



Salt Spring  
Island  
British Columbia

1895

By  
The Reverend E. J. Wilson  
of Salt Spring Island

5.00

THE COLONIST PRESSES.

Q23 C24.



number of sheep on his mountain range. Mr. A. Walter owns 1,000 acres, and goes in chiefly for dairying and sheep farming. Mr. H. Ruckle owns 1,000 acres, of which about 40 are at present under cultivation. He believes in mixed farming and has cattle, sheep, pigs, turkeys and chickens. Last autumn he thrashed 250 bushels of wheat, 100 bushels of oats, 200 bushels of peas, and put up 20 tons of hay, 60 tons of swedes, and six tons of potatoes. Mr. W. E. Scott owns 700 acres, of which about 60 are under cultivation. He has cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry; and, besides raising grain and potatoes, put up last year about 50 tons of hay. Mr. Edward Lee owns 400 acres, and with the aid of his brother, Mr. T. Lee, cultivates 150. Last year he raised 700 bushels of wheat, 50 tons of hay, and 75 tons of potatoes. Mr. W. Robertson is owner of 2,500 acres, the most of it being mountainous and suitable only for sheep ranching. Capt. Trench, a non-resident, has also an extensive sheep-ranch of about 4,000 acres in the southern part of the island, known formerly as the Musgrave estate; it is nearly all mountain. Mr. J. P. Booth owns 350 acres, of which about half is now under cultivation. He has a considerable number of cattle and sheep and about 300 chickens. Mr. Jos. Akerman owns 355 acres, and also keeps cattle, sheep and poultry. Mr. Fred. Foord owns 410 acres bordering on a picturesque little lake which bears his own name. About 60 acres of his land is now cleared and more or less under cultivation, and he keeps cattle, sheep, pigs and chickens. Mr. T. W. Mowat owns 350 acres, and cultivates about 50. He goes in especially for dairying and raising poultry, having 10 well-bred cows and about 200 chickens. Mr. J. Maxwell owns 400 acres, cultivates 50, and has about 600 sheep. Mr. Ed. Walter, assessor for the district, has about 400 acres. Mr. C. Tolson, 300, both valuable properties bordering on Ganges Harbor. Messrs. Tregge and Spikerman own 839 acres, most of which is a sheep run, but they make a living chiefly by raising fruit. Mr. A. McLennan owns 410 acres, and with the help of his young sons cultivates about 17. He believes in mixed farming and poultry raising.

There are other farmers who have not quite so much land, but are nevertheless very successful in their farming operations; among these are Mr. H. Stevens, owner of 100 acres, and one

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Rev EF Wilson

of the handsomest teams on the island. Mr. John Norton who owns 200 acres, and has about 40 under cultivation. He raised last year about 200 bushels oats and peas and about 30 tons of hay, besides 16 or 17 tons of potatoes, carrots and mangold. Mr. S. Connery, owner of 160 acres, of which about 40 are more or less under cultivation. He has 12 head of cattle, and raised last year about 35 tons of hay and 20 tons of roots.

Among the most successful fruit growers are Messrs, Tregge & Spikerman, who have an orchard of 1,600 trees. Some of their "Canada Reinettes" are a sight to witness when loaded down with fruit, the bending branches supported by a double circle of strong posts and rails; 24 boxes (of 50 lbs. each) is not an unfrequent yield from a single tree. They consider the Canada Reinette and the Blenheim Orange their two best apples. Mr. W. E. Scott has 1,200 orchard trees, a large proportion of them but recently planted. Mr. Ruckle has a well grown orchard of about 600 trees. Mr. Booth has about 300 trees. Mr. McLennan 350. Mr. Akerman 300. Mr. Lee 250. Other farmers have from 50 to 200 trees or so in their orchards. Mr. A. A. Berrow keeps a nicely ordered nursery garden, where fruit and ornamental trees and shrubs of the choicest description may be purchased at very moderate prices. It is to Mr. Berrow that the compiler of this pamphlet is chiefly indebted for the names of the flowers, ferns, etc., growing wild on the island.

The general opinion as to the style of farming best adapted to the island may be gathered from the following notes:—

1. AS REGARDS FRUITS.—The island is peculiarly suited for the growth of apples, pears, plums and cherries. Apples and pears do well on the red alluvial loam with marl sub-soil; cherries better if the sub-soil be "hard-pan"; plums best on the black "bottom lands." Apples and pears also do well on the lowlands if thoroughly drained. The favorite fruits are *Apples*:—Baldwin, Canada Reinette, Blenheim Orange, Wealthy (for winter keeping), and Duchess of Oldenburg and Gravenstein (summer apples). *Pears*:—Bartlett and Vicar of Winkfield. *Plums*:—Yellow Egg, Greengage, Magnum Bonum; and Mr. Tregge recommends also his "Pawn-seedling," which grows twice the size of an ordinary egg-plum, and is probably the



geon; also loons. Salt Spring Island is certainly an *El Dorado* for the sportsman.

#### FARMING.

Extensive wheat fields, large areas planted with oats, or barley, or peas, or roots, are not to be found on the Island of Salt Spring, nor indeed on Vancouver Island. When once the Rocky Mountains are crossed the great wheat region of the Northwest, and the big prairie farms are all left behind, and in their stead we find small fields of grain and roots, and apple orchards, and poultry yards, with hay fields in the bottom lands and pasture for sheep and cows on the side hills. But although the homesteads are so much smaller, and a considerable portion of each farm seems to be the side or base of a timber covered, stone spattered mountain, yet for all that there appears to be an air of comfort and content about the place, which is too often wanting on the great prairie farms. Here in these islands on the Pacific coast the climate is mild and genial, there is no dread of an intense cold winter, there is no fear of drought in summer and no lack of fuel for the cold months. Whatever is put into the ground is sure to grow and to grow well. No Colorado bug will attack the potatoes, no summer or early autumn frosts will injure the cereals, hay time and harvest time is always dry and warm so that the crops can be gathered in almost invariably in good condition. Autumn work has not to be hurried over as ploughing can be done at almost any time in the winter. There is no anxiety about housing stock during the cold weather; sheep will generally find their living all the winter long in the open, and cattle need housing and feeding for a short time only. A farm on the Pacific coast may, perhaps, not yield its owner a fortune, but it will at any rate enable him to make a living and to bring up a family with comparative ease and comfort. Ten or fifteen acres with an orchard and a poultry yard and a cow or two, in British Columbia, has probably a greater sustaining power than a hundred acres of land in the prairie regions of the Northwest.

