of a quiet bay with a spectacular natural setting. One may be surprised to discover that its expansive sand flats were once routinely covered by log booms.

By 1907 the Alberta Logging Company had used their 3000-foot log chute to skid logs across the lowlands to the shore. Booming in the bay continued into the 1950's (photo).

Previous major historical activity in the bay had been centred at Shelter Point. The house depressions, clam gardens and onshore rock fishing weirs visible today remind us that 3000 years ago a First Nations village prospered there.



View of Texada Mines Camp with S.P.&P. Logging Booming Grounds in the foreground c.1958

For the most part, though, Gillies Bay remained isolated. Few Van Anda residents braved the rough all-day trail from the town to enjoy seaside camping. Infrequent visitors were always welcome to a cup of tea by Ed Russ who lived alone in his 16x20 cedar cabin near the shore.

The silence was occasionally broken as farm families and school classes from Upper Gillies Bay ("High Road") trekked down the trail to the beach for holiday picnics.

In 1912 the farmers built a 600-foot wharf at Shelter Point to export their produce. It was unsuccessful as only two ships tied up before it was abandoned.

In 1923 the west side of the bay was purchased by Vancouver high school principal Dr Roy Sanderson. He built the first house there and sold waterfront lots (at \$250) to teacher colleagues in the city. Summer tourism had begun!

The opening of Texada Mines in 1951 brought more activity to the bay. Employees lived in the new townsite on land bought by the company from Dr Sanderson. Several bunkhouses, the commissary and cookhouse crowded the head of the bay (photo). In 1977 when the mine closed the bunkhouses were removed and the cookhouse became a restaurant (Sea View then Sand Dollar Inn).

Today's Sandcastle celebrations, Blues and Roots Festival, Farmers' Market as well as the beautiful sandy shores have made Gillies Bay a prime destination for residents and summer visitors alike. And no log booms in sight!

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