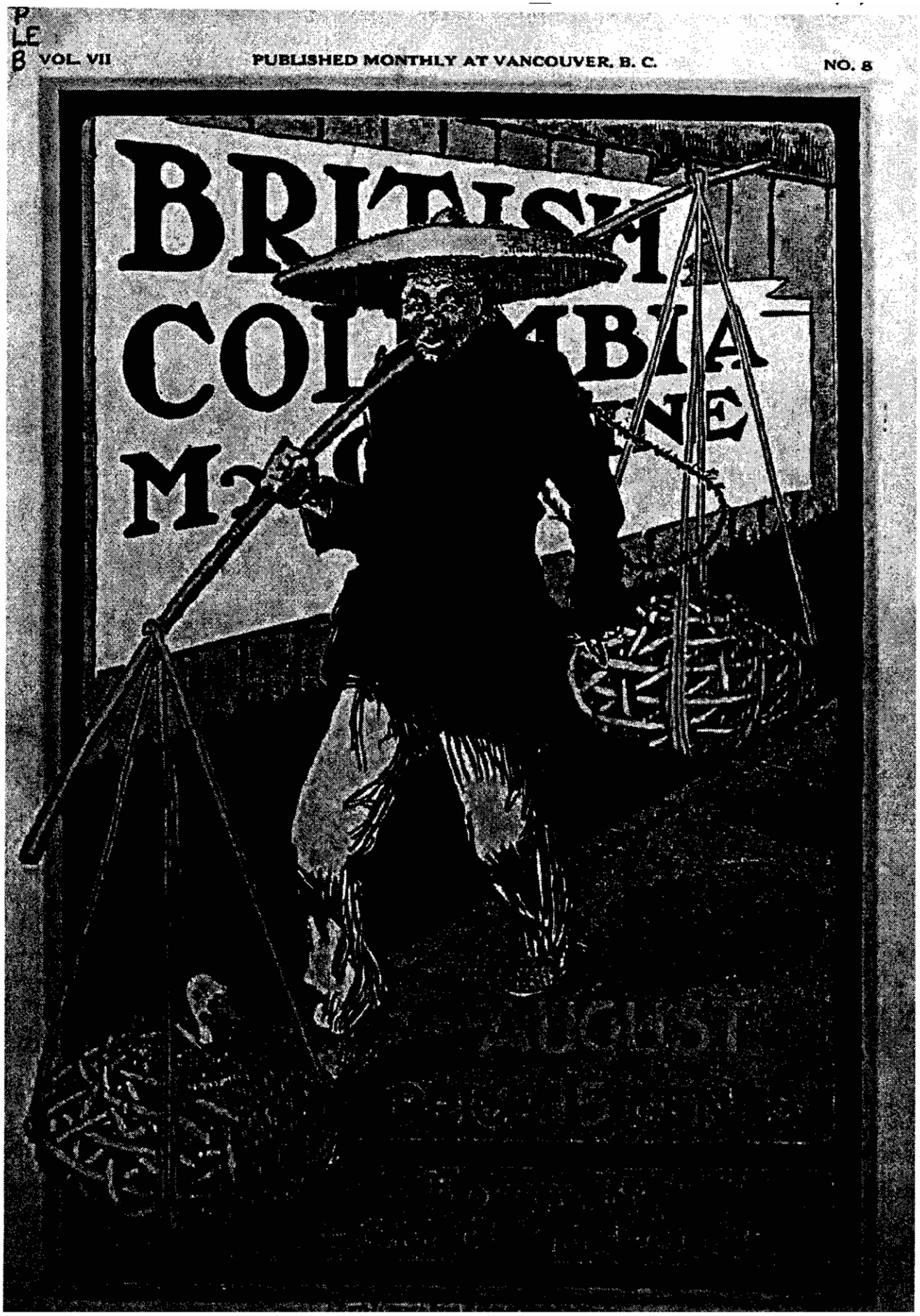
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Texada Island

By Orville Deville

COME with me for a trip to Texada Island. Starting from the Yachting Club waters at Vancouver, we can use either yacht or launch; but to do the trip in correct, leisurely fashion we will take an auxiliary yacht. Those in a hurry can buy tickets at the Union Steamship wharf. For the sum of four dollars and fifty cents you get a return ticket for Van Anda, the port of call for the island. We will have a most delightful trip up the north coast, striking the southernmost point of Texada about thirty-five miles from Vancouver city, and then passing on either the east or west coast of the island for about thirty miles, we will land either at the port of Van Anda or Marble Bay. So you see that Texada Island is practically within the future limits of greater Vancouver—the Vancouver we all dream about.

