FARM WOMEN AND THEIR WORK

IN DELTA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

1900 - 1939

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores and categorizes the economic contribution of farm women in the Fraser Delta of the lower mainland of British Columbia during the period 1900-1939. The sources were mainly oral history interviews, as well as personal diaries, local newspapers, and government documents. In the particular social and economic context in which they ran their households and raised their families, the twenty-four women whose lives were explored shared many common characteristics, but an effort was made to convey a sense of these women as individuals as well as members of a larger group.

Farm wives in Delta during the first four decades of the twentieth century had an important economic role on their family farm. All women performed a core group of activities of a domestic nature, most of which took place within the family home. A significant number, over half, were involved in a transitional category, which might be termed household support work, and which usually generated a small income. The third category of work, farm work, appeared to have been a negotiable area. The involvement of women in farm work varied from household to household. The reasons also were particular to the individual family: of the seven women who did farm work, most worked because of perceived financial necessity; only one woman did so by preference.

All farm women did work of importance to the family's occupation.

Female labour can be categorized so that each woman's economic contribution, while exhibiting some commonality, was individual and unique. However, even in a rural community which was relatively homogeneous ethnically and economically, some variablity of experience was possible. Despite their neglect by historians, women and their work were essential in this agriculturally-based economy, but their importance did not depend on their being directly involved in agricultural production.

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I am breaking with tradition by thanking my husband, Norman Snihur, first and foremost -- his contribution to the entire experience has been invaluable. Thanks are due as well to Veronica Strong-Boag, in part for insisting that it could be done. I am also grateful to the residents of Delta who shared with me their memories of their parents. Many other people were helpful to the process of research, but some stand out. Among them are Ramona Rose and Libby Merrick, the archival staff of the Delta Museum and Archives, where I became a "regular", and Pat Crawford of B. C. Hydro.

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The Municipality of Delta, 1905. Source: Provincial Archives of British Columbia.

★ Location of oral history subject families.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Gisele Ireland makes a valid comment in her general lament that in the "research devoted to women's issues and concerns, rural women have been conspicuously absent."[1] Farming has been characterized generally as a male pursuit, and women's activities and contributions, even in the present day, have been subsumed into the larger category of a family enterprise. Whether or not women were directly involved in production, the tendency has been to downplay the importance of their work to the enterprise. This patriarchal domination has rendered invisible the essential contributions of women, thereby preventing the emergence of a true picture of this economic sector.[2] Furthermore, the prevailing assumption by historians often appears to be that women's work was no longer worth mentioning, once the frontier stage of development had passed.

Farm women have been noticeably absent from the history of British Columbia, where farming has not been studied as one of the kinds of work done by women. While Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia, the primary provincial collection of material about women and work, does not limit itself to paid employment, agriculture is not included as an area of female involvement. This is also true of the general histories of the province as written to date. In the long-standing survey text by Margaret Ormsby, British Columbia: A History, women are portrayed as little more than appendages to great men. Jean Barman's recent book, The West Beyond the West, is the first real indication of progress being made towards including women

in the standard general history books about British Columbia. In this account, women as participating partners have been woven into the fabric of the province's history, as Barman has made visible their roles in the social and political spheres, and in certain aspects of the economy. In the field of agriculture, however, she has followed the pattern of other British Columbia historians in ignoring direct female involvement.[3]

Few historians have explored the lives of Canadian farm women, especially women in the west. Mary Kinnear has reported briefly, and quite superficially, on the situation for Manitoba women in 1922. Although she has managed to extricate some quantitative information on women's work from her sources, she has not analyzed this information or situated her findings in the context either of the province as a whole or of the larger arena of women's experience as part of the farm family.[4] Some of that variety of experience is evident in Sara Brooks Sundberg's article on farm women in the Canadian prairies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Drawing on women's letters, diaries and memoirs, Sundberg offers an alternate female image to that of helpmate. The depiction of women as equal partners in the farming enterprise is an appealing one, but it needs to be based on something more substantial than anecdotal evidence from a small and select group of women.[5] This lack of quantitative detail also detracts from the work of Eliane Leslau Silverman. In The Last Best West she reports the results of oral history interviews with women who lived on the Alberta frontier from 1880 to 1930. While the anecdotal information is interesting and revealing, the lack of data and analysis, especially in reference to women's work, makes Silverman's treatment little more than a collection of interesting memories.[6]

The most valuable and analytical work on Canadian farm women has come from practitioners of disciplines other than history. The most useful research has been done by Seena Kohl, an anthropologist, who has studied the lives of ranch and farm women in southwestern Saskatchewan. Although her work focuses on a modern period, the 1960s and 1970s, she includes a brief discussion of the earlier frontier and settlement periods. From her in-depth longitudinal study Kohl has concluded that women played a pivotal role in the farming enterprise regardless of the extent of their participation in various aspects of work.[7]

From a political economist, Marjorie Cohen, has come a valuable addition to what little was known about the role of women in dairying in Ontario prior to the factory production of butter and cheese in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She claims that women were intensively involved in market production in the pre-industrial stage of agriculture, unlike the typical economic view which has largely excluded women. Cohen makes the further point that farm women were deprived of their most visible contributory role when cheese-making and, more importantly, butter-making became factory operations. The increasing profitability of dairy farming attracted men's interest and, consequently, capital investment in herds, buildings and equipment. However, it is important to note that this transformation was gradual; as late as 1921, approximately half the butter produced in Canada came directly from farm households.[8]

This thesis seeks to determine the economic contribution of farm women in the municipality of Delta in the extreme southwestern corner of British Columbia, roughly between 1900 and 1939. The different categories of work which they did will be examined, with particular

emphasis on the extent to which they engaged in "farm work". It will also explore the society and the economy which formed the backdrop to the lives of these women. The region has a long association with agriculture, which has been pursued continuously from the time of first European settlement in the late 1860s to the present day.[9] In addition, a certain amount of population stability is apparent, in that some families have remained as farmers on the same land over the course of three and four generations. Up to the middle of the twentieth century, the population was also remarkably homogeneous, with the great majority of the people being of British stock.

The major problem confronting historians in attempting to accord to farm women the recognition they deserve is the difficulty of uncovering the details of women's lives. At first glance, sources of information about the women of Delta appear scanty. No community-sponsored local history books have been written for any part of the region.[10] Personal memoirs, while providing colour and human interest, contain little, if any, information on women's work.[11] The sole exception is Above the Sand Heads, whose author, T. Ellis Ladner, acknowledges the participation of women in a fashion, by describing their lives in a few pages.[12] Secondary sources in the form of works by historians and geographers contribute to the available knowledge about this agricultural area, but reveal nothing about the role of women, least of all about their work.[13] Women fare no better in the popular histories of Delta, which tend to be condensed versions of a male past revolving around farms and canneries.[14]

One would expect that primary materials, such as women's letters and journals, would be productive sources of information on the lives of

farm women in this area, but only two diaries have been collected by the Delta Museum and Archives. The one attributed to Edith Burr was, in fact, kept jointly with her husband.[15] It is no more enlightening about women's lives than the journal kept by Lola Paterson for the year 1930. In the latter, Mrs. Paterson recorded the daily weather, the comings and goings of her politician husband, visits with family and friends, and the daily work activities of the hired men. The farming cycle becomes readily apparent, as well as her husband's high profile as an active member of the community, but her own activities have been almost completely ignored. There is no descriptive detail, as the following sparse entry for April 17, 1930 illustrates: "Fair [weather]. Men working at fences. Mr. Mills here. Alex [husband] and I in Van. [Vancouver] on 9 ferry. Alex left for Oregon."[16]

Other primary sources were consulted to extend the available information about these women. A perception of married women's public identity, as well as an indication of the extent to which farm women were involved in community activities, can be gleaned from the local newspapers of this period. Newspapers also contain a wealth of information on the social and economic life of the community, as well as about the availability of services in the village centre, that is, the existence of a doctor, drugstore, butcher, baker, or dressmaker, all of whom could ease women's domestic burden. A local newspaper was published between 1902 and 1914, and ceased publication because of the failing economy resulting from the war.[17] A locally-based weekly newspaper did not appear again until 1922. In the intervening years, news of the area was carried in at least one weekly newspaper that served the Fraser Valley, but the sense of community that was evident previously is

missing from these reports of activities in Delta. A number of farmers' magazines existed in British Columbia in the early decades of this century, but most were short-lived, and none offer glimpses into the lives of farm women through letters and articles.[18]

The property rights of married women in British Columbia during this period have to be established; the best source in this regard appears to be Helen Gregory MacGill's Daughters, Wives and Mothers in British Columbia, Some Laws Regarding Them.[19] One of the major inequities of farm women's lives, past and present, lies in the fact that while their contributions may have been equal and essential, this was not reflected in property relations.[20] These women have tended not to own property jointly with their husbands; almost invariably farms were registered in their husbands' names. An attempt was made to ascertain how women's rights were evidenced and protected in property transmission and inheritance practices through an examination of probated wills held by the Provincial Archives of British Columbia. Since inter-generational property transmission could and did sometimes take place prior to the death of the male property-owner, land transfer and probate documents should be examined together. However, the number of probated wills relevant to the oral history subjects was too few and the cost of researching Land Title Office records held in New Westminster too prohibitive, to allow for more than a few tentative observations.

Primary sources in the form of government documents were of mixed value as sources of information about the municipality at large. The early annual reports of the provincial Department of Agriculture, the first of which was submitted in 1891, contained concise summaries of aspects of farming in the region. Likewise, the 1914 report of the Royal

Commission on Agriculture revealed useful material on other aspects such as farm labour, public markets, agricultural credit, and food imports.[21] In general, however, the local newspaper provided the most accurate and specific information on local conditions. Many government documents, especially after about 1910, tended to view the Delta as part of the Fraser Valley and to treat the latter as one large homogeneous region.

The study period terminates at 1939 because by this time almost all of the municipality had been electrified, although not all at the same time. The introduction of electricity has the potential to alter significantly the labour content of women's lives, although in practice this did not necessarily materialize until some time after electrical power became available.[22] Nevertheless, in the context of this research, electrification is perceived generally as constituting the transition point into a modern environment.

Electrification proved to be the most elusive subject to capture historically. The collection of British Columbia Electric Railway Company (B. C. Electric) papers held by the University of British Columbia proved to be of extremely limited value because only a very small percentage of the pertinent records appear to have survived.[23] Other sources, therefore, had to be combed meticulously, including the local weekly, the farm newsletter published by B. C. Electric, and a variety of materials donated to the Delta Museum and Archives. Although pockets of non-electrified farms remained in 1939, usually on side roads with only one or two inhabitants, it can be reasonably conceded on the basis of the available evidence that the greatest portion of the municipality had been connected to electrical power by that date.

The most promising research method, therefore, is the compilation

and collection of oral histories. Some oral histories have been collected by the local archives, but these have limited value, since they are generally unfocused and ignore the work of women, whether paid or unpaid, domestic or farm. For the purpose of researching the lives of farm women, the scope of the period under study commences about 1900, since the sons and daughters of some women who farmed in the municipality of Delta during those early years are still alive. It was not possible realistically to examine a period beginning earlier than 1900, since this was the extent of access relying on the memories of people still living. Since only three of the informants were of an age to be interviewed about their own lives, the lack of first-hand accounts is a serious limitation. Elderly informants attempting to remember childhood and to report on their mothers' lives cannot be expected to recall with accuracy all aspects of their lives, in view of the great length of time elapsed and the fallibility of memory. In some instances, only a general impression of certain activities could be obtained or an affirmation of what was most likely to have happened.

The objective is to acquire and analyze information concerning the lives of some twenty or more women who farmed with their husbands in the municipality during the period 1900-1939. An effort was made to include in the sampling families from different communities in the municipality, so that any existing variability in experience might be discovered. Such variability can be the product of a number of factors, particularly the size of the farm holding and geography, which includes such elements as soil fertility or access to transportation links. By 1900, small communities had grown up in various locations in Delta, each centered around an elementary school. Except for the fishermen at Port Guichon

and the townspeople at Ladner village, these were farm communities and each constituted a neighbourhood unto itself. It was considered imperative to speak with at least one representative from each of these communities, namely Boundary Bay, Gulfside, Westham Island, Crescent Island, and East Delta, in addition to the farming area immediately adjacent to the village of Ladner itself, which was the focal point of these smaller groupings.

The individuals themselves, who are the sons and daughters of the farm women being studied, were contacted as a result of references from participants in an earlier project and from each other, a method which precludes scientific random sampling. Two source people formed the basis of this search for elderly informants whose parents had farmed in Delta for at least a large part of the subject time period. It is difficult to evaluate how representative of the farm population of the period these informants are. The fact that these men and women were all residents in the municipality during the late 1980s and early 1990s is not necessarily indicative of family persistence in the sense used by Gagan. The people of Peel County whom he found to be persisters were the migrants and their families who remained in the area, either continuing in farming or pursuing another occupation in the same location.[24] In Delta, however, in a significant number of families, six in all, the informants had spent a major portion of their adult lives outside the district and had returned to the villages of Ladner or Tsawwassen later in life, sometimes at retirement. Several significant changes in the landscape accounted for this fairly common phenomenon, most particularly the encroachment of highways and housing developments onto farmland. Therefore, those among the informants who had persisted in farming were mem-

bers of the stable and relatively successful element of the farm community and thus gave it continuity. The others, mostly women, had returned to Ladner from outside the area, viewing the district as a familiar and comparatively inexpensive place in which to live in retirement.

Economic congruence or financial similarity does not link these informants either, for their families did not all achieve the same level of prosperity. Not all could be categorized as successful farmers. In fact, four informants rated their families as being not very well off. Of these, two ventured the opinion that the family had started out as being not very well off, but had improved substantially over time and had become comparatively prosperous. Most informants evaluated their family's economic position as being average, in comparison to the families in their immediate vicinity, with whom they would have been sufficiently familiar to make a reasonable assessment. Only three felt that their families could be labelled well off or above average, and the material evidence, such as opportunities for education, especially at college or university, tended to bear this out.

Identifying the class to which these people might have belonged is especially problematic. While the existence of a social hierarchy is readily apparent, the organizational basis is unknown. Various sources have offered conflicting accounts of applicable social divisions in the community. Barman suggests that British Columbian settlers from eastern Canada "tended to come from relatively modest backgrounds and belong to one of the non-conformist denominations, such as Methodism, viewed by Anglicans as distinctly plebian [sic]."[25] Ellis Ladner, who writes about the early period and his memories of those years, would most likely concur that religion at least was an influential factor: "There was in

those days something distinguishing people which must have been that which led them to be [sic] Anglican, Methodist or Presbyterian. Those terms had very powerful meanings."[26] Hutcherson, on the other hand, claims that the pioneer farm families constituted the upper stratum of Delta society, with all others arrayed below them. While Hutcherson is not the most perceptive of observers, it may be that by the time his family returned to Ladner during the 1930s the bases for social differentiation had altered significantly, with the "old guard" closing ranks against newcomers.[27] Some oral history informants revealed an awareness of societal differentiation, although they tended to perceive it as based on a confrontation between emigrants from the old country and first-generation migrants from other parts of Canada.

Lastly, the size of farm holding is not a common denominator for these families. The size of farms ranged from 40 to 340 acres, and the amount of land farmed by these families, including rented acreage, generally tended to increase over time. As a result, meaningful comparisons can only be made by focusing on a specific point in the family cycle. The scarcity of data poses a serious obstacle, for the census prior to 1941 does not provide information on geographical units as small as a sub-district, which is how Delta is identified. Without agricultural statistics for the sub-district, it is impossible to make precise or meaningful observations. Pursuing the subject of land ownership and acquisition for all the families concerned through the records of the Land Title Office lies beyond the scope and resources of this thesis.

The interviews concentrated on the work that these farm women did. Work in this inquiry is divided into three categories: housework, that

is, work done inside the home, including child care; work in support of the household and farm, a transitional category which might encompass a wide range of activities from raising chickens for sale or for the family's use to growing a garden to trading surplus apples for fish caught by local fishermen; and, lastly, work in the farm enterprise, that is, the livelihood aspect of farming that has been regarded traditionally as "men's work". In the interests of clarity and simplicity, the latter was referred to as "farm work" in the interviews. While domestic work for these women included the same tasks that urban women performed, there is an additional element of "tasks essential to the orderly functioning of the enterprise."[28] In this category must be included work such as laundry and cleaning for the hired man, when present, as well as less frequent occurrences, for instance, feeding and putting up for the night the milk tester sent out by the provincial government.[29] All of this entailed additional work for the farm wife.

Appendix A lists the questions which formed the basis of the oral history interviews. In practice, the format was not followed slavishly, but served more as a checklist to ensure that all relevant questions were covered. Furthermore, the questions provided a framework for the interview in order to maintain its focus on farm women's work and to prevent it from degenerating into a free-flowing narrative about matters of interest to the interviewee.[30] In addition to work, the subjects' family backgrounds were explored, especially details concerning the process of immigration to British Columbia. The 1874 "List of Persons Entitled to Vote", as well as the 1881 and 1891 manuscript censuses, were useful, not in providing relevant information about women's lives, but in confirming details such as ages, residence in the municipality,

and occupation of the head of the household.[31] The various British Columbia directories and biographical compilations which were consulted turned out to be of not much assistance in locating women, since these listings are almost exclusively male-oriented. Nevertheless, they were most useful in establishing the kind of society and economy that had developed.[32]

Female immigration and migration into the region proved challenging to pursue. The immigration of women has been approached in the past from the wider perspective of populating the nation. Groups of women have been studied on the basis of their class, for example, the middle-class single women from Victorian Britain in Hammerton's work.[33] Other historians have studied the immigration of women on the basis of their occupation, such as Marilyn Barber who has focused on domestic servants.[34] While regional studies have painstakingly traced the movements and motivations of male immigrants or of families,[35] the same approach has not been applied to women, undoubtedly because they are difficult to trace since they rarely owned property or appeared on voters' lists. It is known that not all women came to Delta as members of families; some arrived as unmarried adults,[36] most commonly as schoolteachers who frequently married into the local population. It is clear that this information can be obtained only through oral history interviews. Even local pioneer accounts are male-oriented, generally ignoring the history of a wife's family,[37] a further indication of the acceptance of patriarchal domination of the historical record. It appears that chain migration, whereby one individual initiated the process and influenced other family members from the same place of origin to migrate, was the prevailing type of individual female

immigration.[38] The women of this study came from eastern Canada and Great Britain, but the sample was too small to afford any meaningful conclusions about motivation.

The farm women of Delta cannot be studied apart from their environment, which influenced and shaped their lives. It is impossible to appreciate these women, who they were, why they were in this particular locality, or why they did certain kinds of work, without an understanding of their society and of farming as it was carried out in this region in the early twentieth century. Therefore, it is essential to examine at least those aspects of the economy and the society that had direct implications for women's lives. Since no suitable model exists for this kind of community study,[39] it has been necessary to create a woman-oriented model "from scratch."

The argument of this thesis is that all these farm wives did work that constituted an economic contribution. Some worked only in the family home; others also did farm work outdoors. In all farm families, their work was essential, regardless of the form it took. Using a realistic definition of the concept of economic contribution to the family livelihood, the objective of this research has been to determine and categorize the contribution of these particular women in a society which, like the larger world, was experiencing complex social changes during the four decades prior to the Second World War. In spite of scarce documentation and the shortcomings of oral histories dependent on childhood memories, a substantial advance can be made toward crediting these women for their role in the agricultural economy of Delta and situating their contributions as a model for the larger national context.

NOTES

1. Gisele Ireland, The Farmer Takes a Wife: A Study by Concerned Farm Women (Chesley: Concerned Farm Women, 1983), p. 2.

2. Parvin Ghorayshi, "The indispensable nature of wives' work for the farm family enterprise," Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology 26 (August 1989): 571-73.

