

**Reading the Land:
Rural Discourse and the Practice of Settlement, Salt Spring Island,
British Columbia, 1859-1891**

by

Ruth Wells Sandwell
B.A., Carleton University, 1979
M.A., University of Victoria, 1981

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APPROVAL

Name: Ruth Wells Sandwell
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy
Title of Thesis: Reading the Land: Rural Discourse and the Practice of Settlement, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, 1859-1891

Examining Committee:

Chair: Dr. Derryl MacLean

Dr. J.A. Little, Professor, Senior Supervisor
Department of History

Dr. Tina Loo, Associate Professor
Department of History

Dr. C.I. Dyck, Associate Professor
Department of History

Dr. Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Professor
Department of Political Science
Internal External Examiner

Dr. John Herd Thompson, Professor
Canadian Studies Department,
Duke University
External Examiner

Date approved: September 12, 1997

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Red Reading the Land : Rural Discourse
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Author: _____
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Ruth Wells Sandwell
(name)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the history of Salt Spring Island, which lies between the mainland of British Columbia and Vancouver Island, in the first years of non-Native settlement, 1859 to 1891. Its foundation is a quantitative database, compiled from a wide variety of routinely-generated sources that detail the lives of island residents over time. Land records, rarely used by British Columbia historians, provide important insights into the relationships between landownership, household and community in this rural area.

The dissertation begins by exploring the rural discourse articulated by policy makers and reformers, who, notwithstanding the resource industries and laissez-faire capitalism of nineteenth-century British Columbia, identified the settlement of farm families on country lands as integral to the stability and prosperity of the province. This 'official' discourse of rural, rooted in liberal ideas of profit and progress, was expressed in the creation of the pre-emption system of rural land acquisition which allowed occupation prior to purchase, and purchase at a low price conditional on land improvements and continuous residency. The first half of this dissertation traces the ways in which this official discourse was realized in the success of the pre-emption system on Salt Spring Island: notwithstanding high rates of claim abandonment, land speculation was curtailed, and a solid core of families was established, most headed by farmers whose geographic persistence rivaled that of farmers in the settled regions of central Canada.

The second half of this study explores how, in spite of the rhetoric of successful agricultural capitalism, most island farmers failed to become commercial agriculturalists. Instead, families used their land, most of it unimproved and unpurchased, as a cheap, secure and flexible foundation for a variety of economic endeavours -- self-provisioning activities in the rich coastal environment, intermittent waged work on and off the island, and

occasional sales of farm produce -- better suited to raising a family than accumulating capital. Economic behaviours, power structures, patterns of land use, family formations, and community organization suggest that island residents experienced rural life within a different set of parameters than those provided by the liberal discourse of agricultural improvement and commercial success.

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ABBREVIATIONS

SSIA	Salt Spring Island Archives
BCA	British Columbia Archives
NAC	National Archives of Canada
BCSP	British Columbia Sessional Papers

Introduction

Negotiating Rural British Columbia

This dissertation is an exploration of the potent and varied relations that existed between British Columbians and country lands in the nineteenth century. Because the dynamics between people and land manifest themselves most clearly when the frame of reference is narrow, this study focuses on one locale, Salt Spring Island, during the early years of non-Native settlement, 1859-1891. The island occupies about one hundred and eighty square kilometers, and lies in the Gulf of Georgia between Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia. Salt Spring Island was chosen for this study in part because it was the first area in the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia where cheap country lands were made widely available to prospective farmers under the pre-emption system. Of greater significance, however, is the unusually rich documentation available about land on Salt Spring Island, documentation that provides the historian with a rare glimpse of the process of non-Native settlement in nineteenth-century British Columbia.

This dissertation details the ways in which government policies about land were translated into the rural economy, society, and culture of Salt Spring Island through the practice of land settlement and land use during these years. The emphasis here on the practice of settlement is, on one level, a response to the paucity of such land-related studies in British Columbia.

The historiographical pre-occupation with resource extraction and large-scale capitalist formations in the province has stimulated little research into the settlement of non-Natives on country lands. Where studies do exist, they tend to focus exclusively on government policy or generalized trends rather than geographically- and historically-specific land-related practices.¹

On another level, however, this study extends beyond both the geographical boundaries of the island and the theoretical boundaries of the policy-vs.-practice framework; for this history is also an exploration of an argument between two groups of people -- loosely defined as policy makers and Salt Spring Island settlers -- about the appropriate use of country lands, and the type of rural society best built upon them.

The following chapters will outline how the land policies directing settlement on Salt Spring Island were themselves shaped by a coherent vision that identified capitalist agricultural production on the family farm as the economic, social and moral apogee of rural society. This nineteenth-century liberal vision of rural was shared by British Columbia policy makers, bureaucrats, journalists, and community "boosters" alike. It was manifested in a widely-dispersed bureaucratic and popular discourse of rural life that insisted on the importance of rural populations -- or at least a particular sort of rural population -- to the growth of a healthy new society. Land policies, particularly the pre-emption system that dominated land settlement on Salt Spring Island, were explicit manifestations of this discourse, and were

specifically designed to stimulate the “right” type of rural society into existence.

This way of seeing rural society is identified here as “the official discourse of rural.” As Joy Parr puts it, “[e]xperience ... is formed through discourses. Experiences are not made *by* discourses, but discourses are the medium through which experiences are comprehensible.”² This rural discourse, rooted in particular liberal beliefs about human nature and its relation to community, was the medium through which most of those living in the towns and cities of nineteenth-century British Columbia understood rural society.³ Challenging earlier constructions of the province exclusively as an industrial resource frontier, therefore, this study suggests that rural was an important part of British Columbia identity in the nineteenth century.

Rural identity, however, was neither fixed nor uniform. The wide literature written in the nineteenth century about country lands helped crystallize the meaning of rural for those living in cities and towns, and has made such representations available to historians. In a similar way, records documenting land acquisition and use provide a lens through which we can observe the behaviours in which settlers outside of towns and cities constructed and gave meaning to their own rural experience.

Routinely-generated records, like any historical texts, provide us with representations of events that are not descriptive, but are instead prescriptive, ideological and normative.⁴ Many areas of Salt Spring Island experience --

particularly those concerning women, children, and non-landowning males -- seldom appear within such "snapshots;" others show up as indistinct images, blurred by their location at the margins of significance as defined by those creating the documents. The aspects of rural society that were at the front and center of such representations reveal, for example, urban society's pre-occupation with the particular economic structures attributed to rural communities. In an important sense, therefore, the sources used to create the database in this dissertation tell us more about the aims and beliefs of government bureaucrats and the needs of urban society -- about the normative vision that constitutes the official discourse of rural -- than they do about Salt Spring Island society.

Rejecting the notion that such documents can be read as transparent explications of empirical behaviour, however, this dissertation suggests that the wide range of documentary evidence available about land settlement and use can do much more than reveal this single, urban-centered discourse of rural. As theorists have argued, it is possible to read "through" the texts' single meaning, not only "back to the contexts of the texts' production," but also "out, to the ways in which its meanings became constructed."⁵ In other words, records documenting community formation can be used with aggregate patterns of geographical persistence and land use to provide evidence of the ways in which settlers used specific land-related practices to organize and give meaning to their experience of rural society.

The abundant sources relating to land on the island, like the less detailed records about land use and community formation, allow us to see some of the ways that island residents organized their own experience, and, in so doing, helped to both represent and construct their own identity. These sources provide us a view, therefore, of how Salt Spring Islanders, during this time period, structured their experience to create their own rural culture;⁶ for, as anthropologist Grant McCracken explains,

Cultural categories are the fundamental co-ordinates of meaning. They represent the basic distinctions with which a culture divides up the phenomenal world [...] Cultural categories of time, space, nature and person create the vast body of categories. Together they create a system of distinctions that organizes the phenomenal world. It is thus that each culture establishes its own special vision of the world and thus that it renders the understandings and rules appropriate to one cultural context and preposterously inappropriate in the next.⁷

This type of analysis -- which carefully reads historical practice as evidence of cultural formation -- is particularly important in a society which, like Salt Spring Island, can be distinguished from its urban counterpart by the practical illiteracy of the majority of its population. Most residents did not write about their perceptions of rural life and lands in diaries or letters in the years under study, and most records documenting their behaviours were generated by those living outside the community, in neighbouring urban areas. A detailed reading of practice -- of the behaviours relating to land, family and community -- provides one of the only means of discovering how this population understood their own experience of rural.⁸

As one of the oldest surviving immigrant communities in the province, Salt Spring Island is an obvious target for what historian Giovanni Levi terms a microhistorical investigation. Levi begins his argument for the significance of microhistory -- the detailed description and analysis of the minutiae of life in a specific geographic area -- by arguing that "[p]henomena previously considered to be sufficiently described and understood assume completely new meanings by altering the scale of observation."⁹ Levi's argument became increasingly relevant, as, over the course of my research, I became more and more aware that the view from the government sources and community "boosters" on Salt Spring Island was at considerable variance with the glimpses that I was able to obtain of "the view from the countryside."¹⁰ Where the dominant historiographical discourse of modernization suggests that change on the island would be measured by the progress from frontier subsistence to agricultural capitalism, I found instead evidence of an economy consistently based on the labour of all household members, characterized by a wildly fluctuating combination of subsistence activities, waged labour (often off-farm work) and commercial agricultural production. The normal categories of British Columbia historical analysis -- occupation, wage labour, capital accumulation, profit maximization -- seemed strangely ill-suited to the household-based, land-centered, economically-diverse population I was studying.

At the same time, the cluster of values commonly used to define the alternative to modern society -- peasant, frontier or "traditional" society--

also failed to provide a usable framework of description or analysis. Affective values, subsistence living, and family-based commercial agricultural production seemed equally inadequate at describing the high levels of violence, the officially-vilified mixed-race marriages, the failure of political structures, and the rough mix of industrial wage work with hunting and gathering activities that characterized the community. Neither successful farmers nor full-time waged workers, peasants nor profit-maximizers, squatters nor *bona-fide* landowners, capitalists nor proletarians, traditional nor modern, and not predominantly male, these people lived a life of considerable distance from the economic, political and geographical centers of British Columbia historiography. This local study, like microhistory in general, began to take shape through what Levi describes as a "response to the obvious limitations of those interpretations of social history which in their quest for regularity give prominence to over-simple indicators."¹¹

The detailed examination of land-related behaviours provided in this microhistory, therefore, points to important differences between the official discourse of rural, and the experiences of the rural population under study. Deterred by the poor quality of farmland on the one hand, and encouraged on the other by the variety of part-time, off-farm remunerative occupations, the temperate climate and the natural abundance of the Gulf Island environment, the settlers on Salt Spring Island made their own choices about the appropriate uses of rural lands. These choices were circumscribed,

but not determined, by the official discourse of rural and the land policies it generated.

Of the hundreds of aspiring rural residents taking up land on Salt Spring Island in the later nineteenth century, most stayed less than a year. Those who remained walked a careful line between adherence to the mandatory provisions of land policies that ensured their continued residence on the land, and the manipulation of these policies for their own purposes. The behaviour of most island residents regarding their land suggests that they favoured security over risk, ease over hard work, and a modest sufficiency over the accumulation of wealth. These goals were beyond the purview of, and were, indeed, often incompatible with, the emphasis on commercial agricultural production, and its requisite sobriety and respectability, that lay at the heart of the official discourse of rural.

The different visions of rural explored in these chapters are not only manifested in land-related behaviours. Evidence from other sources also outlines the varying structures upon which Salt Spring Island settlers organized their personal and community identities -- through ethnicity, age, gender, and participation in the burgeoning state apparatus. Land, however, remains central to this analysis. Land records provide the discursive space upon which the historian can see different expectations of rural life clearly etched. They let us see how a variety of land practices brokered relations among settlers, and between settlers and those living off the island who had

an interest in the island. Rural, therefore, was not only important as a category of experience and identity in nineteenth century British Columbia, but, like most identities, it was both variable and actively contested.

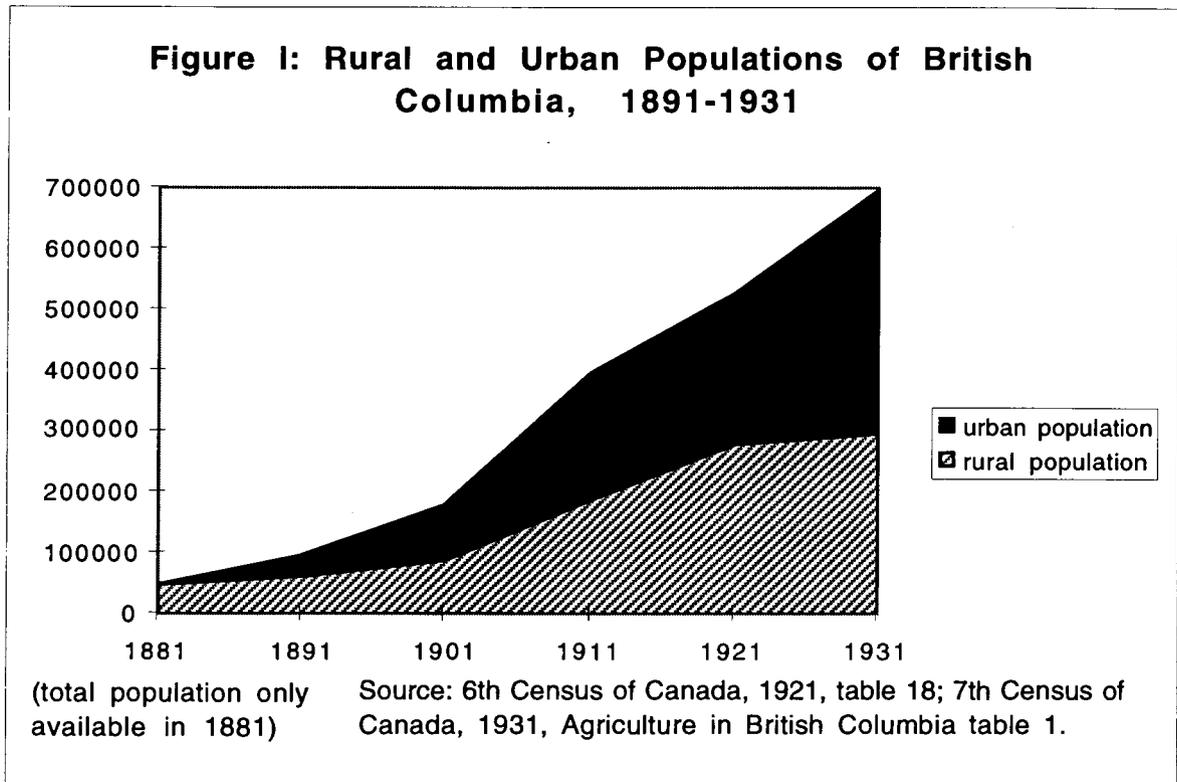
Defining Rural I: The Problems and Promise of Rural History

This dissertation has chosen to locate Salt Spring Island history in a rural context, but what exactly does that mean? In British Columbia, a "sterile sea of mountains" has not only provided a geographical barrier between this most western province and the rest of Canada, but it has isolated British Columbians from that relationship with the land that represents the essence of rural for most Canadians. As Martin Robin generalized in 1972,

[t]he geography of British Columbia, which historically relegated farming to a supplementary rather than primary component of the economic system, has severely restricted the development of extensive cultivation, checked the growth of a large rural population and hindered the emergence of a broadly shared rural consciousness.¹²

Silences in the historical record lend tacit support to the dominance of resource-based capitalism as the shaping force in British Columbia history. Most historians of the province would concur that evidence of a rural consciousness, or even of a rural society, has failed to emerge from an historiography that is dominated by mining, logging and fishing, and is theorized within the context of large-scale, laissez-faire capitalism and economic individualism.¹³ Detailed scholarly studies of populations outside

of Victoria, greater Vancouver and Nanaimo are few, and tend to portray ephemeral societies dominated by young men characterized by liberal individualism, cultural alienation, waged labour and high geographic mobility.¹⁴



The modern, industrial and highly mobile populations described in the historical literature stand in stark contrast to both the stable, agrarian “traditional” societies commonly associated with rural Europe, and the small-scale commercial agriculturalists of nineteenth-century rural North America. Therefore, although more than half of British Columbians lived outside of cities and towns in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Figure 1),

the discourse of capitalist enterprise that dominates British Columbia history has served in practice to erase distinctions between rural and urban, organizing social and economic relations exclusively within the categories that urbanization, industrialization and "progress" provide.¹⁵

British Columbia is not the only area that has difficulty in applying generalized constructions of rural society to specific explorations of rural practice. Within the grand narratives of liberalism, progress, and modernization that dominate twentieth century historiography, "rural" has played a central role: the story of the last two hundred-odd years continues to be told as the transition from rural to urban, from subsistence agriculture to commercial farming, from familial to individualistic, from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, and from traditional to modern.¹⁶ As rural historians complain, however, this discursive position has been responsible for the fuzzy marginality that characterizes rural society within modernism: constructed in opposition to the dominant capitalist, urban and industrial framework, rural tends to take on a particularly rigid and emblematic identity as a pre-industrial or non-urban "other." As economic anthropologist Richard Wilk points out, within this discourse, "any complex process or intricate situation of change is dissected into its traditional and its modern components, and everything is referred back to its archetype."¹⁷

In an important sense, then, rural stands as a particularly potent symbol against which we can measure the changes that the late twentieth century

regards as significant. Its importance can, furthermore, be seen in the positioning of rural within the American national identity: the foundation of American exceptionalism has rested on the supposition that the first American immigrants were commercial, rather than subsistence farmers. Within the paradigm of modernization, such behaviour indicates a position relatively more progressive and modern than peasant farmers of Europe, and confirms the role Americans give to themselves as being the harbingers of progress and modernity.

Whether rural connotes an essential national character, the essential pre-capitalist values of the peasant households, or the essence of nature found in wilderness areas, Ian McKay has persuasively argues in The Quest of the Folk that “rural” is a difficult term to use precisely because its meanings are so potent. It provides a particularly compelling archetype for those of us living in the urban centers of late twentieth century Canada. It has become an “psychic space,” identified with recreation and rejuvenation, a reminder of the *Gemeinschaft* world we have lost while recovering from the pressures and alienation of the modern urban *Gesselschaft* environment.¹⁸ Its importance as a “mythometer” of late twentieth-century urban culture can be seen in the ways that rural societies are used to represent an essential part of who we are: “that which is unchanging, the true, solid and possibly even the providential core of a culture and society.”¹⁹ Rural, like European constructions of the Orient discussed by Edward Said, has allowed urban and

industrial culture to “gain in strength and identity” by providing “a sort of surrogate and even underground self.”²⁰ Rural has become an important, if “underground” part of our identity, hence its tendency to be ignored within, and romanticized outside of the academy.

As James Lehning has argued in the context of rural France, “the power of these discourses [of modernization] lies in their ability to attribute ahistorical and essential qualities to the discourses themselves.”²¹ However compelling a bucolic and primitive rural discourse is to those of us suffering from what Thomas Hardy identified as the “ache of modernism,” it does little to elaborate the complex and variable experiences that are the subject matter of the rural historian.²² Instead, as Ian McKay argues, the dominant discourses of rural function effectively to erase difference and conflict, the structures of inequality, and the politics of rural society by constructing rural as simple, harmonious, homogenous, and pre-political enclaves unscathed by the divisions, disappointments and complexities of modern life.²³

In spite of, and sometimes in response to, these tendencies within both the dominant historiography and the popular culture, rural history has attracted a growing number of scholars over the last thirty years. The work of these historians has helped to refine and problematize earlier, more generalized visions of rural society. Their studies, many of which focus on

small communities or regions, provide a much more detailed and complex view of rural societies, economies and cultures.

Reflecting the continuing influence of the modernizing paradigm to rural studies, however, the “subsistence vs. the market” debate has dominated American discussion about rural change. Within the polarized terms of this debate, historians have argued for either the “modern” character of the (eighteenth- and) nineteenth-century rural populations, or for its opposite: the distinct non-modern and even anti-capitalist identity of the American countryside.²⁴ Evidence of waged labour, regular paid employment, single occupation, individualism and self-interest are provided as evidence for the existence of the former, and the mutuality and self-sufficiency of the family-based peasant or frontier economy provide evidence for the latter. This argument has not been as fully articulated in the Canadian context, but when it has appeared it has tended to fall, often implicitly, along ethnic lines, particularly as it is used to explain the difference between nineteenth century Ontario’s modern, and Quebec’s traditional, societies.

As I have argued in “Rural Reconstruction: Towards a New Synthesis in Canadian History,” in spite of the excellent research it has generated, on closer analysis the theoretical foundations of the subsistence vs. the market debate show little more sophistication than the modernization model that characterizes popular and conventional academic constructions of rural. All of these ways of understanding rural attempt to measure rural societies

against a one-directional and one-dimensional model of change that continues to rest on simplistic polarizations of "traditional " and "modern." As my 1994 article argues, recent documentation of the erratic progress of urban industrialization, international critiques of modernization, and the new emphasis on the persistence of rural communities into the twentieth century suggest that it is time for historians to re-assess both rural societies, and "normal" patterns of change in the larger society and economy.²⁵

As "Rural Reconstruction" goes on to argue, a growing body of studies based on local and regional evidence is suggesting that change was not as monolithic or linear as we have believed. By positioning rural societies on the traditional-to-modern continuum, historians have continued to oversimplify processes of change within rural societies, obfuscating in the process many of the distinctive aspects of rural economies and cultures. This tendency to linearity has, for example, encouraged many North American historians to see the history of agriculture as the steady increase of commercial activity in rural areas. Detailed local studies, in contrast, are suggesting that the amount of commercial agricultural production in rural areas has been overstated for most of the nineteenth century, and its significance may have been seriously misunderstood well into the twentieth. As "Rural Reconstruction" argues, local studies provide considerable evidence that household production for home use, like unwaged household

labour, remained central to the rural economy long after commercial agriculture became widespread.

A wide variety of studies are demonstrating, furthermore, that farming itself was marginal to many farm households. The rural economies emerging from local studies are more readily theorized within a framework of occupational plurality rooted in self-provisioning activities on the family farm than they are within the inevitable progress of capitalist individualism.²⁶ Studies in Canada, furthermore, confirm conclusions of rural historians in other Western nations: "modern" industrial forms co-existed with "traditional" economic and familial patterns in ways that have challenged the usefulness of these terms, and of progress as a means of measuring the distance between the two.²⁷ Connections between rural and urban societies appear to have been much more varied and complicated than historians have allowed. By rejecting the bi-polar model of historical change, rural historians are beginning to deconstruct the essentialized vision of rural society that lies at their heart.²⁸

Other historians are challenging the clustering of values associated with "traditional" or "modernizing" rural societies. American historians like Deborah Fink, Joan Jensen and Jeanne Boydston, and Canadian historians Marjorie Cohen and Daniel Samson are among those examining the ways in which relations of power are often hidden within naturalized and "traditional" structures of rural life.²⁹ Their work, like the subaltern writers

seeking to understand the ways that concept of peasant has hidden relations of power, challenge the discursive structure that has obscured rural women's paid and unpaid work from the historian's view.³⁰

Interpretive and analytical models need to be adjusted to accommodate the varied experiences of rural societies in the later-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, where "the simple distinction between 'self-sufficient' and 'market-oriented' fails to do justice to the varying strategies of production and exchange followed by household producers during the period."³¹ This re-evaluation is linked to a deeper shift in the meaning of rural: what is emerging from recent studies are new, much more fluid explorations of ruralness, and a growing conviction that the significance of rural can be best understood through a variety of discourses rather than a fixed set of definitions. It is no longer sufficient to conflate rural with agricultural, or to see occupational plurality as a simple confirmation, result, or harbinger of urban industrialization. Conceptualizations of change that rest on a linear progression from rural agricultural to urban industrial need to be rethought, and more attention needs to be paid to both the political economy of the family farm, and the discursive structures through which we understand it.³²

Defining Rural II: Negotiating Rural British Columbia

If the meanings and identities of rural are fluid and constructed, not inevitable or essential, how can we define ruralness? This dissertation joins other British Columbia historians in rejecting rural as being essentially linked

to either “traditional” or agricultural society. It parts company with other provincial histories, however, in its assertion that rural is nevertheless a category of analysis that can enhance our understanding of the dynamics within British Columbia society. Rural is a term used here simply to identify the spaces characterized by low population density, spaces that dominated both Native and non-Native settlements in nineteenth century British Columbia. These spaces, defined from the outside (in their etic definitions, as the anthropologists would term it) by nineteenth century urban bureaucrats and a popular bucolic vision of rural harmony, were defined from the inside (in their emic definitions) by the behaviours and beliefs of those living within it.

Despite the reluctance of British Columbia historians to use rural as a category of description or analysis, therefore, documents available about Salt Spring Island allow for an examination of rural as a contested space, defined by the beliefs and behaviours of residents and observers alike. Information about these behaviours and beliefs is provided by such narrative sources as government reports, newspapers, travelers’ accounts, diaries and letters. Much of the evidence about behaviours provided here, however, is drawn from aggregate and quantitative data gathered from a variety of routinely generated sources. The machine-readable database for this study contains the names of every person who is mentioned on any of the documents available for the island, particularly in a variety of land records, but also in parish

records, business directories, assessment rolls (available only after 1891), censuses of 1881, 1891 and 1901, listings in Voters' Lists, and in reports from Department of Education, Department of Agriculture and Public Accounts found in the British Columbia Sessional Papers, probate files, court records (particularly inquests) and newspapers. This data has been used to link individuals over time, and to establish patterns of behaviour among individuals. Such evidence provides the foundation of this study.

If the category of rural does not generate a series of normative typologies, however, why use it at all? This dissertation assumes that there are important reasons to do so, and these need to be articulated here. First, the application of rural to British Columbia history raises the possibility of an alternative framework of analysis, at the same time drawing attention to the ideological imperatives that have informed the dominant historiography of colony and province. In British Columbia, the need for this re-assessment is particularly pressing because ideologies rooted in the primacy of urban industrialization have brought their own terms of reference to societies of our past, within which many of the complexities of rural life have simply disappeared. The goal here, as elsewhere, is not to develop an approach that trivializes the impact of urban and industrial society; rather, the challenge for historians is to discover frameworks of description and analysis which, unlike the discourse of urban industrialization, do not marginalize dominant economic and social formations that persisted long after the first British

Columbians made their move to city, mill, mine, forest and factory.

Moreover, these frameworks must not obscure the important dynamics that mediated relations between urban and rural societies, and within rural society itself.

The re-evaluation of the dominant historiography provides a strategic use of rural, but in historical practice the category of rural provides an important point of entry for understanding areas of British Columbia history -- the land, "nature," complex economies, urban-rural conflict, and even inter-racial relations -- that have only been marginally addressed within the more common categories of description and analysis. There are many aspects of land, economy and culture that are difficult to see within an historical discourse that centers on men's waged work in the resource industries.³³

Rural does not only provide a new entry point for seeing areas of British Columbia history that have been unexplored, however, but, provides a third advantage: a different way of seeing. Rural is, above all, about people within a particular kind of space. According to Levi, the historian's task has less to do with uncovering facts than with exploring the multiple and varying terms upon which systems of meaning -- "bounded rationalities" -- have been built up, negotiated, legitimized, contested and changed over time and in different places.³⁴ This dissertation, then, is less concerned with defining "what was rural?" that it is to answer the question, "what did it mean?" Rural is a category that allows us to explore the ways that the meaning of rural was shaped and

negotiated by those living on, and thinking about, areas outside the towns and cities of British Columbia. This perspective cuts across the customary categories of description and analysis, providing us with a different view of social, political and economic relations, raising new issues, and forcing us to think of gender, power and place in new ways.

This shift from empirical reality to meaning can be seen in the way that the category of rural is used in this dissertation. Salt Spring Island is not presented here as an example of a typical rural community, of British Columbia, or the nineteenth century, or of any other time and place. Comparative demographic, social and economic evidence does not exist at this time to make generalizations about rural British Columbia. Even if it did, however, this study rejects rural as a single descriptive category. This is, first of all, because generalizations of this sort too often rest on evaluations of significance that are pre-determined within the discursive structures of the historiography:

In this approach, the varieties of human society are considered a 'sequence of specialized adaptations to different economic circumstances'. As a consequence, attention is turned away from the dynamics of social relations in a particular society to a grand narrative of human progress. Each new study recodes its findings to fit an objectified story already known to the observer. It is only the residue, when all the local color is washed away, which counts for essential knowledge of the subject.³⁵

As Joy Parr puts it, after three decades where social science has influenced historians to increasingly seek out "patterned regularities and to immobilize them as structures, to think cross-culturally in ways that rinse out local

colour, the renewed attention to specificity and to the implications of the ornery exceptions is not displaced."³⁶ Explorations of rural must demonstrate in particular, and not generally assume, the ways in which different people, and groups of people, organized their experience within and about this space.

The meaning of this study, therefore, lies not in the standard typologies it can generate, but rather in the detailed interactions, at different levels of experience, that it can reveal. As Bakhtin has argued,

the task of understanding does not basically amount to recognizing the form used, but rather to understanding it in a particular, concrete context, to understanding its meaning in a particular utterance, i.e. it amounts to understanding its novelty and not to recognizing its identity.³⁷

David Sabeau responded to questions about the "typicality" of his microhistory of Neckarhausen by maintaining that "[t]he *local* is interesting precisely because it offers a *locus* for observing relations."³⁸ The following chapters will understand Salt Spring Island as the locus, or site, for observing the socially constructed, historically-specific and culturally variable meanings of rural, arguing that the meaning of rural, like that of "oriental," "Native," and "folk" was, and continues to be, both variable and contested.

Dissertation Overview

As this introduction has suggested, rural history in British Columbia has been constructed by the ideological proclivities of bureaucrats and historians alike. On the one hand, the emphasis of British Columbia historians on waged labour and large scale, successful capitalist enterprise has directed attention away

from rural communities like Salt Spring Island, whose economy was rooted in intermittent wage labour, small-scale capital investments in land, and an embarrassingly atavistic reliance on subsistence activities. Sources from the nineteenth century, on the other hand, have a good deal to say about rural society, but their view reflects a positivistic predisposition to limit farming to agricultural occupations, agricultural occupations to cash flow, and both to men only. Neither approach allows much room for the description and analysis of the types of experience -- occupational plurality, a reliance on the informal economic activity of men, women and children, the marginality of cash incomes -- that characterized the practice of Salt Spring Island residents in the nineteenth century. This dissertation seeks to clarify the official discourse that mediated between urban populations and the rural societies they observed, and to look beyond it to the varied terms upon which this rural population understood their own experiences of rural.

This dissertation is structured in a way that highlights the particular distinction that the author is trying to elaborate between the official discourse of rural, and the ways that the population under study expressed their experience of rural society. Because land was central to the process of settlement, and because extensive records document both land policy and practice, this study "reads" land-related sources as a discursive space upon which different groups of people have recorded their interpretations of rural life. The first three chapters are an exploration of the ways in which the official discourse represented country lands

in general, and Salt Spring Island in particular. Chapter 1 begins the discussion of rural in British Columbia with a look at the first country lands legislation in the province, and its particular relationship to the settlement of Salt Spring Island. Notwithstanding the virtual silence of modern historians about land settlement, the writers and policy makers of the time had their own vision of rural culture and society, and were charting its relation to the province's destiny.

For many of these public figures, rural was a problematic concept within the discourse of laissez-faire liberalism. On the one hand, it represented an unchanging past against which modern progress could be measured; on the other, it was a place which, by virtue of the independent yeomen raising much-needed agricultural produce on their own land, seemed to offer a safe haven from the worst ravages of modern, urban, and industrial capitalism. These tensions in the official discourse -- impatience with stability and the apprehensions about progress -- can be found neatly contained in the pre-emption system that dominated land acquisition on Salt Spring Island in the time under study. By severely curtailing the rights generally accorded to individual landowners by means of a three-stage process of purchase -- land had to be resided on and improved to a certain standard before the 'owner' could apply for clear title -- the pre-emption system sought to limit land speculation and ensure landowners' residence on country lands. These limitations on normal capitalist relations in British Columbia regarding the commodification of land were to encourage the development of capitalist activity, but only of a

specific type --petty commodity production on the family farm -- in order to create a particular type of person-- individualistic, entrepreneurial, but socially responsible -- within a stable, family-based agrarian community. Small-scale and family-centered capitalism was to be a foil against too-vibrant, socially disruptive capitalist activity and liberal individualism in other parts of the province.

Relying heavily on government-generated land records, Chapters 2 and 3 examine the ways in which the official discourse of rural, operationalized through land policies, directed and shaped land settlement and land use on Salt Spring Island. Chapter 2 explores in some detail the discourse of the sturdy yeoman that dominated the official view of the island in the nineteenth century. Here we find considerable evidence that the community on Salt Spring Island was characterized by petty commodity production on the family farm. Chapter 3 evaluates the practice of pre-emption from the vantage point of its the explicit goals of policy makers: land settlement policies succeeded in limiting land speculation and ensuring landowners' residence on their land. The surprisingly high rates of geographical persistence for landholders on the island argue that the pre-emption system provided an effective bridge between government expectations and settler aspirations for those remaining for more than a year on the island. Chapters 2 and 3 suggest that the official discourse of rural found considerable resonance, and was indeed shared by, the island population.

Although this discourse is compelling in its coherence and symmetry, Chapter 4 presents evidence suggesting we should hesitate before concluding

that, on Salt Spring Island, rural can be understood within the framework of liberal economic theory and the viability of capitalist agriculture that dominated the official rural discourse. Focusing largely on census data, land records, and Department of Agriculture statistics, Chapter 4 argues that, notwithstanding the optimistic rhetoric of commercial agricultural success, both land clearances and the production of agricultural commodities for markets were, by 1891, extremely limited: few Salt Spring Island farmers were making a living from farming.

How do we reconcile the absence of commercially viable farms with the identity of the island as an area of commercially successful agricultural enterprises? This disjuncture points to important differences between discourse and practice. By looking closely at rural practices surrounding lands, the remaining chapters move beyond the discourse of agricultural capitalism to explore in closer detail the experience of rural for those living on country lands. Chapter 5 begins this exploration by viewing land as a contact zone between settler culture and government prescription -- as the physical site upon which different views of what the rural experience should be were negotiated. Rather than assessing land-related behaviours exclusively in terms set to measure the success of policy makers' aspirations, this chapter instead links landowners through a variety of sources and over time to explore other patterns in land acquisition and improvement. This focus on landholders' practice rather than policy-makers prescriptions confirms that some pre-emptors clearly used the system as a foundation for petty commodity production and the establishment of

a family farm. Most settlers, however, although acquiescing to the restrictions placed on land by this system of land acquisition, were simultaneously manipulating its provisions in ways not intended by policy makers. Chapter 6 goes on to explore the varied economic and familial advantages that ready and secure access to land, in an area rich in natural resources, brought to those who chose to stay on Salt Spring Island.

The final two chapters continue the examination of rural practice that provides a counterbalance to the official discourse of rural outlined in the first three. They move beyond the land-related and economic behaviours of landowners to search out some of the other ways that the rural population of the island expressed their rural identity at the level of household and community. Although ethnic clustering and unequal landholdings point to some important inequalities along ethnic lines on the island, in this area of widespread land ownership, divisions within families were often more significant than those between households. Hierarchies based on ethnicity, age and gender are explored, and some speculations are advanced to explain the frequency with which these hierarchies were challenged.

Evidence presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 suggests that both families and the community showed little of the regularity or harmony that the official discourse attributed to rural society. Chapter 8 explores the fractious community formations on the island, and suggests that although a wealthy elite was beginning to emerge by the end of the period under study, its ability to turn

inequalities of wealth into political power was seriously limited. The majority -- backed by the economic security inherent in their land tenure -- demonstrated a considerable disinclination to recognize the organized forms of political and bureaucratic power they tried to wield. The land-based and household-oriented community on Salt Spring Island showed a decided reluctance to incorporate the new ideals of civic behaviour contained in the official discourse of rural: the community was very long way from being the idyllic, stable and coherent rural community envisaged by urban observers.

NOTES

¹ Margaret Ormsby's two articles on agriculture in the province, published about fifty years ago, still remain the central works in the field: "The History of Agriculture in British Columbia," Scientific Agriculture, 20 (September 1939), 61-72; "Agricultural Development in British Columbia," Agricultural History, 19 (1945), 11-20. Like Barry Gough's "Corporate Farming on Vancouver Island: the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, 1846-1857," Donald Akenson, ed., Canadian Papers in Rural History, 4 (Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1986), they are almost exclusively concerned with the development of a commercially-viable capitalist agriculture. Similarly, Robert Koroscil has published a number of articles on the Okanagan commercial orcharding business. See especially "Resettlement in Canada's Garden of Eden" in Catherine Kerrigan, ed., The Immigrant Experience (Guelph: University of Guelph, 1989), 129-164; "Boosterism and the Settlement Process in the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, 1890-1914", in D. Akenson ed., Canadian Papers in Rural History, 5, 73-100 and "Soldiers, Settlement and Development British Columbia, 1915-39," BC Studies, 54 (1982). Nelson Riis also discusses agricultural practices in the Okanagan in his article, "The Walhachin Myth: A Study in Settlement Abandonment," BC Studies, 17 (Spring 1973), 3-25. See for example Martin Robin, The Rush for Spoils: The Company Province, 1871-1933 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), 36-40; Robin Fisher, Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977(1992)). See esp. chapter 5, "Gold Miners and Settlers," where Fisher maintains that interests of settlers trying to settle on Indian lands changed the dynamic of Native non-Native relations on the coast forever. Few historians have commented on the significance of this mass movement to the land-based, non-industrial history of British Columbia. The most important book on land settlement, Robert E. Cail's Land, Man and the Law: The Disposal of Crown Lands in British Columbia, 1871-1913 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1974), now out of print, provides a detailed and comprehensive view of land settlement policy, but only a limited investigation of how these policies were implemented. F.W. Laing, secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, compiled a detailed examination of pre-emptions on the mainland colony from 1859-71, but this work remains unpublished. F.W. Laing, "Colonial Farm Settlers on the Mainland of British Columbia, 1859-1871," MS, University of British Columbia Special

Collections. An important exception to this approach is David Demeritt's article, "Visions of Agriculture in British Columbia," BC Studies, no. 108 (Winter 1995-96), 29-59, which explicitly discusses the different discourses that have defined and sustained agriculture in British Columbia, and Duncan Duane Thomson, "A History of the Okanagan: Indians and Whites in the Settlement Era, 1860-1920" (Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1985), who provides a detailed and thorough examination of land practices.

² Joy Parr, "Gender History and Historical Practice," Canadian Historical Review, 76, no.3 (September 1995), 365.

³ William Reddy's definition of liberalism is "the notion that all people sought to maximize comparative net advantage -- that is that the motive of gain was the mainspring of human behaviour [...] and that unregulated competition brought maximum progress." William Reddy, Money and Liberty in Modern Europe: A Critique of Historical Understanding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 10-11.

⁴ This paraphrase Tina Loo's words about the discourse of liberalism in nineteenth century British Columbia. Tina Loo, Making Law, Order and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 8. As Joy Parr has noted, there is considerable resistance within the Canadian academy to the identification of discursive frameworks as "hierarchically ordered understandings rather than pristine data against which those understandings could be definitively tested." Post-structuralist analysis not only draws attention to the naturalized structures of power and knowledge in the past, but applies these to the ways that knowledge is constructed within the academy. Parr, "Gender History and Historical Practice," 364..

⁵ Introduction to Geoff Eley, Nicholas Dirks, Sherry B. Ortner, eds. Culture, Power, History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25.

⁶ Oral histories, available for a later period of time on the island, are an important adjunct to our understanding of how this rural population understood rural life. As Bourdieu argues, historical practice involves the attempt to understand the systems of meaning by which a population, or part of a population, organized their experience: "Systems of classification which reproduce, in their own specific logic, the objective classes, i.e. the divisions by sex, age, or position in the relations of production, make their specific contribution to the reproduction of the power relations of which they are

the product, by securing the misrecognition, and hence the recognition, of the arbitrariness on which they are based [...] This experience we shall call doxa, so as to distinguish it from an orthodox or heterodox belief implying awareness and recognition of the possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs." Pierre Bordieu, "Structures, Habitus, Power: Basis for a Theory of Symbolic Power," Outline of a Theory of Practice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 164.

⁷ Grant McCracken, Culture and Consumption (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 73. The definitions of culture employed by anthropologists have traditionally been normative and prescriptive, and not descriptive, reflecting the beliefs of Western societies, and creating systems of power along with systems of cultural differentiation. This dissertation is, instead, using culture here as a means of understanding self-definition, and the creation of meaning within the society under study. For a critique of the imperialism of cultural formation, see for example Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (New York: Routledge, 1992). and Eley et al., Culture, Power, History, 1-6.

⁸ There is some evidence that the failure of the population on Salt Spring Island to live in a world mediated by literacy also shaped their definition as a population different from, and inferior to, their urban neighbours. Measurable rates of illiteracy were a little higher on Salt Spring Island (at eighty-four percent of adults over fourteen in 1891, the only year that the census asked the question 'can you read English') than in Ontario in 1861 (less than ten per cent). But a distinction is being made here between those who were able to write, and those who used the written word to understand and constitute their identity. Salt Spring Islanders left few written records. Letters and documents delivered to government officials suggest that most settlers were unaccustomed to writing, and, before the 1890s, few references, in sources such as wills, inquests, and probate files, are made to the possession of reading materials. Many of those who were absolutely unable to read and write on Salt Spring Island were Hawaiian, Native and eastern European. For a discussion of the extent and significance of literacy in rural society, see Gordon Darroch and Lee Soltow, Property and Inequality in Victorian Ontario: Structural Patterns and Cultural Communities in the 1871 Census (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 112-160. For a wider discussion on the meaning of literacy in the nineteenth century, see David Vincent, Literacy and Popular Culture in England, 1750-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁹ Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory" in Peter Burke, ed., New Perspectives on Historical Writing (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1991), 98.

¹⁰ Daniel Samson, ed., Contested Countryside: Rural Workers and Modern Society in Atlantic Canada, 1800-1950 (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994), 1.

¹¹ Or, as Levi suggests, quoting J. Revel, the motto for microhistorians should be "Why make things simple when one can make them complicated?" Levi, "On Microhistory", 110.

¹² Martin Robin, The Rush for Spoils, 35. Ontario politician Edward Blake first described British Columbia as a "sterile sea of mountains" in the early 1870's. A colourful account of British Columbians' negative reactions to his statement is contained in James Morton, In the Sea of Sterile Mountains: The Chinese in British Columbia (Vancouver: J. J. Douglas, 1974), 50.

¹³ As Martin Robin summarized, British Columbia was, "the company province [...] built by working men set to work by capitalists and politicians whose passion for profit was kindled by the great promise of a resource-rich environment." Robin, The Rush for Spoils, 40. Two recent overviews of British Columbia history, Jean Barman's The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), and Hugh Johnston, ed., The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996), have gone a long way to correcting the one-dimensional view of the province along gender and ethnic lines, a sensitivity also reflected in Veronica Strong-Boag and Gillian Creese, eds., British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1992). Nevertheless, rural is not a term that comes up in reference to British Columbia: the index to Hugh Johnston's book, contains only one reference to "rural", which is "rural life as a literary theme," while Jean Barman's does not include the term at all.

¹⁴ For the continued importance of this discourse to British Columbia historians, see the recent discussion in BC Studies Forum: Mark Leier, "W[h]ither Labour History?: Regionalism, Class and the Writing of BC History;" Bryan Palmer, "Class and the Writing of History: Beyond BC;" Veronica Strong-Boag, "Moving Beyond Tired Truths: Or, Let's Not Fight the Old Battles;" Robert A. J. McDonald, "The West is a Messy Place;" and Mark Leier, "Response to Professors Palmer, Strong-Boag, and McDonald," BC Studies, no. 111 (Autumn 1996), 61-98. See also Robert A. J. McDonald, "Lumber

Society on the Industrial Frontier: Burrard Inlet, 1863-1886," Labour/Le Travail, 33 (Spring 1994), 69-96; Robert A.J. McDonald, Making Vancouver: Class, Status, and Social Boundaries, 1863-1913 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996); R. Cole Harris, "Industry and the Good Life Around Idaho Peak," Canadian Historical Review, 66, no. 3 (Sept. 1985), 315-43; Loo, Making Law, Order and Authority.

¹⁵ Notwithstanding some excellent collections on the history of women in British Columbia, the most recent of which is Gillian Creese and Veronica Strong-Boag, eds., British Columbia Reconsidered, the history of women in British Columbia has failed to challenge the hegemony of waged work, labour capital relations so evident within the modernization discourse.

¹⁶ As French historian James Lehning notes, "[w]hether called 'progress', as did the leaders of the Empire and Republic; 'development', as did international agencies after the Second World War; or 'modernization', as did social science in the last generation, it is the same story." James Lehning, Peasant and French: Cultural Contact in Rural France During the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); 206.

¹⁷ Richard E. Wilk, Household Ecology: Economic Change and Domestic Life among the Kekchi Maya in Belize (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991), 19.

¹⁸ Ian McKay, The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 13.

¹⁹ McKay, The Quest of the Folk, 13.

²⁰ Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1979 (1978)), 3. This point, illustrated here also by Ian McKay, was made first by Raymond Williams, who argued that the idealization of 'rural,' by locating a better world in the pre-industrial and therefore unattainable past, severs us from responsibility for the status quo at the same time that its values and 'structures of feeling' sustain us. See especially Chapter 4 'Golden Ages', Chapter 10, 'Enclosures, Commons and Communities' and his Conclusion in The Country and the City (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1973).

²¹ James R. Lehning, Peasant and French, 4.

²² For a discussion of Hardy and the rural past, see Raymond Williams, "Wessex and the Counties," The Country and the City.

²³ McKay, The Quest of the Folk, esp. 37-42.

²⁴ R.E. Mutch, "'Yeoman and Merchant in Pre-Industrial America: Eighteenth Century Massachusetts as a Case Study" Societas, 7 (1977), 279-302; M. Merrill "'Cash is Good to Eat': Self-Sufficiency and Exchange in the Rural Economy of the United States," Radical History Review, 7 (1975), 42-71; J. Lemon, "Early Americans and their Social Environment" Journal of Historical Geography, 6 (1980), 115-31; W. Rothenberg, From Market Places to a Market Economy: The Transformation of Rural Massachusetts, 1750-1850 (University of Chicago Press, 1992), C. Shamus, "How Self-Sufficient was Early America?" Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 13, 2 (Autumn, 1982), 247-272 .

²⁵ For an interesting example of what the revision of modernization might hold for political history, see S.J.R. Noel, Patrons, Clients, Brokers: Ontario Society and Politics, 1791-1896 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). There are a number of interesting indications that *urban* history is also being distorted by an over-emphasis on the 'modernization' of social, moral and economic life assumed to accompany urbanization. See for example Bettina Bradbury, "Women's History and Working Class History," Labour/le Travail, 19 (Spring, 1987), 22- 43, and "Pigs, Cows and Boarders: Non-Wage Forms of Survival among Montreal Families, 1861-91," Labour/le Travail, 14 (Fall, 1984), 9-46 and, more generally, Working Families: Age, Gender and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993); Gordon Darroch and Michael Ornstein, "Family and Household in Nineteenth Century Canada: Regional Patterns and Regional Economies," Journal of Family History, 9, 2 (1984), 158-77; Sheva Medjuck, "Women's Response to Economic and Social Change in Nineteenth Century Moncton Parish, 1851-1871," Atlantis, 11,1 (Fall 1985), 7-21, and Joy Parr, The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950 (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990); William Reddy, The Rise of Market Culture: The Textile Trade in French Society 1750-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) makes a similar argument in the European context..

²⁶ See, for example, Darroch and Soltow, Property and Inequality in Victorian Ontario; Gérard Bouchard, "Sur un démarrage rate: industrie laitière et co-intégration au Saguenay, 1880-1940," Récherches Sociographiques, 45, no.1 (1991), 73-100; Kris Inwood and E. Roelens, "Labouring at the Loom: A Case Study of Rural Manufacturing in Leeds County, Ontario, 1870," D. Akenson, ed., Canadian Papers in Rural History, 7 (Ganonoque: Landale Press, 1989), 222-41; Graeme Wynn, Timber Colony, A Historical Geography of Early Nineteenth Century New Brunswick (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981); Béatrice Craig, "Agriculture in a Pioneer Region: The Upper St. John Valley

in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," in Kris Inwood, ed., Farm, Factory and Fortune: New Studies in the Economic History of the Maritime Provinces (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1993), 17-36; J.I. Little, Nationalism, Capitalism and Colonization in Nineteenth Century Quebec (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1989); J.I. Little, Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1881 (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1991); Chad Gaffield, Language, Schooling and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of French Language Controversy in Ontario (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1987). For an overview of the problems of rural within the Canadian historiography, see R.W. Sandwell, "Rural Reconstruction: Towards a New Synthesis in Canadian History," Histoire Sociale/Social History, 27, no.53 (May 1994), 1-32.

²⁷ See for example Ronald Aminzade "Reinterpreting Industrialization: A Study of Nineteenth Century France," in S. Kaplan and C. Koepp, eds., Work in France: Representations, Meanings, Organization and Practice (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 394-420; Stuart Woolf, ed., Domestic Strategies: Work and Family in France and Italy, 1600-1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Reddy, Money and Liberty in Modern Europe; Lehning, Peasant and French; Alan Greer, "Wage Labour and the Transition to Capitalism: A Critique of Pentland" Labour/Le Travail, 21 (Spring, 1985), 7-22, and Chad Gaffield, "Children, Schooling and Family Reproduction in Nineteenth Century Ontario" in Canadian Historical Review 72, no. 2 (1991), 157-191.

²⁸ In Britain, for example, close attention to the complex economies within rural societies has led to a re-evaluation of the tri-partite division of landowner, yeoman and labourer that has defined British history for so long. See for example, Alun Howkins Reshaping Rural England, 1850-1925 (London: Harper Collins, 1991); Mick Reed, "'Gnawing it Out: A New Look at Economic Relations in Nineteenth Century Rural England," Rural History, 1990, 1 no.1, 83-94; Mick Reed and Roger Wells, eds., Class Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside (London: Savage, 1990). This re-evaluation has stimulated a new look at labour and class in rural areas, a focus that has also appeared in the works of Canadian historians Rusty Bittermann and Daniel Samson. Samson, ed., Contested Countryside, 1-33; Rusty Bittermann, "The Hierarchy of the Soil: Land and Labour in a 19th Century Cape Breton Community," Acadiensis, 28, 1 (Autumn, 1988), 33-55 and Rusty Bittermann, "Farm Households and Wage Labour in the Northeastern Maritimes in the Early 19th Century," Labour/Le Travail, 31 (Spring 1993), 13-45.

The emphasis on rural labour and colonialist relations has also been addressed in a larger literature of subaltern populations, where a rural focus has provided a new perspective of the relations between class, race, power, and social change. Ranajit Guha, ed., Subaltern Studies II (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983); Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rethinking Working Class History: Bengal, 1890-1940 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

²⁹ Deborah Fink, "Farming in Open Country, Iowa: Women and the Changing Farm Economy," in M Chibnik, ed., Farmwork and Fieldwork: American Agriculture in Anthropological Perspective (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 121-144; and Deborah Fink, Agrarian Women: Wives and Mothers in Rural Nebraska, 1880-1940 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Jeanne Boydston, Home and Work: Housework, Wages and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Joan Jensen, Loosening the Bonds: Mid Atlantic Farm Women 1750-1850 (Yale University Press, 1986), 91; Nancy Osterud, Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth Century New York (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Women's Work, Markets and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

³⁰ This is an argument made explicitly by Lehning, Peasant and French, who argues that the peasants were reconstructed by the French bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century to define, through opposition, the nature of the French state and the bourgeoisie who controlled it. This definition also operationalized particular relations of power that privileged the types of knowledge that characterized the French state.

³¹ Reed, "'Gnawing it Out,'" 84. This occupational plurality is also quite clear in the later years covered in Paul Voisey's Vulcan: the Making of a Prairie Community (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), but he accords off-farm work significance only as showing that farmers were in trouble with their cash flow.

³² This argument has been forcefully made by Harriet Friedmann, "World Market, State and Family Farm: Social Bases of Household Production in the Era of Wage Labour," Comparative Studies in Society and History, 20 (1978). For an overview of the debate on this question, see R.W. Sandwell, "Reconstructing Rural," 15-19.

³³ For examples of some of these, see the essays in R.W. Sandwell, ed., Negotiating Rural: Essays from British Columbia (Vancouver: UBC Press, forthcoming, 1998).

³⁴ This distinction is nicely made by J.S. Mill: "By Bentham, beyond all others, men have been led to ask themselves, in regard to any ancient or received opinion, Is it true? and by Coleridge, What is the meaning of it? [...] Bentham judged a proposition true or false as it accorded or not with the result of his own inquiries; and did not search very curiously into what might be meant by the proposition, when it obviously did not mean what he thought true. With Coleridge, on the contrary, the very fact that any doctrine had been believed by thoughtful men, and received by whole nations or generations of mankind, was part of the problem to be solved, was one of the phenomena to be accounted for." John Stuart Mill, "On Coleridge," John Stuart Mill on Bentham and Coleridge (New York: Harper Torch, 1950), 99-100.

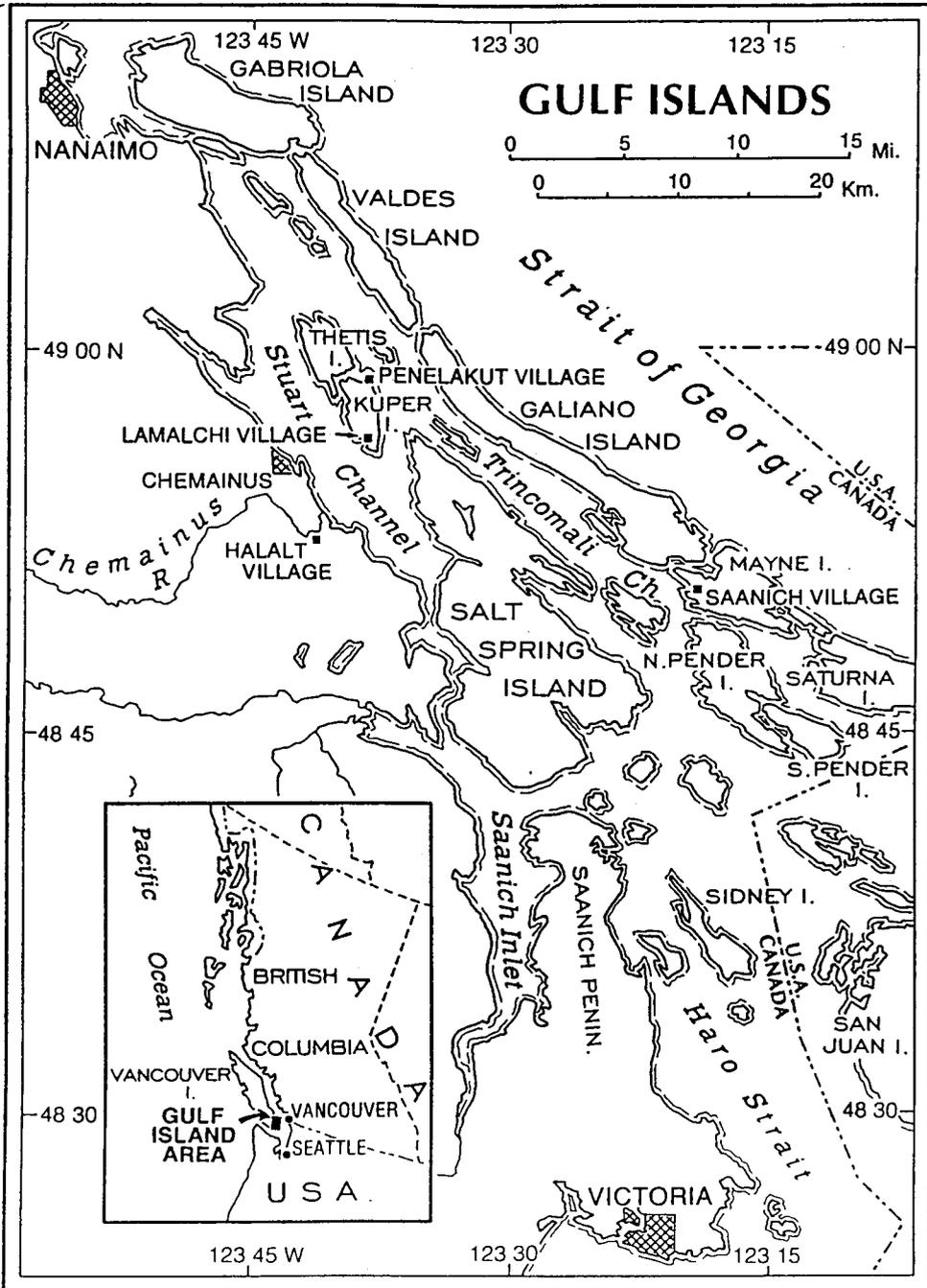
³⁵ David Warren Sabeau, Property, Production and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700-1850 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 9.

³⁶ Parr, "Gender History and Historical Practice," 373.

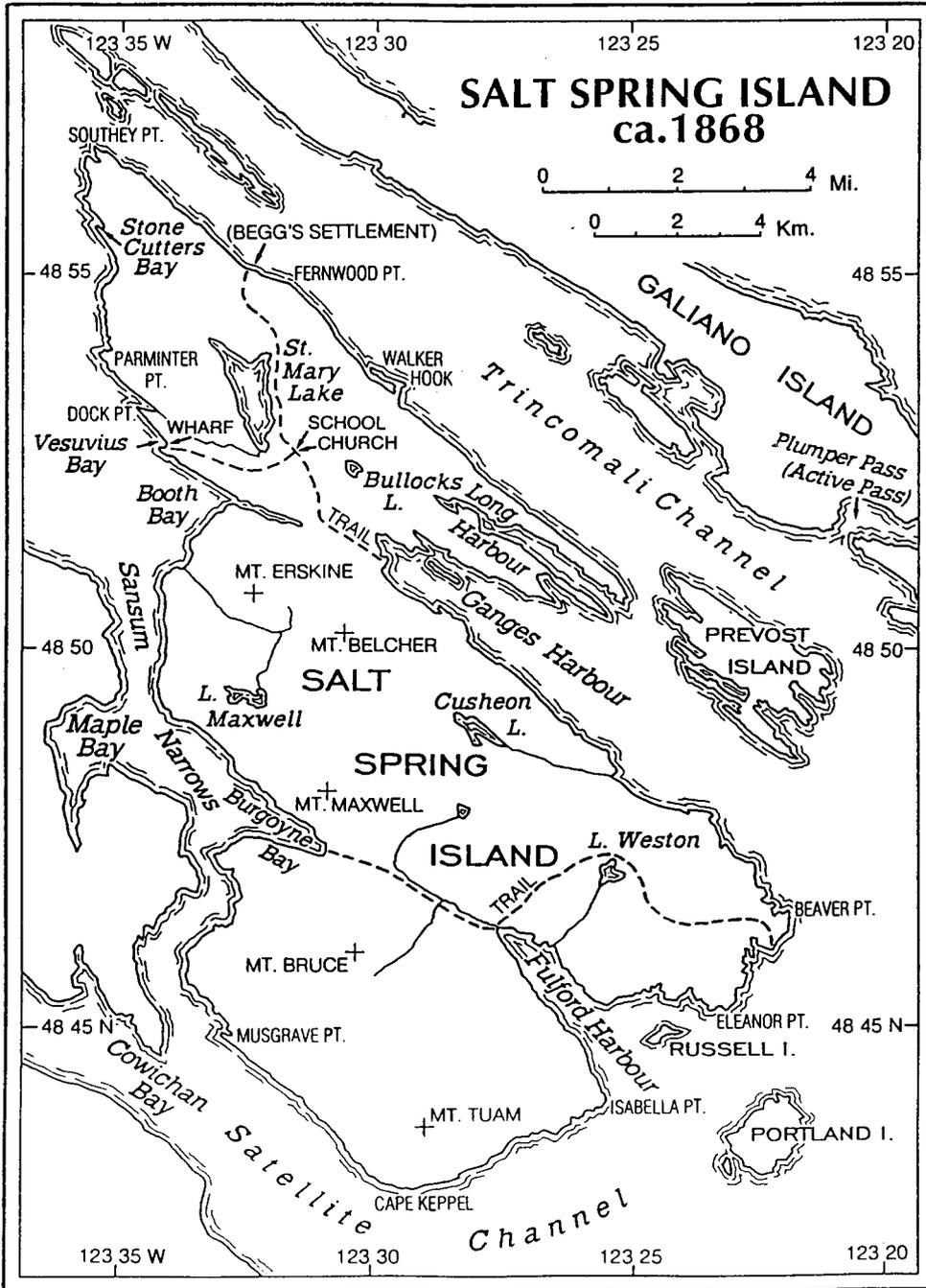
³⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, quoted in Sabeau, Property, Production and Family, 9.

³⁸ Sabeau, Property, Production and Family, 10. Emphasis in the original.

Map 1



Map 2



Chapter 1 Land Policy and The Official Discourse of Rural Settlement

Our understanding of rural societies has been shaped in number of important ways by the urban and evolutionist framework adopted by many historians. Rural society has, therefore, tended to be defined from the outside in, a perspective that is reflected in the privileging of wage labour and the market economy within the contours of liberal economic theory, the construction of the rural as a nostalgic starting point for historical change, and the general failure of economists and historians to create the conceptual tools needed to explore the complexities of non-urban and non-industrial societies.¹ This chapter looks beyond the ontological closure that usually surrounds the concept of rural in British Columbia by exploring the most accessible discourse on the subject: the official discourse of rural contained in the newspapers, colonial correspondence, and published government records concerning the settlement and use of country lands in the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia.