When the rock gangs were drifting through the bluffs at Prince Rupert in 1907, and the place was mostly an aggregation of shacks and tents, J. Pecaut, a Frenchman, was running excursions to Porcher Island in his little twenty-six foot Columbia river boat. Excitement often welled high when new crowds left quietly for the island, and as quietly returned (often as quietly left the place), without giving an expression of opinion or impression of the merits or demerits of Porcher. Young men outfitted in numbers, and had the genial Pecaut land them on Welcome Bay to loneliness and contemplation, only to be forced to eventually abandon the island altogether.

Is it not then incomprehensible that such a place as Texada Island should have remained comparatively unknown all these years, and yet be but a few hours' sail from Vancouver city?

Porcher Island was advertised. The newspapers gave it mention, and it was only a few hours' sail from Prince Rupert —about the same distance as Texada from Vancouver.

Texada has never been brought into the limelight of newspaper and magazine notice; and although one acre is worth more than the whole of Porcher Island (agriculturally), there has been no Pecaut with his little boat to tell the glad news of spreading acres open for the taking.

Texada Island has three classes of soil fitted to the different requirements of farming. There is the alder land, a deep red soil streaked with a dark loam; the beaver meadows, a vegetable decay resembling a highly fertilized black loam; the highlands, a gravel soil that is pre-eminently suited to the culture of fruits and roots, and no doubt capable of producing almost everything when subjected to proper tillage. The growth of these lands is phenomenal. The alder flats and highlands are oceans of waving ferns during the months of June, July and August. These ferns—where the clearing allows the sun to penetrate—are often in great tracts and over six feet in height. A veritable jungle of verdure: as Dr. Gaetz says, "As if the giant Nature were airing carpets from the summits of the hills." They could be likened to an English hunting park seen from the distance.

There is a lamentable dearth of information regarding Texada. Even in Van Anda there was, until the last few months, a most surprising ignorance of the interior of the island; and those who did know were astonishingly silent.

It has often been said that mining and lumbering interests do not encourage settlement, and that seems to fit the case. The writer was told by a mining man of Van Anda that no settler could hold a preemption down over six months, which assertion is not only wrong but positively misleading. As might be expected, Texada soil is in the sour state a bush land is

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bound to be, and only clearing and cultivation will bring it into luxuriant productiveness. Vancouver city site thirty-five years ago was only fit for cutting cordwood on. The scriptural mandate to till the soil, with results following the sweat of the brow, is applicable today as centuries ago, and British Columbia bush land is not exempted.

When we land at Van Anda we will be in a mining town. It is situated about six miles from the northern point of the island, rock-clad and sombre in appearance during a portion of the year, but when the rejuvenating influence of early summer waves its magic wand the barrenness disappears, the orchards are a profusion of blossoms exuding sweet freshness, and even the wild roses assist with their Gibson Girl blushes to dispel any lingering memory of bleakness. It is a town of about four hundred inhabitants, boasting all the modern conveniences of sewerage and waterworks.

Blubber Bay is about five miles north of Van Anda, and here the local lime kiln is situated.

Powell River, the site of the great pulp mills, is just across the channel from Van Anda, and when your steamer arrives at night time you will see a great string of electric jets in the distance, like twinkling stars welcoming you to contemplate this great industry. Powell River pulp mills afford employment for several hundred men.

You can either land at Van Anda or Marble Bay. It is said Marble Bay is the more secure landing point of the two. The Marble Bay copper mine is one of the most successful on the island. What the future may develop in mining here no one can say. There are properties as yet unknown on which development work alone has been done, and that only sufficient to fill the requirements of the mining law.

We will now turn south to the interior of the island. Just on our way another copper mine looms up—the Cornell—and from the size of that hill of crushed rock the output must be considerable. They have run a double shift in this and other Texada mines for years.

There is an old road running south from Van Anda into the interior, known as the Gillis Bay road as far as the bay, and from there on known as the Sumner extension—so named after the Sumner boys, as they were the first ranchers in the Gillis Bay district. This road follows the trend of the west coast, but the new road—now almost completed—is more central—in fact, will shortly be known as Central road. It follows the first bench of the chain of hills that run a centre parallel of the island length. This road will shorten the distance from Van Anda by almost a half, and is one of the best and most picturesque roads ever built on a British Columbia island. In following the trend of the hill benches the cruisers have established a grade on this new road that would otherwise have been impossible, and although the route is along the rocky hillside, it presents a catchy scene of creeks and canyons, timber and ferns. The tree-clad hills are the ideal home of the deer, which roam here in great numbers.