The largest land owners and farmers at present on Salt Spring Island are Mr. Joel Broadwell, who owns 1,260 acres. He farms the land immediately around his house, and keeps a



Rev. E. F. Wilson & Family - 1895




Central Settlement, with a splendid wedding breakfast at "Barnsbury" and a honeymoon in San Francisco. Returning from their honeymoon, they lived in "The Ranch" for two years, then sold it to Leonard and moved to Victoria. They returned to Salt Spring Island in 1898 to build the older half of the Tolson/Borradaile house, but very shortly after moving into the new house, Charles' illness was diagnosed as consumption. For the sake of his health, Evelyn and Charles and two children, Mary and Charles, moved to Denver. In December of 1899, when Charles' health declined, they went to England and there Charles died.

The house was then purchased by E.G. Borradaile. In 1904 E. George Borradaile married a second Wilson daughter, Florence Muriel. In the E.F. Wilson Journal there is a drawing of the house and a floor plan, with the note: "Mr. and Mrs. E.G. Borradaile's house." Four children - Phyllis, Jack, Ted and Gladys, were born there. Claire Buttersfield of Ganges remembers the house well, and recalls that Borradailes first owned a large tract of land at Long Harbour where they had a log cabin. Mr. Borradaile was a small, wiry man, a builder. Once, during the construction of the Trading Company in Ganges, he fell off the roof but miraculously was not injured. He probably added the two-storey addition which totally changed the appearance of the house. When the Borradailes moved to what is now the Day Care Centre on Ganges Hill (where George Borradaile built the summer cabins for the resort) they sold the Tolson/Borradaile house to George Halley.


#### THE WALTER HOUSE

Margaret (Shaw) Walter, in her booklet: "Early days among the Gulf Islands of British Columbia" described her family's surprise arrival in 1877 at the home of her uncle, Edward Walter, on Ganges Spit, when "the EMMA'S whistle roused my

# TIMES PAST



## Salt Spring Island Houses and History before the turn of the century



Written by

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and Margaret Pearce

Community Arts Council  
Heritage House Committee :  
Olive Clayton                      Marguerite Lee  
Beth Hill                              Wyn MacLachlan  
Patty Lawson                        Sue Mouat  
Gerry Layard                         Morton Stratton

May 1983



uncle in the very early hours of an exquisite June morning - this first little trip ashore in Uncle's rowboat remains a clear memory after between sixty and seventy years. We landed in the little bay where Uncle's home stood and all around the scenery was beautiful. Otherwise things were not as we had thought they would be. The house was a one-room



cottage with a little verandah, also a good stone fireplace, very comfortable - for a bachelor; a small fowl house for a few hens - the only stock on the place, except a dog; and a sort of hut for the transient occupant. Near the house about a dozen young fruit trees had been planted. Otherwise among the 160 acres of forest there was perhaps one of roughly cleared land - no fencing, no crops or garden. My uncle had written home such glowing accounts of the new country, its prospects and opportunities, advising us frequently to come out and perhaps take up land for ourselves... To my father the situation gave such grave discouragement that he thought the only thing to do was to go back to Scotland again."



#### REV. E.F. WILSON'S BARNSBURY

One of Salt Spring Island's most interesting unpublished historical documents is the Rev. Edward Francis Wilson's illustrated family record: "From Barnsbury England in 1868 to Barnsbury Canada 1908". A xeroxed copy is owned by one of his descendants, Doreen Morris. The Rev. Wilson arrived at Vesuvius on Sunday Feb. 4, 1894, at 10:20 A.M. ....

"I first set foot on Salt Spring Island having come over in a small boat from Kuper Island. Directed by the Bittancourts (of whom there seemed to be a large family) I wended my solitary way from Vesuvius Bay up through the woods to Mrs. Stevens' Boarding House. There I had dinner."

Offered the parish of Salt Spring, with a stipend of \$500.00 from the mission Fund and about \$400.00 from the parishioners "I gladly accepted".

The journal notes the major events of family life... the marriage of daughter Evelyn to Charles Tolson in 1894, the building of Central Hall in 1896 and the first Agricultural show held there



few of us can know anything about old island days and ways!  
 If these old houses had tongues - but they stand silent,  
 staring with blank eyes, and it is only from scant memories  
 of the children and grandchildren of their builders, from a  
 few faded photographs, and documents, that we can speak for  
 them.

#### DATES

- 1857 ..... the first 30 settlers, Negroes, arrived.  
 1858 ..... 30 more blacks. Possibly Estalon and Manoel  
 Bittancourt.  
 1859 ..... 80 more blacks. 17 white and black settlers  
 (John Copland, J.D. Cusheon, Jonathan Begg, John  
 Booth, Henry Lineker) stone quarry at Vesuvius.  
 1860 ..... Indian battle, Ganges. John Maxwell, Theodore  
 Trage, Joseph King arrived.  
 1861 ..... Methodist Rev. Robson came to visit.  
 1862 ..... Bride ship  
 1863 ..... Martha Clay married Joseph Akerman.  
 1864 ..... John Jones teaching. S.S. FIDELITER bringing  
 mail to Vesuvius. Michael Gyves arrived.  
 1865 ..... Petition to Governor to have mail ship stop at  
 Begg's settlement every two weeks.  
 1866 ..... Union of Vancouver Is. and British Columbia.  
 John Maxwell complains about Indians stealing  
 cattle.  
 1867 .....  
 1868 ..... Chemainus Indian hung for murder of Wm. Robinson  
 and Giles Curtis.  
 1869 .....  
 1870 .....  
 1871 ..... Kanakas arrive at Isabella Point.  
 1872 ..... Henry Ruckle comes to Beaver Point. Henry  
 Sampson appointed constable.  
 1873 ..... Corporation of the Township of Salt Spring Island  
 (dissolved 10 years later)  
 1874 .....  
 1875 ..... First post office, Central Settlement.  
 1876 ..... RUCKLE HOUSE  
 1877 ..... Fred Bittancourt born  
 1878 .....  
 1879 ..... Chas.Horel arrived  
 1880 ..... Census, population 600. Burgoyne Bay P.O.  
 established. St. Paul's built.  
 1881

(Dates continued)

- 1882 ..... NIGHTINGALE HOUSE  
 1883 ..... Incorporation dissolved.  
 1884 ..... Samuel Beddis arrived. Beaver Point P.O.  
 established. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Stevens arrived.  
 1885 ..... Beaver Point School built. Mouats arrived.  
 1886 ..... BITTANCOURT ANNEX built.  
 1887 ..... STEVENS HOUSE  
 1888 .....  
 1889 ..... St. Mark's built. Leonard Tolson arrived.  
 1890 ..... "TRAVELLERS' REST", MOUAT HOUSE, TAHOUNEY HOUSE,  
PHILLIPS HOUSE  
 1891 .....  
 1892 ..... Henry Bullock arrived. OLD CREAMERY built before  
 this date.  
 1893 .....  
 1894 ..... Scovell & Westwood mine gold, Beaver Point.  
 Rev. E.H. Wilson arrived.  
 1895 ..... J.T. Collins arrived. COLLINS HOUSE, SCOVELL HOUSE  
 1896 ..... EDWARD AKERMAN HOUSE  
 1897 ..... Central Hall built.  
 1898 .....  
 1899 .....  
 1900 ..... Boer War. "IROQUOIS" began service to Islands.  
 1901 ..... Queen Victoria died.