These public records provide considerable evidence of the particular significance that rural society in general, and rural land ownership in particular, held for those contemplating the future of what was to become British Columbia. This chapter explores the official discourse surrounding rural lands to suggest that agricultural production was deemed more significant to the nineteenth century economy than historians have generally

allowed. The idea of rural land ownership, furthermore, played an important role in the construction of the colonial and provincial identity throughout the later nineteenth century.

i. The Colonial Context of Early Settlement on Salt Spring Island, 1859

Fur trade posts in Fort St. James, Fort Langley and Fort Victoria, established under the authority of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1811, 1824, and 1843 respectively, provided the sites of the first European agricultural activity in present-day British Columbia, but they did little to create agriculturally-based communities. Whether the Hudson's Bay Company was unwilling to promote settlement, as historians have generally assumed, or whether it was simply unable to do so, as Richard Mackie has suggested, non-Native settlement in the area was extremely limited before 1858.² There is little disagreement, however, that the Fraser River gold rush of 1858 provided the first impetus for permanent European settlement in the area, stimulating the government to re-evaluate the efficacy of Wakefield's class-based land settlement proposals in the face of large-scale immigration into the area.³ While the first land laws of the new colonies were formulated with particular reference to the needs of miners flooding into the Fraser River area, they went far beyond the requirements of a mining population. Their focus was to address the need, felt by administrators, capitalists and workers alike, to settle immigrants from Europe, 'Canada' and the United States on country lands throughout the province.⁴

The British government believed that the availability of arable rural lands was essential to the successful settlement of the young colonies, but, even after Wakefield's conservative vision was abandoned by colonial legislators, their determination that the Pacific colonies should be self-supporting impinged considerably on the formation of land policies that would encourage land settlement.⁵ Although in principle the twin goals of establishing settlers on the land and raising revenue by so doing seemed reasonable to the Colonial Office in Britain, James Douglas, the first governor of the mainland and Vancouver Island colonies, had great difficulty establishing land policies that could do both simultaneously. Town sites had been laid out at Fort Langley, Fort Hope and Fort Yale shortly after the colonial government was installed in 1858, and a number of lots had been sold that year at the price fixed by the crown at £1 per acre. In spite of a system of deferred payment and public auction, revenues from land sales fell far short of expectations.⁶ By early 1859, it was becoming clear to Governor James Douglas that Sir Edward Bulwar Lytton, colonial secretary in Britain, had seriously underestimated the difficulty in attracting permanent settlers to an isolated area of high priced, heavily treed land on the edge of the Empire.⁷

Problems with high land prices in the British colonies were exacerbated by the availability of cheap lands to the south, in the Oregon Territory. Because the British presence on the Pacific Coast was so fragile, James Douglas believed that these cheap lands could have serious consequences for

the continued security and existence of the mainland and Vancouver Island colonies. Although Douglas was deeply concerned with raising revenue, and land sales were one of the few means the government could use to do so, he disagreed with Lytton that high-priced land was the answer to the revenue problem: cheap land, he maintained, was essential to encourage "the sturdy yeomen expected this year from Canada, Australia and other British Colonies" to take up land in British territory rather than on American lands to the south.⁸ Furthermore, Douglas maintained that a low price for country lands would inhibit rather than promote the land speculation that both administrators identified as so detrimental to the agricultural foundation and community base essential to the new colonies.⁹

In February 1859, Douglas made some concessions to the growing pressure for cheaper land by publishing the first proclamation concerning public country lands. Lands outside towns would, it declared, now be available under auction as the town lots were, but at the lower price of ten shillings per acre. The practice of deferred payment established in 1858 could be applied to half the purchase price. In yet another attempt to stave off rampant land speculation, no land was to be offered for sale until it had been mapped and surveyed under the government's authority.¹⁰ While the government was concerned with the issue of raising desperately needed revenue and maintaining the British presence on the coast, the rising tide of poor and unemployed men pouring into Victoria was increasingly concerned

with finding economic support and security through the acquisition of land in the new colonies. The reduced price for country lands announced in February did little to meet the needs of many of the potential settlers, who simply did not possess sufficient capital to make land purchases under these terms. As the Victoria paper, British Colonist, argued in June, 1859:

Foremost among the objects we wish to secure by a good land system, is the locating of actual settlers upon the soil. To induce them to do this, now that they have been driven away [by the high price of land], the public lands ought to be open to pre-emption, in quantities of 100 or 160 acres, on condition of actual residence and the cultivation of a certain number of acres with improvements; and a reasonable period allowed to pay for the land [...] To compel the poor and industrious emigrant to compete with a set of land-sharks, bespeaks little, either for the intelligence, humanity or justice of the government. We view the public domain as the patrimony of the people...¹¹

In the words of Jonathan Begg, who would go on to be one of the first settlers on Salt Spring Island, and one of the first to be granted pre-emptive land in the colony, the land system in the Vancouver Island colony in June, 1859 was

in such a deplorable condition that no one out of the employment of the HB Coy could procure an acre of the public domain. I saw that justice and reform was necessary. So I commenced a movement which has since changed the whole land system in the colony. I got up a public meeting in one of the principal hotels where strong resolutions accompanied by an urgent petition to the governor and local legislature was carried.¹²

Following his sister to North America, Begg had left England for California to take up fruit ranching in 1858. Disillusioned with the republican frontier

society of California, he moved north to Victoria in June, 1859.¹³ Discovering that he could “get no work of any kind as there were hundreds more out of employment,” he tried to support himself by raising produce on vacant land until he obtained gardening work from the local banker some weeks later.¹⁴

While the seminal role that he gives himself in his correspondence for changing land laws is not entirely consistent with other evidence, Begg certainly was present at the Colonial Hotel in Victoria on June 22 when a group of would-be settlers first organized to pressure the government to address their need, as settlers, for land.¹⁵ The petition, drawn up at this meeting by Amor de Cosmos (editor of British Colonist and later provincial premier), and seconded by Begg, put forward resolutions on a number of land issues. “The history of nations and the experience of ages,” petitioners unanimously resolved, “dictate a liberal encouragement of the art of agriculture as the only sure guarantee of the enduring prosperity and wealth of a country.”¹⁶ In their petition, submitted to Governor Douglas in early July 1859, this group of would-be-settlers further resolved that

The true policy as well as duty of government is to encourage agricultural pursuits above all others; to induce immigration to the country; to invite the hardy pioneer to occupy its territory; to furnish the actual settler cheap access to the soil -- whereon to permanently invest his labor, and rear his home.¹⁷

The petition went on to outline a system of land pre-emption whereby “a preference should be given to actual settlers in the choice of the public lands.”¹⁸ The competition provided by cheaper land available south of the

border, they argued, was drawing off desirable settlers, and with them the potential success of the British colony. They were, in effect, requesting an imitation of the American system in which settlers could take up land before paying for it, on condition that they improve it and reside on it as a condition of purchase. The legitimacy of their petition rested on the conviction that arable land was essential to the subsistence and growth of the colony.

The petition received a "courteous reception" from Douglas, who maintained that while he was "personally opposed to the present system," he was unable to alter it because he had no authority to change the terms of the colonies' land policies.¹⁹ To illustrate his support in principle for their goals of land settlement, however, Douglas went on to request that "if there are a hundred farmers ready to settle in the Cowitchen [sic] valley, let them present themselves and facilities will be afforded them, the Indian title extinguished as soon as practicable, [...] no immediate payment will be required for the land, and the price [will...] be determined by the legislature."²⁰

On July 11, a number of people, "mostly Canadians," met at the offices of John Copland, an Edinburgh lawyer who had arrived in Victoria via Australia, and who had presented himself as a land agent to those wishing to obtain cheap country lands for settlement.²¹ He drew up a list of about twenty-five people desirous of settling in land around Cowichan and Salt Spring. At this meeting, the aspiring landowners declared "their desire to settle in Cowitchan [sic], that they were farmers; that they engage to settle on

condition of actual occupancy and improvement, and if they fail to do so, their lands [are] to be forfeited."²² On July 13, a deputation of thirty or forty people waited upon Douglas, presenting a petition signed by over a hundred people, requesting the right to take up land in the Cowichan valley on these terms. Again, Douglas responded that the price had been set by the crown, and he could not alter it.²³

The next day, however, Douglas found a potential loophole in the problem of high-priced land, and took his first practical step to support his previously-stated belief that "the practice of making the public lands a source of revenue is unwise and impolitic."²⁴ He decided that he could get around the stipulations limiting his ability to grant land by looking to the large tracts of unsurveyed lands outside of Victoria, which did not have either the £1 or ten shillings per acre upset price attached. In these unsurveyed districts, "actual settlers would be allowed to go on the land upon payment of one shilling per acre at the time of settlement, and no other payment [sic] would be required of them until the land was surveyed, which would not probably be for at least one year."²⁵ The fertile Cowichan lands being already surveyed, he decided to open up lands in "the Chemainus country, which is unsurveyed and commences ten miles north of the southern end of Cowichan, towards Nanaimo."²⁶ This area included Salt Spring Island.

After the July 14 revision of the terms of land settlement, prospective settlers lost little time in pursuing this opportunity, and a group of about

thirty "farmers" left aboard the *Nanaimo Packet* to look at the Chemainus lands. On July 18, the first seventeen or eighteen settlers arrived on Salt Spring. As they reported back to the Victoria British Colonist, they were "highly pleased with the country, and consider it to be a beautiful agricultural country."²⁷ Begg was "one of the eighteen adventurers who went out to view the land," and he was favourably impressed with what he saw on Salt Spring Island:

This is one of the most romantic regions I was ever in. Scotland is nowhere in that respect in comparison[...] The band of adventurers [...] finding the island beautifully situated in the midst of an archipelago more beautiful than the 1000 Islands of the St. Lawrence [...] This being the most convenient to Victoria, [...] we determined to form a settlement here. We drew for choices of selection. My lot fronts a quarter of a mile in a nice little bay [...] Behind my lot, on its rear it borders a beautiful fresh water lake of some 2 miles in length, teeming with fish. I have about 80 acres of prairies on the farm. It is not exactly a prairie as it more resembles an English park or pleasure ground, and here and there is a clump of beautiful balsam growing.²⁸

They returned on July 24, two days before Pemberton gave his reply to John Copland's petition.

As Begg summarized in a letter written the next year, "so the movement went until the HB Governor and council [sic] had to submit to the popular demand."²⁹ On July 26, the colonial surveyor replied to John Copland's petition for the settlement of twenty-nine settlers on Salt Spring. Acknowledging their "want of funds to settle on surveyed lands elsewhere in which cases an immediate installment is required," Pemberton agreed "to

delay the survey of that portion of Tuan [Salt Spring] Island on which these persons shall settle for [left blank] years or until requested at an earlier period to survey and issue titles by the majority of the holders."³⁰ He went on to state that "after the survey of the lands in question shall have been made, preemptive rights in those of the number stated who shall have effected most improvements in the way of Buildings, fencing, or cultivation on any government section shall be recognised."³¹

Pemberton's reply constitutes the first official statement granting preemptive rights to land in the Canadian west, pre-dating by some three years the American Homestead System, pre-dating by four months the first official pre-emption proclamation on the mainland colony, and pre-dating by a full eighteen months the official pre-emption proclamation in the Vancouver Island colony.³² Although historians have correctly identified the mainland colony as having the first pre-emption legislation, not only did community action against high land prices first crystallize in Victoria, but the first pre-emptions were granted and taken up in the Vancouver Island colony, albeit it in unlegislated form.³³

In his letter, Pemberton not only provided for the first pre-emptions, but he endorsed three out of the four main principles that informed rural land settlement over the next five decades: cheap land, deferred payment, and the purchase of such land on condition that it had been cleared, fenced and built upon. The "essential requirement of the preemptive system,"³⁴ the

personal residence of the pre-emptor, was not included explicitly until the January 4, 1860 Land Ordinance.

At the end of July, prospective settlers on the mainland colony presented to Douglas a petition that was similar to the Vancouver Island petition, stating that the "want of a proper and liberal land system, is the first and most important grievance of which the People of this Colony have to complain."³⁵ Like those in Victoria, these petitioners asked for a policy that would allow settlers with little or no capital to take up rural lands. There is no evidence that this petition spawned any of the unofficial pre-emptions of the type being granted in the Vancouver Island colony, as the earliest pre-emptions are dated after the Land Ordinance of 1860.³⁶

By contrast, pre-emptions continued to be offered in Vancouver Island colony, including Salt Spring, throughout the summer and fall of 1859, and through 1860. On July 30, Pemberton had extended the terms applicable to Salt Spring Island to 212 settlers wanting to take up lands in the Chemainus area.³⁷ At the end of August, Copland wrote to Pemberton and noted that the first twenty-nine settlers "have now nearly all settled their lands," adding that "there is ample land left for the present applicants," an additional thirty-two settlers.³⁸ In November, Copland sent the Land Office a list of another thirty potential settlers, and before the end of the year another seventy-two had applied.³⁹

In December, having granted pre-emptive rights to over three hundred people in the Salt Spring and Chemainus area under the terms outlined in his July 26 letter, colonial surveyor Joseph Pemberton wrote to Douglas, "earnestly and respectfully" urging him to formalize the pre-emption system. He argued that while a great deal of land near Victoria "has been put up to public auction," it was not being purchased, "even at that low price because the land, although containing many fertile spots is, generally, speaking, covered with forest and rock or swamp."

I would therefore [...] suggest that these sections [...] be thrown open to pre-emption, believing that many persons who now wish to occupy lands at a distance, at Salt Spring Island for instance, or Chemainus, would thereby be induced to seek out and occupy the fertile spots alluded [sic] and that an Impetus would be given to settle up lands which, although so near Victoria are too wild to sell at present.⁴⁰

The result was the Land Ordinance of January 1860, outlining a pre-emption system for the mainland on almost exactly the same terms as outlined in Pemberton's July 26 letter.

Under this proclamation, a single man could take up 160 acres of unsurveyed land, on condition that he occupy and improve it, and that he pay up to ten shillings an acre when the land was surveyed and the legal title obtained. Douglas's support for this system of settlement in both colonies cannot be doubted. As he declared in the Colonial Legislature on March 1, 1860, "I am prepared also to concur in any measures which may tend more directly to encourage settlers to occupy and cultivate the country; and I believe

that the cheap and easy acquisition of public lands, and the construction of roads, to facilitate and reduce the cost of transit to and from the settlements will tend materially to the advancement of these objects."⁴¹ It is not clear why this piece of legislation was not expanded beyond the mainland colony to include lands on Vancouver Island, except, as Robert Cail suggests, Douglas was "so preoccupied in guiding the development of the mainland colony that he had found little time to consider the state of affairs closer to home."⁴²

It is important to note that the question of Aboriginal claims to land in the Vancouver Island colony and on the mainland had not been settled by 1860. Douglas clearly wanted to extinguish Native land title,⁴³ but, as we will see in greater detail in Chapter 7, although prior Native claims in the area were largely ignored by officials, and although Natives were prohibited from pre-empting land after 1866,⁴⁴ their presence on 'settler' lands continued well into the third decade of non-Native settlement.

The sub-legal status of pre-emptions on Salt Spring Island created numerous problems. It must have been a source of concern to the settlers on the island when, for example, on October 5, 1859, Pemberton declared that the settlers on Salt Spring and Chemainus had no legal title to the land they had been granted in July, and were nothing more than squatters.⁴⁵ Mr. Copland quickly responded on behalf of the settlers, presenting Pemberton with a copy of his July 26 letter, and Pemberton's statement was retracted publicly in the October 5 edition of the British Colonist.⁴⁶ As we will see in subsequent

chapters, the confusion of names and claims in the early pre-emption records can, in part, be attributed to the sub-legal status of these early claims, as it was not until 1861 that a formal registration process for pre-emptions was instituted for the Vancouver Island colony. The confusion did not, however, end with formal registration: overlapping claims, registration duplication and a general failure to comply with many regulations continued to characterize the pre-emption system throughout the nineteenth century.

In spite of these problems, settlement was definitely taking place on Salt Spring Island in 1859. On September 20, Jonathan Begg wrote to the New Westminster Times, informing its readers that "the settlement of the land is progressing favorably, and considering all circumstances, rapidly. Cabins are being built, ground being cleared and other difficulties disappearing before the energetic labourers who have undertaken the task of pioneers."⁴⁷ Begg had taken up his land in one of the first settlements on the island, which soon became known as Begg's Settlement. [see Map 1] In the vicinity of this north-eastern settlement were a number of British settlers, many of whom had worked for the Hudson's Bay Company.⁴⁸ By early spring, 1860, settlers had begun clearing their land. In September of that year, the visiting Bishop George Hills noted that he "visited most of the log houses that are built on each lot. The land is [...] quite park-like and the soil is sometimes rich black loam."⁴⁹

Begg's settlement was not the only area settled in 1859. Another group of settlers took up land in the vicinity of Ganges harbour in 1859 and early 1860. Unlike those in Begg's Settlement, many of these settlers were Blacks from the United States, with an added mixture of Canadian (from present-day Ontario), British and European settlers. Within a few months, settlers were also living near the Fulford Valley, at the south end of the Island.⁵⁰ Settlers were obliged to build roads, in addition to working towards the improvement of their own lands as required under the pre-emption system.⁵¹ By the middle of December 1859, when Pemberton wrote to Douglas arguing for the adoption of a pre-emption system, the island already possessed a store, a nursery and a post office, with a population of forty or fifty settlers.⁵² The first colonial elections on Salt Spring Island were held in January 1860. By April 1861, the Daily Press could report that ninety-four "bonafide agricultural settlers" resided on Salt Spring Island.⁵³

ii) The Pre-emption Legislation

Notwithstanding the difficulties of implementing the pre-emption system of land settlement, by 1868 Joseph Trutch, surveyor-general of the united colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, was convinced that the pre-emptive system of land acquisition was exactly suited to the needs of the colonies. In a long letter he outlined why. He noted that in the mainland colony, almost 1,700 pre-emption claims had been taken out by 1867, and about thirty percent of these, comprising about 90,000 acres of land,

had been "actually settled upon and improved." In the Vancouver Island colony, just over a thousand claims had been recorded by 1867, about seventy percent of which had been settled and improved. Noting that "almost the entire farming settlements of Vancouver Island as well as the Mainland of British Columbia have been made on lands acquired under the pre-emption system," Trutch argued that this system worked far better than the original one of sale by auction. In contrast to the system of outright sale, "in which large tracts of land purchased at auction for purely speculative purposes remain still in the same primitive condition as when they were sold -- not a tree felled -- not an acre ploughed up -- totally unproductive to the owners -- and retarding the general progress of the Country," he maintained that pre-emption was "most important when regarded as the first steps towards development of the capabilities of the Colony."⁵⁴

As Robert Cail has outlined in some detail, it was the Land Ordinances of 1860 and 1861 that had provided the backbone of the land legislation in effect in 1867 when Trutch provided this evaluation of the land system. Similar legislation remained in force throughout the nineteenth century. The 1861 Land Ordinance outlined in detail the pre-emption regulations roughly drawn up in 1860. It stated that all British male subjects over eighteen years of age could pre-empt land, provided the claim was not on an Indian reserve or settlement.⁵⁵ Each man could take up 150 acres if single, and 200 acres if married. Applications for pre-emption had to be

accompanied by a description of the land. When the land was surveyed, the settler was required to pay the price of four shillings and twopence per acre, and three years were allowed for full payment. If, after two years, the settler could demonstrate that he had been in continuous occupation of his land, and that he had made improvements amounting to two shillings per acre, he could obtain a certificate of improvement. After receiving this certificate, the pre-emptor was allowed either to mortgage, transfer, or purchase his land at the special price of ten shillings per acre. An absence of no more than two months from the claim was allowed, or it would be forfeit.⁵⁶

The Land Ordinance of 1870, in effect when the colonies entered Confederation, closely resembled this legislation. There were a few changes. Pre-emptions of unsurveyed lands were, for example, restricted to 320 acres east of the Cascades, and 160 acres west of them. Also, pre-emptors were not allowed to take out more than one claim at a time, and improvements had to be made to the amount of \$2.50 per acre. Bona-fide personal residence of the owner on the claim was insisted on, replacing the earlier edict that anyone could be appointed to occupy the claim. The purchase price, after improvement, was set at \$1.00 per acre, and a crown grant was obtainable after a survey, and payment of all fees.⁵⁷ Revisions in the 1875 Land Act provided for pre-emptions of smaller plots of land, and of surveyed, as well as unsurveyed, land, but upheld the single pre-emption rule, and the same acreages as the 1870 Ordinance. Free land grants, also established in 1875, did

not stimulate land settlement, and were no longer offered after revisions to the Land Act in 1879.⁵⁸ By 1879, the provincial government had also decided to tighten up its regulations concerning payment for improved land, allowing for payment by installment, but requiring it within four years.⁵⁹

The Land Act of 1884 raised the price of surveyed and unsurveyed agricultural lands from \$1.00 to \$2.50 per acre, but the price of pre-empted land remained at \$1.00 per acre. A ceiling of 640 acres was placed on the extent of unsurveyed land that could be purchased. Another land act in 1888 broke new ground by classifying different kinds of land as agricultural or timber lands, and facilitating grazing leases for the growing cattle industry. Again, reflecting the increasing realization of the relative scarcity of agricultural lands, and the desire to protect such lands from speculators, restrictions on the amount of surveyed and unsurveyed land that could be taken up came into effect with the Land Act of 1891. Classifications of types of agricultural lands were also refined.⁶⁰ Although there were many variations in land legislation throughout the century, the principles of cheap rural land, deferred payment, the purchase of such land on condition that it had been cleared, fenced and built upon, and the residence of the bona fide settler on the land remained intact from 1860 to the end of the century.

iii.) The Meaning of Rural Lands: The Official Discourse

These activities provided the immediate context of early land settlement in the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia. To

understand the wider significance of both the pre-emption system and the vision of country lands upon which it was based, it is necessary to step back a little to look at the broader context of rural land settlement in colony and province throughout the nineteenth century. As we will see, policy makers, editorialists and a growing stream of settlers repeatedly stressed that “the mining as well as the other interests in the colony are dependent on its agricultural development for their prosperity.”⁶¹ Rural was clearly identified with agricultural land, settled by small producers and their families. To rural society fell the task of providing the foundation of wealth, population and social stability in the growing colony and province.⁶²

The concern with land settlement was not limited to administrators and policy makers. Indeed, it is one of the striking features of a broad range of sources available in the nineteenth century. Despite the propensity of twentieth-century historians to look to capital enterprise in logging, mining, and fishing as the foundation of wealth and settlement in British Columbia, newspapers, colonial correspondence, personal memoirs and the types of land legislation -- discouraging land speculation and encouraging agricultural settlement -- suggest that another vision preoccupied many in the nineteenth century. When the Victoria Weekly Colonist declared in May 1860 that “[t]here is no interest here so important as that of agriculture,”⁶³ it was not indulging in rural nostalgia, nor was it simply expressing the view of a group of disillusioned miners. It was reflecting a commonly held view that land

was the basis of security and wealth in society. "Get settlers into British Columbia," argued the Colonist, "and they will raise provisions, make roads, and generally develope [sic] the resources of the country."⁶⁴

Although it would eventually become clear to governors and governed that British Columbia was going to have an economy rooted in something other than agriculture, this was not yet apparent to many of those living in the province throughout the later nineteenth century. The conviction that individual land ownership would provide the foundation of the provincial economy was clearly expressed in the debates leading up to British Columbia's union with Canada. Amor De Cosmos, member for the Victoria District, declared in 1870,

If the terms between British Columbia and Canada do not protect the farming interest, the largest and only permanent interest in this Colony, Confederation will do no good. If it does not protect the farming interest, I vote against Confederation, first, last and all the time.⁶⁵

Daniel Marshall's detailed study of voting patterns in the provincial legislature of the early 1870s reveals a clear pattern in pre-party politics: the tariff question, centering on the protection of markets for the benefits of farmers in the province, was the single most important political issue that divided members of the Legislative Assembly as the province entered its first years in confederation with Canada.⁶⁶

The agricultural potential of the province provided a standard theme in the literature enticing immigrants to colony and province; pamphlets and

guidebooks promised that “circumstances here greatly favour the prosecution of small farming.”⁶⁷ The Handbook of British Columbia and Emigrant’s Guide to the Gold Fields (1862) began with the assertion that “British Columbia is apparently a second England, with the added advantages of gold fields the richest in the world. It is computed to contain about 200,000 square miles of land, fitted to the labor of the agriculturist.”⁶⁸ Maintaining that “its agricultural capabilities are almost illimitable,” the author argues that “[m]en of steady and industrious habits, possessed of small capital, [...] would, there is little doubt, do well in following agricultural pursuits in British Columbia.”⁶⁹ An 1883 pamphlet urged the settler to appreciate the “immense advantage to a settler to be in mineral country, because the mines give, or will give, work to those able to undertake it, and will create local markets which otherwise might not exist for generations.” Everything that brought people to the province, pamphlets argued, “specially benefits the farming settler.”⁷⁰ Immigration literature reassured potential settlers about the viability of farming by reference to the imports of food from the United States and elsewhere.⁷¹

Immigrants were being drawn by the benefits of capital accumulation through farming, but the ideal of independence inherent in land ownership was also of great importance. As one pamphlet urged, “Why should a farmer in the old country continue to pay rent [...] when, with one year’s rental, he can purchase a partially prepared farm with buildings on it in the thoroughly

British province of British Columbia?"⁷² In 1895, Reverend Wilson, Anglican minister of Salt Spring Island, explained the advantages of farming to prospective settlers in this way: "A farm on the Pacific coast may not, perhaps, yield its owner a fortune, but it will at any rate enable him to make a living and to bring up a family with comparative ease and comfort."⁷³ Agriculture in British Columbia was to provide a safe and secure living for those "who would be glad, untrammelled by conventions, to make a home for themselves by work, bring up their children to a healthy, independent life, and gratify those tastes for shooting and fishing which their means will not permit in the Old Country."⁷⁴

In trying to establish what social commentators and reformers found so compelling about this particular rural vision, it is important to remember that, for many in the nineteenth century, the economic advantages of agriculture were inseparable from a particular set of cultural values: land was not simply to provide for the subsistence needs of the province, but was to do so in a way that was compatible with particular ideas about liberal democracy and the progress of civilization, ideas that were inseparable from colonial settlement. As a number of writers have argued, by the late nineteenth century, Europeans had "constructed a pyramidal evolutionary model with their own culture occupying the apex and all others ranked on an ascending scale from hunting to farming to industrial society."⁷⁵

The construction of British Columbia as an empty wilderness awaiting civilized use, no less than the literature surrounding agricultural development, provides evidence of this evolutionist, ethnocentric paradigm. The large Aboriginal populations on the coast, designated primitives, were transformed by the colonial discourse into part of this empty, natural landscape, waiting to be turned to productive use, civilized just as the land they lived on was cultivated. As Edward Mallandaine (architect, teacher, and early land-owner on Salt Spring Island) stated in his First Victoria Directory of 1860:

Land, wild, tenanted only by the bear, the wolf and deer is valueless; but land obtained gratuitously by industrious men, and by them made to produce the 'fruits of the earth' is valuable, because turned to its natural and intended use, and enhances the value (gives it, then, in fact) of the remainder.⁷⁶

As historians of Aboriginal British Columbia have demonstrated, the discourse of land settlement, and the agrarian ideology it contained, are inseparable from the political, economic and ideological context of colonial expansion.⁷⁷

How do we reconcile this pastoral vision with the aggressive liberal individualism which usually categorizes social and economic relations in nineteenth-century British Columbia? Tina Loo has argued in Making Law Order and Authority in British Columbia that throughout the nineteenth century, politicians, journalists and colonists pressured governments to create the clear, impartial and rational legal system that was deemed essential

to link material progress, economic individualism and laissez-faire capitalism.⁷⁸ But notwithstanding the importance of the gold rush, the discovery of coal, and, later, of the commercial value of timber, the discourse of laissez-faire capitalism was, as land legislation suggests, mediated by the discordant voice of small-scale production on the family farm.⁷⁹

Christopher Clarkson, in his study of liberalism, nation building and family property law in British Columbia in the 1860s, argues that the family was particularly important in the liberal discourse that identified rural with small scale land ownership of agrarian lands. He suggests that this particular construction of rural shared some important ideological roots with laissez-faire capitalism in Britain and America:

while economic development and liberalism's theoretical economic equality of opportunity appealed to most Pacific north western reformers, the social effects of capitalistic acquisitive individualism did not. They, like republicans, clear grits and British radical Liberals, idealized property-based democracy and economic equality for yeomen smallholders, artisans, tradesmen, merchants and entrepreneurial businessmen. The prospect of industrial monopolies, widespread wage labour and a large landless proletariat was abhorrent to them.⁸⁰

Clarkson argues that reformers like Amor de Cosmos and John Robson, recoiling against fears concerning the consequences of laissez-faire capitalism, nevertheless kept their faith in this system by looking to the families who would constitute the household-based and small scale capitalism of rural society. The family, and the values it represented as an extra- or sub-capitalist formation, would provide a foil against the worst

aspects of capitalism and shore up nation-building in a number of important ways.⁸¹ Demographically, land-based families would establish a permanent Anglo-Saxon base for nation building; for, as Adele Perry has argued, White women would “raise the moral tone of the white, male-dominated society, quell the rapid development of a mixed-blood community, and ensure that British law, mores and economic development flourished.”⁸² Furthermore, because the discourse of liberal economics positioned families outside the relentless search for rational self-interest, it was the family that could best allay fears that competition would escalate “to the point where self-gratifying desire and instinctual self-preservation over-ruled altruism, morality and social cooperation.”⁸³ Finally, small-scale agricultural production, as a household-based industry, would prevent capitalism from destroying the family at the same time that it limited proletarianization, thereby curtailing the social and cultural alienation that capitalism too often entailed. The family, in its rural setting, was the “stable social institution” in the reformers’ nation-building agenda, reflecting, in Clarkson’s words, “desires for progress, order and individual equality, all of which were threatened by *laissez-faire* capitalism.”⁸⁴

At the same time that agriculture would provide the economic foundation of the province’s resource industries, therefore, petty commodity production on the family farm would provide the ideological underpinnings, through economic independence, necessary for a fully functioning liberal

state.⁸⁵ This helps to explain why, in spite of the hyperbole of laissez-faire capitalism, land policies continued throughout this period to identify beneficial use with the settlement of small-scale agricultural producers on the land.⁸⁶ It also explains the ideological appeal of the pre-emption system, which expressly limited the rights of individual landowners to treat their land as a commodity, in order to preserve it for family farms. The pre-emption system resolved tensions in the official discourse of rural -- impatience with stability on the one hand, and apprehensions about progress on the other -- by allocating to the rural family the responsibility for preventing the self-destruction of the capitalist state.

By the 1890s, the discussion surrounding land settlement was taking place within the increasingly detailed context of agricultural land use. Like so many other Victorian-era bureaucracies in the western world, the British Columbia government demonstrated its interest in the subject by creating reports and compiling detailed statistics.⁸⁷ In 1891, the Department of Agriculture published its first report, which aimed to provide detailed statistical support of the government's belief that "this Province is thoroughly suited in every way, by soil and climate, for good farming."⁸⁸ In addition to educating farmers in modern agricultural practices, the Department of Agriculture reports served the explicit goal of providing information to prospective immigrants who would be drawn by the agricultural potential of

the province.⁸⁹ As James Anderson, statistician, exulted in the First Report on Agriculture in the Province in 1891:

[E]nough information has been obtained to prove that the Province is not the 'Sea of Mountains' it has been represented [sic], and although it cannot be compared in extent as a grain growing country to the Great North West, nor can it aspire to produce 70,000 or 80,000 turkeys in a season like the County of Lanark, Ontario, [...] it will, with improved means of communication, and transport, yet show that it is not to be ignored in the matter of agricultural production, while its climatic excellence is too well known to need descanting upon.⁹⁰

In the process of industriously creating reports detailing the growth of agriculture in the province, bureaucrats and statisticians have provided historians with a view of the "process by which visions of reality, models of social structure, were elaborated and revised."⁹¹ When we turn to the statistical record, the vision of social order we see is portrayed in the cash value of farms and the market value of produce. It is a vision of rural life understood within the context of an efficient and scientifically-informed industry, and defined by the presence of the agricultural capitalist.

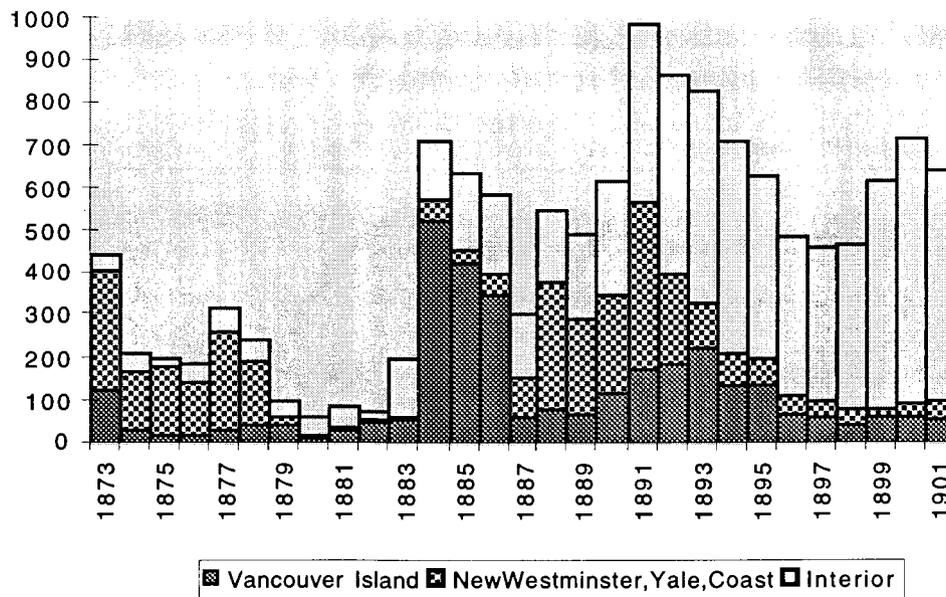
Statistics provided the material standard against which agricultural success or failure was measured, but the moral imperative that was always present in the literature took on an increasingly dominant tone as the twentieth century progressed. As in the rest of Canada, British Columbia governments looked to rural areas for the stability and security that seemed to be quickly disappearing from urban and industrial life. Farm schools, soldiers' settlements, and agricultural education programmes are examples of

the ways that the government looked to the countryside to compensate for the demoralizing modernization of urban areas.⁹² As this federal Agricultural Bulletin from 1919 suggests, by the inter-war period, discussions on rural life had taken on a typically Edwardian moral fervour :

Agriculture is the basic science upon which rests the superstructure of our economic wealth; a most important industry, which makes for the highest development and the moral and physical well-being of the people.... no other vocation has so many claims to preeminence as this, the oldest pursuit in the world [...] the farmer alone adds to the common wealth; his calling is a co-operative triumph of nature and science, which exemplifies the faithfulness of mother earth in rewarding the mental and physical energy of man, when intelligently applied to unlocking the secrets of nature's treasure vaults [...] The success of agriculture is absolutely necessary to the existence of a stable and prosperous nature.⁹³

How successful were the attempts of the government to turn British Columbia into a province of farmers? As Robert Cail argues in Land, Man and the Law, government administrators devoted considerable time, effort and money to developing and overseeing land policies that identified 'beneficial use' of country lands with the installation of 'bona fide settlers' on such lands. Records suggest that many people must have found the prospect of land ownership appealing: before 1871, when the non-Native population stood at about 9,000, over 4,000 pre-emptions had been granted in the British Columbia and Vancouver Island colonies.⁹⁴

Figure 1:1 Number of Pre-emptions by Year and by Region, British Columbia, 1873-1901

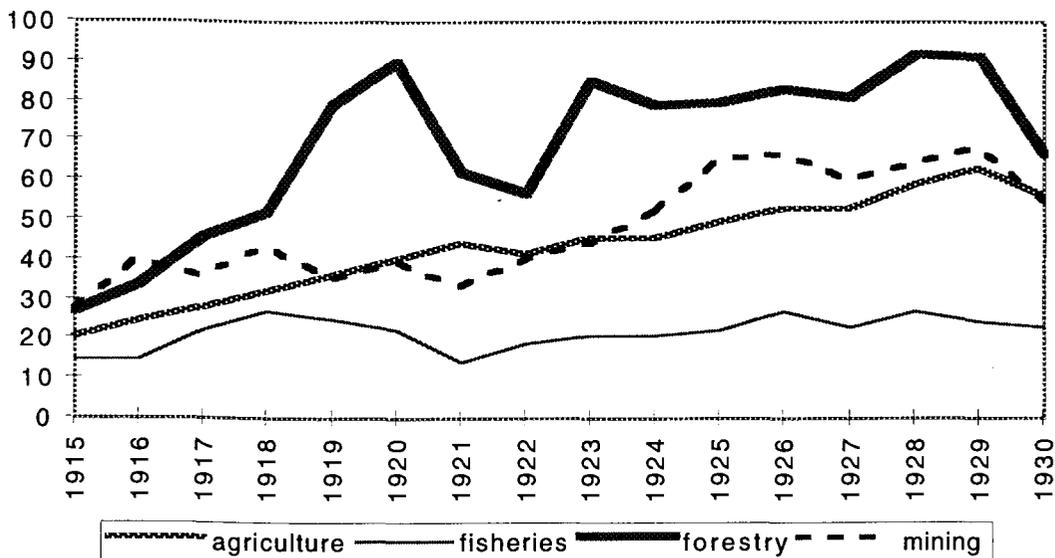


Robert E. Cail, *Land, Man and the Law*, Appendix B, Table 1.

Between 1873 and 1900, the number of pre-emptions grew to eighteen thousand, and, by 1913, over thirty-seven thousand pre-emptions had been taken out by prospective settlers (Figure 1:1).⁹⁵ For these people, the real opportunities offered by the province seemed to lie in small-scale land ownership. Government records suggest that many of the stated objectives with regard to land settlement were achieved by the early decades of the twentieth century. While one historian has claimed that statistics “do not indicate the essential role of agriculture [...] farming for many people was on the limits of marginalization,”⁹⁶ this is not borne out by the numbers of

people taking out pre-emptions, or reportedly involved in farming in the province.⁹⁷

Figure 1:2 Total Value of Production in British Columbia Primary Industries, in Millions of Dollars, 1915-30



Source: Economic Council of Canada, *Statistics of Industry in B.C., 1871-1934* (1935); 1915-1920 agricultural figures are extrapolated from *Census of Canada, 1931*, Vol. 8, Table 1.

It is not borne out by production values either. As Clint Evans has argued, while British Columbia agriculture made a poor showing in comparison to production in other parts of Canada, within the province, “a comparison of annual values of production indicates that farming and logging became two of the province’s leading primary industries prior to the First World War, and the value of farm production closely rivaled that of forestry well into the 1920’s.”⁹⁸ Figure 1:2 summarizes the Economic Council

of Canada's statistics indicating the strong economic role played by agriculture in British Columbia between 1915 and 1930.

Farmers' Institutes, and their women's auxiliary, the Women's Institutes, flourished as the rural population flaunted its agricultural character. An editorial in Vancouver Province in 1927 declared British Columbia a "farming province," and suggested that while agriculture still trailed behind forestry as the most lucrative industry, "it promises, very shortly, to assume the leading position." "

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the official discourse surrounding country lands in nineteenth-century British Columbia, a discourse that identified beneficial land use with the establishment of settlers on the land; government policy, through the pre-emption system, enabled settlers with little capital to settle on the land, and government agents actively encouraged the pursuit of small-scale agricultural production on the family farm. Rural land, by means of the independent yeomen, who would create thriving agricultural economies, comprised an important component in a cluster of values representing deeply-held beliefs in colony and province about civilization, progress, liberal individualism and the growth of capitalism. The next two chapters will explore in more detail the ways in which this discourse shaped rural Salt Spring Island.

NOTES

¹ For an elaboration of all of these points, see R.W. Sandwell, "Rural Reconstruction: Towards a New Synthesis in Canadian History," Histoire Sociale/Social History, 27, no. 53 (May 1994), 1-32.

² For a review of early agriculture in British Columbia, see F.W. Laing, Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, "Early Agriculture in British Columbia," typescript, 1925, GR 509, BCA. On the failure of the Hudson's Bay Co. to promote settlement, see for example, Barry Gough, "Corporate Farming on Vancouver Island: the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, 1845-1857" in Donald Akenson, ed., Canadian Papers in Rural History, 4 (Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1984), 72-82, and for a different perspective, Richard Mackie, "The Colonization of Vancouver Island, 1849-1858," BC Studies, no. 96 (winter 1992-93), 3-40. The most complete overview of land settlement policy is contained in Robert E. Cail, Land, Man and the Law: The Disposal of Crown Lands in British Columbia, 1871-1913 (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1974).

³ The Wakefield system was a system of land disbursement designed to sustain traditional class relations by limiting the access of the lower orders to land by keeping the price of land high. For an overview of the Wakefield system, see Tina Loo, Making Law, Order and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 39-40, and J.I. Little, "The Foundations of Government," in Hugh J.M. Johnston, ed., The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996), 77-80.

⁴ Cail, Land, Man and the Law, xiii and 13-14.

⁵ For a review of the goals and problems of early land legislation, see Cail, Land, Man and the Law, Chapter 1; and James E. Hendrickson, "The Constitutional Development of Colonial Vancouver Island and British Columbia," in James E. Hendrickson, ed., Journals of the Council, Executive Council and Legislative Council of Vancouver Island, 1851-1866. (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1980).

⁶ Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 6-8.

⁷ See for example Lytton to Douglas, 14 August 1858, no. 8. Great Britain, Colonial Office, Papers Relative to the Affairs of British Columbia, presented to both houses of

Parliament by command of Her Majesty, 1859-1862, 48-52, cited in Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 5-7.

⁸ "Proclamation Enclosure in No. 51," Papers Relative to British Columbia, cited in Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 11.

⁹ Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 11.

¹⁰ Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 9-10.

¹¹ British Colonist, 13 June 1859.

¹² Jonathan Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, 10 March, 1860, Begg File, Salt Spring Island Archives (hereafter SSIA).

¹³ Jonathan Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, 2 February 1858 and 10 March 1860, Begg File, SSIA.

¹⁴ Begg to William and Margaret, 10 March 1860, Begg File, SSIA.

¹⁵ British Colonist, "Land Reform Meeting," 24 June 1859. Jonathan Begg appears as one of those drawing up resolutions for the petition.

¹⁶ British Colonist, 4 July 1859.

¹⁷ British Colonist, 4 July 1859

¹⁸ British Colonist, 4 July 1859. Although Cail suggests in Land Man and the Law, xi, that Douglas invented the pre-emption system of land acquisition before any other examples, such as the 1862 American Homestead Act, were available, this is not so. The terms outlined by de Cosmos and the other petitioners closely follow the Donation Land Claim Act, established by Oregon's provisional government in 1850. Under the terms of this act, every white male citizen over eighteen could take up 320 acres of land if single, or if married his wife could hold an additional 320 acres in her own right. Personal residence for four years, and the cultivation of some of the land were the only stipulations. Blacks and Hawaiians were excluded from this system. Carlos A. Schwantes, The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 103.

¹⁹ British Colonist, 8 July 1859.

²⁰ British Colonist, 8 July 1859

²¹ See A.F. Flucke, "Early Days on Salt Spring Island," British Columbia Historical Quarterly (July-Oct. 1951), n. 15.

²² British Colonist, 11 July 1859. It is important to note that the concept of land 'improvement' is a profoundly cultural construction, one that was implicated in differences between Native and non-Native definitions of 'beneficial use.' See for example Bruce Stadfeld, "Manifestations of Power: Native Response to Settlement in Nineteenth Century British Columbia" (MA Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1993), and Robin Fisher, Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1891 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977[1992]), Chapter 5.

²³ British Colonist, 13 July 1859.

²⁴ British Colonist, 4 July 1859.

²⁵ Victoria Gazette, 14 July 1859.

²⁶ Victoria Gazette, 14 July 1859.

²⁷ British Colonist, 27 July 1859.

²⁸ Jonathan Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, 10 March 1860, Begg File, SSIA.

²⁹ Jonathan Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, 10 March 1860, Begg File, SSIA.

³⁰ Joseph Pemberton to John Copland, 26 July 1859, Correspondence Outward, Land and Works Dept., CAA30.7J1, BCA. See Appendix A for the full text of this letter.

³¹ Pemberton to Copland, 26 July 1859.

³² Flucke, "Early Days on Salt Spring Island," 15.

³³ See for example, Jean Barman, The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 87; and Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 12-15.

³⁴ Joseph Trutch to Governor, 12 August 1868, File 953, Correspondence of the Land and Works Dept., BCA, 19; Cail, Land Man and the Law, 12-13.

³⁵ Victoria Gazette, 30 July 1859.

³⁶ See Barman, The West Beyond the West, 87, where she sites 1860 as date of first pre-emptions in the Fraser Valley. F.W. Laing, Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, notes 1858 as the time of the first application for farm land, at Hope, but he too notes that pre-emptions were not granted until 1860. "Early Agriculture in British Columbia."

³⁷ British Colonist, 19 August 1859; Joseph Pemberton to Mssrs Manly, Sparrow and Wright, 30 July 30 1859, Correspondence Outward, Department of Land and Works, CAA30.7J1, BCA.

³⁸ Copland to Pemberton, enclosed in Pemberton to Copland, 19 Sept. 1859, Dept. of Lands and Works, CAA30.7J1, BCA.

³⁹ See also Pemberton to Copland, 19 September and 8 December 1859. Dept. of Land and Works, Correspondence Outward, BCA.

⁴⁰ Pemberton to Douglas, 12 December, 1859. Dept. of Land and Works, Correspondence Outward, BCA. Pemberton outlines an early version of the pre-emption system in this letter, that is to pertain to Vancouver Island, and give pre-emptive rights to single men for 100 acres of land, and 200 acres to married men.

⁴¹ Journals of Colonial Legislatures of the Colonies of Vancouver Is. and British Columbia, 1 March 1860, 157.

⁴² Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 15. Flucke also notes this discrepancy, but provides no explanation, "Early Days on Saltspring Island," 170-3.

⁴³ Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 57.

⁴⁴ "The Pre-emption Ordinance" 1866; "An Ordinance to Amend and Consolidate the Laws Affecting Crown lands in British Columbia," 1 June 1870.

⁴⁵ British Columbia, Journals of the Colonial Legislatures of the Colonies of Vancouver Is. and British Columbia 1851-1871, vol. 1 (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1980), 4 October 1859.

⁴⁶ Flucke, "Early Days on Salt Spring Island," 171-72; See also British Columbia, Attorney General; file 96/72, GR 419, BCA for copies of the documents in this incident, preserved in the file of W.K. Brown, whose 1859 claim was tied up in a dispute stemming from this altercation.

⁴⁷ New Westminster Times, 24 September 1859.

⁴⁸ Henry Sampson, George Sampson, George Mills, James McFadden and Edward Walker were among Begg's Settlement settlers who had worked with the Hudson's Bay Company. Family Files, SSIA.

⁴⁹ Journal of Bishop George Hills, Bishop of Columbia, 11 September 1860, Archives of the Ecclesiastic Province of British Columbia, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

⁵⁰ 11 September 1860, Journal of Bishop George Hills.

⁵¹ As W.K. Brown noted in a letter to the colonial surveyor in March, 1860, "After arriving on the said land, I immediately with the others went to work making a main road several miles long on the Island." file 96/72, British Columbia Attorney General, GR 419, BCA. Louis Stark wrote complaining that a number of complications arose around the construction of a road near his property, when other settlers created a detour leading directly to a neighbour's barn, and away from Stark's property. Stark to Trutch, 22 November 1870, British Columbia Surveyor General, Correspondence Inward from Louis Stark, 1869,1870, C/G/30.71k/s+2, BCA.

⁵² New Westminster Times, 10 December 1859.

⁵³ Daily Press (Victoria), 23 April 1861.

⁵⁴ Joseph Trutch to Governor Frederick Seymour, 12 August 1868, File 953, Correspondence of the Land and Works Dept., BCA, 9-17.

⁵⁵ Blacks, Natives (before 1866) and Hawaiians were able to pre-empt lands, as long as they swore an oath of allegiance to the British crown, whereas Chinese were not.

⁵⁶ Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 15.

⁵⁷ Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 17-18.

⁵⁸ Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 30-32.

⁵⁹ Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 33.

⁶⁰ There is no indication on Salt Spring that lands acquired after these dates were being classified in this way in practice. See Cail, Land, Man and the Law, Chapter 3, for a closer look at these pieces of legislation.

⁶¹ Victoria Gazette, 30 July 1859.

⁶² For personalized views of the appeal of this agricultural ideal, see Richard Somerset Mackie, The Wilderness Profound: A Victorian Life on the Gulf of Georgia (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1995) and Margaret Ormsby, ed., Susan Allison A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia: The Recollections of Susan Allison (Vancouver, UBC Press, [1976] 1991).

⁶³ Weekly British Colonist, 12 May 1860.

⁶⁴ Weekly British Colonist, 14 January 1860. Richard White argues that failure of governments to recognize the sustainability of logging or other non-agricultural land practices had severe environmental and social consequences; he maintains that "at the root of these land problems [in the American West] was the supposition that agriculture was the highest use for all lands." Richard White, Its Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 148.

⁶⁵ James Hendrickson, ed., Journals of the Colonial Legislatures, vol. V, appendix A, "Confederation Debates," 470.

⁶⁶ See chapter entitled "War of the Tariffs" in Daniel Marshall, "Mapping the Political World of British Columbia, 1871-1883" (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1991).

⁶⁷ British Columbia as a Field for Emigration and Investment (Victoria: Wolfenden Press, 1891),15.

⁶⁸ Handbook of British Columbia and Emigrant's Guide to the Gold Fields with Map and Two Illustrations from Photographs by M. Claudet (London: W. Oliver, 1862), 3.

⁶⁹ Handbook of British Columbia, 4-5.

⁷⁰ Province of British Columbia, Canada: Its Climate and Resources, with Information for Emigrants published under the direction of the Minister of Agriculture (Victoria: Wolfenden Press, 1883), 82.

⁷¹ See for example British Columbia as a Field for Emigration and Investment; and the First Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, 1891, British Columbia Sessional Papers (hereafter BCSP) 1892, 733.

⁷² Province of British Columbia, Canada: Its Climate and Resources, 101.

⁷³ Rev. E Wilson Salt Spring Island, 1895: an Illustrated Pamphlet with Map (Salt Spring Island: Vesuvius P.O., 1895),11.

⁷⁴ E. Phillips, Salt Spring Island, 1902, British Columbia (n.p., n.d.) SSIA. For the significance of British middle class immigrants to British Columbia, see Jean Barman, Growing up British in British Columbia: Boys in Private School (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), and Paul Koroscil "Resettlement in Canada's British Garden of Eden," in Catherine Kerrigan, ed., The Immigrant Experience (Guelph:

University of Guelph, 1989), 129-64; Jason Patrick Bennett, "'The True Elixir of Life: Imagining Eden and Empire in the Settlement of Kelowna, British Columbia, 1904-1920'" (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1996).

⁷⁵ Julie Cruikshank, "The Invention of Anthropology in British Columbia's Supreme Court: Oral Tradition as Evidence in *Delgamuukw v. B.C.*," B.C. Studies, no. 95 (1992), 27. See also Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (New York: Routledge, 1992); Kay J. Anderson, Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill Queen's University Press, 1991).

⁷⁶ Edward Mallandaine, First Victoria Directory Comprising a General Directory of Citizens (Victoria: Hibben, Carswell, and Herre, 1860), 15. For a discussion of this point, see Robin Fisher, Contact and Conflict, 104-5; and Julie Cruikshank "Invention of Anthropology," 29.

⁷⁷ R. Cole Harris and Robert Galois have argued that the 1881 census both reflected and helped to construct historically specific categories of social and political understanding. From this perspective, the census of 1881 provides a view of how "... the human geography of the Strait of Georgia had been remade in approximately European terms. It had become a place of towns, 'pioneer' countrysides, and industrial work camps, all broadly controlled by the infrastructure of the state and the cultural assumptions of its English-speaking inhabitants." R. Cole Harris and Robert Galois, "Recalibrating Society: The Population Geography of British Columbia in 1881," The Canadian Geographer, 38, no. 1 (1994), 37-53. See also John Lutz, "Superintending the Songhees: Naming, Knowledge and the Extension of Dominion Over Aboriginal People, 1843-1913," Unpublished paper presented to the 1993 Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting.

⁷⁸ Loo, Making Law, Order and Authority, 9.

⁷⁹ John Lutz's research indicates that capitalist domestic manufacturing existed along with resource extractive industries in the nineteenth century. John Lutz, "Losing Steam: Structural Change in the manufacturing Economy of British Columbia, 1860-1915," (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1988).

⁸⁰ Christopher Clarkson, "Property Law and Family Regulation in Pacific British North America, 1862-1873," Unpublished manuscript, 5; Christopher Clarkson, "Liberalism,

Nation Building and Family Regulation: The State and the Use of Family Property Law on Vancouver Island and in the United Colony/Province of British Columbia, 1862-1872" (MA Thesis, University of Victoria, 1996).

⁸¹ For a review of the extra-capitalist position accorded to the family farm in North American discourse of rural, see Sandwell, "Rural Reconstruction," 15-19.

⁸² Adele Perry, "I'm Just Sick of the Faces of Men: Gender Imbalance, Race, Sexuality and Sociability in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia," BC Studies, nos. 105-106 (Spring / Summer 1995), 36-37.

⁸³ Clarkson, "Property Law and Family Regulation," 8.

⁸⁴ Clarkson, "Property Law and Family Regulation," 7.

⁸⁵ Clarkson, "Property Law and Family Regulation," 5-6.

⁸⁶ Cail, Land, Man and the Law, xi.

⁸⁷ Suzanne Zeller, Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), explores the ways in which the zeal for scientific information influenced nineteenth-century Canada. Zeller does not, unfortunately, mention British Columbia in her otherwise excellent book.

⁸⁸ Fourth Report of the Department of Agriculture, British Columbia, 1894 (BCSP, 1895), 1009.

⁸⁹ In the 1894 report, the author quotes the rave reviews that published excerpts from the Report of Agriculture are finding in the immigration literature: "This useful report should be in the hands of everyone who contemplates settling in British Columbia, as it contains a vast amount of detailed and reliable information on the nature of the soil, stock raising, sheep farming, agriculture and fruit growing in the several districts of the Province." Fourth Report of the Department of Agriculture, British Columbia, 1894 (BCSP, 1895), 828.

⁹⁰ First Report of the Dept. of Agriculture, British Columbia, 1891 (BCSP, 1892), 734.

⁹¹ As Joan Scott has argued, "[s]tatistical reports are neither totally neutral collections of fact, nor simply ideological impositions. Rather they are ways of establishing the authority of certain visions of social order, of organizing perceptions of experience." Joan Wallach Scott, "The Statistical Representation of Work: La Statistique de l'industrie a Paris, 1847-1848," Gender and the Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 115.

⁹² See for example J. Donald Wilson and Paul L Stortz, "May the Lord Have Mercy on You: the Rural School Problem in British Columbia in the 1920's," BC Studies, no. 79 (Autumn 1988), 24-58 and Mary Margaret Carlisle, "Early Agricultural Education in British Columbia: the Pioneering Role of the Farmers' Institutes" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1986); David C. Jones, "The Zeitgeist of Western Settlement: Education and the Myth of the Land," in J. Donald Wilson and David C Jones, eds., Schooling and Society in Twentieth Century British Columbia (Calgary: Destilig Publishing, 1980), 71-89; and Ruth Wells, "Making Health Contagious: Medical Inspection of the Schools in British Columbia, 1910-1920" (MA Extended Research Paper, University of Victoria, 1981); Paul Koroscil, "Soldiers, Settlement and Development in British Columbia, 1915-1930," BC Studies, no. 54 (Summer 1982), 63-87, stresses the perceived benefits of rural life in solving the problems of soldiers returning after the Great War.

⁹³ Agriculture of British Columbia, Canada, Bulletin No. 8. Published by the Authority of the Legislative Assembly (Victoria: 1919), 13.

⁹⁴ F.W. Laing, secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, "Colonial Farm Settlers on the Mainland of British Columbia, 1859-1871," unpublished manuscript, UBC Special Collections, 9, documents the registering of 3,000 pre-emptions on the mainland before 1872. The total population of Whites (Asians and Natives were prohibited from pre-empting land) in 1871 was 8,576. Barman, The West Beyond the West, Table 5, 363.

⁹⁵ see Cail, Land, Man and the Law, appendix B, table 1. There were a total of 33,784 pre-emptions listed between 1873 and 1913.

⁹⁶ Ian MacPherson, "Creating Stability in a Marginal Industry: the Social Origins of the Struggle for Orderly Marketing in British Columbia, 1900-1940," unpublished paper presented at the 1986 BC Studies Conference, UBC Special Collections, 5.

⁹⁷ The number of farms in British Columbia increased from 2,743 in 1881 to 26,079 in 1931. Census of Canada, 1931, vol. 8, Table 1.

⁹⁸ Clint Evans, "Unimportant or Overlooked? The Historical Role of Agriculture in British Columbia," unpublished paper presented at the 1991 Qualicum Conference, 13.

⁹⁹ Daily Province (Vancouver) 15 July 1927, 6.

Chapter 2 The Agricultural Identity Of Salt Spring Island Explored

In spite of the tendency of modern historians to see the history of British Columbia played out within the parameters of extractive industries, the last chapter has argued that the settlement of families on agricultural lands comprised a rural discourse influential throughout the later nineteenth century. This chapter will look at the ways in which government administrators, statisticians, some early settlers and the popular press found in Salt Spring Island a harbinger of British Columbia's agricultural future from the early 1860s onward. By 1891, bureaucrats in the Department of Agriculture had adopted a rhetoric of boosterism throughout the province to describe and quantify the rich agricultural bounty they perceived in the southern Vancouver Island region in general. The promise of commercial agricultural success, implicit in the terms of the pre-emption system, explicit in the newspapers of the 1860s, and measured by an enthusiasm for farming, dominated the discourse of rural life on Salt Spring Island.

i) Pioneer Settlement, 1859-1881

Salt Spring Island began as did many other settler communities in North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Settlers arrived and began to clear land, plant crops and build shelters for themselves and their families, dispossessing Aboriginal populations in the process. Newspaper reports, government documents and personal memoirs relating

to Salt Spring Island in these early years tell the story of aspiring farm families treading the well-worn path from pioneer subsistence to commercial agriculture as their lands were slowly cleared and brought into production.¹

Salt Spring Island was perceived from its earliest days as a community rapidly moving towards a successful commercial agriculture. As early as September 1859, just two months after the land was taken up by settlers on Salt Spring Island, the New Westminster Times enthusiastically reported that “the settlement of the land [on Salt Spring Island] is progressing favorably, and considering all circumstances, rapidly. [...] Now we see the advantages which the country would have derived had the liberal measures pursued towards the settlers of this Island been adopted at an earlier period.”²

The agricultural progress of the island in its earliest years can be followed in the letters of Jonathan Begg, dubbed “one of the first and most respectable of the [Salt Spring Island] settlers,” by the New Westminster Times, as it published his report on the island.³ Begg was one of the earliest, and certainly the most vocal, boosters for the budding community at the North End of the island, named Begg’s Settlement in his honour. By December 1859, “having obtained the agency for the sale of Fruit Trees from some of the best Nurseries in Oregon and California,”⁴ Begg had established Balmoral Nursery on his property. From here he sold both nursery stock and his expertise in planting and maintaining orchards and other foodstuffs. The nursery was run in conjunction with a general store that offered to purchase

and sell agricultural produce. In May 1860, Begg expanded his agricultural frontier beyond the limits of his own property, and, with five other island residents, formed the Salt Spring Island Agricultural Association. As Begg promoted in the notice he issued to the British Colonist, "the probabilities are that if like societies are formed throughout the island, and farming engaged in energetically and systematically, we shall be enabled in a short time to export, instead of importing nearly every article of daily consumption."⁵

In a letter to his brother-in law and sister early in 1860, Begg expounded on the advantages that he saw in the growing community:

I need not tell you that commencing in the wilderness without capital and a stranger to boot has been a hard task, but I have perseverance and industry. I have so far surmounted all my difficulties in a very satisfactory way, and am now in possession of 200 acres on the Pacific coast. [...] I have got about three acres inclosed [sic] and under cultivation, which I am at present at work on. We will be able to put in 1 acre of vegetables, 1 acre turnips and cabbage, 1 acre potatoes. I have planted 75 apples trees this spring, and put in a number of gooseberries and current bushes in addition to the crop already referred to.⁶

Ever cognizant of the commercial potential of his land and works, Begg went on to note that "you may imagine how vegetables pay here, when green peas sell at 10 to 20 cts per bu., cabbages from 2 1/2 to 10 cts, turnips 2 1/2 cts, etc. etc."⁷ By 1862, Begg could confidently assert that

I have sold a large quantity [of fruit trees] this season of my own growth and every year the trade is increasing [...] My commencing that trade here has been a decided hit. A large local demand has sprung up, owing to the number of settlers just now settling up the wild land. In Canada or

the North States, you see no growth of fruit trees like what we have here.⁸

Begg broadened his entrepreneurial scope by heading for the Cariboo gold fields in 1862, "traveling some 1500 miles with my blankets and grub on my back," hoping to make a quick profit out of selling produce to the miners. The journey was not a commercial success, however; as he noted in a letter to his sister, "I packed cabbage plants right into the mines and planted them out also. I should have realized \$2.50 per head if I had not got starved out before they matured."⁹

Although Salt Spring Island presented Begg with a vision of commercial agricultural success, the island, like any pioneer community, presented numerous obstacles to viable trade. Land clearing and the construction of dwellings for people and livestock were foremost among those difficulties. The huge trees of the Pacific coast provided ample materials for constructing the small log cabins that were typical of the earliest homes on the island. Cutting down these giants posed formidable problems, however, for the axes commonly used in eastern areas of North America and Europe were not well-suited to the task.¹⁰ Early settlers reported boring holes into the trees with an augur, and filling the holes with hot coals, to slowly burn the tree down. "Stumping powder" -- gunpowder -- was used until the second world war as a means of getting rid of stumps.¹¹ Throughout the entire time period under study here, "felling trees, burning them, digging

among the stumps to plant potatoes with vegetables and different grains, getting some fowls and, later on, cattle by degrees" remained lengthy and difficult processes.¹²

The difficulties of land clearing and settlement were exacerbated by the poverty of most of the early settlers. As Peter Russell has noted, one of the most important factors influencing the rates of land clearance in pioneer communities was the ability to hire the labour to help clear the land.¹³ No aggregate information is available about the wealth of early settlers, nor their rates of land clearance during these early years, but scattered information indicates slow clearance rates and widespread poverty. Early in 1860, for example, Salt Spring Island was unable to forward any candidates for election to the Legislative Assembly in January 1860: as electoral officer Jonathan Begg reported, "the member had to be worth £1500 so we had to appoint a man from Victoria as no settler could qualify."¹⁴ While Begg, like settler J.P. Booth, obviously had some capital (both were able to hire labourers to help with clearing their land), settlers complained about the scarcity and high price of labour, particularly necessary for cutting and clearing the huge trees.¹⁵

Without either cash or ready access to markets in the first decade of non-Native settlement, settlers were heavily reliant on self-provisioning activities. Reports about Salt Spring consistently stress the variety and quantity of foodstuffs readily available to the pioneers. Bishop Hills, who visited Salt Spring Island in September 1860 noted that "[g]rouse are to be had.