We will take the Gillis Bay route on our first trip. It is the old-established trail, and settlement and romance always follow the beaten track. It also leads to the bay, where we can view the big iron mine.

For a couple of miles on our way the same rocky formation is observed as around Van Anda, then the country takes on more the aspect of a farming district. The soil shows less and less rock; the creeks purl through small defiles, and in places lose themselves in the dank grass of the beaver meadows—to appear again in a short distance over pebbly bottom.

Along the creeks wild roses and elder bushes brace shoulders with the salmonberry bush, and wild strawberries and raspberries are fairly plentiful.

Open tracts of meadow land, sometimes ten or fifteen acres in extent, fern-clad and level as a table, relieve the monotony of continuous bush; and in places the large fir, hemlock and cedar trees give place to great stretches of alder, which any British Columbia farmer knows is a sure indication of the best of soils. The undulating nature of the northern part becomes less pronounced, while large tracts of beautifully level land opens to view, with just a moderate covering of large timber.

Heretofore settlement duties were not rigorously enforced, and many settlers secured their holdings by simply building a shack and fencing their meadow lands.

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The consequence was, very few attempted to live out the requirements of the law, but lived and worked in town. That day is past. They must prove up now, but the fact accounts for so many tenantless houses in the past years.

The beaver meadows are great hay fields and afford pasturage for the new settler. All that is required to subdue them into producing timothy and other grasses is drainage. You simply sow the seed broadcast in the wet season, and a bountiful crop is the result if properly drained. These are the natural basins for the winter floods, and until drained are often under water. Tillage and drainage would make them blossom as the rose, as they are already sufficiently fertile.

Along the Gillis Bay road there are a number of small lakes where trout abound; and even in the small creeks it is no feat to hook fifty or sixty of the finny tribe.

It may be worthy of mention to say there are no snakes on the island, except a few garter snakes, and no depradatory animals that will even interfere with a deer. It has been claimed that in the rocky part of the island to the north there is a small grey snake of a combative nature, but only one man has seen it as far as the writer can ascertain.

Gillis Bay is about ten miles south of Van Anda by road, and to anyone with a facile pen would present a picture of such beauty and restfulness as would invoke unstinted praise. It is situated on the west coast and will be the future metropolis of Texada, unless vested interests force the development to Shelter Point—a couple of miles south of the bay—where the installation of a cement plant is now under way.

Just north of the bay a great hill, tree and fern clad, looms like a giant sentinel defying the elements to molest the tranquillity of the waters of the bay, while across the channel the snow-clad mountains of Vancouver Island mark the skyline. Within the crust of that great hill is hidden the iron ore that lately passed into the hands of a syndicate of Canadian and American financiers for the sum of one and one-half millions of dollars. It is a big and stately hill, and gives the impression of security to which the world could anchor its faith. We all like good, big, solid things, so this will be to the liking

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of one and all. The iron sample is said to rival that of Sweden. There are untold quantities of ore in sight—sufficient, it is said, to run the mine night and day for a hundred years at a phenomenal output. What, then, is to be hoped from development?

Let us give rein to reasonable fancy for a few seconds and realize what this denotes: a beehive of industry where hundreds of men are daily employed; a thriving town and a thriving district; a port of call—yea, a commercial port where other mines will track and ship their output; where the farmers will transact their business, load their timber and produce; a townsite where the things enumerated are all in sight, with lots of the unexpected to develop, as is always the case. Here the land situation is almost ideal. A level tract lies butting against the very waters, while both north and south a gentle incline sweeps away into the distance. This land is the property of the iron mine, timber licensees and purchasers. Timber licensees? No, they do not own the surface rights; they own the timber when they have paid the royalty, and that ownership is no Christmas-box, as the timber here is "konky," and generally admitted to be unworthy of removal. But even though the licensees do not own the surface rights, and practically have no value in the timber, they are keeping settlers from acquiring the land, which is most fertile, and as far as the writer could find they are benefiting in nothing by so doing.