3. Barbara K. Latham and Roberta J. Pazdro, ed., Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia (Victoria: Camosun College, 1984); Margaret A. Ormsby, British Columbia: A History (Toronto: Macmillan Company, 1958); Jean Barman, The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

4. Mary Kinnear, "'Do you want your daughter to marry a farmer?': Women's Work on the Farm, 1922," in Canadian Papers in Rural History, Vol. 6, ed. Donald H. Akenson (Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1988), pp. 137-153.

5. Sara Brooks Sundberg, "Farm Women on the Canadian Prairie Frontier: The Helpmate Image," in Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History, ed. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1986), pp. 95-106.

6. Eliane Leslau Silverman, The Last Best West: Women on the Alberta Frontier, 1880-1930 (Montreal: Eden Press, 1984).

7. Seena B. Kohl, Working Together: Women and Family in Southwestern Saskatchewan (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Limited, 1976).

8. Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 93-117.

9. T. Ellis Ladner, Above the Sand Heads, (Cloverdale: D. W. Friesen & Sons, 1979), p. 11; Leon J. Ladner, The Ladners of Ladner: By Covered Wagon to the Welfare State (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1972), p. 127.

10. Paul Voisey has given the designation of "community-sponsored local history book" to local histories organized, written and produced by a committee, as opposed to those written by individuals about their own or others' lives. Paul Voisey, "Rural Local History and the Prairie West," Prairie Forum 10 (Fall 1985): 333-6.

11. Ladner, The Ladners of Ladner; Leila Hutcherson, Memories of Early Days on the Delta (Ladner: The Optimist, [1939]); William Hutcherson, Landing at Ladner (New York: Carleton Press, Inc., 1982).

12. Ladner, Above the Sand Heads, pp. 27-29.

13. John Edgar Gibbard, "Early History of the Fraser Valley, 1808-1885" (Master's thesis, History Department, University of British Columbia, 1937); John E. Gibbard, "Agricultural Settlement of the Fraser Valley," in The Fraser's History from Glaciers to Early Settlement (Burnaby: The Burnaby Historical Society, [1977]); Margaret A. Ormsby, "Agricultural Development in British Columbia," Agricultural History 19 (January 1945); George R. Winter, "Agricultural Development in the Lower Fraser Valley," in Lower Fraser Valley: Evolution of a Cultural Landscape, ed. Alfred H. Siemens (Vancouver: Tantalus Research,1968); Edward M. Terris, "Ladner: A Pioneer Study" (Master's thesis, Geography Department, Western Washington State College, 1973).

14. Gordon D. Taylor, Delta's Century of Progress (Delta: Delta Centennial Committee, 1958); Terrence Philips, Harvesting the Fraser: An Early History of Delta (Delta: Delta Museum and Archives, 1988).

15. Edith Burr diary, Delta Museum and Archives, Annie May Burr Collection, MSS DE 1983-235.

16. Mrs. A. D. Paterson, Journal, Delta Museum and Archives, Matt Rogers Papers, MSS DE 1988-07.

17. The Delta Times, 20 November 1914.

18. Among them were Suburb and Country (1904), B. C. Fruit and Farm Magazine, B. C. Farmer, and Vancouver Farm and Home.

19. Helen Gregory MacGill, Daughters, Wives and Mothers in British Columbia, Some Laws Regarding Them (Vancouver, 1914). Also Supplement 1915 and Revisions 1925, 1928, 1935 and 1939.

20. Ghorayshi, 582.

21. Province of British Columbia, Session 1892, First Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1891 (Victoria: Richard Wolfenden, 1892); Province of British Columbia, Full Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, (Victoria: William H. Cullin, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1914).

22. Ruth Schwartz Cowan, More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), pp. 69-101.

23. The University of British Columbia, Special Collections Division, British Columbia Electric Railway Company papers.

24. David Gagan, Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land, and Social Change in Mid- Victorian Peel County, Canada West (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), pp. 95-124.

25. Barman, p. 92.

26. Ladner, Above the Sand Heads, p. 29.

27. Hutcherson, Landing at Ladner, p. 51. For an expression of this phenomenon in an earlier period in Eastern Canada, see Beatrice Craig, "Immigrants in a Frontier Community: Madawaska 1785-1850," Histoire sociale / Social History XIX, 38 (November 1986): 288-289.

28. Ghorayshi, 576.

29. Interview with Murray Davie, Ladner, British Columbia, 01 June 1989.

30. Province of British Columbia, Provincial Archives, Sound and Moving Image Division, Voices: A Guide to Oral History (Victoria: Provincial Archives, 1984): p. 18.

31. Pat Vibert, ed., Heads of Household in British Columbia in 1874 (Vancouver: British Columbia Genealogical Society, 1984); Canada, Manuscript Nominal Census, 1881, Reel No. C-13284, Subdivision A - South, New Westminster, pp. 44-55; Canada, Manuscript Nominal Census, 1891, Reel No. T-6290, New Westminster Sub-District, A11.

32. See F. W. Howay and E. O. S. Scholefield, British Columbia, From the Earliest Times to the Present. Biographical, Vol. IV (Vancouver: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1914), which lists only two well-connected women among its hundreds of entries.

33. A. James Hammerton, Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration, 1830-1914 (London: Croom Helm, 1979).

34. Marilyn Barber, "The Women Ontario Welcomed: Immigrant Domestics for Ontario Homes, 1870-1930," in The Neglected Majority, Vol. Two, ed. Alison Prentice and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985). See also Genevieve Leslie, "Domestic Service in Canada, 1880-1920," in Women at Work 1850-1930, ed. Janice Acton, Penny Goldsmith and Bonnie Shepard (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974).

35. Bruce S. Elliott, Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988); Maureen Molloy, "'No Inclination to Mix With Strangers': Marriage Patterns Among Highland Scots Migrants to Cape Breton and New Zealand, 1800-1916," Journal of Family History 11 (3): 221-243; Darrell A. Norris, "Migration, Pioneer Settlement, and the Life Course: The First Families of an Ontario Township," in Canadian Papers in Rural History, Vol. 4, ed. Donald H. Akenson (Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1984).

36. Interview with Lois Black and William Black, Ladner, British Columbia, 8 July 1988.

37. Kohl perceives this as a fairly common occurrence in local

histories, where women are embedded in their family unit, a confirmation of the lack of an independent identity. Seena B. Kohl, "Image and Behavior: Women's Participation in North American Family Agricultural Enterprises," in Wava G. Haney and Jane B. Knowles, eds., Women and Farming: Changing Roles, Changing Structures (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), p. 93.

38. A. Gordon Darroch, "Migrants in the Nineteenth Century: Fugitives or Families in Motion," Journal of Family History 6 (3): 259, 266-270.

39. Paul Voisey's study of the agricultural community of Vulcan in southern Alberta during the early twentieth century is informative, but he fails to situate women properly in the picture. In fact, he has the audacity to claim that women could not possibly have worked as hard as they are reputed to have done; otherwise, the community organizations, whether religious, educational or social, which owed their existence largely to women's perseverance, could not have come into being. Paul Voisey, Vulcan: The Making of a Prairie Community (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 158.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

While the nature of the economy may exert the greatest influence on people's lives, the social context is also a significant factor. An overview of the society of early twentieth century Delta is necessary for an understanding of the milieu in which women lived, in particular those whose lives were explored through oral history interviews. Its structure, especially the institutions, customs and values, was influential in determining the course of their lives. In addition, the material conditions under which women lived, kept house, and raised children reflected the state of development of the community, technologically and socially.

The evolution of that society is also important to this discussion for it reveals not only the realities of these women's lives, but also the possibilities that became available to them as the century progressed. The acquisition of the vote by women and the gradually increasing presence of women in public life were the public manifestations of the social transformation that was occurring gradually during the early twentieth century. Farm women may have been limited to a marginal participation in the larger community because of geography and time-consuming domestic demands, but they were part of the social fabric nevertheless, as newspaper accounts confirm.

That social fabric in the early twentieth century in Delta was determined to a great degree by the ethnic composition of the population, which was largely of British stock. The 1891 census for the muni-

cipality recorded 1,289 persons contained in 207 households. Of these, 170 were households inhabited by people of European descent. The balance of households was almost equally divided between Chinese, of which there were nineteen, and native Indians, whose number was eighteen households. Of the white adult population in 1891, only 86 out of 495, or 17.4 percent, had origins other than in England, Ireland or Scotland.[1] Of those resident in Delta at the turn of the century, many had come directly from Great Britain, and many more had arrived via Ontario, or, less commonly, the Maritime provinces, where their forebears had settled originally. Delta would continue to receive emigrants from England, Scotland and Ireland, as well as migrants from Eastern Canada, until war was declared in the summer of 1914. This pattern of ethnicity, in which people of British stock predominated, endured until the opening of the tunnel under the Fraser River in 1959, permitting easy access to Vancouver and environs. Neither ethnicity nor place of origin was a significant contributing factor in any variations in women's lives.

The Fraser River Delta was occupied originally by the Chewasin Indians, who had used its shores for summer camping and fishing. Their numbers had been decimated by smallpox epidemics by the time European settlers arrived, after which they were relegated to a reserve in the area.[2] Non-native intrusion occurred after settlements had been established along Burrard Inlet, on Lulu Island, and at New Westminster. The western end of the district attracted permanent residents first, and much of the available information relates to that section. The first permanent people on the land were the Ladner brothers, William and Thomas, who pre-empted lots in 1868; others had been there previously, but they had been discouraged by the floods and freshets of the Fraser

River.[3] There are records of homesteads being established in the district, but few, if any, were retained by the original claimants.[4] Not until after the Fraser and Cariboo gold rushes had run their courses did potential farmers, such as the Ladners, seriously consider residence in the Delta. They were followed by others, so that by the end of the 1870s all the arable land had been alienated. Not all of it was acquired by practising farmers, for the blight of land speculation was rife here as elsewhere in British Columbia. William Booth, father-in-law to both William and Thomas Ladner, was a typical example. Although a resident of Victoria until 1884, Booth owned over 1500 acres in Delta by the end of the 1870s.[5] Also, a cannery owner named John Adair held 1200 acres in west Delta in these years.[6] In addition, landowners frequently acquired timber lots of ten to twenty acres, most commonly in south Delta, the area currently known as Tsawwassen.[7]

The process of immigration to the Delta is a difficult one to trace definitively, but some generalizations can be made upon examination of some of the early pioneers' family histories and other available information. In 1879, fifty-one male residents signed a petition to the provincial government requesting incorporation of the municipality of Delta. The family histories of these men, who can be reasonably regarded as representing a cross-section of the early citizens, contain some interesting revelations. Most significantly, it appears that nearly one-half the men, twenty-four, arrived in British Columbia as single individuals, while a slightly smaller number, twenty-one, came to the province as members of families.[8] This pattern of male immigration continued into the twentieth century, as is evident in the subject families, perhaps even as late as 1914, but there is no

way of confirming its extent.

It is much more difficult to unravel the process of female immigration. Existing pioneer accounts tend to focus on the male experience, and on the families of husbands and fathers. The lives of the twenty-four women of British stock who were the subjects of oral history interviews reveal something of the situation for women, although for a later period.[9] Only six of the subjects were born in British Columbia; of the remainder, twelve came to Delta as members of families, while six came as individual adults. It is not unusual that the latter women arrived with the intention of making their home with a relative or with an employer known to a relative either in the new community or in their place of origin. School teachers were the exception. From the earliest time, teaching was the principal means whereby single marriageable females were introduced to balance a predominantly male frontier. In Delta, the earliest teachers were governesses employed by those first families who could afford the expense. The first school in Delta, named Trenant Public School and built in 1874, was decidedly primitive. However, the first teacher, Miss Nellie Edwards, established a pattern which many followed, namely, marrying a local farmer and resigning her position.[10]

For pioneering women, the early years were characterized not only by material hardships, but also by psychical deprivation. Ellis Ladner, in writing about his mother's life in the 1870s, conveys a keen feeling of the distress she must have suffered at her helplessness during the illnesses and deaths of her children.[11] Nor does he disregard the loneliness these women experienced. In order for Edna Ladner to visit another woman, even her sister who lived a mile away, she had to walk through muddy fields or row a boat along the river. "It must surely have

been a hunger for the companionship of another woman ... that would induce a woman, tired from her domestic duties to contend with travelling with her small children under the conditions that prevailed."[12] The journalist, Harbord, writes about Mary Ladner, sister to Edna Ladner. He suggests some other concerns of the time, namely, fear of attack by the Indians who were initially an unknown group and, therefore, were regarded as unpredictable. In addition, he credits these women with exceptional fortitude to contend with everyday anxieties, such as the ongoing struggle against mosquitoes and other insects associated with the sloughs, as well as the hazards of the river, which in the early days flowed within yards of their homes.[13] In any event, the career of a farmer's wife in the Delta in the late nineteenth century was not for the faint of heart! It is unlikely that these women of the pioneering period insisted on white gloves for dancing or had their own calling cards to present at afternoon at-homes. The next generation could more afford the luxury of indulging in such social trappings.

There were few diversions from the daily routine of living until a church was built in Ladner in 1881. Even then, attendance at church service entailed walking or riding on a farm wagon or on horseback over the dirt road, or travelling by rowboat on the river or the slough. No doubt the appeal in attending church lay as much in the opportunity to interact with other people as in the spiritual benefits. Nevertheless, those families who lived four or five miles away could attend only irregularly.[14] With time, however, came the building of roads, the arrival of additional permanent settlers, and the development of a small business area that would become Ladner's Landing. The village began with the building of a general store and saloon in 1882,[15] although All Saints'

Anglican Church had already been erected on land donated by William Ladner. For many years, Trenant Public School served as a meeting place for the community, including the municipal council, until a municipal hall was constructed in 1883.[16] Gradually other businesses were added: the Delta Hotel about 1885, and shortly thereafter, the first butcher shop. Beyond the village site the salmon canning industry had been operating for some time, the first cannery having been set up in 1878.[17] Over time, as the population warranted, school districts were organized and elementary schools were added to serve individual farming neighbourhoods. By 1900 that process was essentially completed.[18] However, until schools had been set up for all the children, women in unserviced areas had to take on the responsibility of teaching their own offspring.

The establishment of telegraph service and steamship transportation to Victoria and New Westminster ensured that vital communication links were in place by the 1880s. Ladner secured a telephone connection with New Westminster in 1893; the exchange was located in McNeely's general store for some time.[19] Farmers organized their own cooperative telephone company in 1908, eventually joining with the village system in 1923.[20] A post office had been in existence since 1867, when it was set up in William Ladner's home, moving some time later to the general store.[21] All of these means of communication helped to ease the sense of isolation felt by women, in particular those living on farms at some distance from the village. The telephone most of all provided them with an essential link to family, friends and the larger community.[22] Later, the introduction of radio in Delta during 1922, while providing entertainment, also helped women feel connected to a larger world.[23]

To the turn of the century, Ladner's Landing continued to grow. By

1902 the village could boast the following commercial enterprises: ten general stores, four of which were operated by Chinese; two hotels, with a third in the planning stage; two butcher shops; a drugstore; a bakery; a fishmarket; two physicians; a veterinary surgeon; two stables; a "carriage builder and painter"; a harnessmaker; two bootmakers; a watchmaker; a barber; a tailor; a carpenter; a "contractor and builder"; two sawmills; two blacksmiths; a dealer in bicycles, farm implements and hardware; and a newspaper.[24] Some businesses had a short life span: tailors, dressmakers, photographers, and other non-essential services came and went. Other services, such as the maternity homes run by Mrs. Ansel and Mrs. Devereaux in the early part of the century, did not need to advertise. In 1904, banking locally became possible with the arrival of a branch of the Royal Bank of Canada.[25] The availability of an increasing variety of commercial products and services made possible a significant reduction in the work loads of women, if they could afford to become consumers.

At the same time, in spite of the growth of the local business district, many people continued to make the all-day trip for shopping to New Westminster, or, less commonly, to Vancouver. The connection with the former was one of long standing, beginning in the early days, when the main means of transportation was the Fraser River which linked the budding community with the established town upriver. In those days men commonly did the shopping for staples for the household, no doubt with a list from their wives.[26] Even a trip to town to break the monotony of their lives was beyond the reach of women with domestic responsibilities and babies to care for.

Other features that assist in transforming a collection of people

into a society were also in evidence by this time. As previously noted, the first church in Ladner was built in 1881 by and for adherents of the Anglican faith. Other churches followed, namely those of the Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Roman Catholics, in that order. The presence of churches necessitated the participation of men and women in their administration and programs. Among the Anglicans, for instance, a vestry made up of men was elected annually to serve as the administrative committee of the church. Women were involved as well, through the respective organization in each Protestant denomination, whether the Ladies' Aid, the Women's Auxiliary or the Women's Missionary Society. A church choir also required participants, male and female, and Sunday school for children was often taught by women. The Women's Christian Temperance Union, with a few male honorary members, was an active organization in this rural area in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Its presence here is not surprising since the newspaper in 1902 described Ladner as "a temperance place."[27] Participation to varying degrees in the activities of the respective church was a characteristic of the lives of all the subject women, except for two. Involvement ranged from membership in a women's group to teaching Sunday school to contributing items for the bazaars and teas, but the church remained the one institution which brought these women into contact with the larger community.

Secular organizations for men were numerous in the community by this time. Farm men could belong to two groups oriented to agriculture. The Delta Agricultural Society, founded in 1888, was responsible for overseeing horse racing and the annual agricultural exhibition held on its grounds. The Delta Farmers' Institute, whose purpose was more

educational in nature, came into being in 1898. Fishermen did not have a local organization committed to their interests, but some belonged to the Ladner branch of the Fraser River Fishermen's Union, first formed in 1893 as the Fraser River Fishermen's Benevolent Association.[28]

Fraternal organizations were also in place by the turn of the century. Among them were the Independent Order of the Oddfellows, the Loyal Orange Lodge, the Canadian Order of Foresters, the United Workmen, and the Benevolent, Protective and Independent Order of Lions. A lodge of the Masons did not exist locally until 1920.[29] Leading male citizens were to be found in an organization that wielded a measure of clout, both politically and economically. The Delta Board of Trade, the forerunner of the local Chamber of Commerce, was formed in 1910. It functioned essentially as a lobby group, claiming to represent the economic interests of the community. Over the years it promoted successfully projects such as rural mail delivery, the appointment of a resident produce inspector, solutions to labour shortages on the farms, and improved ferry service from Ladner to Woodward's Landing on the Richmond side of the river.[30]

For women, few secular organizations initially existed. Those which were successful and survived were of a philanthropic nature and embodied the notion of women as nurturers. A lodge of the Rebekahs was instituted in 1896, but disbanded in 1899, only to reappear in the 1930s.[31] The True Blue Lodge, affiliated with the Orangemen, was organized in 1899, and included women as members. However, it fell dormant in 1904 and was not revived until 1919.[32] Its principal activity appears to have been the maintenance and support of the True Blue Orphanage in New Westminster and the summer camp at Boundary Bay for

these children. The Women's Educational Club began in 1918, but it only lasted for six or seven years. Although it may have had an interest in Columbian College in New Westminster, its major purpose seems to have been to provide an educational and social outlet for women.[33] In the 1920s two other organizations for women were added, chapters of the Order of the Eastern Star and of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, both in 1922.[34] Not until 1933 was there an organization specific to farm women; in that year a branch of the Women's Institute was established, an earlier attempt in 1909 having been unsuccessful.[35] The Delta Manor Women's Club was formed in 1928, but no information has surfaced on this group.[36]

It is significant that the one group which was oriented towards women as individuals, the Women's Educational Club, was so short-lived in contrast to those emphasizing service to the community. Silverman has suggested that successful women's groups in a rural community were those which served to "prop up the primacy of marriage."[37] That may also have been true in Delta, where there was certainly some indication of the larger society's expectation that women's groups should fulfil a maternal function.