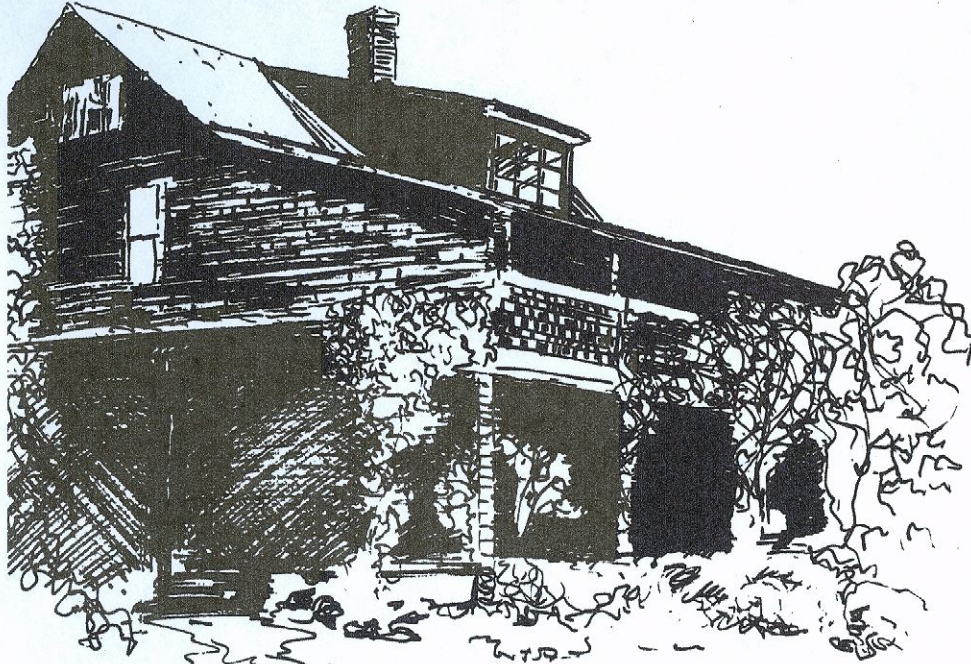
#### AKERMAN HOUSES

Joseph Akerman arrived on Salt Spring Island in 1863. In  
 May of that year he married Martha Clay, a Leicestershire  
 lady who arrived on the "bride ship" ROBERT LOWE in 1862.  
 Martha lived to a very old age; her son Joseph Jonathan  
 said she was 99 when she died, not 96 as is sometimes  
 reported. Paying a dollar an acre for their land, Joseph and  
 Martha established a homestead beside Fulford Creek, and with  
 stout-hearted work made it into a showplace with many unusual  
 trees and plants. For some years they made part of their  
 house a store. Their home was also a hotel, named "Travel-  
 lers Rest". When Martha was old she was interviewed by  
 Margaret (Shaw) Walter, who wrote:

"She told of one evening taking poultry from their fowl  
 house to another, some distance away. Her husband was  
 also carrying some, and on the other side of the fence  
 dividing what was probably a field from the road or  
 trail where they were walking, a panther kept pace with  
 them and the squawking hens in their hands. She cried  
 out, "Joseph", if this beast follows us any longer I  
 will drop the fowls!" But her husband's only reply was  
 "Don't drop the fowls!" Another experience must have  
 given her a great shock. While busy gardening near the

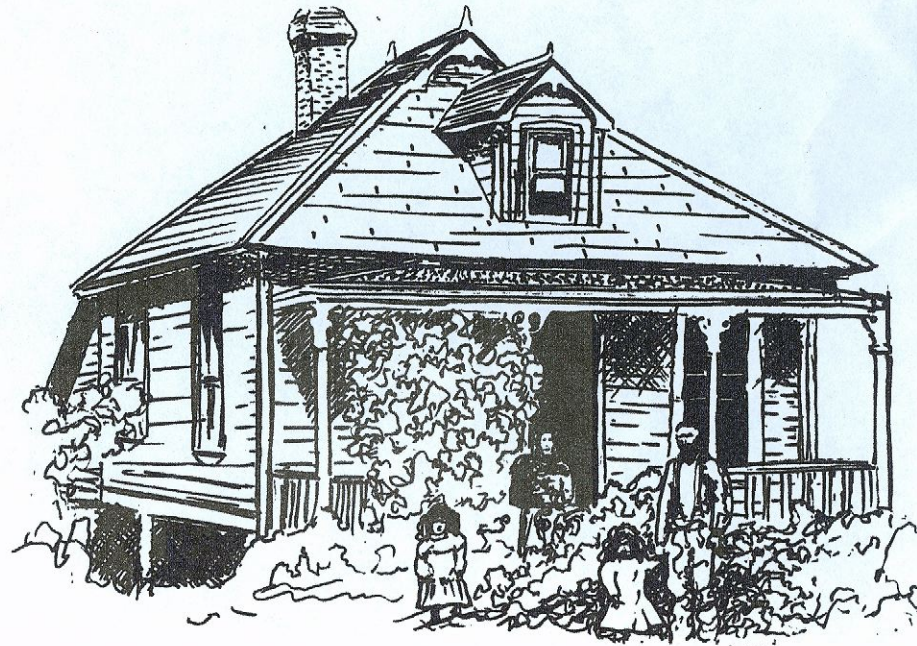


home, when her husband was elsewhere, she laid her baby girl on the ground while she went on with her task. Happening to lift her eyes later on she saw a panther walking down between the rows toward her little daughter. With no weapon at hand she ran screaming toward it, and it must have been fairly close for she spoke of lifting her foot as if to thrust it away. Whether it was the movement, however, or the sound of the frantic screams, the animal turned back and left them. She said little about her feelings in the matter, but her quiet remark, "I did not sleep much that night", told its own story".



