

Betty

The Story of the Log House - 1207 Harris Ave. North Vancouver B.C.
1926- by Mrs. Christena Gillis - Oct 1977

Jack Gillis was working for the District of North Vancouver, opening the road from Deep Cove Highway to the wharf at the foot of Strathcona Road, when he purchased the four lots on the corner of Strathcona and Harris for \$20.00 each. He cleared Lot #4 as he could see the water from there.

He bought the cedar poles from the District on stumpage basis - they were cut from property on top of Keith Hill opposite the Reservoir and skidded down to our lot by two horses and peeled on our lot. The basement was dug out by hand with pick and shovel and wheelbarrow. Next the foundation of very heavy posts on mud sills with a plank floor and cedar poles were used for basement walls. The house was built pole by pole and I think the corners were dove-tailed.

Jack built the house on overtime, after a ten to 12 hour day's work, from March until August when we sold our little house on the hill, so we had to move in before it was finished in August 1926. Only one side had shakes on, so we put the stove under the shakes with the stove pipe out an opening for a window and a tent in a corner. We all slept under the tent (mother, dad and child). We only had a small shower of rain when the last of the shakes were being put on. The shakes were made from cedar snags on the lots. Jack made them all by hand with the fro. A Scotsman built the fireplace out of granite and the one-piece mantle of solid stone was carried by hand down the almost impassable trail road from the Deep Cove Road. The fireplace took much longer than expected as it rained so much that year. By Xmas we were into the kitchen and fairly comfortable.

There were no houses built on Strathcona Road from Deep Cove Highway to Harris Ave at that time and the road was very muddy and impassible at times when cars couldn't make it. There was no water or electricity. The water came

down Strathcona Road but not piped in on Harris Avenue so we got our drinking water from a house near the wharf and our washing water from the ravine at the back of the lots. By 1927 the water main came thru on Harris Avenue so that really made us very comfortable with water at our door.

A few years later the basement floor and walls deteriorated and Jack had to replace them with cement walls and floor which added to our comfort. Years later we were able to get a make shift furnace from an oil tank or drum which really modernized our home. We also dug drains around the house to keep the basement dry. The drains ran into the ravine which lead to the sea, but somehow there were many rats which came from the ships that used to load at the Dollar Mill and they would plug up the drains so Jack built cess pools and sumps which solved the problem. This mill was about ten minutes walk through the brush, called Dollar Mill which I believe was an American-owned mill. It was closed some years later, during the Second World War. This is now known as Roslyn Park.