The introduction of some additional organizations for women in the district during the 1920s made it possible for women, including farm women, to become more active socially. Up to that time, farmers' wives in general, and this group of women in particular, did not play leading roles in community organizations. Reports of the activities of women's groups, with the possible exception of church groups, seldom included the name of a farm woman, especially in the first two decades of this century. Although farmers' wives were actively involved in war work,

their names hardly ever appeared as canvassers or heads of committees. In executive positions they were even more rare. Exceptions existed, of course, including among these subject women. During the campaign leading up to woman suffrage, the Delta Women's Suffrage Association was organized and Margaret Davie served on the executive committee.[38]

However, in the 1920s the increasing availability of automobiles and the ongoing improvement of local roads made mobility less of a problem for farm women. Among the subject group in particular, most had reached the stage where their children were in school and did not require full-time parental care. For most of these women the family farm operation was well-established by this time; for some women increasing prosperity allowed them more time for community involvement. When the short-lived Parent-Teachers' Association was formed in 1922, Agnes Pybus was elected to the social committee. Edna Kirkland was named a director of the Delta Agricultural Society in 1924, only the fifth year that women had served on the board. Dora Black was instrumental in the revival of the True Blue Lodge in 1919; she eventually rose to the position of provincial grand mistress.[39]

A variety of other community groups came and went over time, some of which appealed to women or required their support. Among those that existed at various times, with periodic re-incarnations, were a musical society, a dramatic society, a cornet band, a short-lived Parent-Teacher Association during the 1920s, and a lacrosse league.[40] The Ladner [Lawn] Bowling Club appeared in 1916 and became a permanent fixture. A football club on Westham Island was enthusiastically supported from early in the 1900s.[41] For marksmen, there has been a Ladner Gun Club dating from at least 1903.[42] Few organizations for children existed. As in other parts

of the country, only clubs affiliated with the churches, such as the Canadian Girls in Training or the Trail Rangers, had any chance of survival, before the advent of the 4-H movement.[43]

Other amenities were also available to the citizens of the municipality in 1902. A Mechanics' Institute Reading Room, containing a selection of newspapers and periodicals, was open to all, whether paid-up members or not. It also housed the provincial travelling library until such time as the Reading Room was closed, sometime around 1905. Then the government library was transferred to the municipal council chamber, where borrowing was supervised by the municipal clerk, and periodically the stock of books was rotated.[44] Moving pictures were shown for the first time in Ladner in 1908, but were not a regular occurrence until McNeely's Hall became available for use in 1909.[45] A small high school was constructed in 1913, the same year in which a new Tudor-style municipal hall was completed.[46]

Ladner was not a total backwater where cultural activities were concerned. The famous half-Mohawk poet, Pauline Johnson, stopped at Ladner as part of her tour in August 1902, but cancelled the performance to emphasize her annoyance at the audience's inability to be punctual.[47] Her displeasure was not permanent, however; in October 1909, she made another appearance before a local audience, at which time the question of punctuality did not arise.[48] Music recitals featuring noted singers from Vancouver and New Westminster and dramas presented by travelling theatre companies were held from time to time.[49] The occasional vaudeville company stopped in Ladner to entertain, and lantern slide shows and lectures on topics such as "Life in the Tropics" took place at intervals.[50] The increasing availability of entertainment and recreation

supplied a diversion from the routine of everyday life for women as well as men, provided they could afford to take advantage of these opportunities.

With the probable exception of the first two decades of pioneering activity, a lively social life was carried on in this community. Among farmers, much of it took place among small groups of people living in close proximity.[51] The number and condition of the roads controlled social interaction at the best of times. The original mud roads gave way eventually to planked thoroughfares, which in turn were superseded by gravel in the early twentieth century.[52] Even into the war years, by which time roads were much improved, most of a family's social life revolved around the family itself and its immediate neighbours. Neighbourhood socializing among farmers helped to cement the interdependence that was essential during harvesting time. As reported by oral history informants, the farm women studied tended to socialize most frequently with others living nearby, thereby consolidating these cooperative alliances. Neighbours were also essential when a crisis of illness or death befell a family. When a neighbour named Kennedy was stricken with appendicitis, John and Ella Honeyman took in one of his three children. Upon his death five months later, Ella "went to see what I could do for Mrs. Kennedy," and drove the family to New Westminster.[53]

In the village, there was greater opportunity for a wider social circle. There were also, of course, the larger social functions which took in the entire community. Since the village of Ladner has always supported a farm population in the surrounding district, the timing of these activities reflected that reliance on the agricultural economic base. Consequently, most social events took place in the winter, when

the demands of farming were much reduced. In fact, for many years the Farmers' Ball, held in the first months of the year, was the social event of the year, attracting between three and four hundred people.[54] Smaller dances, lasting until the early hours of the morning, were also held throughout the winter months, usually sponsored by a club or society. For instance, the Westham Island Football Club regularly hosted a dance in the winter, apparently well attended by people in the community.[55] Attendance was undoubtedly much improved after 1910 when a bridge was built over Canoe Pass, connecting the island with the rest of the municipality. Dances were also held in private homes, presumably encompassing smaller crowds.[56] For women all of these social occasions were enjoyable no doubt, but for some at least there was also work to be done, as local women invariably prepared the food that was served at public social gatherings.

There were other means for carrying on social intercourse. For women, church fund-raising activities, such as bazaars and teas, also represented an opportunity to spend time in the company of other women. Men, not exclusively farmers, attended auctions with much the same ulterior motive, in addition to the business of purchasing livestock and machinery. The fall ploughing match sponsored by the Farmers' Institute was another occasion for male camaraderie.[57] An annual fair, sponsored by the Delta Agricultural Society and first held in 1888, provided an occasion for both sexes to socialize and to share practical information on the day-to-day aspects of their lives.[58] Local fairs and exhibitions were among the few occasions when, for a very limited number of women, their handicrafts and the products of their kitchens or gardens were submitted to general public scrutiny.[59]

In the summer months, the site of social activity shifted to Boundary Bay, a resort area in the southernmost part of the municipality. The Directory for 1918 for the first time lists the location separately, describing it as a "summer resort ... with 400 [inhabitants] in summer occupying summer cottages and camps, as Boundary Bay provides the safest and longest stretch of bathing beach in the province." Some local families, as well as residents from Vancouver and New Westminster, had summer camps there as early as 1902, if not sooner. Permanent dwellings, usually summer cottages, were not erected until 1913. The accessibility of the locale made it a popular summer place for local residents who, if they were not among the fortunate few property owners, could rent accommodation.[60] However, summer, even if all or part of it could be spent at Boundary Bay, was not a holiday for women. Their domestic responsibilities continued, which in this locale meant labouring under primitive conditions, with no electricity or running water, until the mid-1930s.

Up to the time of World War I, the character of the society that evolved in the municipality did not change much. The population increased to about 4,000 by 1918, but the ethnic composition remained much the same. Many of those of British stock aspired to the middle class and attempted to introduce into Delta society some of its social observances, some of which were recorded in the local newspaper. "At the Shamrock ball gentlemen are requested to remember that white gloves are called for" was the notice contained in The Delta Times in February 1912.[61] On occasion, notices such as the following, appeared in the newspaper column carrying local news: "Mrs. Herbert J. Kirkland will be 'At Home' to her friends on Thursday afternoon, July the 19th inst. Afterwards on the first Thursday of each month."[62] Sometimes a newly

married woman was reported to be receiving visitors in her home for the first time. When Mrs. Margaret Davie, an oral history subject, returned to Delta from Ontario as a bride in the winter of 1904, she marked her new status in local society by entertaining in this way for the first time.[63] Her contemporary, Mrs. Mabel Coleman, another oral history subject, who married in the following spring, did likewise.[64] Since the above-mentioned women were farmers' wives, it is apparent that such customs had permeated through the whole society and were not restricted to village inhabitants. Many landowners gave names, appropriate or otherwise, to their holdings. This constituted perhaps the most visible attempt to replicate Victorian values and to emphasize their status as landowners. Some examples are Bloomfield, Green Croft, Bayview Hall, and Tiptree Hall.[65] The latter Gibbard labelled as "pretentious", probably a not inaccurate evaluation, given the utilitarian nature of the earliest accommodations.[66]

A certain amount of complacency in this society derived from being able to treat visible minorities as inferior. In that respect, Ladner and the Delta were no different from anywhere else in British Columbia. While only small numbers of Japanese and East Indians lived in the community, the Chinese and native Indian populations were large enough to be a significant factor. The Chinese have formed a part of the society from the late 1870s when the first salmon cannery was opened. The 1881 census counted seventy-four Chinese males, grouped in two households.[67] By 1891, 361 Chinese were listed, of whom only one was female. Most of these men were connected with the cannery business, and lived in Chinatown, located to the west of the village of Ladner. A significant number, however, were farm labourers, many of whom were

included in the households where they worked.[68] Of course, not all of these Chinese men who were employed by farmers or townspeople did outside work; as often they were hired to cook or do laundry. Many oral history informants remembered a Chinese cook in their family's household during their childhood. Some Chinese also farmed for themselves, renting several acres from a farmer, often their employer, and growing vegetables for sale, particularly potatoes.[69] During World War I, when farm labour was scarce, open resentment surfaced against the Chinese, who were farming profitably for themselves on rented land, rather than making themselves available as cheap labour for white farmers.[70]

In the cannery, as Ellis Ladner has described in detail, Chinese men were segregated into certain jobs.[71] The same was true in farming: the Chinese worked in gardens, harvested potatoes in the fall, and occasionally milked cows. They also dug the underdrains and ditches. The public view of the Chinese was anything but tolerant. Ellis Ladner described their living conditions as pathetic, but his perspective was that of white detachment.[72] Others were less reserved. The newspaper in the early 1900s referred openly to "Chinks", who were usually nameless. Oral histories and journals made similar references, without any self-consciousness.[73]

Indians were viewed no more kindly. In the pages of the local newspaper they hardly existed, except for a rare mention in relation to an alcohol charge or some other misdemeanour.[74] Local people spoke of them in disparaging terms, even though the Indians at Chewasin did farm their reserve land early in the twentieth century.[75] They, too, had their occupational slots in society. Indians worked in certain unskilled positions in the cannery, where Ellis Ladner found their attitude to

life and, more particularly, to work, alien and frustrating.[76] The men were rarely found working on farms, and only very occasionally did Indian women do domestic work. A rare reference appears in Leila Hutcherson's recollections of the 1870s, where she mentions "old Chief Steele of Chewasin who came to dig potatoes for my father in bare feet and nondescript apparel" and his wife, Mary, "who came to wash clothes for my mother."[77] Sometimes band members came into the village to trade their woven baskets for old clothes.[78]

World War I was a time of major change for the people of Delta. Since the local weekly ceased to publish in November 1914, and another newspaper out of Marpole did not begin to fill the gap until February of the following year, it is difficult to evaluate the enthusiasm for enlistment in the defense of the empire. In February 1915, it was reported that twenty-three volunteers for service overseas had left from the Delta.[79] Support for the war was strong in this community, as far as can be deduced from newspaper reports. This was not surprising in view of the ethnicity of its people, some of whom were relatively recent arrivals from Great Britain. By war's end, Delta had contributed 140 men and two women to the front, and a dozen more men who had been stationed initially at locations such as Vernon.[80] Twenty-seven men did not return from the Great War; it is unknown how many more were lost, in the sense that their lives were permanently scarred.[81]

Those who stayed behind did their "bit" as well.[82] A branch of the Canadian Patriotic Fund, established to assist in the support of soldiers' dependents, was organized very early, in the second month of the war. A women's section, the Delta Women's Patriotic Society, was organized in the same month, followed by a second group, the Comfort

Club, a year later. Both groups performed admirably during the course of the war. Among other achievements, these women knitted thousands of socks, rolled miles of bandages, raised thousands of dollars, and made business-like decisions about the allocation of money and resources. Their experience established that women could have a place in public life, which had not been evident or allowed earlier.

The contribution of women to the war effort was frequently cited by suffragists as a justification for the vote for women. On the local scene, the subject of woman suffrage was under discussion in several quarters during the early months of 1914.[83] However, the war appeared to have diverted people's attention, so that the topic was not addressed again until April 1916 when woman suffrage was included as a referendum in the provincial general election.[84] Three months later, the Delta Women's Suffrage Association was formed, operating under the umbrella of the Provincial Women's Suffrage Referendum Association.[85] Prominent citizens, male and female, villagers and farmers, were elected to serve on the executive. The Weekly Gazette, the newspaper serving the region, published letters and articles written by well-known residents, including politicians, supporting woman suffrage.[86] In the election of that fall, the local voters came out in favour of woman suffrage, although the opposition was not insignificant. The results of the referendum in Delta were as follows: 1077 voters were in favour and 474 opposed. Prohibition also carried in the municipality, but with a somewhat smaller majority.[87]

The outbreak of the Spanish influenza epidemic coincided with the winding down of hostilities in Europe. The first cases were reported in the telephone exchange in Ladner on October 19, 1918, slightly later

than in Vancouver or New Westminster. Public meetings were cancelled, and churches and schools were closed. A temporary hospital for twenty patients was set up, with a staff of five nurses assisted by volunteers from the community, mostly women. While the total number of deaths is not known, the most severely stricken in the district was one farming family in which two young daughters perished. By mid-February life began to return to normal, and on March 1 the temporary hospital was dismantled, although cases of influenza were still being reported as late as the end of March. Some agitation for a local hospital ensued, but nothing came of it.[88]

After the upheaval of the previous decade, the 1920s was a period of recovery and consolidation here as in the rest of the country. As noted in the following chapter, the 1930s was a decade apart, a trying time for all, including farmers. However, in terms of change as it affected farm people, the 1930s could also be characterized as the period during which electrification was extended to many rural homes. Electricity was introduced in stages, beginning in late 1906, when Ladner acquired street lighting for the village and electric lights for the inhabitants from the British Columbia Electric Railway Company (B. C. Electric). Those families on farms immediately adjacent to the village and on the main roads east and west for several miles also benefited at this time.[89] The capacity was there, whether or not people were able financially to avail themselves of the service. It appeared that the company installed electricity in response to demand in the early years, rather than attempting to create a demand. In 1913, a request from Delta council for additional electrification was received favourably by B. C. Electric, resulting in the second stage of

electrification which brought power to East Delta.[90]

Thereafter, in-fill installation appears to have taken place on a piecemeal basis into the 1930s and early 1940s. Even in the mid-1930s, during the worst part of the Depression, expansion of electrical service did not cease, so that by 1939 the majority of homes in the municipality had been connected to electrical power.[91] The few remaining isolated pockets of farm homes were electrified during the years of World War II, usually at great expense to the farmers.[92]

The political life of the community was not particularly remarkable. From the time of incorporation of the municipality in 1879, local politics has centered around the municipal council, where party affiliations did not play a direct role.[93] In the first four decades of the twentieth century, provincial politics was dominated generally by the two traditional national parties. However, there was no longstanding tradition of loyalty to one particular party, as the voters were not averse to expressing their displeasure by turning out the sitting member. These decades were characterized by frequent switches between parties. Fringe groups such as the Communist Party elicited only marginal support in the municipality, the farmers who made up the largest percentage of the electorate seemingly preferring to be represented by one of the two mainstream governing parties. Even during the 1930s, when the electoral district registered its disaffection with those parties by electing a member of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in 1933, the majority of farmers in Delta municipality continued to support either the Liberal or Conservative candidate.[94] On the federal scene as well, loyalties alternated between the Liberals and the Conservatives,[95] a reflection of the concerns and backgrounds of the

inhabitants. Women did not hold elected public office in this community until recent times.[96]

A detailed study of society in Delta, along the lines of Paul Voisey's work on Vulcan in southern Alberta, is obviously not possible here.[97] What has been attempted is an exploration of the various facets of the social context which provided the parameters within which farm women, as well as town women, lived in the early twentieth century. The nature of that society and its values, customs and institutions were reflected in the everyday lives of women. How that society changed, both in physical terms and in outlook, over the course of four decades is also important. Social change in its various forms, from physical modernization to the increased participation of women in public life, had a direct effect on the subject women. The lives of farm women, like those of women generally, began to change during those years, as women began to move, however tentatively, beyond the gender roles accepted by their own community.

NOTES

1. Canada, Manuscript Nominal Census, Delta Municipality, 1891. Reel No. T-6290, New Westminster Sub-District, A11.

2. Terrence Philips, Harvesting the Fraser: An Early History of Delta (Delta: Delta Museum and Archives, 1988), pp. 7-8.

3. T. Ellis Ladner, Above the Sand Heads (Cloverdale: D. W. Friesen & Sons, 1979), p. 13; Leon J. Ladner, The Ladners of Ladner: By Covered Wagon to the Welfare State (Vancouver: Mitchell Press Limited, 1972), p. 129; V. Harbord Harbord, From Beaver Dam and Forest to Harvest Field and Meadow ([1939]), p. 241.

4. Only two homesteads were found in the Register of Homesteads, Volume I, namely Lot 111 in the name of William Fisher, abandoned 1873, and part of Lot 107 in the name of Peter Matheson, abandoned 1917.

5. Land Title Office, New Westminster, Register of Absolute Fees, Volume 4 and Volume 6.

6. Leon Ladner, Map, p. 128.

7. See Absolute Fee Book, Volume 23, Folio 93, in which a twenty-acre timber lot was divided four ways among members of the Arthur family.

8. Delta Museum and Archives, copy of petition for incorporation. It was not possible to locate information about six of the signatories.

9. Oral history interviews conducted by the writer between 1988 and 1991.

10. Ellis Ladner, pp. 69-70.

11. Ellis Ladner, p. 152.

12. Ellis Ladner, p. 29.

13. Harbord, pp. 238-246.

14. Ellis Ladner, pp. 74-76.

15. Ellis Ladner, p. 77.

16. Ellis Ladner, p. 73; The Ladner Optimist, 75th Anniversary Issue, 10 November 1954, Section 3, p. 5.

17. Ellis Ladner, pp. 77-80.

18. Edward M. Terris, "Ladner: A Pioneer Study," (Master's thesis, Western Washington State College, 1973), p. 72. Corrected by Margaret Leighton, Delta Museum and Archives.

19. The Ladner Optimist, 75th Anniversary Issue, 10 November 1954, Section 3, p. 2.

20. The Weekly Optimist, 2 August 1923 and 23 August 1923.

21. Gibbard, p. 294; Ellis Ladner, pp. 47, and 77.

22. Eliane Leslau Silverman, The Last Best West: Women on the Alberta Frontier, 1880-1930 (Montreal: Eden Press, 1984), p. 147.

23. The Weekly Optimist, 18 May 1922.

24. 1902 is the earliest date for which verifiable information is available. The Delta News, advertising, 22 February 1902 to 31 December 1902; Henderson's British Columbia Gazetter and Directory, Ninth Edition for 1902 (Vancouver: Henderson Publishing Company, 1902), pp. 180-182.

25. The Delta Times, 9 January 1904.

26. One oral history informant recalled having to wear shoes that were too small because her father had purchased the wrong size and would not be making another trip to New Westminster for some time. Interview with Ellen Sibbald and Margaret Tamboline, Ladner, British Columbia, 1 May 1989.

27. The Weekly Gazette, 26 January 1918; The Delta Times, 17 December 1907; The Delta News, 23 August 1902.

28. Gordon D. Taylor, Delta's Century of Progress (Delta: Delta Centennial Committee, 1958), pp. 79-81.

29. Taylor, p. 82-83; The Delta News, 25 October 1902; The Delta Board of Trade, The Prolific Delta: Where and What It is ([1912]), p. 21.