Martha and Joseph had five sons and two daughters. Their eldest son, Joseph Johathan Akerman, married Georgina Marie Horel in 1893 at St. Mary's Church in Fulford Harbour. He then managed Broadwell's and Fernwood farms, at one time remarking "I have seen the change from ox team and home-made sleighs to ox teams with wagons, then to horses and wagons, and now to motor cars and trucks."

But the heyday of the Island's agricultural economy was already over when he died in 1954. The second son, George



Edward (Ted) Akerman built the 1892 house now owned by Danny Akerman. The original house hidden behind a later addition. Ted Akerman married Ellen Gyves, shown in the older picture with daughters Molly and Dorothy.

The old log building behind "Travellers' Rest" may have been an earlier house built by Joseph and Martha. Standing amid fields and fruit trees, the old log structure reminds us of the days when the giant cedar trees had to be cleared, the great log piles burned and potatoes planted among the stumps. The work of removing stumps was back-breaking. Oxen were better than horses in those years, for they could plough among the stumps, patiently waiting when buried roots brought them up sharp, instead of rearing and breaking harness as horses would likely do.



# Salt Spring

The Story of  
an Island

1998

CHARLES KAHN

Harbour Publishing  
Madeira Park, BC

*Charles Kahn*



**KEY DATES**

**1873** Salt Spring Island is incorporated and becomes a municipality.

Burgoyne Bay School District is formed.

Salt Spring's first post office is established.

**1874-75** The first land survey of Salt Spring is conducted.

**1880** The Burgoyne Bay Post Office opens.

**1881** The population of Salt Spring reaches 258.

**1883** The municipality of Salt Spring is dissolved by the legislative assembly.

ing Island were held within ten days of the official announcement, and first council meeting took place on January 30, 1873. The seven members were Thomas Caradoc Parry (warden), Henry W. Robinson (clerk), Charles McDonald (collector), Frederick Foord (treasurer), Joseph Akerman (senior), Jacob Crook Crane, and John Craven Jones. Few of the generally independent, self-sufficient south Salt Spring residents supported incorporation, which to them meant only higher taxes. Many wanted roads to get their crops to market but were otherwise content to be alone. Edwin Pimbury and his brothers led an anti-incorporation faction, which soon asked the legislative assembly to dissolve the municipality. Rising debt and taxes, blamed on salaries for council members, were apparently the chief complaints. (Salt Spring residents have always vigorously resisted tax increases.) Residents also felt that councillors were profiting at the expense of other settlers and that the municipality should be divided into wards. Edwin Pimbury complained to the lieutenant governor in January 1874 that councillors were violating the Municipal Act of 1872. Theodore Trage, Henry Spikerman, William Walsh, Michael Gyves, John Cairns, and John Maxwell—all south-end residents—signed documents supporting Pimbury. Pimbury's letter was referred to the attorney general, who advised the promoters to take the matter to the Supreme Court of British Columbia, which they could not afford. The question of incorporation simmered until 1881. In the meantime, John Booth lost the 1875 election and Edwin Pimbury placed him in the provincial legislature, which probably reflected the general opposition to Salt Spring's incorporation.

## JOHN PATTON BOOTH

John Patton Booth was born in the Orkney Islands in 1838, came to Canada at four, and arrived in Victoria when he was twenty-one. Booth pre-empted 200 acres (80 ha) straddling what is now Booth Canal. There he lived until he married Elizabeth Griffiths, who ran the extensive Fernwood nursery and orchard that her late husband had purchased from Jonathan Begg. After the marriage, Booth sold his own land to Arthur Walter and moved to the Fernwood farm.



*John Patton Booth's large and impressive funeral at St. Mark's Church in Dunsmuir and thirty other members of the legislature. BCARS A-1092*

Booth's name seems connected with every Salt Spring public organization of the day. He was an officer of the Salt Spring Island Agricultural Association, a road commissioner, one of three elected members of the first school board, reeve of the Township of Salt Spring Island, and one of two representatives from the constituency of Cowichan in the first provincial legislature.

Booth lost two subsequent provincial elections but won again in 1890 in the new North Victoria constituency, which included most of the Gulf Islands. He held the seat until his death in 1902. At the time of his death, Booth was Speaker of the British Columbia legislature.

AD



small primitive farm. Now that his hands were resting the forest was coming back again, rather slower than at Frank's place, because it had been attacked more savagely in the first place, but the split cedar fence-rails were down and the young firs back in the field.

Arnold had always been fond of painting and now it occupied all his time, but other than self-portraits he believed in no original inspiration and preferred always to copy other pictures. . . .

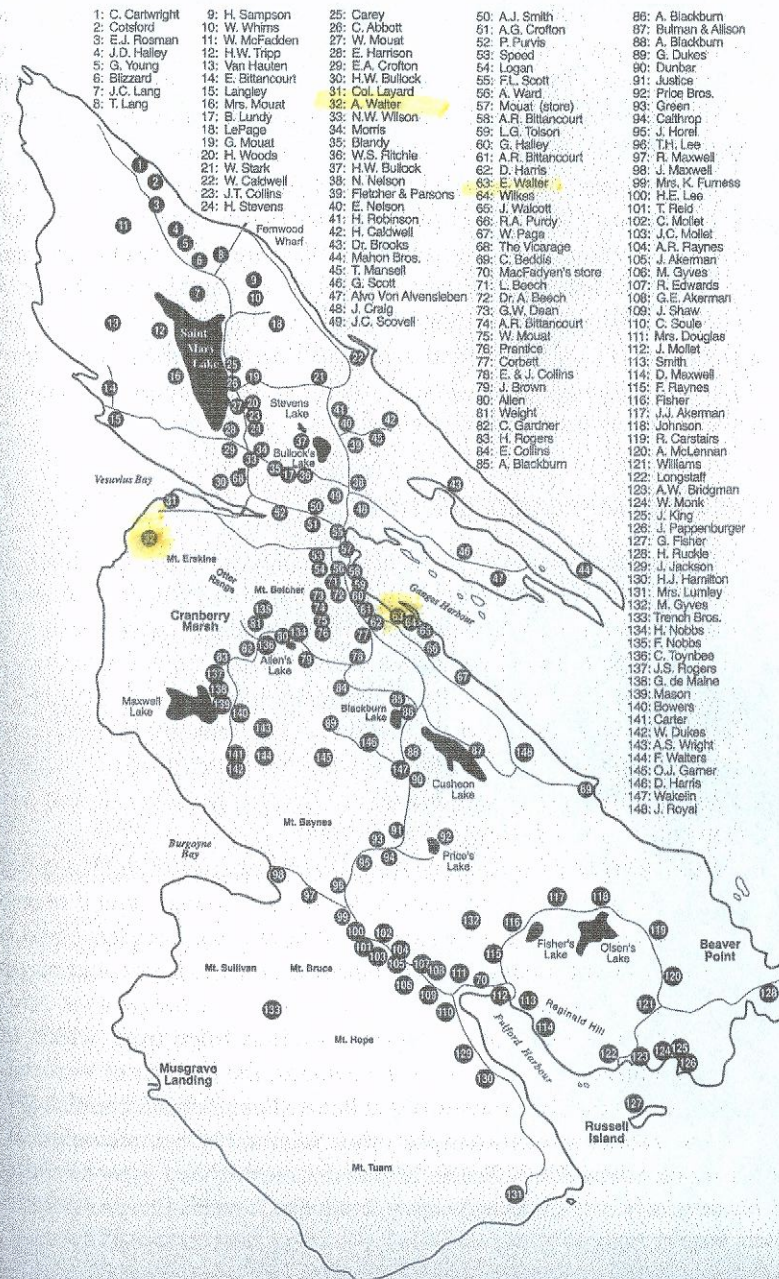
Walter, the youngest of the Smith brothers, grey-haired, lean, haggard and intense of feature, but always with a friendly smile and salty North Country humour, was . . . the reader and the philosopher of the family, extremely well-read and up to date in all that was going on. One day Beryl handed him back some huge volume of Toynbee's that he had lent her. "What are you reading now?" she asked. "Oh, I'm on to something serious now," he said, "Relativity!"