Deer in abundance and good. Fish plentiful."¹⁶ Another visitor to the island in the 1860's noted, "there is also Deer, grouse and pheasants, ducks and geese swarmed in the numerous inlets that indent the island."¹⁷ Even Jonathan Begg was diverted from his habitual raptures about the commercial potential of agricultural production to note that "[t]his is the most bountiful country for wild berries."¹⁸

In spite of poverty and the difficulties involved in clearing the land, by the fall of 1860, just over a year after the first non-Native settlers had arrived, a new community was emerging. Bishop Hills noted the rapid progress that settlers had made clearing and cultivating their land in his first visit to the island in 1860. He observed that some 8,000 acres had been taken up:

A log barn has been built upon each. Some three or five acres have been brought under cultivation in each lot. Garden produce of all sorts is to be seen. Cabbages, potatoes, beetroots, onions, tomatoes, peas, cucumbers, watermelons, carrots and wheat and oats, pigs, poultry and calves.¹⁹

In November 1861, the *Victoria Daily Press* concluded that the pre-emption system on Salt Spring had been most effective in furthering not only the economic health of the region, but, by so doing, had provided an important moral lesson to less enterprising members of the colony:

The encouraging policy adopted towards Salt Spring Island enabled men of limited means to clear, fence and cultivate a much larger portion of their land than their neighbors in Vancouver Island could do, in fact many, but for this judicious system, would have been excluded, who

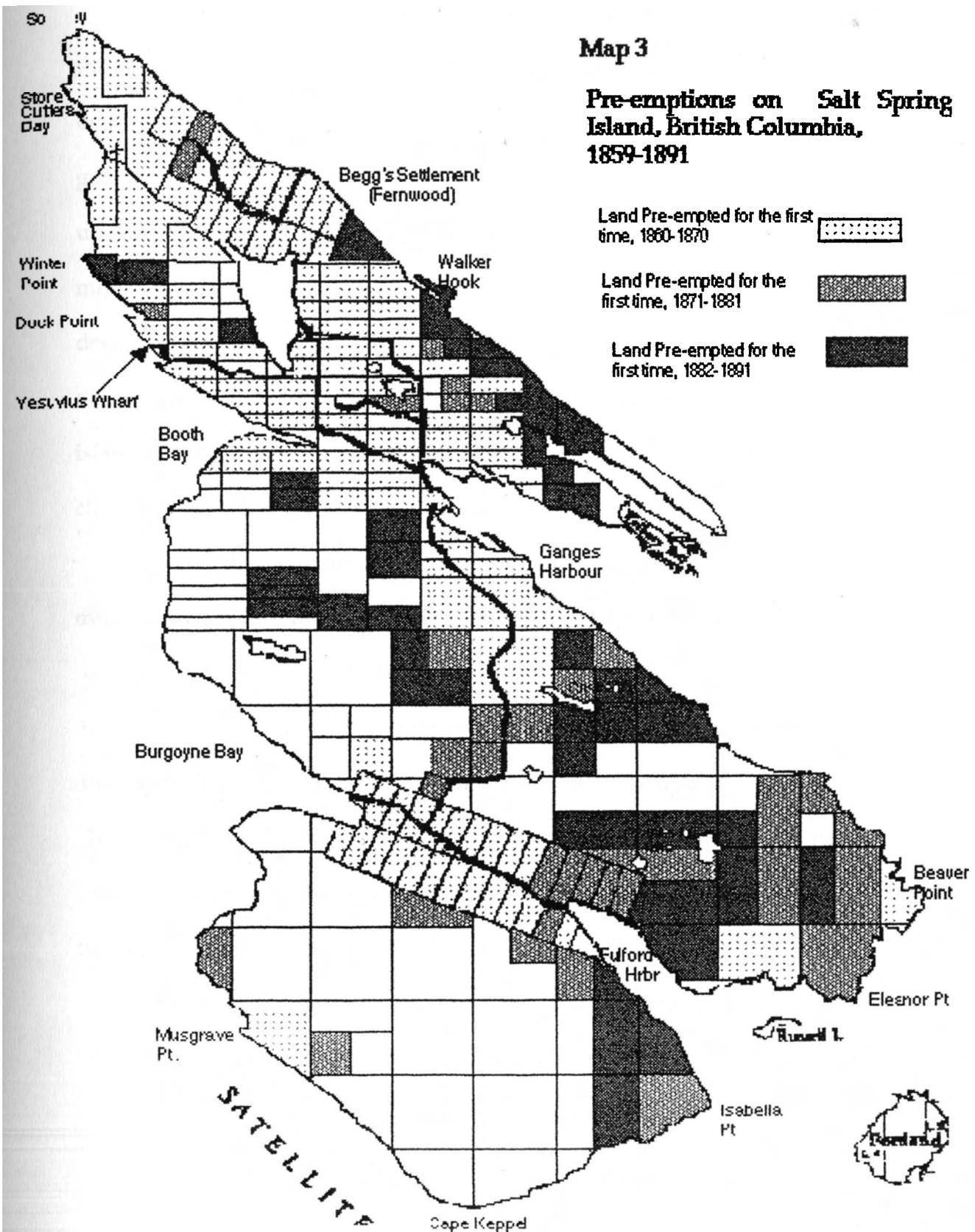
now enjoy a good homestead which they can make more valuable every year. To the inexperienced, it would be a matter of surprise when observing that what has been accomplished in so short a space of time by individual exertion without hired labor; but when they contrast the industry and perseverance of the many with the indolence and neglect of the few, the matter is explained.²⁰

The indefatigable Jonathan Begg had cleared, fenced, built two houses, and planted 7,000 fruit and other trees by the time he applied for his certificate of improvement in 1862. By the same date, Henry Sampson, a former Hudson's Bay Company employee who had also arrived in 1859, and his partner, Mr. Baker, had built a house, fenced some land, and were in possession of twelve cows and a horse.²¹

The geography of the island exerted a considerable influence on the patterns of settlement. Although prospective farmers like Jonathan Begg and Henry Sampson were attracted to the island's fertile valleys, these were separated by a number of large mountains that settlers negotiated only with great difficulty. One range separated Begg's Settlement from Vesuvius Bay, creating friction between the two communities: as a petition from settlers at Begg's Settlement in 1865, protesting the new route of the steamship that bypassed their community, announced: "it seems that the steamer calls regularly at Vesuvius Bay, on the west side of the Island, and communication with which point lies over a mountainous range, rendering it difficult and at this season year out of the question to send any of their produce there for shipment to a market."²²

Map 3

Pre-emptions on Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, 1859-1891



Another range, aptly called the Divide, runs between the north half of the island and the south. The south end was closer to markets in Victoria, but better harbours in the northern settlements, and the easy proximity to the growing town center of Nanaimo, encouraged the first non-Natives to take up land in this area. As we will see in Chapter 7, ethnic clustering and chain migrations of both British and Black settlers were also responsible for the decision of a number of people to settle in northern areas in the first two decades of non-Native settlement. In 1866, the Reverend Cave visited the island and estimated the population at "17 couples, 22 single men, and 42 children" on the north end of the island.²³

As Map 3 suggests, land in the south end of island was taken up more slowly. Only nineteen pre-emptions had been taken out by 1866, and of these only eight families remained in that year. Mr. Cave was "unable to reach" the south end community at Burgoyne Bay during his survey of the island in 1866, but was told that about fifteen people lived there.²⁴ By 1874, when Ashdown Green conducted an informal census of the island, the population of the south end was still small, enumerated at twenty-two men, thirteen women, and twenty children²⁵ (see Table 2:1). With no Jonathan Begg to spur them along, and no steamboat service at Beaver Point, only forty-two settlers had taken out pre-emptions in the south end of the island by 1881, as compared to ninety-six in the north end.

Table 2:1 Ashdown Green's Survey of South Salt Spring Island,
November 1874

Name	Men	Women	Children	Horses	Cattle	Sheep	Pigs
Mitchell	1	1	3	2			
McDonald	1	1					
Cairnes	1	1	2		9		
Purser	1	x	3		7		20
Foord	1	1					
Williams	1	1					
Sparrow	1	x	3	1	30		
Gyves	1	x					
Welch	1						
Meinerstorf	1			1	12		8
Trage and Spikerman	2	x	1		13		28
Ruckle	1				17		20
Howmere (Kanaka)	1	x			2		12
Nuan (Kanaka)	1	x					
Shepherd	1	x	4				
Pimburys	3				2	350	
Akerman	1	1	4				
Weston	1						
TOTAL	21	13	20	4	92	350	88

Source: November 20, 1874; Ashdown A Green, Diary of a Survey of Salt Spring Island, June 8 - November 22, 1874, Add Mss 437, BCA. an "x" connotes a Native woman

Although the south end attracted fewer people to take up lands, the ones who did were more inclined than their counterparts on the northern part of the island to stay: whereas only a quarter of those pre-empting northern Salt Spring lands up to 1881 stayed more than ten years, more than half of south end settlers remained on the island for over a decade.²⁶ Steamer and post-office service was established at the south end in the 1880s, and more people began moving into the area in the late 1870s. The increased settlement at this time, in combination with the higher persistence rates, resulted in a higher population in south Salt Spring Island in 1881 than in the north: 148 people in thirty-nine families, as opposed to 110 people in thirty-two families at the north end.²⁷

Settlers in the south end of the island included George Mitchell, another former Hudson's Bay Company employee, who had cleared and cultivated about six acres by 1874, and had 160 acres fenced, presumably for grazing purposes. Michael Gyves, an Irishman and a wheelwright by trade, had arrived from Ireland via the United States army and the Pig War to settle in Burgoyne Bay in 1866.²⁸ By the time he obtained an improvement certificate for his land, he had built a house, cleared fifteen acres, and fenced an additional twenty.²⁹ Another Burgoyne Valley neighbour at this date was Norwegian J. C. Sparrow. Henry Ruckle, who would go on to become one of the most successful farmers on the island by the 1890s, arrived at Beaver Point from Ireland, via a farm in Ontario, in 1872. Local lore claims that Henry

Ruckle's eloquence about the benefits of Salt Spring Island life was responsible for drawing a number of worthy settlers to the south end of the island in the late 1870s and early '80s.³⁰ Hawaiians, most of them former Hudson's Bay Co. employees, were prohibited from taking up lands in the neighbouring American San Juan Islands in the early 1870s. As a result, a number moved north to Salt Spring Island, married Native women, and pre-empted land around Isabella Point in the south end. These settlers show up as "Kanakas" in Ashdown Green's survey and in land records.³¹

ii) The Commercial Economy of Early Salt Spring Island, 1859-1881

No statistical data is available concerning production or land clearances for this time period; the Department of Agriculture did not start publishing an annual report until the 1891, and the first dominion census was not conducted until 1881. Even after 1881, little household-level data is available to attest to the state of British Columbia agriculture, as the household agricultural schedules after 1871 have been destroyed in Canada. Nevertheless, although poverty and self-sufficiency were important aspects of life, it was the model of commercial agriculture that defined the discourse of settlement even in this early period of the island's history. Within this discourse, the advantages that the resource-rich environment that provided for self-sufficiency on the island were seen by most commentators simply as a prelude to and foundation for the development of commercial agriculture. When Jonathan Begg wrote to his sister and brother-in-law in 1862 that he

was living in a "a country we can grow stuff in," he was clearly thinking of the benefits that would accrue to the agricultural capitalist, as the rest of his letter (and indeed most of his correspondence) attests:

There are many good openings in the way of farming in this country in fact no country in the globe shows the like. I know farms that have netted 30,000 dollars. I know some farmers that have made \$10,000 in cutting and stacking wild hay in the course of 6 weeks. Barley and oats for fodder brings 20 to 25 cents per lb. and it costs me \$4 1/2 a night at some points to keep a horse in hay. When will your Iowa prices compare with that? There is no country that presents the openings for a working man that this does.³²

Begg was not alone in his aspirations towards agricultural petty-commodity production. Newspapers frequently reported on the market opportunities offered by the island's agricultural potential. In a series of articles about Salt Spring Island and the promise it held for the future of commercial agriculture in British Columbia, the Victoria Daily Press noted in 1861:

The Island, like Vancouver [Island], is intersected with rocky hills, running S.E. and S.W. between these there are many valleys of extremely rich land. There are many open plats [...] cattle thrive all year round upon the herbage and some parts are well suited for sheep walks... Springs abound and the water is good [...] There are all kinds of grain and a great variety of vegetables [...] The Indian corn grown here is very fair... The wild fruits are very plentiful [...] and orchards and strawberry beds are likely to prove profitable...³³

The Daily Press reported in 1861 that it had received “samples of wheat, oats, and barley grown on the farm of Mr. Abraham Copeland, which are certainly not to be surpassed on the coast. This gentleman has about fifteen acres under cultivation.”³⁴ In 1864, the Victoria Colonist noted that Brinn and Griffiths, who had purchased Jonathan Begg’s nursery some months previously, were in possession of a “nursery for fruit trees ...[that] may safely be set down as the largest in the whole colony of Vancouver Island.”³⁵ More than ten years later, the Guide to The Province of British Columbia noted that Mr. Griffiths was still making his living by selling in Nanaimo and Victoria produce from the gardens of Salt Spring:

In Mr. Griffiths’ garden there was a large plot [...] The crops of all the varieties of currants and raspberries in quantity and quality vied with those of Comox... Mr. Griffiths’ orchard occupies about two acres [...] The apples are excellent in quality [...] Mr. Griffiths has about 300 barn-door fowls which are fed on grain of the farm and enable him to supply a great abundance of eggs to the Victoria and Nanaimo markets, where they sell from 25 to 40 cents a dozen ³⁶

Notwithstanding its insularity, Salt Spring Island offered its residents ample opportunities for travel on and off the island. Scattered evidence can be found in newspapers, letters, memoirs and miscellaneous government documents referring to a vigorous maritime trade. Jonathan Begg mentions the benefit of Indian canoeists in bringing goods to market, and to other settlers, in the early 1860s.³⁷ The commercial activities of island residents can

be seen in other sources. In 1868, Mr. Sampson's arrest of his wife for the attempted poisoning of his neighbour was retarded by the fact that he was off the island, selling his produce at Mr. Brinn's store in Nanaimo.³⁸ After William Robinson was murdered in the same year, neighbours worried that the commercial opportunities of his land had been underestimated by Victoria officials auctioning off his property, and pointedly advised the Colonial Secretary of its worth; Robinson's pre-emption was "one of the most valuable pieces of property on this island, being the only place where the mail steamer can call on this side of the Island. Aside from this the land is worth 4 or 5 hundred dollars to anyone wishing to obtain a farm."³⁹

A similar commercial predisposition is discernible in descriptions of south end families. John Maxwell had arrived with his partner and fellow Irishman, James Lunney, from the goldfields of the Cariboo in 1861. Arriving with what is reported to be a large sum of money, they pre-empted about 360 acres of land in the rich Burgoyne Valley. They established a large cattle-raising operation, with Maxwell quickly importing about one hundred Texas Longhorns from Oregon to Victoria and then to Salt Spring Island via Cowichan.⁴⁰ The pair expanded their property through a five-year grazing lease from the provincial government in 1870, where they "scattered grass seed so there is some good feed for stock."⁴¹ Maxwell soon married a Native woman, but Lunney stayed single all his life. The Pimbury Brothers, another

wealthy family of British stock who took up land near Burgoyne Bay, had 350 sheep by 1875.

By the late 1870's, Henry Ruckle, recently arrived from Ontario, was well on its way to establishing what would become the most extensive commercial farming operation on Salt Spring Island. He married an Norwegian woman, and the family began selling their produce by means of steamers stopping first at Vesuvius, and by the later 1880s at Beaver Point and Burgoyne Bay.⁴² Theodore Trage, a settler from Germany living in the Beaver Point area of south Salt Spring Island with his Native wife, was remembered by other early settlers as rowing his strawberries to market in Victoria.⁴³ From the earliest years, market production of agricultural goods was clearly defined as an important part of the island economy.

As noted above, some of the difficulties with farming, particularly land clearing, were duly noted by contemporaries. It was the problems with transportation that created the most sustained chorus of complaint from island farmers. Frontier conditions on the island forced settlers to purchase a number of items of consumption, particularly sugar, flour and tea,⁴⁴ all of which had to be imported from Victoria or Nanaimo. Settlers frequently complained of the difficulty of sending and receiving mails.⁴⁵

Most of the complaints about transportation, however, seem to have been rooted in the difficulties of shipping produce off the island. The early commercial aspirations of island farmers can be seen in these frustrations

with transportation systems which, although better than those in other colonial areas, were a long way from meeting the standards of enthusiastic entrepreneurs like Jonathan Begg. When, in 1865, Begg distributed a petition to request a resumption of steamer service to Begg's Settlement rather than Vesuvius Bay, it was the consequences for commercial agriculture that he noted: the difficulty of transporting produce over the mountain to Vesuvius Bay, he argued, made it "difficult, and at this season of the year, out of the question, to send any of their produce there for shipment to market."⁴⁶ In 1877, petitioners for a south end post office were still complaining that they were "entirely shut out from the Nanaimo market, which all the rest of the coast enjoy," because "the steamer only calls on her down trip so that our letters cannot be answered until the next week, although she runs past the Bay within three quarters of a mile of our wharf and calls at other places with less populations."⁴⁷ The grave consequences that would accrue to the island's commercial agriculture without improved steamer service were emphasized by a letter from the Minister of Agriculture that accompanied another Salt Spring Island petition in the same year.⁴⁸ The days of dependence on Indian canoes and rowboats for the transportation of goods on and off the island were fast disappearing by the early 1880's, when transportation and communication links to the island by steamer gradually began to improve.

Transportation difficulties clearly made land acquisition unattractive to many land speculators and agriculturalists, but the relative isolation of the

island should not be overstated, especially in the first two decades of settlement. At a time of few roads, and in a region where roads were sometimes impossible to construct across rocky terrain, Salt Spring Island's strategic situation with regard to water-borne transportation, like its location at the center of the growing British Columbian population, was often seen as a positive factor by contemporaries. As Jonathan Begg noted, "My farm contains 200 acres of the best land in the colony and is admirably situated midway between New Westminster and Victoria, the respective capitals of British Columbia and Vancouver Island"⁴⁹ The advantages of Salt Spring Island, relative to other agricultural areas, clearly declined with the growth of roads throughout the province.

Commercial activity was not limited to growing and selling agricultural produce. Many islanders were involved in a number of secondary industries, most notably in the field of transportation, which appear in similar settler communities across North America.⁵⁰ Captain Walker, who took up land in Begg's Settlement in 1859, was another former Hudson's Bay Company employee. He was one of the early owners of the *Nanaimo Packet*, the ship that brought the first settlers to look at Salt Spring in July 1859, and which continued to freight goods and people along the coast well after Walker's retirement from the Company.⁵¹

Walker's boat also carried stone from a quarry established early in the 1860's at the north end of the island. A group of four Yorkshiremen,

including Henry Elliott, Robert Leach, John Lee and William Senior pre-empted land in the north end for this purpose.⁵² Stone was taken from this quarry on Salt Spring Island throughout the 1860's to ports of call in Seattle, San Francisco and Victoria.⁵³ William Isaacs, another north Salt Spring Island settler who was involved in maritime trade in the 1860s, was the master of ship *Industry* that carried both wood and stone from the island. In spite of this off-farm employment, Isaacs was one of the earliest to improve his land near Ganges Harbour.⁵⁴

Michael Gyves supported himself by selling cedar shakes from the huge trees on his property, and transporting them from Fulford Harbour to Victoria via Indian canoe. He also worked throughout his life as a carpenter on and around Salt Spring building barns. Like Maxwell and Trage, Gyves married a member of the Cowichan band (Penelecut) and remained on the island until he died.⁵⁵ Joseph Akerman, who arrived from England in 1863, also took up rich land in the Burgoyne Valley and raised cows and sheep. He started a market garden on his property, where he opened the first hotel on the island, the Traveler's Rest, in the 1870s.⁵⁶ Bishop Hills, who visited the Fulford Harbour area in 1860, commented on a tiny German community in the same vicinity:

These industrious men are occupied in cutting shingles for roofing and staves for salmon casks from the cedar. They are friends who came out from Germany together, who lived at the mines in California together and who have come here and decided to remain. They are Roman Catholics, one a Protestant. They appear quiet and respectable. [...] The chief speaker was a fine young man

who unhappily several times took the name of God in vain. They have no land yet under cultivation. They take their work to Victoria and bring back food. They clear 3 1/2 dollars on the 1000 shingles. They have a constant supply of venison [...] The spot is pleasant. Some Englishmen lived a short distance off but have left for a while.⁵⁷

The mineral potential of the island provided the basis for much speculation, both figuratively and practically, but little mineral wealth was ever realized. Ashdown Green noted the ruins of a copper mine when he surveyed the island in 1874. Gold, copper and coal were reported discovered on the island at different times. By 1892, the Vancouver Coal Company had taken out a 600-acre claim at the south end of the island.⁵⁸ A number of settlers hoped that the salt springs at the north end that gave the island its name would provide a source of money, either for salt mines, or for health spas. Hopes for discovering coal oil were also raised.⁵⁹

Logging fared much better as a commercial venture. Strange as it seems for British Columbians today, it was not until the very end of the nineteenth century that the economic potential of British Columbia's trees was realized, and it was not until the twentieth century that logging became an important industry on the island.⁶⁰

Of all the non-agricultural sources of wealth that were imagined by settlers in the 1860s and 1870s, however, it was tourism that eventually proved to be the most sustainable; the booming retirement and tourism economy of Salt Spring Island in the late twentieth century vindicates this

1861 prediction: "The time may not be very distant when neat cottages, and elegant villas will ornament the hill-sides, as summer residences for those who have to retire from the bustle of town life."⁶¹

Although a variety of activities was pursued on the island, commentators expressed few doubts that the mixed economic activity and poverty that characterized the early years of settlement were a prelude to a more stable and commercial agricultural community. By 1881, few had contradicted Reverend Cave who had declared in 1866 that "Salt Spring Island is one of the most promising settlements he has ever visited." Indeed, most sided with Bishop Hills in his conviction that this "there is not better land in British Columbia than I have seen, or on Vancouver Island."⁶² According to promotional literature and newspapers, the promise of Salt Spring Island's agricultural future seemed well on its way to fruition by the beginning of the railway boom decade of the 1880s.

iii) Towards Commercial Agricultural Success: 1882-1891

Notwithstanding A.F. Flucke's contention that "neither the fur trade, nor the gold rush, nor the railroad boom so much as touched the shores of Saltspring Island,"⁶³ land records clearly document the boom in land sales that occurred in the 1880s. Between 1881 and 1891, 183 pre-emptions -- just about half the total of the entire period between 1860 and 1891 -- were taken out on the island, comprising almost 24,000 acres of land.⁶⁴ Furthermore, nearly 10,000 acres of pre-empted land was purchased from the crown during

this decade, compared to just over 2,000 acres of pre-empted land that was purchased from the crown in the twenty-two years before 1882.⁶⁵ For the first time in the island's history, however, it was outright purchases -- land obtained without a prior pre-emption certificate -- that dominated land alienated from the crown. Over 15,000 acres of land was purchased in this way from 1882 to 1891, compared to under a thousand acres which had been acquired in this way before 1882.⁶⁶

The number of acres occupied on the island increased from 8,845 in 1881 to almost 40,000 in 1891.⁶⁷ The number of landowners more than doubled from fifty-three to 125, and the population of the island grew from 257 to 436. Petitioners for a Beaver Point Post Office noted in 1894, "those on Salt Spring Island in vicinity of Beaver Point are engaged almost wholly in agriculture, and the quality of the land being favorable and easily obtained, it is anticipated that the settlement will rapidly increase."⁶⁸ Newspapers in Victoria had their interest in the agricultural progress of Salt Spring diverted by the series of political scandals that rocked Salt Spring Island in the 1870s, but by the time the Department of Agriculture published its first report in 1891, government reports, immigration literature, memoirs and business directories seemed assured that Salt Spring Island, like many other areas in the southern Vancouver Island area, was well on its way to fulfilling its destiny as an agricultural community.⁶⁹ Jonathan Begg's optimistic 1860 prediction that

“[f]arming will be a paying business here for a long time to come”⁷⁰ seemed, by 1891, to have been realized.

Salt Spring Island was caught up in the hyperbole of agricultural opportunity that characterized the official discourse of rural by the end of the century. The 1891 Report of the Department of Agriculture expressed enthusiasm about the commercial potential of Salt Spring Island that is reminiscent of Jonathan Begg’s raptures on the same theme:

Surrounded as it is by the salt water, the valleys protected alike from the cold northerly winds of winter and the southerly sea breezes of summer, offer the very best facilities for peach, apricot, nectarine and melon growing, while the hot rocky slopes of the hills seem to be intended by nature for grape culture [...] Grain comes to perfection [sic] and can, on account of the small rainfall, be well saved in ordinary seasons. [...] Root crops did well and gave excellent returns. A considerable number of cattle are kept and a quantity of butter was manufactured and disposed of in the Nanaimo and Victoria markets. The absence of wild animals, and the excellent runs the hills afford, make sheep raising more profitable here than in most places.⁷¹

Detailed statistics on the island’s agricultural production were compiled in a number of returns published by the Department of Agriculture throughout the 1890’s,⁷² further boosting the glowing reports of Salt Spring Island’s agricultural potential that were evident in the earliest newspaper accounts. As the 1892 Report on Agriculture noted, although the island “has a rugged appearance, having several high, rocky hills on it,” this did not preclude the potential for agricultural success: “[t]he fact that nearly one

hundred farmers live on the island goes to prove that there is a great deal of good land in the valleys. These valleys are for the most part wooded, in some parts lightly, and are of great fertility, the soil being a red sandy loam and a somewhat heavy black loam, according to locality."⁷³ The virtues of Salt Spring Island as an area of great agricultural promise were particularly located in its fruit-growing potential: "as a fruit growing district and also for sheep raising it stands unrivaled."⁷⁴ The Report on Agriculture for 1894 reflected this interest, noting that 14,000 apple trees, and a further 3,600 pear, plum, and cherry trees were being grown on Salt Spring in that year.⁷⁵

While sheep and fruit trees were identified as providing the most lucrative cash commodities for export, island informants for the Department of Agriculture continued to emphasize the importance of mixed farming to the community. Mr. Trage noted in 1891 that "nearly everybody has hens and all agree that they are very profitable," and many farm women sold eggs.⁷⁶ Potatoes were "extensively grown," he noted in 1895, while "other vegetables are grown for home consumption."⁷⁷ Sheep, horses, hogs and poultry were extensively kept. The two stores on the island provided a venue for the sales of some produce, but many islanders chose to ship their produce off-island to take direct advantage of the higher prices available in Nanaimo, Ladysmith and Victoria.⁷⁸ In 1891, the Dominion Census considered Salt Spring Island important enough to be included as a separate district in the aggregate agricultural statistics. These

statistics indicated that almost three thousand bushels of wheat, six thousand bushels of oats, three thousand bushels of peas, and almost twenty thousand bushels of potatoes were being grown on Salt Spring Island in 1891.⁷⁹

By the mid 1880s, lines of communication and transportation had improved dramatically from the pre-railway boom years. Steamers were stopping at Vesuvius Bay, Burgoyne Bay and Beaver Point, providing mails twice a week to these localities from Nanaimo and Victoria.⁸⁰ Post offices, which not only facilitated trade but also provided for the transfer of money through essential money order service, were established at Vesuvius in 1873, Burgoyne Bay in 1880, Beaver Point in 1884, and Fulford Harbour in 1893.⁸¹ By 1887, mail service to the north end had increased to four times a week.⁸² When in 1891, Scottish-born shepherd Alexander Aitken dutifully recorded each vessel that he saw from his vantage point at the south end of the island as he tended sheep for the Musgrave family, what he perceived was a busy commercial thoroughfare: “[w]hile waiting for the [steamer] Isabel we saw the Sady, the Isabel, a large sloop, one boat and two canoes all out there at once; quite a busy place this [is] getting to be.”⁸³ Aitken’s detailed diary of activities in 1891 notes trips off-island to buy and sell produce as often as twice a week when the weather allowed.⁸⁴

The success of farming, detailed in promotional literature, newspapers and Department of Agriculture statistics, is echoed in residents’ self-

definition as well. Memoirs of Salt Spring Islanders habitually define the community as a farming area.⁸⁵ More significant evidence for occupational self-definition is provided by the censuses, directories and voters' lists, in which household heads were asked to provide their occupation. Between 1871 and 1891, eighty-four percent of the 434 people on Salt Spring who listed their occupation in provincial business directories gave their occupation as farmer, while ninety-two percent of those 653 men with occupations listed in the published voters' lists between 1862 and 1891 did so. As Table 2:2 indicates, the snapshots provided by the 1881 and 1891 censuses provide further evidence of the overwhelming proportion of men on the island who considered themselves farmers: in 1881, just under eighty percent of people listing occupations called themselves farmers or farmers' sons.⁸⁶ Eighty-three percent of household heads were listed as farmers. In 1891, two-thirds (sixty-five percent or 111 out of 171) of all of those declaring occupations, and three-quarters of household heads, listed themselves as farmers.⁸⁷ Those household heads declaring themselves farmers had older children, were more established and had been longer on the island than other segments of the population, suggesting that farming, as in so many rural communities across Canada, was a "destination occupation." The nominal census, like the Department of Agriculture reports, suggests that Salt Spring Island had achieved the status of an successful agricultural community by the 1890s.

**Table 2:2 Occupational Data from the Nominal Censuses,
Salt Spring Island, 1881 and 1891**

Census data on Household Heads	1881 farmer	1881 non-farmer	1891 farmer	1891 non-farmer
number	60	11	71	24
% of House-hold Heads	85	15	75	25
Average age	48	42	46	41
% with children	52	55	60	56
Av. Age of eldest child	15	10.	14	11
% landowners	78	63	89	56
% living on Island >5 yrs	60	23	70	50

Sources: Census of Canada, 1881, district no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that by 1891, Salt Spring Island was being identified by newspapers, governments, and by some settlers themselves as an area of significant commercial agricultural production -- the culmination of a promise the island had represented since the earliest days of its non-Native settlement in the early 1860s. Chapter 3 moves on to take a closer look at the ways in which land policies, those specific articulations of the official discourse of rural, shaped land-related practices on Salt Spring Island.

NOTES

¹ For an excellent overview and comprehensive synthesis of the North American literature see Gerard Bouchard, "Family Reproduction in New Rural Areas: Outline of a North American Model," Canadian Historical Review, 75, no. 4 (1994), 475-510.

² New Westminster Times, 24 September 1859.

³ New Westminster Times, 24 September 1859.

⁴ New Westminster Times 23 December 1859.

⁵ British Colonist, 8 May 1860.

⁶ Jonathan Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, March 1860, Salt Spring Island Archives (hereafter SSIA).

⁷ Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, March 1860, SSIA.

⁸ Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, 28 November 1862, SSIA.

⁹ Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, 23 November 1862, SSIA.

¹⁰ It was not until the late 1870s that a longer-headed, double-bitted axe was developed in Seattle. The cross-cut saw, used in Europe since the fifteenth century, was not used on the coast, and the two-man cross-cut saw specially developed for harvesting the trees of the Pacific North West was not in common use until the 1880s. Ken Drushka, Working in the Woods A History of Logging on the West Coast (Vancouver: Harbour Publishing, 1992), 32-33.

¹¹ Marie Elliott, Mayne Island and the Gulf Islands: A History (Mayne Island: 1984), 5. Charlie Horel and Johnny Bennett talk about these method of land clearing. Interviews, 1990, SSIA.

¹² Margaret Shaw Walters, Early Days Among the Gulf Islands of British Columbia (Victoria: Hebden Printing, n.d.),16.

¹³ Peter Russell, "Emily Township: Pioneer Persistence to Equality?" Histoire Sociale / Social History, 22, no. 44 (November 1989), 317-332.

¹⁴ Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, 3 June 1860, SSIA.

¹⁵ Begg wrote that labourers' wages varied from \$24 to \$40 per month, and "a man and his wife can get \$50 readily." Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, 16 July 1866, SSIA.

¹⁶ Journal of Bishop George Hills, Bishop of Columbia, 6 Sept. 1860, Archives of the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

¹⁷ Blair goes on to note that the ducks "are so fishy and tough that they are worthless one Would Want a patent set of teeth to masticate them." Diary of George Blair, 1862, 124, Add Mss. 186, BCA.

¹⁸ Begg to William and Mary Chisholm, 16 July 1860, SSIA.

¹⁹ Diary of Bishop George Hills, 6 September 1860, Archives of the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

²⁰ Daily Press (Victoria), 10 November 1861

²¹ 11 January 1862 from Henry Sampson and George Baker to Colonial Surveyor, contained in Sampson file, Vancouver Island Colonial Surveyor; Office of the Land Recorder for Salt Spring Island, Copy of the Pre-Emption Register to 17 October 1862; CAA/30.71/Sa3.1, BCA.

²² British Colonist, 9 March 1865.

²³ Daily Chronicle (Victoria), 28 February 1866.

²⁴ Daily Chronicle (Victoria), 28 February 1866.

²⁵ Ashdown Henry Green, Diary of a Survey of Salt Spring Island, 8 June - 22 November 1874, Add Mss. 437, BCA.

²⁶ Of the forty-two people taking up land in the south end between 1859 and 1881, sixteen left after a year or less on the island, four left after two to five years, and twenty-two stayed longer than ten years. At the north end of the island, by contrast, forty-two of the ninety-six people pre-empting lands left after a year or less on the island, eighteen stayed for two to five years, nine stayed for six to ten years, and twenty seven stayed for more than ten years.

²⁷ Fewer south Salt Spring Island families had children (seventeen of thirty-nine) than north end families (twenty out of thirty-two), but they had a greater number, on average: 4.5 per household as opposed to 2.8 for north end families. It is difficult to assess why this would be so. Average ages of the household heads in the north end was slightly higher (47.8 for north end households, 45.9 for south end), and north end household heads had been on the island longer: an average of 10.3 years as opposed to 7.3 years for south end household heads. Both of these factors would suggest higher birth rates at the north end. Cultural factors may be responsible; south end families included more Hawaiians and Native women, who tended to have larger families than British women.

²⁸ See Gyves family file, SSIA. For a detailed popular history of the San Juan boundary dispute and the Pig War, see David Richardson, Pig War Islands: the San Juans of North West Washington (Eastsound, Washington: Orcas Publishing, 1990).

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- ²⁹Pre-emption no. 908, British Columbia Dept. of Land and Works, Pre-Emption Records, Vancouver and Gulf Islands, GR 766, BCA.
- ³⁰ Bea Hamilton, Salt Spring Island (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1968), 43, 93, 94, 96-7. See also entry under Ruckle, Henry in P.S.N. Claydon and V.A. Melanson, eds. and comp., Vancouver Voters, 1886: A Bibliographic Dictionary (Vancouver: British Columbia Genealogical Society, 1994), 619-20; Ken Pedlow, Ruckle Provincial Park: A Documentary History (Victoria: Province of British Columbia, Ministry of the Provincial Secretary and Government Services, Heritage Conservation Branch, 1984).
- ³¹ Tom Koppel, "Little Hawaii", Kanaka: The Untold Story of Hawaiian Pioneers in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1995), 105-114.
- ³² Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, 28 November 1862, SSIA.
- ³³ Daily Press (Victoria), 11 November 1861.
- ³⁴ Daily Press (Victoria), 25 July 1861.
- ³⁵ Colonist, 7 June 1864, 3.
- ³⁶ E. Mallandaine, Guide to the Province of British Columbia for 1877-78, compiled from the latest and most authentic sources of information (Victoria: T. Hibben and Co., Publishers, 1877), 27.
- ³⁷"It is very cheap living here as the Indians who are very useful and very good to white men bring us large quantities of the best the water, woods and forest can produce for a mere song." Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, 10 March 1860, SSIA.
- ³⁸ Franklyn to Colonial Secretary, 16 November 1866, file F602.24, reel B1329 Colonial Correspondence, BCA.
- ³⁹ Correspondence from John Booth and John C. Jones to the Colonial Secretary, 2 January 1869, Colonial Correspondence Inward, file F988-1, GR 1372, BCA.
- ⁴⁰ Elizabeth Blanche Norcross, The Warm Land (Nanaimo: Evergreen Press, 1959), 116-17; British Colonist, 27 March 1867.
- ⁴¹ Diary of Ashdown Green, 29 August 1874, BCA.
- ⁴² Pedlow, Ruckle Provincial Park.
- ⁴³ Theodore Trage, "Vertical File," reel 144, frame 0036, BCA.
- ⁴⁴ Data is difficult to obtain about this aspect of island life. However, some documentation suggests that these items were commonly purchased. See Pedlow, Ruckle Park, 127, for evidence from a later period (1900-1914).

⁴⁵ On 15 April 1861, for example, the British Colonist reported that while the island was thriving and “will be enabled to supply our market with considerable produce throughout the coming season”, nevertheless “great complaint is made of the want of proper communication with Nanaimo, a week sometimes elapsing without communication being had with the latter place.” In 1862, Begg speculated that the loss of a third of the Salt Spring Island population after the unusually cold winter of 1862 was probably “owing to the Government providing no mail communication.” British Colonist, 5 May 1862.

⁴⁶ British Colonist, 9 March 1865

⁴⁷ Fred Foord and Thos. H. Williams to Mr. Roscoe, 24 March 1877, Divisional Inspectors Reports, National Post Office of Canada, British Columbia, 1877-1880, RG3, Series 6, vol. 2, Reel C7225, file no.304, National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC).

⁴⁸ William Smithe, Minister of Agriculture, to Post Master General, Ottawa, 17 July 1877, Divisional Inspector Reports, National Post Office, reel C7227, file 304, NAC.

⁴⁹ Begg to William and Mary Chisholm, 3 June 1860, SSIA.

⁵⁰ Russell, “Emily Township;” J.I. Little, Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1881 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill Queen’s University Press, 1991), 134-155.

⁵¹ Captain John T Walbran, British Columbia Place Names, Their Origin and History. (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1977 (1909)), 520- 21.

⁵² See John Tait to B.W. Pearse, Saltspring Island, 3 May 1860: “I surveyed 20 lots upon the North West Point of the Island for Stone Masons, but it is not connected with the General Survey;” Lands and Works, Correspondence Inwards, C/AA/30.71K/2; Record of Pre-emptions for Vancouver Island, box 1, files 90-93, Salt Spring Island GR 766. See also “Edward Mallandaine’s Reminiscences”, Add Mss 470, BCA, 91.

⁵³ For information on the stone quarry, see New Westminster Times, 3 March 1860; Daily Press (Victoria), 23 November 1861; Colonist 13 September 1885, British Colonist, 25 March 1863; 16 April 1863; Chronicle, 26 February 1866. On the *Industry’s* role carrying wood, see British Colonist, 8 September 1863.

⁵⁴ William Isaacs, Saltspring Island Correspondence and By-Laws, 1871-1882, B.C. Provincial Secretary’s Correspondence, box 1, file 2; GR 1707, BCA.

⁵⁵ Gyves Family File, SSIA; Hamilton, Salt Spring Island, 54.

⁵⁶ Akerman Family File, SSIA; Joseph Akerman, Pre-emption no.494, 1863, British Columbia Dept. of Land and Works, Pre-emption Records, Vancouver and Gulf Islands,

GR 766, BCA; Richard Mouat Toynbee, Snapshots of Early Salt Spring and other Favoured Islands (Salt Spring Island: Mouat's Trading Co. Ltd., 1978), 43.

⁵⁷ Journal of Bishop George Hills, 11 September 1860, Archives of the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

⁵⁸ British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes, 1892, Assessment Roll B 443, Gulf Islands Assessment District, BCA.

⁵⁹ Salt Spring Island Parish and Home, February 1896.

⁶⁰ See Drushka, Working in the Woods; James Morton, The Enterprising Mr. Moody, the Bumptious Captain Stamp (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1977) and W. Kaye Lamb, "Early Lumbering on Vancouver Island" British Columbia Historical Quarterly, 2, no. 2 (1938), 95-121. For the technological and financial limitations of logging in most of British Columbia before the late nineteenth century. On Salt Spring Island itself, Reverend Wilson does not, for example, mention logging as an industry on the island in his 1895 pamphlet, nor are trees mentioned as anything but a nuisance in Department of Agriculture reports of the nineteenth century. Rev. E. Wilson, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, 1895 (Ganges, 1895), SSIA.

⁶¹ Daily Press (Victoria), 11 November 1861. The same theme is forwarded in the Colonist, 13 September 1885.

⁶² Journal of Bishop Hills, 6 September 1861, Archives of the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

⁶³ A.F. Flucke, "Early Days on Saltspring Island", The British Columbia Historical Quarterly, 15, no. 3 (July-October 1951), 163.

⁶⁴ The total number of pre-emptions taken out from 1860 to 1891 was 388, 47.6 percent of which were taken out between 1882 and 1891. In this last decade under study, 24,204 of the total 50,442 acres pre-empted were taken up. Of the 50,442 acres pre-empted between 1860 and 1891, thirty-four percent (17,175 acres) were pre-empted from 1884 to 1888.

⁶⁵ 8954 acres of pre-empted land was purchased from 1882 to 1891, by sixty-two pre-emptors. Before 1882, fifteen people purchased their pre-emptions of 2,286 acres.

⁶⁶ 778 acres were purchased outright between 1876 and 1881, none before that time. Between 1882 and 1891, 15,465 acres of land were purchased outright.

⁶⁷ Figures from 1881 and 1891 come from a cross linkage of land records with the 1881 nominal census, and from 1891 from the Assessment Roll of 1892 for Salt Spring Island. Aggregate information from the assessment roll indicates that, by 1891, 37,784 acres of

land was under some form of ownership, whether pre-empted or purchased. Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes, 1892, Assessment Roll B 443, Gulf Islands Assessment District, BCA.

⁶⁸ Correspondence from Acting Superintendent to Divisional Inspector, Feb. 16, 1884, Divisional Inspectors Reports, National Post Office (Canada) British Columbia 1882-1884, RG3, Series 6, vol. 4, Reel 7226, no.13, NAC.

⁶⁹ See for example the Cowichan Valley, Norcross, The Warm Land; Arthur James Wright, "A Study of the Social and Economic Development of the District of North Cowichan; 1850-1912" (graduating essay, UBC, April 1966, UBC Special Collections).

⁷⁰ Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, 3 June 1860, SSIA.

⁷¹ First Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, 1891 (BCSP, 1892), 804.

⁷² See Dept. of Agriculture Reports, 1891 (BCSP, 1892), 804-806; 1892 (BCSP, 1893), 866-870; 1894 (BCSP, 1895), 1017-1020, and statistical returns for the island in 1895-96 Report (BCSP, 1897), 1137-47.

⁷³ Second Report of The Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, 1892 (BCSP, 1893), 866.

⁷⁴ Williams British Columbia Directory (Victoria:1889), 187.

⁷⁵ The figures are 13,739 apple trees, 1,161 pear trees, 1,689 plum and prune trees, 474 cherry trees, and 279 other fruit trees; "Recapitulation of General Returns from Vancouver Island and Adjacent Islands," Fourth Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, 1894 (BCSP, 1895). 1050-1051.

⁷⁶ Report on Agriculture, 1891 (BCSP, 1892), 805.

⁷⁷ Fifth Report of the Department of Agriculture for the Province of British Columbia, 1895-96 (BCSP, 1896), 1072.

⁷⁸ See Morton Stratton, "Agriculture: Farms, Farmers and Farming "in "A History of an Island Called Salt Spring", unpublished manuscript, SSIA. See also E.R. Cartwright, A Late Summer: the Memoirs of E.R. Cartwright (London: n.p.,n.d.), especially 13-15; and Wilson, Salt Spring Island.

⁷⁹ Source: Fourth Dominion Census of Canada 1891, Table XVI, 244; and Table II, 8.

⁸⁰ British Colonist, 13 September 1885; Henderson's British Columbia Gazetteer and Directory (Victoria: Henderson, 1889), 275, 276, 348.

⁸¹ "Research Report" on Salt Spring Island Post Offices, by William E. Topping, Fellow, Royal Philatelic Society, London, typescript, SSIA. For a discussion on the importance of the money order business, see for example Fletcher to National Post Office, June 1887, file 723, and August 1887, file 768. Divisional Inspectors Reports, National Post Office of Canada, source RG3, reel C-7227, NAC.

⁸² Mr. Fletcher to Post Master General, 20 May 1887, Post Office Inspectors Reports, British Columbia, 1886-87, RG3, series 6 vol. 8, reel C7227, file no. 696, NAC.

⁸³ 16 February 1892, Diary of Alexander Aitken, SSIA..

⁸⁴ Diary of Alexander Aitken, 1891, SSIA.

⁸⁵ See for example Hamilton's Salt Spring Island, Flucke's "Early Days on Salt Spring Island" and especially Wilson, Salt Spring Island, 1894.

⁹⁹ All of the men over fifteen listed occupations, while only two women over fifteen listed occupations. Nine of the men were listed as farmers' sons, and one man was listed as a farmer and storekeeper. Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

⁸⁷ Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

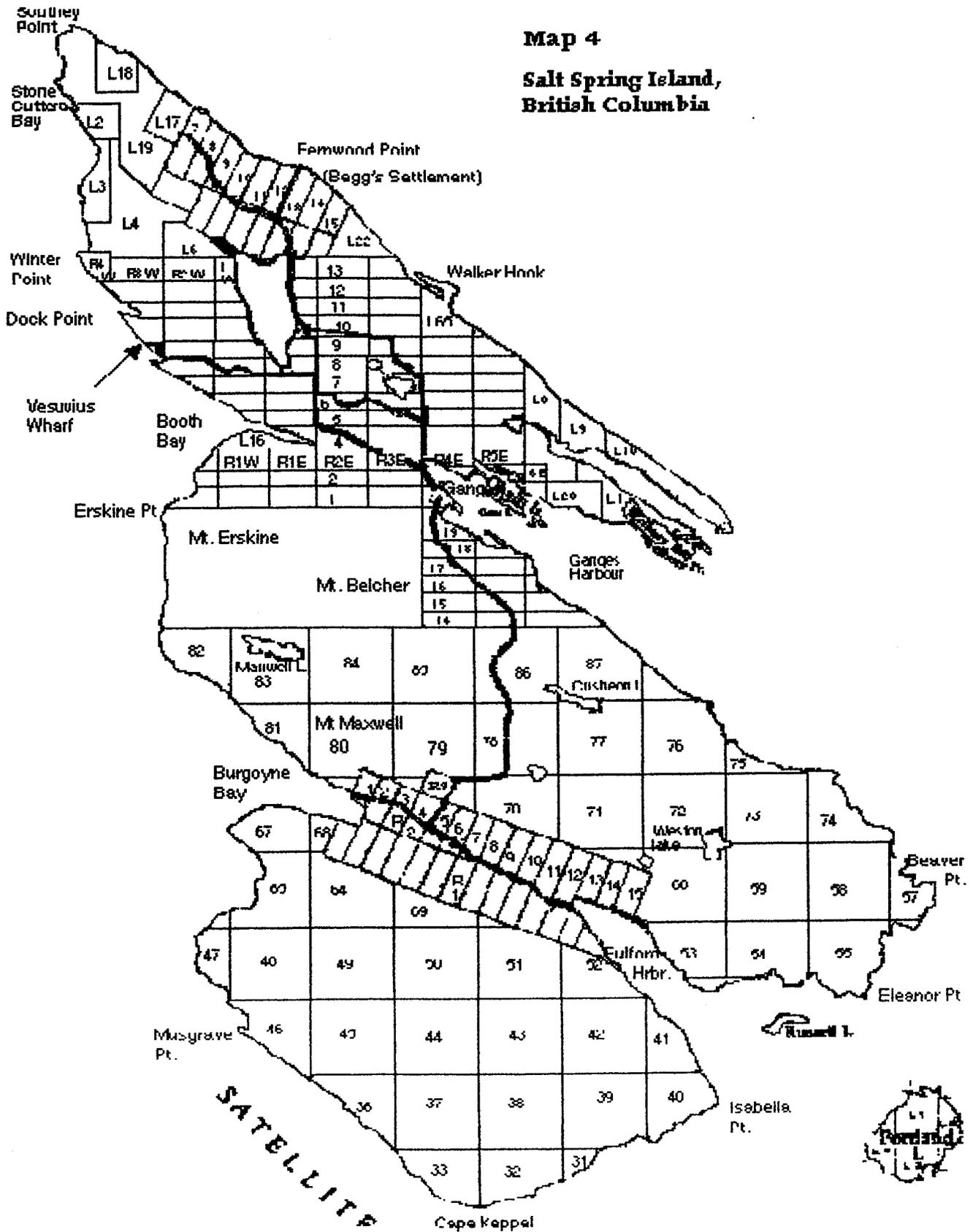
Chapter 3 The Practice of Pre-Emption: Meeting Policy-Makers' Goals

Chapter 1 explored the nineteenth-century discourse surrounding rural lands in British Columbia with an examination of public policy regarding both land settlement and the development of commercial agriculture. Chapter 2 looked in some detail at the ways in which this discourse of agricultural capitalism dominated the literature describing Salt Spring Island between 1859 and 1891. This chapter turns away from policy formation and narrative descriptions of rural life to detail the ways in which land policies shaped the practice of land acquisition on Salt Spring Island in the first thirty years of non-Native settlement.

To what extent were the goals of policy makers, articulated clearly through the pre-emption system, realized in the behaviours of this rural population? This chapter will argue that when the success of the pre-emption system is measured by its ability to further policy-makers' specific goals for country lands, evidence suggests that the system indeed provided an effective bridge between government expectations and settler aspirations. Land owners staying more than a year on the island accepted to a considerable extent the particular prescriptions for rural life that pre-emption entailed, and their behaviours generally met the two specific goals of the pre-emption system: land-speculation was successfully curtailed and permanent residency was achieved. By cross-linking land records and census data, we find that a

Map 4

Salt Spring Island, British Columbia



third goal of the pre-emption system -- the installation of families on country lands -- was also accomplished.

The System of Land Settlement

i) The Sources

Pre-emption records for Salt Spring Island are comprised of confusing and disorganized collections of records dispersed across several repositories on Vancouver Island.¹ In spite of the difficulties of using these records, this system of land acquisition was accompanied by documentation that offers some very particular advantages to historians wanting to explore land settlement.² Its most important idiosyncrasy within provincial land records is the paper trail it created. Once land has been alienated from the crown in British Columbia, the system of land registration makes it practically impossible to trace the various owners of numerous pieces of land over time. Before land is alienated from the crown, however, land registers -- organized according to district and land address -- and pre-emption records -- organized by pre-emptor and by region -- provide accessible documentation about who held each piece of land under pre-emptive rights until it was purchased.³

Although it was possible for settlers to purchase land outright on Salt Spring Island after 1861, land acquisitions on Salt Spring Island were dominated by pre-emptions until 1881. The pre-emption system involved a three-stage form of land 'ownership' -- staking a claim, obtaining a certificate of improvement, and finally paying for the land -- each of which generated a

document. By registering a pre-emption claim, settlers obtained the full rights to use the land as if they owned it, with the important exception that they could not the sell, trade or mortgage it. In order to turn their land into a tradable --or ownable -- commodity, pre-emptors had first to register improvements on their land by submitting a sworn statement that they had fenced, cleared, and built permanent dwellings upon their land, and that they had permanently resided on their claim. The certificate of improvement, issued if the government was satisfied that the pre-emption requirements had been met, still did not provide clear title to the land; it did, however, allow settlers to apply to purchase the land from the crown at the special price of \$1 an acre, contingent on the completion of a survey and the payment of the purchase price. With a certificate of improvement in hand, pre-emptors could also trade, mortgage, but still not sell their lands. Only the final stage of the pre-emption process -- the payment of the purchase price -- provided clear title. With the payment of the purchase price, and the issuing of the crown grant, the land not only passed into private hands but it also passed out of the view of historians wanting to trace serial ownership of a piece of land.

Only six percent of all pre-emptions in the colonial period, and forty percent in the provincial period under study ended in purchase: most claims were pre-empted over and over again, leaving the historian the rarely available documentation to trace the history of landholding by a variety of people over time.⁴ Because land transactions on Salt Spring Island were

dominated by pre-emptions, and because pre-emption records provide usable documentation of these transactions, records about Salt Spring Island provide a view of land acquisitions in settler society that is practically impossible to find in other later settled, less settled, and more rapidly-purchased areas of the province.⁵

The value of pre-emption records to the historian is greatly increased when the individuals who appear in the land records are traced over time, and through other sources. The database created for this study contains information gathered about individuals from a variety of routinely generated sources, including voters' lists, assessment rolls, business directories, inquests, parish records, probate files, family papers, and, most particularly, the decennial censuses. Information about landowners is not difficult to find: of a total of 4,652 records gathered about Salt Spring Island residents between 1859 and 1891, 3,805 (eighty-two percent) relate to landowners.⁶ Linking individual landowners across a variety of sources allows an examination of landownership in relation to gender, family composition, age, geographical persistence, and occupation. This chapter concentrates on tracing individuals through land records and over time to uncover the patterns of settlement and geographical persistence that demonstrate the success of the pre-emption system in meeting policy-makers goals. The terms landholder and landowner are used interchangeably throughout this dissertation, and include the

majority with provisional but *bona fide* landholding status within the pre-emption system, as well as the minority who had clear title to their land.

ii) *The Pre-emption Process*

Before the mid-1880s, almost all of the people acquiring land on Salt Spring Island obtained it through pre-emption rather than outright purchase. Few, apparently, were willing or able to invest cash for lands where uncertain agricultural conditions, distance from markets, and the weakness of economic infrastructures promised uncertain speculative or agricultural returns.

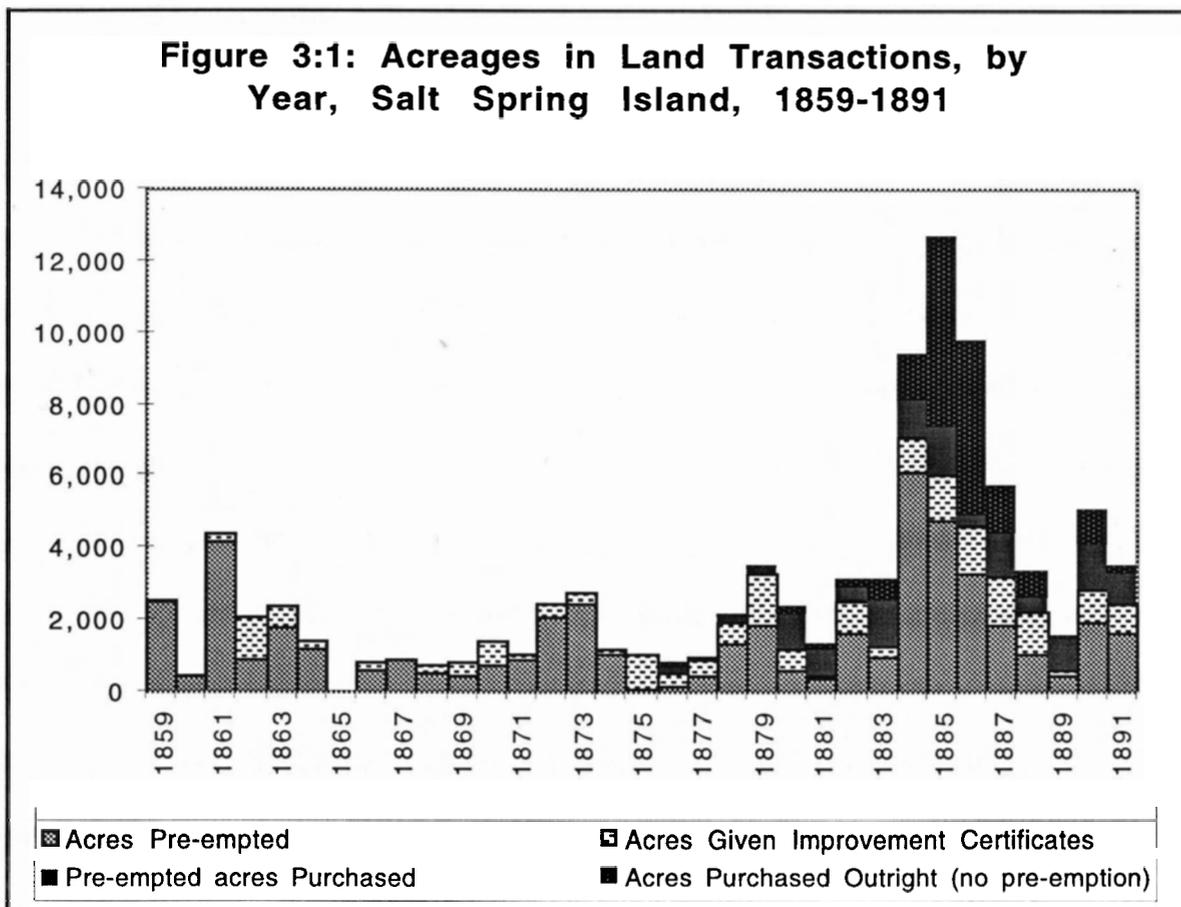
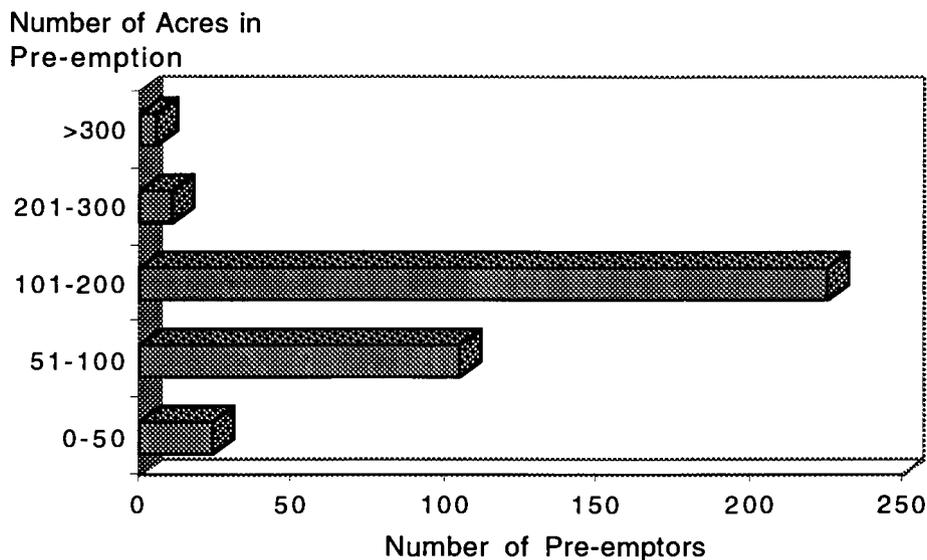


Figure 3:1 indicates that pre-emptions were central to the process of land acquisition on Salt Spring Island in the entire period under study. All of the land acquisitions before 1871 were pre-emptions, and between 1871 and 1881 pre-emptions still accounted for ninety-six percent of all lands taken up. Before the railway boom years of the 1880s, then, the pre-emption system provided virtually the only means of land acquisition. After this time, the number of acres purchased by people without prior pre-emption comes close to rivaling the acres pre-empted. Even during the 1880s, outright purchases comprised less than half of the land taken up on Salt Spring Island, and most of this land was acquired by only three individuals.⁷

What did the process of pre-emption involve? Settlers wishing to pre-empt land needed to pay a small fee to register their claim, and they also needed to swear that the land they were taking up had been vacant for at least three months. Registration of claims was usually done in Victoria, although a few claims were registered in Cowichan.⁸ Regulations changed over time, but throughout this period individuals could pre-empt at least 160 acres, and were able to purchase other lands outright.

As Figure 3:2 indicates, most people took out claims of between one hundred and two hundred acres. The average size of pre-emptions fell slightly between 1860 and 1891, from 141 acres in the first decade of settlement, to 133 acres between 1881 and 1891. This trend can be explained by a shortage of pre-emptable land as time went on and more settlers arrived.