30. The Delta Times, 18 January 1913; The Weekly Gazette, 17 March 1917, and 21 April 1917.

31. The Weekly Optimist, 15 February 1934; Taylor, pp. 82-83, is incorrect.

32. Taylor, p. 92.

33. The Weekly Gazette, 2 March 1918, 5 June 1920; The Weekly Optimist, 20 April 1922, 18 May 1922, and 9 May 1925; Taylor, p. 92.

34. Taylor, p. 83.

35. Taylor, p. 85; British Columbia's Women's Institute, Modern Pioneers, 1909-1959 (Evergreen Press Ltd., [1959]), pp. 38 and 57.

36. Taylor, p. 85.

37. Eliane Leslau Silverman, "Women's Perceptions of Marriage on the Alberta Frontier," in Building Beyond the Homestead: Rural History on the Prairies, ed. David C. Jones (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1985), p. 61.

38. The Weekly Gazette, 8 July 1916.

39. The Weekly Optimist, 8 June 1922, 7 February 1924, and 23 June 1934.

40. The Delta News, 15 March 1902.

41. The Delta Times, 24 December 1904.

42. The Delta News, 11 April 1903.

43. The Weekly Optimist, 27 March 1924 and 4 April 1924; The Ladner Optimist, 75th Anniversary Issue, Section 3, p. 12.

44. The Delta News, 4 October 1902; The Delta Times, 20 August 1904, 12 November 1904, 8 April 1905, and 3 May 1913.

45. Philips, p. 53; The Delta Times, 14 July 1908 and 24 July 1909.

46. Philips, p. 53. However, classes for high school students had been held since the fall of 1909. The Delta Times, 28 August 1909.

47. The Delta News, 23 August and 30 August 1902.

48. The Delta Times, 30 October 1909.

49. The Delta Times, 21 January 1911; The Weekly Gazette, 1 October 1921.

50. The Delta Times, 17 January 1914; The Weekly Gazette, 27 November 1915.

51. Ellis Ladner, pp. 28-30.

52. Philips, p. 27.

53. John Honeyman diary, 13 February, 30 March, 21 June and 22 June 1902; The Delta News, 28 June 1902.

54. The Weekly Gazette, 28 February 1920.

55. The Delta Times, 18 March 1905.

56. The Delta Times, 27 January 1912.

57. The Delta Times, 19 March 1907, 8 September 1908, 18 December 1909, and 16 November 1912.

58. The Weekly Gazette, 4 October 1919.

59. David C. Jones, "'From Babies to Buttonholes": Women's Work at Agricultural Fairs," Alberta History 29 (4) (Autumn 1981): 26-32.

60. Wrigley's British Columbia Directory, 1918 (Vancouver: Wrigley Directories, Limited, 1918), p. 98; The Delta News, 21 June 1902; The Prolific Delta, p. 16.

61. The Delta Times, 10 February 1912.

62. The Delta Times, 14 July 1906.

63. The Delta Times, 26 March 1904.

64. The Delta Times, 1 April 1905.

65. The British Columbia Directory for the Years 1882-3 (Victoria, B.C.: R. T. Williams, Publisher, 1882), pp. 247-249.

66. Gibbard, p. 294. See Cole Harris, "Industry and the Good Life around Idaho Peak," Canadian Historical Review LXVI, 3 (1985), p. 338 for other examples of this behaviour.

67. Canada, Manuscript Nominal Census, Delta Municipality, 1881. Reel No. C-13284, Subdivision A - South, New Westminster, pp. 44-55.

68. Ms. Nominal Census, 1891.

69. Douglas Honeyman diaries, 2 March 1922, 13 April 1923, 15 December 1932, and 15 August 1935.

70. The Weekly Gazette, 9 June 1917.

71. Ellis Ladner, pp. 104-109.

72. Ellis Ladner, p. 117.

73. The Delta News, 22 February 1922; The Delta Times, 2 April 1914; Douglas Honeyman diary, 31 March 1922 and 10 June 1922.

74. The Delta Times, 3 November 1908, and 23 August 1913; The Weekly Optimist, 8 February 1934.

75. This attitude persists as local residents' view of the past, unless they are reminded, as in at least one oral history interview, that threshing was done on reserve land. The Indians also grew potatoes for the evaporating plant. See The Delta Times, 2 April 1914.

76. Ellis Ladner, p. 104, pp. 119-131.

77. L. M. Hutcherson, Memories of Early Days on the Delta (Ladner: The Optimist, [1939]), p. 26.

78. The Weekly Optimist, 22 June 1922.

79. The Weekly Gazette, 13 February 1915, and 20 February 1915.

80. The Weekly Gazette, 25 December 1915, and 22 July 1916.

81. The Weekly Gazette, 26 July 1919. One oral history informant revealed that her father's nerves were so shattered by his experiences in World War I that there were some farm jobs that he simply could not perform.

82. Except where otherwise noted, the information in respect of community activity during World War I is based on a paper entitled, "The War Work of Women in Rural British Columbia, 1914-1919," presented by the writer at the Qualicum Conference, January 1991. The source of the information is almost entirely The Weekly Gazette for the war years.

83. The Delta Times, 21 and 28 February 1914.

84. The Weekly Gazette, 15 April 1916.

85. The Weekly Gazette, 1 July and 8 July 1916.

86. The Weekly Gazette, 29 July 1916, 5 August 1916, and 26 August 1916.

87. The Weekly Gazette, 23 September 1916. The results of the referendum on prohibition in Delta were as follows: 983 for and 619 against.

88. The Weekly Gazette, 26 October 1918, 2 and 9 November 1918, and 19 December 1918, 4 and 18 January 1919, 22 February 1919, 1 and 29 March 1919.

89. The Delta Times, 12 May 1906, 30 June 1906, 15 December and 22 December 1906, 8 January 1907, and 27 August 1907.

90. University of British Columbia, The Library, Special Collections Division, British Columbia Electric Railway Company Papers, Box 41, B1185, No. 1-3, Correspondence Outward dated 06 December 1911, 22 March 1913, and 25 March 1913; Box 1A, B72, Correspondence Outward dated 3 January 1913, 17 January 1913, and 27 January 1913.

91. British Columbia Electric Railway Company Papers, Customer Service Applications, Box 5, Roll No. 220, Applications of Smith Wright and Sidney Wright, Boundary Bay Road, November 1929, Connection dated February 1930; The Weekly Optimist, 10 January 1935; Farm Service News, British Columbia Electric Railway Company, November 1938; Delta Museum and Archives, Delta Board of Trade Minute Books, 1910-1971, MSS DE 981-88; Peter Hrysko, The Delta Centenary (Delta: By the Author,1979), p. 104.

92. Interview with Margaret Berney, Ladner, British Columbia, 8 February 1991.

93. Taylor, p. 68.

94. The Delta News, 27 November 1909; The Weekly Gazette, 23 September 1916 and 5 February 1921; The Weekly Optimist, 23 August 1928, 2 November 1933, 3 June 1937, and 23 October 1941; The Ladner Optimist, 20 September 1945.

95. Taylor, p. 69.

96. Gwen Szychter, "'Not a favour, not a courtesy, but justice'," South Delta Sounder Magazine, September 1991, pp. 8-10.

97. Paul Voisey. Vulcan: The Making of a Prairie Community. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.

CHAPTER THREE

AN ECONOMY BASED ON AGRICULTURE

The lives of all people are influenced by the nature of the economy in which they live. For women on farms in Delta, being part of an economy based on agriculture had profound implications for their day-to-day lives. The kind of farming in which the family was engaged, and the size of the operation and its stage of development, determined the kind of work there was to be done, in which women might or might not participate. The type of farming also determined whether income was received regularly, as in dairy or poultry farming, or irregularly, following the sale of certain commodities after harvest, such as hay, oats or potatoes.

The size of the farm household and consequently the amount of work to be done in the home by a farm wife fluctuated according to the seasonal demands of the farm. Whether the farmer's wife had any leisure time to spend in personal pursuits or community activities resulted also from those occupational demands. The level of prosperity attained by the farm operation, which resulted from a number of factors, determined how much in the way of material conveniences or even luxuries she might enjoy. In short, many aspects of a farm woman's life were shaped by the nature of the economic sector in which the family was engaged. For all of these reasons it is important to explore the agricultural economy of Delta in the early years of the twentieth century.

In spite of the gushing testimonials in various publications that referred to the Delta as "unexcelled for fertility of soil" or as being

in "the very highest state of perfection from an Agricultural [sic] point of view,"[1] the first settlers who arrived with the intention of establishing farms did not have an easy time of it. Although the alluvial silt deposited by the Fraser River over thousands of years was well-suited for farming, it required years of hard labour utilizing relatively primitive equipment to prepare this fertile ground for agriculture. There was little in the way of land clearing, breaking, seeding, and harvesting of crops that was not done by hand.[2] Clearing the land was an expensive and arduous undertaking. While the region was not heavily forested, the smaller growth which predominated, such as willow and hardhack, together with the existing trees, had to be removed. Logs and tree stumps deposited and embedded by the river and the ocean had to be dug out.[3]

In addition, since the greatest percentage of land in the municipality lies barely ten feet above sea level, much of the terrain had to be dyked and drained.[4] The earliest rudimentary dykes were made of unstabilized earth, which was subject to frequent deterioration by the periodic flooding of the Fraser River. Dyking was done initially on an individual basis, each farmer being concerned to protect his own holdings.[5] Excavating underground drainage of the land was even more arduous and labour-intensive, much of the work being done by Chinese men.[6] A variety of drainage designs was employed and the project was of such magnitude that it was still being carried out past the turn of the century.[7] Improved dyking for areas like Delta was not constructed until the late 1890s, since municipal governments, with limited revenues, were reluctant to undertake expensive public works. After the disastrous flood of 1894, the provincial government joined with the municipal body

in financing the construction of permanent dykes.[8]

The municipality contains about 50,000 acres of land, of which about 40,000 are arable.[9] Reports extol the value of Delta farm land around the turn of the century, but research indicates that the figures circulated require a healthy dose of skepticism. Terris, a geographer who studied the region, uses secondary sources to arrive at a price range of $30 to $100 for land in Delta in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. He further states that in 1910 the land of the Delta was "valued at a minimum of three hundred dollars an acre, being the most expensive farmland in the Province."[10] Primary sources indicate that there was indeed a gradual escalation in prices after 1900, but also substantial fluctuation. Ads in publications such as Farm Lands in British Columbia and reports in the local newspaper reveal that prices for farm land ranged from $ 3 to $ 700 per acre in the years prior to the First World War.[11] In the 1920s only one transaction that included the selling price was published in the newspaper, making it difficult to know whether $ 200 an acre was, in fact, an average price for the period.[12] Similarly in the 1930s, the one example in which the asking price was quoted as $ 280 per acre is insufficient for comparison.[13]

Generalizations, such as those made by Terris, are misleading since they ignore the lack of uniformity in the land. Just as land varied in quality, degree of development and distance from services, so it also varied in price. Terris's acceptance of the unsubstantiated information contained in secondary sources is also problematic in that it has created inaccuracy that others have relied upon and reproduced. Perhaps the editor of The Delta News summarized the situation best by saying, "as to the exact value to place on land, it is hard to do, owing

to difference in the localities, water and drainage facilities ..."[14]

However, it is not inaccurate to say that getting established in farming was an expensive undertaking in part because of the cost of the land. A major investment of capital was needed by men who did not acquire land through inheritance. Some men who entered into farming independently were able to do so by saving their earnings from years of employment on a farm and by establishing a personal reputation in the community. With sufficient savings to make a down payment on a piece of land, and being able to obtain a mortgage on the strength of their good name, these men undertook the risky business of farming. Of the farm families explored through oral history interviews, five of the male heads of households followed this route. For instance, local lore celebrates the fact that Alex Davie, a "self-made man," had arrived in Delta in 1894 with less than $20 in his pocket.[15] The alternative, but less popular, way of gaining entry into farm ownership was through renting a farm and eventually working into a financial position of being able to buy land of one's own. Two such examples were found among the subject families. Through either method, the Delta farm owner started out encumbered by a major debt load, and often remained so, with mortgages placed repeatedly on the land.[16]

Mortgages were available from private individuals, usually members of the community, although by the early twentieth century investment companies began to appear on the scene as mortgagees. For aspiring farmers it appeared impossible to farm without mortgage financing, a heavy burden in an occupation generally characterized as a gamble. Burdened by such an encumbrance, the farm family had to focus on the reduction of the debt, at the same time that the family unit was estab-

lishing itself on the farm. In these early years of enterprise establishment a farm wife might be required to participate in the farm operation. Most likely she would be expected to make an economic contribution in the form of the postponement of personal and household consumption.[17] With income being directed toward the farming operation, the house and conveniences for the farm wife had a very low priority. This necessity of "doing without" undoubtedly made these people unsympathetic to the demands of workers for a reasonable wage.

The acquisition of land is described in masculine terms since there is no indication among the people studied that women contributed capital to land purchase. In any event, married women had few rights in terms of property in the early twentieth century. Where real property was concerned, dower rights did not exist in British Columbia after 1912, so that land could be conveyed without the wife's consent. The Dower Act, together with its amendments, by which a man could "deprive his widow of all and every claim upon his real estate," was repealed in 1927.[18] Records at the Land Title Office in New Westminster reveal that in all but one instance among the subject families, farm land was held solely by men. In that one exception the names of both husband and wife appeared on the certificate of title, but not as joint tenants, a status which carries with it survivor rights.[19] Some women in the families studied did own very small parcels of land in their own right, but the reason for this is unknown.

It was essentially mixed farming that was carried on in the municipality. However, lack of access to markets in conjunction with the undeveloped condition of the land limited early farming to stock raising, primarily beef cattle and draught animals, both oxen and

horses, and the cultivation of hay, mostly timothy, for shipment to Victoria. Other pursuits, such as dairy farming and poultry raising, were confined largely to the sale of surplus goods produced for household use. At the turn of the century, the economy of the Delta area was still in the early stage of market development. Women continued to make butter and raise chickens for their households' use, but their participation in the market in the late nineteenth century remained limited to the sale of household surpluses. Some of the goods produced were exchanged for staples with merchants in Ladner or Port Guichon. Several stores took eggs and butter, one even paying cash.[20]

As Cohen has observed for later nineteenth-century Ontario, as a result of "urban growth and improved forms of transportation, the demand for eggs, dressed poultry, dairy products, and fruits and vegetables ... increased considerably."[21] Increasingly after the turn of the century with the growth in the urban centres of Vancouver and New Westminster, more and more women in Delta began to engage in farm production oriented to the market. At least until the time of World War I, a significant number of individuals, both women and men, took their produce via boat to the public market at New Westminster on Fridays.[22] At least one of the women in this study, Rachel Brandrith, is known to have made regular trips to the market at New Westminster in the early 1900s to sell butter, eggs, milk, chickens and fresh vegetables.[23] This was a major undertaking for a woman, as it necessitated a sixteen-hour day on the part of the vendor, but it was a means for marketing some farm products and for bringing some cash income into the household to supplement the irregular income earned from commodities such as hay and oats. Not all families could participate, especially those with young children.

However, when the men who normally went to market were otherwise occupied with haying or threshing, even these women had to arrange to attend the market,[24] perhaps with their young children in tow.

As more and more land came under tillage, the variety of field crops expanded to include not only hay, but also oats, which became the principal grain crop, as well as wheat, barley, potatoes, mangolds and turnips. By the turn of the century, production of hay, oats and potatoes for the market had begun to constitute the farmers' primary source of revenue. Wheat and barley were grown in smaller quantities for feeding to livestock and chickens.[25] Some raising of animals also went on, although this was of lesser importance than field crops and dairying. Victoria and Nanaimo remained the principal markets for Delta farmers, taking advantage of the convenient water highway as a transportation route across the Gulf of Georgia. This continued heavy reliance on field crops which brought in revenue during a limited period of time after harvesting, perhaps six months, required the ongoing involvement of women in small-scale production for the market to ensure year-round income. Not until dairying became more developed could women give up these efforts to supplement the income of the farm enterprise. Such specialization in field crops also necessitated deferral of consumption and reliance on merchants' credit, so that only the necessities of life could be purchased.[26]

Since dairying is the main aspect of farming in which women were most likely to be involved, as Cohen has demonstrated,[27] a comparatively detailed examination of its evolution in this district is necessary. Until near the turn of the century the uncontrolled pollution of the Fraser River by the fish canneries retarded the development of

dairying.[28] A shift in the direction of farming toward greater concentration in dairying was accelerated by the arrival of two conveniences: clean running water and a railroad. Water was piped from East Delta to service the rest of the municipality, beginning in 1911. "Dairying is characterized by the large quantities of fresh water that it requires," as Taylor claims.[29] Of equal importance was the arrival of the railway. In May 1903, the Great Northern Railway completed a branch line from Port Guichon on the western edge of the municipality to Cloverdale.[30] While the shipping of hay and oats by water to Victoria continued up until 1920, dairying became a profitable alternative with the arrival of this transportation link. However, dairying on a substantial scale was not an entirely new venture in the region, having been carried on since the late 1890s.

In April 1895, the Delta Creamery, made up of local shareholders, not all of whom were farmers, was incorporated as a cooperative venture. It took in whole milk and shipped 80 percent of its substantial output to Victoria.[31] Many of the owners of dairy herds in the Delta participated in this operation; in 1902 the Creamery claimed to be supplied by thirty-seven farmers milking one hundred cows.[32] Some dairymen remained aloof, however, shipping to Vancouver and Victoria.[33] Others marketed home-made butter on a modest scale, Victoria being one of the destinations.[34] There were also private entrepreneurs offering their milk directly to the public. W. A. Kirkland, for example, in 1902 advertised home delivery of milk from his Hazel Grove Dairy.[35] Such independent operations were still in existence in the 1930s, ensuring the ongoing participation of women in dairying on a smaller scale.[36]

The completion of the rail line sounded the death knell for the

Creamery, however, for it made possible greater competition for farmers' output by opening up large and reasonably accessible markets for fluid milk, namely, New Westminster, and, later, Vancouver. The inevitable happened and in the fall of 1906, the Delta Creamery was liquidated.[37] Subsequent attempts to revive a creamery were unsuccessful, and farmers were forced to ship their milk or cream farther afield, to Vancouver or even farther away, up the Fraser Valley to Sardis.[38]

The B. C. Milk Condensing Company and its milk condensing plant, located between Ladner and Port Guichon, constituted the next phase in the development of a local dairy industry. Start-up took place in May 1914, with great expectations of extensive community support, especially since the company sent out drivers to collect the milk from the farmers.[39] Initially, fifty-six local farmers signed up to supply the condensory with milk, but World War I seriously disrupted production. Later in 1914 the condensory was shut down, only to reopen in mid-1916 under the new ownership of Pacific Milk.[40] In this incarnation the condensory survived until 1928 when it was closed, having been taken over by the Fraser Valley Milk Producers' Association (FVMPA) in 1924.[41]

The appeal of cooperatives lay primarily in the stability they brought to the marketplace, both in price and predictability of demand. The FVMPA's intention was to draw all the dairy farmers in the Lower Mainland into one group so that they could, according to The Delta Times, "practically dictate prices to the dairyman and the consumer and thus get a fair living profit from their milk."[42] However, the recession of 1914 and the First World War intervened, setting back its inauguration to 1916, with the final organization not completed until 1917. At first the FVMPA was only a bargaining agent ensuring equitable

prices for its shareholder members, but of necessity it soon became a processing operation, and not long after, a distributor of milk and milk products.[43] Throughout the period of study, the FVMPA continued to be a major force in the local dairy business.