The Musgrave homesteaders were nearly all sheep farmers, as the mountain pastures wouldn't support dairy herds. In 1915, fifty-nine residents in seventeen families were homesteading on the mountain. Work started on a road from Fulford to Musgrave Landing about the same time, but Musgrave Landing remained accessible only by water for years. At least once, pre-emptors served their required residency and then left en masse, disappointed with the lack of progress on the road.

A few people settled in the Cranberry Marsh area—named for the berries growing there before it was drained—before 1900, but most came in the early 1900s. In 1903 a road was built through the Cranberry to Maxwell Lake. British-born John Rogers and his Canadian wife, Martha, arrived around 1902 and successfully established an 800-acre (320 ha) mixed farm. As a sideline, John discreetly sold homebrew. Neighbours reported that most traffic on Cranberry Road headed for the Rogers farm.

Other pre-1918 Cranberry settlers included Charles Gardner, John and Annie Brown, the Toynbee brothers (Charles, Albert, and Richard), Edward

(Opposite) The original of this map showing where Salt Spring families were located in 1912 was drawn by a teacher and was donated to the Bittancourt Heritage House Museum by the Crawford family. Some of the map's errors and omissions have been corrected from information supplied by John Bennett.





Frederick Foord chose the pretty basin above Fulford Creek surrounding the lake that now bears his name.

In 1864, Michael Gyves pre-empted land among giant cedars just north of Akerman. He had originally emigrated from Ireland to New York where his brother lived. Unable to find work there, he joined the US Army and was posted to San Juan Island during the British and American dispute over the island's ownership. After his discharge, he moved north, trying his luck in the Cariboo gold rush before returning to Victoria. There he met John Maxwell, who encouraged him to settle on Salt Spring and find a house-keeper and wife. He soon met his life partner—Tuwa'H Wiye, later known as Mary Ann "Granny" Gyves—the daughter of a Cowichan chieftain. Gyves produced cedar shakes from his fine pre-emption, rowing them to markets in Sidney and Victoria.

Other south-end communities were settled later. When Henry Ruckle arrived in 1872 (see chapter 6), there were already several cabins in the



Michael Gyves pre-empted land in 1864 and made his living by cutting cedar shakes. Courtesy Val Gyves



Tuwa'H Wiye (Mary Ann "Granny" Gyves), daughter of a Cowichan chieftain and common-law wife of Michael Gyves. Courtesy Val Gyves

Beaver Point area, probably built by men of Hawaiian descent. Also in 1872, William Lumley was among the first to settle in the south-end community of Isabella Point. He later married a daughter of a Hawaiian-born settler. (For more about the Hawaiians, see chapter 7.)

Almost all the early settlers were single men. A few, such as Theodore Trage and Henry Spikerman or John Maxwell and James Lunney, arrived together and worked as partners. Others undoubtedly helped each other as much as possible in an isolated community where distances between homesteads were relatively great and unmanageable without roads. Several took aboriginal wives, usually without traditional religious or civil ceremonies, and had large families, who were a great help on the farms. Descendants of many of these pioneers still live on the island.

## GETTING ON AND OFF THE ROCK

Transportation and communication, among Salt Spring settlements and between them and their Victoria and Nanaimo markets and suppliers, posed a major challenge. At first, each island settlement traded with its closest centre: the south end with Victoria and the north end with Nanaimo.

Settlers brought sailing vessels with them, and some, such as E.J. Bittancourt, provided a transport service for their fellow islanders. Most people, however, relied on the traditional Salish canoe to get around, sometimes with Salish paddlers. It was the Salish who had taken the Akerman family and their belongings 11 km from the Saanich Peninsula to the mouth of Fulford Creek in the early 1860s. In the next decade, pioneer author Margaret (Shaw) Walter of Galiano Island, and later Salt Spring, recorded how her neighbour, Elizabeth Griffiths of Salt Spring, managed to collect her mail:

There was no post office near us in those days, so she had our mail matter collected along with their own when it arrived at Vesuvius Bay, then the only port of call and



distributing centre for steamers on the northern half of Salt Spring Island; and sent it over to Galiano—perhaps once a month, by a special Indian, “Capt.” Peatson he called himself [Peatson’s aboriginal name was Hul-kalkstun], brother to Capt. Verygood, in whose largest canoe Mrs. Griffiths made her business trips to Victoria or Nanaimo as the case might be. These two brothers were rather outstanding natives. . . . When his [Capt. Peatson’s] little canoe reached there—about a four-mile journey, he would shout for one of my brothers to come and help him. It was generally next day before he left.

Sloops and schooners such as the *Nanaimo Packet* that passed Salt Spring en route between Victoria and Nanaimo were unable to load directly without landings or wharves. So at first, weather permitting, crewmen would whistle for canoes to come alongside to pick up or deliver mail, passengers, or freight. Sailing schooners arrived unpredictably in these early days and couldn’t be depended on. All settlers needed access to a canoe, skiff, raft, or dugout to reach ships or travel to Vancouver Island.