Figure 3:2: Number of Pre-emptors by Pre-emption Acreage, Salt Spring Island, 1860-1891



The decline can also be explained by the increasing tendency of landowners on Salt Spring Island to take out second, third, and even fourth pre-emptions over time: by the 1880s, almost a third of all claims were taken out by individuals who had already staked a claim. These subsequent claims tended to be smaller than first pre-emptions for a variety of reasons, including the declining availability of land, the tendency of landholders to take up neighbouring chunks of irregularly-sized lands as they became available, and regulations limiting the acreage of subsequent parcels of pre-empted lands.⁹ Being on the spot, pre-emptors were well-situated to take up new land, particularly desirable claims abandoned by neighbours. Cross-linkages with the census of 1881, and with both the assessment roll and

census of 1891, confirm that those who stayed longer on the island owned more land.¹⁰

Throughout most of the years under study, Salt Spring Island was a very long way from the centers of bureaucratic administration in Victoria. Where communication with, and transportation to, Vancouver Island was often difficult, it is not surprising that the registration of pre-emption claims proved to be inefficient and often inaccurate. Further complicating the situation was the fact that during the first years of settlement, it was only on unsurveyed lands that pre-emptions could be granted.¹¹ Inadequate registration procedures may have been responsible for a number of pre-emptors, such as Edwin Johnson, Robert Layzell, Henry Sampson, Manuel Bittancourt, William Hutson, and William Meiss, taking up overlapping claims. The loose system of land registration of unsurveyed lands was probably responsible, for example, for the problems of Manuel Bittancourt and Daniel Fredison. Both were settlers who found themselves in the unfortunate position of having built houses, and made improvements on land that was, in fact, pre-empted by someone else.¹² Many of these claims seem to have existed on paper only, as clerical errors or delayed claim cancellations, as most of these were not contested.¹³

Problems with inadequate or non-existent surveys, difficulties with the registration process and the tendency of pre-emptors to leave their claims without notice created a legacy of land-related problems. The Chief

Commissioner of Lands and Work summarized the situation on Salt Spring Island in 1874 as follows:

The position of settlers' claims upon this Island is most confusing, and in no part of the Province are surveys more urgently required. From the archives of this Department I gather that, in the early part of 1860, a number of persons settled on the Island, consequently, prior to any Land Pre-emption Proclamation in the Province. Some of these settlers were permitted to take possession of, and occupy, 200 acres, others 150 acres; and subsequently, others recorded 100 acres of land. Until the past summer, no regular system of surveys had been made on the Island. Several disputes, and more than one law suit, have arisen out of these complications. I am so informed by Mr. Green, the gentleman who surveyed a portion of the Island this summer, that the Pre-emption Record Map in the Land Office, shows an extensive acreage of land that has no existence, and as it is recorded by settlers, who claim that they are entitled to their acreage in that locality, it is impossible to say where these difficulties will end...¹⁴

Problems did not, unfortunately, end with the official surveys of the island.

Although most of the land was officially surveyed in 1874 and 1875 by Ashdown Green, records at the Surveyor General's office indicate that it was receiving complaints as late as 1943 concerning the inaccuracy of acreages surveyed by Green and others in the late nineteenth century.¹⁵

For those who took up uncontested claims, however, the pre-emption process seems to have worked well. John Maxwell's history provides a good example of the practice of pre-emption very much as it was envisaged by those creating land policy. Maxwell, as we saw in Chapter 2, was an Irishman of about twenty-seven years of age when he took up excellent agricultural

land in the Burgoyne Bay area.¹⁶ On June 18, 1861 Mr. Maxwell sent a letter to Victoria to register his claim:

Please record this clame comensing at a stake ate the mouth ofe the creke ate the south side ofe the Bay and runing due este fore a quarter of a mile in a simelar Poste then runing due north towards whauken mountens then runing backe to the poste.¹⁷

In order to obtain his certificate of improvement, Mr. Maxwell needed to prove that he was a *bona fide* settler who had cleared, fenced and constructed permanent buildings on portions of his land to the value of ten shillings, or \$2.50 per acre. When Maxwell sent off his application for a certificate of improvement in March 1875 for his Burgoyne Bay property, he described his improvements as follows:

dwelling house 34 by 20= \$500.; 2 barns, 32 by 22 and 40 by 20 = \$200. 18 acres cleared cultivated and fenced, \$1500; 20 acres cleared fenced and in grass \$1,000.= \$3,200. 180 acres improved @2.50/ acre.¹⁸

As was common on Salt Spring Island, it was Mr. Maxwell's neighbours who witnessed the improvements, and certified that he had indeed been a resident on the land while making the improvements he claimed.¹⁹

The fourteen years that John Maxwell took to obtain his certificate of improvement was a little longer than the average ten years elapsing between pre-emption and improvement for those who pre-empted their land in 1860s and eventually purchased (i.e. did not trade) it. It was also considerably longer than the two years that officials who penned the pre-emption acts

thought improvement should take, for reasons that will be explored in greater detail in later chapters. In the second decade of settlement, the average had decreased to just under seven years, and, by the 1880s, improvement certificates were being issued after an average of just over five years from pre-emption.²⁰ The leisurely pace of land acquisition is also reflected in the average length of time from pre-emption to purchase. It decreased from twenty years for those pre-empting land in the 1860s, but remained a substantial nine years, on average, for those pre-empting land between 1870 and 1880, and eight years for those pre-empting from 1882 to 1891.²¹

Although Maxwell provided detailed descriptions of the improvements he made to his claim, only a minority of improvement certificates contain such detail. Most certificates resembled that of John Christian Sparrow, a Norwegian who had worked as a quarter master on a surveying vessel up and down the Pacific coast before taking up land close to John Maxwell in 1861.²² When he applied for an improvement certificate five years after staking his claim, he simply listed his name and pre-emption number, and noted that he had resided permanently on his claim, making “full improvements of 10 shillings per acre, the amount being 150 acres.”²³

John Maxwell finally obtained the crown grant, and clear title, to his land in 1880, almost twenty years from the time he first staked his claim. Like many others, having purchased one claim, he went on to pre-empt more land, taking up 160 acres in 1884, paying the last of four installments on that

land in 1892. In 1890, he pre-empted another fifty acres in the same area, paying for it at the same time as his other pre-emption.²⁴

While three quarters of those obtaining a certificate of improvement went on to purchase their claims, this was not the only alternative open to pre-emptors at this point.²⁵ Once a certificate was granted, landholders could use the land to raise a mortgage, or could transfer their claim to someone else. There are frustratingly few indications of how these transactions worked in practice. Records concerning these are rare, but not completely absent. On June 9, 1862, for example, George Mitchell transferred his claim in Begg's Settlement to former fellow-Hudson's Bay employee, William Isbister, in order to take up land in Burgoyne Bay. He wrote to the Land Office in Victoria to register the exchange:

I have this day sold and transferred all my rights and improvements situated on Salt Spring Island, consisting of one dwelling house, cow houses, pigs houses etc. to William Isbister in exchange for one cow and calf, signed George Mitchell, witnessed by A. McFarlane, John Isbister.²⁶

We know from the Land Register that John Booth transferred much of his land to Arthur Walter after improving it, but, as with the great majority of these trades, evidence is provided only by the entry of a new name under the "improved" land listing in question, and no indication is given of the amount of money or goods, if any, changing hands in the transaction.²⁷

Evaluating the Success of the Pre-Emption System

The pre-emption system was specifically designed to create a particular type of social and economic environment by encouraging the settlement of *bona fide* settlers on country lands. The residency of the landowner on his land was deemed essential to this process, for two important reasons. First, compulsory residence would prohibit land speculation by absentee landowners. As policy makers were well aware, such speculation was notorious for driving up land prices at the same time that it inhibited the growth of the infrastructure so necessary to the agricultural economy.²⁸ Secondly, by compelling residency, policy makers believed that they were setting in motion a natural process by which the hard working settler would, with his growing family, turn his land into an agriculturally productive living, a living which, it was assumed, would support the family farm deemed so essential for economic, moral and political stability of the colony and province. Did the pre-emption system succeed on Salt Spring Island in accomplishing these goals?

i. The Pre-emption Mandate I: Ensuring Residency

Joseph Trutch explained the importance of residency to the success of the pre-emption system in a letter to the Colonial Secretary in 1868:

Personal residence of the Claimant on the land claimed by him by pre-emption right is in fact the essential requirement of the pre-emption system as it is practically carried out in the neighbouring United States Territories

from whence it was adopted into this Colony. His presence on the land (affording the best possible guarantee that his labor and means will be devoted to the utmost to the cultivation of the soil, and thus advance the general interests of the Colony) is the equivalent required for the privilege granted to the pre-emptor of settling on the land in advance of survey without payment and with the secured right of eventual purchase at the upset price.²⁹

Trutch, in this 1868 summary, credits the pre-emption system with ensuring the growth and development of the colony. It was by ensuring residency through the pre-emption system, he argues, that

we have secured a class of colonists who have not only already contributed in taxes to the Colonial Exchequer many times the sum which the land they hold free of charge would have brought at auction, but by their labor on the land are fast tending to render the Colony self-sustaining, and during the season of depression we are now emerging from, have been the main support of the Colony.³⁰

Although residency was central to the pre-emption system, the term "resident," like the term "landowner," was not a simple one in the context of the pre-emption system. Residents of Salt Spring Island shared with other settlers across Canada serious difficulties in supporting themselves on lands that were not yet productive, and in communities that were not yet established.³¹ Although pre-emptors were required to obtain signatures confirming that the land they wanted to pre-empt had been vacant for three months, in a location where it was difficult to support a claim without off-island work, the difference between "claim jumping" and the legal occupation of an abandoned claim was not always easy to ascertain. W.K.

Brown, for example, was compelled to return to California to care for his sick wife, having arrived on the island in 1859:

After arriving on the said land, I immediately with the others went to work making a main road several miles long on the Island. After the completion of the road and making the survey, we went to work erecting residences and clearing the land. I erected a house on my land and cleared about 10 acres of land, working all that year and until about the latter part of March 1860 when I was compelled to go to California, my wife being sick.³²

When he returned to his land the following year, he found that John C. Jones had pre-empted and received an improvement certificate for the land.

Although Brown had made payments on his original claim, and pursued the case with land officials well into the 1890s, his claim was turned down because he had failed to carry out his "settlement duties" by remaining on the land.³³

Similarly, James Shaw took up land in August of 1859, and wrote on May 15, 1861 to the Surveyor General explaining some of the problems he had encountered when he decided to leave his claim for a short period of time:

I took possession of som land [on Salt Spring Island] right opposite Maple Bay on Dec 26, 1859, and improved it by building a [house?] 16 by 21 feet, and cleared som land and planted potatoes and other improvements to the balance of \$200. My neighbours all left for the mines in 1860. I remained on the claim four weeks after they left, but found it inconvenient and unprotected from Indians, so I left [...] som of my neighbors returned from the mines. I was on the clame on the 26 August 1860 and found the tools and house the same as I left their [...] I got an accident I injured one of my hands and was not able to visit my clame until March 18, 1861. I found a man in charge for

Lewis Buchard I told the man in charge not to make any improvements I was the first settler on the clame. I have visited the clame since, but I did not see Louis Buckar. Sir I hope you will give me possession of my clame.³⁴

James Shaw lost the claim to his pre-empted land because he had, in the parlance of the pre-emption system, “abandoned” it by being absent without leave for more than three months.³⁵

Jacob Francis was also driven off the island by strictly-enforced pre-emption regulations. Even though he had officially registered a leave of absence in Victoria in 1863, and had “left Manuel Anderson on his claim,” when Anderson left the claim without notifying Francis, Francis lost his land: his neighbour waited the requisite three months, signed a declaration that the land had been abandoned, and began to occupy it. Despite Francis’ insistence that “the spirit of the proclamation has been complied with,” and despite protestations that he had spent considerable sums improving his claim, the Land Office refused to overlook his absence, and he lost his right to the claim, showing up in the land records as one of the many who had ‘abandoned’ their land.³⁶

Others, more punctilious about keeping to the terms of the pre-emption regulations, had more success in establishing claims they had temporarily left.³⁷ Legislation enacted in 1862 allowed pre-emptors to register a planned interlude off the island,³⁸ but canny land-watchers on the island continued to take up vacated lands, and were supported by a court system that

continued to show little leniency for those who had transgressed residency regulations.³⁹ These disputes over pre-emption claims suggest that regulations concerning land residency were rigorously enforced, not so much because of expert policing on the part of land officials, but because of the policy-driven response of pre-emptors themselves: within a system where ownership could not be purchased outright, proof of residency became of central importance, replacing money as the arbiter of the right to land in contested claims.

In spite of difficulties in discovering continuous residency, however, it is possible to estimate the success of residency regulations by using the available data to find those who *never* lived on their pre-emption claims. Evidence suggests that although the year 1859 saw a huge wave of people taking up land and not residing on it, these non-resident pre-emption claimants became a rapidly decreasing part of the island's history. Because landownership was the most common qualification for suffrage, and pre-emption was the most common means of obtaining land, voters' lists provide a good source of information about pre-emption. Because they include both the location of the land owned, and the place of residence of the voter, these lists provide the means to establish the extent of landowners' non-residence.

Poll books from the 1862 colonial election indicate that non-residents comprised about two thirds of the voting population (twenty out of thirty), a figure that had declined to less than half (fifteen out of thirty-five) by 1866.⁴⁰

Voters' lists from the later provincial period (they appear in 1875-79, 1881-2, 1885 and 1889), indicate a rapidly declining number of non-residents. Only one or two Salt Spring Island voters appear as non-residents in each of these years.⁴¹

A slightly different picture of non-residency is provided by other sources. When the voters' list from 1881 is cross-linked with the census of the same year, eight out of sixty-seven registered voters (twelve percent) show up as owning land but not living on the island.⁴² Cross-linkages suggest that three of these were not absentee landowners after all. Three others had obtained crown grants by 1881, making them absentee landowners but not pre-emptors absent from their claims.⁴³ Of the remaining two potential absentee pre-emptors appearing on the voters' list, Mr. Weston had abandoned his pre-empted lands by 1876, and Mr. Jackson abandoned his in 1882.⁴⁴ This cross-linkage, therefore, seems to corroborate evidence in the voters' lists alone: non-residency among pre-emptors was not a significant problem.

The assessment rolls contain the most reliable information about residency of landowners, but information is available only for the last year of this study, 1891.⁴⁵ This assessment roll records a significantly higher rate of non-residency than is suggested above: twenty-nine out of 124 landowners, or just under a quarter, were not resident on the island. A cross-linking of the assessment roll with the land records indicates that most of these

individuals had purchased the land they were being taxed for, suggesting that these were tenanted, and not held by delinquent pre-emptors. This leaves seven who were not honouring the residency clauses of their pre-emptions.⁴⁶ Six of these seven, however, abandoned their claims shortly after 1891.

The fact that most of the non-resident pre-emptors appearing in the 1891 assessment roll abandoned their land, most within two or three years of 1891, may simply attest to the lag between changes in land status and its transcription in Victoria. However, other sources also indicate a definite trend whereby non-resident pre-emptors did not hang onto their land for long. Most did not realize any profits from their pre-empted lands: the great majority of non-residents seem to have abandoned their claims within a year of taking them up. In many cases, there is little evidence to suggest that they were ever on the island.⁴⁷

Of the 170 non-resident pre-emptors during the period under study, only four ever purchased, and only nine improved, their claims. That they were able to at all provides a testament to the laxity in enforcing certain aspects of the pre-emption regulations, the inadequacy of sources to document people's residency in these early years, or a combination of both.⁴⁸ With an important caveat that will be discussed below, however, the force of evidence presented here suggests that the pre-emption system did succeed in ensuring the residence of pre-emptors on their land.

Indeed, when residence is measured by geographic persistence, the success of the pre-emption system is remarkable, particularly in the light of studies suggesting high geographic mobility amongst early settlers in British Columbia. Geographic persistence was measured in this study by cross-linking each household head in the censuses of 1881 and 1891 across the entire database for the island. The first and last date for which information on each individual on the island was recorded was noted. Persistence in years was therefore conservatively estimated by subtracting the first date from the last.

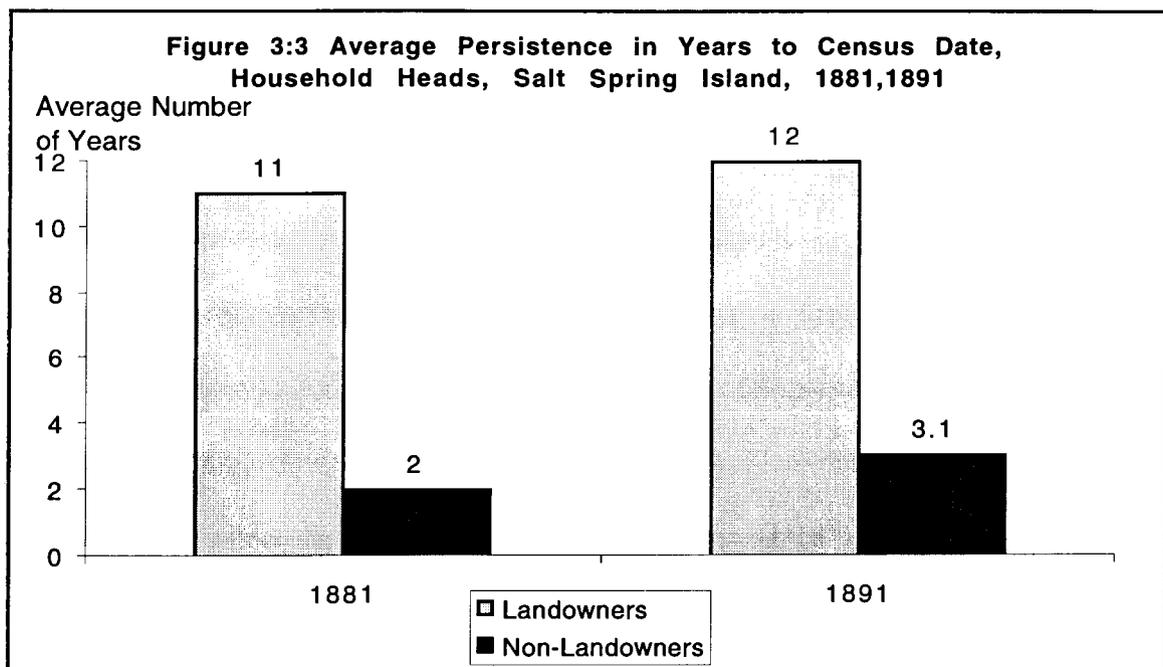
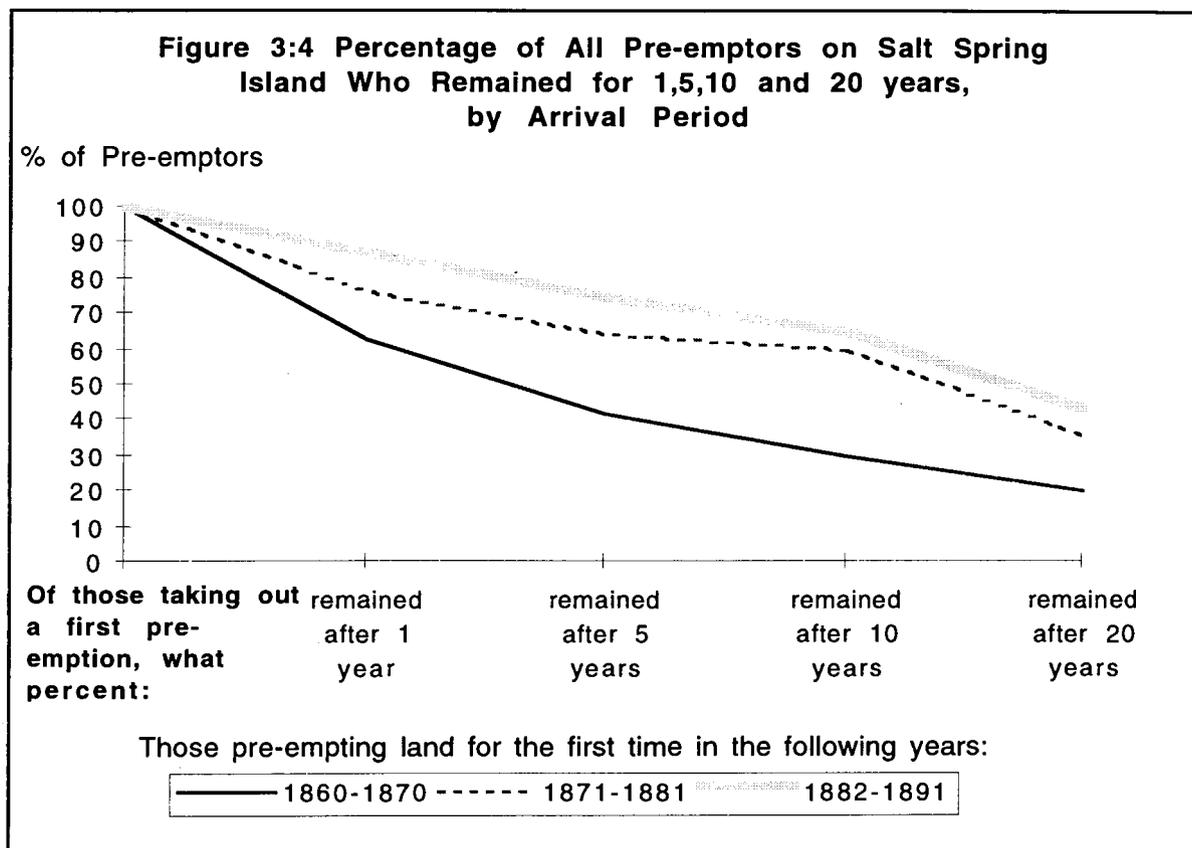


Figure 3:3 illustrates the average length of time that landowning and non-landowning household heads had been on the island at the time when

the census was taken. Because so many of the documents available for individuals residing on Salt Spring Island were contingent on their status as landholders, it is much easier to trace landowners over time than those without land. Notwithstanding this bias in the sources, however, the correlation of landownership and geographic persistence over time is persuasive. The eighteen household heads not owning land in 1881 were documented as being on the island an average of two years, whereas the twenty-nine landowners had been on the island for just under eleven years, on average. Similar averages pertain for those appearing on the 1891 census: the seventy five landowners had been on the island an average of twelve years by the census date, the nineteen non-landowners for three years.

These average figures understate the brevity of tenure that characterized the experience of most non-landowners: of the thirteen household heads appearing in the 1881 census who never owned land on the island, eleven stayed a year or less. In 1891, ten of the sixteen household heads who never owned land stayed a year or less. The centrality of the landowning experience to adult males in the community can be stated another way: of household heads in 1881, fifty-three of the fifty-nine household heads (ninety percent) who stayed longer than one year were landowners. In 1891, sixty-seven of the seventy-three household heads (ninety-two percent) who stayed longer than a year were landowners. The snapshots provided by the censuses suggest that average rates of persistence

for household heads are conflated by very high mobility in the first year, particularly among those who did not own land, and stability thereafter for the great majority who owned land.



Cross-linked land records for all of those pre-empting land between 1860 and 1891 confirm the trend seen in census data pertaining to household heads: the average length of stay for all of those pre-empting land was just over fifteen years, while those who pre-empted land and stuck it out for more than a year stayed, on average, just over twenty-two years.⁴⁹ For those taking out their first pre-emption in the first decade of settlement, the average length of stay was just under ten years. Those taking out their first pre-

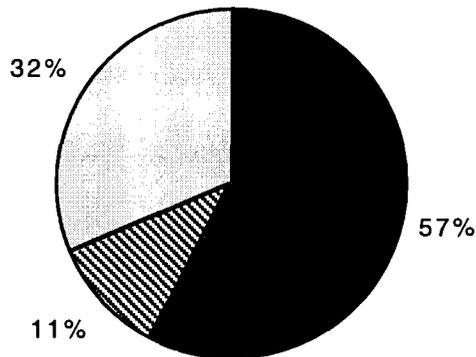
emption in the 1870s stayed an average of sixteen years, while those who did so from 1882 and 1891 stayed just under twenty years on average.⁵⁰

But again, average figures hide the distinctive patterns of stability and mobility on the island: as Figure 3:4 illustrates, thirty percent of those pre-empting lands in the 1860s were still on the island ten years later, a figure that doubled to sixty percent for those taking out land in the 1870s, and to sixty-five percent in the 1880s. A fifth of those taking up land in the 1860s were still on the island after twenty years, a figure that rose to forty-three percent for those taking up land in the 1880s and early 1890s. What we are seeing here is a snapshot view of the very high mobility of those in their first year on the island, combined with surprisingly stability of tenure thereafter.

ii.) The Pre-emption Mandate II: Preventing Land Speculation

Both the courts and Salt Spring Island residents kept a close eye on residency requirements on the island, and there is little evidence that settlers were able to purchase pre-empted lands without residing on and improving them. As Figure 3:5 indicates, however, throughout the entire period under study, most of the pre-emption claims that were registered on the island resulted in abandonment; that is, they were not improved and transferred, nor were they improved and purchased. Chapter 5 will examine in greater detail the wider significance of these abandoned pre-emptions, but here it will suffice to evaluate briefly the relationship between these high abandonment rates and land speculation.

**Figure 3:5 History of Pre-emption Claims,
Salt Spring Island,
1860-1891**



■ abandoned ▨ improved then transferred
▤ improved then purchased

There is some evidence from Salt Spring Island to suggest that land abandonment, was, in some cases, the result of the rigorous application of the land regulations intended to stimulate settlement. Attempts to foil land speculation drove off a number of settlers who, having made investments of both time and money in their lands, were anxious to settle on it. As we have seen, in spite of trying very hard to use the pre-emption system to take up land, W.K. Brown and James Shaw had been deprived of their land by the rigorous rules of the system. The potential of the pre-emption system to drive away enterprising settlers, whose interests may have expanded to land speculation, can be seen with particular force in the case of John D. Cusheon. Cusheon, a Victoria businessman, was one of the first men to pre-empt land on Salt Spring, and was perhaps the most enterprising man to take up land on the Island before the boom years of the 1880s. In 1859 he took up about

1000 acres in the area of the lake now bearing his name. In 1861, "having expended for the improvement of the said land over three thousand dollars in clearing the land, fencing, the erection of a house, and hen house", John Cusheon, still a resident of Victoria, applied to purchase the land for a dollar an acre, apparently in the hope of speculating on rising land values.⁵¹

Although Cusheon had installed someone on the land to fulfill what he understood as the residency clause of the pre-emption regulations, his application for purchase was turned down. This was because he tried to purchase more than the 160 acres that he was, under the pre-emption system, allowed to take up as a single man. Furthermore, regulations allowing the outright purchase of unsurveyed lands at the dollar-an-acre price had not yet been established. Unable to purchase his claim at any price, Cusheon gave it up in disgust, leaving land that he had fenced and partially cleared, but which he had no right to sell, trade or mortgage.⁵²

There are a number of indications that other pre-emptors tried to speculate on the first available cheap lands. It possible that many of the non-resident pre-emptors who registered a claim and never showed up on the island were aspiring speculators in land. The great majority of these abandoned their lands without realizing any financial gain, or indeed turning their land into a commodity through the registration of claim improvements.

Other evidence of land speculation can be found in a number of properties which changed hands in rapid succession without being either

purchased or improved, particularly near wharf areas in Ganges, Vesuvius and Begg's Settlement. If these were attempts at land speculation, they were strikingly unsuccessful, as pre-emption after pre-emption on these lands reverted to the crown instead of being improved or purchased.⁵³ As Figure 3:1 has suggested at the beginning of this chapter, there can be little doubt that the promise of increased demand and higher prices for land during the railway boom of the mid-1880s encouraged pre-emptors to take up, improve and purchase their claims, creating the Salt Spring Island land boom of the 1880s. There is, however, little evidence that landowners were transgressing the terms of the pre-emption system to speculate on rising land prices.

The pre-emptors selling their lands in the 1880s and 1890s would have certainly realized considerable profits from their investment of labour, time and money in their land, but most pre-emptors in the years under study had their ability to turn land into money successfully limited by the terms of the pre-emption system, which ensured that they could not do so without first enduring many years of rural residence and hard work improving their lands.

iii. The Success of the Pre-emption System III: Creating Families

As we saw in Chapter 1, the pre-emption system emerged as a legislative development within an official discourse that identified rural settlement with family-based commodity production on agricultural lands: the family was given a crucial role in the development of social stability and economic

Figure 3:6 Ages of the People on Salt Spring Island, 1881, by Gender

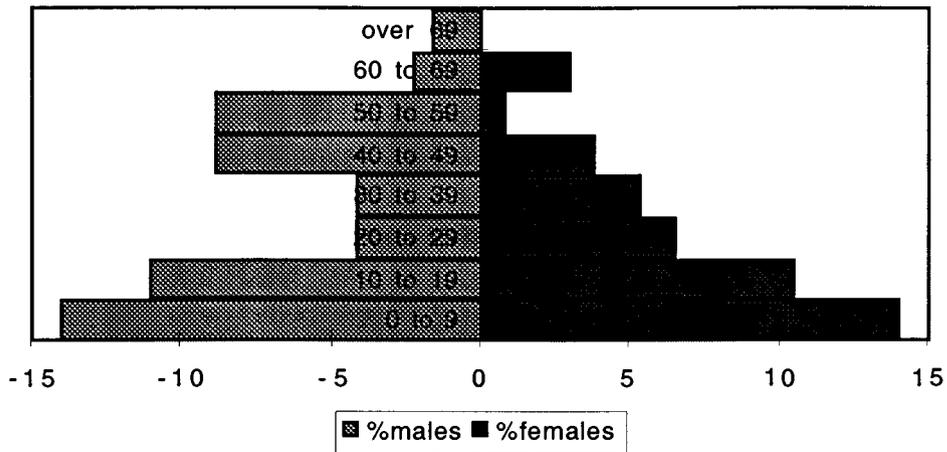
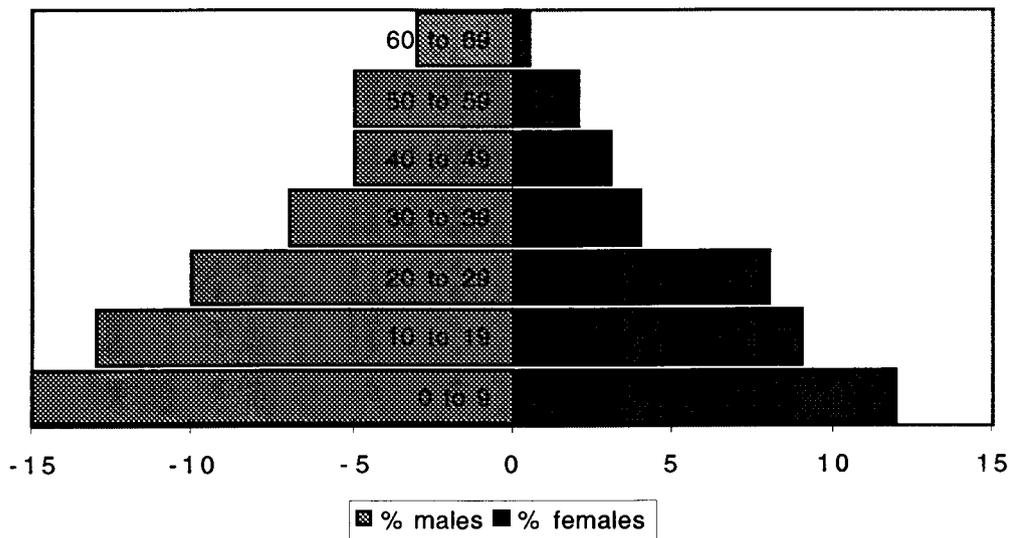


Figure 3:7 Ages of the People, Salt Spring Island 1891, by Gender



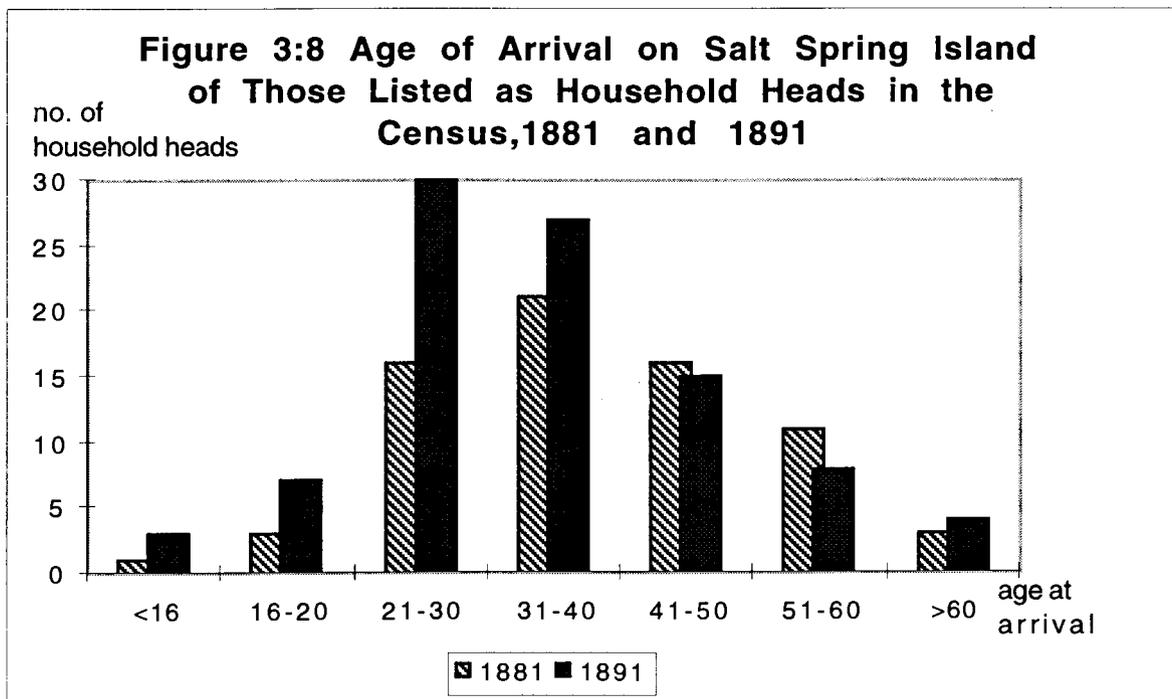
progress through production on the family farm. How effective was the pre-emption system in placing families on the land?

As Figures 3:6 and 3:7 suggest, by 1881 families were well-established on the island. Children (under the age of fifteen) were an important part of island society, comprising forty percent of the population in both census years.⁵⁴ Although the ratio of adult women to men fell from 2:3 in 1881 to 1:3 in 1891, two thirds of household heads were (or had been) married in both census years, and over half had children.⁵⁵ As these population figures suggest, families and children were an important part of the community.

The significance of land ownership was not limited to household heads. Married men with children were more likely to own land than single men: while only half of single people owned land, three quarters of married men with children did so, a proportion that rose to almost four-fifths in 1891.⁵⁶ In both census years, four out of every five people on the island lived with a household head who was a landowner.⁵⁷

What of the young and single resource workers who figure so large in the provincial historiography? The censuses for Salt Spring Island in 1881 and particularly 1891 certainly contain single young men working as loggers, labourers and (in one case) a miner. The census snapshot of this group of single young men indicates that they comprised less than a quarter of the population in 1881, and less than a third in 1891.⁵⁸ By cross-linking census

information, which contains the age of all residents, with other information about individuals in the database, it is possible to estimate the earliest date, and hence the age, at which all the household heads who appear in the census first arrived on the island. These linkages suggest that household heads appearing on the 1881 census arrived on the island at an average age of thirty-eight. This average fell to thirty-four years of age by 1891, mainly because of the large influx of younger men in the twenty-to-thirty year old range, as Figure 3:8 suggests. This change reflects the increasing opportunities for young men, including waged work in logging and fishing that were becoming more available on and off the island in these years.



Young men were by no means transitory migrants: of those listed on the census who had arrived between the ages of sixteen and thirty, most were

landowners by the following census year. Calculations of geographical persistence indicate that their average total length of stay on the island was over twenty-five years.⁵⁹ While only a small minority of those arriving in their late teens and twenties arrived with families, by the census years, more than half of this group had established families and had their first child.⁶⁰ While these conclusions do not preclude the existence of a highly mobile group of people who stayed only briefly on the island, once again we see a pattern, even for single young men, where high transience co-existed with considerable geographical stability.

Although the society on Salt Spring Island, with its large number of families and its stable population, did not conform to the norms of British Columbia society in terms of gender and age composition, it did conform to the discourse that equated rural society with families living on the land.

Conclusion

Data examined here confirms the importance of the pre-emption system to the settlement of Salt Spring Island, and suggests that the system of land acquisition succeeded in large measure at furthering the specific goals of policy-makers regarding country lands. Most of the adult White men living on the island during the first thirty years of European settlement were resident landowners. Land settlement was encouraged at the expense of land speculation, and landowning household heads were, by 1891, engaged in raising families and staying many years on the island to do so. In spite of

high mobility and low persistence among the majority of pre-emptors who stayed less than a year on the island, there was a solid core of pre-emptors whose rates of persistence rivaled those of well-established farming areas of southern Ontario during the nineteenth century.

NOTES

¹ The Land Registers for Salt Spring Island that detail land transactions before the granting of land title, are located in the Surveyor General's Office. Most of the pre-emption records are contained in British Columbia Dept. of Land and Works, Pre-emption Records, Vancouver and Gulf Islands, GR 0766; and British Columbia Dept. of Lands and Works, Certificates of Improvement, Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, GR 765 at BCA. The Land Registers for North and South Salt Spring Island, which list properties up to and including purchase from the crown, are housed at the Surveyor General's Office in Victoria. The Land Office in Victoria contains the records of land dealings after the issuing of the crown grant, but were not used in this study. Information was also gleaned from Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; and British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes, 1892-4 Assessment Roll , Roll B 443, Gulf Islands Assessment District, BCA.

² Robert E. Cail, Land, Man and the Law: The Disposal of Crown Lands in British Columbia, 1871-1913 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1974); and more recently Paul Tennant's Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990), are the only two book-length studies of land in British Columbia. Both of these historians have largely limited their discussion of land to policy development rather than the practices of land acquisition and use.

³ Whereas historians in central and eastern Canada can use land registers to trace the history of a variety of owners of a particular piece of land over time, this is not possible for historians in British Columbia. Under the Torrens system of land registration adopted in British Columbia, once land has passed out of the hands of the crown-- once the crown grant was issued -- it is recorded by the name of the purchaser and by numbers that refer only to the immediately previous land transaction. Tracing one piece of land through a variety of owners is a costly and time consuming practice that clerks in the Land Titles Office are reluctant to perform; tracing land transactions throughout a whole community over time is practically impossible. I would like to thank Keith Ralston for explaining the theory behind the inaccessibility of land records in British Columbia, and the Land Titles Office for demonstrating it in practice.

⁴ Between 1859 and 1870, 271 pre-emption claims were taken out on Salt Spring Island, encompassing 14,260 acres of land. Only fifteen of these claims (5.5 percent) were ever purchased by the pre-emptors. (2,296 acres, or sixteen percent of the pre-empted land). From 1871 to 1891, a further 269 pre-emption claims were registered, covering 34,931 acres, of which 110 claims (forty-one percent) with 14,933 acres (forty-three percent of the land) were eventually purchased. Between 1876 and 1891, a further 16,243 acres were purchased outright, with no pre-emptions, the vast majority of these purchases were made by three individuals between 1884 and 1886. See Appendices for details. Out of 541 pieces of land pre-empted between 1859 and 1891, 224, or forty-two percent were pre-empted more than once. Of these, 143, or almost two thirds (sixty-four percent) were pre-empted three or more times.

⁵ Registers for Salt Spring Island are reliable from 1871 onward, providing a comprehensive source that is well supplemented by a variety of pre-emption records.

⁶ These records include landownership documents relating specifically to land transactions such as pre-emptions, transfers and land purchases (690 records), and other information directly concerning their relation with the land, such as leaves of absence from pre-emption claims, witnesses to land transactions and secondary legal matters (593 records). Business directories (464 listings) and voters' lists (683 listings) were not, in theory, limited to listing landowners, but in practice this group overwhelmingly dominated both lists. Any person of substance (including most landowners) appeared in business directories, but inclusion in the voters' lists was more formalized; voters did not have to own property, as an educational provision allowed people with university education to vote in addition to property owners. In practice, however, comparisons of voters lists and directories show considerable similarities: for example, in 1882, the voters list contained sixty-six names, and the Directory of the same year contained fifty-nine; forty-five of these names were the same. The database linking the 1881 manuscript census to landownership documents indicates that there were fifty-five landowners on the island in 1881, forty-seven of whom had lived on the island for more than a year.

⁷ Between 1882 and 1891, pre-emptions included 23,526 acres, outright purchases included 15,838 acres, or forty percent of all the land acquired. 8,601 acres were taken up by three individuals, Edward Musgrave, Robert Holburn and William Robertson, in 1885 and 1886. Two of these were absentee landowners, and the third, Musgrave, stayed for only two years on the Island. Altogether, thirty-three people purchased land

outright on the land in the years under study.

⁸ See "Mr. Morley's Old Book, Land Records and List of Squatters," British Columbia Dept. of Lands and Works, GR 514, BCA, which contains listings of thirty-nine Salt Spring pre-emptions from the colonial period.

⁹ Although there were 387 pre-emption claims taken out between 1860 and 1891, they were taken out by only 271 individuals. As the table below suggests, the proportion of first claims taken out by individuals arriving on the island declined as the years passed.

	% of First Pre-emptions	% of Subsequent Pre-emptions	Average Acres in First Pre-emptions	Average Acres in Subsequent Pre-Emptions
1860-1870	80	20	148	120
1871-1881	77	23	143	125
1882-1891	61	39	139	124

In the first decade of settlement, eighty percent of claims were the first claim that an individual took out. By the 1880s, almost a third of claims were being taken out by people who already held pre-emptions. At the same time that first pre-emptions were declining in size, therefore, the proportion of subsequent claims was increasing slightly, a factor which contributed to the declining average acreages pre-empted over the first thirty years of settlement. See chapter 5 for more details about patterns of land acquisition and abandonment.

¹⁰ Many of those taking up pre-emptions abandoned them before taking up additional lands. Cross-linkages with the assessment roll, available for the first time in 1891, indicate, however, that of those landowners arriving on the island before 1871, more than half (fifty-four percent) owned more than 200 acres. Of those arriving between 1871 and 1881, forty-five percent owned more than 200 acres. Of those arriving after 1882, only twenty-seven percent owned more than 200 acres. British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes, 1892 Assessment Roll , Roll B 443, Gulf Islands Assessment District, BCA.

¹¹ Joseph Trutch to the Colonial Secretary, 12 August 1868, file 953, 4, Lands and Works Department, Colonial Correspondence, BCA. See also Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 15.

¹² Memorandum, no date, Estalon Jose Bittancourt's 1874 pre-emption, no.1485, and Daniel Fredison, who pre-empted sections 5 and 6 range 4 east in 1881. British Columbia Dept. of Land and Works, Pre-Emption Records, Vancouver and Gulf Islands, GR 766, BCA. In 1888 the Land Register notes for the neighbouring property, section 7,

range 5 east, that Mr. Fredison "was allowed to purchase the above 2 acres, to include his improvements placed on them."

¹³ For example, see listings for T. Edwin Johnson and Robert Layzell, Island Colonial Surveyor; Office of the Land Recorder for Saltspring Island, Copy of the Pre-Emption Register to Oct. 17, 1862, CAA/30.71/Sa3.1, BCA; Henry Sampson, Pre-emption no.760, October 1864; Manuel Bittancourt, Pre-emption no.918; William Meiss, Pre-emption no. 104; George Booth (no number) 1868; William Smith, no.408; Louis Stark (no number), 1871; David Overton, no.651; Jacob Crane (no number), 1871. British Columbia Dept. of Land and Works, Pre-Emption Records, Vancouver and Gulf Islands, GR 765, BCA and Salt Spring Island database. Clerical error seems to be the case in lands pre-empted by John C. Jones in 1860. Both David Overton and John Moore are listed in some records as pre-empting the same land while Jones was occupying the land, and in other records their addresses are different. Robert Layzell and T. Edwin Johnson are similarly listed with the same address, but records provide no indication that these conflicting claims ever created serious problems, and the historian can assume that these were clerical errors. See John C Jones' pre-emption, 1860, Salt Spring Island database for an overview of the confusion about this claim, and also John Moore, Vancouver Island Colonial Surveyor; Office of the Land Recorder for Salt Spring Island, Copy of the Pre-Emption Register to 17 October 1862, in contrast with his address given in the British Colonist, May, 1861, where his address is given as John C Jones'. Just to make things more complicated, Moore writes to the surveyor General in 1861 to complain that both his name and his address have been recorded inaccurately, see "Vancouver Island Colonial Surveyor; Correspondence and Papers re. Settlers on Salt Spring Is, 1859, '61, '62, '66", CAA/30.71/Sa3.1, BCA.

¹⁴ Report of the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works of the Province of British Columbia for the 1st of December 1873 to 31st December 1874 (BCSP, 1875),148-49.

¹⁵ See, for example, Henry Fry, "Field Notes: Survey of Salt Spring Island, Salt Spring Island Field Book," September, 1907; and F. G. Aldous, "Regarding the S.E. Quarter of section 52, Salt Spring Island," 1943. Unpublished Field Notes, Map Division, Surveyor General's Office, Victoria. As later chapters will discuss, many pieces of island property were missed by Green in the first comprehensive survey of the island, and although the government required surveys before purchase, island residents were slow to pay for and hence survey their claims.

¹⁶ See Chapter 3 for more details on Mr. Maxwell's farming endeavours. Also, Bea Hamilton, Salt Spring Island (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1969), 51.

¹⁷ Enclosed in Pre-emption no.84, John Maxwell, British Columbia Dept. of Land and Works, Pre-Emption Records, Vancouver and Gulf Islands, GR 766.

¹⁸ Pre-emption no. 84, British Columbia Dept. of Land and Works, Pre-Emption Records, Vancouver and Gulf Islands, GR 766, BCA.

¹⁹ That is, Michael Gyves and James Lunney, Certificate 244, British Columbia Dept. of Lands and Works, Certificates of Improvement, Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, GR 765, BCA.

²⁰ The recording of pre-emption improvements also became more sloppy in the 1880's and 1890's, with many land records in this period listing only the pre-emption date and the date of the crown grant. In these cases, in the Salt Spring Island database, the purchase date and improvement date are listed as being the same, in lieu of evidence to the contrary. The data may be exaggerating the reduced lack of time between improvement and purchase in these years.

²¹ For those taking out pre-emption between 1860 and 1870, the average length of time between pre-emption and purchase was 18.7 years, which decreased to 8.6 years for those pre-empting lands between 1871 and 1881, to 8.2 years for those pre-empting land between 1882 and 1891.

²² Sparrow is mentioned in the Diary of George Blair, 1862, Add Mss 186,122-126, BCA.

²³ John C Sparrow, Certificate of Improvement no.56, 1866, British Columbia Dept. of Lands and Works. Certificates of Improvement, Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, GR 765, BCA. After 1871, applications for Certificates of Improvement, like pre-emption applications, became more standardized. Certificates of Improvement contained less information as time went on. The disorganized holdings of these certificates by BCA in GR 765 trail off after the colonial period, although they continue to be recorded in the Land Register for Salt Spring. Only sixteen of the ninety-one Certificates of Improvement issued on Salt Spring before 1887 provide details of improvements. Witnesses had to be bonafide settlers, and were almost always residents of neighbouring claims. The names that appear on these various signed documents have been an important supplement to pre-emption records in establishing who lived in what part of the Island and for how long, particularly in the early years of settlement when other sources are scarce.

²⁴ Between 1860 and 1891, 271 people took out pre-emption claims. One hundred and ninety-nine took out one claim, forty-nine took out two claims, and a further seventeen took out three claims, and six others took out more than three claims. Those who took out more than one claim, not surprisingly, stayed longer, on average, than those who took out only 1: 12.3 years was the average length of stay on the island for those who took out one claim, and 21.9 was the average for those taking out two, and 25.2 years was the average for those taking out three claims.

²⁵ Of the 171 pre-emptions taken out between 1859 and 1891 that were improved, 126 (73.7 percent), were purchased, and the remainder were traded or deserted.

²⁶ Pre-emption no. 916; Vancouver Island Colonial Surveyor; Office of the Land Recorder for Salt Spring Island, Copy of the Pre-Emption Register to 17 October 1862, CAA/30.71/Sa3.1, BCA.

²⁷ Salt Spring Island Database, John Booth, esp. Under "census summary," 1881.

²⁸ As Joseph Trutch argued in a letter to the Colonial Secretary, 12 August 1868, the "evil results" of selling land by auction could be observed around New Westminster and Victoria, where "large tracts of land purchased at auction for purely speculative purposes remain still in the same primitive condition as when they were sold -- not a tree felled, not an acre ploughed up -- totally unproductive to the owners and retarding the general progress of the Country." Trutch to Colonial Secretary, 12 August 1868, 8, file 953-4, Dept. of Lands and Works, Colonial Correspondence, GR 1440, BCA.

²⁹ Correspondence of the Land and Works Dept., file 953-4, 7-9. Joseph Trutch to the Colonial Secretary, 12 August 1868, GR 1440, BCA. Trutch maintains that the occupation of the pre-emptor on his land is a positive requirement of the pre-emption system in the Vancouver Island Colony, as distinguished from the mainland colony, where anyone can stand in for the pre-emptor by residing on the pre-empted land.

³⁰ Correspondence of the Land and Works Dept., file 953-4, 5. Joseph Trutch to the Colonial Secretary, August 12, 1868, GR 1440, BCA.

³¹ See for example Paul Voisey, Vulcan: the Making of a Prairie Community (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) and Lyle Dick, Farmers Making Good: The Development of the Abernethy District, Saskatchewan, 1880-1920 (Ottawa: Environment Canada, 1989). For an overview of the importance of "off farm work" to rural areas in Canada throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see R.W. Sandwell "Rural Reconstruction: Towards a New Synthesis in Canadian History," Histoire Sociale/Social History (May, 1994), 13-15.

³² W.K. Brown to Pearse, March 16, 1860; file 96/72, British Columbia Attorney General, GR 419, BCA.

³³ "Our client has no claim whatever to the land, as he failed to carry out his settlement duties and that the installment of 11.4.0 paid on the 16 April 1860 was forfeited to the crown". Correspondence from Chief Commissioner of Land and Works, 12 August 1896, file 96/72; British Columbia Attorney General; GR 419, BCA. The Land Proclamation of 1861 was quite clear about this: as section XX of the 1861 Land Proclamation put it, "all deposits paid in respect of such forfeited claims, and all improvements, buildings and erection thereon shall [...] be absolutely forfeited."

³⁴ Letter from James Shaw, Vancouver Island Colonial Surveyor; Correspondence and Papers re. Settlers on Salt Spring Is, 1859, '61, '62, '66, BCA.

³⁵ Correspondence re. James Shaw, Vancouver Island Colonial Surveyor, Correspondence and Papers re. Settlers on Salt Spring Is, 1859, '61, '62, '66, BCA.

³⁶ Francis wrote to Pearse in 1864, demanding that his land be returned to him. He accused the new pre-emptor of "jumping other people's improvements, his name having before appeared as a pre-emptor of land on Salt Spring Island to which he had no right whatever, and it was certainly never the intention of the proclamation to encourage such practice and will never be sanctioned by you." In spite of his vague threat of legal action, Pearse did not relent and Francis lost the land. Francis to Pearse, 11 May 1864, Jacob Francis, Pre-emption no.574, 1863, Pre-Emption Records, Vancouver and Gulf Islands, GR 766, BCA.

³⁷ Mr. Lineker twice left his land, and twice found that his claim had been "jumped" by another settler in the mid 1860s. Because he had followed proper procedures in registering his leave, Mr. Lineker was able to evict the interlopers and get his land back. Vancouver Island Colonial Surveyor; Correspondence and Papers re. Settlers on Salt Spring Is, 1859, '61, '62, '66, and British Columbia Dept. of Land and Works, Pre-emption Records, Vancouver and Gulf Islands, pre-emption no.918, BCA.

³⁸ Vancouver Island Land Proclamation, 1862. B. .C. Statutes, 1873, 36 Vict., no. 1. quoted in Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 24. Recognizing the continued need of settlers to work outside of their land, the 1873 Land Act Amendment allowed pre-emptors to be absent from their claims for up to six months of each year, "provided the land be cultivated" up to the specified twenty acres. B.C. Statutes, 1873, 36 Vict., no. 1, quoted in Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 24. Unfortunately, records documenting leaves of absence, like records of paid employment, are far from complete, making it impossible to

gauge the rhythms of off-island employment in these years. Thirty three leaves of absence have been found for the island, most of these from the colonial period. Some documentation shows up as a notation in the margin of a colonial and provincial pre-emption records, and a few letters requesting leaves are included in the pre-emption files. A few more notices appear scribbled under certain land descriptions in the Land Register for Salt Spring: "Leave of absence 3 months, 3/12/84." The only single collection of the actual documentation to be found so far is filed, without any organization, amongst a miscellaneous collection entitled "Miners Certificates and Leaves of Absence," British Columbia Department of Lands, "Misc. Mining Receipts and Leaves Of Absence", box 4, GR 1057, BCA.

³⁹ Other claims that were resolved on the basis of residency were Francis Jacob, no.574 1863; Manuel Antone, no.918, 1866; Edward Mallandaine, no.422, 1859, and Henry Sampson, no.750, 1864; British Columbia Dept. of Land and Works, Pre-Emption Records, Vancouver and Gulf Islands, GR 766, BCA. See also Vancouver Island Colonial Surveyor; Correspondence and Papers re. Settlers on Salt Spring Is, 1859, '61, '62, '66, CAA/30.71/Sa3.1, BCA for overview of conflicting claims.

⁴⁰ Pre-emption records indicate that all but one of these had obtained their land, and hence their suffrage, by pre-emption. See List of Voters, 30 January 1862, District of Salt Spring Island and Chemeynes; Poll Book of the Salt Spring Is. and Chemainus District, 27 July 1863; List of Voters, 29 January 1866, District of Salt Spring Island and Chemainus Sheriff's Office, GR 1666, BCA.

⁴¹ Voters' Lists appeared in the British Columbia Sessional Papers in the year following each election.

⁴² Census takers in 1881 were instructed to include in their household listings everyone normally resided on their district, even if they were temporarily absent.

⁴³ Other sources indicate that two of those missing from the census 1881 (Abraham Copeland and Alexander McLennan), were on the Island around 1881 although the census taker did not record their presence. Of the remaining six, there is no record that one, Charles Hooper, ever owned land on Salt Spring. Of the remaining five who appear on the voters list but not on the census, three (Mills, Pimbury, Pollard) had obtained crown grants around 1881, and were not, therefore, absent from their pre-emption claims, although they may have been absentee landowners. Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

⁴⁴ While eight people show up on the voters' list who are not on the census, a five show on the census who do not appear on the voters' list, in spite of the evidence from land records that indicates that they were in fact landowners in that year. The inadequacies in the printed records for the island provide another advantage of using a variety of sources in the database.

⁴⁵ The information was gathered in 1891, and taxed in 1892. Non-residents were listed as such in this year's listings. British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes, 1892 Assessment Roll, Roll B 443, Gulf Islands Assessment District, BCA.

⁴⁶ Twenty-two of these non-residents (three quarters) had crown grants for their land, while a further seven were pre-emptors who did not. As analyses of household heads suggested later in this chapter, in Chapter 6 and chapter 2, have suggested, the great majority of those living on Salt Spring Island for more than a year were landowners, and tenancy, when it occurred, seems to have been of short duration, at least for household heads.

⁴⁷ Non-residency is difficult to trace. Thirty-seven were clearly identified as being non-residents through cross-linkages. A further 133 individuals only appeared in the island's records once, while staking their claim, indicating that they probably did not take up their land on the island.

⁴⁸ Of the 170 non-residents taking up land in the years before 1892, ninety-five percent of these abandoned their claims without purchasing them, with the vast majority (eighty-six percent) doing so within a year of staking their claims. Residency was established by cross-linking all records about an individual to find an indication that they ever lived on the island. There were a number of people who sometimes did, and sometimes did not live there, but only if there was no evidence of residency was someone declared a non-resident.

⁴⁹ Of the 272 pre-emptors who took up land between 1860 and 1891, eighty-six stayed for a year or less, twenty-eight stayed from two to five years, twenty-three stayed from six to ten years, forty-five stayed for eleven to twenty years, and ninety stayed longer than twenty years. The average length of stay for all those who stayed for more than a year was 22.3 years; for all those who pre-empted land, it was 15.3 years.

⁵⁰ The average stay for those first pre-empting land 1860-1871, 9.9 years is the average length of stay on the island. For 1872-1881, the figure is sixteen years, and for the 1882-1891 period, it is 19.2 years.

⁵¹ Pre-emption no.114, 1861, British Columbia Dept. of Land and Works, Pre-emption Records, Vancouver and Gulf Islands, GR 766, BCA.

⁵² A.F. Flucke provides a detailed account of Cusheon's misadventures with Salt Spring land in "Early Days on Saltspring Island," 170-171.

⁵³ See for example Section 3, Range 1 east and 1 west, Ganges, which was pre-empted six times between 1861 and 1888; Section 8, Range 1 east, Ganges was pre-empted at least eight times between 1860 and 1898; Range 1 North, section 12 was pre-empted eight times between 1860 and 1879, and was finally purchased in 1891.

⁵⁴ 109 of 257 residents in 1881 were younger than fifteen (forty-two percent) and 171 of 436 in 1891 (thirty-nine percent).

⁵⁵ In 1881, there were fifty-eight women and ninety men fifteen and over; in 1891, there were ninety women fifteen and over, and 175 men; in 1881, forty-four out of seventy-one household heads were married, and thirty-seven had children. In 1891, fifty-one out of ninety-four families had children, fifty-nine of ninety-four household heads were married.

⁵⁶ In 1881, thirty-four of the forty-five married men over seventeen years of age owned land (seventy-six percent), while only twelve of the twenty-three (fifty-two percent) single men did so. In 1891, fifty out of sixty-seven married men owned land (seventy-four percent), while only twenty-eight out of sixty, or forty-seven percent, of single men did so. Thirty-nine out of forty-nine, or eighty percent, of married men with children owned land in 1891, while forty-seven percent of single men did so (twenty-eight of sixty). These figures are not intended to connote causality; as later chapters will suggest, land ownership correlated very closely with age, which in turn relates closely to both marital and landowning status.

⁵⁷ In 1881, fifty-five out of seventy-one household heads (seventy-six percent) were landowners, a figure that rises to seventy-five out of ninety-four (eighty percent) in 1891. 201 of the Island's 258 people lived on land owned by the household head in 1881, with 347 out of 436 doing so in 1891. Landownership, as we will see in greater detail later in chapter 5, was a complex concept in the time period under study, including land that had been pre-empted but not improved; land that was improved but not yet purchased, and land for which a crown grant had been obtained.

⁵⁸ Single men between fifteen and thirty-five years of age comprised less than a quarter of the adult males in 1881 (eleven out of ninety) and less than a third (fifty-four out of 183) in 1891; about one percent of the total population in 1881, twelve percent in 1891.

⁵⁹ Seventeen of the nineteen household heads who arrived between sixteen and thirty years old were landowners by 1881; thirty-one of the thirty-eight household heads showing up in 1891 and arriving between sixteen and thirty years of age were landowners by that date. The average total length of stay for those appearing as household heads on the 1881 census, and arriving between the ages of sixteen and thirty was thirty-three years; in 1891, the average was twenty-eight years in total for those arriving before age thirty. Average total persistence rates were lower for those arriving in their thirties: twenty-seven years for household heads in 1881, and nineteen years for household heads in the 1891 census.

⁶⁰ Of the nineteen household heads in 1881 who had arrived between the ages of sixteen and thirty, birth dates of the children indicate that only three had had children before their arrival on the Island. By 1881, ten of the nineteen had at least one child. Of the thirty-seven household heads in 1891 arriving between the ages of sixteen and thirty, seven had arrived with children, and eighteen, or just under half, had had their first child by 1891.

Chapter 4
'What is Wrong With This Picture?':
An Evaluation of Commercial Agriculture
on Salt Spring Island

The discourse of agricultural success outlined in the previous three chapters provides a view of rural society that is forceful, clear and familiar to students of Canadian history. Nevertheless, more detailed evidence should cause the historian to hesitate before concluding that commercial agricultural production defines the most significant relationship between Salt Spring Islanders and their land. This chapter will begin by reviewing some of the reservations expressed within the public discourse about the success of commercial agriculture on the island. It will go on to suggest that these reservations and qualifications hint at the alternate constructions of rural within Salt Spring Island culture and society. In spite of reliable documentation attesting to the existence of cash markets, in spite of the identification of the island's economy as agriculturally based, and in spite of the predominant self-definition of "farmer" among island men, a closer look at land acquisition and land use calls into question any easy assumptions we might have of what rural signified for those owning country lands. This chapter will challenge the coherent identification of rural with agricultural by examining in some detail two vital measures of commercial health in agricultural areas: land clearances and agricultural production. As we will see, hard evidence on this subject is not easy to find; where it does exist, however,

it provides little support for the contention that capitalist agriculture was the basis of the rural economy on Salt Spring Island by 1891.

i) The Economic Downside

The public or official discourse on rural Salt Spring Island, gleaned from government reports, promotional pamphlets and memoirs of island residents, indicates that the later 1880s and early 1890s were not always years of unmitigated prosperity for the farmers of Salt Spring Island. Farmers continued to complain, for example, about the high cost and the scarcity of hired help.¹ Salt Spring Island correspondents with the Department of Agriculture were vocal about the problems they experienced with predators, particularly cougars, which ate their livestock, and the deer, jays and raccoons who ate their produce.²

As in the pre-1880 period, the difficulties of shipping produce on, and particularly off the island remained the most common cause of complaint throughout this entire period. Residents noted problems with transportation and communications, including difficulties with the (part-time) telegraph system by the turn of the century. By 1912, the most commonly heard complaint before the Royal Commission into Agriculture in British Columbia made by Salt Spring Island residents continued to be transportation problems and the high cost of farm labour.³ Land clearing remained a costly and difficult practice throughout the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding the increasing value of timber, and in spite of a steadily growing lumber industry

and better logging tools, even by the turn of the century settlers often considered it too expensive to have the land logged, and found it easier to burn trees down and dynamite the stumps rather than harvest them.⁴ Settler activity created dramatic environmental changes on the island; in 1894 Mr. Trage, correspondent for the Department of Agriculture on Salt Spring noted that "very little cedar left; all used for rails and shingles." White and red fir, maple and alder remained.⁵ Although most of evidence available in government reports, memoirs and newspapers, and summarized in the last two chapters, therefore, suggests that the island was well-established as an agricultural enclave by 1891, the difficulties of agricultural production were also represented in the literature about this island society.