The unstable market for cream and fluid milk had an immediate effect on the farming family. Once the family as an economic unit had decided to stop making butter for sale, it was committed to shipping either cream or whole milk. Every change in the commercial arrangements affected the production side. For example, when companies went out of business, as in the case of the Delta Creamery, dairy farmers had several options. They could seek a new outlet for their product, which was not always there, or revert to home production, which entailed the intense participation of farm wives, or get out of dairying altogether, a potentially ruinous decision in a region where mixed farming was regarded as the only viable economic pursuit. The fluctuations of the dairy market were ongoing in the first four decades of the twentieth century. World War Two brought temporary relief, but it was not until competition legislation was enacted successfully by the province in the mid-1950s that there was long-term stability in the industry.[44]

The price farmers received for the fruits of their labours was only one of the occupational variables. Life was far from simple. In fact, it was an ongoing struggle to survive against the many other adverse factors, namely weather, travel distances, finances, health problems, and machinery breakdown. If there was one perennial problem that plagued the farmers of Delta, like those elsewhere, it was the shortage of able farm labour to augment the contributions of family members. By the turn of the century many farmers were relying on the

assistance of paid labour, regardless of the size of family or farm. The 1891 census reveals that 48 out of 108, or 44 percent of the households that identified themselves as farmers in the district at the time, had a full-time male farm hand in their employ; most of these employees were white. This number does not include another four farm households which claimed to have employees, but whose household listing did not include those wage earners who apparently lived elsewhere.[45] All of the oral history informants reported the presence of a hired man on their family's farm. Whether this employee had worked full-time year-round, or whether hired help was required only at one stage of enterprise development is unknown; informants could not confirm in all cases what the circumstances had been. It is known that at least two of those families who considered themselves not very well off resorted to part-time hired labour out of necessity. One family experienced the loss of several members in childhood; the male head of the household in the second family was unable to perform some farm jobs such as discing and mowing because of ongoing health problems.[46] The apparently common tendency to employ labour meant that the necessity of women participating in farm work was significantly reduced.

Finding and keeping a full-time year-round farm hand became increasingly difficult over the years. In the twentieth century, the developing resource economy increasingly paid more money than did farm work and siphoned men away from the farm labour market. This was especially evident during the railway boom period to 1914, when jobs in railway construction offered a wage of $ 2.25 per day, which the farmers had to match by offering $ 2 per day plus board, in order to get hay hands.[47] Finding able temporary help was also a challenge. The journal

of John Honeyman for the summer of 1905 is a never-ending saga of the difficulties of hiring competent farm hands, a situation echoed in newspaper editorials that summer. However, The Delta Times went so far as to suggest that some farmers were partly to blame in that the substandard working conditions for farm hands drove men away.[48] During the later years of the First World War when labour became extremely scarce, it was not unheard of for women to take part in haying, but such instances were rare.[49]

The haying season, usually during the month of July, was an especially problematic time for labour because the work was extremely hard and the weather very hot. Even with the use of horses for some aspects, such as mowing, raking and hauling the hay, much of the work was brutal manual labour. This took place over two to three weeks as farmers grew large crops of hay, especially if they engaged in dairying. For instance, John Honeyman recorded a total of 114 loads of hay from all his fields in 1904; in 1905 this number had increased to 332 loads.[50] Labour problems were further exacerbated by the fact that by 1916 most farmers were taking two crops of hay off their fields.[51] For this entire time, women had to produce meals for these workers.

In the haying operation there was less of the work sharing that was common-place in threshing, the individual farm family being essentially responsible for bringing in its own crop. Getting the job done necessitated rounding up whatever transient labour was available, regardless of experience or ability.[52] Sometimes East Indians were employed, but they tended to be concentrated in the baling end of the haying business. "Hindoos," as local people labelled this ethnic group, were considered satisfactory workers, unless they were competing with

white labourers.[53]

Threshing of oats, barley and wheat was a different matter, one in which the farmers within a radius of several miles of their respective farms worked cooperatively, sharing both equipment and labour resources. The work was still heavy and hot, but did not last as long as the haying phase which had preceded it. Threshing was only one part of the harvesting, for the grain had to be cut with the binder first and then stooked by hand. In his diary, John Honeyman provides a terse but informative first-hand account of threshing in 1902:[54]

> Started threshing 8.45 a.m. got done 5.45 p.m. 8 hours. Had team and man from Mason, Mackenzie, Read, Pearce, Guichon, Gibbie, our own team and we rigged up another by getting a horse from Gibbie and one from Pearce. Had one pitcher from Guichon for 5 hours and two others all day ditto two band cutters, two fillers, sack buck and sewer. The latter two at ¢ 30 per hour = $4 80 former six at ¢ 20 = $9 60 one five hours at ¢ 20 = $1, total $15 40. Tank man ¢ 20 an hour to be paid to Guichon boys. Had 813 sacks oats a little over 27 per acre.

By the 1930s the threshing scene had not changed much except for a decrease in the number of men required because of advances in technology, including in some cases the introduction of a tractor. This, in turn, meant fewer men to cook for. A quick calculation of the Honeyman account of 1902 suggests that eighteen men had to be fed at least three or perhaps four meals a day. By the 1930s this number may have decreased to about a dozen, still a large crowd for whom the farmer's wife had to provide meals. There is no evidence that the reliance on neighbours decreased after family members, especially sons, matured, as Hedley has suggested for the same time period in the prairies.[55] This phenomenon did not appear to have occurred in this area, certainly not among the subject families, even during the Second World War when the next generation of farmers experienced a severe shortage of farm workers.

Tractors came into use in significant numbers in the 1920s, although a Holt caterpillar gasoline tractor was reported at work on a farm in the district as early as 1913.[56] Only a few farmers purchased a tractor initially, for it took some years before the gasoline tractor had been modified sufficiently to replace the work horse effectively.[57] In the springtime, especially in a low-lying area such as the Delta where the land was too wet for a heavy tractor, horses continued to do the work for which they were best suited. In addition, early models were inappropriately powered, mechanically unreliable, and too technically complex for most farmers. Horse-drawn equipment could not be adapted to tractor operation, requiring, therefore, that a farmer invest additional money in compatible implements when they became available.[58] Furthermore, as had always been the case with certain kinds of equipment, farmers often shared usage of those tractors available.[59]

Moreover, in the 1930s, when reduced markets for their products in turn reduced their incomes, many farmers in this region who had purchased tractors followed the example of prairie people and temporarily reverted to the use of horses.[60] This was not the only hardship suffered by Delta farmers during the Depression. While many had the security of a milk cheque to fall back on, its size was severely reduced.[61] One oral history informant reported that her family's dependence on credit at local stores increased markedly during this decade, with the result that the milk cheque was mostly "spent" before it was received. Another informant's father fished during the summer months and worked at other employment in an effort to make ends meet, with the result that her mother had to take over responsibility for the farm. For some families, hired help became too expensive, necessitating the rare participation of

female family members. Two sisters recalled having picked potatoes, along with their mother, during the 1930s, when the Chinese men who customarily worked in the potato fields were considered too expensive.[62]

Since it was often difficult, if not impossible, to sell their crops during the Great Depression, farmers had to be extraordinarily resourceful. One informant, describing the situation that she and her husband had faced, rather than that of her parents, called this period "the tightest time we ever had in our married life." But they found ways of "getting by." Her husband was able to sell some hay at the Farmers' Market and to New Westminster families who kept a cow for their milk supply. It was also possible to sell some produce for cash to families who took in foster children. In addition, some stores in New Westminster were willing to take potatoes in exchange for sugar and flour.[63]

"Doing without" during the Depression was a common experience even among these farm people, although most oral history informants found it difficult to recall specific details. At least one woman felt that she and her siblings had not experienced those years as being extraordinary, largely because her parents had made sacrifices in order to maintain a relatively consistent standard of living for the children. For most people, however, "doing without" meant having to forego repairing and / or replacing items in the house or on the farm when the necessity arose. Linoleum on the floor was not replaced when it wore out. Clothing had to be worn and patched until its usefulness had been exhausted. Machinery fell into disuse because there was no money with which to carry out maintenance.[64] Nevertheless, farmers in Delta were at least able to continue to put food on their tables, unlike much of the general population during those years. At least some farmers were aware of their

more fortunate circumstances: John Honeyman's son, Douglas, was not exceptional in donating sacks of potatoes and other produce to those less fortunate.[65] An appeal for assistance from the United Church in the fall of 1934 yielded from Delta alone over forty-five tons of potatoes, vegetables and fruit, most of which were directed to the people of Saskatchewan.[66]

The most common indicator of hard times, the repossession of farms, did not occur among the subject families, although not all farmers in Delta escaped unscathed.[67] Among those hardest hit by the Depression years were the residents of an agricultural development project called Delta Manor, who had been enticed to come to Ladner to take up a small landholding and raise chickens. Poultry farming had long been underdeveloped in this district, although there are ongoing references to the need for poultry raising in British Columbia in order to reduce imports from the 1890s onwards.[68] With few exceptions, it remained a small-scale production commodity, one of those activities relegated to women, who gained a small income in this manner.[69]

Not until the Delta Manor scheme of the late 1920s and 1930s was poultry-raising undertaken in the district in a major way. In 1926 five hundred acres in the estate of the late T. E. Ladner, one of the original settlers, were subdivided into lots of one to four acres. In spite of the earlier warning of the Department of Agriculture against inexperienced people taking up poultry raising on a large scale, the project was promoted by the Delta Land Company Limited as an opportunity for small poultry farm operators, and about one hundred took up the challenge.[70] Many of these poultry farmers, eleven of whom were women, had come from the prairies, particularly Saskatchewan.[71] Having escaped

the dust bowl, most did not find a better life in the Delta. The combination of a depressed economy and a market oversupplied with eggs resulted in a severe decline in prices, making poultry farming unprofitable in the 1930s. Farmers of long standing who had always been involved in mixed farming could and did dispose of their chickens; the poultry farmers of Delta Manor could not absorb such losses and were forced to give up farming before the end of the decade.[72]

Table I

Agricultural Production, Delta, British Columbia, 1911 and 1927

	1911			1927		
Crop	(Tons) Production	$ Value	%	(Tons) Production	$ Value	%
Hay	20,000	400,000	29.63	15,000	240,000	13.07
Grain	12,500	375,000	7.78	13,000	455,000	24.77
Potatoes & Roots	7,000	150,000	11.11	8,000	200,000	10.89
Milk		120,000	8.89		325,000	17.69
Eggs		16,000	1.18		250,000	13.61
Livestock		280,000	20.74		210,000	11.43
Fruits & Vegetables					75,000	4.08
Straw					72,000	3.92
Miscellaneous		9,000	.67		10,000	0.54
		$1,350,000	100.00		$1,837,000	100.00

Sources: The Delta Board of Trade, The Prolific Delta: Where and What It Is ([1912]), p. 8; The Delta Board of Trade, The Municipality of Delta: "The Prolific Delta" ([1928]), n.p.

For the most part, the products of mixed farming remained the same through the first four decades of the twentieth century, as is evident from Table I. Except for the temporary increase in poultry activity resulting from the Delta Manor project, farmers continued to concentrate on field crops and dairying, although there was some raising of sheep and pigs. Any changes were in degree of commitment to a particular

aspect of farm production. Not until the 1940s did farmers begin to experiment seriously with new crops such as sugar beet seed, flax and hemp. However, the one permanent innovation made in the early 1930s was the growing of vegetables on a large scale for canning. Peas were most popular, but farmers also grew beans, carrots and corn. The Broder Canning Company, which acquired the former Pacific Milk plant outside Ladner in 1930, joined other canneries in the Lower Mainland in purchasing farmers' crops grown on contract.[73] Hutcherson describes pea threshing as another harvesting operation, not unlike the threshing of grain, with much the same requirements of labour and equipment. The description suggests that pea threshing in 1938 was somewhat less strenuous than the grain threshing operation, since the work could be done by teenaged boys. He also refers to the meals provided for the pea threshers by farm wives as "unbelievable" and "admirable," an indication that the demands upon farm wives in the feeding of seasonal labour continued.[74] The extent of this new crop specialization is difficult to determine; however, twelve of the twenty-four families whose histories were explored through interviews grew peas and other vegetables for commercial canning, beginning in the 1930s.

This brief exploration of those aspects of agriculture relevant to women's lives draws attention to several points worth noting. It was a life of hard work, seasonally-prescribed, for both women and men. Mixed farming continued to dominate the landscape, with a greater concentration towards large-scale dairying over the years. In mixed farming the work was ongoing throughout the year, with little respite. Even in winter there was work to be done, for that was the season for repairs and maintenance. Fences were built or repaired; fire wood was

brought to the farm; buildings were repaired, replaced or whitewashed. All this was carried out in addition to the normal work of winter such as baling hay with a hay press and fanning seed grain. Although winter provided a break for women after the pressing demands of the harvest period, there was no decrease in their normal domestic workloads. On a farm engaged in dairying there was hardly a slacking of the pace for anyone year-round; most of these farmers never experienced a holiday.

The economic base that was the source of the family's livelihood influenced all aspects of the lives of the farm women who were the subjects of oral history interviews. From the time they were married, which itself was determined largely by the seasonal demands of the farm, to the age at which a woman and her husband could retire to a less active life, their lives revolved around farming. Any decrease in the work load of women resulting from the gradual mechanization of farming during this period was marginal at best. Women continued to cook and bake and clean up for haymakers and threshers. Every labour-intensive agricultural operation brought with it a corresponding increase in the work load for women. While the number of threshing hands working on the grain decreased over the years, the commercial growing of peas made up for it. Hired hands still had to be fed and their laundry done. The drudgery of domestic tasks may have been alleviated somewhat by the advent of electricity during these four decades, but major changes in farming in the form of technological improvements did not come until after World War II.

NOTES

1. Province of British Columbia, British Columbia as a Field for Emigration and Investment (Victoria: Richard Wolfenden, Printer to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, 1891), p. 16; The Delta Board of Trade, The Prolific Delta: Where and What It Is ([1912]), p. 3.

2. British Columbia Provincial Museum, Agriculture 1870-1920 (Victoria: Queen's Printer, 1974), n.p.

3. Provincial Archives of British Columbia, CBC/Imbert Orchard Collection, 1960-1974, Interview with Arthur J. Parmiter, Tape No. 739-1, Side 1; T. Ellis Ladner, Above the Sand Heads (Cloverdale: D. W. Friesen & Sons, 1979), p. 17; Edward M. Terris, "Ladner: A Pioneer Study" (Master's Thesis, Western Washington State College, 1973), p. 107.

4. Terris, pp. 27-32.

5. Thomas Kidd, History of Lulu Island and Occasional Poems (Vancouver: Wrigley Printing Company Limited, 1927), p. 61; Terris, pp. 98-99.

6. Province of British Columbia, Sixth Report of the Department of Agriculture of British Columbia, 1900 (Victoria, B.C.: Richard Wolfenden, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1901), p. 54.

7. The Delta Times, 20 January 1906. Delta Museum and Archives, John Honeyman Collection, MSS DE 1983-228, John Honeyman Diary, 23 February, 16 April, 17 April and 25 April 1903.

8. Leon J. Ladner, The Ladners of Ladner: By Covered Wagon to the Welfare State (Vancouver: Mitchell Press Limited, 1972), p. 131; Bulletin No. 10, p. 65.

9. Henderson's British Columbia Gazetter and Directory (Vancouver: Henderson Publishing Company, 1902), p. 180.

10. Terris, p. 121.

11. Farm Lands in British Columbia (Vancouver: The Settlers' Association of British Columbia, 1902), pp. 93-94; Advertising, Westward Ho! Magazine, August 1907, p. 59; The Delta Times, 7 July 1906, 18 December 1909, 13 January 1912 and 13 April 1912.

12. The Weekly Optimist, 1 November 1923.

13. The Weekly Optimist, 15 March 1934.

14. The Delta News, 6 December 1902.

15. F. W. Howay and E. O. S. Scholefield, British Columbia: From the Earliest Times to the Present. Biographical. Vol. IV (Vancouver: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1914), pp. 172 and 175.

16. LTO Records, Group 2, Lots 192 (Frew on Westham Island), 184 (Black, Leary, McKenzie), 135 (Hopcott), SE ¼ of Section 22 (Wright). Of fourteen parcels of land researched in whole or in part at the Land Title Office, all were encumbered by mortgages in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

17. Seena B. Kohl, Working Together: Women and Family in Southwestern Saskatchewan (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Limited, 1976), p. 94.

18. Helen Gregory MacGill, Daughters, Wives and Mothers in British Columbia: Some Laws Regarding Them (Vancouver: 1913). Also Supplement 1915 and Revisions 1925, 1928, 1935, and 1939. MacGill's work is the source for all the information on women's legal rights.

19. Where the certificate of title does not specify a joint tenancy, the law assumes that the named owners are tenants-in-common. I am grateful to Nelda Kabesh of the Land Title Office in New Westminster for pointing out that this is a common occurrence among older couples, who have assumed for years that both spouses owned the real property jointly.

20. The Delta Times, 19 May 1908, 2 June 1908, and 7 September 1912.

21. Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 90.

22. The Fraser Valley Champion and Farmers' Advocate, 8 February 1896, 11 and 18 April 1896, 16 and 23 May 1896, 20 June 1896 and 4 July 1896; The Delta Times, 9 April 1907, 2 July 1907, 6 August 1907, and 2 August 1913. A public market opened in Vancouver in 1908, but it never managed to make serious inroads into the flow of farmers to New Westminster, nor did a second that came into being in South Vancouver in 1921. Province of British Columbia, Full Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture (Victoria: William H. Cullin, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1914), p. 137; The Weekly Gazette, 24 December 1921.

23. Interview with Margaret Wayte, Tsawwassen, British Columbia, 20 February and 9 March 1989.

24. The Delta Times, 2 August 1913.

25. Sixth Report, p. 54; The Delta Times, 10 August 1912.

26. In one such family that relied on field crops for income and was considered not very well off, the children were aware that their mother was criticized for apparently spending her husband's money to

dress the children in expensive clothes. The reality was that they were wearing hand-me-downs from relatives in Great Britain.

27. Cohen, pp. 93-117.

28. Terris, p. 116.

29. Gordon D. Taylor, Delta's Century of Progress (Delta: Delta Centennial Committee, 1958), pp. 28-29.

30. The Delta News, 9 May 1903.

31. The Delta News, 22 February 1902.

32. The Delta News, 8 March 1902.

33. Hugh Savage was one of these independents who shipped milk to David Spencer's Dairy in Vancouver and never to the FVMPA. Interview with Dorothy Davie, Tsawwassen, British Columbia, 12 June 1989.

34. John Honeyman records in his diary regular shipments of butter to Victoria during 1900 and 1901. See also Sam Morley accounts ledger for sales of butter in 1902, Delta Museum and Archives, Vasey Morley Collection, MSS DE 1986-059-46.

35. The Delta News, 6 December 1902.

36. The Weekly Gazette, 13 July 1918; The Weekly Optimist, 21 February 1924, 4 September 1924, 19 April 1934 and 17 May 1934.

37. The Delta Times, 17 November 1906.

38. The Delta Times, 7 May 1914; Delta Museum and Archives, John Honeyman Collection, MSS DE 1983-228, Douglas Honeyman Diaries, 1911-1914.

39. The Delta Times, 7 May 1914.

40. The Weekly Gazette, 26 August 1916.

41. Fraser Valley Milk Producers' Association, Our First 40, 1917-1957, n.p.; The Weekly Optimist, 4 September 1924.

42. The Delta Times, 18 September 1909.

43. Our First 40, n.p.

44. Morag MacLachlan, "The Success of the Fraser Valley Milk Producers' Association," B. C. Studies, 24 (Winter 1974-75), pp. 59-61.

45. Canada, Manuscript Nominal Census, Delta Municipality, 1891. Reel No. T-6290, New Westminster Sub-District, A11.

46. The wisdom of this latter family entering into farming is questionable at best. The parents had two disadvantages from the beginning: they married late, she at age 38 and he at 42, and both had serious health problems.