Vessels en route to Victoria or Nanaimo sailed past both sides of Salt Spring. In a letter to his sister and brother-in-law dated March 10, 1860, Jonathan Begg in Beggsville wrote: “Schooners pass to Victoria by my place from Nanaimo about 3 times a week, and we have a weekly mail. I am Post Master. . . .” Sylvia Stark remembered arriving in 1860 on a sailing vessel that dropped passengers and freight on the northwest side of the island.

The first landing was probably built at Vesuvius Bay. From 1864 to 1866, the SS *Fideliter* regularly stopped there with mail on its run from Victoria to Nanaimo. (A new government wharf was built at Vesuvius Bay in 1872.) Meanwhile, in the south end, Maxwell and Lunney donated 3 acres (1.2 ha) to establish a wharf at Burgoyne Bay in 1869.

A rough road from the St. Mary Lake area to Vesuvius Bay was

probably the first on the island. But the farmers at Beggsville were still isolated. In 1865, Edward Mallandaine and Jonathan Begg requested that the *Fideliter* call at Beggsville as well as Vesuvius Bay, since travel across the mountain from Beggsville to Vesuvius Bay was extremely difficult and hauling produce was almost impossible. The Vancouver Coal Company, which owned the ship, refused. Company officials instead suggested that Beggsville settlers cut a road through to the quarry north of Vesuvius Bay. Louis Stark, who had industriously put roads through his own property and volunteered his labour to put connecting roads through other people’s land, pleaded with the chief commissioner of land and works: “A sentral [sic] road is all that we ask for and let us make little roads and pigtrails to come to it by our own labour.” Although every male Salt Spring landowner over age eighteen was supposed to devote six days a year to building roads, most early pre-emptors were either absentee landowners or too poor to donate the time. Resources for road building were not available until British Columbia joined Canada in 1871.



## HOW THEY FARED

The first settlers on Salt Spring had enormous problems to overcome. They found most of the land heavily forested. There were no roads, no wharves, no regular transportation to and from the island, no stores, no mail service and nobody to ask or hire for help. Most pioneers were poor and had chosen Salt Spring mainly because they could pre-empt land and pay for it years later. They lacked farming experience, money, and the equipment necessary to hack homes and farms out of the forest. Many had minimal food and clothing, and all had to worry about cougars (which they called “panthers”), wolves, and bears. They also faced the hostility of some aboriginal people who saw them as trespassers (see chapter 5).



Statistics for these early days can only be approximate, as the sources vary so greatly in their estimates. According to Begg, the population of Salt Spring Island was 50 in March 1860.<sup>4</sup> On August 23 of the same year, the *British Colonist* recorded the number of landholders as almost 70. An 1865 history of the area states that Salt Spring was “inhabited by 70 or 80 settlers,” which would suggest little increase between 1860 and 1865 (if all these figures are correct).<sup>5</sup> Still another estimate in 1866—this time by a visiting minister—gave the population of the north end of the island alone at “17 couples, 22 single men, and 42 children.” Although he did not visit the south end, its population was estimated at about 15 to make a total of 113 for the whole island.<sup>6</sup>

Many settlers had large crops of barley, oats, and potatoes and were raising cattle, pigs, and other animals for the Victoria market. The Salt Spring Island Agricultural Association was formed in 1860. The *British Colonist* estimated that there were more than five hundred head of cattle on the island in 1864, and in 1868 island farmers began to participate in the annual exhibitions of the brand new Cowichan, Salt Spring, and Chemainus Agricultural Society.

When George Hills, the Anglican bishop from Victoria, visited Salt Spring in September 1860, he found a thriving community:

The plots are laid out in oblongs of 200 acres each. In the whole island some 8000 acres are taken up. . . . Although hardly a year has elapsed, yet much has been cleared. A log barn has been built upon each. Some three or four acres have been brought under cultivation in each lot. Garden produce of all sorts is to be seen. Cabbages, potatoes, beetroot, onions, tomatoes, peas, cucumbers, watermelons, carrots, etc., & wheat & oats, [also] pigs, poultry & calves.

The soil is good generally, a light kind, some very good black loam, a great deal of this latter principally in the valleys. I should say there is no better land in British Columbia that I have seen, nor in Vancouver Island. There is considerable wood to be cleared, but extensive open ground [is] covered with fern. The timber is not heavy or thick. There is good water from wells. Grouse are to be had. Deer in abundance & good. Fish plentiful. Miss Lineker today was at the water's edge raking in smelts. We

had some for dinner & capital they were. In winter wild fowl are abundant. Mr. Lineker told me he could come down & shoot as many as he wanted whenever he liked. The settlers complain of the hawks, the chicken hawks who pounce upon the chickens at the very door of the house.

Single white women were few in the colony. In the diary of his 1860 visit to Salt Spring, Bishop Hills noted: “There are sixteen settlers [in the north-east part of the island], mostly young men. Nearly all are living with Indian women.” Among the first settlers who took aboriginal women as common-law wives were Henry Sampson, John Maxwell, Theodore Trage, and Michael Gyves. According to Margaret Walter, whose family settled on Galiano Island in the late 1870s, the HBC encouraged former employees “to take a Native woman and settle down.”<sup>7</sup> Several apparently followed this advice on Salt Spring. Mrs. Walter wrote with great respect of the aboriginal wives:

These native wives . . . adapted themselves in a surprising degree to the white man's ways—learning also to speak English more or less. One thing seemed curious in this direction. The mother often spoke to the children in her own tongue but the youngsters invariably answered in English—at least those we knew did. And, while these wives might be docile, this did not mean subservient. Should conditions become too uncomfortable there was always the tribal reserve to fall back on, and hubby had to choose between seeking them out there or having his domestic arrangements put out of gear. This used to amuse my mother, who thought they were more independent in various ways than their white sisters. But such disagreements seemed to happen seldom and the union was as a rule kept loyally on both sides. As time went on they might be moved, or persuaded to marry legally, and one of such events we knew of, took place when the father and mother were married, and their grandchild christened on the same day.

The Anglican Church, which opposed mixed marriages, arranged for the importation of single, unemployed young women from Britain as potential wives for unmarried colonists. In September 1862, sixty-two women arrived



Margaret Walter recounted two of Martha Akerman's encounters with cougars:

She told of one evening taking poultry from their fowl house to another, some distance away. Her husband was also carrying some, and on the other side of the fence dividing what was probably a field from the road or trail where they were walking, a panther kept pace with them and the squawking hens in their hands. This got on his wife's nerves and she cried out, "Joseph, if this beast follows us any longer I will drop the fowls," but her husband's only reply was, "Don't drop the fowls."