What of the poverty that characterized life for many of the early pioneers in Canada? Such a concern were a long way from the bureaucratic gaze of the Department of Agriculture, with its emphasis on bountiful agricultural yields and the price of crops, for poverty was not mentioned in the published reports. Newspapers were largely silent on the question of social conditions. When the Reverend E.F. Wilson, recently arrived from Ontario, decided to write a pamphlet boosting the cultural and economic advantages of his new community, his promotional pamphlet noted that "extensive wheat fields, large areas planted with oats, or barley, or peas or roots are not to be found on the Island of Salt Spring."⁶ Nevertheless, he maintained, farming on the island was a success because, on the small-scale

mixed farms that characterized Salt Spring's agricultural economy: "ten or fifteen acres with an orchard and a poultry yard and a cow or two [...] has probably a greater sustaining power than a hundred acres of land in the prairie regions of the Northwest."⁷ Wilson provided a detailed description of the successful commercial agricultural operations of some twenty island farmers, and the general beneficence of the island:

Although the homesteads are so much smaller, and a considerable portion of each farm seems to be the side or base of a timber covered stone spattered mountain, yet for all that there appears to be an air of comfort and content about the place, which is too often wanting on the great prairie farms.⁸

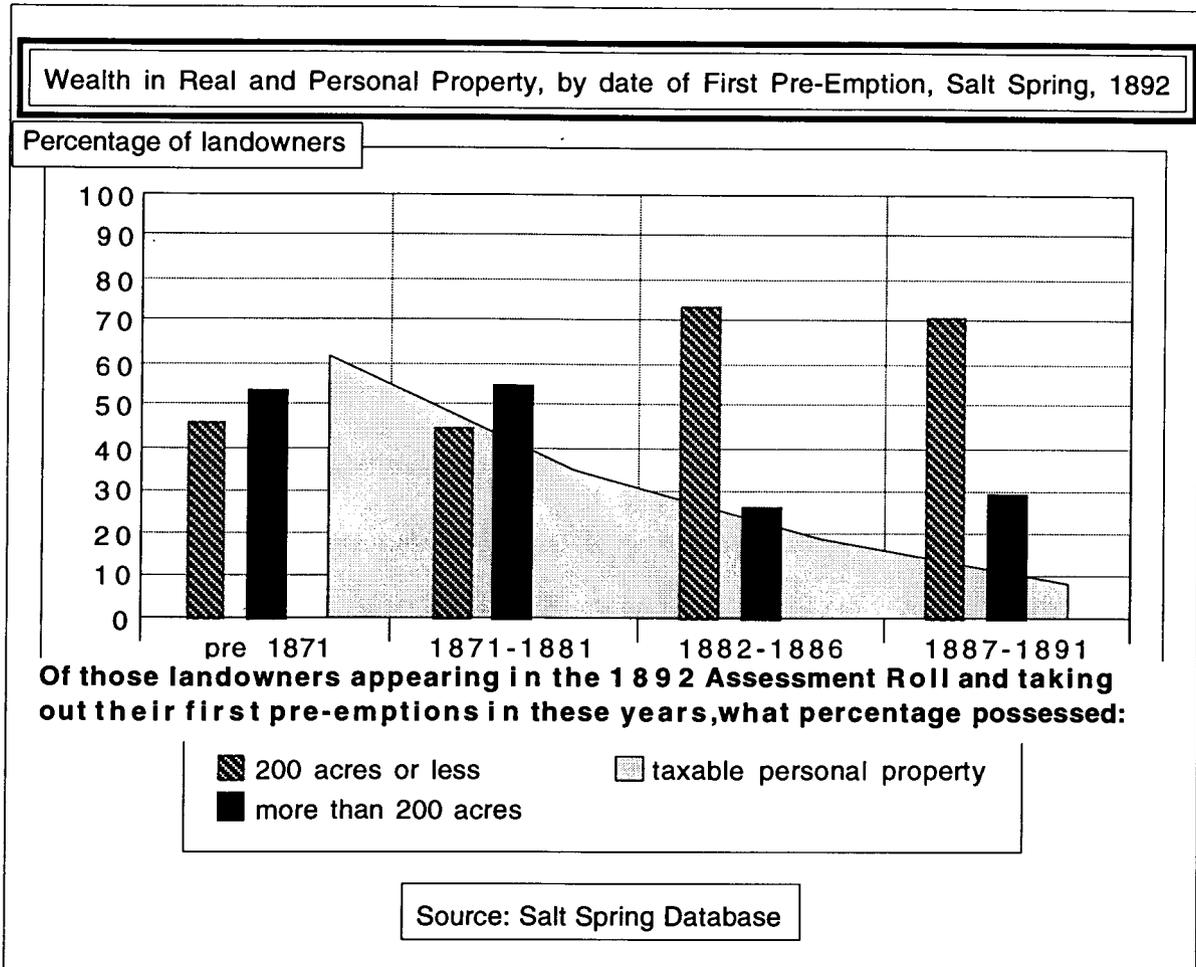
Poverty, like most social or political problems, seems to have been banished by the commercial success of island farmers.

A closer look at the island, however, reveals evidence of considerable poverty throughout the entire period under study. Its extent is not easy to measure. The concept of land ownership was confused by the different types of ownership people had of their lands -- pre-empted, improved or purchased. Only purchased land could be sold for money, and land without a certificate of improvement had no value as a commodity at all. Land size, therefore, was not necessarily an indication of wealth in any normal sense.⁹

If its value as a commodity was constrained by the complexities of the system of land acquisition, its production value is also obscure: census data and assessment rolls provide little indication of the extent of land improvements, including land clearances. Inequalities of wealth are

difficult to assess. Personal property, taxed by the provincial government and therefore included in the assessment rolls that are available for Salt Spring Island in 1891, provides one of the few routinely generated sources documenting poverty on the island.

Figure 4:1



Chapters 7 and 8 will explore inequalities on the island in greater detail, but we can note here that race, age and length of residence were factors. Figure 4:1 examines land size and personal property owned by

landholders appearing on the 1892 assessment roll relative to their arrival date. It indicates a strong trend whereby those who had been on the island longer had more land, and more declared personal property. Most landowners, even by these generous standards that take into consideration neither the production value of land, nor its value as a tradable commodity (as we will see in the next chapter, most island residents did not have crown grants for their land), were not wealthy landowners. Most (about two thirds) held less than two hundred acres, and fewer than a quarter of landowners showing up on the assessment rolls declared any personal wealth.¹⁰ Those who declared the most were recent British immigrants who brought substantial wealth with them.¹¹

In spite of the landholdings of most household heads on the island, the poverty of early settlers can be glimpsed in many of the documentary sources available for the 1860-1881 period. The poor quality of agricultural implements was noted by resident Jonathan Begg who, in the grand tradition of Old Country visitors assessing North American pioneer agricultural practices, disparaged agricultural tools and methods on the island:

Farming is not conducted here on grand principles. Any little that is done or has been done heretofore has been by old servants of the H.B. Coy. who are more awkward than the animals they drive. One can see here the old carts, farm implements and mode of cultivation in vogue fifty years ago in Britain.¹²

Descriptions and photographs of the earliest cabins provide further evidence of the poverty that characterized life in mid-century. As one early settler described, "cabins were built of fir logs, roofed with shingles of cedar, and chinked with moss or clay. Most had a fireplace, and [were] lighted by candles made by themselves."¹³ Most were small, one room cabins, sparsely furnished and dark. Many Salt Spring Island settlers arrived with families, or soon started them, and difficult living conditions were exacerbated as the size of families grew. Although the Inspector of Schools was willing to blame rates of absenteeism that averaged twenty-five percent on the "apathetic carelessness" of Salt Spring Island parents,¹⁴ one local teacher believed instead that poverty was to blame. Parents found it difficult to clothe their children adequately, he explained to the school Superintendent in 1879: "I expect to get two other young children from Horel," reported school Trustee Henry Robinson in 1879, "but he is not very well provided with shoes and clothing for the little ones in this cold damp weather, and that is also the case with Purser."¹⁵

The difficulties that could beset island families can be seen with particular poignancy in the history of the Purser family mentioned by Robinson. In 1882, George Purser, who is listed in the census of 1881 as living with his wife and seven children, was struck with paralysis. In order to provide support for the family, "the mother, an Indian woman married to Purser, is at Victoria with the baby, she is washing," reported George

Stainburn, the Burgoyne Bay teacher in 1882.¹⁶ Correspondence between Stainburn and the Department of Education documents his attempts to find some support for the family in the face of their deteriorating situation. After the mother left, she failed to send the needed provisions, the eldest daughter ran away from home, and the willingness of the storekeeper, Joseph Akerman to extend further credit to the family was finally exhausted.¹⁷ "The Pursers have been assisted several times by residents here, but most of the settlers are themselves poor [...] Altogether Purser and his family are in a very deplorable state,"¹⁸ reported Stainburn. In spite of some aid from the Department of Education for the family, George Purser shot and killed himself in 1886, shortly after hearing that his wife had permanently taken up with another man.¹⁹ Conditions like these prompted Stainburn to conclude that, "this place is both pecuniarily and otherwise one of the worst places in the province."²⁰

Poverty is indicated in other sources. When William Robinson, who occupied one of the most valuable pieces of land on the island, was murdered in his windowless cabin in 1868, the inquest noted that the only contents of his one room were a table, a rifle, a plate and cup, an augur, a hammer, a coat, and a wooden carton that served as a chair.²¹ His probate file noted that his total household effects, outside of agricultural produce, some money and clothing, were worth \$8.75.²² When Armstead Buckner died in 1889, \$140 of the \$162 worth of his assets was tied up in livestock. Tools, a musket and a

rifle were assessed at \$20. Household effects were compiled into two miscellaneous lots valued at \$2.50.²³ Settlers on Salt Spring Island conform to the pattern identified by Gordon Darroch and Lee Soltow for Ontario, where, "undoubtedly real estate was the principal form of wealth throughout the last century."²⁴ Scattered and anecdotal evidence suggests that as late as 1914 "for a majority of the farmers, operations were still geared to basic survival."²⁵

ii) Land Clearances

In his study of Emily Township in Ontario, Peter Russell notes that rates of land clearance contain some important information for historians, not just about the development of settler communities but also about the motivations behind their actions: "[t]hose new arrivals from Europe who dreamed of creating farms had to fell that forest. Their rate of clearing is one important measure of how close their dream was to reality."²⁶ Although limited by factors beyond landowners' control, the rate and extent of land clearances by those who remained for any length of time on Salt Spring Island nevertheless speak directly to the types of expectations they had of life on the island in general, and of farming in particular.

Any study of land clearances must begin with a look at the type of land -- soils, topography, geological formation -- that characterize the location in question. For those knowing Salt Spring Island only through the glowing terms cited in earlier chapters, it may come as a surprise to find that land and soil surveys of the late twentieth century do not emphasize the fertile valleys

that attracted so much attention from nineteenth-century observers; instead, it is the rugged and rocky terrain covering much of the island that attracts comment. While some arable land certainly exists in the valleys, land use surveys of Salt Spring Island note that steep inclines, rocky soil and outcroppings of bedrock impose significant limitations on the cultivation of crops.²⁷ The low rainfall, particularly in August and September, characteristic of Salt Spring Island's mediterranean climate, also limited the type and extent of agricultural production. Although Salt Spring has more fresh water than the other Gulf Islands, water sources were a problem in many areas of the island, limiting the potential for irrigating on any large scale.²⁸

Standing out from the chorus of praise surrounding the island's agricultural potential in the nineteenth century is one discordant voice. In stark contrast to the praises typical of most commentators on Salt Spring are the diaries of the first official surveyor of the island in 1874: Ashdown Green had a very negative opinion of Salt Spring Island's agricultural promise. Much of the land in the south end was rocky but generally believed to be well-suited to grazing, but Green dismissed it as "worthless except for sheep, but it would require so many acres to keep one sheep that it would not pay to buy it."²⁹ While he found some good loam in the Burgoyne Valley, particularly on the lands occupied by Gyves, Mitchell, Sparrow, Maxwell, Akerman, and Walsh, Green had little praise for the overall composition of the island:

August 20, 1874: Today we passed over rough worthless country. Gravely, stony soil with small fir and brush; salal very strong. In whichever direction we looked we could see a rocky bluff, in fact the Island seems to be very little else but ravines and perpendicular rock.³⁰

A few days later, writing of Mount Maxwell, he notes, “[f]rom the top of the mountain I had a good view of the country, and a more rocky and worthless place it would be hard to find. In fact it is nothing but steep bluffs and ravines.”³¹

It is difficult to reconcile the picture of Salt Spring Island found in such land-use reports with the glowing pastoral prose of settlers and Department of Agriculture Reports. It is even more difficult to reconcile the statistical returns from the Department of Agriculture with its enthusiastic conclusions about Salt Spring’s agricultural accomplishments. Any attempt to make an assessment of the nature and extent of agricultural production in nineteenth-century British Columbia is hampered by a stark absence of evidence concerning the standard measures of agricultural success, land clearances and crop production. The limited evidence available, however, suggests a large gulf between the aspirations of nineteenth-century agricultural observers and the activities of Salt Spring Island farmers.

In the colonial period, the government’s lack of interest in the amount of rural lands cleared can, like so many other areas of the bureaucracy, be traced to the chronic shortage of money and administrative staff available to obtain such information. As Robert Cail argues, however,

even when money became available after 1871, only desultory attempts were made to enforce the regulations [concerning land use]. For thirty years the prevalent attitude was to be that land was plentiful but most of it useless and should anyone have enough initiative to pay a nominal price, no hindrance ought to be placed in his way.³²

Chapter 5 will look in more detail at the problems surrounding the collection of payment of even these 'nominal prices' for pre-empted land, but the remainder of this chapter will examine the development of agricultural lands.

Routinely generated data concerning clearance rates remains elusive well into the provincial period. Provisions in the legislation governing land purchase and land use did little to require particular land clearances before 1873, and, when they did appear, they were not rigorously enforced in the province.³³ Indicating a similar lack of concern for specific land clearances, even assessment rolls on Salt Spring Island fail to distinguish between cleared and uncleared land; instead, they distinguish only between land that was potentially arable, and those areas of "marsh, swamp and rock" defined as wild lands and taxed at a lower rate.³⁴ Similarly, the Department of Agriculture did little to obtain or publish information about agriculture until the early 1890's, when its first reports appeared. Although these reports contain a great deal of important information about agriculture, data on land clearances did not figure there in the nineteenth century. As a result, evidence of land clearances is problematic for those wanting to provide

specific evidence of the extent to which Salt Spring Island farmers participated in agricultural pursuits.

One of the few record collections to mention cleared and cultivated lands is that documenting improvement certificates. Pre-empted land required such a certificate, attesting to improvements to the value of \$2.50 per acre in the form of clearing and fencing portions of the claim, and the construction of buildings upon it. At one Salt Spring Island settler's estimate of \$180 to clear each acre of land, the required improvements must not have been difficult to achieve.³⁵ It was only after this certificate was issued that the pre-empted land became eligible for purchase from the crown at the low rate of \$1.00 per acre. Of the 388 pre-emptions granted between 1860 and 1891, 136 (comprising almost 19,000 acres or forty percent of pre-empted lands) had been improved by 1891.³⁶

Unfortunately for the historian, the information contained in the individual certificates of improvement provides little insight into the extent of land clearances. Certificates only rarely contain detailed figures on the number of acres cleared, fenced or cultivated. Records are richest in the colonial period and poorest in the era after 1881, but the total number of improvement certificates that contain any detailed information on the fencing or clearing of land on the island during this whole period is twenty two. Only fifteen (twelve percent) of improved claims contain information about acreages cleared.

**Table 4:1 Pre-emptors of Land on Salt Spring Island
Who Include Detailed Information
on Land Clearances**

PreEmp Date (#)	Imp. Cert. Date	Name	Acres Cleared	Acres Ploughed	Acres Fenced	Buildings
n/a	1863 /22*	[illegible]	1.5 [?]	3	4	\$100
1863 (#619)	1864	Armstead Buckner	15		4000 rails [about 11 acres]	House 20 x 16 . Barn 26 x 24 x 10
1862 (#423)	Before 1865	Jonathan Begg		7,000 trees planted	20 acres	2 houses built
1874 (#1492)	1874	Louis Stark	100		100	3 houses and 2 barns built
1861 (#84)	1875	John Maxwell	18	18	38	House, 34x20; 2 barns 34x20
1873 (#1448)	1875	George Mitchell	6		160	House 30x30, 16x12, barn 60x25
1871 (#1242)	1875	Joseph Norton	10		25	House, 24x18
1868 (#1082)	[No date]	Ke-awe-hou	6		78	
1864 (#700)	1876	W. Harrison	25		35	House 20x26. barn
1863 (#516)	1877	James McFadden	20		20	House 20x16; barn, cow house
1874 (#1490)	1877	Henry Spikerman	10			
1868 (#1066)	1877	Theodore Trage	100			
1872 (#1326)	1880	Henry Ruckle	60	20	700 rails	
1874 (#1485)	1883	Estalon Bittancourt	7		7	House 23x32, barn 18x24
1866 (#908)	1884	Michael Gyves	15		22	House, \$300

Source: British Columbia Dept. of Land and Works, Pre-Emption Records, Vancouver and Gulf Islands, GR766 BCA; British Columbia Dept. of Lands and Works. Certificates of Improvement, Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, GR765, BCA; Land Register for Salt Spring Island, Surveyor General's Office, Victoria.

* This is the Certificate of Improvement Number, as name and Pre-emption number not available.

Results from these sources, although fragmentary, are contained in Table 4:1. A further thirteen records contain information about the value of improvements, but do not specify acreages.

Because the cost per acre of cleared land fluctuated so wildly in the ten records that provided such information, varying from \$13 to \$50 per acre, it is impossible to estimate confidently acreage values from the value of improvements alone.³⁷ This small sample, involving claims taken out in the first and second decade of settlement, suggests clearance rates of about two acres per year, on average. This figure is similar to the rates of land clearance suggested by Peter Russell's evidence concerning southern Ontario.³⁸ Unlike Peter Russell's figures, however, these do not come from tax assessors or census takers, but from a small sample of statements made by the farmer, witnessed by his neighbours and friends, and sent to a bureaucrat in Victoria in order to substantiate a claim to buy land at a very cheap price.

Fragmentary evidence suggests that these estimates may indeed have been exaggerated by settlers anxious to meet the minimum requirements of the pre-emption regulations. John Maxwell, for example, took out a certificate of improvement in March 1875 for land that he had pre-empted in 1861. The certificate, duly signed by Maxwell's neighbours, notes that he has cleared, cultivated and fenced eighteen acres of land, and cleared and fenced a further twenty acres for pasture.³⁹ When Ashdown Green surveyed the south

end of the island four months later, however, he noted only that Maxwell had "a field of grass of about four acres, but not of much account." Even though three days later, he noted the "very fair ground occupied by Maxwell's garden orchard and buildings,"⁴⁰ this assessment does not seem to reflect the thirty-eight cleared acres claimed by Maxwell. Similarly, Armstead Buckner claimed to have cleared fifteen acres and fenced about eleven by 1864. When his property was sold at auction (still without a crown grant) after his death in 1889, probate records suggest that that no improvements had been made to the land, as the property was valued at just over \$2 per acre, and finally sold for \$6 an acre, a moderate price for unimproved land in the Cowichan area.⁴¹ As the foregoing analysis suggests, historians must be extremely wary about using such data from certificates of improvement to infer the extent of land clearance.

The Dominion Census, the only source to document aggregate figures concerning land clearances, also has serious flaws. While by 1931, the Dominion Census could confidently assert that the term improved lands "is employed in the census to mean all land which has been brought under cultivation and is now fit for the plough, including orchards, gardens and land occupied by buildings,"⁴² its meaning was not so clearly established in 1881 or 1891. The 1881, census definition of improved land was dramatically different from either 1891 or 1901. The tendency of enumerators to regard all lands that received a certificate of improvement as "improved" may have

been responsible for some spectacular anomalies in the statistical record in the 1881 census. In that year, 184,885 acres of land are listed as improved in the province of British Columbia, a figure that plummeted more than seventy percent to 57,881 acres in 1891, notwithstanding the doubling of the population during the decade from 49,459 to 98,173, and the three-fold increase in the number of occupied farms, (from 2,743 to 7,451) as well as those employed in agriculture (from 2,617 to 8,303).⁴³ Following a similar pattern, 9,462 acres in Cowichan and Salt Spring (whose totals are listed together in 1881) are listed as "improved" in 1881, a figure that plummets to 1,592 acres in 1891.⁴⁴ My data indicates that 9,286 acres of land had received a certificate of improvement by 1881. Because Cowichan lands were not open for pre-emption until early in the 1880's (having been designated as railway lands in the early provincial period in the expectation that the trans-Canada railway would pass through the area⁴⁵), it is likely that most of the agricultural improvements in both areas had occurred on Salt Spring by 1881. If so, this figure supports the contention that all lands that had received a certificate of improvement were considered improved for the purposes of the 1881 census. In most cases, only a small proportion of a pre-emption claim needed to be cleared and planted in order for the entire quarter section to be designated "improved."

In 1891, by contrast, lands were explicitly considered improved only if they were cultivated for crops, fruit trees, or a garden. A number of crops,

including hay and hops, were not included in calculations for improved lands, as they fell under the category of pasture lands. This had changed by 1901 to include tracts of timber lands.⁴⁶ The 1891 census has the advantage for this study, however, of providing the first solid aggregate documentation pertaining to land clearance on Salt Spring Island. In 1891, the island had 804 improved acres, that is land in gardens, orchards and crops. A further 455 acres in hay, included in the pasture figures for the 1891 statistics, brings the probable total of land cleared by farmers by 1891 to 1,279 acres, or four percent of the island's 35,105 occupied acres as listed in the census.⁴⁷ Department of Agriculture returns for the same year conclude that about six percent of land owned was under cultivation.⁴⁸

These figures suggest that each of the one hundred resident landowners on Salt Spring Island in 1891 had cleared an average of about thirteen acres.⁴⁹ By this date, three quarters of landowners had been on the island for more than five years, and over a third had been there more than ten years.⁵⁰ Their average stay by this date was just over twelve years, providing an overall average clearance rate of one acre per year by 1891, a rate of land clearing towards the low end of the average of other Canadian agricultural areas in their first decades of settlement.⁵¹ This is a small amount of land compared to the twenty acres estimated necessary to support a family in Ontario at this time.⁵²

iii) The Problem of Crop Production

The contrast between the rhetoric of agricultural success constituting the official discourse of rural, and the lives of Salt Spring Island farmers becomes even more striking when we look beyond both the low yearly rate and total amount of land cleared by 1891, to the detailed evidence of agricultural production. Although statistical information on this subject is not available in routinely generated sources before 1891, some aggregate information is available to the historian of Salt Spring Island wanting to find out about agricultural development. Robert Brown stopped to visit the island as his natural history expedition passed by in 1862, and his statistical reporting provides some useful information about settlement and land use at that time. These figures provide a point of comparison to those compiled nearly thirty years later in the 1891 census, and are provided in Table 4: 2.

Brown's data suggests that the average number of acres cultivated per household in 1863 increased only marginally, from six and a half to eight acres in 1891. In spite of a six-fold increase in the population (from about seventy-eight to 436), the number of acres under cultivation increased only five-fold from the figures cited by Robert Brown. The differences between the earliest years of pioneer settlement and the time when Salt Spring was widely acclaimed as having achieved commercial

agricultural success are not, therefore, indicative of sustained agricultural development between 1862 and through the railway boom of the 1880s.

Table 4: 2 Changes in Agricultural Production, 1862-1891, Salt Spring Island

DATE	Acres wheat	Acres Barley	Acres Oats	No. Cows	No. Pigs	Acres occupied	Acres cult'd	No. HH	Cult.Ac. \ HH
1863	9	37	43	278	200	4,200	163	25	7
1891	104	12	169	354	704	35,105	804	100	8
In-crease	x12	x-3	x4	x1.3	x3.5	x8.4	x5	x4	x1

Source: "Miscellaneous notes on Vancouver Island, scrapbooks, 1863-64" Robert Brown, Add Mss 794, Vol. 1, BCARS and Table XVI and Table II, Field Produce, Census of Canada, 1891.

The problem of reconciling this picture of marginal farming with the portrait of an agricultural community becomes even greater when we turn to the individual households on Salt Spring Island. Household-level data from the agricultural schedule of the census is not available for the island in 1891, but three other sources provide the basis for a more detailed analysis of agricultural production at the household level. While fragmentary, the following evidence gives us the only available means of reaching beyond the average figures discussed above.

Reverend Wilson's understanding of rural society was framed within the same discursive structure we have seen in newspaper accounts and Department of Agriculture Reports, and his promotional pamphlet reflects this construction of Salt Spring Island as a successful agricultural community in 1894. Although Wilson's prose is marked by the pastoral hyperbole characteristic of the genre, it also reflects the pre-occupation with yields, crop

production and prices that characterize the bureaucratic discourse on rural British Columbia at that time. The detailed information that Wilson provides about a number of island farmers can be linked to the island assessment roll of 1894, and to Department of Agriculture returns for the same year, to give us a closer look at households on the island.⁵³ There is good reason to believe the accuracy of the figures he cites: his listings of acreages owned by the nineteen settlers he mentions, for example, are within two percent of the acreages contained in the assessment rolls for 1894.⁵⁴ By linking his data on particular individuals with aggregate information in both the Department of Agriculture Reports and the assessment rolls, it is therefore possible to come to some conclusions about average land clearance rates and the types of agricultural activity typical of island residents.

What is most notable about Reverend Wilson's statistics is the large proportion of all island agricultural activity carried on by the nineteen farmers that he singles out for mention from the 128 farmers that the assessment roll lists as being on the island.⁵⁵ As Table 4:3 indicates, even when the farmers he mentions are seen as a proportion of the more modest figure of seventy-nine farmers enumerated by the Department of Agriculture in 1894, the disproportions are striking. For example, the wheat production of the two farmers listed by Wilson who are among the seventy-nine enumerated by the Department of Agriculture in 1894, amounts to forty-three percent of that tabulated by the Department of Agriculture.

**Table 4:3 Comparisons of Agricultural Produce and Producers,
Salt Spring Island, 1891, 1894**

source	Total no. farmers	wheat (60lbs./bu)	oats (35lbs./bu.)	peas	roots	barley	hay	fruit trees & gardens	acres cultivated	Total acres occupied
Census 1891	104	2836 bu [85 tons] 104 a	6305 bu. [110 tons] 169 a.	3319 bu. 230 a.*	19977 bu. 112 a	450 bu. 12 a.	751 ton 445 a\$ (not incl)	177 a.	804 a.	35105 a.
1894 Dept. of Agric.	79	[2233 bu.] 67 tons 109a.	[6571 bu.] 115 tons 163 a.	81 tons 111a	559 tons 125a	3 a	[900 tns] 532a	17347 trees 516 a	1027a	28514 a.
Rev. Wilson, 1894; mentions	100	950 bu [28.5 tns] 2 people	300 bu. 2 people		178 tons 4 people		185 tons 5 people	4600 trees 7 people	687a 11 people	14974 a. [15324 on AR for 19]
		3% of the 79 grew 43% wheat	3% of the 79 grew 5% of oats		5% of the 79 grew 32% roots		6% of the 79 grew 21% hay	9% of the 79 grew 27% fruit trees	14% of the 79 owned 67% of cleared land	

*no acreage is listed for peas, beans and corn, but the total acerages of wheat, barley, oats, potatoes, other roots is 397 acres; add to this the 177 acres listed as total acreage of gardens and orchards = 574 acres. We know that the total cultivated land for 1891 is listed as 804 acres, so peas, beans and corn must be 804-574= 230 acres.

Similarly, five percent of the landowners (four people) grew thirty-two percent of the root crops, and five farmers (six percent of the total) grew twenty-one percent of the hay. Eight percent of the farmers grew a quarter of the fruit. The eleven people for whom Wilson lists cultivate acreages -- fourteen percent of the farmers and nine percent of the 128 landowners in 1894 -- owned sixty-seven percent of all cultivated lands listed in the Department of Agriculture's report for 1894. A comparison of Wilson's figures with those in the assessment roll indicates that fewer than a fifth of the farmers on the island owned more than a third of the land. Their land was, on average, about four times the size and valued at roughly four times the price of those farmers' lands not included in Reverend Wilson's list. Furthermore, they had an average amount of personal (i.e. not real) property valued at almost three times the amount of that belonging to those who are not mentioned by Wilson.⁵⁶

As these figures suggest, while cultivated land and agricultural production were clearly important aspects of life for some Salt Spring Island residents, these seem to have been a distinct minority. Deducting crop production and land clearances in Reverend Wilson's figures from Department of Agriculture statistics in 1894, we find that the average acreage cleared by those 109 landowners not mentioned by Wilson is not the thirteen acres provided to each landowner by general averaging figures: average acreages for the majority were just over three acres per landowner. This was

perhaps enough to support a house, a chicken run, a vegetable garden and a few fruit trees. Their crop production, except perhaps of hay, potatoes and some fruit, must have been extremely small. Although the great majority of island householders defined themselves as farmers, therefore, this occupational definition becomes further removed from that of agricultural capitalist the more closely we look at the details of agricultural production.

Conclusion

Any examination of agricultural development on Salt Spring Island is frustrated by the absence of detailed information on the most telling of agricultural indicators, land clearances and crop production. A general trend is, however, clear: the steady progress of land clearing and cultivation that characterized the earliest years of settlement was by not carried out by all people, or in a uniform way, as the century progressed. On the contrary, evidence suggests that land clearance rates throughout the 1870s and 1880s stood in marked contrast those in the first year or two of settlement.

How do we reconcile this portrait of Salt Spring -- a failure in terms of capitalist farming and even agricultural production -- with the portrait of the island presented in earlier chapters? Although the official discourse surrounding rural lands in British Columbia suggests that farmers were failing to achieve their desired agricultural aims, a closer look at land acquisition provided in the next chapter suggests a different vision of rural, rather than failure to achieve the prescribed one, was responsible.

NOTES

¹ Mr. Trage reported in 1891 that "Labour is very scarce; only white men are working here. Wages, \$1 per day." First Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, 1891 (BCSP,1892), 805. In 1894, Mr. Trage reported that Japanese and Whites were being employed at the same rate of \$1 per day, but "they are not easily procured." Fourth Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, 1894 (BCSP, 1895), 1017.

² Mr. McLennan of Salt Spring Island reported in 1891 that farmers were bothered by "a few rats and blue jays." First Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, 1891 (BCSP, 1892),804.

³British Columbia Royal Commission on Agriculture, 1912 , testimony given at Ganges Harbour, April 10, 1912; box 1/4, GR 324, BCA.

⁴As F.M. Phillips notes in his overview of Salt Spring Island in 1902, "The felling of timber [...] is done in winter and the trees being left to dry through the summer, a fire is run over them in the fall; the logs that remain being cut up, piled and burnt, the land is then seeded down to grass or broken up for a first crop of potatoes." F.M.Phillips, Saltspring Island (Ganges Harbour, 1902), 8-9, SSIA. For lengthy discussion of the problems of land clearances for farmers, see "Clearing Land" in The Fifth Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, 1895-96 (BCSP, 1897), 1156-67.

⁵ Fourth Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, 1894 (BCSP,1895), 1017.

⁶ "The people generally seemed to approve," he wrote, "thinking it would help to bring settlers to the island." Rev. E.F. Wilson, "Our Life on Salt Spring Island, B.C., 4 February 1894 to 24 November 1905," unpublished manuscript, 151, SSIA.

⁷ Rev. E. Wilson, Salt Spring Island 1894 (Ganges, 1894), 11. This pamphlet was republished in 1994, and has sold briskly to the tourists flocking to Salt Spring Island.

⁸ Wilson, Salt Spring Island, 11.

⁹ A cross linkage between the 1881 census and land records indicates that the average size of landholdings on the island was 166.9 acres, with more than half (thirty-two out of fifty-three landowners) owning between one hundred and two hundred acres. Twelve people owned less than a hundred acres, and three owned more than 300. With the railway boom in the mid-1880's, however, speculators became part of island life, and took up large tracts of mostly-uninhabitable land. Greater disparities among settlers can

be discerned. The 1892 assessment roll indicates, for example, that about a third of the island's landowners owned more than 300 acres, and almost one in five lived on fewer than 100 acres. The 1894 Assessment Roll for the island indicates that three landowners owned almost thirty percent of the island. Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; and Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes, Assessment Rolls 1892-94 , Roll B 443, Gulf Islands Assessment District, BCA.

¹⁰ About a third of those appearing on both the assessment roll and the census (thirty-four people out of the ninety-six appearing on both lists) owned more than two hundred acres, and about two thirds(sixty-two people) owned less, with most (thirty seven people) owning between one hundred and two hundred acres. An examination of the assessment roll of 1892 (collected in 1891) cross linked with other information in the Salt Spring Island database and looking at all resident landowners, indicates that the ninety-six on the island in 1891 had been there an average of 12.2 years , with seventy-four percent having been on the island for more than five years, and forty-four percent having been there for longer than ten years by 1891. British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes Assessment Roll for 1892, Gulf Islands Assessment District, Salt Spring Division, Roll B444, BCA; Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no.1, Nominal.

¹¹For example, Squire Henry Bullock, the Mahon Brothers, the Tolson Brothers, family files, SSIA..

¹² Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, 3 June 1860, SSIA.

¹³Cited from a letter of an early Salt Spring Island pioneer by Tom Koppel, Kanaka: The Untold Story of Hawaiian Pioneers in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1995), 107.

¹⁴ Province of British Columbia Public Schools Report, 1877 (BCSP,1878), 19.

¹⁵ Henry W. Robinson, Chairman of the Trustee Board, Salt Spring Island, to C.C. McKenzie, Superintendent of Education, Salt Spring Island, 4 August 1879, in British Columbia Superintendent of Education, Inward Correspondence, GR 1445, BCA. Thanks to Jean Barman for drawing this source to my attention.

¹⁶ George Stainburn, teacher at Burgoyne Bay, to C.C. McKenzie, Superintendent of Education, Burgoyne Bay, 11 January 1882, in British Columbia Superintendent of Education, Inward correspondence, GR 1445, BCA.

¹⁷ Stainburn to McKenzie, 11 January 1882, British Columbia Superintendent of Education, Correspondence Inward, GR 1445, BCA.

¹⁸ Stainburn to McKenzie, 11 January 1882, British Columbia Superintendent of Education, Correspondence Inward, GR 1445, BCA.

¹⁹ After swearing that he knew of "no cause why my father should kill himself," his son George declared at the inquest, "[h]e was very weak and ill, paralyzed on one side of his body; has been so for 4 or 5 years. He could walk and get around a little. His wife, my mother, had left him about a year [ago], and the night before he died (I go home every night), he asked me if I knew for sure that my mother had got another man. I told him yes, and he said 'That's all I wanted to know'. We had no gun in the house, the one he shot himself was a borrowed one from George Sheppard." signed George Purser. Inquest of George Purser's Death, file 18-1886, British Columbia Attorney General, Inquisitions, 1872-1937, GR 1327, BCA.

²⁰ George Stainburn, teacher at Burgoyne Bay to C.C. Mackenzie, Superintendent of Education, Burgoyne Bay, 2 March, 1882, in British Columbia Superintendent of Education, Inward Correspondence, GR 1445, BCA.

²¹ Evidence of Henry Sampson, Trial of Tom for the murder of William Robinson, 2 June 1869; Vancouver Island, Supreme Court of Civil Justice, Bench Books of Criminal Cases Heard Before Judge Joseph Needham, 1867-1869, GR 2030, BCA.

²² William Robinson, probate file 13 (1868), British Columbia, Supreme Court (Victoria), Probates 1859-1974, GR 1304, BCA.

²³ Armstead Buckner, probate file 1902 (1889), British Columbia, Supreme Court (Victoria), Probates 1859-1974, GR 1304, BCA.

²⁴ Gordon Darroch and Lee Soltow, Property and Inequality in Victorian Ontario: Structural Patterns and Cultural Communities in the 1871 Census (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 4.

²⁵ Morton Stratton, "Agriculture: Farms, Farmers and Farming," typescript, SSIA..

²⁶ Peter Russell, "Emily Township: Pioneer Persistence to Equality?" Histoire Sociale/Social History, 24, no. 44 (Nov. 1989), 317.

²⁷ Saltspring Island: A Landscape Analysis, Report BC-X-99 (Victoria: Environment Canada, Pacific Forest Research Center, 1974), 1.

²⁸ Agriculture Canada, Research Branch, Soils of the Gulf Islands of British Columbia, Volume 1, Soils of Saltspring Island, Report no. 43 (Victoria: British Columbia Soil Survey, 1987), 103-105.

²⁹ Ashdown Green, 18 June 1874, "Diary of a Survey of Salt Spring Island, June 8-Nov. 22, 1874," Add Mss 437, BCA.

³⁰ Ashdown Green, 20 August 1874, "Diary," Add Mss 437, BCA.

³¹ Ashdown Green, 24 August 1874, "Diary," Add Mss 437, BCA.

³² Robert E. Cail, Land, Man and the Law: The Disposal of Crown Lands in British Columbia, 1871-1913 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1974), xiii.

³³ The 1873 Land Act Amendment was the first to specify a set number of acres (twenty) be cleared before a certificate of improvement, but, like so many provisions, it was not enforced. See Cail, Land Man and the Law, 24, 29-30, 36-38.

³⁴ Legislation requiring the identification of wildlands as distinguished from agricultural lands emerged in the 1890s, affecting land taxation on Salt Spring Island after this date. See Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 35-38. See British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes, Assessment Rolls 1892-94, Roll B 443, Gulf Islands Assessment District, BCA.

³⁵ Fourth Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1894 (BCSP, 1895), 1018. In 1894, estimates of the total value of improvements (buildings, fences and other improvements) on the island was given as \$77,710. Fourth Report of the Dept. of Agriculture, 1894 (BCSP, 1894), 1019.

³⁶ 18,526 of the 49,192 acres had been improved.

³⁷ For \$13 per acre, see Michael Gyves, pre-emption no.908, 1884, and for those closer to \$50 per acre, see Theodore Trage, 1877 pre-emption no.1066; John Maxwell, 1875, no.84; Ke-awe hou, no.1082, n.d. British Columbia Dept. of Land and Works, Pre-emption Records, Vancouver and Gulf Islands, GR 766, BCA.

³⁸ Russell suggests that most early settlers cleared between one and two acres, although those on better lands cleared about three acres per farm per year. Peter Russell, "Forest into Farmland: Upper Canadian Clearing Rates, 1822-1839," in J.K. Johnson, Bruce Wilson, eds., Historical Essays on Upper Canada: New Perspectives (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989), 133, and Tables 1 and 2, 140.

³⁹ John Maxwell, Pre-emption number 84, 1861; Certificate of Improvement no.244, British Columbia Dept. of Lands and Works, Certificates of Improvement, Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, GR 765, BCA.

⁴⁰ Ashdown Green, July 15 and July 18, 1875, "Diary of a Survey of Salt Spring Island," Add Mss. 437, BCA.

⁴¹ The probate file notes that his 100 acre claim was worth only \$125. Mr. Moss offered

to purchase Buckner's land for \$265 in October 1889. File 1902, British Columbia, Supreme Court (Victoria), Probates 1859-1974, GR 1304, BCA. The Province of British Columbia, Canada: Its Climate and Resources, with Information for Immigrants (Victoria: Wolfenden Press, 1883) notes that unimproved, timbered land in Cowichan and Comox was selling for between \$2.50 and \$15 per acre. Buckner's land finally was auctioned off for \$600, or \$6 per acre but not until after his creditors had lobbied for parliamentary intervention to speed up the process. See "Return ... Concerning the intestate estate of the late Armstead Buckner, specifying therein the amount realized, the expenses incurred and what disposition has been made of the balance." (BCSP,1891), 333. The Department of Land and Works had noted in 1875 that many pre-emptors were "absent, and the improvements under which they have obtained their certificates, years ago, having become obliterated" B.C., Department of Land and Works Annual Report, 1875 (BCSP,1876), 531. It is, of course, possible, that Buckner cleared this land and then let the land revert, but the question would still remain -- why did he do so, rather than purchase the land for \$1 per acre and sell it for the higher price that improved land could bring?

⁴² Dominion Bureau of Statistics, British Columbia Census of Agriculture, 7th Census of Canada, Volume 8, 1931, 2.

⁴³ Dominion Bureau of Statistics, British Columbia Census of Agriculture, 7th Census of Canada, Volume 8, 1931, Table 1. Figures on the rural / urban split in population are not available until 1891.

⁴⁴ Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Third Census of Canada, 1891, table XVI., 244-45. The figure 1592 comes from totaling 804 acres on Salt Spring, 619 acres on South Cowichan, and 179 acres in North Cowichan.

⁴⁵ Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 36; and Chapter 8, "The Railway Belt to 1884."

⁴⁶ In 1901, the census reported that figures of "the present census refer only to lands of agricultural production and those of the former [year, 1891] to all occupied lands in the Province, including tracts of timber land; hence the greater number of occupiers and the larger area of occupied land in 1891 and 1901. Woodland and forest in the former year's returns included all unimproved land whereas in those of the latter the forest area is given separately but is also counted as part of the unimproved land." Bulletin XII, Census of Agriculture, British Columbia, Fourth Census of Canada, 1901, 3. Improved land is land under crops (excluding hay and some minor crops) plus areas in orchard and garden. In 1901, improved land included hay, forage crops, flax, tobacco and hops,

excluded in 1891. As we will see below, 1881 figures were differently based again.

⁴⁷ Fourth Census of Canada, 1891, table XVI, 244-45. My own figures from the 1892 assessment roll for the island, indicate that the number of occupied acres was 37,784, bringing to 3.4 percent the proportion of improved lands. Much of the pasture land on the island was uncleared rocky, treeless and steep mountainside, suitable for grazing sheep but little else. British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes Assessment Roll for 1892, Gulf Islands Assessment District, Salt Spring Division, Roll B444, BCA; Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

⁴⁸ First Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1891 (BCSP, 1892), 804.

⁴⁹ Resident landowners are taken from Assessment Roll for 1892, taken in 1891. Seventy-four of those listed as owning land were identified as household heads in the 1891 census, twenty-six were not. Thirteen of those listed as resident landowners in the 1892 assessment roll do not show up in the census, some apparently because they arrived between the time of the census and the assessment roll enumeration, some because the census enumerator simply missed them. British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes Assessment Roll for 1892, Gulf Islands Assessment District, Salt Spring Division, Roll B444, BCA; Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no.

⁵⁰ As outlined in note 10 above.

⁵¹ Russell, "Forest into Farm Land," 140.

⁵² Russell, "Forest into Farm Land," 140.

⁵³ Aggregate statistics for Salt Spring Island are contained in two charts, "Recapitulation of General Returns from Vancouver Island and Adjacent Islands," 1050-51, and "Recapitulation of Returns of Products from Vancouver Island and Adjacent Islands," 1054-55; Fourth Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of British Columbia, 1894 (BCSP, 1895). Statistical data of this sort is not available before 1894. This data was gathered by a number of correspondents on the island (Theodore Trage, Alexander Wilson, Estalon Bittancourt, Walter Dukes, Raffles Purdy, George Dukes, Alfred Raynes, the Beddis Brothers, and Alexander McLennan) who were asked for data on their own farms, and for estimates of island totals. These estimates provided the statistics in the annual reports. See also British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes Assessment Roll for 1894, Gulf Islands Assessment District, Salt Spring Division, Roll B444, BCA.

⁵⁴ Reverend Wilson's estimates on the nineteen people he mentions lists their combined holdings as being 14,974 acres as compared with 15,324 acres. Saltspring Island 1894.

⁵⁵ British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes, 1895 Assessment Roll Roll B 443, Gulf Islands Assessment District, BCA.

⁵⁶ The nineteen farmers mentioned by Wilson owned a total of 15,324 acres or forty-two percent of the owned land, while the remaining 109 landowners owned 21,418 acres or fifty-eight percent of the land. The nineteen farmers owned properties averaging 807 acres assessed at an average of \$4,144, and sixteen of the nineteen declared personal property. The 109 not mentioned by Wilson averaged 197 acres valued at an average of \$906, and only twelve of the 109 listed any personal property. See Wilson, Saltspring Island 1894; British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes Assessment Roll for 1894, Gulf Islands Assessment District, Salt Spring Division, Roll B444, BCA.

Chapter 5
The Success of the Pre-emption System Re-evaluated:
Pre-emption Behaviour as Rural Culture

The discourse of agricultural capitalism informed settlement policies and influenced the activities of a number of Salt Spring Island residents between 1859 and 1891. Low overall rates of land clearance and crop production, however, suggest that in spite of the vigorous rhetoric of capitalist agriculture, most landowning families on Salt Spring Island were not realizing the commercial goals of bureaucrats and boosters. As the granddaughter of one of the earliest settlers phrased it (putting a slightly different spin on the relation between farming and income), "the farming never did pay. We always had to do something else to keep the farm going."¹

Why, then, were people taking up land, and why were they staying on it for so long? There can be little doubt that they were doing so: the cross-linking of census and land records confirms in snapshots of 1881 and 1891 what the land records alone suggest: it was the pre-emption system that provided most settlers with their access to land. Furthermore, there can be little doubt that land acquisition in turn formed the basis of settlement on the island. In both 1881 and 1891, more than three quarters of all household heads were landowners; of these, the vast majority had obtained their land by pre-empting it.² In each of the census years, only two landowners had not pre-empted any land by the census date. By 1891, most landowners (eighty-

one percent) were still living on land they had pre-empted; indeed, almost half of these were still living on pre-emptions for which they had not yet paid.³ As Chapter 3 argued, the pre-emption system on Salt Spring Island enjoyed considerable success in meeting the immediate goals of administrators by limiting speculation in, and ensuring residency on, country lands.

How do we reconcile this interest in landownership and rural life with the weakness of commercial agriculture on the island? This chapter will argue that an approach to Salt Spring Island that measures the success of the community within the parameters set by policy makers -- the ability of families to create commercially-viable farms -- begins by assuming what this rural study seeks to explore: why was land taken up by, and what did it mean to, the pre-emptors on Salt Spring Island? It is possible to look beyond the official discourse that identified rural with commercial agriculture by returning to the land records: a close examination of the patterns of behaviour within the pre-emption system suggests that expectations other than the creation of a commercially viable farm informed those taking up land on the island. As we will see, it is in these land-related behaviours that we find the seeds of the island's 'failure' as an agricultural community, and some indications of the terms of its success.

i. Pre-emption Abandonment

In spite of numerous minor changes to the pre-emption system between 1859 and 1891, people who took out pre-emptions had only three alternatives after staking a claim. The simplest was to abandon pre-empted land without registering any improvements on it. These settlers paid nothing for their land, but neither did they obtain the right to turn it into an exchangeable commodity: in abandoning their claim before improving it, they walked away from any investment of time and money that they may have put into their property.⁴ The land, in the manner of "Indian lands", simply reverted to the Crown.⁵ It was only when the pre-emptor took the second step, to obtain a certificate of improvement, that he was able to trade, mortgage or apply to purchase his land.⁶ Pre-emptors did not obtain title to their land until they proceeded to the third stage: to purchase the land from the crown. Only at this point were they obliged to survey the land, if it had not been done already, and to pay for it at a price of \$1.00 per acre.⁷

While government policy discouraged land speculation through its residency requirements, its success at ensuring land settlement continued to be frustrated by high rates of claim abandonment throughout the entire period under study. By 1881, after more than two decades of non-Native settlement on the island, only fifteen (four percent) of the 357 pre-emptions taken out on the island had been purchased. By 1891, only a quarter of pre-

emptions taken out since 1859 had been purchased, while two thirds were abandoned before any improvements had been registered.⁸ As Table 5:1 indicates, even when the pre-emptions taken out in 1859 -- of which an unusually high ninety-six percent were abandoned -- are left out of the calculation, we still find that more than half of all pre-emptions on the island ended in abandonment, with fewer than a third ending in purchase.

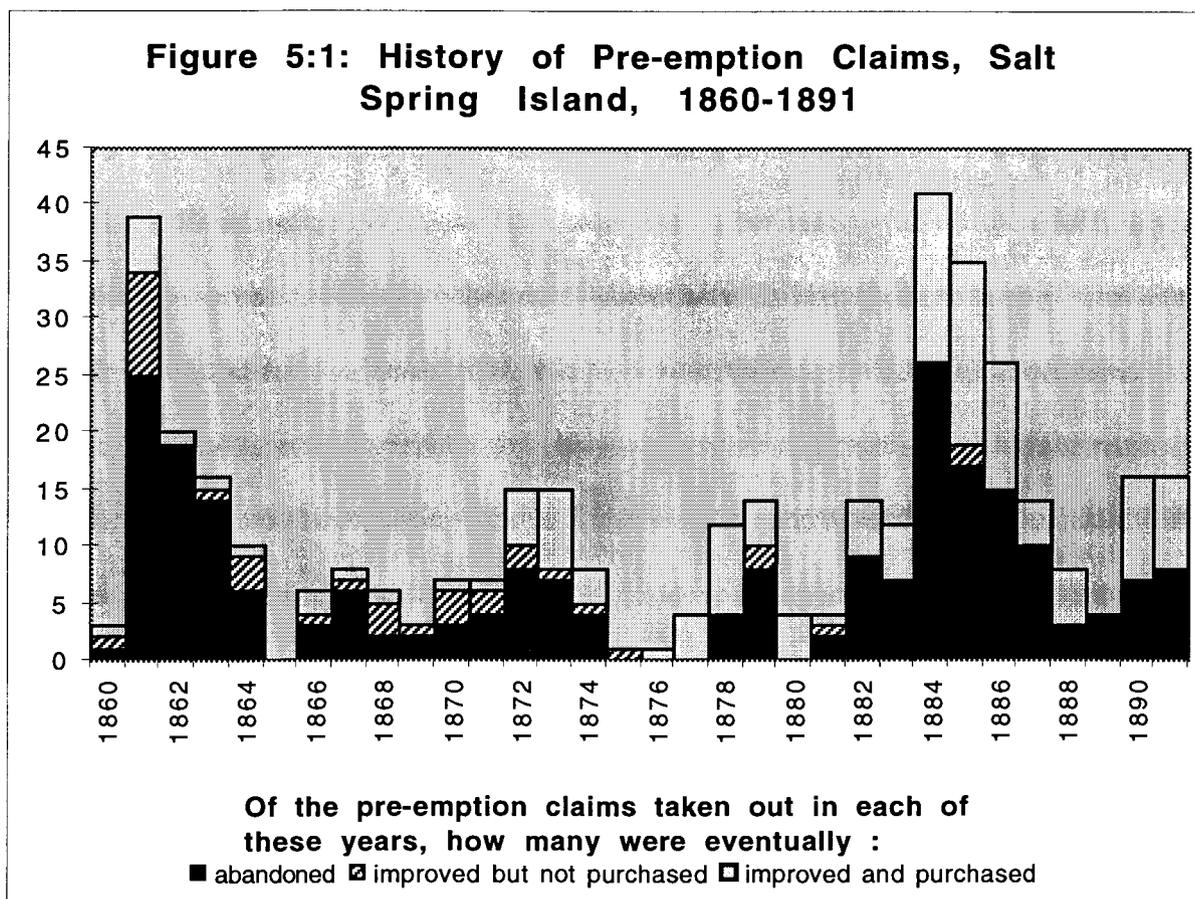
Table 5:1 History of Lands Pre-empted on Salt Spring Island, 1860-1891

Pre-emption Claims:	number	percentage
abandoned	223	57
improved then transferred	41	11
improved then purchased	123	32

The high rates of abandonment are illustrated in Figure 5:1, where the history of each piece of land pre-empted each year is summarized. Although rates of land abandonment fell from fifty-four percent for land pre-empted in the 1860-1870 period to fifty percent in the 1871-1881 period, they rose to a high of sixty-two percent in the post-1881 period. How successful was a system of land acquisition from which over half the participants simply walked away?

High rates of claim abandonment, particularly in the first years of non-native settlement on Salt Spring Island, confirm the existence of a highly mobile population in this frontier society. This will come as no surprise to historians of British Columbia, where the transience of a young male work force is a staple of provincial historiography.⁹ High rates of mobility were not unique to British Columbia; they have been confirmed in other settler

societies across Canada. David Gagan's study of Peel County indicates that about half of the population in mid-century censuses could not be found a decade later, and similar persistence rates have been identified in other Ontario and Quebec locations.¹⁰ This study, like theirs, suffers from the historiographic exigencies of areas of high mobility typical of the North American frontier: if the majority of pre-emptors who came to the island stayed only a short time, left few records and moved on, it is difficult to describe or explain who they were, or what they were doing in any particular place.¹¹



Information gleaned about particular settlers from these records does, however, reflect the varieties of settler discontent with the pre-emption system in general, and Salt Spring Island in particular. Cross-linked land records and aggregate behaviours tell us a great deal about the problems and promises that pre-emptors found in the land. Evidence suggests, for example, that a substantial number of pre-emptors who abandoned their claims were the non-resident pre-emptors discussed in Chapter 3: in other words, a significant number of pre-emptors did not take up their claims after registering them. A similar lack of evidence suggests that between 1860 and 1881, one quarter of the pre-emption claimants never resided on Salt Spring Island, a figure that falls dramatically to eight percent in the 1880s.¹² All but two of these elusive pre-emptors abandoned their claims without leaving any evidence that they had ever taken them up.

It is beyond the parameters of this study to follow these itinerant pre-emptors after they abandoned their claims, but histories of British Columbia suggest that they became part of that large group of migrants moving through the colony and province casting about for a way to make a living and a life. For this group, the staking of a pre-emption claim was a speculation in a system of cheap land acquisition that probably involved only the small registration fee and some quixotic thought about rural life. The declining number of those who casually registered but did not take up a claim not only reflects the growing number of wage-earning opportunities as colony and province

matured, but also the increasing seriousness with which land acquisitions were regarded; obtaining cheap lands elsewhere in the southern Vancouver Island area was becoming more difficult, especially in the railway boom years.¹³

The number of these absentee claimants fell by 1891, but more than half of pre-emptions were still being abandoned in the 1880s and early 1890s. Although most of these left within a year, there remained a group of pre-emptors who would eventually abandon their claims, but not until they had made an effort to install themselves on the land. For these people, claim abandonment often reflected settlers' discontent with the exigencies of pioneer life. As we saw in Chapter 2, difficulties with the weather,¹⁴ transportation and communications also created frustrations for settlers.¹⁵

Chapter 7 will explore in greater detail the Indian wars on the east coast of Vancouver Island with which the newspapers in the 1860s were so full, but it will suffice here to note that a number of settlers reported harassment from Aboriginal people probably dissatisfied with the transfer of their lands.¹⁶ James Shaw left his claim in 1860 due to reports of Indian harassment. In 1869, Louis Stark wanted to move to a new pre-emption on the island to protect his family from the violence in the Vesuvius settlement. He wrote to Joseph Trutch, Commissioner of Lands and Works, to request a new pre-emption:

I beg leave to inform you that I have ben obliged to move my famerly from my claim as the Indiens is daingeris I cannot get any man to live on the place since Cirtice was killed for this caiss I [... would like to pre-empt] a peace of land on the n.e. side of ganges harber and joidn on the south east end of david overtons' claim thir is forty or fifty acres of this land near to other settlers which I would

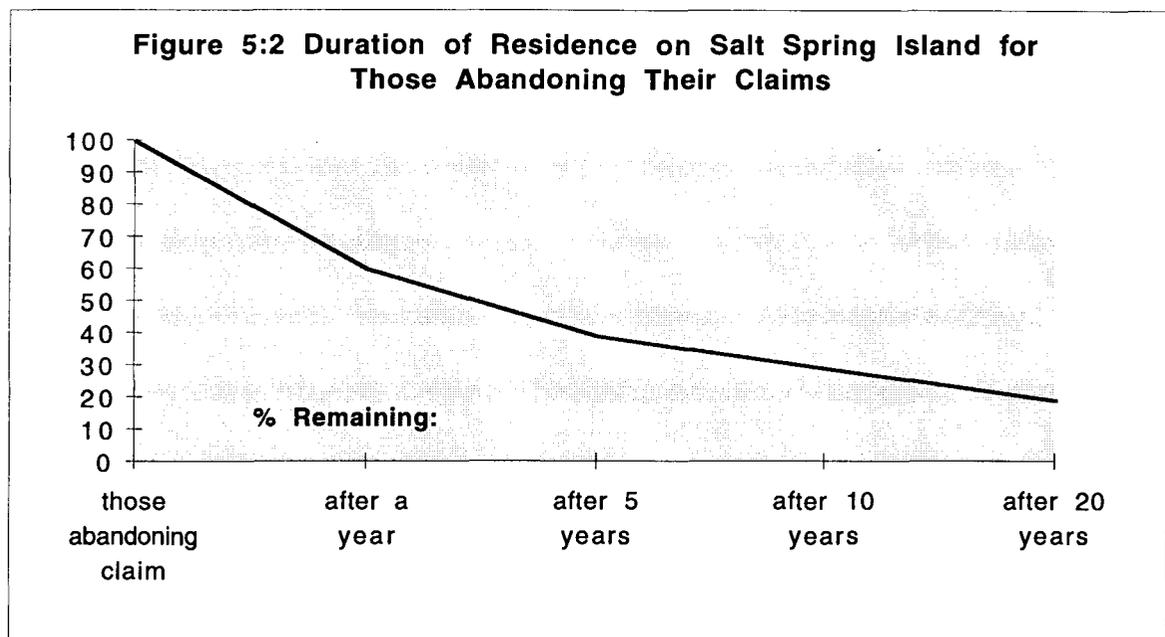
be very thankful if you will record this to me and take one hundred acres from my other claim and record to me one hundred onely until I can get a man on it.¹⁷

Trutch replied that Stark must either improve and purchase his claim, or abandon it, if he wanted to pre-empt more land.¹⁸ Stark was in no position to make such a purchase, and so was forced to abandon his first claim.¹⁹ Social conflict and economic difficulties certainly contributed to settler discontent and to claim abandonment; there is some evidence, as we saw in Chapter 3, that the pre-emption system itself selectively drove a number of serious pre-emptors off the island.

It is clear that numbers of settlers left their pre-emptions before being able to gain any financial return on their investment of time and labour on the land. A close examination of the land records suggests, however, that the significance of an abandoned claim may have been more complex. High claim abandonment rates overstate the extent of mobility on and off the island: although the majority of those staking claims between 1860 and 1891 abandoned their claims, many were doing so without abandoning the island. The 223 claims rescinded after 1860 were abandoned by 156 people; of these, 113 were abandoning their only claim, but forty-three were long-term residents who went on to pre-empt subsequent claims on the island.²⁰

Not only were many claim abandoners going on to take up other claims, but those who took out only one claim often abandoned it after a very long period of time. The average length of stay on Salt Spring Island for all those who abandoned land was more than nine years. As Figure 5:2 indicates,

of all those who abandoned their claims, more than half remained after a year, and there were still forty percent remaining on the island after five years. Almost a third remained after ten years, and, after twenty, almost one out of every five pre-emptors who had abandoned their first claim was still on the island.²¹ For those 'abandoners' who stayed a year or more on the island, however, the average stay was fifteen years, with almost half staying longer than ten years.²² These figures confirm the pattern seen in Chapter 3: high rates of mobility within the first year of staking a pre-emption claim co-existed with surprisingly high persistence rates thereafter.



The length of time abandoners resided on the island suggests that claim abandonment should not be simply understood as an indicator of pre-emption breakdown; on the contrary, pre-emption abandonment seems to have been used selectively by those remaining more than a year for a variety

of purposes. These included graduated and low-risk land acquisition, land-holding for the future, and, commonly, as a strategy for low-cost continued residence. These will be examined in turn.

For a number of settlers, a first pre-emption seems to have worked as a "starter claim" -- land that provided the pre-emptor the opportunity to get established on the island while looking around for a better location. Joseph Akerman, for example, abandoned his first claim when a more desirable neighbouring location became vacant four years later. Other pre-emptors, such as George Mitchell, Pompey Jackson, John Cairns, Thomas Williams, and Armstead Buckner, followed a similar pattern, using the first claim as a springboard for obtaining better land which they went on to improve and purchase.²³ For these settlers, pre-emption abandonment represented flexibility rather than failure.