47. The Delta Times, 28 June 1913.

48. John Honeyman diary, 4 July to 7 September 1905; The Delta Times, 12 August 1905 and 30 September 1905.

49. An oral history informant, Bertha Reynolds, confirmed that she, her sister and her mother worked in the hay field during the war years. She has a photograph, c. 1918, showing the members of her family dressed for work and equipped with pitchforks.

50. John Honeyman diary, 30 July 1904, and 9 August 1905.

51. The Weekly Gazette, 19 August 1916 and 14 September 1918.

52. John Honeyman in his diary entry for 6 July 1905 described a certain named hay hand as a "poor stick" and a day later Honeyman let him go. See also The Delta Times, 26 July 1913, in respect of the death of an inexperienced worker from heat prostration.

53. The Delta Times, 14 July 1906, 9 and 16 July 1914. When the economy was in a downturn, as in the recession of 1914, resentment in the community resulted when Hindu workers undercut the wages asked by white labourers. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the newspaper berated the workers rather than the white farmers who took advantage of this labour windfall.

54. John Honeyman diary, 25 August 1902.

55. Max J. Hedley, "Reproduction and Evolving Patterns of Cooperation and Resource Transfer Among Domestic Producers," Canadian Journal of Anthropology 1 (2): 144.

56. This was on the Guichon farm. See The Delta Times, 8 November 1913. Another farmer was reported to have ordered an 18-horsepower gasoline traction engine from Great Britain even earlier, but nothing more is heard about this alleged purchase. See The Delta Times, 2 June 1906.

57. Robert E. Ankli, H. Dan Helsberg, and John Herd Thompson, "The Adoption of the Gasoline Tractor in Western Canada," in Canadian Papers in Rural History, Vol. II, ed. Donald Akenson (Gananoque, Ontario: Langdale Press, 1980), pp. 11-15.

58. Ankli et al., pp. 14-15.

59. Douglas Honeyman diary, 19 April 1923.

60. Farm Service News, British Columbia Electric Railway Company, April

1934, p. 4; D. Honeyman diary, 28 and 29 April 1932.

61. MacLachlan, p. 60.

62. Interviews with Margaret Wayte, Tsawwassen, British Columbia, 20 February and 9 March 1989; Interview with Marion Quigley and Alfreda Plowright, Ladner, British Columbia, 20 May 1991.

63. Interview with Bertha Reynolds, Ladner, British Columbia, 25 January 1988.

64. Interview with Ellen Sibbald and Margaret Tamboline, Ladner, British Columbia, 30 January 1989; Interview with Clifford Wright and Gladys Davis, Ladner, British Columbia, 19 July 1989.

65. Douglas Honeyman diary, 11 April 1933, 30 January 1934, 18 October 1934 and 17 November 1934.

66. The Weekly Optimist, 18 October 1934, and 8 November 1934.

67. Delta Museum and Archives, Municipality of Delta Collection, By-laws, MSS DE 1984-031. Some tax sales of farm land occurred, but the subject is extremely difficult to research.

68. C. J. Lee Warner, "The Evolution of Farming in British Columbia," Westward Ho! Magazine, September 1907, p. 44; William E. Scott, "British Columbia's Agricultural Resources and Conditions," Man-to-Man Magazine, October 1910, p. 860.

69. Mrs. Catherine Dowding customarily shipped thirty dozen eggs weekly to Vancouver in the years after the family arrived in 1909. Interview with Bertha Reynolds. Ladner, British Columbia, 29 March 1988.

70. Royal Commission, p. 112; William Hutcherson, Landing at Ladner (New York: Carleton Press, Inc., 1982), p. 91; Taylor, p. 30; Delta Land Company Limited, Delta Manor: The New Life of the Land, n.p.

71. Wrigley's British Columbia Directory, 1930, (Vancouver: Wrigley Directories Limited, 1930), pp. 390-392; The New Life of the Land, n.p.; Leon Ladner, p. 129.

72. Interview with Alfred Parmiter, Ladner, British Columbia, 24 June 1988.

73. Matt Rogers, "Farming in Delta -- a capsule history," in Delta: Home of the Sungod (Delta Chamber of Commerce, 1981), p. 5; Hutcherson, p. 133.

74. Hutcherson, pp. 133-135.

CHAPTER FOUR

FARM WOMEN AND THEIR WORK

In these early decades of the twentieth century farm wives were largely invisible in terms of their occupational roles. Delta women rarely appeared in the public record in their primary identity as farm wives and their work toward the family enterprise was never acknowledged publicly. Even when they attended such occupationally-related social events as the Farmers' Ball, farmers' wives were indistinguishable from the wife of the bank manager or the local general merchant.[1] The lack of information about these women in the public record necessitates that most of what can be ferreted out about their lives, and more particularly, about their work lives, during the first part of the twentieth century must come from less conventional sources, namely oral history interviews.[2] The occasional journal or diary, even those kept by husbands, also reveals something of significance about women's lives.

The role of women in the agricultural economy of this district must be established. In the nineteenth century the situation resembled that in Ontario, as seen in the work of Marjorie Cohen.[3] Women's activities frequently propped up the agricultural economy in the early years. While there was no staple trade in wheat or timber on which the population relied, as in Ontario, women's home production of surpluses of poultry, garden produce and dairy products for market exchange freed men to develop the land for the production of field crops, largely for markets elsewhere. As in Ontario, industrialization moved control of many of these productive activities into the hands of men, although at a

later date in British Columbia. In dairying where the women of British Columbia had a history of participation, the establishment of butter factories or creameries resulted in this facet of women's work slowly being phased out.[4] The process took longer to complete in British Columbia than in Eastern Canada; as late as 1941, 29 percent of the province's butter was being produced on farms, undoubtedly by women.[5] However, the Delta example differs substantially in terms of the perception of a negative effect on women as a result of being displaced from direct involvement in agricultural production. Contrary to Cohen's findings that women suffered a loss of independence and, by implication, of status, this research in a British Columbia rural setting suggests that women's non-involvement in agricultural production for market did not affect their status in a negative way.

To begin, an understanding of the living conditions of the pioneer period is necessary because many aspects affecting the lives of women in the Delta persisted well into the 1900s. One of the few sources for later nineteenth century Delta is T. Ellis Ladner, son of Thomas E. Ladner, whose reminiscences were prepared for publication by his daughter. His mother, Edna Booth Ladner, died of tuberculosis in 1883 at the age of forty-three. She had given birth to seven children, four of whom died before the age of five. No doubt, the lack of medical and nursing assistance, together with the harsh conditions under which she had to keep house and raise a family in the 1870s and 1880s, hastened her own death. In Above the Sand Heads, Ellis Ladner creates an evocative picture of his mother's environment:[6]

> Our living conditions in the early days on the delta were very primitive. Not only was there poor housing and little heat, but also there was no running water...

The fuel for cooking and heating was wood, mostly alder and willow, secured from the bush. Father filled the wood box in the morning but during the day, mother had to replenish the supply from the woodshed...

Throughout the fall and winter months our water source was mostly rain. It was conveyed to barrels by troughs ... suspended from the eaves. When this source failed, water was taken from the slough...

A wooden tub or half liquor barrel was used to bathe infants. After the bath, mother took the tub outside to empty it... Clothes were boiled in a wash boiler, or washed in the wooden tub and scrubbed on a galvanized iron washboard. They were rung [sic] out by hand. The tub was emptied and refilled for rinsing. The clothes were hung on a rope line outdoors in summer and in the kitchen in winter. The women made their own soap. I remember Mrs. Parmiter's soap was white with streaks in it. I used to wonder how she made the streaks.

The iron of that period had a fixed metal handle. After the iron had been heated on the stove, a protective cloth had to be used around the handle. The detachable wooden handle was not available until later.

Mother made all the garments for us children. I well remember her making hats from cotton cut to something of a pattern to produce a crown and a brim, and then stitching in rows around the brim...

Father milked the cow or cows, although later he had assistance from a seasonal worker. The milk was carried to the house and poured into pans through a cloth strainer fastened on the milk bucket. The pans were put on shelves in a ventilated milk room. In due course, mother skimmed off the cream and placed it in a crock and, periodically, made it into butter.

Our first butter churn was like a large elongated wooden bucket with a stick, like a piece of broom handle, inserted through a hole in the cover. Cream was churned by pumping the handle up and down until butter formed... Butter was shaped with wooden moulds. Half-pound or pound pats, or sometimes two-pound rolls were made. Butter in rolls was always wrapped with cheesecloth.

We had currant bushes and gooseberry bushes and, in time, fruit trees. I have no recollection of any jellies, but jams were made...

Fish was had only when Indians brought it. Meats, either animal or bird, were to be had at will. When a beef animal or pig was slaughtered, a considerable portion of the carcass was preserved in brine...

In summer when cranberries and blueberries were in season, there were occasional picnics in the bog area about three miles from Ladners Landing... As I remember, a picnic meant extra work for

> mother, both in the preparation of the family needs for the occasion and in the cooking and preserving of the fruit afterward.

No doubt the Ladner family also had a sizable garden, since Ellis Ladner refers elsewhere to eating an abundance of cabbage and potatoes. He also mentions homemade bread as being the major ingredient in the lunches which he and his siblings took to school.[7]

Merely providing the necessities of life was a major undertaking in the early years. Arthur Parmiter, whose mother was a contemporary of Mary and Edna Ladner, recounted that before there was a general store in Ladner, Mary Ann Parmiter made a trip annually to Victoria to obtain her year's supply of staples such as flour and sugar. The family grew vegetables and supplemented their diet with meat, including wild game, which was plentiful in the nineteenth century.[8] Mrs. Parmiter made butter for sale, according to the records that she kept.[9] Farm production of butter was a commmon occurrence in Delta, as in other parts of British Columbia in these years prior to the establishment of creameries.[10] Like the women of nineteenth century Ontario,[11] Mrs. Parmiter was thus able to supplement the irregular income her husband derived from shipping hay to Victoria. Whether she also milked the cows is unknown, but it is not improbable.[12]

In many respects the conditions of women's lives had changed little by 1900. Some of the women whose lives are explored in the oral history interviews kept house and cared for children in conditions not unlike those described by Ellis Ladner. Piped water was a convenience without which eighteen of these twenty-four women began their married lives in Delta. During her first few years in East Delta, Fannie Fisher, who was married in 1907, on occasion brought home barrels of water in

the democrat from South Delta, although it was usually the men who did this. Until 1911, when water was piped into Ladner and the surrounding district from the North Delta uplands, everyone collected rain water for household use and hauled water from the spring at Tsawwassen or the one on the Indian reserve. Some residents waited much longer for running water. Westham Island farms were not connected to the municipal water system until 1922, after a connecting pipe was laid across Canoe Pass.[13]

These same women toiled many years without the luxury of electricity. As discussed earlier, hydroelectric power was brought to the municipality in stages. Even when it was available, some people could not afford the installation costs. Furthermore, when electricity did arrive, it was used at first primarily to provide lighting on farms, a fact which B. C. Electric recognized and sought to remedy in the 1930s with an aggressive campaign to promote electrical farm equipment.[14] As early as 1917, some electrical appliances existed which could be plugged into a lamp socket, but this characteristic may have rendered them too inconvenient, even if they were affordable.[15] The timing of the arrival of electricity in individual homes is difficult to verify. What can be concluded from sources other than people's memories is that at least two-thirds of the women being studied had electricity in their homes by 1939. The remainder appear to have had their homes electrified sometime during the Second World War. Given the scarcity and incompleteness of existing sources, it is not possible to be more precise.[16]

Until the introduction of both running water and electricity, these women experienced work lives that were still highly labour-intensive, even though commercial products for the household had become more available. About one-third of their number washed clothes on a

scrub-board in a metal tub, boiled the whites on the stove, and added bluing to the rinse water. However, only a few women had ever made soap, and these probably only briefly in the early 1900s. A fortunate few were in possession of a gasoline-powered washing machine. One woman confessed to having been afraid to start it herself, therefore requiring that her husband contribute at least this much to sharing in the drudgery of wash day. There was also a hand-cranked version, which was the next step up from a scrub-board, but the physical strength required to operate it made it a questionable improvement. Few women appear to have been as fortunate as Ella Honeyman whose husband, John, recorded in his diary frequent instances of helping his wife with the wash.[17]

Most days the laundry was hung outdoors to dry. When it rained, the drying process was moved indoors, an unavoidable nuisance. At least these women could be grateful that they seldom had the experience of bringing in frozen clothing from outdoors to both thaw and dry inside. Ironing could not proceed at once when the clothes were dry, for they had to be dampened, and rolled up to sit overnight, or starched. "Sad" irons, at least three or four, were heated on the stove and had to be used carefully, so as not to make the clothes dirty.

The stove was invariably a woodstove. Keeping it supplied with fuel was a never-ending chore, generally relegated to children. Since the Delta was not heavily wooded, its residents had to rely on more distant sources for fuel. A few families owned timber lots in what is now Tsawwassen and supplied their own needs. Some enterprising owners of timber lots sold their wood to customers who hauled it away in their own wagons.[18] Most oral history informants spoke of obtaining wood from the beach at some time in their lives. While it may seem improbable that one

location could have supplied a large number of families for many years, the map of Delta indicates an extensive beach area from which could be salvaged not only driftwood, but also discarded piles from the cannery fish traps.[19] A few women adopted sawdust-burning stoves in the 1930s, when sawdust was cheap; most retained their woodstoves until they acquired an electric range at a much later date.

The cooking and baking that these women did was quite extensive. With only one exception, all baked bread, at least in their early married years. Most succumbed to buying bread from the bakery when their children were young, although a few continued to bake bread until they were quite elderly. The baking of pies, cakes, buns, and cookies was done routinely, and there were some traditional English specialties at Christmas. Threshing time was described as the period of greatest demand for both cooking and baking. Threshers preferred plain but good cooking, nothing fancy.[20] Whereas an informal system of sharing work existed among the men at harvest time, this did not apply to women. Each farm wife worked individually in the preparation of meals.[21] She could count on having to supply at least four substantial meals: breakfast, dinner at mid-day, a lunch about four o'clock in the afternoon, which would be taken out to the field, and supper at eight o'clock in the evening or whenever the crew quit for the day. Simply cleaning up and washing the dishes after a meal was incredibly time-consuming, as well as fatiguing. If it rained, the farmer and his wife were expected to continue feeding the crew, most of whom did not live nearby. One woman recalled her family once having to endure five days of this extra work load.[22]

While no one mentioned feeding hay hands, it is improbable that they would have been expected to fend for themselves. In fact, the

haying season, as described in Chapter Three, placed even greater demands on women, in that the work lasted longer, sometimes up to twenty-five working days,[23] and in later years two crops were taken annually off the fields. In the early years hay was stored loose in barns and some of it was baled later in the winter if it was destined for sale to a customer. This operation entailed a crew of eight men, plus family members, all of whom required meals. Farm wives also had to make meals for day labourers employed to pick potatoes, except when this work was done by Chinese men, who did their own cooking whatever the work. One woman reported that she had to feed the people who were hired to dress turkeys in preparation for sale at Christmas.

In addition to the day-to-day cooking and baking, most women also canned and preserved fruits and vegetables. Most of these women seemed to have continued this activity even after commercial canned goods became increasingly available. An inventory of one woman's preserve shelves in the 1930s revealed seven hundred jars. All made jams and jellies, using fruit from the family orchard and berry patch; everyone seemed to have a few trees and bushes, and those with a surplus shared with neighbours and friends. Wild blueberries and blackberries were still available for picking. A few women also put down beef and fish, but rarely chicken, perhaps because it was readily available year-round. The making of pickles was common among farm women. Everyone had a vegetable garden, although the work connected with it was not always done by the farm wife. Often her husband was responsible not only for the ploughing of the garden plot in the spring, but also for the planting, weeding and harvesting. This flexibility in the division of labour concerning the garden echoes what Silverman found among Alberta

couples.[24] By contrast, a fairly rigid sexual division of labour existed in these families concerning domestic chores. While women could or might do farm work, men almost never contributed to housework or child care. Only a crisis of some proportions, usually serious illness, could propel a man into what he considered his wife's domain. This appears to have been typical of farm families elsewhere in Canada.[25]

Most of these women had made butter at some time during their years on the farm. For most, this was done primarily to meet their family needs until butter became readily available from the Fraser Valley Milk Producers' Association. For a few women, however, producing butter for sale was a significant source of family income. Both Catherine Dowding and Dora Black had made butter for sale to customers in the village for many years. However, regardless of quantity, butter-making was a delicate business. Most, that is, nineteen, of these women did not have a cream separator; therefore, cream had to be skimmed from the surface of milk set in pans. Care had to be taken that the cream had not turned sour. Many informants spoke of butter being made in a churn similar to that described earlier in this chapter by Ellis Ladner,[26] or in a barrel churn that agitated the cream until butter formed. The buttermilk was then poured off and the butter was washed repeatedly in cold water. Salt was worked into the butter after washing. Most often it was formed into one-pound prints in a wooden mould, a necessity if the butter was being prepared for sale. Storage always posed a problem, in view of the lack of refrigeration and the absence of wells in Delta. People took advantage of whatever cool place there was, perhaps a shallow cellar or root house. Ironically, by the time of the Second World War, when the conveniences were available that would have made the job

of butter-making easier, none of these women were doing so. Contrary to Cohen's suggestion that the advent of factory production in dairying deprived women of some independence, most of these women were glad to be relieved of the work of butter-making, in spite of the loss of income.[27]

It seems that every farm had a flock of chickens, and, quite often, a few ducks or geese raised specifically for special occasion dinners. Two families had raised turkeys to sell to the Christmas market. Raising turkeys was not popular because the market was seasonal and the birds could be adversely affected by the damp climate of the district. One of these families, the Davises, had also raised geese commercially for the yuletide dinner table of local residents.[28]

In many families, the feeding and care of chickens fell to the farm wife, although cleaning out the chicken coop was more usually undertaken by her husband or her male children. Since poultry-raising was traditionally regarded as women's work,[29] it is surprising that, in nine of these twenty-four situations, the farm wife did none of the work involved in raising chickens. Conversely, in three instances, the women did all the work including cleaning out the henhouse. For several women, selling the eggs from their flock was a profitable enterprise. As mentioned earlier, Catherine Dowding shipped crates of thirty dozen eggs to Vancouver on a weekly basis. Elizabeth Wright also raised chickens and sold the eggs to a broker who came round once a week and paid cash for them. In another instance, the Parmiter family's poultry business, which at its height consisted of about 2500 chickens, evolved from Bertha Parmiter's venture with a few hens. She continued to do most of the feeding, and collecting and grading of eggs through the 1920s and 1930s. After the market for eggs began to decline in the mid-1930s, the

family disposed of its chickens just before the Second World War, but continued with dairying and the growing of field crops, especially peas.

Both the making of butter for sale and the raising of chickens in order to sell the eggs fall into the category of support work. As previously defined, this transitional category included such widely unrelated endeavours as raising chickens for sale or trading apples for fish caught by local fishermen. There were other means by which women could add to the family income, but all were on a small scale and earned only "pin money" for the household. At least half the women studied engaged in some activity of this sort. According to Elizabeth Mason's daughters, when the family had surplus fruit in the orchard, sometimes the Chinese paid to pick the fruit, which they presumably sold. Elizabeth Wright sold surplus walnuts occasionally to a store in Vancouver, and for many years she raised canaries for sale. The Brandrith family sold milk, eggs and vegetables to the campers at Boundary Bay in the summer months during the 1930s and perhaps earlier. Keeping bees and selling the honey to a local store was an enterprise initiated by Catherine Dowding, but later taken over by her husband. Boarding the school teacher, as Rose Frew did for many years on Westham Island, was a source of extra income. If she was especially fortunate, as was seldom the case, the schoolteacher might turn into an occasional helper in the kitchen.