Another experience must have given her a great shock. While busy at some gardening work near the home when her husband was elsewhere, she laid her baby girl on the ground while she went on with her task. Happening to lift her eyes later on she saw a panther walking down between the rows toward her little daughter. With no weapon at hand she ran screaming toward it and it must have been fairly close for she spoke of lifting her foot as if to thrust it away. Whether it was the movement, however, or the sound of what would be frantic screaming, the animal turned back and left them. She said little about her feelings in the matter, but her quiet remark, "I did not sleep much that night," told its own story.

Winter greatly magnified all problems in the isolated farms and spread-out communities. The winter of 1861-62, the first for many settlers, was especially fierce, with ice, snow, and extremely low temperatures. Settlers lost more than a hundred head of cattle and ran short of food and firewood. The winter was equally hard on wildlife, poultry, and other livestock. Desperately hungry wolves and cougars attacked domestic stock and even humans. Mail delivery and other communication with larger communities on Vancouver Island halted for weeks. In May 1862, the *British Colonist* reported that one-third of the settlers had left the island. Those who remained learned from their experience and managed better in the following, almost equally bad, winter.

From the outset, homesteaders had to look beyond their lonely pre-emptions to the outside world for both their supplies and their markets. No one



Willis, the oldest child of Louis and Sylvia Stark, had a lifelong reputation as a great cougar hunter. Photo by Jessie Bond, SSIA

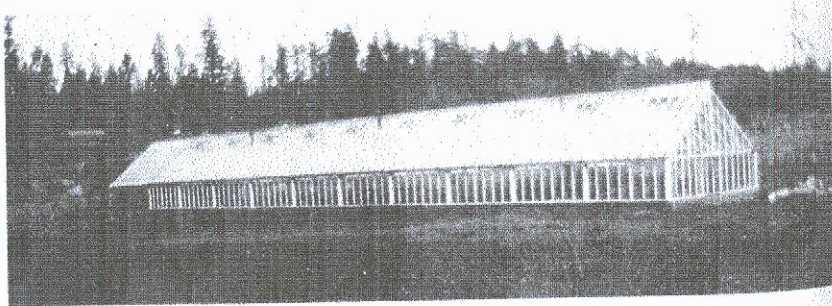


from Fulford Harbour. After shearing in June, nearly 4000 pounds (1814 kg) of wool were sacked and shipped to Victoria from Musgrave Landing. About a hundred "fat sheep" were sent to market that summer, Aitken recorded, and each week the family slaughtered a sheep for food.

## NURSERY FARMING

Salt Spring nursery farming began in 1860 when Jonathan Begg started raising fruit trees, ornamentals, and shrubs at his Fernwood nursery. Richard Brinn and Thomas Griffiths took over his business, but we don't know if it survived the 1870s. In the 1880s and early 1890s, when farmers were planting orchards all over the island, they probably bought their nursery stock in Victoria. In 1896, professional nurseryman Ambrose A. Berrow opened a nursery southwest of Central, but sold it five years later to Harry Bullock.

No dedicated nursery operation served the island for much of this century, although Mouat's, Patterson's, and the Trading Company sold farmers some supplies. In 1976, recently arrived Tom and Mimi Gossett opened a small store in Upper Ganges. The Gossetts' Foxglove Farm and Garden Supplies, named after their farm on Mt. Maxwell Road, first catered to farmers' needs but expanded to bedding plants the next year. It moved to the corner of Atkins and Lower Ganges Road in 1979. As Salt Spring's population grew, the Gossetts' nursery business expanded, and other nurseries opened. By the late



*Kumanosuke Okano built the island's first greenhouse, 55 m by 91 m, on his Booth Canal farm around 1930. A few years later, his daughter, Kimiko Murakami, started selling fruit and vegetables from a stall on her 17-acre (7 ha) farm on Sharp Road. The quality of Mrs. Murakami's produce was widely known; much went to the Empress Hotel in Victoria. Courtesy Mary Kitagawa*

nineties, the island supported about a dozen nurseries, including one specializing in native plants and another in water plants.

## SUPPORT FOR THE FARMING COMMUNITY

Three important farmers' organizations formed in the late 1890s: the Central Hall Association, the Islands' Agricultural and Fruit Growers' Association, and the Farmers' Institute. The last two especially, with government support, helped improve island agricultural methods.

In 1895, local farmer and Member of the Legislative Assembly John Patton Booth led a move to create a limited liability company with shares at \$5 each to build a public hall mainly for agricultural shows. Central Hall housed Salt Spring's first agricultural exposition on October 14, 1896. The hall soon proved more suitable as a community centre, and the fair moved to Rainbow Road. Central Hall at North End and Vesuvius Bay roads still functions as an island meeting place.

The Horticultural and Fruit Growers' Association, formed in 1896, soon changed its name to the Islands' Agricultural and Fruit Growers' Association, broadening its membership to all the Gulf Islands. Its objectives also grew to include both agriculture and horticulture.

Salt Spring founded its branch of the Farmers' Institute in 1898 to educate farmers and improve agriculture through lectures and demonstrations. John Collins, Rev. E.F. Wilson, Edward Walter, James Horel, and Ed Lee were among the most active members and officers. The institute's educational efforts focussed largely on co-ordinating government-sponsored lectures by experts on topics such as clearing land with stumping powder, tuberculosis and dairying, animal husbandry, creamery management, and orchard care.

The Islands' Agricultural and Fruit Growers' Association, sponsors of the fall fair, soon realized it needed proper exhibition grounds with an adequate hall, livestock facilities, and space for athletic and social events at the annual celebration. Land on Rainbow Road was purchased from Frank Scott, and by fall 1901 a new hall was under construction. Even before it opened in 1902, the society borrowed \$1000 from landowner Ross Mahon to enlarge the hall and buy additional exhibition grounds. Mahon died in 1903, and in 1904 the Mahon family forgave the mortgage and the hall was named the "Mahon Memorial Hall." (It's been known simply as Mahon Hall ever since.)

Fairs from 1896 to 1914 were a great success, each proclaimed "the best



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“trying to build a community like an English town. He wasn’t very popular so he had to try to make himself popular.”<sup>10</sup> Mary Inglin believed he was a true altruist:

Mr. Bullock was quite a wonderful man, really, very kind-hearted, and he was always doing good turns for people. If anybody was very hard up, he would send a good lot of groceries from the store just at dusk when nobody could see what he was doing.<sup>11</sup>

But perhaps Bullock wasn’t entirely altruistic. Donald Goodman felt that Bullock evidently enjoyed having people grateful for his kindnesses and in his debt.