Joseph Akerman also shared with a number of his island neighbours a more strategic use of land abandonment. A number of settlers held land in a pre-emption claim, unimproved and not paid for, for more than twenty years. After they abandoned their claim, it was immediately pre-empted by the son.²⁴ Similar land transference strategies can be found in other unimproved lands: a number of pre-emptors died after living several years on their unimproved pre-emptions, leaving the land to be improved and purchased by their widows. Most of these widows, probably short of both cash and labour, were content to preserve their pre-emptions without

improvement, as all waited for re-marriage before improving and purchasing their claims.²⁵

Other pre-emptors used the system as an inexpensive vehicle for holding lands until they could pay for them. Take, for example, the case of Theodore Trage. Mr. Trage took up hundreds of acres in the Beaver Point area in the first three decades of settlement, much of it with his partner Henry Spikerman. Both carefully used the pre-emption system to accumulate lands gradually, pre-empting and purchasing a number of times. Claim abandonment was one of their strategies: when Trage took up a pre-emption in 1884, and abandoned it in 1887, it was immediately purchased by Henry Spikerman. Once the land was abandoned, pre-emption regulations allowed Trage to pre-empt more land, which he immediately did.²⁶ Similarly, Arthur Walter accumulated almost a thousand acres of land with a strategy of pre-emption abandonment and outright purchases. For example, he pre-empted one hundred acres in the Ganges area in 1884, only to abandon and immediately purchase it in 1885.²⁷ A number of others may have been attempting a similar strategy of holding lands until they decided, or were able, to purchase them, but had their pre-emption claims scooped by other pre-emptors before they were able to purchase them. F.L. Lakin, William McAfee, and Henry Sampson took up lands, abandoned them, and then quickly purchased them after the subsequent pre-emptors in turn abandoned their claims a few years later.²⁸

While some pre-emptors were clearly holding the land for future gains, others may have been reaping some of the economic advantages of unimproved lands. Richard Maxwell and his brother David, for example, each pre-empted well-timbered lands around Mount Maxwell in the mid-1880s, at the beginning of their logging careers. While David had abandoned his land by 1894, Richard held onto his claim until 1925, at which point he abandoned and immediately purchased it. The land, useless for farming, once again held good stands of timber by that date.²⁹ Although regulations in the late nineteenth century sought to prevent logging on pre-emption claims, they were used by a number of landowners as a source for salable timber, as well as woodlots.³⁰ Clearly, claim abandonment provided these settlers one more strategy in increasing their usable landholdings, both for themselves and their families.

Although the Maxwells, Akermans and Trages were using claim abandonment as part of a strategy that would eventually turn land or its products into a commodity, the use of pre-empted but unimproved lands was not limited to commercial or speculative purposes. Almost a third of those who abandoned their claims lived on them for more than five years before leaving them.³¹ Most of these people walked away from the land they had a right to use but not exchange, in very much the same way as a long-term lessee walks away from a secure rental property. For these people, pre-emption was not so much an investment in land as a stage in life. As we will

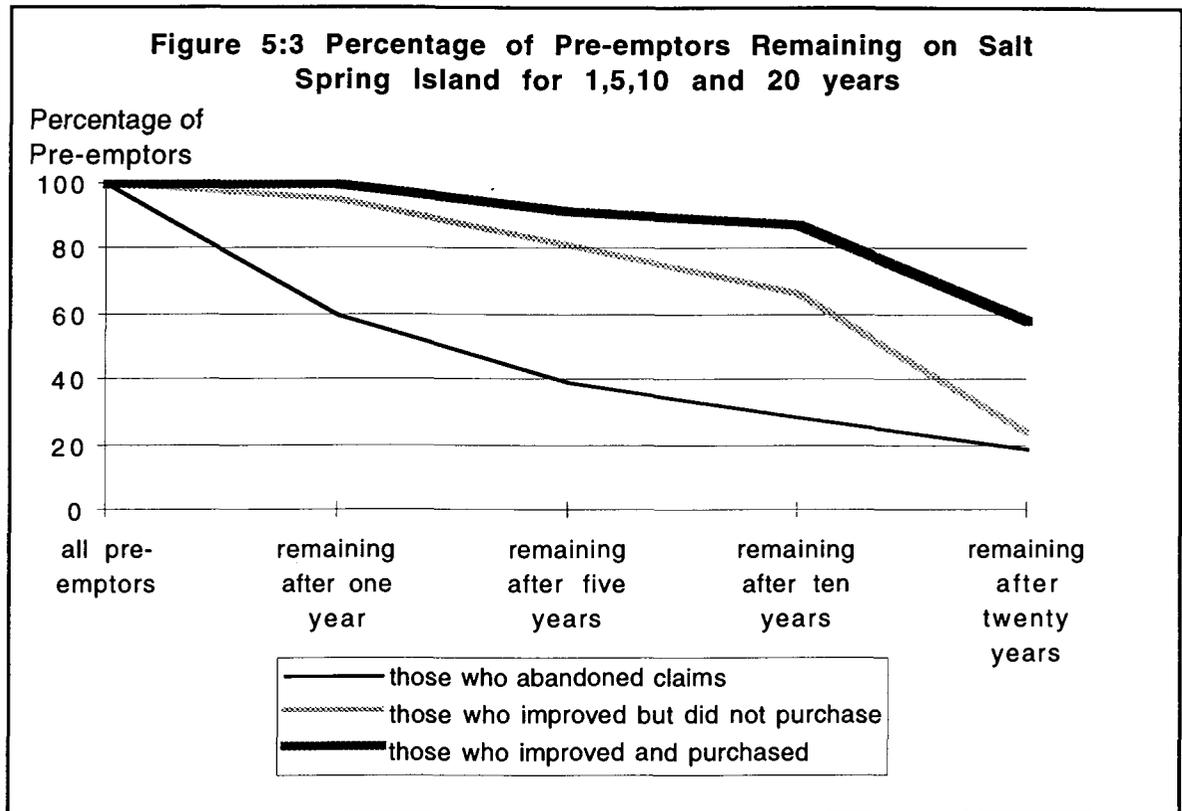
see in later chapters, landholding on Salt Spring Island provided a wide variety of economic alternatives for those who were only intermittently willing or able to turn their land into commercially-viable farms. For many of these settlers, indeed, claim abandonment seems to have been part of a low-cost and flexible solution to the problem of where and how to live.

To suggest that claim abandonment represented a failure of the pre-emption system is to suggest that the goal of pre-emptors was to improve and purchase their lands. Evidence presented here has suggested that some pre-emptors had other uses for the lands they took up. Although some settlers were driven off lands they wanted to purchase by pre-emption regulations and the difficulties of pioneer life, other settlers used claim abandonment as a strategy for deferring, or putting off altogether, the necessity of paying for the land that they used as a short-term economic strategy, held for the future, or upon which they lived.

ii) Improvement and Purchase: Successful Pre-emptors

When we turn our attention to those who improved and then either traded or purchased their lands, we are seeing those who, in policy makers' terms, proved the success of the pre-emption system. This system provided the opportunity for over a hundred settlers on the island to turn 'useless' lands into the improved holdings necessary to create viable farms, and a further forty-two pre-emptions were traded after improvements had been made.³² The remainder of this chapter will look at those who made these

choices, and then move on to explore some land-related behaviours that tax the historian trying to understand such behaviours in the context of a rural discourse that identified the long-term goal of the pre-emption system with the creation of agricultural capitalists.



While a portion of both non-landowners and pre-emptors comprised a steady stream of people taking up land and leaving Salt Spring Island within a year, there was nevertheless a solid core of permanent settlers who stayed longer than ten years on the island. Figure 5:3 confirms this trend, and suggests that it was mediated by the decisions that pre-emptors made about their land. In spite of the flexible and varied uses of abandoned lands noted

above, those who abandoned their claims stayed the least amount of time on the island, and those who purchased their claims stayed the longest.

And those who improved and purchased their land stayed a very long time on Salt Spring Island: an average of twenty-six years, as opposed to the nine years that claim abandoners remained. A number of these pre-emptors had created successful and thriving farms by the 1890s; as we saw in Chapters 3 and 4, farmers like Joseph Akerman, Theodore Trage, John Maxwell, John Cairns, Alexander McLennan, John Norton and Henry Ruckle were growing and selling a variety of agricultural produce to Victoria, Vancouver and the mining communities of Nanaimo and Ladysmith by the 1890s.

The behaviour of purchasers, however, resembled that of abandoners in one important way: most showed a surprising reluctance either to turn their land into a commodity, or themselves into full-time petty commodity producers.³³ This reluctance, visible in the state of agricultural development discussed in the last chapter, as well as in the high number of abandoned claims discussed above, is also reflected in the length of time it took pre-emptors to improve and purchase their claims. Those who pre-empted land in the 1860s and went on to purchase their claims waited, on average, ten years before registering improvements on their land. They waited another eight years, on average, before paying for it. Those pre-empting in the 1870s and 1880s waited an average of just under seven and six years, respectively, before registering improvements on their land, and another two before

obtaining crown grants.

We have looked in some detail at some reasons why pre-emptors might take so long to improve and purchase their lands: the physical difficulties in clearing land and building houses and fences were often formidable and time consuming; bureaucratic processes were often cumbersome; transportation and communication was limited; most settlers lacked the financial resources that, as Peter Russell has demonstrated, made so much difference to rates of land improvement in frontier areas.³⁴

In spite of these impediments to the improvement of country lands, there was one group of island pre-emptors who managed to circumvent their impact more effectively, and improve their lands more quickly, than others: those who improved land and then transferred it without purchasing it. The behaviour of this small group is interesting because it is different from those who improved and purchased their lands. As such, their behaviour extends our understanding of the range of possible behaviours for island landowners, particularly those who were able and willing to make the investments necessary to improve their lands. Table 5:2 examines the behaviours of that minority of pre-emptors who improved their lands. As the table suggests, most of those who transferred their lands -- that is, those who improved but did not go on to purchase their pre-emptions -- did so before 1882. Those transferring their lands took about half as long to improve their claims than their counterparts who purchased.

The length of time between taking up and improving a claim speaks directly to the settlers' desire to turn their land into a tradable commodity on the one hand, or a working farm on the other. Evidence presented in Chapter 4 suggests that most farmers on the island did not turn their land into commercial farming operations. Evidence presented in this chapter suggests that those who improved their land, traded it, and left the island were different -- more fortunate and/or hard working -- than those farmers, whose patience often verged on torpor, remaining to purchase their lands on Salt Spring Island.

Table 5:2 Differences between those purchasing and transferring their pre-emption claims, Salt Spring Island 1860-1891

	How many pre- emptions taken out in these years were purchased? (% of all claims)	Average length of time (years) between pre- emption and improvement: Lots Purchased	How many pre- emptions taken out in this year were improved and transferred? (% of all claims)	Average length of time (years) between pre- emption and improvement: Lots Transferred
1860-1871	13 (11%)	10.4	25 (21%)	3.7
1871-1881	35 (41%)	6.8	13 (15%)	4.4
1882-1891	75 (41%)	5.5	3 (2%)	0.7

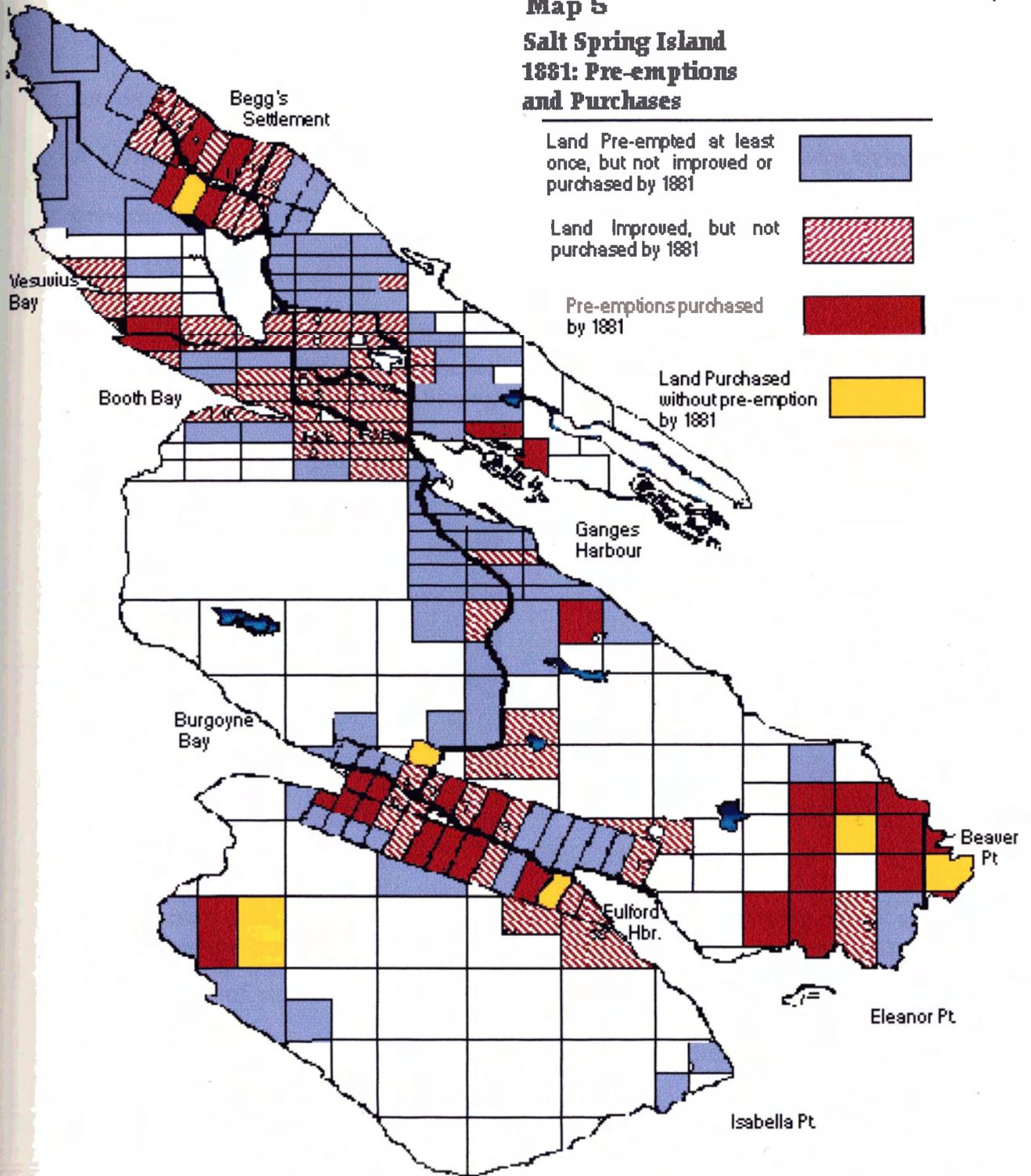
Three explanations seem possible here. Those who quickly improved their lands and moved may have been wealthy enough to complete what their neighbours could only dream of, by hiring the labour necessary to clear land. Particularly in the years before 1881 (when most of the transfers

occurred), the sources that could document this type of inequality in a routine way do not exist. The evidence mentioned in Chapter 4, however, seems to support broadly-based poverty throughout the island. Two other possibilities suggest themselves: either the 'serious' farmers soon realized the island's limited agricultural potential and moved elsewhere to better pursue their agricultural aspirations, or they wished to make money out of their land, and did so by making improvements rapidly. Either way, the net result was that the motivated, hard working individuals like Jonathan Begg left the island, leaving their slow working companions behind to purchase their claims at leisure. The behaviour of those who improved and transferred their land was, however, anomalous in a system that seemed otherwise to function primarily to maximize low-cost, low-risk tenure on the land.

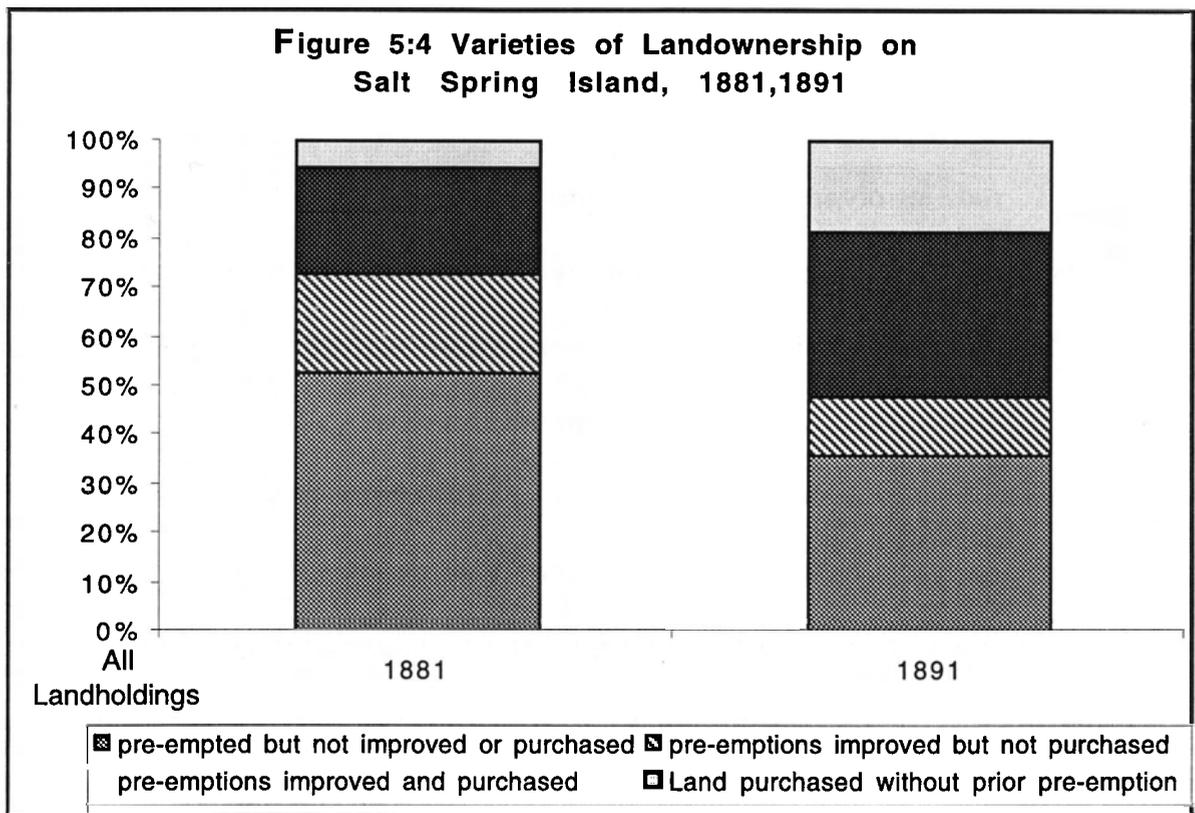
The limited commodity value of land can be seen in another way. Although pre-emption was the primary method of land acquisition on Salt Spring Island, the straightforward ownership of land -- the possession of a crown grant and freehold title -- remained an unusual condition for most landowners in these early years. This ambiguity can be seen clearly by looking at Map 5, which provides an overview of all the lands that had been pre-empted, improved and purchased by 1881. By this date, little of it had been improved, and even less purchased.

This characteristic of island landholding can also be seen in the snapshots of the 1881 and 1891 censuses, cross-linked with land records, as

Map 5
Salt Spring Island
1881: Pre-emptions
and Purchases



summarized in Figure 5:4. Of the fifty-five household heads who “owned” land in 1881, fewer than a quarter (twelve) had obtained a crown grant for some or all of their land by that date. By 1891, this figure had risen to a third. A further twenty percent in 1881, and twelve percent in 1891, were living on pre-emptions for which they had obtained certificates of improvement that gave them provisional ownership rights only.



The majority of landowners in 1881 (twenty-nine out of fifty-five) were in possession of lands that they had the right -- indeed, the obligation -- to live on, use and improve, but which, because they lacked a certificate of improvement, they were unable to mortgage, trade, or even purchase at the discounted price of \$1 per acre. By 1891, more than a third of landowning

household heads on the island were still in this situation.³⁵ Throughout most of the time period under study, then, most land owners did not own their land.

iii. The Multiple Meanings of Rural Lands

Evidence presented in the last chapter suggests that the majority of pre-emptors were not just slow at improving their lands: a great many seem to have simply stopped improving them when a certain minimum amount had been cleared, fenced and built upon. A community of agricultural capitalists on the island failed, for the most part, to emerge. In speculating on the motivations behind the surprisingly unprogressive behaviours that characterized the rural experience for so many on the island, it is difficult to suppress the possibility that many were not participating in commercial agriculture because they were not interested in doing so.

The evidence is compelling: as we saw in Chapter 4, notwithstanding pre-emptors' residence on country lands, agricultural production and land clearance rates were minimal, confirming the failure of most Salt Spring Island farmers to create the commercially viable farms that the pre-emption system was designed to promote. An examination of claim abandonment indicates that a number of Salt Spring Island pre-emptors made little investment of either labour or capital in their lands: instead, they were using the system as a method of putting off altogether payment for inhabited and exploited lands. Most of those who pre-empted land were slow to turn their

land into a commodifiable investment. Assessment rolls, available for Salt Spring Island for the early 1890s, also point to the fact that landowners were reluctant to part with cash to support their lands: one out of every four landowners neglected to pay taxes in these years.³⁶ And, as we have just seen, the group of pre-emptors who were quickest to improve their lands were those who transferred their lands and left the island.

Before dismissing island farmers as failures because they did not become agriculturalists, however, it is important to look in more detail at the particular benefits that low-cost land, flexible terms and secure residence were in fact offering pre-emptors of country lands. Although pre-emptors were not able to speculate on their land until purchase, they were able to live on their land with no obligation to pay for it until it was surveyed, at which time the applicant could apply and pay for their crown grant. Indeed, it was impossible to purchase claims at the discounted pre-emption price until improvements had been registered and the survey paid for. The government, as noted above, was increasingly concerned about problems associated with unsurveyed lands, and encouraged and coerced pre-emptors, especially those who had received certificates of improvement, to have their lands surveyed.³⁷

Although the Land Ordinance of 1861 had specified two years as the minimum amount of time a pre-emptor must reside on the land prior to applying for the right to purchase it at the rate of \$1 an acre, there was little attention given to the maximum amount of time that could elapse between

pre-emption and purchase: nineteenth-century legislators were much more interested in getting settlers onto the land than compelling payment, at least in these early days. Thus, Joseph Trutch complained in 1868:

as it is found that the Government has no power under the Land Ordinance to compel payment by pre-emptors of the upset price of such pre-empted and surveyed lands, these lands must continue in this anomalous condition until the payment of the price thereof be enforced under penalty of forfeiture of all pre-emptive rights....³⁸

Before the 1870s, the government showed little inclination to pressure pre-emptors to fulfill the official directive to improve and purchase their lands within two years. None of the 317 pre-emptions taken out on Salt Spring Island before 1876 had been purchased by that date.³⁹ By 1873, the government was growing concerned by the fact that throughout the province lands that had been purchased outright had not been paid for; a land return tabled by Robert Beaven in 1873 indicated that seventy-five percent of land in the province was being purchased by deferred payment, and, of that, only fourteen percent had actually been paid for.⁴⁰ As we saw in Chapter 1, by the late 1870s pre-emptors were being encouraged to make payments by installment within four years of improvement, but legislation regulating the amount of time between pre-emption and improvement was not clarified before the 1884 land act.⁴¹ After that date, increasing pressure was put on pre-emptors, first by threats to remove settlers from their lands if certificates of improvement were not obtained, and later, by charging interest on unpaid amounts.⁴² Pre-emptors obtaining their crown grants from the mid-1890s

onward commonly had the price of a survey added to the price of their land, apparently paid to the Surveyor General and recorded in the Land Register. Throughout this period, as the figures above suggest, enforcement of regulations surrounding payment for lands remained extremely lax, the result of large distances and administrative ennui.⁴³

All the while that pre-emptors were on their land, whatever their particular stage in the pre-emption system, they enjoyed secure tenure, with all the rights accorded to landowners except the right to trade, mortgage or sell. They were generally unmolested by government officials.⁴⁴ Not only stability of tenure but political voice was conferred by a pre-emptor's landholding status: most voters on the land gained their right to vote, not by their education, but by means of pre-empting land. Without either owning their pre-emptions or turning their lands into commercial agricultural enterprises, land owners occupied a privileged position in the island society and, in their own way, in the island economy.

Conclusion

Although settlers enthusiastically took up pre-emptions, married, and raised families on Salt Spring Island, they showed greater reluctance to improve and purchase their land. The liberal discourse of modernization assumes that those who do not maximize production, or successfully commodify its means, have failed to reach their intended goal. Closer analysis suggests that many pre-emptors on Salt Spring Island found

ingenious ways of getting around the more constraining aspects of pre-emption system to take full advantage of the “easy terms” of land acquisition that it offered. These advantages frequently lay outside of the benefits attendant on the improvement and purchase of land. Indeed, evidence concerning land acquisition and abandonment suggests that it was the economic flexibility offered by these provisional forms of landownership, and not the creation of a commercially viable farm, that held particular appeal to many settlers. This theme will be pursued in its economic and cultural dimensions in the chapters that follow

NOTES

¹ Dorothy Dodds, 1990 interview, Salt Spring Island Archives (hereafter SSIA).

² Out of seventy-one household heads, fifty-five (seventy-six percent) were landowners in 1881. Ninety-six percent of these had obtained some of their land through pre-emption, and two-thirds (sixty-nine percent) of landowners had obtained all of their land by pre-empting it. In 1891, seventy-five of ninety-four household heads (seventy-eight percent) were landowners. In both 1881 and 1891, all but two landowners pre-empted land at some time. In 1891, sixty-one of the seventy-five household heads (eighty percent) who owned land were still living on land acquired through pre-emption. Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; and Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 -- - S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

³ By 1891, sixty-one of the seventy-five household heads who owned land had obtained at least some of it through pre-emption. Thirty-six of these had still not obtained crown grants for their land.

⁴ As section XX of the 1861 Land Proclamation put it, "all deposits paid in respect of such forfeited claims, and all improvements, buildings and erection thereon shall [...] be absolutely forfeited." British Columbia Proclamation No. 9, 1861, Paragraph XX.

⁵ Paul Tennant, discusses the important differences between Indian Lands and the granting of the British-based fee simple; one of these differences is the fact that such lands cannot be sold, but can only revert to the crown. Paul Tennant, Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990), 11.

⁶ The use of the pronoun "he" is quite deliberate here. Of the 543 pre-emptions taken out between 1859 and 1891, all but three were taken out by a man. As we will see below, however, a small number of widows had pre-emption transferred to them.

⁷ Prior to 1873 legislation, pre-emptors had to have the land surveyed before obtaining a certificate of improvement. Robert E. Cail, Land, Man and the Law: The Disposal of Crown Lands in British Columbia, 1871-1913 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1974), 23.

⁸ Between 1859 and 1891, 541 pre-emption claims were taken out. Only 126 of these, or twenty-three percent were purchased by the pre-emptor. 171 of the 541 pre-emptions received certificates of improvement, with forty-five being transferred.

⁹ See for example, Hugh Johnston, "Native People, Settlers and Sojourners: 1871-1916," in Hugh Johnston, ed. The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia (Vancouver,

Douglas and McIntyre, 1996), 165-204.

¹⁰ David Gagan found that more than half of those showing up in decennial censuses at mid-century were still in Peel County ten years later. David Gagan, Hopeful Travelers: Families, Land and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 114-120. J.I. Little, using a more comprehensive methodology, finds more than fifty percent of families persisted for two decades, and a "remarkable forty-eight percent" persisted over a thirty-year period. J.I. Little, Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1881 (Kingston and Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1991), 95, 93-104. Peter Russell finds slightly higher persistence rates in Emily Township, Ontario. Peter Russell, "Emily Township: Pioneer Persistence to Equality?" Histoire Sociale/ Social History, 22, no. 44 (November 1989), 324-26. Lower persistence is found by Gerard Bouchard, in his study of Laterriere. He attributes high mobility to a transition point in the community, where mature families were leaving for frontier areas of Lac St. Jean in order to settle their grown children on cheaper and more available lands. Gérard Bouchard, "Family Structures and Geographic Mobility at Laterriere, 1851-1935," Journal of Family History, 2 (1977), 350-69.

¹¹ For a discussion of this particular problem with local studies, see Gagan, Hopeful Travelers, 14; Russell, "Emily Township," 322-23. A study that overcomes many of these problems is Bruce Elliott's, which followed 775 families from Ireland to two different Canadian locations, over a number of generations. Bruce Elliott, Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988).

¹² Between 1860 and 1881, fifty-three of the 204 pre-emption claimants show up only as pre-emption registrants, appearing in no other sources. In the 1881-1891 period, only fourteen of the 183 pre-emptors show up only at registration, abandoning their claims.

¹³ It may also reflect the increasingly strict regulations about registering a claim. The British Colonist of 18 May 1861 listed the names and addresses of those who had officially taken up land on Salt Spring to that date, and issued notice that those who did not comply with pre-emption regulations, including prompt payment for surveyed lands, would forfeit their claims. Land Agent John Copland protested, and apparently won. Copland to Pemberton, 6 July 1861, Correspondence of the Lands and Works Dept., Colonial Correspondence, BCA. A history of this dispute can be found in the file of W.K. Brown, file 96/72, British Columbia Attorney General, GR 419, BCA.

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- ¹⁴ Particularly the terrible winter of 1862. British Colonist, 2 May 1862.
- ¹⁵ See, for example, British Colonist, 3 June 1860, 5 May 1862, 9 April 1863, 9 March 1865; petition regarding postal service, 21 November 1868, "Petitions, 1868-1870," Colonial Correspondence, GR 1372, BCA.
- ¹⁶ British Colonist, 12 July 1860, 14 July 1860, 20 August 1860, 23 August 1860, 9 April 1861, 15 May 1861, 6 May 1863, 8 May 1863, 15 May 1863, 3 October 1866, 2 November 1866. See also Hollins to Wm. A. Young, Colonial Secretary, 24 February 1869, file 789/69; and petition protesting violence of Natives, f1354, Colonial Correspondence, GR 1372, BCA.
- ¹⁷ Louis Stark to Joseph Trutch, November 1869, C/B/30.71K/S+2, BCA.
- ¹⁸ Joseph Trutch to Louis Stark, 10 November 1860, C/B/30.71K/S+2, BCA.
- ¹⁹ Louis Stark, no pre-emption number, Vancouver Island Colonial Surveyor; Office of the Land Recorder for Salt Spring Island, Copy of the Pre-Emption Register to 17 October 1862, CAA/30.71/Sa3.1, BCA.
- ²⁰ Of 388 claims staked on the Island between 1860 and 1891, 223 were abandoned by 156 pre-emptors. 113 abandoned their only claims, and over half of these (sixty-one) abandoned the island within a year. Thirty took up one other claim, and a further thirteen took up more than two. In 1860 to 1871, those who abandoned their claims stayed on their claim an average of 3.1 years, a figure that fell to 2.4 years in the 1870-1881 period, and increased again to 3.7 years in the 1882-1891 period. Abandonment dates were seldom recorded, and so dates are inferred here from the next date that the pre-emptor took up land (pre-emption regulations usually prohibited holding more than one claim), from the next date that the land was pre-empted or purchased, and from miscellaneous other routinely generated sources.
- ²¹ Of the 156 people who abandoned their first claim pre-empted between 1860 and 1891, ninety-three remained after one year, sixty-one remained after five years, forty-five remained after ten years, and thirty remained after twenty years.
- ²² The average was 9.3 years, while the average length of stay on a claim (taken out between 1860 and 1891) was 2.6 years.
- ²³ Joseph Akerman, Pre-emption no.494, 1863, no address. According to Bob Akerman, his grandson, Joseph Akerman disliked the long shadows cast on his first pre-emption by Mount Maxwell, and chose a sunnier location second time round. Interview with Bob Akerman, 1989, SSIA. See also George Mitchell (pre-emption no.960), who took up land in Begg's Settlement in 1862, and subsequently took up land in the south end; Pompey

Jackson who abandoned land pre-empted in 1863 to take up a more suitable claim in 1867. Pre-emption no. 1008, British Columbia Dept. of Land and Works, Pre-Emption Records, Vancouver and Gulf Islands, GR 766, BCA. Similarly, John Cairns took up land (pre-emption no. 1438) in 1873, lived on it until 1878, when he abandoned it and purchased a neighbouring piece of land outright. Section 12, Range 1, South Salt Spring Island Land Register. Thomas Williams first pre-empted land at Range 1, Section 9 Burgoyne Bay (no pre-emption no.), in 1866, and abandoned it when he took up land Section 6, Range 1 in 1868. (Pre-emption no.108). When Armstead Buckner arrived on the island in 1859, he took out a pre-emption on section 3, range 1 east and west, but in 1863 he abandoned that claim to take out a second pre-emption, no.619, on which he stayed until his death in 1888.

²⁴ In 1878 Akerman pre-empted a further sixty acres of land in the Burgoyne Valley. He improved and purchased the north forty acres in 1885, but held onto the south portion without improving it, until 1910. When he abandoned the claim at this time, his son William immediately took it up. Joseph Akerman, Homestead Pre-emption no.9, 1878, Salt Spring Island Database. Joseph Akerman's son, Joseph J. Akerman followed a similar strategy, pre-empting land in 1885, and abandoning it without improvement until 1907, when his son Thomas pre-empted it; pre-emption no.136. So also Joseph King pre-empted land in 1882, holding it without improvement until 1904, when he abandoned it, allowing his son to pre-empt it immediately thereafter; pre-emption no.35, 1882. Michael Gyves took out an additional pre-emption in 1885, abandoning it in 1914 when it was immediately taken up by his son; pre-emption no. 120.

²⁵ Thomas Williams held his pre-emption for four years before dying and leaving his unimproved land to his son-in-law, George Furness, who resided with his wife and his mother-in-law on the land until he in turn died, and left it to his wife. See Thomas Williams, Pre-emption no.1083; Thomas Griffiths lived on his pre-emption from 1868 till his death in 1879, leaving it to his wife Elizabeth. Elizabeth finally purchased the land, and moved onto it with her new husband in 1885. Thomas Foord (no.907) left his unimproved land, pre-empted in 1866, to his wife Charlotte after holding it for a year. Charlotte improved and paid for her land in 1876, shortly after her marriage to William Morley (no.955). William Harrison took up a claim in 1874 that he left to his wife when he died in 1878, with no record of improvement (no.1499). Mrs. Harrison, who left the island to live in Oberlin, Ohio, before her husband's death, returned to live on this land, which paid for the land 1892, with her new husband, Albert Staff. John Kelly took up

his claim in 1881, and it was transferred to his wife in 1883, and finally improved in 1898.(no.30), although his death at this time is unconfirmed. George H. Anderson left his 1870 (no.119) unimproved pre-emption to his wife, who improved it in 1890, after her marriage to Mr. Henry Robinson. British Columbia Dept. of Lands and Works, Certificates of Improvement, Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, GR 765, BCA and Salt Spring Island Database.

²⁶ See Pre-emption no.83, 1884, Theodore Trage, British Columbia Dept. of Lands and Works, Pre-emptions, Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, GR 766, BCA and Salt Spring Island Database. Regulations placed limits on the number of acres and the number of pre-emption claims that could be held.

²⁷ See pre-emption no.21, Arthur Walter, 1884, British Columbia Dept. of Lands and Works, Pre-emptions, Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, GR 0766, BCA and Salt Spring Island Database.

²⁸ F.L. Lakin (pre-emption no.160, 1886), William McAfee (pre-emption no. 2649, 1907), and Henry Sampson (pre-emption no. 750, 1864). British Columbia Dept. of Lands and Works, Pre-emptions, Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, GR 766, BCA and Salt Spring Island Database.

²⁹ Richard Maxwell, Pre-emption no.143, 160 acres, south west quarter of section 80, 1885 and David Maxwell, Pre-emption no.223, 1888, eighty acres in the south east quarter section 80, Land Register for Salt Spring Island.

³⁰ Legislation was passed in 1884 that restricted the sale of timbered lands, but compliance was not enforced for twenty years. See Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 92. Joe Garner, an early resident and one of the early loggers on the island, discusses the logging of pre-emption claims by his family and others in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Joe Garner, Never Fly Over an Eagle's Nest: A True Story of Courage and Survival During British Columbia's Early Years (Nanaimo: Cinnabar Press, 1980), 141-158.

³¹ Of the 156 pre-emptors who abandoned their claims, fifty-five spent more than five years on their claims.

³² 124 pre-emptions were purchased on land pre-empted between 1860 and 1891.

³³ Even in the years between 1875 and 1879, when, under the Homestead Act, pre-empted lands could be obtained free of charge, only six of the pre-emptors already on the island -- John Cairns, Richard Brinn, Thomas Williams, Joseph Akerman, Richard Jackson and Abel Douglas -- used this provision to obtain land on what they assumed

would be free lands, while another eight arrived on the island at this time to do so. Only John Cairns actually obtained the crown grant for his property before the law changed to restore the purchase price to \$1.00 per acre in 1879, but the land register for Salt Spring indicate that the fourteen who obtained Homestead Pre-emptions, and went on to improve and purchase their claims, were not required to pay this price when they eventually obtained their crown grants, on average seven years later.

³⁴ Russell, "Emily Township," 317.

³⁵ Of the seventy-five landowning household heads, sixty-one had pre-empted all or some of their land. Nine were living on land that they had improved, and twenty-five had purchased their pre-emptions. A further fourteen were living on land that they had purchased without a pre-emption.

³⁶ On the 1892 assessment roll, thirty of 125 landowners (twenty-four percent) did not pay their land taxes. This figure rose to twenty-five percent in the following year. By 1894, thirty percent were not paying taxes. Further assessment rolls are missing until 1902, by which time the numbers not paying taxes had dropped substantially, probably as the result of government threats in the late 1890s to sell up the lands of delinquent taxpayers. British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes Assessment Roll for 1892-4, Gulf Islands Assessment District, Salt Spring Division, Roll B444, BCA.

³⁷ See, for example, the warnings in The British Columbia Gazette, 20 March 1875.

³⁸ Trutch to Colonial Secretary, 12 August 1868, 15-16, file 953-4, Lands and Works Dept., Colonial Correspondence, GR 1440, BCA.

³⁹ Only one was purchased in that year, with only fourteen pre-emptions purchased before 1882.

⁴⁰ "Return of Government Reserves," British Columbia Journals, 1st Parl. 2nd sess; 1872-73, cited in Cail, Land, Man, and the Law, 25.

⁴¹ This act raised the price of unsurveyed and surveyed land to \$2.50 an acre, and distinguished between agricultural and waste land, which was still sold at \$1.00 an acre. Land registers for Salt Spring indicate that all land was sold at the 'waste land' price. The act allowed settlers two years to register their improvements, and another four to make annual installments on their land. Cail, Land, Man and the Law, 36-37.

⁴² Thirteen of those taking up lands before 1892 were being charged interest on their unpaid installments beginning in the 1890s. The practice became common for those taking up lands in the post-1891 period. See Land Register for Salt Spring Island, Surveyor General's Office, Victoria. For threats to confiscate unsurveyed lands, see The

British Columbia Gazette, 20 March 1875.

⁴³ Cail, Land, Man and the Law, xiii.

⁴⁴ Squatters in many areas of North America successfully fought the legal establishment - and bona fide landowners -- for these rights on a number of occasions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See, for example, Alan Taylor, "'A Kind of Warr:' The Contest for Land on the Northeastern Frontier, 1750-1820," William and Mary Quarterly, 46 (1989), 3-26; Donald Pisani, "Squatter Law in California, 1850-1858," Western Historical Quarterly (Autumn 1994), 277-310.

Chapter 6
Peasants on the Coast?
The Rural Economy of Salt Spring Island Re-Examined

Chapter 1 has argued that notwithstanding the contemporary historiographical emphasis on resource extraction, many British Columbians in the nineteenth century saw the economic prosperity and social stability of the emerging province rooted in the settlement of farm families on the land. Chapter 2 has argued that bureaucrats, journalists, and statisticians, like those settlers who wrote about their experience, interpreted the settlement and economic growth of Salt Spring Island within a well-established tradition of what rural was, and what it meant. These British Columbians believed (however unadvisedly) that rural life meant agricultural production on the family farm, the success of which could be measured in the transition from pioneer self-sufficiency to commercial agricultural production. Chapter 3 has examined the ways in which Salt Spring Island landholders realized the agrarian goals of administrators by taking up, improving and settling on country lands.

Chapter 4 went on to argue, however, that this discourse of rural life was strangely disconnected from the behaviours of most Salt Spring farmers, who neither cleared much land, nor grew much produce. The links between Salt Spring Island farming and agricultural capitalism -- or at least successful agricultural capitalism -- seem to have been greatly exaggerated by those writing about the island economy. Chapter 5 explored this problem by

examining pre-emptors' uses of the land system, inferring from these behaviours a variety of land-related goals, some of which transcended (or at least avoided) its use as a commodity.

The remainder of this dissertation continues to explore the gap between the official discourse of rural Salt Spring Island and the experience of farming, in order to better understand what land in particular, and rural in general, meant to the population of Salt Spring Island. This chapter addresses two related questions: first, if the farmers of Salt Spring Island were not relying on agricultural production or land speculation, then what were they doing to make a living? Second, if the model that associates rural life with farming, and farming with commercial production does not explain behaviours on Salt Spring Island, in what context can we understand the economy and culture?

i) The Problem of Occupation

This chapter will begin its exploration of the disjunctures between farming and rural life with a closer look at the term "occupation" as an ontological category, revealing its particular limitations in defining the life work of Salt Spring Island residents. Occupation, "one's habitual employment, profession, craft, or trade,"¹ provides one of the most common routinely-generated categories of information available for the population on Salt Spring Island. It appears consistently in such sources as voters' lists, parish records, assessment rolls, censuses and business directories. Only the Dominion

Census is explicit about what occupation means. The 1891 Instructions to Officers advised enumerators on the subject as follows: “[t]he profession, trade or occupation must be entered in full, as given to the enumerator. When two of these are united in one person, both may or may not be given; the point being decided by the importance attached to the fact by the person himself.”²

While occupation seems at first to provide a sensible enough description of what people do to make a living, there were some well-defined limitations placed on this category of experience within the discourse of bureaucratic liberalism in the nineteenth century. These limitations are most apparent in definitions of women’s work. In spite of numerous indications that Salt Spring Island women were an important part of an economy rooted in the farm and household,³ information on women’s and children’s contributions to the island economy is very difficult to find.

The silence that defines women’s work in the primary sources can, in part, be attributed to women’s legal status regarding land. More than eighty percent of the records containing information about Salt Spring Island residents appears on documents relating in some way to land ownership. In nineteenth-century British Columbia, where most women were prevented by law from participating in the most common form of land acquisition on the island --pre-emption-- their relative obscurity in routinely generated sources is not surprising.⁴ Thus, while women and children together comprised sixty

percent of the population of the island in the census years of 1881 and 1891, together they generated fewer than fifteen percent of the records.⁵

When adult women *did* appear, however, as they did in the decennial census, the cultural constructions of "occupation" usually did not include their work: in 1891, enumerators were explicitly instructed not to list occupations for women and children "unless they have a definite occupation besides their share in the work of the family or household."⁶ Housekeeping only became an occupation "for such persons as receive wages or salary for their services."⁷ This decision speaks to much broader issues concerning the ways that society assigns significance to particular actions, as we will see in greater detail below.

In 1881, only two women out of fifty-eight who were fifteen and older (three percent) were listed with an occupation: one a widowed 'housekeeper' and the other a widowed 'farmer.' Nine young women over fourteen years of age and living with their parents listed no occupation. A further thirty-eight women were married to farmers but also listed no occupation. This is in stark contrast to the portrayal of men in this source: all of those fifteen and over were listed with an occupation in 1881, including nine young men listed as farmer's sons.⁸ In 1891 more women --twelve of the ninety-two, or thirteen percent -- were listing occupations. Most of these women were single.⁹ Four married women also listed occupations in 1891: two farmers, a baker and an unemployed teacher.¹⁰ Nevertheless, occupational status for

women remained unusual, subsumed in their traditional roles as wives, mothers and daughters.¹¹

In spite of its obscurity at the level of government documentation, scattered sources indicate that women's work was central to the economy of Salt Spring Island. Evidence suggests that self-provisioning activities remained an important activity of Salt Spring households well into the twentieth century. Many of these activities were carried out by women and children. Women probably cared for the 4,200 hens and chickens living on the island in 1891 (the only year for which records are available) as well as the 300 ducks and geese. They probably milked the 265 cows, and made the 11,651 pounds of home-made butter produced in 1891.¹² Women also worked preserving food, foraging for wild fruits, tending orchards, and growing extensive vegetable gardens. When Mrs. Gyves, for example, a Cowichan Native who was some months pregnant, went into premature labour sometime in the 1880s, she was picking fruit at the time. The family maintained that she had miscarried on other occasions because of hard physical labour on the farm. When Mary Reanny died of puerperal fever in 1891, local residents suspected that the difficult labour was exacerbated by heavy work in the fields.¹³ This type of self-provisioning work is seldom accorded significance as legitimate economic activity. Even though anecdotal evidence suggests that some of this produce made its way to local markets, or

was exported off the island,¹⁴ economists do not routinely include produce from the household garden in estimates of marketable surpluses.¹⁵

Men were often away from home for days or even weeks at a time, and women, in addition to their more traditional role in the preparation of food, would help provision the family with at least some of the wild venison, grouse, clams, fish, and ducks that were an important part of people's diet. Primary sources concerning food are notoriously hard to find, but the importance of both wild game and household labour to the diets of Salt Spring Island residents can be glimpsed in available documents. When widower James McFadden ate a breakfast of "the heart and liver of a deer and a part of rabbit [...and...] a basin of wine" in 1868, it was prepared and placed on the table, like the (allegedly poisoned) coffee he drank, and the under-cooked bread he ate, by his thirteen year old daughter. When William Robinson was murdered, he was just sitting down to a dinner of salmon and potatoes.¹⁶ Bishop George Hills was particularly impressed by seeing Mrs. Lineker "at the water's edge raking in smelts. We had some for dinner and capital they were, delicious."¹⁷

Other evidence suggests that island women played an important role in fishing on the island. As we will see in more detail in the next chapter, a number of the settlers were Aboriginal women. Many of these women not only maintained social ties to their Native extended families, but seem to have instructed their non-Native husbands in well-established patterns of

subsistence activities, including fishing.¹⁸ These activities speak to the particular economic benefits that marriage to a Native woman could bring. Homer Stevens, whose family (on his grandmother's side) fished on the coast for centuries, writes of his grandparents who were early settlers on Salt Spring Island in the 1880s. His grandmother was a Cowichan, and his father a Greek:

Emma was more interested in telling about the time when she and my grandfather were living on the farm on Saltspring Island and coming over to fish salmon on the Fraser. [...] Later on, when they had a family, my grandmother would usually stay on the farm on Saltspring Island, taking care of the kids while he went fishing, but in the early years, she'd come across and fish with him during the salmon season. I gather that she taught him a lot about how to catch salmon.¹⁹

Aside from the census listings mentioned above, little evidence exists about the extent of women's work for wages in the period under study, although the oral history record indicate that women worked seasonally in the fields for wages in a later period.²⁰

The struggle to find out about women's work on Salt Spring Island reveals the selectivity of both nineteenth-century bureaucrats and modern historians alike. The types of activities outlined above and performed by women -- self-provisioning, usually unwaged household-centered tasks, or irregular and part time waged work -- find little resonance within historical descriptions of British Columbia or any other developed region where work is commonly identified with earning money, most particularly with wages.²¹

At first glance, recognition of men's economic role seems to be born out by their definition, unlike that of their wives and daughters, within the occupational category of "farmer." Out of the 2,400 records containing information about occupation on Salt Spring Island, over seventy percent of these describe men as farmers.²² While a number of families on the island clearly supported their families, at least in part, by selling agricultural products, earlier chapters have indicated that most men were not full-time farmers in any sense: few of them attained the status of commercial agriculturalist that we tend to identify with the term. Indeed, the vast majority seemed to spend most of their time, like rural women and children, engaged in a wide variety of paid and unpaid labour that had more to do with the support of the family than with the exigencies of either commercial agriculture or wage labour.

Occupational plurality has emerged as an important aspect of rural society and culture throughout nineteenth century Canada,²³ and it provides a good description of the varied and intermittent work carried on by the majority of Salt Spring Island residents. A few examples concerning island 'farmers' will suffice here. William Lumley, for example, who shows up receiving Managers' Drafts from ABC Packers in Canoe Pass in the 1890s, appears as a farmer, a fisherman, and a police constable in nineteenth century directories and voters' lists, and as a farmer on the 1901 census.²⁴ Between 1877 and 1901, Joseph King

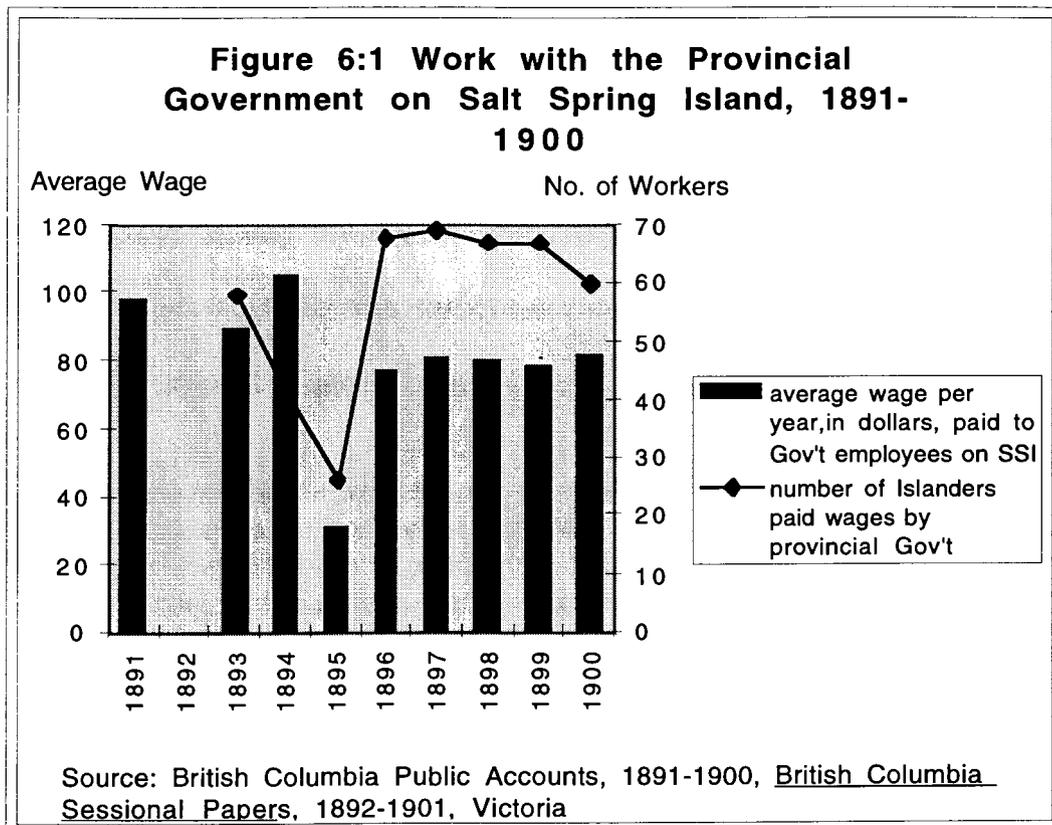
alternated between calling himself a farmer, a fisherman and a boatman. William McFadden is described as a farmer in directories and voters' lists in the 1880s and 1890s. Nevertheless, in the 1891 census, he, like two or three other men on the island, is listed as a sealer.²⁵ Richard Brinn owned land on Salt Spring, and his wife and family shared a house and farmed the land there with his business partner's family, while he worked at his store in Nanaimo.²⁶ Nels Nelson always called himself a farmer, but he worked as a labourer for the provincial government from time to time throughout the 1890s, and, like Lumley and King, was one of the many islanders who spent several weeks every year fishing commercially in a variety of locations up the coast.²⁷

Logging, like fishing, played an important and variable role in the economic activity on the Island. Because most of the crown land on Salt Spring had been pre-empted or purchased by the time logging was established as a bonafide industry in the 1890s, logging was not done on the basis of crown grants to large companies. Instead, it usually took place as an informal arrangement, often between those wanting logs and those wanting pasture.²⁸ As a result, no formal records of nineteenth-century employment attest to the forestry industry on Salt Spring Island. Only a tiny portion of those who listed an occupation on the island described themselves as loggers (zero in 1881, four percent in 1891), but the importance of this work to the household economy, as a source of fuel, of wages and as a cash crop, is visible in the oral

history record, in personal correspondence, and in published memoirs. This was particularly obvious in the case of tie mills. Small, portable mills were established all over British Columbia in the second decade of the twentieth century to provide ties for the expansion of international railways. The oral history record for Salt Spring in the 1920s is full of references to the role of tie mills in household economies on the island.²⁹ Like many aspects of this fluid and varied economy, logging waxed and waned on a seasonal basis, and in relation to the demand for the product. While many of these men undoubtedly showed up elsewhere in British Columbia as young -- and not so young --migrant labourers, on Salt Spring Island, those who lived in landowning families were stable, land-based 'farmers.'

The provincial government provided another important, though characteristically fluctuating, source of work for many people on the island. The most usual type of employment generated in this way was road work, which became an essential component of waged earning for islanders during the Depression of the 1930s.³⁰ Government wages could be picked up in a variety of other ways, including working at elections, helping in the conveyance of prisoners, or testifying at inquests. As Figure 6:1 illustrates, the average wage earned per year from the province varied between seventy and eighty dollars. Most of the men averaged about a month's work a year.³¹ Teachers and the provincial tax collector earned the largest and most regular

incomes, but about a third of the male population over fifteen years of age obtained some wages from this source in 1891.³²



General statistics on income were not kept for the populations in British Columbia in the nineteenth century, as the population was not routinely taxed. However, the 1901 census did ask household heads how much money they had earned. The average earnings of under \$400 per household per annum -- low figures compared to \$561 and \$552 for Victoria and Vancouver respectively -- provide us with some indication of the relative importance of the seemingly small amounts earned in the government's employ on the island.³³

Looking beyond commodity production and waged work, we can find considerable evidence of a third strategy of considerable importance in making a living or “getting by” on the island: self-provisioning activities. A number of these activities associated with farming have already been mentioned in reference to women’s work, and as evidence of the pioneer hardships of the early years of settlement. The natural bounty of the island, and its importance to early settlers is summed up most eloquently in a newspaper report of 1861:

Game abounds; some of the deer are noble looking animals, the mountain grouse very comeatable [sic]... The shoals of fish are prodigious; standing upon the beach you rake in the smelts with a common hayrake by the bushel; salmon, rock cod and that delicious fish when properly cooked the red mullet, abound, the oyster, also that shell fish that has been a by-word expressive of poverty, vociferated by disappointed gold-seekers during the excitement of ‘58, the Royal Clam.³⁴

Evidence of self-provisioning activities is not, however, limited to the first years of settlement, nor to women: settlers on Salt Spring Island, like their Aboriginal neighbours, found themselves situated in an area remarkably rich in foods suitable for human consumption. The environment of coastal British Columbia, with its hospitable climate, and its abundance of natural resources for food and shelter, has long been identified as central to sustaining the large Native populations and complex cultures of the Pacific Northwest.³⁵ As Richard Mackie notes in his study of an early non-Native

Comox settler, access to the wealth of the coastal environment remained important to settlers throughout the nineteenth century: "The Gulf of Georgia was famed for its intertidal abundance of clams, mussels and other shellfish, which attracted settlers and gave rise to local expressions like 'when the tide's out the table is set'."³⁶

The oral history record indicates that well into the twentieth century hunting and gathering, like growing vegetables for home consumption, was a mainstay of the household, and therefore of the island economy.³⁷ The native fauna and flora provided not only for the dietary needs of the early settlers, but also for those of their livestock. Hogs and cattle were able to feed on the rich fern roots, possibly camas, that covered significant portions of the Island.³⁸ Sheep were grazed in the large open rocky areas that were particularly prevalent at the island's southern end. Although such self-provisioning activities were marginal and prefatory within the official discourse of rural, on Salt Spring Island they continued to provide a vital part of the overall economic activity.

In spite of the identification of most adult males as farmers, therefore, on closer examination this occupational category does not do enough to describe the wide variety of work carried on by men on a daily, seasonal or life-course basis. Young men and landless men were more likely to define themselves as 'labourers' or 'loggers,' although those living with landowning parents most often defined themselves as 'farmer' or 'farmer's son.'³⁹ Once men became

landowners, the status conferred seems to have translated into the occupational category of farmer, while the range of their economic activity in any given year seems to have increased, rather than decreased.

ii) The Problem with Rural Populations

As we have seen, Department of Agriculture statistics reflect a narrow concern with commercial agricultural production, and make no mention of the complex economies of island households. Although the economy of Salt Spring Island was clearly different from one marked by commercial agricultural success, the definition of Salt Spring as an agricultural community nevertheless remained dependent on its construction within the rural discourse of commercial agricultural production. Its failure to live up to the standards of commercial agriculture was, however, frequently remarked upon. As one of the first visitors to the Island, Robert Brown, reported in 1862 :

Though not a pleasant topic, I cannot help noticing the want of confidence in the stability of the Colony manifested by most of the settlers, and a "Waiting for something to turn up" Micawber sort of disposition. This is more or less the way in all countries [...] But though this is every day more and more decreasing owing to the recent discoveries of the expedition, yet it is preeminently so among a large portion of the Cowichan, Chemainis [sic] Salt Spring and Comox settlers whose only ambition (it is no use mincing matters by refined language) seems to be "a log shanty, a pig, a potato patch, Kloomchman (Indian woman) and a clam bed"! This is easily accounted for, most of the Settlers being either men with no business and totally unacquainted with farming: Men who came here attracted by the gold-fever and got their eyes jaundiced by their Cariboo failures, prodigal sons who are just waiting to get reconciled to their families, or to go home

having mistaken their vocation. The few who have been really bred to farming are the men who are doing most...⁴⁰

Other visitors shared this low opinion of Salt Spring Island farmers. George Blair, visiting John Sparrow in the early 1860s, was not impressed with the abilities or habits of his host: "like many others he thought he had the head if only he had the means to carry on extensive business in the farm line. He thought himself very clean but never used a dish cloth but his British flag."⁴¹ Ashdown Green laconically noted in the diary of his survey of the island's south end in 1874, "[s]aw a specimen of Salt Spring Island farmer. A garden of one quarter acre and a clam bed."⁴² The more relaxed attitude to economic activity that is hinted at by these observers finds further support in the words of the island's elected provincial representative, who, in 1875, described his constituents as "a mob of drunken rowdies."⁴³

The type of rural life disparaged by observers like Robert Brown -- characterized by a disrespect for industrious farming practices and an intermittent recourse to off-farm work -- was either ignored or castigated by government officials. The absence of information concerning self-provisioning activities, and the importance of off-farm work, found its counterpoint in the complaints that members of the Department of Agriculture made about the rural population in general. Determined in 1891 to gather the statistics on agricultural production "indispensably necessary in order to note the progress made from year to year,"⁴⁴ bureaucrats in the

Department of Agriculture were compelled to reassure farmers throughout the province that, “[i]t is a mistaken notion to suppose that these returns are of an inquisitorial nature.”⁴⁵ In spite of these reassurances, officers seeking information about agricultural production were often met with “indifference and suspicion of the object of the enquiries.”⁴⁶ By 1894, the Department complained that it “found it impossible to arouse the interest of the farming population sufficiently to furnish the required data through the medium of the circular enquiries.”⁴⁷ Rural society in British Columbia was clearly a contested space in which beliefs about appropriate behaviour were being negotiated.

Economists have not been much kinder than nineteenth-century urban observers in their evaluation of the self-provisioning activities, occupational plurality, seasonal work, and the failure to accumulate capital that characterized life so many rural communities. In 1776, Adam Smith argued that it was the tendency of rural people to work at a variety of occupations that did not bode well for the efficiency and productivity of their endeavours :

A man commonly saunters a little in turning his hand from one sort of employment to another.... The habit of sauntering and indolent careless application, which is naturally or rather necessarily acquired by every country workman who is obliged to change his work and his tools every half hour, and to apply his hand in twenty different ways almost every day of this life, renders him almost always slothful and lazy, and incapable of any vigorous application even on the most pressing occasions.⁴⁸

Smith's colleagues in the field of economics have generally supported him in this evaluation. Although rural populations in the industrial period have been largely ignored by social historians until recently, since the 1970s the theory of proto-industrialization has, in the European context, added complexity to our understanding of groups outside of towns and cities. It has identified occupational plurality, intermittent and poorly paid wage labour, and the predominance of small, unsuccessful farms, as a cluster of characteristics revealing the exploitation and under-development of rural areas of marginal agricultural production. Being unable to reap the benefits of high agricultural sales due to poor land quality or distance from markets, and unable to sell their labour at a competitive, urban price, the rural poor are defined as dependent on the combination of wages that are insufficient to support a family, and a farm that is incapable of accumulating capital. Trapped in the countryside, these 'semi-proletarians' are unable to fulfill the destiny laid out for them by the terms of modern capitalism: to become fully fledged urban proletarians on the one hand, or owners of successful agribusinesses on the other.⁴⁹ For many island residents, evidence presented here suggests that life was indeed one of considerable poverty, with most residents eking out an existence from the land on the margins of modern capitalist activity. Does under-development and failure provide the best model for understanding the rural population of Salt Spring Island?

iii. Problems with Rural History

Historians have recently begun to offer a critique of such evaluations by challenging the assumptions upon which they are based. These evaluations are, they argue, the result of a positivist, modernizing ideology that uncritically mirrors the progressivist discourses that have dominated middle-class and urban discussions of rural for almost two hundred years.