Farm work has been defined in Chapter One as the income-producing aspect of farming that has been regarded traditionally as "men's work". Only six of these women did any form of farm work, although it appears that in well over half the families women were both willing and able to lend a hand when necessary, and had, in fact, done so at some point in their lives. This might entail driving the horse with the hay fork when

their husbands were short-handed or picking potatoes during the 1930s. In the case of only five women was there a categorical denial of ever having done farm work, regardless of emergency. The reasons given for doing very little or no farm work ranged from having enough to do in the house to their husbands' belief that it was not a woman's place to be doing outside work. A state of financial distress, wherein the family could not afford hired help, did not appear to be an influential factor in any of these instances.

For most of these women, the raising of chickens was the only kind of farm work that they did. It is interesting that many oral history informants, not exclusively male, did not consider raising chickens to be farm work. However, these individuals would have to concede that it was possible to cross the boundary between support work and farm work. When the Parmiter chicken operation evolved from Bertha's cottage industry into large-scale production, there is no doubt that her continued participation constituted farm work.

All six women who did farm work milked cows on a regular basis, a practice which one observer considered an Ontario tradition which did not transfer completely to British Columbia.[30] Two women, Catherine Dowding and Greta Trevitt, chose to do so for strictly financial reasons, preferring not to have to pay a hired hand for work that they could do for free. Two women in South Delta, Rachel Brandrith and her daughter-in-law, Elizabeth Brandrith, milked cows at least partly out of necessity. Rachel's husband, W. J. Brandrith, was a horticulturist for the provincial government and travelled a great deal. John Brandrith, Elizabeth's husband, worked at other employment, including fishing, in the 1930s with the result that the running of the farm fell on his

wife's shoulders. Rachel at least had grown sons on whom to rely, but Elizabeth had to make do with whatever hired labour could be obtained.

Another woman, Agnes Pybus, was faced with very different circumstances. Of the nine children to whom she gave birth, only four grew to adults. Her first-born, a boy, died at eighteen months of spinal meningitis. Another son, the eighth child, was stillborn. Two daughters succumbed to the Spanish influenza epidemic in 1918, and a third daughter was crippled at age thirteen and died in her early twenties. In addition, one family member was hospitalized for long periods in the pre-war years. According to her daughter, Mrs. Pybus probably did the milking in the early years out of necessity, since there were few family members to contribute their free labour and the family could not afford paid help. As the size of the milk herd was increased, it may be that a hired hand was added, perhaps only on a part-time basis. Certainly all the children in the family, including the two girls, were expected to do farm work.

The last woman, Dora Black, appeared to have also done farm work by choice, but in her case the reason was that she preferred to work outside. Mrs. Black milked cows for about twenty years and at times raised up to two hundred chickens. Both the cows and chickens were revenue-generating, for she made butter to sell privately to customers in the village and shipped eggs regularly to a Vancouver wholesaler. Since she enjoyed working with horses, she sometimes did field work, such as driving the horses for mowing or raking hay, even though the family apparently had a hired hand most of the time.

Unfortunately, doing outside work was not offset by having paid help in the house. These women in effect had two jobs, a complaint that is still being voiced by farm women today. Hired help in the house on a

year-round basis was a rare situation, occurring in only four families. Most women could count on having some help in the kitchen at harvest-time or someone in for a week or two after the birth of their children. Mothers or mothers-in-law were sometimes relied upon to look after the household when babies were born. In only three families, women carried the additional burden of meeting seasonal demands alone, almost never having hired help. Daughters were expected to begin helping out at an early age, gradually assuming more responsibility and more difficult tasks until they effectively did the work of a "hired girl."

On the other hand, hard work did not necessarily mean an early death. All six of these women who did farm work lived to a respectable old age. Two survived into their nineties, one died at age seventy-one, one at seventy-five, and one at eighty-two. The sixth woman is still alive at ninety-six, but could not be interviewed because she suffers from senile dementia. But for some women the burden of farm life was too great. In 1902 the local weekly reported the death of Olivia Ramage, the wife of a Gulfside farmer, at age thirty-eight. She had borne four children, the first when she was sixteen years old. In a rare instance of forthrightness, the paper stated that "the cause of her death was due to exhaustion [sic]."[31]

The newspaper was never as revealing again, and only infrequent and incidental references to farm women were allowed to escape into the public view thereafter. A woman potato grower, unnamed, appears in its pages in 1912. She is portrayed as a competent farmer who "is growing about thirty varieties of potatoes" and who "gives her personal attention to their cultivation."[32] Several women were noted beekeepers of long standing, among them Mrs. Sarah Gillanders and Mrs. Norman

McCallan.[33] It was not unheard of for women to farm on their own, but it was extremely difficult. Two women in the district did so in the period being studied, but they were exceptional in many ways, most particularly in having strong personalities. Nevertheless, both relied heavily on extended family members nearby or hired help or a combination of both.[34]

It would be misleading to assume that the foregoing represents a catalogue of all the work that these farm women did. Much other work went on that is camouflaged. Visitors were welcomed and treated hospitably. Some homes, such as that of W. J. Brandrith, seemed to have had a steady stream of visitors, but it must be recognized that such hospitality entailed considerable work for his wife, much as Rachel Brandrith may have enjoyed the company. Since many of these residents were relatively recent arrivals from Great Britain, visitors from overseas, when they came, remained for several weeks or even several months. Bertha Parmiter's mother and brother, with his family of seven, came to visit in 1924, for what amounted to a family reunion. Her brother and his family subsequently took up permanent residence in the Delta, after enjoying the hospitality of the Parmiters. Mrs. Parmiter's mother, however, stayed on for two years before returning to England.[35]

Additional people in the household meant an increased work load for these women. For instance, Fannie Fisher's brother-in-law lived with her and her husband for fourteen years until he married in 1921. In the Wright family, Elizabeth's brother-in-law, with whom her husband had farmed, came to take his meals in their household after his wife died in 1927, and lived with them from 1943 until his own death in 1952. In some families elderly parents came to live out their last years in the home of a son or daughter; usually it was a daughter upon whom this responsi-

bility fell. There were four such instances among the subject families. For example, Margaret Chorlton's parents came to live in her household when they could no longer manage on their own. Mr. Erskine resided there for about two years, while his wife survived him by five years.

Having a large family also resulted in a lot of work for women, although nearly all of the subjects were reported to have had some sort of household help at least at the time of the births of their children. Six of these women gave birth to seven or more children; Rachel Brandrith had twelve children in a period of child-bearing that extended over twenty-four years. In an agricultural economy where children were needed to participate in the farm operation, giving birth to a large number of offspring, especially boys, constituted an economic contribution, even in these early years of the twentieth century. The farm women concerned may not have viewed the situation in those terms, but the male desire for sons was reflected in the newspaper reports of births after the turn of the century.[36]

Farm women performed many of the same domestic tasks as village women, but they had the added burden of tasks distinctive to a household engaged in agricultural pursuits.[37] The size and nature of the farming enterprise determined whether there were hired men, their numbers and whether they were seasonal employees. Each of the families studied, with the exception of one,[38] was farming a minimum of sixty acres at some time during its career, and all had hired men. All of these women, therefore, had to cook for at least one additional person, since it was generally customary for the hired man to eat with the family. Sometimes he also had a room in the family home, which resulted in laundry to be taken care of by the farm wife. Other less frequent demands occurred

that were unique to farming. When the milk tester made his monthly rounds, he had to be fed and given a bed for the night. The same hospitality was extended to the man who brought his stallion around in the spring to breed the mares. Some women also kept the books and paid the bills for both house and farm, although accounting was still very basic in this period.

The availability of services for the women of this research constituted an improvement in conditions over the previous generation. The gradual development of a village, beginning in 1882, including a variety of businesses, freed women from some of the most onerous tasks, although only when the family had the financial wherewithal to take advantage of these services. As described earlier, Ladner in 1902 included several general stores, as well as a bakery, so that some of these women began to rely on commercially available products. The presence of two doctors and a drugstore in the village afforded a greater sense of security to women, but did not immediately resolve one distressing aspect of isolation that carried over from the nineteenth century. The death of a child at birth or in early childhood was a tragedy that was experienced by ten of these twenty-four families, sometimes more than once. The Colemans, Mitchells and Pybuses each lost two babies; in the Frew family, the deaths of four infants undoubtedly influenced the family's decision to move from Westham Island to New Westminster for five years.

Whether these women did farm work or confined themselves to domestic matters does not appear to have affected their status. This situation serves as a contrast to Cohen's observation that displacement from an active role in agricultural production, such as dairying, entailed a loss of independence for women, as well as an implied loss of

status.[39] While the greater proportion of the women of this study did not play a direct and visible role in the economic life of the family farm, there is no evidence among oral history informants that this coincided with a loss of status for these women.

While it is impossible to assess whether husbands openly acknowledged their wives' equal but different contributions to the family farm, inheritance practices supply some supporting documentary evidence. Regrettably, only a small number of probated wills relating to this group of people were available in the Provincial Archives of British Columbia. While these were insufficient for generalization, they do reveal some variability of behaviour.[40] In some instances, a widow was given a life interest in the land, in others, outright ownership, indicating marked differences in the relationship between husband and wife. Of the six examples of letters probate reviewed, in four cases the wife was designated as the sole beneficiary, while in the remaining two examples the widow received a life interest in the respective farm. In the one instance where the husband died intestate, the widow, who had five dependent children, was named administrator by the courts. This left her in the frustrating position of being unable to dispose of the land or other parts of her husband's estate. In at least one family some transmission of land to sons had taken place prior to the death of the property owner. In another, the widow retained ownership of the family farm until her death, although her son farmed it along with his own land during those years. While patriarchal domination is readily apparent in some of these transmissions of property, in others a more egalitarian disposition took place in which the widow was given outright control over the family farm, a recognition perhaps of her ability to manage it

and of her lifetime contributions to its survival.

All but three of the women studied spent their later years as widows, six for twenty-five years or more. Remarriage was clearly not a common practice, as only one woman remarried, even though none of the wills examined included restrictions in the event of remarriage.[41] A few continued to live on the family farm, making their home with the family of the son who had been chosen to carry on the operation. Often they had their own separate residence, as in the case of Catherine Dowding who for a time occupied a smaller house near that of her son. In advancing years, a widow often moved into an apartment in Ladner or joined the household of a daughter, before ending up in a retirement home or extended care facility.

Farm women tend to be viewed as stereotypes, which is unavoidable when the discussion generally focuses on a group of individuals. In a broad sense, the following two women are representative of this generation of Delta farm wives. Dora Black, née Lewis, who was extensively involved in the family farm, has already been shown to have done farm work as a personal preference. She was a native of New Brunswick, a middle child in a family of twelve children. In 1898, when she was twenty-six, she left her sister's home in Boston to come to Ladner where another sister had migrated earlier with her husband. Prior to her marriage in 1902, Dora worked in Ladner as a dressmaker, which may also have been her occupation in Moncton. Although she and her husband had only two children, a son and a daughter, she worked hard, for she rarely had household help. She made butter, raised chickens, grew a large garden which she mostly tended herself, made soap, baked bread, and continued to quilt until she was well into her eighties. Her daughter-in-law des-

cribed her as a great horsewoman who was good with animals. In addition, she was a capable nurse who helped to deliver more than a few babies in the surrounding area. In spite of her heavy work load Dora Black was devoted to two causes: the Baptist church and the summer camp at Boundary Bay operated by the True Blue Lodge for the children in the orphanage at New Westminster. She lived to be almost ninety-six years old, a widow for forty-two of those years, but until the end she retained ownership and, therefore, control of the family farm. An individualist who had no time for the "social round", Dora Lewis Black represents one end of the spectrum of women's involvement in the family farm.

At the other end of this spectrum would be situated Fannie Fisher, whose name has also appeared previously in this chapter. Another native of the Maritimes, Fannie Fleck was twenty-one when she married and came from Nova Scotia to East Delta where her husband was farming with his brother. She also worked hard, but the house constituted her domain. She was fortunate enough to have a hired girl for many years, including the early years during which her five children were born. Hired help both outside and inside the house meant that Fannie did not do any outside work, not even involvement in growing a garden or raising chickens. Inside the house, however, she worked hard, from baking bread to sewing clothes for herself and her daughter to managing the family finances. There was time for community activities: Fannie attended the Presbyterian and later the United church, and belonged to the Order of the Eastern Star. She and her husband were a very sociable couple with a particular fondness for dancing. Like most of the women studied, Fannie Fleck Fisher outlived her husband by a number of years, and spent some of her last years in her daughter's home, until her death at

eighty-three years of age.

These two women are intended to be representative of their contemporaries, but not exclusively so. Not all women had the strong personalities of Dora Black and Fannie Fisher. Some women lived in rigid patriarchal households, where life revolved around the husband and father. In some households, women did much less domestic work than either of these women, relying heavily on the products of bakeries and grocery stores. In several families, the women did not participate at all in the larger community, perhaps only attending church on an irregular basis. While it is not possible, therefore, to say that Fannie Fisher and Dora Black were typical farm women of the Delta in this period, their lives were typical indeed in certain respects. What these examples do convey most clearly is the wide range of contributions made by women to the family enterprise and the broad variation of experience possible even in a relatively homogeneous society.

While these women, and most particularly, their work may have been invisible in the agricultural economy, the use of oral histories reveals the details of their lives. This research method also makes clear that their work, in whatever category, was a valuable contribution to the survival of the family farm. Although the larger percentage of these women was not actively participating in farm labour, women's role in the agricultural economy was no less pivotal in the early part of the twentieth century than it had been in the nineteenth century when direct involvement was more prevalent. Furthermore, in contrast to what Cohen implies took place in nineteenth-century Ontario, farmers' wives in Delta did not lose status by reason of their lack of direct involvement in agricultural production.

NOTES

1. The Weekly Gazette, 28 February 1920.

2. Unless indicated otherwise, all the information in respect of women's lives in this chapter was taken from the oral history interviews conducted by the writer between 1988 and 1991.

3. Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 59-117.

4. Bureau of Provincial Information, Bulletin No. 10: Land and Agriculture in British Columbia, 6th ed. (Victoria: King's Printer, 1907), p. 6; Cohen, Women's Work, pp. 109-117.

5. Census of Canada statistics cited in Marjorie Griffin Cohen, "The Decline of Women in Canadian Dairying," in The Neglected Majority, ed. Alison Prentice and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1985), p. 76.

6. T. Ellis Ladner, Above the Sand Heads (Cloverdale: D. W. Friesen & Sons, 1979), pp. 26-29.

7. Ladner, p. 28.

8. Provincial Archives of British Columbia, CBC/Imbert Orchard Collection. Interview with Arthur J. Parmiter, Tape No. 739-1, Side One.

9. Mary Ann Parmiter's grandson has these records in his possession. Interview with Alfred Parmiter, Ladner, British Columbia, 24 June 1988.

10. Bulletin No. 10, p. 6. Ellis Ladner refers to his mother, as well as his cousin, Ada Matheson, making butter, the latter to sell at the cannery. Ladner, pp. 27-28.

11. Cohen, Women's Work, p. 97.

12. Ladner, pp. 33-34.

13. Delta Museum and Archives, Corporation of Delta, Municipal Water Roll, MSS 1988-047-829.

14. Farm Service News, British Columbia Electric Railway Company, December 1935, p. 6; R. H. Gram, "Rural Electrification in British Columbia," Agricultural Institute Review 4, 6 (November 1949): 418.

15. Ad in The Weekly Gazette, 08 December 1917, for "Grillstoves, Irons, Chafing Dishes, Milk Warmers, Radiators, Washing Machines,

Vibrators, Electric Ranges, Percolators, Toasters, Foot Warmers, Hot Pads, Shaving Mugs, Sewing Machine Motors, Curling Irons."

16. University of British Columbia, The Library, Special Collections Division, British Columbia Electric Railway Company Papers, Customer Service Applications, Box 5. These microfilm rolls unfortunately contain only a minute percentage of the applications for electrical connection for the Fraser Valley, that is, part of the "S's" and part of the "W's".

17. Delta Museum and Archives, John Honeyman Collection, MSS DE 1983-228, John Honeyman diaries, 1900-1906.

18. The Delta Times, 29 July 1905, 25 August 1908, and 4 June 1914.

19. Ladner, pp. 85-86.

20. Ernest B. Ingles, "The Custom Threshermen in Western Canada, 1890-1925," in Building Beyond the Homestead: Rural History on the Prairies, ed. David C. Jones and Ian MacPherson (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1985), p. 157 and footnote.

21. Only two women appeared to have done any sharing of work in feeding harvesting crews. These were two sisters-in-law who lived across the road from each other and who sent over items of food, but who did not actually work in each other's kitchen.

22. Interview with Bertha Reynolds, Ladner, British Columbia, 25 January 1988.

23. John Honeyman diary, 6 July to 9 August 1905.

24. Eliane Leslau Silverman, The Last Best West: Women on the Alberta Frontier, 1880-1930 (Montreal: Eden Press, 1984), p. 79.

25. Silverman, p. 98; Seena B. Kohl, "Women's Participation in the North American Family Farm," Women's Studies International Quarterly 14 (4), Winter 1974-75: 47.

26. Ladner, pp. 26-29.

27. Cohen, Women's Work, p. 117. She appears to base this conclusion on one quote from a farm wife in the 1940s or 1950s.

28. The Davises advertised geese for sale at Christmas time. See The Weekly Optimist, 17 December 1925.

29. Cohen, Women's Work, pp. 90-91; Silverman, pp. 96-97; Carolina Antoinetta J. A. Van De Vorst, "A History of Farm Women's Work in Manitoba," (Master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 1988), p. 97.

30. L. M. Hutcherson, Memories of Early Days on the Delta (Ladner: The Optimist, [1939]), p. 29.

31. The Delta News, 30 August 1902.

32. The Delta Times, 21 September 1912.

33. The Delta Times, 23 April 1914; The Weekly Optimist, 18 January 1923.

34. Since the marital situations of these two women were somewhat "delicate", their privacy has been respected.

35. The Weekly Optimist, 18 September 1924, and 28 May 1926.

36. The Delta Times contained blatant examples conveying disappointment over the birth of a daughter. The most offensive of these appeared in the issue of 25 August 1906. It read as follows, with an appropriate amendment to ensure anonymity for the living: "W. A____ cannot be said to be carrying the smile that won't wear off, as it is a frown rather. Instead of a young farmer as was hoped for, another housekeeper arrived this a.m."

37. Parvin Ghorayshi, "The indispensable nature of wives' work for the farm family enterprise," Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 26 (August 1989): 582.

38. This family farmed only 40 acres.

39. Cohen, Women's Work, p. 117.

40. Since property transmission is a sensitive area, and many members of these families who were affected are still living, anonymity was deemed necessary.

41. These findings contrast markedly with the situation in nineteenth-century Ontario and New Brunswick, but it may be that wills from the nineteenth century in British Columbia were as restrictive as those elsewhere. See Cohen, Women's Work, pp. 48-54 and 160-162; Nanciellen Davis, "'Patriarchy from the Grave': Family Relations in 19th Century New Brunswick Wills," Acadiensis XIII, 2 (Spring 1984): 94-100.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Comparatively self-contained until the 1960s, the municipality of Delta in the southwest corner of the province of British Columbia provides an excellent setting in which to study a select group of people. Originally settled in the 1870s, the area has been home to a remarkably homogeneous population which has been renewed since that time by immigrants primarily of British stock. Delta has always been a fertile agricultural district, so that farmers have constituted the majority of families through the early decades of the twentieth century. By the turn of the century, the village of Ladner was sufficiently developed to supply most of these families' commercial and social needs, although connections to New Westminster were retained. The necessary infrastructure and means of communication were in place by 1900, the beginning of the period of this study. With the introduction of piped water and electricity by the time of the Second World War, the transition materially to the modern period was completed.

