



# Texada Tapestry: A History

*Heather Harbord*

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Texada is the largest island in the Strait of Georgia, a long strip of richly mineralized granite and limestone dividing the upper gulf. Travel time from Vancouver is six hours via three ferries. A newcomer's first impression is of an idyllic place with a big sandy beach, a Sunday farmer's market and a scant population of aging loggers, miners, pot-growers and other retirees, but this belies Texada's intriguing history.

Although today Texada is better known as the home of the illegal agricultural product called Texada Gold, it was once the focus of a real gold rush that lured no less a figure than cookie tycoon William Christie. Later, Texada was the site of British Columbia's first major political scandal when squabbles over a rich iron ore claim forced the resignation of Premier Amor de Cosmos in February 1874. The rich mineral deposits in time gave rise to three booming towns--Gillies Bay, Blubber Bay and Van Anda, noted as the town with everything: not just a whorehouse, but an opera house. Population ebbed and flowed with mineral prices and Texada went in and out of the news. Its association with illegal intoxicants dates back to 1928 when the biggest whisky still north of Vancouver was busted in romantic Pocahontas Bay. The bitter Blubber Bay strike of 1938 put Texada in the news again as the Pacific Lime Company faced off against the International Woodworkers' Association labour union in a bloody riot. This is also the feisty island that repelled the might of the Greater Vancouver Regional District when it wanted to dump metropolitan garbage in the abandoned pit of the once-famous Texada Mine.

Author Heather Harbord has dedicated years to research, including over a hundred interviews of locals and old-timers to create a captivating book full of unforgettable characters, humorous anecdotes and well-researched fact, accompanied by many previously unpublished photographs. Once again, she has created a valuable volume on the history of the BC coast.

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