Evaluations of rural society have, they argue, been uncritically engaged in the same liberal discourse that constructed rural populations as urban *manqées*: those who, because of outdated social relations, retarded economic relations, and immature political systems, were unable to fully transform themselves into the modern economic men demanded by the progress of urban and industrial society.⁵⁰

Marjorie Cohen, in Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Ontario, was one of the first scholars in Canada to challenge this discourse. Her study of nineteenth-century Ontario examines the ways in which rural women's economic roles have been hidden from the historian's and the economist's view, both by the patriarchal structures of the farm family, and by the masculinism of mainstream theoretical approaches. The latter has been responsible for positioning staples production as the most significant economic activity occurring in rural areas. Cohen argues instead that the family-provisioning work of women on the family farm provided the foundation upon which staples production was

based. Cohen goes on to demonstrate how, when certain areas of women's work, like dairying, became profitable within wider markets, gendered structures of power transformed women's relation to their work, and limited their ability to benefit financially from changes within their industry.⁵¹

In her study of the changing rural economy in the nineteenth century, Home and Work: Housework, Wages and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic, Jeanne Boydston similarly articulates the changing ideological or cultural factors influencing rural women's work, and our ability to understand it. She argues that the changing evaluation of women's work followed not from what rural women *did* so much as from historically-specific changes in the *meaning* of work. During the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, she argues, the "incursion of markets and cash relations into daily life took some work out of the household and away from the family,"⁵² creating a decline in the status of women's work. More significantly, however,

cash earning became more and more closely identified with economic activity; unpaid labor, or labor that did not bring cash profit, became marginal to the definition of economic agency. At the same time, husbands became more and more closely associated with cash-earning [...] The emerging formulation of 'economy' as an extra-household activity encouraged the perception that the work that went on within the household --especially if it was work that did not at some point realize an external cash value --was not a part of the material reordering of social life...⁵³

James Lehning applies a similar analysis to the ways in which the official discourse of nineteenth century France constructed the peasant. He argues that the terms of market culture, developed around the discourse of economic liberalism, had become so widespread by the end of the century, that it was "increasingly difficult to find language to describe nonmarket aspects of the workplace."⁵⁴ The discourse of agricultural improvement privileged rural producers who were motivated by the maximization of profit, and "small rural producers who oriented their production towards family goals of subsistence found no place."⁵⁵ The increasing bureaucratic emphasis on particular types of activity served a two-fold purpose: by defining 'normal' rural activity as market centered and rational, it marginalized rural populations at the same time that it reinforced the identity and the power of urban dwellers as responsible, progressive and cultured people. Hal Baron, Daniel Samson, and Bruce Curtis have, in different ways, made similar arguments in the North American context. They have suggested that this liberal discourse, articulated so clearly in the literature surrounding rural improvement and development, has played an important role in constructing the independent, rational and economic individuals needed to sustain the relations of power within the modern state.⁵⁶

James Lehning sees great significance in the failure of nineteenth and twentieth-century urban observers to understand the large numbers of people who refused to adopt new and improved methods of farming, and

the increased profits that they brought. "This refusal is worth pondering," he argues, as "the logic of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western culture makes little sense of people who refuse economic development."

Lehning adds that:

Portraying these people as, at best, 'peasants' isolated from the benefits of modern science serves only to reinforce the premises of the nineteenth-century discourse as it constructed 'peasants.' Rather, we need to understand this behaviour as a practice in which these country dwellers represented their own identities.⁵⁷

In trying to understand why the people on Salt Spring Island lived in this way, however, it is not enough to articulate the discourses to which they did not conform. If we are to reach beyond the liberal discourses that consign most of their behaviours to the "figurative dustbin,"⁵⁸ how do we do so? If, indeed, rural people were not working mainly to maximize production and accumulate capital, then perhaps it is time to evaluate what Salt Spring Island families *were* accomplishing, seeing in their behaviours not only a failure to meet our standards, but also the terms upon which they understood their own lives.

iv. Reconceptualizing Rural Economy and Culture

In a series of articles concerning the society and culture the populations involved in agri-forestry in the Saguenay region of Quebec, Gérard Bouchard explores different types of subsistence-based and market-oriented economic activity within the conceptual framework of "co-

intégration."⁵⁹ He argues that an analysis of economic change can only come from a broad understanding of the co-integration of economic and cultural imperatives at both the broad economic and household levels. On this basis, he argues that in the Saguenay region, evidence of entrenched under-development is not clear. He uses family reconstitution to argue that " l'activité forestière a pu, dans un court terme, favoriser directement le développement de l'agriculture.⁶⁰ In Quebec, and in New Brunswick, seasonal labour in the forests complemented and stabilized work on the farm. Bouchard maintains that the rural population continued to develop and change, without becoming proletarianized or stagnantly 'under-developed' into the early twentieth century. Assumptions about the appropriate directions for change in rural society -- towards greater market orientation on the one hand or proletarianization on the other -- obscure the complexity of rural life revealed by these detailed studies.

This co-integration model, with its emphasis on local experience and its respect for the decisions of those living in rural areas, has some important advantages for understanding the behaviours of Salt Spring Island residents. Most landowners on Salt Spring Island failed to accumulate capital through land speculation or commercial activities in agriculture, living lives of considerable poverty, but high rates of geographical persistence outlined in earlier chapters suggest some level of satisfaction with island life. Evidence

that the majority of people left the island soon after arrival suggests that many were not willing to accept the particular economic and social opportunities of island life. But what did island life offer those who chose to stay?

What life on the island could provide was a broadly-based system of economic support that was both stable and flexible.⁶¹ While little money was earned through crop sales or waged labour, little money was required for the major family expense of renting or land purchase; the pre-emption system allowed island most residents to acquire a secure land base, free from the worry of high land payments or demanding landlords for a great many years. Securely rooted on the land, household members were able to draw on a wide range of activities -- self-provisioning activities, intermittent waged employment, occasional sales of produce -- that provided the economic support needed to keep their family on the land. As a growing literature on working class and settler history suggests, it was this mix of stability and flexibility, unattainable by most landless, urban waged workers in the nineteenth century, that so many found so appealing about rural life.⁶²

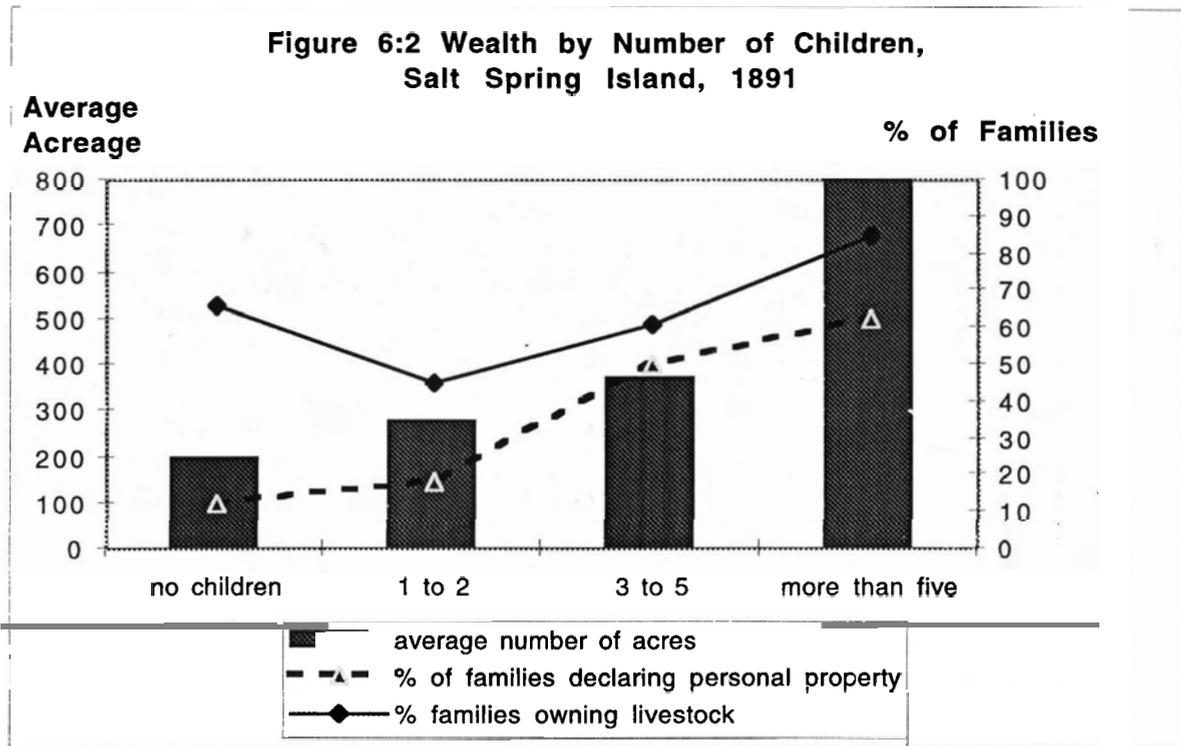
An examination of families on Salt Spring Island confirms their centrality in island society and economy. This is not surprising; for a wide historical literature confirms the economic importance of children in rural society until quite recently.⁶³ As Viviana Zelizer argues, it was not until the later nineteenth century that the Western world identified children's work as

a threat; before that, it was a measure of children's love, respect and membership in both the family and society.⁶⁴ As we saw in Chapter 3, more than half of the households on the island in each census year had children. About half of these had arrived with children, and those with children were more likely to own land than those without.⁶⁵ Landowning families with children, indeed, had the highest rates of persistence on the island.⁶⁶

Like the work of both rural men and women, most children's work is not visible in routinely generated sources, and seldom appears in the liberal discourse about rural life. Glimpses do appear, however. Thirteen-year-old Mary Anne McFadden, for example, was making breakfast for her father and complaining of overwork in her motherless household when she tried to poison her father.⁶⁷ When Babbington Sparrow was accidentally shot at fourteen, he and some friends were out hunting deer.⁶⁸ When George Purser killed himself, his young son was out working at a neighbour's house.⁶⁹ When Mr. Sampson's thirteen year old daughter eloped, she was living with and working for the local storekeeper, Mr. Bittancourt.⁷⁰

Because children's work, like that of their parents, was so often of an unpaid, variable and erratic nature, it is also difficult to quantify. The richest source for this type of informal and unrecorded work of both adults and children is the oral history record. Although not available for this early time period, the record from the 1920-1935 period is filled with descriptions of the physical labour that children were expected to perform in the course of a day -

- chopping wood, carrying water, caring for younger children, hunting, gathering clams, picking stones, and weeding the vegetable garden.⁷¹



It is impossible to document the amount of work done by children, but its importance to the households of Salt Spring Island can be inferred from aggregate information gleaned from the assessment rolls and census of 1891. Having more children meant more mouths to feed, but the correlation between land, personal property and children outlined in Figure 6:2 suggests that children were contributing to, as well as consuming, the wealth of the family through their work. These differences were not simply the product of the age of the household head. Figures 6:3 and 6:4 provide profiles of the average acreages, and percentage of household heads owning personal

Figure 6:3 Wealth of Landowning Household Heads with Children, by Age, 1891

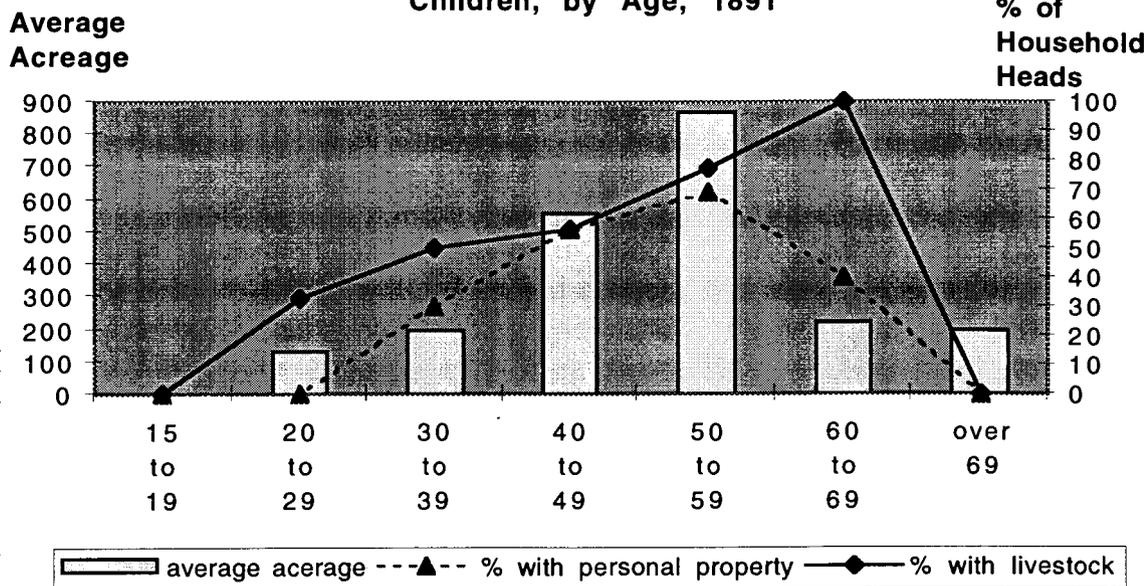
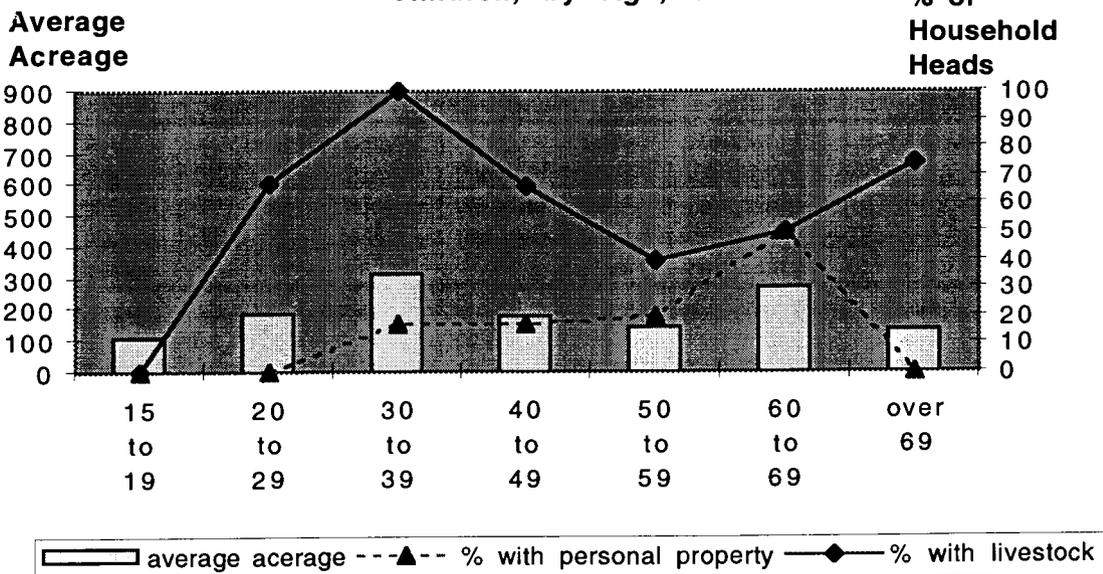


Figure 6:4 Wealth of Landowning Household Heads with no Children, by Age, 1891



property and livestock, distinguishing between those with children (Figure 6:3) and those without (Figure 6:4), by the age of the household head. Those

aged forty and sixty with children owned between two and four times as much land as those in the same age cohort who had no children. Between two and three times as many of those with children owned personal property than those without. This evidence suggests that children were one more important component in a complex economy that may have included subsistence activities, intermittent waged labour, and irregular sales of produce and livestock.

Table 6:1 Households without Children, 1881 & 1891, Salt Spring Is.

	Total	Single Men	Married Couples	Adult Males	With Lodgers	With Servants	With Relatives
1881	34	18	10	2	3	0	1
1891	43	18	8	8	10	3	6

Source: Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

Table 6:2 Households With Children, 1881 & 1891, Salt Spring Is.

	TOTAL no. of families with children	Nuclear* (%)	Total non-nuclear (%)	Single Parent (male/female)	Other Relatives living in HH.	Blended Family (step-children)	Adult Children (>20)	Lodger	Servant
1881	37	16 (43%)	21 (57%)	7 (4/3)	1	11	8	3	3
1891	51	18 (35%)	33 (65%)	7 (5/2)	7	4	8	12	6

* defined as two parents and their related children under 20 years old

Source: Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

By 1891, as more young men arrived on the island to take advantage of the opportunities offered by secure land-tenure and waged work in this resource-rich environment, about the same number of childless household heads lived in houses with other men as were married. With its high proportion of male households, Salt Spring Island comes closest to the portrait of nineteenth century British Columbia as an adult male frontier. Nevertheless, the ratio of one adult women to two adult men in 1891 was still a far cry from the much higher ratios that exceeded one in twenty in other up-country areas of the province in the nineteenth century.⁷²

Over half of the landowning household heads on the island did, however, have children. Only half of these in 1881 met the criteria for 'normal' nuclear families -- married parents living with their own dependent children -- a figure that fell to a third by 1891. As Table 6:2 suggests, households with children relied on a variety of household strategies that helped families to 'get by.' A number took in lodgers, or had other family members living with them. This was especially evident in the 1891 census, after the years of rapid growth on the island in the late 1880s and early 1890s, when a growing number of young men were moving to the island. Many of these young men moved in with relatives or friends with children. Adult children tended to stay with parents until they had their own land, if they were men, or until they were married if they were women. By the 1890s, a number of grown sons and daughters were also leaving the island. As this

settlement community aged -- as land became less available and waged work more available -- there was an corresponding increase, from seven percent of households to eleven percent, of (mostly non-landowning) adult children living with their parents.⁷³ These unorthodox family formations, like the complex economic patterns on the island increased the number of alternatives open to Salt Spring Island families in their search for economic support.

Conclusions

How can we understand the economies of Salt Spring Island? Were the people of Salt Spring Island "Peasants on the Coast," as the title to this chapter has mischievously suggested? These rural dwellers conformed to many of the characteristics of rural as defined by Allan Greer: they were small-scale agricultural producers, they worked economically as a family, they were self-sufficient to varying degrees, and they possessed -- or at least had secure legal access to -- the means of production, their land.⁷⁴ The people of Salt Spring Island failed, however, to meet one important criterion of peasant life: although this was not an egalitarian society, evidence that landholders were systematically dominated or exploited by any privileged class or group is strikingly absent, as we will see in Chapter 8. But while these people may not have been peasants, neither were they capitalists or proletarians. I have suggested in this chapter that the failure of this rural population to conform to 'normal' categories of economic behaviour is intimately tied to their

invisibility in the historical record. Canadian historians have had little experience dealing with populations that refuse definition as either capitalists or proletarians.

The picture that is emerging from a close examination of economic practices on Salt Spring Island suggests that the economy was based on a wide variety of work, carried on by most family members. Most families did not have enough land cleared to rely exclusively on commercial agricultural activity. Wages, lower than in the neighbouring cities of Victoria and Vancouver, were probably not sufficient to provide exclusive support to families throughout most of the year. The economic foundation of most households, therefore, was comprised of a wide variety of activities, including waged work, commodity sales and self-provisioning activities, all of which were participated in by all family members capable of work. Central to this economy and society was secure tenure on cheap or practically free land. Like the rural populations that Mick Reed describes in nineteenth-century Britain, "the behavior of the great majority was precisely the opposite of entrepreneurial, in that most producers actively sought to avoid risk, and were primarily concerned with earning a living, rather than maximizing profit. Whether producing for direct consumption or exchange, their main interest was subsistence."⁷⁵ As we have seen in this chapter, this household-based and land-centered economy did not result in traditional family

structures. As we will see in the next two chapters, neither did it find expression in the bucolic harmony so often associated with rural.

NOTES

¹ Chambers English Dictionary (Cambridge: Chambers, 1988), 993.

² Manual Containing Instructions to Officers Employed in the Taking of the Third Census of Canada, 1891 (Ottawa: Government Printing, 1891), 13.

³ See for example Bea Hamilton Salt Spring Island (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1969), and A.F. Flucke, "Early Days on Salt Spring Island," B.C. Historical Quarterly, 25, nos. 3 and 4 (1951), 161-202.

⁴ While nineteenth century women could purchase land, they were prevented from pre-empting land unless widowed with dependent children. About ninety-four percent of men owning land in 1881 had obtained it by pre-empting. Urban women were much more likely to own land. For a detailed discussion of women entrepreneurs and landowners in urban B.C., see Peter A. Baskerville "'She Has Already Hinted at Board': Enterprising Urban Women in British Columbia, 1863-1896," Histoire Sociale / Social History, 26, no. 52 (Nov. 1993), 205-09.

⁵ Women (females over fourteen) and children fourteen and under comprised sixty-five percent of the population (167 out of 258 people) in 1881, and sixty percent (263 out of 436) in 1891. Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

⁶ Instructions to Officers, 13.

⁷ Instructions to Officers, 15.

⁸ In 1881, all 90 males over fourteen declared an occupation. Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

⁹ Three were nuns, one was working as domestic, and three were farmers. One of the three unmarried women farmers was widowed, but the other two farmers were sisters, age seventeen and twenty-three, who were single and living with their families. Their appearance as 'farmers' is so anomalous that it seems more plausible that this is a clerical error. Census of Canada, 1881, district no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

¹⁰ Of two married women who listed themselves as farmers, one of these (we know from other sources), was separated from her husband. Mrs. Stark is listed as married, but by

1891 her husband was living in Nanaimo; see Stark File, Attorney General's Office, GR 419, Box 67, BCA. Another married woman listed herself as a baker; like the dressmaker and the domestics, she was not a wife our daughter of the household head, but was listed as a lodger. Most unusual of all, a married woman with a large family listed herself as a teacher, even though "unemployed in the preceding month." Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

¹¹ Thirteen women who were over fourteen years of age and single listed no occupations, and a further forty-six women who were married to farmers listed no occupation in 1891. Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

¹² We know that about two thirds of families (sixty out of ninety-six resident landowners) in 1891 had cows, sheep, pigs or horses, and most kept poultry. There were over 300 ducks and geese on the island, and well over 4,200 hens and chickens, all of which were traditionally part of farm women's work. Third Dominion Census of Canada, 1891, table III, Animals and Animal Resources, 115-6. The Gyves family explicitly lists cattle as the women of the family's responsibility. Typescript, Gyves Family File, SSIA.

¹³ On the Gyves family, see typescript, Gyves Family File, SSIA; Mary Reaney, Inquest, File 52-1891, BC Attorney General, Inquisitions, 1872-1937, Roll B2373 , GR 1327; Rev. Ebenezer Robson describes cows as women's concern. Diaries of Ebenezer Robson, 16 September 1861 to 27 March 1862; 13 October 1861, H/D/R57, R57.3, BCA.

¹⁴ One of the two diaries available for the island during these years, that of John Beddis, confirms the importance of small scale sale of eggs. Beddis notes the sales of eggs to the store once or twice a week. John Beddis, Diary, 1 January 1890 to 30 June 1890, SSIA.

¹⁵ See for example Kris Inwood and James Irwin, "Canadian Regional Commodity Income Differences at Confederation" in Kris Inwood, ed., Farm, Factory and Fortune: New Studies in the Economic History of the Maritime Provinces(Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1993), Appendix B, "Potential sources of Bias in Regional Decomposition."

¹⁶ For evidence on diet from the 1930s, see especially Johnny Bennett, 1990 Interview, SSIA; R. v Mary Anne McFadden, File 24-1866, British Columbia Attorney General's Papers, GR 419, BCA; Murder of William Robinson, Trial of "Tom," testimony of John Norton, 2 June 1869, Benchbooks of Chief Justice Needham, BCA.

¹⁷ Journal of Bishop George Hills, Bishop of Columbia, 6 Sept. 1860, Archives of the

Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

¹⁸ For the continued ties within mixed-race families See Gyves' Family File, SSIA; and Jean Barman, "The Worth of an Everyday Woman: Maria Mahoi and Her Two Families," unpublished paper, Department of Educational Studies, University of British Columbia, 1996.

¹⁹ Homer Stevens and Rolf Knight, Homer Stevens: A Life in Fishing (Vancouver: Harbour Publishing, 1992), 4. Stevens goes on to write of the arguments his grandparents had deciding on whether the salmon fishing or the berry picking would get priority.

²⁰ Interview with Valentine Reynolds, 1990, SSIA.

²¹ For a critique of this particular problem with liberal economic theory see Gillian Hart, "Imagined Unities: Constructions of 'The Household' in Economic Theory," in Sutti Ortiz and Susan Lees, eds., Understanding Economic Process: Monographs in Economic Anthropology (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992), 129; and Richard Wilk, The Household Economy: Reconsidering the Domestic Mode of Production (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989).

²² Out of the 2,337 records containing information on occupation in my database-- directories, voters lists', censuses, parish records and Public Accounts -- 1,635 describe people as farmers.

²³ For a review of the numerous rural histories documenting occupational plurality as a characteristic of rural Canada in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see R.W. Sandwell, "Rural Reconstruction: Towards a New Synthesis in Canadian History," Histoire Sociale/Social History, 27, no 53 (May 1994), 1-32.

²⁴ See ABC Packers, Managers' Draft Books, 1901-1905, University of British Columbia Special Collections. See also Stevens and Knight, Homer Stevens, Chapter 1.

²⁵ Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

²⁶ See Regina vs. McFadden and Sampson, , file 24-1866, Attorney General's Papers, GR 419, BCA.

²⁷ See ABC Packers, Managers' Drafts Books, 1901-1905; interview with Bob Hele, 1990, SSIA.

²⁸ See Land Register for Salt Spring, Surveyor General's Office, Victoria. Most of the land had been taken up by 1890. For logging on the Island, see Joe Garner, Never Fly Over an Eagle's Nest (Nanaimo: Cinnabar Press, 1982); Charlie Horel, 1990 interview, SSIA. Ken Drushka explains that the combination of technology and terrain in B.C.

particularly favoured the individual hand logger, who, “with only a few hand tools and a lot of determination” could obtain work. He contrasts this to Oregon and Washington, where the gentler terrain favoured the establishment of large-scale logging operations. Working in the Woods: A History of Logging on the West Coast (Vancouver: Harbour Publishing, 1992), 40.

²⁹ In 1927, the bottom fell out of the market, and farmers on Salt Spring as elsewhere suffered from this sudden reduction in their resource options. See particularly the interviews with Bob Hele, Bob Dodds and Charlie Horel, 1990, all of whom worked in the logging industry; Interviews, SSIA.

³⁰ See Robert Hele, 1990 interview, SSIA.. See also the relief books for Salt Spring Island, detailing payments towards taxes earned by working on the roads. Relief Books, 1931-36, SSIA. For 1885-1891 evidence, see Province of British Columbia Public Accounts (BCSP) for these years.

³¹ In 1888, thirty-one men worked, for an average total pay of \$94 for the year, figures that declined to about \$50 in 1889, 1890 and 1891, providing the men (at an average of \$2 per day) about a month’s work in most of the years under study.

³² The 1891 census lists 162 men over sixteen, in which year fifty-two workers (thirty-two percent) received wages averaging \$62 per person. Information about the total number of men on the island in other years is not available. Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

³³ I would like to thank Dr. Peter Baskerville, University of Victoria, for supplying the figures from Victoria and Vancouver in 1901. Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

³⁴ Daily Press (Victoria), 11 November 1861.

³⁵ For an examination of aboriginal populations and their economic support, see for example Wayne Suttles, “Variation in Habitat and Culture on the Northwest Coast,” and “Coping with Abundance: Subsistence on the Northwest Coast,” Wayne Suttles, Coast Salish Essays (Vancouver, Talonbooks, 1987), 15-66.

³⁶ Richard Mackie, The Wilderness Profound: A Victorian Life on the Gulf of Georgia (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1996).

³⁷ See Dorothy, Lassie, and Bob Dodds (1990); Mrs. Lee and Johnny Bennett (1990); and especially Valentine Reynolds (1990), who provides the most detailed account of food growing and preserving on the Island in the 1930s, Interviews, SSIA.

³⁸ Diary of George Blair, 123 (1862), Add Mss. 186, BCA. Bishop Hills notes that the

pigs belonging to the early settlers "at this time live and thrive upon what can be obtained in the bush. Pigs root up 'pig nuts' and the camas." 7 September 1860, Journal of Bishop Hills, Bishop of Columbia, Archives of the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia, Columbia, University of British Columbia, Vancouver. The tendency of island residents to let their cattle wander free to graze prompted councilors to pass the following resolution: "For the improvement of cattle, it shall not be lawful for any bull to run at large during the month of April, May or June," Salt Spring Island Municipal By-Laws, Salt Spring Island Correspondence and ByLaws, 1871-1882, British Columbia Provincial Secretary, box 1, file 2, GR 1707, BCA.

³⁹ In 1881, twenty-four of the thirty-five landless males over fourteen defined themselves as farmers or farmers sons. In 1891, most of these landless farmers (thirty-one) were under the age of thirty, and were sons or brothers of farmers. In 1881 landless farmers were older (nine were under thirty, and were sons or brothers of landowners, and fifteen were over thirty years of age), but most of these older farmers had arrived within a year of the census date. Most landowners in both census years called themselves farmers; in 1891, seventy out of eighty-five landowners called themselves farmers; in 1881, forty-eight out of fifty-five landowners did so.

⁴⁰ John Hayman, ed., Robert Brown and the Vancouver Island Exploring Expedition (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989), 122.

⁴¹ Diary of George Blair, 125 (1862), Add Mss. 186, BCA.

⁴² Ashdown Green, 19 June 1875, "Diary of a Survey of Salt Spring Island, June 8 to November 22, 1874," Ass Mss 437, BCA

⁴³ British Colonist, 22 April 1875, 3. The voters of Salt Spring were apparently unperturbed by this characterization, as they returned Mr. Booth to the Legislative Assembly almost every election until he died in 1902.

⁴⁴ "Report of the Immigration Agency," 1883 (BCSP, 1884), 299.

⁴⁵ "Report of the Immigration Agency," 1883 (BCSP, 1884), 300.

⁴⁶ First Report of the Department of Agriculture, British Columbia 1891 (BCSP, 1892), 731.

⁴⁷ Fourth Report of the Department of Agriculture, British Columbia, 1894 (BCSP, 1895) 827. An Act was therefore passed in that year to hire people specifically to gather statistics.

⁴⁸ Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Books 1-III, originally published 1776 (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), 114-5.

⁴⁹ For one of the earlier outlines of the theory of proto-industrialization see Hans Medick, "The Proto-Industrial Family Economy: The Structural Function of Household and Family in the Transition to From Peasant Society to Industrial Capitalism," in P. Thane, A Sutcliffe, eds., Essays in Social History, 2 (1986), 30 (first published in Social History, 3 (1976), 291-316). For a summary of the theory of proto-industrialization, and its relevance to Canadian nineteenth-century rural history, see Sandwell, "Rural Reconstruction," 22-28.

⁵⁰ For a summary of this discursive structure, see R.W. Sandwell, "Reconstructing Rural."

⁵¹ Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Women's Work, Markets and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988). Harriet Freidmann has challenged the discursive framework of mainstream economic theory in her analyses of the family farm in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Canada. She outlines how the structures of the capitalist system are modified by the problematic physical environment of capitalist agriculture in the northern reaches of the continent and by the social factors in production of the family farm. Her argument that the family farm constitutes a special type of capitalist enterprise has been vigorously opposed by Goodman and Redcliffe, who argue that forms of economic activity in capitalist societies can only be peripheral or transitional to capitalism. See Harriet Freidmann "World Market, State and Family Farm: Social Bases of Household Production in the Era of Waged Labour," Comparative Studies in Society and History, 20 (1978), 545-86, and David Goodman and Michael Redcliffe, "Capitalism, Petty Commodity Production and the Farm Enterprise," Sociologia Ruralis, nos. 3-4 (1985), 231-247; and Freidmann's reply in "Patriarchy and Property," Sociologia Ruralis, 27, 2 (1986), 187-193.

⁵² Jeannne Boydston, Home and Work: Housework, Wages and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 28.

⁵³ Boydston, Home and Work, 44, 28.

⁵⁴ James Lehning, Peasant and French: Cultural Contact in Rural France During the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 81. This argument was first made by William Reddy, The Rise of Market Culture,; The Textile Trade in French Society 1750-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

⁵⁵ Lehning, Peasant and French, 81.

⁵⁶ Hal S. Barron, Those Who Stayed Behind: Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century New England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Bruce Curtis, "Preconditions of the Canadian State: Educational Reform and the Construction of a Public in Upper

Canada, 1837-1846," Studies in Political Economy, 10 (1983); Daniel Samson, "Industry and Improvement: State and Class Formations in Nova Scotia's Coal-Mining Countryside, 1790-1864" (Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University, 1997).

⁵⁷ Lehning, Peasant and French, 87.

⁵⁸ Lehning, Peasant and French, 87.

⁵⁹ Gérard Bouchard, "Co-intégration et Réproduction de la Société Rurale. Pour un Modele Sanuenayen de la Marginalité," Récherches Sociographiques, 29, no. 2-8 (Dec. 1988), 283-309.

⁶⁰ Gérard Bouchard, "Introduction a l'étude de la société saguenayenne aux XIX et XXe siecles" Revue Historique Américain Française, 31 (1977), 15. In his article "Mobile Populations, Stable Communities: Social and Demographic Process in Rural Parishes in the Saguenay, 1840-1911," Continuity and Change, 6 (1991), 59-86, Bouchard goes on to argue that family-based inter-regional migrations were central to the cohesiveness of rural society.

⁶¹ For a detailed examination of the importance of stability and independence for rural families, see Gordon Darroch and Lee Soltow, Property and Inequality in Victorian Ontario: Structural Patterns and Cultural Communities in the 1871 Census (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), summarized on pages 202-03. For an historiographic overview of the importance of stability and independence throughout rural Canada, see Sandwell, "Rural Reconstruction," 1-32.

⁶² There is a wide literature attesting to the importance of a secure land base among the poor. In the English context, see Keith Snell, Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), chapter 4; and Malcolm Chase, The People's Farm: English Radical Agrarianism 1775-1840 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). In the Canadian context, see for example Darroch and Soltow, Property and Inequality in Victorian Ontario; J.I. Little, Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1881 (Kingston, McGill Queen's, 1991).

⁶³ Neil Sutherland, "I Can't Recall When I Didn't Help: The Working Lives of Pioneering Children in the Twentieth Century British Columbia," Histoire Sociale, / Social History, 23, no. 48 (Nov. 1991), 263-288; and "We Always Had Things to Do: The Paid and Unpaid Work of Anglophone Children Between the 1920's in the 1960's," Labour/Le Travail, 25 (Spring, 1990), 105-141; Joy Parr, Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980);

Royden Loewen, Family, Church and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and the New Worlds, 1850-1930 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). Bettina Bradbury's research into Montreal families suggests that between a quarter and a half of children over sixteen in this urban area worked in paid employment in the 1861-1891 period, while children's unpaid work within the family often made the difference between discomfort and absolute want. Bettina Bradbury, Working Families: Age, Gender and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), table 4.4, 240, and especially 118-151.

⁶⁴ Viviana Zelizer, Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

⁶⁵ Of the twenty-nine households with children on Salt Spring Island in 1881, fifteen had children before coming to the island, and two more households had families between the time they arrived on the island and the time they pre-empted. Of the eight household heads who had no land in 1881, seven had children when they arrived. In 1891, forty-two landowning households had children, and twenty-four of these brought their children with them to the island, and three had children between their arrival and the time they pre-empted land. In 1881, landowning household heads with children had their first child at thirty two, and pre-empted their first claim at thirty-four years of age on average. In 1891, the average ages were thirty-four and thirty-six, respectively

⁶⁶ In 1881, the twenty-nine landowners with children had an overall persistence rate of 35.2 years, as compared with 23.2 years for the twenty-four landowners without children. The eighteen household heads without land stayed an average of 4.8 years, with those eight with children staying an average of three years. This may indicate the difficulty of raising a family without a secure land base on the island before waged work was widely available in the 1880s. In 1891, a similar pattern is observed: the forty-two landowners with children stayed an average of twenty-nine years, as compared to twenty-six years average stay for those thirty-three landowners without children, while those without land (nineteen in number) stayed an average of twelve years.

⁶⁷ British Columbia Attorney General Documents, 1875-1966, file 24/66, box 6, GR 419, BCA.

⁶⁸ British Columbia, Attorney General, Inquisitions, 1872-1937, file 73-1888, GR 1327, BCA.

⁶⁹ British Columbia, Attorney General, Inquisitions, 1872-1937, file 18-1885, GR 1327, BCA.

⁷⁰ British Columbia, Attorney General, file 1881-18, box 22, GR 419, BCA.

⁷¹ Childhood is one subject that most people were happy to talk about at length. Especially good interviews on this subject were Charles Horel (1990), Ted Brown (1990), Johnny Bennett and Mrs. Lee (1990) and Bob Hele (1990). Interviews, SSIA.

⁷² This is especially true in 1891, where the proportion of adult men to adult women grew from 2:1 in 1881 to 3:1. For a discussion of the treatment of this imbalance, see Adele Perry, "Oh I'm Just Sick of the Faces of Men': Gender Imbalance, Race, Sexuality and Sociability in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia," BC Studies, nos. 105-106 (Spring/ Summer 1995), 27-43; John Douglas Belshaw, "Cradle to Grave: An Examination of Demographic Behaviour on Two British Columbian Frontiers," Journal of the Canadian Historical Association (1994), 52-53.

⁷³ In 1881, five households out of seventy-one had adult children -- defined here as those over 18 -- living with them (seven percent). By 1891, the number of such households had increased to ten out of ninety-four (eleven percent).

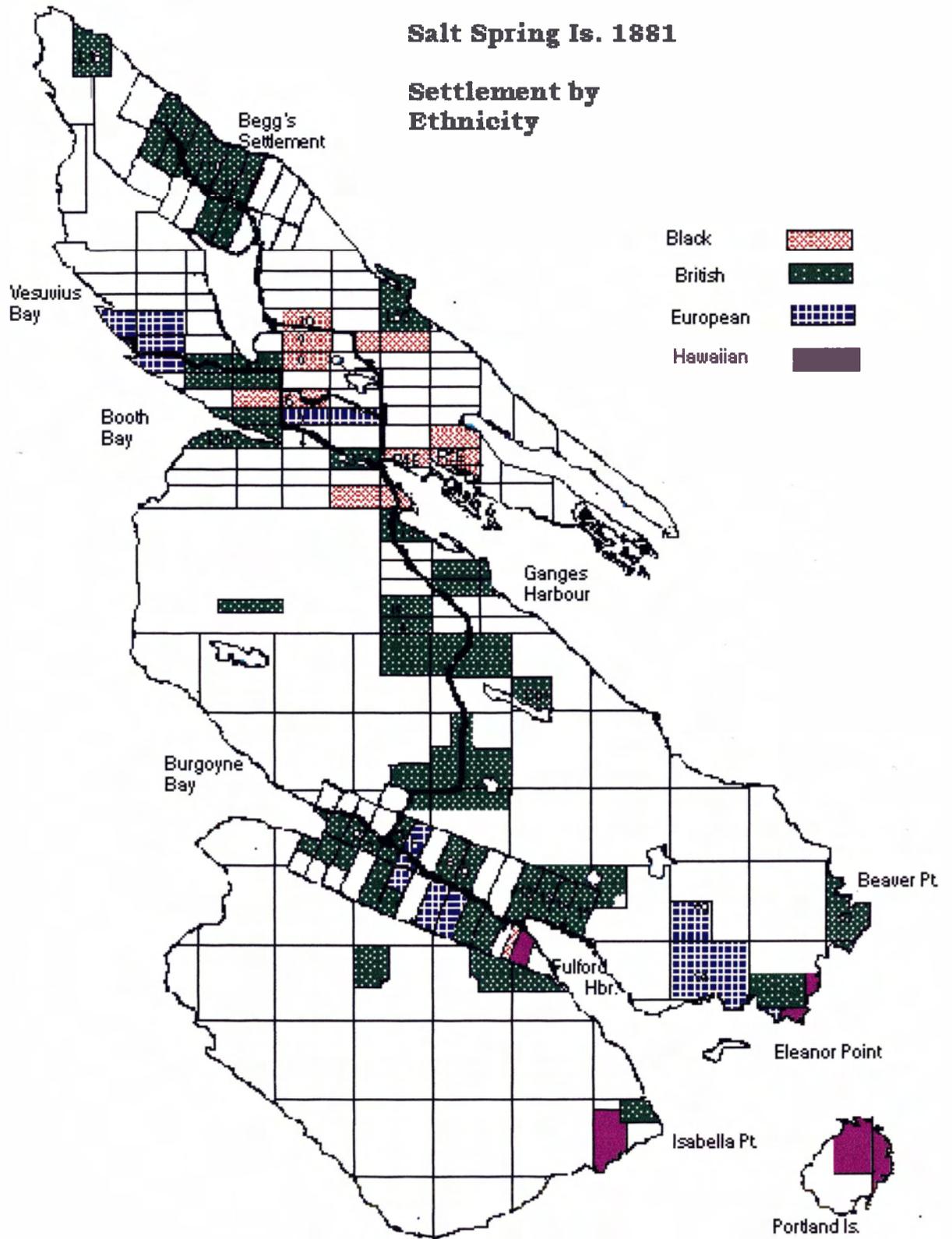
⁷⁴ Allan Greer, Peasant, Lord and Merchant: Rural Society in Three Quebec Parishes, 1740-1840 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), xi. For a broad-ranging discussion of modern peasants, see Teodor Shanin, ed., Defining Peasants: Essays Concerning Rural Societies; Exploring Economies and Learning from Them in the Contemporary World (London: Blackwells, 1990).

⁷⁵ Mick Reed, "Gnawing it Out: A New Look at Economic Relations in Nineteenth Century Rural England," Rural History, 1990, 1, no.1 (1990), 84.

Map 6

Salt Spring Is. 1881

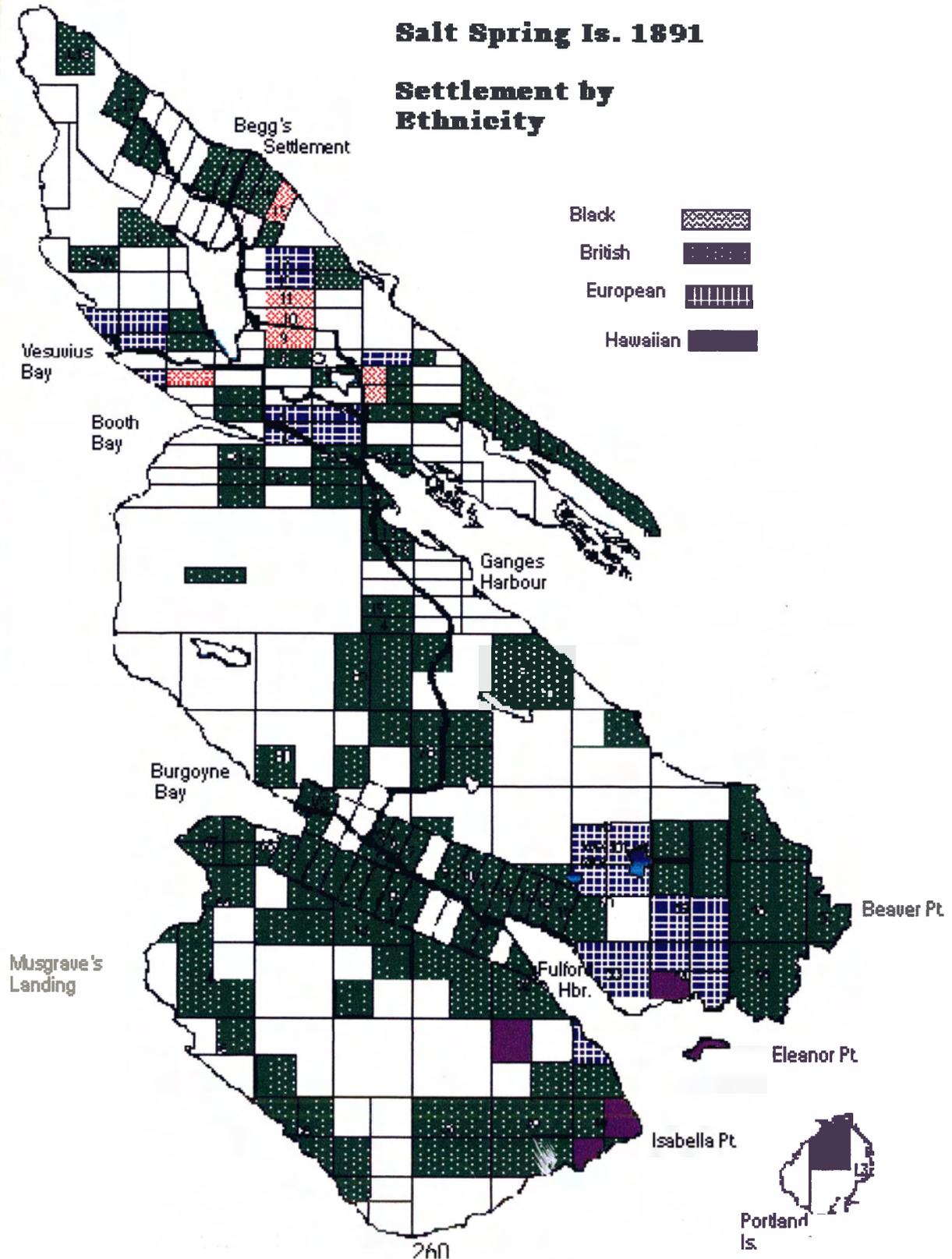
Settlement by Ethnicity



Map 7

Salt Spring Is. 1891

Settlement by Ethnicity



Chapter 7
Shaping Identity and Forming Community:
Religion, Age and Ethnicity on Salt Spring Island

Although Salt Spring Island can be described in terms of the nineteenth-century liberal discourse that identified rural with petty commodity production on the family farm, most island households took advantage of the secure and inexpensive tenure provided by the pre-emption system to pursue a way of life that overlapped with, but was not identical to, that rural ideal. Few island farmers actually used their land base to create the commercial enterprises envisaged by policy makers. The previous chapter rejected the interpretation of these behaviours as evidence of either personal or community failure. Arguing that economic behaviours can be 'read' as expressions of the ways in which people construct their identities, Chapter 6 suggested instead that these behaviours provide evidence of a rural culture that differed in some important respects from the one prescribed by the discourse of liberalism.

By moving to a broader focus on the community, this chapter continues its exploration of how the people of Salt Spring Island represented their identities through their behaviours. What united people in this rural space? What divided them from each other? The following pages will begin an exploration the lines of cohesion and the points of fracture within household and community in an attempt to articulate some aspects of the

“bounded rationality” by which people on the island constructed their identities and understood their community. It will begin by looking at religion and age as forms of social organization on the island. Distinctions based on ethnicity, are however, that are easiest to trace in the historical documents pertaining to Salt Spring Island. The final chapter will continue the exploration of the ways in which islanders constituted their own individual and community identity with an examination of gender and politics on the island.

i) Religion

Differences in ethnicity on the island will be traced in detail below, but they were often reflected in the different religious affiliations. Most of the Blacks were Methodists, most of the British were Anglicans or Presbyterians, and most of the Hawaiians and Natives were Catholic. The strength of religious ties, like the force of religious difference, are difficult to trace in the years under study. No churches were established on the island before the mid-1880s, when an Anglican, a Methodist and a Catholic church were all built.¹ There were no resident clergy on the island, however, until 1892, when Reverend Wilson arrived to tend his Anglican flock. Methodist Ebenezer Robson, Anglican Bishop Hills, and Catholic Father Donckele visited the island periodically in the earlier decades, giving sermons to people of all faiths who chose to attend.²

The importance of religion to some island residents can be inferred from the number of families who sent their children off-island to receive a convent education. Twenty-one daughters of Salt Spring Island families show up in the registers the Sisters of St. Anne School and Orphanage in Cowichan throughout the 1880s.³ Although some were clearly placed there to receive the Catholic education denied them by their remote location on the island, this was probably not the case with others, particularly those placed in the convent permanently, as orphans. For these families, poverty or other family problems were significant in the decision to remove the child from the family.⁴

Families of mixed religious composition were not unusual in island families, providing another indication that religious differences were not as important on Salt Spring Island as they were in other parts of the country, or, indeed as they were to become on the island in later years.⁵ Nevertheless, household heads were more likely to marry someone of a different race than a different religion: there were more than twice as many mixed-race marriages as those of mixed-religion, suggesting that religion played a role in the cultural life of the island, although a paucity of sources and the absence of established churches on the island makes it difficult to assess its extent in this first generation of settlement.⁶

ii) Age and Life-course

As we have seen in earlier chapters, land ownership on Salt Spring Island was similar to landownership in other rural areas in one important respect: it correlated with age and life-course characteristics.⁷ Landowners were, on average, about eight years older than those men who did not own land, and those in their forties and fifties were much more likely to own land than those in their twenties.⁸ Those who were older, married and had more children usually had more land and livestock, on average, than those who were single, young, and had none. Most men tended to take up land just after they were married and were starting families.

While landowners were a majority of household heads, they comprised only a fifth of the total population, and about a third of the entire adult population in both census years.⁹ If wealth and status were organized around the extent of land ownership, then the most significant inequalities can be measured not among landowners, but between land owners and those who did not own any land. Because of the high proportion of land owning household heads on Salt Spring Island, therefore, the greatest inequalities were not manifested *between* households as often as they were expressed *within* them. Such an analysis further provides indications of how power and authority were allocated within the household as well as the community.

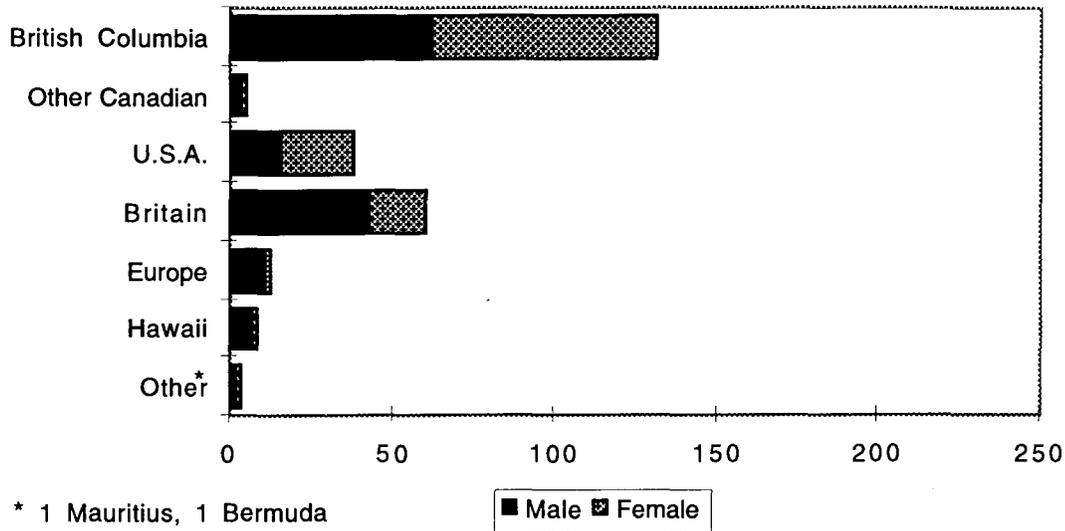
Age, clearly, was an important factor in organizing social relations.¹⁰ In both 1881 and 1891 children outnumbered landowning adults by about two to

one, although the former generated fewer than ten percent of the records between 1859 and 1891.¹¹ Although, as we saw in Chapter 6, children were introduced early into the family economy via the world of work, there is considerable evidence that they also partook of the special status increasingly accorded to children by the state and by their parents in the nineteenth century.¹² Department of Education statistics for the island indicate that a majority of the children between five and sixteen attended school, even though attendance on the island, as in other rural areas of the province, often proved irregular.¹³ The 1881 census indicates that three quarters of the children between six and thirteen attended school.¹⁴ By the age of fourteen, children seem to have transcended their childhood identity to the extent that they stopped attending school.

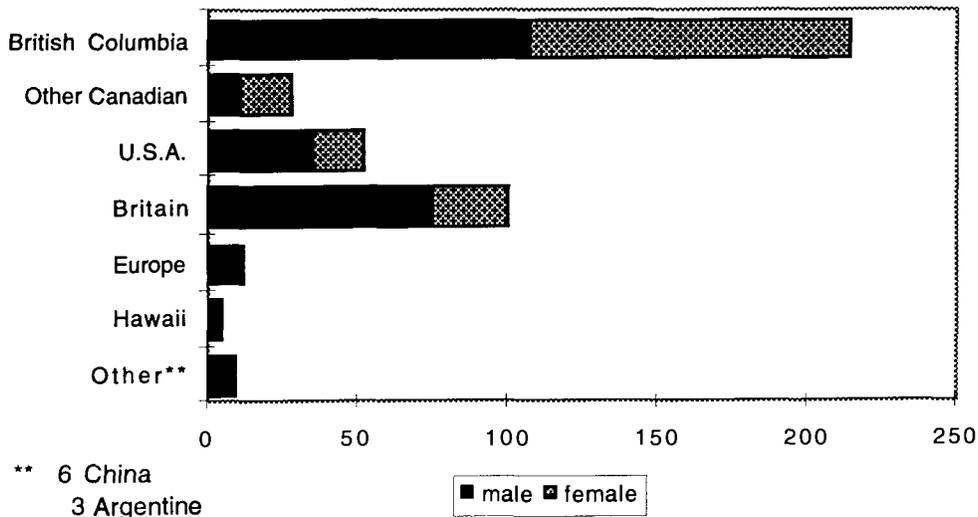
Most youths, however, continued to live with parents, with relatives, or as lodgers with other families, until their late twenties. By 1891 a growing number took the latter course, living in households with other adults until they married or left the island.¹⁵ Young women tended to marry and leave the house of their parents earlier than young men, entering the world of full adulthood at a younger age.¹⁶ Surviving documentation does not reveal the age at which Salt Spring Island residents married. It is possible to estimate it, however, by using census data from 1881 and 1891 to infer women's age at the birth of their first child. These calculation suggest that women had their first child at an average age of seventeen years old in 1881, and nineteen years in

Figure 7:1: Residents of Salt Spring Island, by Gender and Place of Birth, 1881,1891

1881



1891



Source: Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; and Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

1891, compared to men who were, on average about ten years older when they started their families.¹⁷

It is difficult to assess the kinds of relationships that existed between children and their parents, between the young and the old. We know that young men tended to list themselves as having an occupation from the age of sixteen onward. As we have already seen, available diaries, inquests and the Public Accounts of the provincial government suggest children's important role both within the family economy and as wage labourers.¹⁸ Memoirs and the oral history record available for the later period suggest both that children and youths worked a lot harder than they liked in the service of the household economy, and that many gained considerable self-respect and social identity from doing so.¹⁹ Although relations between adults and children were central both to families and social organization on the island, they were not always harmonious. As we saw above, Salt Spring Island children were occasionally placed in the Sisters of St. Ann's convent and orphanage in Cowichan because of family problems. On two occasions, children were taken to court by their parents for challenging their authority: one was accused of trying to poison her father so that she could "go where [she] wanted," and another was charged with eloping at age thirteen.²⁰

We can assume that these cases were unusual. Although islanders clearly organized their social lives around the axis of age both inside the family and

in the wider community, little evidence exists for this time period with which we can document the exact contours of these relationships.

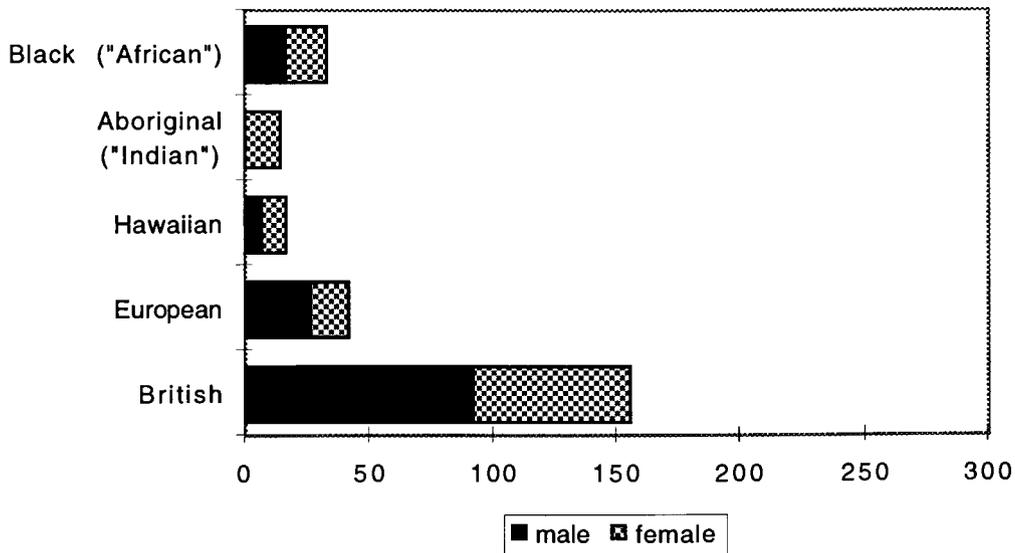
ii. Ethnic Relations on Salt Spring Island

An abundance of documentation, however, attests to the importance of ethnicity as a category of difference that helped to organized the ways that island residents and urban observers alike understood family and community on Salt Spring Island. The meaning of ethnicity, or race as it was then termed, has undergone a number of changes in the way that the island community represents itself. The multiple meanings of race are apparent in the disjuncture between the discourse of historical racial harmony by which islanders identify their community today, and evidence from nineteenth-century sources that indicate the important role of race as a divisive, and sometimes hostile, category in island life.