Twenty-four women who were married to farmers and resided on farms in the municipality during the years 1900 to 1939 were the subjects of oral history interviews conducted with certain of their sons and daughters. The main purpose of these interviews was to determine the kinds of work performed by these women, as well as to gain some insight into how they might have otherwise assisted the family economy. Other sources, such as diaries and the local weekly newspaper, were also consulted extensively in order to develop an understanding of the social

context in which these farm wives lived.

Sociologists can evaluate the extent of modern women's role in detail by quantification through the administration of tests and the keeping of time records. To make that same determination for a generation of women of whom almost all are deceased is a daunting task. The most that can be hoped for is a descriptive approximation based on the recollections of their children. This information must be tempered by the realization that newcomers to the district arrived at different stages in their family life cycle. The situation facing a family with several grown sons was quite different from that for a newly married couple. In addition, care must be taken to avoid over-generalization of women's experience without making allowance, to the extent possible, for variability based on such factors as class, ethnicity, type of farming, and the size of the enterprise. Women need to be viewed as individuals participating in family establishment, enterprise development and society building.

Nevertheless, it is essential to begin with some general observations, the most fundamental of which is that all farmers' wives made valuable economic contributions to the family livelihood, differing only in form. Sundberg has made this point for the farm women of the Canadian prairies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She maintains that women deserve to be regarded as partners in the farm business because they provided valuable goods and services in their roles as "homemakers, home manufacturers, field hands, wage earners, doctors, morticians, and teachers."[1]

For all twenty-four women studied this contribution included, at a bare minimum, the domestic sphere. These women managed a household, bore

and raised children, and nurtured their families in various ways. The majority limited themselves, or were limited, to the domestic sphere, but this does not negate the fact that their work was integral to the operation of the agricultural enterprise. Even the willingness to defer personal or household consumption can be a valuable contribution, as Kohl has suggested.[2] Some activities, such as canning food and sewing for the family, had substantial direct cost-saving implications. Whether or not a woman ever "helped out" in her husband's sphere or performed specific farm tasks on a regular basis, her work was complementary to his and equal in importance. The strenuous nature of the individual tasks may have been altered with the introduction of running water and electricity, or with increased prosperity, but the necessity of work for these women was unavoidable.

Even without the additional burden of work in the barn or the field, these women bore substantial responsibilities, as has been seen in Chapter Four. In fact, this was a common reason given by oral history interviewees for their mothers not performing farm tasks. Much of this work load resulted from the nature of the family occupation, which necessitated a thorough integration of home and livelihood. A woman could not escape the effects of this blending of two domains. When she married a farmer, she married a way of life.[3] Daily routine revolved around the seasonal demands of the farm, and women had few alternatives to satisfying those requirements.

In addition to the work required in operating households and raising children, many women appear to have engaged in labour which can be classified as work in support of the household and farm. This category includes a broad range of activities from raising chickens for sale or

for family use to growing a garden to trading surplus apples for fish with local fishermen. Making butter and raising chickens were typical tasks. In this municipality, as in British Columbia generally, women had been performing such work since the early years.[4] Egg money, like that received for dairy products, gave women and their families an income which could be essential to the maintenance of life on the land.

Finally, some women did work directly associated with the production aspect of the farm enterprise that provided the family's livelihood. The women of the subject group who did farm work were a minority. Only six, or possibly seven, of the twenty-four were actively involved in the productive aspect of agriculture. Milking cows was the principal farm task they took on. This work, a mainstay of the dairy economy, was critical to the development of the dairy sector of Delta's agricultural economy in these years. Oral history informants ascribed two major reasons for the participation of their mothers: personal preference and financial necessity. While it is possible to subsume the former into the larger financial motivation, the opportunity to save money was not always a decisive factor in determining the nature of work. In at least two additional families the financial imperative alone should have dictated the involvement of female family labour in farm work, but it does not appear to have done so.

Furthermore, none of the other potentially influential variables were decisive factors in determining the apportionment of women's time. The kind of farming was not a factor, since mixed farming predominated in the region during the period, nor was the size of farm, as the smallest farm in the sample was one on which none of the female family members ever did farm work. The use of hired farm help was commonplace in

Delta, and the increasing shift toward mixed farming made it highly probable that the great majority of farmers relied to some extent on paid labour. Ethnicity can be ruled out as a factor in women's work decisions, since all the families studied were of British stock, as was the largest percentage of the municipality. Likewise, national origin did not play a role in these decisions. The concept of class remains as a possible determining factor, but given the disagreement among the various sources, class differentiation, however organized, does not provide a reasonable explanation of the variations in women's work lives.

No tidy answers or definitive conclusions, whereby it is possible to correlate the active involvement in farming of these particular women with ethnicity, class, financial considerations, relations of production, or the character of the farm itself, evolve out of this research. Women's direct involvement appears to have been attributable to values, not as social constructs that determine proper behaviour, but as beliefs that the welfare and prosperity of the family enterprise were the goals toward which all members should be actively striving and that the family's well-being, present and future, was more important than masculine social status or community approval. The latter were important constraints on behaviour, for several informants suggested that a man's status among his peers derived to a significant degree from his ability to carry on the male business of farming without his wife's direct labour. The decision to work in the barn or in the field was an individual one, made by a woman, most likely in consultation with her husband. Their mutual goals, whether family financial security or personal fulfillment, were deemed more important than community reaction.

Work for Delta women consisted of a core of household and child

care responsibilities. Beyond that core there appeared to be an area that was negotiable between husband and wife. Whether a farm woman engaged in household support activities or participated in farm work varied according to the individual relationship between marriage partners. The degree of participation also may have fluctuated according to age and state of health of the wife, stage in family cycle, and level of economic achievement. This coincides with the findings of Kohl relating to a much later period in southwestern Saskatchewan. She discovered that for a farm woman "participation in the enterprise varies according to her own desires and values, the needs of the enterprise, and the expectations of her husband and other members of the family enterprise."[6]

Whether or not these women did farm work in addition to housework, their contribution to the family farm was essential and was considered as such by family members. Describing their role as pivotal, as Kohl has done, would not be an exaggeration.[7] That women were sometimes regarded publicly as equal contributors is evident in the number of instances in which husbands willed control of the family farm to their wives, an indication that these men trusted their wives to manage the enterprise competently. Since the home and the farm were inseparable, women did not have to do farm work in order to contribute something of value; they were an integral part of an economic unit of production. Most farmers' wives in these decades of the twentieth century were no longer visibly taking part in the operation of the family farm, but this did not mean that they had lost status in the economy, as Cohen has suggested. The nature of their occupation determined that everything they did was important. Despite their neglect by historians, farm women in Delta counted, both in the economy and in society.

NOTES

1. Sara Brooks Sundberg, "Farm Women on the Canadian Prairie Frontier: The Helpmate Image," in Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History, ed. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd.), p. 104.

2. Seena B. Kohl, Working Together: Women and Family in Southwestern Saskatchewan (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Limited, 1976), p. 94.

3. It is instructive to note that farmers married in the winter months exclusively, this collection of families included.

4. T. Ellis Ladner, Above the Sand Heads (Cloverdale: D. W. Friesen & Sons Ltd., 1979), pp. 27-28, and 151. See also Bureau of Provincial Information, Bulletin 10: Land and Agriculture in British Columbia, 6th ed. (Victoria: King's Printer, 1907), p. 6.

5. Kohl, p. 68.

6. Kohl, p. ix.

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Father

What was your father's name? When was he born? Where? What was the size of his family? Where was he located in the family? How much education did he have?

When did his family come to Canada? From where? Why? Were his family farmers?

When did he come to Ladner? Why? Did he come on his own or with his family?

When was he married? When did he begin to farm in Delta? Did he continue to farm throughout his life? Was he active in the community? When did he retire? Who took over the farm when he retired? When did he die? How old was he? What did he die from?

Mother

What was your mother's maiden name? When was she born? Where? What was the size of her family? Where was she located in the family? How much education did she have?

When did her family come to Canada? From where? Why? Were her family farmers?

When did she come to Ladner? Why? Did she come alone or with her family?

Did she work at a paid job before she was married? How did she and your father meet? How many children did she have (including yourself)? Where were the children born, at home or in a hospital? Were there any babies that died at birth or shortly after? When did she die? How old was she? What did she die from?

Parents - Farming

Where was their original farm located? Size? Did they add to this? Size?

Kind of farming? Field crops (hay, oats, barley, potatoes, turnips and mangels, corn, peas)? Dairy business? How many cows? Where did the milk go? Animal-raising (beef cattle, sheep, pigs, horses)?

Did your parents have hired help to do farm work? Through all these years? Was this a full-time person year-round? Was this man white, Chinese, "Hindu", or native Indian?

Material Environment

Did you have a telephone? Always? If not, when was it installed?

Was there running water in the house? Always? Where did the water come from?

Was there electricity? If not, when did your parents get electricity? What was the first electrical applicance purchased for the house?

Where did the wood supply come from? Who cut, split, and brought the wood into the house?

Mother

Farm work -- Did your mother ever do any farm work? If yes, what kind of work did she do? Milking and looking after the cows? Helping with the harvesting of hay and oats? Driving horses or the tractor in the field? If not, did she ever help out when hired men were hard to get, such as during World War I?

Household Support Work -- Did your mother raise chickens, ducks or turkeys? Was this for the family's own use or to sell? Who looked after the birds, that is, fed them, collected the eggs, cleaned the henhouse?

Did she make butter? Was this for sale or for the family's own use?

Did she have a vegetable garden? What was grown in it? Was this just for the family's use? Who prepared the soil? Who seeded? Who looked after the garden, that is, weeded or hilled potatoes, etc.? Who harvested?

Did your family have an orchard of fruit trees? What kind? Was this just for the family's own use? Who picked the fruit?

Did your family keep bees? Was the honey intended for sale or for the family's own use?

Housework -- Did your mother bake bread? Regularly? Did she do other baking as well, such as pies, cakes, cookies? Did she use a woodstove? Did she later have a sawdust-burning stove, and then an electric range? Did she do cooking and baking for harvesting crews? For how many men for how long? Did the number of men decrease over the years? Did she can and preserve fruits? vegetables? meat? fish?

What did she have for doing laundry: scrub-board? hand-cranked washing machine? gas-powered washing machine? electric washing machine? a clothesline fixed with a pole or a pulley line? Did she iron with heavy irons heated on the stove? Did she later have an electric iron?

Did she ever make soap?

What kinds of house-cleaning were done daily? weekly? spring cleaning?

Did she have a sewing machine? Did she sew for herself? for the family? for the house? Did she knit, crochet, or do fanciwork? Did she quilt? with a neighbour or with a group of other women (a "bee")?

Who did the shopping for food, etc., your mother or your father? Where (Ladner, New Westminster, or Vancouver)? Did they also buy from the Eaton's catalogue? Did your mother learn to drive a car?

Household help -- Did your mother ever have hired help in the house, e.g. during harvesting or when the children were born? Was this person a relative or a stranger? How long did she stay? What kind of work did she do? Did your father ever help in the house, for example, washing or drying dishes, or help with the care of the children? Did the children have chores to do: farm chores, helping with housework, working in the garden, looking after younger children?

Related areas -- Did your mother or father help the children with homework from school?

Who kept track of family finances, that is, did the book-keeping and paid the bills? Did your mother share in financial decision-making with your father concerning the farm and/or the house?

Did your mother participate in community activities? Did she attend church regularly? Which one? Was she a member of the women's organization for that church? Did she teach Sunday school? Did she belong to the Women's Christian Temperance Union? the IODE (after 1922)? the Eastern Star (after 1922)? the Women's Institute (after 1933)?

What did your mother do for her own pleasure and enjoyment?

Evaluation -- How would you rate your family economically in relation to other families around you: well off? average? not very well off?

Do you think that most of the farm wives of your mother's generation, at least the ones in your own surrounding area that you would have known about, pitched in with the farm work? Why? or why not?

APPENDIX B

FARM WOMEN OF DELTA

Florence Arthur ... was born in Stratford, Ontario in 1888. Her parents, William and Sarah Frederick, came to British Columbia in 1891 and to Ladner in 1893. Florence married Frederick Arthur in 1909 and they farmed his parents' 170-acre farm, as well as 80 acres of their own. The Arthurs had five daughters, one of whom died in childhood. Florence Arthur died in 1976.

Dora Black... was born in rural New Brunswick in 1872. She came to Delta in 1898 after spending some time in Boston. Dora worked as a dressmaker for several years prior to her marriage to David Black in 1902. The Blacks farmed approximately 120 acres. She bore two children. Dora Black died in 1968, spending forty-two years as a widow.

Elizabeth Brandrith... was a native of British Columbia. She was born in New Westminster in 1895. Her training as a nurse at Royal Columbian Hospital was cut short by the flu epidemic of 1918. In 1920 she married John Brandrith and together they farmed about forty acres, as well as some of the original Brandrith family farm. They had five children. Elizabeth Brandrith still lives in Delta, in an extended care hospital.

Rachel Brandrith... arrived in British Columbia in 1887 with her husband and two children. She had been born in York County, Ontario in 1864, but her family moved to Manitoba to homestead. There she met and married Jim Brandrith, a horticulturist, in 1883. They came to Delta in 1903 to farm about one hundred acres. Rachel gave birth to twelve children. In 1916 her husband died, and she spent her last years in the homes of her children, until her own death in 1939.

Margaret Chorlton... came from a seafaring family that had settled in late 1892 in Victoria, where Margaret was born the following year. After the Erskines moved to Sea Island, she worked for a time as a seamstress before marrying John Chorlton in 1907. The Chorltons farmed about 260 acres in East Delta. They had four children, three daughters and a son. In 1957 Margaret Chorlton

died, predeceasing her husband by sixteen years.

Mabel Coleman... was born in 1885 at Woodward's Landing, across the Fraser River from Ladner. The Thirkle family moved to Ladner, and Mabel married Robert Alfred Coleman in 1905. She had six children, all of whom were born in a local maternity home. Her husband specialized in growing potatoes, as well as custom threshing. Mabel Coleman died in 1948, seven years after her husband.

Margaret Davie... was born in Grey County, Ontario, near Kincardine, in 1873 and came to Delta to keep house for her brother, Alex Paterson. She returned to Ontario for her marriage to Alexander Davie at the end of 1903. Her first baby lived only a couple of days, but she bore four more children who survived. The family farmed at least half a section of land. She died in 1964, at ninety-one years of age.

Ruby Davis... was a native of Delta, a member of a pioneer family. She was born in 1893 and married Alexis (Leckie) Davis, whose family had also pioneered, in 1920. They farmed about eighty acres at Gulfside until the farm was sold in 1966. Ruby Davis died in 1989, her husband having predeceased her in 1985.

Catherine Dowding... came with her husband and three daughters to Delta in 1909. Born in Ontario in 1875, she was a teacher for seven years before marrying Charles Dowding in 1902. A fourth child, a son, was born in British Columbia. Over the years the Dowdings acquired a farm of 160 acres. Charles Dowding died in 1936, leaving Catherine a widow for many years. She died in 1965.

Fannie Fisher... came to Delta as a bride in 1907. She was born in Middle Stewiacke, Nova Scotia, in 1886. She gave birth to five children, only one of whom was a daughter. Her husband and brother-in-law farmed a quarter section of land, that is, 160 acres, together in East Delta. Fannie Fisher died in 1969, eight years after her husband.

Rose Frew... came to Canada in 1894 from Ireland, via Boston, to marry James Frew. She was born in 1864. Of the six babies born to the Frews while the family lived on Westham Island in Delta, only two survived to adulthood. After spending five years in New Westminster, they returned to Westham Island and farmed until 1920, when they

retired to Vancouver. Rose Frew died in 1942.

Beatrice Guichon... was born in 1889 at Oxford Mills, near Ottawa, Ontario. Her father had worked on the construction of the telephone line from Winnipeg to Vancouver, and the family joined him, and moved to Ladner where they ran a hotel. Beatrice married Frank Guichon shortly before she turned seventeen, and had three children, one of whom died as an infant. She and her husband were part of the larger Guichon family operation, until the land was subdivided and they farmed their own one hundred acres beginning in the 1920s. Beatrice Guichon died in 1976, one year after her husband.

Ruth Guichon... was born on a farm in Michigan in 1900, but the Westons moved to Vancouver in 1907. Ruth became a teacher, and one of her postings brought her to Westham Island, where she met Felix Guichon and subsequently married him in 1922. They raised four chldren on their farm of 112 acres, surrounded by other members of the Guichon family. Ruth died in 1991, afer being a widow for thirty-eight years.

Annabella Hopcott... was born in 1886 near Burlington, Ontario, and came to Delta in 1909 as a bride. She and her husband, Fred Hopcott, farmed on Tilbury Island and had four children, two sons and two daughters. Annabella Hopcott died in 1978, after having retired from the farm to Ladner village. Her husband had predeceased her in 1953.

Edna Kirkland... was born in 1875 in St. John, New Brunswick, and came to British Columbia to live with relatives after her parents died. In 1891 she married William Attenborough Kirkland and they farmed 135 acres in Delta and raised six children. Edna Kirkland died in 1942.

Elizabeth Mason... was born in 1867, and arrived in Ladner from Scotland in 1904 to work as a lady's companion. She married John Mason in 1905 and, after a short stay in Kamloops, they settled on a farm of forty acres at Gulfside. The Masons had two daughters and continued to farm until 1924. John Mason died in 1924, and Elizabeth not long after in 1929.

Alice Mitchell... was a member of the Burr family of New Westminster. She was born in 1882 and married Harry Mitchell in 1906. They farmed 107 acres on

Crescent Island, until her husband's death in 1937. She gave birth to nine children, two of whom died at birth or soon after. Alice Mitchell died in 1978.

Bertha Parmiter... in 1906 came from England where she had been born in 1879. She initially lived with relatives in Ladner, working as a telephone operator. In 1908 she and Arthur Parmiter were married, and they had a family of three children. They farmed 160 acres at the corner of Slough Road and Parmiter Road. Bertha Parmiter died in 1972.

Agnes Pybus... was born in Scotland in 1886. The family emigrated to Canada in 1898, settling initially at Sumas Prairie and later in Ladner. Agnes was married at eighteen to Rock Pybus, and they farmed 140 acres on Slough Road. She gave birth to nine children, two of whom died as infants. Agnes Pybus died in Ladner in 1957, outliving her husband by only eight years.

Alice Savage... was born near Guelph, Ontario in 1883, and came to Delta in 1904 to live with relatives when she and her sister were orphaned. She married Hugh Savage in 1908, and they farmed originally on Westham Island, later on Fairview Road, and lastly on Crescent Island. She bore eight children, and died in 1965.

Violet Swenson... came from California, where she was born in 1899. In 1909 she came to British Columbia with her mother and sister, and resided in Ladner. She worked as a secretary for a short time before marrying Arthur Swenson in 1922. They lived in Burnaby until 1930, when they moved to the family farm of about 180 acres in Delta. They had four children. Violet Swenson died in 1973.

Ellen Tamboline... was born in 1897 on Westham Island and spent her early years in New Westminster, returning to Westham Island to live in 1904. Ellen taught school for several years until she married Joseph Tamboline in 1920. She had six children, most of whom were still dependents when her husband died suddenly in 1941. She remarried later to Bob Sibbald, and is still living in Ladner.

Greta Trevitt... was born in 1891 in Cheam, in the Fraser Valley. She came to Delta with her mother and sister, where they farmed. In 1918, she married John

Trevitt, a returned soldier, and together they farmed her mother's land, as well as their own. Greta Trevitt bore five children, including two sets of twins. She died in 1973.

Elizabeth Wright... was an American who met her future husband, Smith Wright, when she was working for a local farming family. In 1894, when she was eighteen, she was married in Lynden, Washington. The Wrights had nine children, one of whom died in infancy, and farmed about half a section of land, as well as leasing additional acreage. Elizabeth died in 1955, and her husband followed six months later.

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