In one way or another, most of Bullock’s boys benefited hugely from their exposure to the squire. Most were encouraged to return if they had problems, as several did when jobs were scarce during the Depression. In his will, Bullock left small sums of money to Bill Palmer and Jesse Bond and forgave Bill Currie’s \$2500 mortgage. Bill Palmer summarized many islanders’ view of Bullock: “He was a very kind-hearted man, and you had to put up with his eccentricities. He was very, very good to me. He gave me a start.”<sup>12</sup> Malcolm Bond also remembered that when his father, “a very slight lad at the time, left to serve in World War I, Bullock told him that he was too frail to go, but that if anything happened to him in the war, there would always be a place for him to come back to.”

When Bullock died at eighty in 1946, his nephew Gerard Bullock inherited his property, which he sold to Ernie and Brenda Lowe fifteen years later. The Lowes named the property Lakeridge and started a summer camp for youth there. In 1964, Bullock’s “manor house” burned to the ground, and by the late nineties, little remained to remind islanders of Bullock, other than the lake named after him and the stories told by Salt Spring elders who knew him.

# Logging, Mining, and Red Ink

## HARD PHYSICAL WORK

Timber was an obstacle to eliminate rather than a resource to exploit for most early farmers. When Salt Spring Island’s first settlers cleared land, they slashed and burned much of the timber they felled.

Some recognized the resource’s potential, however. In 1860, for example, four German-born settlers in Fulford Harbour were shipping cedar shakes and staves for salmon casks to Victoria. A few years later, Michael Gyves chose his pre-emption in the Fulford-Burgoyne Valley specifically for its fine stand of cedar, which he used to make cedar shakes for the Victoria market.

Many farmers soon supplemented their meagre income with logging. Charles Horel logged around Dean and Drake roads in the 1880s, using oxen to drag logs from the bush to a bank where he rolled them into the sea. He likely sold his logs in Mill Bay.

A few people logged full-time. The 1891 census identified nine loggers, mostly on Salt Spring’s south end. Many farmers logged to augment their income, and some also worked as teamsters. Their horses and oxen dragged logs from as far as Weston Lake to Fulford Harbour along skid roads still partly visible today.

There was a log dump at the head of Fulford Harbour by about 1900. Much of the timber was exported for mine props and piles in Mexico and wharves and bridges in China. Islanders also burned logs to make charcoal for salmon canneries and to fuel steam boilers on steamships. Rev. E.F. Wilson noted a charcoal-burning crew on Edward Walter’s property (around



## KEY DATES

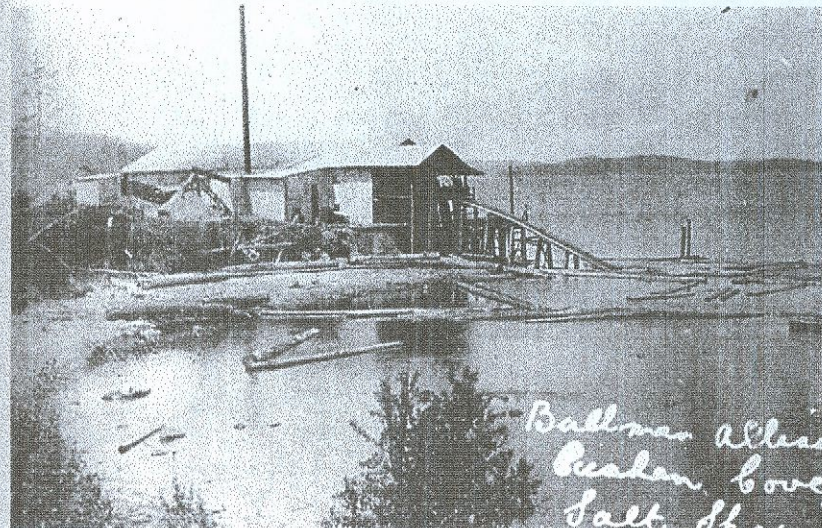
- 1859** Salt Spring Island Stone Company operates near Southey Point on the west side of the island.
- 1860** Four settlers produce shakes and barrel staves for the Victoria market.
- 1891** The census lists nine Salt Spring residents whose primary occupation is logging.
- 1924** F.M. Singer Lumber Company brings several portable tie mills to the island.
- 1926** The wharf of the Bulman sawmill at Cusheon Cove collapses; the company soon closes.
- 1960** Prince Thurn und Taxis of Bavaria begins buying 6000 acres (2428 ha) of Salt Spring forest.
- 1962** The Holdfast Pozzolan plant on Welbury Bay begins production.

Walter Bay) in 1901. About twenty thousand bags sold for 16 cents a bag.

A building boom early in this century, especially in Vancouver, boosted the logging industry. By 1908, logging made up 40 percent of BC's economy, a growth of 31 percent in six years.<sup>1</sup>

Salt Spring's largest operation was the Bulman sawmill (originally the Bulman and Allison sawmill) at Cusheon Cove, established between 1906 and 1908. Its bunkhouse eventually accommodated about 150 men, many of them Norwegians and Swedes. Because Salt Spring timber was considered inferior, most of the mill's timber came from off-island, although small-scale independent handloggers working around Cusheon Cove also supplied the mill. After milling, the lumber went to market in large ships that came to the company's wharf.

The Bulman mill at Cusheon Cove had more than its share of problems, including lack of road access to Beddis Road. When a Japanese employee lost three fingers in a planing machine in 1911, the mill had to phone Captain Good to bring his launch from his Beaver Point store to take the accident victim to Dr. Beech in Ganges. Also in 1911, the company closed temporarily after its manager, a Mr. Profit, drowned when the *Iroquois* sank. Later the same year the mill burned but was quickly rebuilt, since the demand for



The Bulman sawmill under construction at Cusheon Cove. Courtesy Gordon Cudmore/SSIA

lumber was increasing rapidly. The final blow was the 1926 collapse of the mill's dilapidated wharf when it was overloaded with lumber waiting to be shipped. Estimates of the load vary from 1 to 3 million board feet. Most of the wood was lost, and the company soon ceased operations.

Two main "logging shows" operated in the island's south end around 1912. The Maxwell family on Burgoyne Bay used a large steam donkey engine to yard logs and horses to drag them down to the sea. (The land had been logged since the 1870s, with oxen pulling logs over skid roads to tide-water.) Meanwhile, the Fraser Logging Company worked the west shore of Fullford Harbour. Salt Spring-born logger Joe Garner described the operation in "Logging on Salt Spring Was Vital to the Island":

To start with they had to drive piling for a combination log-dump and wharf. This allowed them to put a huge steam donkey far enough out from shore so the logs could be dumped into deep water and boomed. Up in the woods they had a second steampot to yard the logs to their roads.