It is the intention of the settlers to fight this matter to the floor of the Provincial House if necessary; but first the licensees will be persuaded to make a personal inspection, which, if successfully carried out, will be sufficient to settle the matter; this failing, the Minister of Lands will be approached in a friendly way, but in the case of silk gloves over an iron mitt.

A petition from the settlers here to the Minister of Lands, asking that no more lands on the island be offered for sale, has met with courteous treatment, and it is now determined to force the issue on timber holdings, it being specifically charged that there are no merchantable timber limits on the island. The local mill at Van Anda does not cut local timber: "konky" is the reason given. The camp at Shelter Point was a flat failure, as the timber did not pay for removal.

If the settlers properly organize and first approach the licensees, the movement will no doubt be successful, as the licensees would, without doubt, decide to put no more good money into a losing proposition.

Great tracts of white pine have been killed off by the pine tree beetle, and are dead sea fruit to either a timber licensee or a settler; but the beetles have not interfered with any other species of timber.

Along both the east and west coast of the island timber licensees hold the coast frontage, and so far have failed to utilize the timber, though so convenient to the Vancouver market. It is plainly stated here that they will never utilize it, as it will never pay for removal. Why, then, not have it cancelled and thrown open to preemption at once? Hundreds of prospective settlers are turned away from our land offices annually because there is nothing open.

Let us give these progressive settlers our moral support in their fight to colonize our fair British Columbia province. "Let us fight it out on these lines if it takes all winter."

Beyond Gillis Bay a range of hills skirt the east coast, while on the summits the deer have park-like retreats, with well-defined trails and sleeping grounds, which have the appearance of being daily picnicked upon by whole communities of school children; while along the ravines small meadows appear at intervals, through which creeks meander along to tumble over the last hill bench with the roar of a cataract during the rainy season. From the summits of these hills can be had a view of both coasts, and the smoke and general outlines of adjacent towns on Vancouver Island are plainly discerned.

In places the settlers' cabins and clearings are seen even along the hill range. In many instances the cabins are marvels of neatness, being made from peeled tamarac and floored and roofed with shakes made from the cedar trees, the settlers producing everything but the windows and nails.

We will select one of these settlers, whom we know to be gifted with a rude eloquence,

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and glean his impressions of pioneering:

"Not one, but many sincere hard working-men are settled here, and it is not the present which holds them. It is their ability to look into the future and discern a new order of things.

"If but a short time was left to work out our foresight, I can see the fruition of our dreams; for today, as you know, the British Columbia Government is coming to our rescue in a princely manner, and a new road from Van Anda into this Gillis Bay district is almost completed.

"Yon iron mine is the future scene of great activity. Even should the reported deal for it with the capitalists of Eastern Canada and the States not materialize, it is only a matter of time till all of us will be proud to say we are residents of Gillis Bay.

"Further south the country is not so well known, by reason of there being no roads as yet; but even this, as I happen to know, is only a matter of months.

"Because this island is so near Vancouver it must be valuable. There is no better land in the province, and ignorance of this fact is attributable to design on the part of those who did know. Like the big cattlemen in the States some years ago, there may be some here who do not want the settler. But secrecy will be of no avail now. Men have come into this part who cannot be quieted nor bullied into another's way of thinking; nor can they be blinded in what they see.

"Live here? Yes. If hundreds of Vancouver people knew what a summer resort this was, they would be here in numbers every year."

Reasons for the Stability of Vancouver

By James J. Hunter

IF we may judge by the investments of really big men and corporations who invest hundreds of thousands of dollars yearly in Vancouver, it would seem a waste of time commenting on the stability of the city; but in view of certain statements published by uninformed, or, probably better, incorrectly informed, papers in Eastern Canada, a few remarks may not be amiss.

Whether the spirit of jealousy or simply careless editorial censure is responsible for these provincial papers publishing disparaging items on things Western would be hard to decide, but it would be infinitely better for the papers themselves and the general moral tone of the community in which they circulate if more care was taken to verify statements of a defamatory character concerning section as well as person.

The points at issue were divided into two classes: one real-estate and the other labor.

In dealing with the subject I offer no apology to or for those misguided people who would buy 33-foot lots three miles behind Grouse Mountain because they seemed cheap and the terms were easy. These unfortunates will show up in any thriving town north, south, east or west, and while deserving moral censure, are really to be pitied. (For the benefit of readers not familiar with local geography, Grouse Mountain is the high mountain far behind the flourishing city of North Vancouver. I am not aware of anything being put on the market as described, but