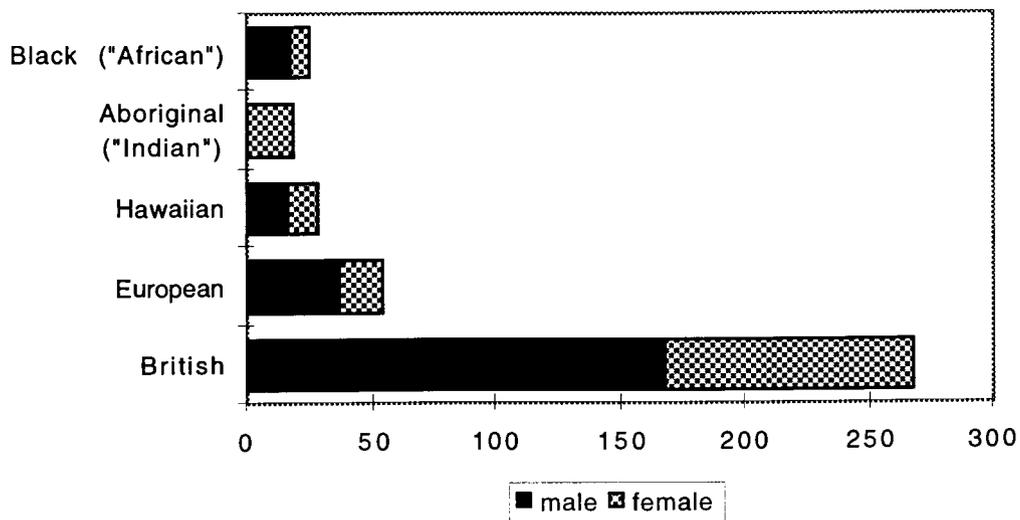
As Figure 7:1 indicates, although British-born people dominated the population of Salt Spring Island in 1881, a number of nationalities were represented. By 1891, those born in British Columbia (most of them children) outnumbered those born outside the province for the first time. As well the population included Hawaiians, American Blacks, Europeans and Aboriginal people (Figure 7:2).²¹ Salt Spring Island was unusual, in the Canadian context, for its large proportion of Black families. Many of these families had been living in California in 1857 and 1858, when judicial and legislative changes suggested that the state was about to make the

Figure 7:2 Residents of Salt Spring Island by Gender and Ethnic Origin, 1881, 1891

1881



1891*



Source: Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; and Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

* The census of 1891 does not list ethnic origin, so ethnicity for this year is inferred from place of birth, and cross-linkages with the rest of the database, particularly the 1881 and 1901 nominal censuses.

transition from a free to a slave state.²² In 1858, Governor James Douglas of Vancouver Island was looking for people to settle the recently-established and under-populated colony of Vancouver Island. Douglas managed to persuade a group of California Blacks of the economic and civil-rights advantages that would accrue to them if they took up lands in the new British colony. In April 1858, a group of about sixty-five left San Francisco for Victoria, just after gold had been discovered on the Fraser River. Although many of these settlers remained in and around the young city, a minority chose to take up land on Salt Spring Island. By 1866, about fifteen Black families were settled on the northern end of the island, along with another fifteen White.²³

In the published histories of Salt Spring Island, the harmonious relations between Blacks and Whites provide a fitting adjunct to a literature that emphasizes the bucolic nature of rural life on the island. Bea Hamilton, long-time resident and author of a book-length history of the Salt Spring Island, maintains "[t]here was no problem of integration on the Island. The Negro people joined in all the community projects over the years, working side by side with the white people."²⁴

James Pilton also notes the absence of racial problems on the island: "most of the settlers were far too busy working their lands to be concerned about complexional differences."²⁵ Crawford Kilian agrees with Pilton and Hamilton's evaluation of race relations, concluding that the Salt Spring Island experience was unusual even in the Vancouver Island context:

the lack of racial hostility was no doubt grounded in the same circumstances as in the gold fields. Confronted with a rich but dangerous country, Blacks and Whites could not afford to be bigoted; prejudice was a luxury of Victoria's comfortable bourgeoisie. When a neighbour's help meant the margin of survival, it scarcely mattered whether he were Black, White, Indian, Hawaiian or Mauri.²⁶

The frontier egalitarianism of the Salt Spring Island community, these writers suggest, helps explain why no separate, let alone segregated, Black community emerged on the island. This point is explicitly addressed by historian Charles Irby, who traces the unusual ethnic homogeneity of the Salt Spring Island community to a different cause. Drawing on the memoirs of Black settlers, particularly Mrs. Stark, he argues that

the major event, in the sequence of events leading up to the occupancy of the land, was Governor Douglas' disallowance of a black [sic] segregated colony. This event determined the character which distinguished Saltspring Island from other black settlements in British North America and Canada.²⁷

Finding no evidence of ethnic clustering, nor other indications of ethnic conflict, historians have concentrated on the important role that Black men occupied within the community. As well as having pride of first place in the resettlement of the island, people like Abraham Copeland, William Robinson, and Henry Robinson participated in civic affairs, helping to establish school boards and municipal governments throughout the 1860s and 1870s.²⁸ The first teacher, John C. Jones, was a Black from Ohio, and had obtained a university degree from Oberlin College. One of the first island

constables, Jim Anderson, was also Black. Members of this ethnic group then, “held responsible positions in all organizations... and were very much a part of the island community life.”²⁹

This coherent and optimistic view of inter-racial relations on the island has more to do with particular discursive construction than it does with the behaviors of Salt Spring Island residents in the nineteenth century. When evidence from land records is cross-linked to find the ethnicity of landholders in 1868, settlement patterns provide considerable evidence of separate Black and British communities on the island in 1868, as Map 8 indicates. An examination of land transfers suggests, furthermore, that that this ethnic clustering survived the arrival and departure of a number of Blacks and Whites before that date.³⁰ Other evidence indicating the importance of ethnic difference to social relations in the north end of the island is offered by the witnesses to pre-emption-related activities. These suggest that people preferred not to cross ethnic lines when looking for neighbours to support their land claims.³¹ Finally, in spite of clear evidence that Black men occupied public positions within the community, parish registers and census returns suggest that family life provided less accommodation for ethnic differences than did the political: Blacks and Whites seldom married each other.³²

The last years of the 1860s marked an important change in the ethnic composition of island communities. In 1867 and 1868, the Black Salt Spring

Island community at Vesuvius Bay was the scene of three murders. The first was of an unknown Black, and this murder received little comment in the colonial press. But when, within a few months two more Black settlers, William Robinson and then his neighbour Giles Curtis were murdered, Victoria newspapers responded with prolonged expressions of horror and indignation, and Salt Spring Island settlers with panic. The popular press, like Mrs. Stark, blamed the murders on members of the Aboriginal population living near to Salt Spring Island. Under considerable pressure to find the killers, the colonial government made an arrest in April 1869, and a Native living near Cowichan was brought to trial and hanged in for William Robinson's murder.³³

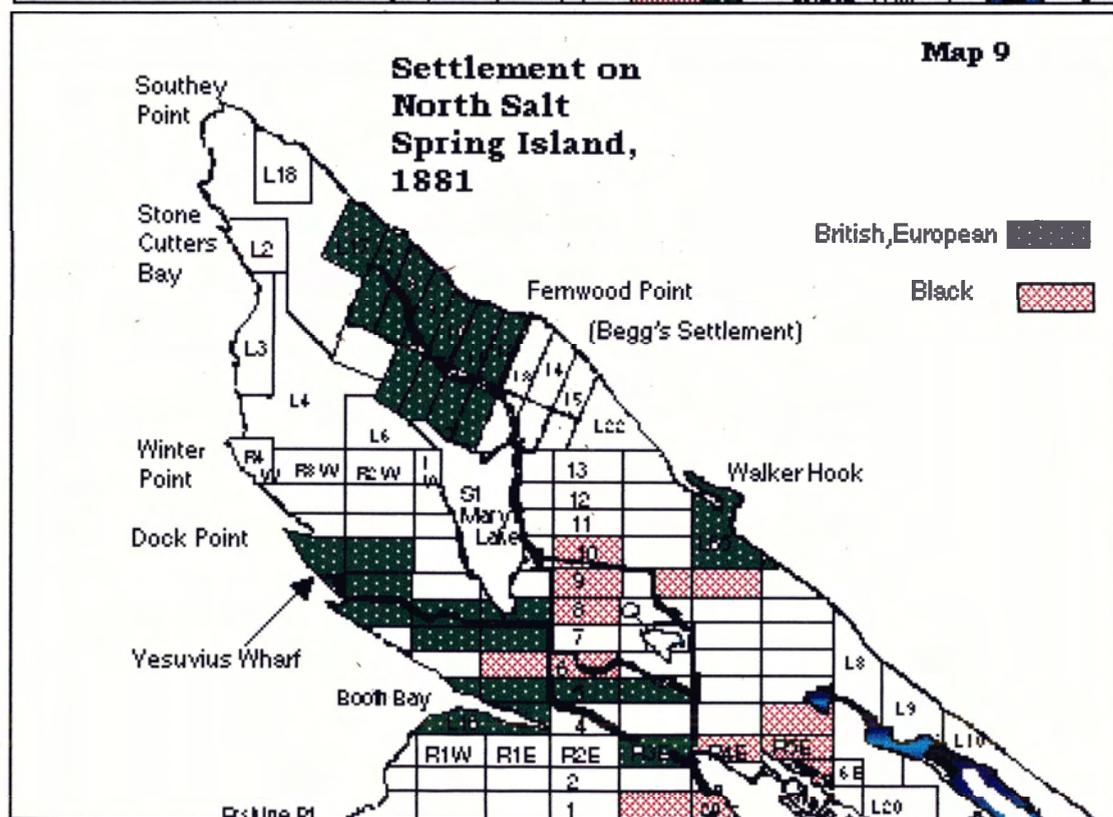
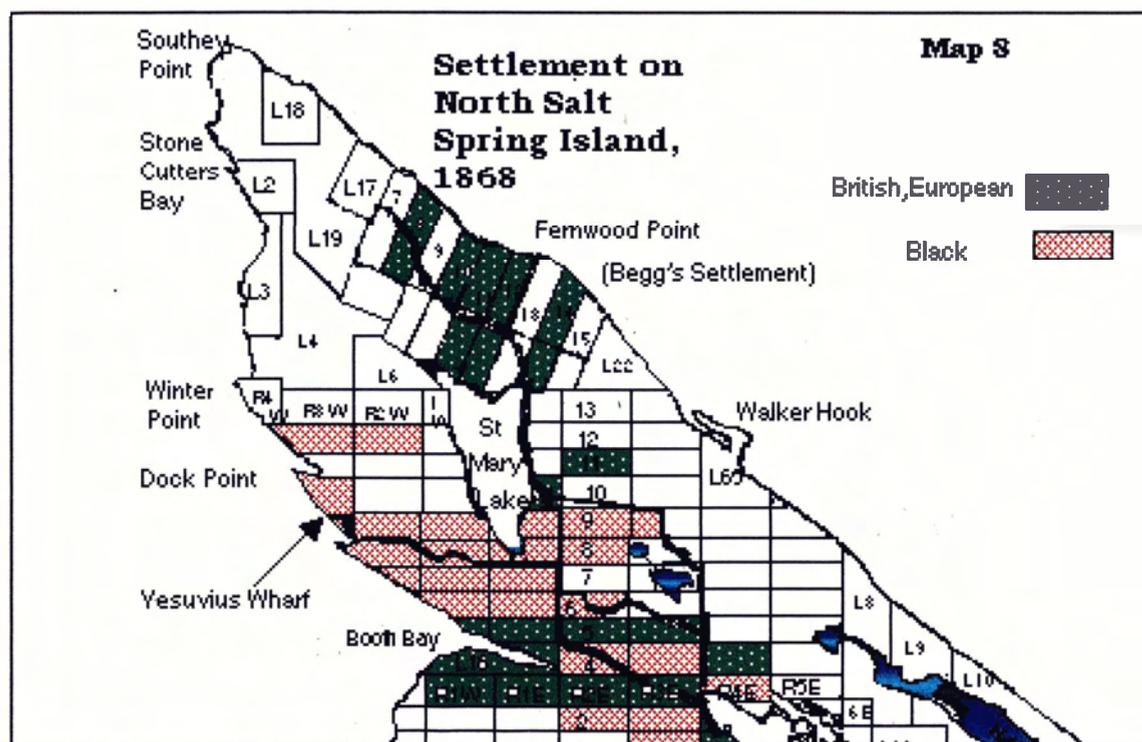
These murders have formed an important element in the discourse of Native/non-Native relations on Salt Spring Island, and, as we will see in a moment, played a supporting role in demonstrating the hostilities accompanying non-Native settlement on Aboriginal lands in the early settlement period. Notwithstanding the popular identification of these murders as an aspect of Native/non-Native conflict, however, an examination of land records suggests that this violence was pivotal in realigning Black/White relations on the island.

Upon their arrival in the early 1860s, Blacks had originally taken up land in similar sized lots to Whites; their early arrival had given them similar advantages in finding and settling on good land. The Blacks took up

land in the valley between Ganges and Vesuvius, while the British took up land to the north and east in Begg's Settlement. The Black settlement terminated at Vesuvius Bay, the best location for a steamboat wharf on the island's north end. The fact that steamship service was discontinued to the British Begg's Settlement after 1865, and continued only at Vesuvius Bay, was cause for consternation among White settlers, but it must have seemed advantageous to the Black community.³⁴

As Maps 8 and 9 suggest, the ethnic clustering that was so apparent before 1868 had fragmented by 1881: eleven of the fifteen Black landowners in the Vesuvius area left it in the years immediately following the murders at Vesuvius. Only one new Black family came to the island after 1868.

The valuable land near Vesuvius wharf, including that of the murdered William Robinson, was quickly taken up by British and European settlers. Racial tensions, suggested by the ethnic clustering of the pre-1868 period, survived the exodus of most Blacks, to surface from time to time over the next few years. When Clark Whims, a Black, eloped with the British-born constable's thirteen-year-old daughter in 1881, for example, conflicting evaluations of the propriety of such inter-ethnic unions created a furor in the community. The complaint made by Mr. Walter in 1885 against the hiring of a new constable because he was 'coloured' also speaks to problematic racial relations.³⁵



Whether Blacks left their lands in Vesuvius Bay because of their fear of Native violence, as is generally assumed, because of the hostility of White neighbours who were feeling increasingly disadvantaged in Begg's settlement, or simply because the American Civil War ended and Black families wanted to return to the United States, it is impossible to know.³⁶ We do know, however, that this move had serious consequences for those Black families who remained. Although pre-emptions fell in average size between the 1860s and the 1880s, those of Blacks fell about twice as much -- a thirty-eight percent drop from pre-1868 levels as opposed to an eighteen percent drop for Whites. The Blacks who remained on the island did under increasingly disadvantaged conditions.

This 'disadvantaging' after 1868 also shows up in the assessment rolls of the early 1890s. Whereas White settlers such as Trage, Booth, Maxwell and Gyves who took up lands in the early 1860s were, by the 1890s, among the wealthiest residents of the island, the pattern for Blacks who had arrived at the same time was very different: their average land value was sixty percent that of their White neighbours. Although one in five residents in 1891 had some "personal property," none of these were Black.³⁷ Whether they left the island, or just their valuable lands in the Vesuvius Bay area, Blacks had been deprived of the important advantages of early arrival in a newly settled area. This revised portrait of Black/White relations, drawing heavily on land

records for Salt Spring Island,³⁸ suggests that ethnic communities existed on the island before 1868, and, even after its dissolution, other evidence of ethnic inequality remains.

As Maps 6 and 7 indicate, ethnic clustering is also evident in the settlement of Hawaiians on Salt Spring Island. From the 1870s onward, a small number of Hawaiian families moved north after leaving the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company, taking up land on southern Salt Spring Island and the small islands immediately south of it. Many of the Hawaiian men who arrived married Aboriginal women, taking up land around the Isabella Point area that historian Tom Koppel identifies as "Little Hawaii."³⁹ Average land size for the fourteen Kanaka landholders was 133 acres, less than the 146 acre average of White landholders, and more than the Black average of 124 acres. This community remained quite isolated, culturally and economically, from nearby settlers at Beaver Point and Fulford Harbour. Community and familial ties were sustained much more rigorously with neighbouring Aboriginal communities.⁴⁰

Evidence suggests that ethnicity played an important role in the ways that people constructed personal identity, and organized social relations in this rural space. It not only affected the formation of communities on the island, but the distribution of land ownership. Ethnic distinctions were clearly not made in isolation from the societies of Vancouver Island and mainland British Columbia. The larger context of racism was manifested on

the island in the provincial land policies that restricted land ownership to particular ethnic groups, thereby directing settlement patterns on the island. Asian men were prohibited by law from pre-empting land or purchasing land. In the decade after 1891, the number of Asians on the island increased from one to twenty-two, but none of them owned land. The census of 1901 suggests that these men lived in fishing camps at the south end of the island. A number worked as farm labourers and, in two instances, cooks for the wealthier families on the island.⁴¹

It is not clear whether there were Native people living on Salt Spring Island at the time of the first European settlement. Archeological digs indicate that permanent villages existed in at least two locations on the island between 1700 and 2400 years ago, and shell middens attest to the importance of the area as a seasonal resource location.⁴² Mention is made of at least one abandoned Native village at the time of contact,⁴³ but there is little evidence of permanent residence on the island at this time. Nevertheless, an article in the New Westminster Times in 1859 reveals that issues surrounding Native land ownership were apparent from the earliest days of non-Native settlement on Salt Spring Island:

We have to urge upon the Government the necessity of some immediate measures being adopted to settle the Indians' claims, if any exist, upon these Islands, as the settlers are subjected to constant annoyance and insult from these claimants, more especially by the "Penalichar tribe" who boldly tell the settlers that the Island is theirs, and that Governor Douglas has "cap-swallowed" it, which, in the elegant Chinook jargon (we believe) means stolen it.⁴⁴

Natives were effectively prohibited from owning land. Aboriginal men were able to pre-empt land for several years in the colonial period, and a number of claims were taken out in the 1860s in both the Lower Fraser Valley and the Okanagan,⁴⁵ but there are no indications that any tried to pre-empt land on Salt Spring Island before the policy was officially rescinded by Joseph Trutch in the late 1860s.⁴⁶ The only statistical information available in the period under study indicates that in 1876, a small group of ten Aboriginal adults were living with five children and some livestock on the newly-created Indian Reserve at Fulford Harbour.⁴⁷

Relations between Natives and non-Natives on Salt Spring Island were frequently remarked upon in the colonial press, and, from the earliest days of settlement, were defined there by violence and lawlessness. Readers of Victoria's British Colonist were introduced to what would become the standard portrayal of Native/settler relations on the coast when, in 1860, the paper re-printed a letter sent by a Salt Spring Island settler to Governor Douglas. Henry Lineker described a bloody massacre that had occurred near his home on Ganges Harbour. Rival Haida and Cowichan tribes had landed in Ganges Harbour and carried out a battle on the shore, leaving many from both tribes dead, and settlers badly frightened.⁴⁸

For historians, this act of violence on the island is among the first in a long line of incidents that "show how precarious life was among Indians on

this Coast up to a comparatively recent period."⁴⁹ Incidents of theft from homes and gardens on Salt Spring Islands by Natives were reported on various occasions throughout the early 1860s, and Natives were allegedly involved in larger scale 'cattle-rustling' on the island.⁵⁰ Altercations between settlers and Natives were not limited to thefts, however; throughout the 1860's, Natives from a variety of tribes were implicated in a number of brutal murders around the Gulf Islands.⁵¹

Within British Columbia historiography, such acts of violence have defined settler/Native relations on the Coast in the 1860s. Robin Fisher and Cole Harris disagree about relations of power between fur traders and Natives in the fur-trade era, but they are in accord about the disastrous impact of European settlement throughout the province after 1858. Both settlers and Natives tended to "select land for the same reasons; they both wanted land that was fertile and productive."⁵² Fisher argues that relations became strained, and then increasingly violent as the scale of settlement increased. This competition for land was exacerbated by cultural differences surrounding land use.⁵³ Competition removed aboriginal peoples from their lands, deprived them of traditional occupations, decimated them by disease, and, as Barry Gough outlines in Gunboat Frontier, resulted in bloody attacks by armed agents of the state.⁵⁴ Within the Salt Spring Island historiography, these acts of violence have acted as a backdrop against which relations among settlers shows up in sharp relief, as Charles Irby explains:

The society was composed of a mosaic of persons who were inextricably linked by the real and imagined realities of their existence. The Native American's threat of violence, against property and person, was a causal link in the process of developing varying amounts of social cohesion. Regardless of genealogy, a neighbor was considered an asset. Proximity provided both protection against the enemy and a vehicle for social relationships.⁵⁵

Community, in other words, was defined on Salt Spring Island in terms of the peaceful frontier egalitarianism of non-Native groups, and sustained by the exclusion of Native/non-Native conflict from definitions of the island's identity.⁵⁶

Detailed evidence from Salt Spring Island, however, supports a more complex reading of these inter-racial relations as well. Letters and reminiscences of the earliest settlers provide glimpses of different kinds of interactions between Natives and settlers. There are numerous indications, for example, that Native men were important to settlers during the early years, providing them with food and labour, and fostering commerce. As Jonathan Begg, the first storekeeper on the island reported in a letter of 1860:

It is very cheap living here as the Indians who are very useful and very good to white men bringing us large quantities of the best the water, woods and forest can produce for a mere song. For instance, I buy a good buck weighing 100 lbs. for \$1.50 in trade, the trade costing me originally about half that amount. A salmon weighing 10 lbs. can often be bought for 12 1/2 cents.⁵⁷

Mr. Begg's tone leaves little doubt that he was happy to extract such beneficial terms from the Natives with whom he was trading, but the type of

negotiation going on here is a far cry from the thefts and murders used to characterize Native/settler relations in the British Colonist.

The positive role of Natives to the trade and commerce of the island extended well beyond the first years of settlement. Margaret Shaw Walters, for example, arrived from Britain as a child in 1877, and comments on the importance of Native participation in the Gulf Islands economy: Natives were, she notes, "kind and considerate neighbours."⁵⁸ Bea Hamilton's history of Salt Spring Island also comments on their positive role in trade.⁵⁹ Evidence that Natives were employed by surveyors, farmers, and the provincial governments lends support to the research of Rolf Knight and John Lutz, which suggests that the Native presence in British Columbia trade and industry did not disappear with the arrival of settlers to the coast.⁶⁰ These relationships, and the power structures they contained, need to be noted and examined before the dynamics of Native/non-Native relations can be defined.

Native contact with settlers, however, extended beyond the neighbourly and business-like interactions just outlined. When Native women rather than Native men are seen as representative of inter-racial relations, the pattern of Native/settler interaction occurs within a framework defined by co-habitation and the raising of families. Bishop Hills, who visited the island in the early 1860s, noted that in Begg's settlement there were "sixteen settlers, mostly young men. Nearly all are living with Indian women."⁶¹ Methodist

Preacher Ebenezer Robson made a similar observation on his visit to the area in 1861. He wrote in his diary that of the nine men in Begg's Settlement,

five are living with Indian women in a state of adultery. Some have families from such connexion. One man has commenced this degrading course since I was here last. He is a young man who was educated in [illegible] College, England, for the Bar and passed his examination for this profession. His father is an old and wealthy Methodist. His son, poor man, is far gone on the way to hell.⁶²

Whereas evidence from other areas of the province suggests that relations between Native women and non-Native men were often brief, informal and violent,⁶³ evidence from Salt Spring Island indicates considerable stability in mixed-race unions. More than a quarter of marriages (twenty-seven percent) on the island were comprised of Native women married to non-Native men, and these families were among those staying the longest on the island: mixed-race families stayed, on average, twenty-nine years instead of twenty-two years of other families.⁶⁴

By the late 1860s, the majority of Natives living on Salt Spring were "settlers," married to White men, in a complex and largely unexamined position of relative economic and political inferiority and partnership that was defined by their gender as much as their race. As Jean Barman suggests, high rates of Native/non-Native marriage in isolated rural areas of the province speak to the relaxation of strict moral sanctions against miscegenation that characterized attitudes in urban area.⁶⁵ This should not

blind us, however, to the important economic and cultural advantages that Native women brought to non-Native men trying to make a living from the land and sea in the Pacific Northwest; as we saw in the last chapter, Native women's familiarity with the coastal environment, like their ties to neighbouring Aboriginal communities, provided considerable benefits to some early settlers.

This more complex reading of inter-racial relations on Salt Spring Island is compatible with the other recent histories of the Pacific Northwest. Looking beyond gunboats and sensational violence, recent studies are revealing a complexity of racial relations at the local level that have been obscured by an intense focus on the one, over-simple indicator of violence.⁶⁶ Historians have recently been looking for, and finding, evidence that "beyond the realm of government dictates and official wrangling, there existed a relationship that was predicated upon confrontation, negotiation and conciliation."⁶⁷

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that religion, age and ethnicity were characteristics around which island residents both ordered their identity, and shaped their community. A paucity of sources makes it difficult to examine the complex hierarchies of age, or to speak conclusively about the significance of religious differences on the island. The importance of ethnicity is more accessible to the historian; its role in directing patterns of settlement is

evident in the land records, and its role in shaping marriage is evident from the census. This chapter has highlighted the differences between the various discourses of race, and land- and family-based behaviours. As we have seen in earlier chapters, these differences underscore the importance of using a number of sources, and examining them in their specific contexts, in order to understand not only Salt Spring Island experience, but the varied and changing ways identities were articulated and understood. The next chapter will continue this exploration of community relations with an examination of gender and state formation on the island.

NOTES

¹ St. Paul's Catholic Church was opened in 1885, and the Burgoyne United Church was opened in 1887. Saint Mark's Anglican Church was opened in 1892. The history of the two latter are contained in "Saint Mark's Centennial, 1892-1992, Parish of Salt Spring Island," typescript, SSIA, and "The Little Church in the Valley: Burgoyne United Church, Fulford-Ganges Road, Salt Spring Island, B.C. Researched and Written by Mary E. (McLennan) Davidson," 1987, typescript, SSIA; St. Paul's Catholic Church was consecrated in 1885; "St. Paul's 100 Year Celebration, May 10, 1980," pamphlet, SSIA.

² Journal of Ebenezer Robson, 16 September 1861 to 27 March 1862, H/D/R57, R57.3, BCA. Diary of Bishop George Hills, Archives of the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

³ They contain the names of a number of well-known Salt Spring Island families: Mary Jane McFadden, Elizabeth Whims, and a number of Sparrow, King and Purser girls. St. Ann's Cowichan, Register of First Arrival at the school, Registers of First Communion, RG II, S36, box 1, Sisters of St. Ann Archives, Victoria. My thanks to Dr. Jean Barman for sharing this information with me.

⁴ This was the case of Sophie Purser, later Sophie King, who was placed there in the late 1890s as a young child, shortly after her father became ill, and never knew her parents. Interview with Mrs. King, SSIA. Most of the twenty-one girls were placed there as children, not babies, a number of them in their early teens. Most stayed a number of years.

⁵ By the early twentieth century, religious, ethnic and political distinctions had crystallized on the island, with British Anglican Conservatives shopping at one local merchant, and American Methodist Liberals shopping at another. The mixed race, Native, Hawaiian and Catholic families living at the south end were increasingly accorded marginal roles in the community. For an interesting examination of an area where few inter-religious marriages occurred, despite geographical propinquity, see, J.I. Little, Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1888 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 105-134, 180-218.

⁶ Ten of the forty-three married household heads married a woman of a different religion, while twenty-two married women of different ethnicity. In 1891, twelve of the

fifty-nine married household heads married a woman of a different religion, and twenty married a woman of a different ethnicity.

⁷ For the importance of age to patterns of landownership in nineteenth century Ontario, see Gordon Darroch and Lee Soltow, Property and Inequality in Victorian Ontario: Structural Patterns and Cultural Communities in the 1871 Census (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 201-203.

⁸ In 1881, none of the household heads owned land before they were twenty. Six of the eleven men in their twenties, and five of the eleven men in their thirties owned land. forty-two of the fifty-six men over forty owned land. In 1891, twenty of the forty-eight men in their twenties, and seventeen of the thirty-four men in their thirties owned land. Thirty-five of the forty-five men over forty owned land.

⁹ In 1881, there were fifty-five landowners on the Island, representing thirty-seven percent of the 148 people over fourteen (twenty percent) on the island. In 1891, landowners were twenty-two percent of the population, thirty-four percent of the 265 people over fourteen years of age.

¹⁰ As Chad Gaffield has summarized, “[w]ithin the patriarchal family, children, youth and adults did not simply share the interests or experience family life in undifferentiated ways.” Chad Gaffield, “Children, Schooling and Family Reproduction in Nineteenth-Century Ontario,” Canadian Historical Review, 7, 2 (1991), 59.

¹¹ Records concerning children (defined here as people under fifteen) are limited to nominal census records (280 out of 378), a few scattered school records, and a small number of birth and death registry entries in the period under study. Only 378 of the 4652 records in the database contain information about children under fifteen years of age.

¹² For an overview of the changing role of childhood in Canadian society, see Neil Sutherland, Childhood in Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

¹³ See Public School Reports (BCSP, 1872-1891) for statistical breakdowns of the number of students between five and sixteen years of age. These figures indicate that between sixty-five percent and 100 percent of eligible children were attending school, although absentee rates hovered around the twenty percent mark throughout the period. For some indication of typical attendance rates in the province, see Penelope Stephenson, “Mrs. Gibson Looked As If She Was Ready for the End of Term’: The Professional Trials and Tribulations of Rural Teachers in British Columbia’s Okanagan Valley in the 1920s,”

in Jean Barman, Neil Sutherland, and J. Donald Wilson, eds., Children, Teachers and Schools in the History of British Columbia (Calgary: Detsilig Enterprises 1995), 241, and J. Donald Wilson and Paul J. Stortz, "‘May the Lord Have Mercy on You’: The Rural School Problem in British Columbia in the 1920s," in Barman, Sutherland, and Wilson, eds., Children, Teachers and Schools, 209-234.

¹⁴ According to the 1881 census, of the fifty-three children between six and thirteen, thirty-nine are listed as attending school. Only one of the nine fourteen-year-olds, and none of the eleven fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds are so listed. There was no question asked about schooling in the 1891 census. Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- SD 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

¹⁵ In 1881, of the twenty-four men from fifteen to thirty years of age, five were married household heads, and two were single household heads. Half (twelve) were sons, living with their family of origin, five were lodgers who may have been related to the women’s side of the family. In 1891, there were eighty-eight men between fifteen and thirty: almost half (thirty-four) were sons, and a further six were brothers of the household head. Seventeen were lodgers, twenty-one headed their own households, and nine of these were married. Three were married but lived in other households as servants in one case, as in-laws in another. Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

¹⁶ Of the forty-seven women between fifteen and thirty years of age on the island in 1891, thirty were married. Of the seventeen who were unmarried, twelve lived with their parents, and six were lodgers. Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

¹⁷ In 1881, sixteen of the twenty-three married couples where the wife was younger than thirty-six years. Assuming that women in this age group would not have children who had left home, the mother’s average age at the birth of the first child was calculated by subtracting the age of the eldest child listed in the census from the mother’s age. In 1881, that age was seventeen. In 1891, twenty-four household heads were married with children, and the average age at the birth of the first child for women thirty-five and under was nineteen. Husbands of women in this cohort had their first child at an average age of thirty-three in 1881, and thirty in 1891. Census of Canada, 1881, District

no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

¹⁸ For example, when George Purser shot himself, his eighteen year-old son is working for a neighbour, Mr. Foord. File no. 18-1885, roll B2372, British Columbia Attorney General, Inquisitions, 1872-1937, GR 1327, BCA. As we saw in Chapter 6, the Maxwell and the Akerman lads worked on family lands as loggers and labourers. The diary of John Beddis, age sixteen in 1890, outlines the daily work he performed on the Beddis farm. As we saw in Chapter 7, young men also “worked on the roads” for the provincial government.

¹⁹ This is particularly clear in the interview with the Dodds family, who arrived on the island just after 1914, and with Charlie Horel, whose mother ran a sawmill on the island in the 1920s and 30s. See interviews with Dorothy, Lassie and Bob Dodds, 1990, and Charlie Horel, 1990, SSIA.. This pride can be inferred in the diary of John Beddis, who carefully outlines the daily work he performs in the year after his father’s death. Diary of John Beddis, January 1, 1890 - June 30, 1890, SSIA.

²⁰ Regina v Whyms [sic] and Anderson, December 21, 1881, file 1881-18, box 22, British Columbia, Attorney General, GR 419, BCA; Regina vs. Mary Anne McFadden and Mary Ann Sampson, file 24/66, British Columbia, Attorney General, Documents, 1857-1966, GR 419, BCA; also British Columbia, Colonial Correspondence, Franklyn to Colonial Secretary, 16 November 1866, file F602.24, reel B1329, BCA.

²¹ This dissertation uses race and ethnicity, not as biological or essential qualities, but as socially constructed and historically-specific categories of difference. For an elaboration of this approach, see Kay J. Anderson, Vancouver’s Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill Queen’s University Press, 1991), 8-33.

²² These were the Dred Scott decision of 1857 and the March, 1858 California Assembly Bill 339. For a history of this migration, see Crawford Kilian, Go Do Some Great Thing: The Black Pioneers of British Columbia (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1978), esp. chapters 1-4, and James Pilton, “Salt Spring Island” in “Negro Settlement in British Columbia 1858-1871” (MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1951).

²³ Black settlers were G.H. Anderson, Abraham Copeland, Armstead Buckner, A.O. Gordon, William Harrison, William Isaacs, John C. Jones, David Overton, Henry Robinson, William Robinson, Henry Shore, Louis Stark, John Usher, Hiram Whims, and Giles Curtis. Henry Moore and Pompey Jackson, also Blacks, had left their pre-emptions by this date. White settlers, in neighbouring Begg’s Settlement and in the

Ganges/Vesuvius area, were John P. Booth, Fred Foord, Thomas Foord, Henry Lineker, George Mills, George Mitchell, John Norton, William Richardson, the Hollins brothers, Henry Sampson, William Smith, and Edward Walker. In the south end were Joseph Akerman, Michael Gyves, John Maxwell, James McDonald, Thomas Williams and probably Theodore Trage, Henry Spikerman and Henry Meinserstorf.

²⁴ Bea Hamilton, Salt Spring Island (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1969),16.

²⁵ Pilton, "Negro Settlement," 135

²⁶ Kilian, Go Do Some Great Thing, 103.

²⁷ Charles C. Irby, "The Black Settlers on Saltspring Island in the Nineteenth Century," Phylon (1974), University of British Columbia Special Collections, 371. Kilian and Hamilton also make reference to Douglas' decision, mentioned by Mrs. Stark: "Sylvia Stark remembered that a delegation of colored people called on Governor Douglas requesting permission to form a colony of colored settlers on Saltspring Island about that time [1858], but he refused, saying it would be to the best interest of all to have a mixed settlement." Marie Albertina Wallace (Stark), 1867-1966, Saltspring Island, Xerox of typescript, Add. MSS. 91, BCA. 18. I have not found any other reference to Douglas' statement.

²⁸ See for example, letter from John C. Jones, William Robinson, and Frederick Lester requesting a school on the island. Jones, Robinson, Lester to Mr. Kennedy, Governor, May 1864, file F988-1, Colonial Correspondence, GR 1372, BCA.. For the important role of Henry Robinson in municipal politics, see British Columbia, Provincial Secretary, Salt Spring Island Municipal By- Laws, Salt Spring Island Correspondence and ByLaws, 1871-1882, box 1, file 2, GR 1707, BCA.

²⁹ Hamilton, Salt Spring Island, 12.

³⁰ An examination of the records shows that of the thirty-seven land transactions involving Black settlers where we know the previous and subsequent pre -emptor or purchaser, twenty-four of these or about two thirds, were other Blacks

³¹ Blacks were much more likely than Whites to have Black witnesses, even in the areas of the island that contain a majority of Blacks. Most (ten of the thirteen) Blacks seeking witnesses found Black witnesses as all or part of their necessary witnesses. Only half of the Whites in the North End (including the Vesuvius/Ganges area and Begg's Settlement) did so. Even in the Ganges/Vesuvius settlements, where the great majority of settlers were Black, more than a third of the Whites did not have Black witnesses for their land transactions.

³² In a survey of 500 parish records, I could find no examples of a non-Black witnessing a Black birth or marriage, or vice-versa, except in the four cases where there was a racially mixed family. Mr. Robinson, an American Black, was already married to Margaret, an Irish Catholic, when they moved to the island. His daughter married Portuguese Mr. Norton, their next-door neighbour, at a very early age. Only three other marriages between Blacks and non-Blacks are documented. This is in stark contrast to the high rates of inter-marriage between other racial groups-- particularly Hawaiians and Native women.

³³ A Native man, Tshunhuasset, was hanged for the murder of William Robinson. For a detailed analysis of this murder, and its role in the history of colonial Salt Spring Island, see "Who Killed William Robinson? Race, Justice and Settling the Land," a website created by Ruth Sandwell, Simon Fraser University, and John Lutz, University of Victoria, <http://web.uvic.ca/history-robinson/index.html>.

³⁴ As a petition from settlers at Begg's Settlement in 1865 announced "it seems that the steamer calls regularly at Vesuvius Bay, on the west side of the Island, and communication with which point lies over a mountainous range, rendering it difficult and at this season year out of the question to send any of their produce there for shipment to a market." British Colonist, 9 March 1865.

³⁵ On Whims and Sampson, see S. Lewis, teacher on Saltspring Island, to C.C. McKenzie, Superintendent of Education, 12 February 1882, British Columbia Superintendent of Education, inward correspondence, GR 1445, BCA. On Anderson as constable, see A. Walter to Premier Smithe, 28 April 1885, British Columbia Premier's Office, correspondence inwards, box 1, file 3, GR 441, BCA.

³⁶ Kilian argues that it was "economic reasons" that made farming less profitable, encouraging Blacks to return to the States. Kilian, Go Do Some Great Thing, 115.

³⁷ Assessment rolls reveal that the eight Black landowners had acerages that were only 124 acres, compared to the 300 acres that Whites on average possessed. The value of Black land was, on average, \$675 as opposed to the Whites \$1,018. Twenty-seven out of 137 (18.9 percent) of Whites declared personal property to be taxed in this year, but no Blacks did. British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes, 1892 Assessment Roll, Roll B 443, Gulf Islands Assessment District.

³⁸ And, it must be added, ignoring the evidence from narrative sources on the island. Most of the anecdotal evidence about harmonious relations on the island can be traced to Mrs. Stark's memoirs. Mrs. Stark was one of the few Blacks to remain on the island;

the majority who left the island would probably tell a different story.

³⁹ Tom Koppel, Kanaka: The Untold Story of Hawaiian Pioneers in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1995), 105-124. Cross-linked land records indicate that fourteen Hawaiian families took up land on South Salt Spring, Russell and Portland Islands between 1872 and 1891.

⁴⁰ Jean Barman, "The Worth of an Everyday Woman: Marie Mohair and Her Two Families" (unpublished manuscript, Educational Studies, University of British Columbia, 1996).

⁴¹ Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- SD 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; Census of Canada, 1901, District No. 3, Vancouver Electoral District, Polling Sub-division Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 -- Nominal. The Diary of Alexander Aitken, a young shepherd who came to work at the Musgrave's farm at the south end of the island in 1891, contains a number of references to the Chinese domestic servant, with whom he shared lodgings. Alexander was astounded at the depth and dignity of Chinese culture that Young [sic] described to him in the summer of 1891. The Diary of Alexander Aitken, July and August, 1891, SSIA.

⁴² For a summary of the archeological and ethnographic data, see Charles Kahn, "In the Beginning: Aboriginal Salt Spring," in his history Salt Spring Island (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, forthcoming, 1998).

⁴³ Bishop Hills notes that he walked through an abandoned Indian village on his arrival at Ganges Harbour. Journal of Bishop George Hills, Bishop of Columbia, 5 September 1860, Archives of the Ecclesiastic Province of British Columbia, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

⁴⁴ New Westminster Times, 24 September 1859.

⁴⁵ Paul Tennant, Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989 (Vancouver: UBC Press 1990); Duane Thomson, "The Response of Okanagan Indians to European Settlement," BC Studies, 101 (Spring 1994), 96-117.

⁴⁶ See Tennant, Aboriginal Peoples and Politics, 34-40.

⁴⁷ Indian Reserve Commission, Census of British Columbia Indians, 1876-77, RG 88 v. 494 file, NAC. Thanks to John Lutz for drawing this source to my attention.

⁴⁸ British Colonist, 12 July 1860. For original of letter, see Lineker to James Douglas, 9 July 1860; Correspondence, Dept. of Land and Works, F1000.0, GR 1372, BCA.

⁴⁹ John T Walbran, British Columbia Coast Names: Their Origin and History (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas [1909] 1971), 199. This incident is reproduced in almost every history of the island. See Hamilton, Salt Spring Island, 17-20 ; Pilton, "Negro Settlement in British Columbia," 137-38; Margaret Shaw Walters, Early Days Among the Gulf Islands of British Columbia (Hebden Printing Co., n.d), 29-31.

⁵⁰ British Colonist, 15 May 1861, and 21 April 1863; Charles Lillard, Seven Shillings a Year: The History of Vancouver Island (Salt Spring Island: Horsdal and Schubart, 1986), 151. On cattle rustling, see British Colonist, 27 March, 1867; Hamilton, Salt Spring Island, 51-53.

⁵¹ For example the murder of Brady and Marks in 1863, Mrs. Smith and her child in 1864, a "Kanaka" (Hawaiian) in 1866, William Robinson in 1867, and Giles Curtis in 1868. For accounts of these, see Barry M. Gough, Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians 1846-90 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), 139, 140-47.

⁵² Robin Fisher, Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774--1890 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press [1977] 1992), 105. R. Cole Harris, "Strategies of Power in the Cordilleran Fur Trade," The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 31-67.

⁵³ See a discussion of this see for example Julie Cruikshank, "Invention of Anthropology in British Columbia's Supreme Court: Oral Tradition as Evidence in *Delgamuukw v. B.C.*" BC Studies, no. 95 (Autumn 1992), 25-42.

⁵⁴ Gough, Gunboat Frontier, 134-36; 147. R. Cole Harris, "Voices of Smallpox Around the Strait of Georgia," Harris, The Resettlement of British Columbia, 3-30.

⁵⁵ Irby, "The Black Settlers on Salt Spring Island," 373.

⁵⁶ Pilton, "Negro Settlement in British Columbia," 142; Kilian Go Do Some Great Thing, 109-115, Hamilton, Salt Spring Island, 21-22. A..F. Flucke, "Early Days on Salt Spring Island," British Columbia Historical Quarterly, 25 (1951), 186. For the racism of Natives against Blacks, see Fisher, Contact and Conflict, 91. This is discounted by Kilian, 110.

⁵⁷ Jonathan Begg to William and Margaret Chisholm, March 10 1860, SSIA..

⁵⁸ Walters, Early Days, 8. See also 9, 24, 55.

⁵⁹ Hamilton, Salt Spring Island, 53.

⁶⁰ Rolf Knight, Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Indian Labour in British Columbia, 1858-1930 (Vancouver: New Star, 1978); John Lutz, "The Lost Years:

Aboriginal People and Work in British Columbia, 1885-1960," paper presented to the B.C. Studies Conference, November, 1992; John Lutz, "Work, Wages and Welfare in Aboriginal-Non-Aboriginal Relations, British Columbia, 1849-1970" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1994). For Native employment on the island, see for example, British Columbia Public Accounts for the fiscal year ended 30 June 1891 (Victoria: R. Wolfenden, 1891), 56; Ashdown Green, Diary of a Survey of Salt Spring Island, June 8 - Nov. 22, 1874, Add Mss 437, BCA; Trial of Tom for the Murder of William Robinson, 1869, Vancouver Island, Supreme Court of Civil Justice, Bench Books of Criminal Cases Heard Before Judge Joseph Needham, 1867-1869, GR 2030, BCA. For the difficulty of finding any formal employment records on Salt Spring, see R.W. Sandwell, "Peasants on the Coast? A Problematique of Rural British Columbia," in Donald Akenson, ed., Canadian Papers in Rural History, 10 (Ganonoque: Langdale Press, 1996), 284-88.

⁶¹ Journal of Bishop George Hills, 11 Sept. 1860, Archives of the Ecclesiastic Province of British Columbia, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

⁶² Diary of Ebenezer Robson, 25 March 1861, BCA.

⁶³ Sylvia Van Kirk, "Women in Between: Indian Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada," Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers (1977), 30-46, was the first to address the role of Native women in the fur trade. For a review of the growing literature on the subject, see Jean Barman, "Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power and Race in British Columbia, 1850-1900" (paper presented to the BC Studies Conference, 3 May 1997).

⁶⁴ Mixed race unions comprised twelve out of forty-four marriages, and comprised thirty-five percent of those staying more than thirty years.

⁶⁵ Jean Barman, "Invisible Women: Aboriginal Mothers and Mixed-Race Daughters in Rural Pioneer British Columbia," unpublished manuscript, Educational Studies Dept., University of British Columbia, 1997.

⁶⁶ See for example, Daniel Clayton, "Captain Cook and the Spaces of Contact at 'Nootka Sound,'" in Elizabeth Vibert and Jennifer S. Brown, eds., Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996), 95-123; Harris, "Strategies of Power in the Cordilleran Fur Trade," 31-67; Tina Loo, "Dan Cranmer's Potlatch: Law as Coercion, Symbol and Rhetoric in British Columbia, 1884-1951," Canadian Historical Review, 73, 2 (1992), 125-65.

⁶⁷ Bruce Stadfeld, "Manifestations of Power: Native Response to Settlement in Nineteenth Century British Columbia" (MA Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1993), 1.

Chapter 8 Gender and Politics in the Salt Spring Island Community

This chapter continues to explore the different ways in which rural society on Salt Spring Island was experienced and understood by residents and observers alike. Whereas Chapters 1 to 3 examined Salt Spring Island through the lens of the official discourse of rural, Chapters 4 to 7 have tried to move beyond this discourse by seeing rural also as a category of experience that was mediated by the specific observable practices of island residents. Land use, economic activity, and aspects of personal identity have been examined in the attempt to understand what rural society meant to those living on, and thinking about, Salt Spring Island.

Chapter 7 has argued that the Salt Spring Island community was organized around differences in ethnicity, religion and age. This chapter will begin with an examination of the ways in which gender shaped behaviours on the island. It will then attempt an evaluation of the hierarchies that gender imposed, speculating about the particular relation between the gendered hierarchies of liberal capitalism, and the lives of Salt Spring Island women. The relevance of class as a category of analysis and description will be briefly evaluated.

The focus in the second half of the chapter will be on the growth of institutions in this state-building era, and public schools and local government will be discussed. As we will see, there is some evidence that the

state-building discourse of liberalism was making an impact on the way the community shaped itself. Nevertheless, high levels of non-co-operation within the population, the predominance of unusual family structures, the continued importance of non-capitalist economic activity, and, most particularly, the instability of most formal institutions, suggest that many resisted, and some rejected, the disciplining power of liberal state formation or governmentality.

i. Gender

As we have seen throughout this study, gender, like age and ethnicity, was central in defining people's identity in the family and community. Gender differences played a role in determining the types of work carried out on the island. Glenda Riley has argued, in the context of pioneer America, that women's work in rural areas was closely focused on the household and family, and domestic tasks were often carried out in isolation from other adults.¹ These types of household-based work characterized women's lives on Salt Spring Island, and similar patterns have been observed in other parts of pioneer British Columbia.² Men, like women participated in a wide variety of self-provisioning activities, but their work was often more sociable than women's. Similarly, leisure activities seem to have been divided along gender lines. Church services, a traditional extra-household activity of women, were not available to men or women on a regular basis during these years. Evidence suggests that women seldom participated in the alcohol

consumption, and even more rarely in the hunting that were favoured as recreational activities by island men.³

Although violence and drunkenness characterized homosocial relations among men, it did not define them.⁴ Men on Salt Spring forged important bonds with each other that were marked by co-operation and strong emotional ties. John Maxwell and James Lunney arrived together from Ireland in the early 1860s, taking up land together and living as neighbours for their entire lives on the island. Similarly, Theodore Trage and Heinrich Spikerman, arriving together from Germany at about the same time as Maxwell and Lunney, took up land together. Trage, like Maxwell, married a Native woman and raised a family. Spikerman lived with Trage and his family as he grew old.

Gender not only determined patterns of work, leisure and sociability, but it played an important role in allocating who had access to the land, the foundation of wealth and power in this rural society. As Christopher Clark and Paulette Falcon have argued, government policies regarding property in nineteenth-century British Columbia were profoundly influenced by patriarchal assumptions, and were designed to maintain patriarchal authority.⁵ Prior to the Married Women's Property Act of 1873, British Columbia women had very few rights to property. The 1865 Homestead Protection Act allowed deserted wives protection from creditors to the extent that the family home was protected, but this was only at her husband's

discretion. The same act, however, allowed a widow to hold the homestead for the duration of the children's minority, or until she remarried, making British Columbia women the first in the Dominion to have dower rights. As we have seen, a number of Salt Spring Island widows took advantage of this law to live on their deceased husbands' pre-emptions.⁶

In 1873, single women were briefly allowed to pre-empt land, a right that was rescinded the following year. After that, only widows with dependent children were allowed to do so. Only two women on Salt Spring Island seem to have taken out land in this capacity in the years under study. The 1873 Married Women's Property Act allowed women to hold property in their own name, but they were prohibited from conveying land until 1887.⁷

As Carol Pateman has argued, these gender distinctions were fundamental to the creation of the modern state. The limitations on women's civil rights evidenced in property regulations and enfranchisement laws were deeply tied to liberal notions of the hierarchical division of family and state:

[t]he fraternal social contract creates a new, modern patriarchal order that is presented as divided into two spheres: civil society or the universal sphere of freedom, equality, individualism, reason, contract and impartial law -- the realm of men or 'individuals'; and the private world of particularity, natural subjection, ties of blood, emotion, love, and sexual passion -- the world of women, in which men also rule.⁸

The exclusion of women and the family from civic identity removed them from definitions as individuals in the liberal sense, bolstering patriarchal

structures in the process; as Christopher Clarkson argues in his study of family law in British Columbia, such exclusion also allowed the family its key role within the state as a bulwark against capitalism, where, as we saw in Chapter 1, it was to provide the stability and extra-capitalist values needed to protect the capitalist state from itself.⁹

On Salt Spring Island, women comprised the majority of those adults who did not own land.¹⁰ Women's truncated presence in the land records confirms their marginal status within the liberal state. Not able to pre-empt land independently, rural women were limited in their opportunities for economic activity outside of their relations to men, as daughters, wives and mothers. The majority of landless women also lacked political voice: none voted in provincial or federal elections, nor did they participate in the nascent government bureaucracy by occupying positions on the local boards or councils.¹¹ Only the widows granted landowning status by the Homestead Exemption Act were able to vote municipally in the period under study, a political advantage limited by the short-lived nature of municipal government on the island, and the tendency of widows to remarry. Outside of their municipal vote, women expressed their political voice in the community only once: in 1891, a number appended their names to a petition requesting the implementation of provincial liquor laws on the island, as municipal ones were not being enforced. This public forum was exceptional

in a community where, until the 1890s, women's lives were usually excluded from the formal structures of power.¹²

Women's circumscribed civil identity in rural society limited their opportunities outside marriage, and is reflected in their poverty relative to men: in the assessment roll of 1891, only four women owned land, and only one woman, Mary Broadwell, declared personal property.¹³ She alone is listed in business directories as a business woman, the proprietor of the family store.¹⁴ Poverty translated into dependence, or at least co-residency: women did not live alone on the island, but with a husband, parent, or, more unusually, with an employer.¹⁵

The predominance of male-headed single parent households hints at the difficulties for women living outside of families; a combination of poor economic opportunities outside marriage, isolation, hard work, and the difficulties of childbirth contributed to the reluctance of women to stay in rural areas without a husband. The prevalence of male, single-parent households also suggests high mortality rates among child-bearing women.¹⁶ Parish records from the 1880s onward suggest that death during childbirth was not uncommon; estimates are, however, difficult to make due to poor registration of births and deaths in the nineteenth century.¹⁷ After the one-armed Dr. Hogg was murdered in the early 1860s, there was no doctor living on the island until 1898, when Dr. Baker, aided by a provincial grant of \$161

began his practice there.¹⁸ Before that time, women relied on other women to help them with illnesses and childbirth.

The difficulties of settler life on the island were exacerbated by the violence within the community: there were at least seven murders within this tiny population in the years under study.¹⁹ Documentation does not exist that would allow us to measure the extent to which women's lives were affected by the informal structures of power contained in personal violence. Violent episodes directed at women did occur, even though men were the victims of most of the murders on the island. Mrs. Smith and her son were murdered in 1864.²⁰ In 1866 Mrs. Robinson accused one of her neighbours of attacking and attempting to rape her. He was charged and convicted of indecent assault.²¹ When Mary Reaney died in childbirth in 1891, the neighbours who attended during her difficult confinement suspected the husband of spousal abuse. Demonstrating considerable solidarity with this Native woman, Mrs. Beddis and Mrs. Broadwell were apparently responsible for taking the unusual step of insisting on an inquest for this ostensibly straightforward case of puerperal fever. At the inquest, Mr. Reaney was compelled to swear, under oath, that

It is not true that on the 3 March or any day between that and the 13 of April my wife was drawing oxen or assisting me in drawing oxen. There was always plenty of food in the house and deceased had always the full run of the house. I swear that I never had any words with the deceased nor acted in any way violently towards her. Deceased never complained to me of having bruised her leg by falling down the step.²²

The bureaucratic and legal structures within which women lived in rural society, like the exigencies of isolated and often violent society, imposed unmeasurable restrictions on women's economic options and their social relations within the household. Nevertheless, as we have seen throughout this dissertation, considerable distance existed between formal and administrative structures on the one hand, and their application to the lives of Salt Spring Island residents on the other. The disjuncture between liberalism and Salt Spring Island experience may have had some beneficial effects on island women's position relative to men in the community.

First, as we will see momentarily, the civic, or public sphere that Pateman associates so closely with male privilege in the modern state was being seriously contested on the island, particularly in the 1880, for reasons that will be evaluated below. Although men were able to vote, their involvement with formal political and bureaucratic structures remained limited in practice. Secondly, gendered economic inequalities usually associated with modern capitalism were disrupted on the island; men were not the breadwinners in the ordinary sense of providing the sole wage for the family. Instead, men's participation in the world of waged work was intermittent, part time, temporary, and marginal to the economy of the household. Subsistence activities, and the sale of small-scale agricultural produce (especially eggs, chickens, and butter), were equally important to the

household economy, and were often performed by women and children. Again, this absence of patriarchal privilege may have had consequences for the divisions of power within the household; for, if one believes that women's inferior position within the modern household was sustained by a discourse that privileged waged work,²³ women on Salt Spring Island may have been in a advantageous position, relative both to their urban sisters and their rural husbands.

Finally, this dissertation has suggested that the value of land as a commodity -- that right to land that helped to distinguish men from women within the liberal state -- was significantly limited on Salt Spring Island in the years under study. Although men alone were given the right to own land, on Salt Spring Island most men, like women, had their relations to land mediated not by ownership, but by use-rights that were contingent on specific behaviours. Women's relations to the land were negotiated through the husband's provisional land rights, and her husband's provisional rights were negotiated through the state, but both differed from the normal relations of power associated with property ownership in a capitalist society. The removal, in practice, of the patriarchal privilege of land commodification may have had repercussions for the balance of power within the household.

How can we assess the effect of these factors on gendered hierarchies on the island? The most important indicator of inequality, is, unfortunately, not available for the island: it is impossible to assess the relative access that

women had to resources inside the household.²⁴ Mary Reanne's inquest suggests that some people, at least, believed that women should have equitable access to household resources, but the inquest also suggests a suspicion that such access was not always provided. Flexible household structures and the high incidence of inter-racial marriage provide some evidence that the rigid hierarchies that characterized gender relations in other areas of Victorian Canada and Britain may have been a little more supple on Salt Spring Island.²⁵

One other pattern of behaviour on the island suggests that the island's marginal relation to liberal and capitalist formations may have influenced the behaviour of Salt Spring Island women: they showed a marked tendency to leave their husbands, and sometimes their children. Whether they did so in order to escape an intolerable life, or to find a preferable one, is not clear. Mrs. Sampson left her husband after he arrested her for aiding and abetting the poisoner next door. She apparently "refused to return to her husband preferring to live with another man somewhere on the mainland of British Columbia."²⁶ As we have seen, Mrs. Purser left her husband and some of her children in favour of another, healthier man, after he had a debilitating stroke.²⁷ When Mr. Harrison died in 1878, the probate file notes that his wife was living in Oberlin, Ohio.²⁸ After his death, widow Harriet Harrison returned to Salt Spring Island, taking up her husband's pre-emption and marrying a man some fifteen years her junior. Mrs. Akerman came over on

the "bride ship" from England to Victoria as Martha Clay in the early 1860s and married Joseph shortly thereafter. The Akermans had obtained substantial landholdings by the 1890s. By 1901, however, Mrs. Akerman had left her husband, who was reputed to be a bad-tempered man, and was living with one of her sons and his wife.²⁹ Julia Sheppard had left her husband, and she appeared with her young daughter as a lodger on the 1891 census.³⁰ Sylvia Stark had asked her husband to leave by 1879, when he moved to Nanaimo. After he died under suspicious circumstances in 1895,³¹ his will noted that he left his wife "1 dollar in lieu of dower because she has some years since without cause left my bed and board consequently she is not entitled to any of my property." He left everything to his youngest daughter, Louisa Stark.³² Mrs. Brown was probably too drunk exactly what happened on December 18, 1891, but the jurors at the inquest formed their own ideas when a neighbour found her the next morning in bed with one Mr. Darlington, and Mr. Brown dead on the living room floor.³³ Explanation for these behaviours are far from clear. It may be that the difficulties of rural life were so great that women were forced to challenge traditional patterns in such a way. Without access to sources attesting more directly to women's understanding of their own experience, it is difficult to evaluate the significance of these behaviours, or to make causal links between the marginality of liberal structures of power and women's relative autonomy in this particular way. These unconventional behaviours -- unorthodox family

structures, mixed-race marriages, “unstable” marriages -- have most often been constructed as evidence of cultural breakdown, both in British Columbia and elsewhere.³⁴ In the context of Salt Spring Island society, however, they do raise questions about the relations between liberal, capitalist society and the position of women.

ii) Class

Conspicuously absent both from the list of inequalities discussed in these chapters, and from discussions of how meaning and identity were formed on Salt Spring Island, has been the issue of class. Class is a concept that has come under considerable attack in recent years. The importance of the means of production as an empirical measure of class relations has been seriously undermined by the influential work of E.P. Thompson, which defines class in experiential rather than materialist terms. At the same time, as William Reddy has argued, historians have failed to establish any simple correspondence between ideology, political identity and class interest, limiting its usefulness as an analytical tool.³⁵ A number of rural historians have been particularly cognizant of the difficulties involved in trying to reconcile the inequalities of rural society within the framework of class, a category of analysis which, despite its vagaries, is better suited to examining inequalities of power generated within urban and industrial settings than rural ones.³⁶ The society of Salt Spring Island presents similar problems, not because inequalities did not exist, but

because it is difficult to explain or even describe these within the increasingly convoluted terms of class analysis.³⁷

First, it is almost impossible to account for the class position of most island residents, because their relation to the means of production is so obscure. The provisional forms of landholding challenge any normal interpretations of "ownership" at the same time that land usages on the island challenge normal ideas of "production." Secondly, if, as has been argued here, the provisional forms of landholding in the pre-emption system provide the measure of inequality, then the most important inequalities do not occur between households in this land based community, but within them. As a number of theorists have argued, it is only with considerable difficulty that gender, and the internal dynamics of the household, can be incorporated into class analysis. There are many reasons for this, but the most compelling are offered by feminist critiques of liberal or Marxist economic theory. Within this framework, critics argue, women's independent economic status is either collapsed into their husbands' by means of the joint utility function, or it erased entirely by a discourse that fails to recognize the significance of the types of economic activities carried on by women within the household.³⁸

Third, as the ensuing analysis will suggest, while there is clear evidence of an elite on the island, as measured by landholding, political voice and personal property, certain peculiarities of the island's economy

and society seriously limited the extent to which this elite was able to turn these inequalities into the formal structures of power more commonly associated with a class society. Perhaps it is time to turn now to formal structures and organizations within the Salt Spring Island community, in order to see how these differences were perceived, and how they were transformed into relations of power within the community.

iii. The Growth of the State

Records kept by the Public Accounts Department of the British Columbia government document the steady increase in public moneys being spent on Salt Spring Island after 1871. Money from provincial spending, as we saw in Chapter 6, provided an important economic contribution to most of the cash-strapped islanders. Of those filling the nascent state-building functions on the island, reaping the financial and social benefits they conferred, it was landowners who were called on repeatedly to fill government posts, sign petitions and perform temporary assignments: boards of school trustees, jury members, foremen in road-building crews, special constables, post-masters, and (after 1871) justices of the peace, were overwhelmingly resident landowners.³⁹

Those who filled the more responsible positions offered by the provincial government were not only landowners, but those landowners who demonstrated, through their well-regulated economic activities and general sobriety, the desire to accept as their own some of some of the

most important tenets of the official discourse of rural. As historians like Hal Barron, Bruce Curtis and Daniel Samson have argued in the North American context, these 'new' behaviours are evidence that the liberal discourse was making important inroads into rural societies in the nineteenth century.

Hal Barron found a "divergence of urban and rural culture during the second half of the nineteenth century" in his study of New England, in which urbanites exhibited a "growing commitment to social science and professionalization, which epitomized the elusive search for order by the new urban middle class."⁴⁰ This manifested itself in a growing critique of rural areas by the new urban elite.

Historians like Bruce Curtis and Daniel Samson draw on a wide international literature to argue that what Hal Barron identified as the 'search for order' was in fact evidence of the hegemony of the modern state. Following Foucault, they argue that the successful development of the new state was less dependent on social control of a powerless population through bureaucratic institutions, than it was on the creation of a particular type of individual -- rational, individualistic, and sober -- who would willingly consent to being governed.⁴¹ Bruce Curtis has argued that "educational reform in mid-nineteenth century Upper Canada sought to reconstruct political rule in society by reconstructing the political subjectivity of the population."⁴² The system of public education, Curtis

argues, played a pivotal role reinforcing in practice the civic ideal constructed by the ruling elites.

Daniel Samson has applied a similar interpretation to nineteenth century rural Nova Scotia. He argues that political legitimacy was increasingly linked to the creation of men who, through their “independence, respectability, propriety and later sobriety” demonstrated their right to be represented and governed, as well as to rule, within the burgeoning democratic state.⁴³ Like Curtis, he emphasizes that rural areas were much slower than the urban to absorb these new ideals of citizenship and the state, and charts the complex political and economic reasons for the loosely structured rural resistance to the modern state. Tina Loo examines a similar process in up-country British Columbia, describing the important and contested role that the legal system played in promulgating the liberal discourse, with its emphasis on constructing independent, rational, economic individuals, throughout the nineteenth century.⁴⁴ As Curtis, Samson, Loo and Boydston would concur, not only did the construction of the modern state create new bureaucracies, but, in the process, created more effective hegemonic powers of the state and the elites.

People on Salt Spring Island, like those in rural areas across North America in the nineteenth century, were actively involved in creating the institutions of the new bureaucratic state. Many saw the new regularized bureaucratic processes and institutions as benefiting both themselves and the

wider community. As we saw in Chapter 2, islanders began petitioning for better mail service and better transportation both on and to the island in the 1860s.⁴⁵ Concerned about an alarming number of thefts and murders in the area throughout 1860s, settlers also petitioned the government in Victoria to provide a Justice of the Peace for the island.⁴⁶ Special constables were appointed on a number of occasions, and Henry Sampson acted as a regular police constable on the island, although in an irregular way consistent with his status as a Salt Spring Island resident. Public education provided another platform for community sponsorship of state bureaucracies, and throughout the 1860s and 1870s, settlers petitioned for new schools for the rapidly growing population.⁴⁷ In 1873, the island established its first municipal government. In these ways, at least some island residents reflected their willing participation in the formation of the liberal state. These were the men who, in fulfilling the most important criteria for successful farmers within the official discourse of rural, were clearly reaping the benefits conferred by the emerging state.⁴⁸

By the 1870s, the entry of British Columbia into confederation had stimulated bureaucratic activity throughout the province, and elements of a provincial bureaucracy was becoming visible on the island. The oral history record, in which proud grandchildren of early settlers inevitably recite the official positions held by their forebears, confirm the prestige, status and power these positions represented for families, at least retrospectively.⁴⁹

Their importance can be glimpsed in the surviving government correspondence. For example, in 1873, Mr. Foord wrote an indignant letter to the justice of the peace when he realized that his role as Court of Appeal judge had been superseded by another official; he concluded his letter by asserting that he had written to the Provincial Secretary, "to know if the Government allow their appointments to be treated with contempt."⁵⁰ Mr. Bittancourt, similarly, expressed his annoyance to the federal postal authorities when his competence at performing his appointment as postmaster was criticized by his neighbours.⁵¹ Most significantly, when the first municipal elections were held in 1873, it was the economic elite of the island who were elected, illustrating their ability to turn conformity with the official discourse of rural into political power.⁵²

By 1891, a small elite had emerged on the island, dominated by, though not limited to, wealthy landowners who had taken the reins of power within the nascent state bureaucracy. This bureaucracy had made some important inroads within the Salt Spring Island community by this date. Children attended state-run schools, mail service was improving, and a constabulary and justice of the peace were in place. Formal social organizations were being established, many of these catering to the emerging elite, and two churches had been opened on the island.

Tina Loo has explained how the legal system was central to this process of amalgamation between subjectivity and the demands of the state, because it

worked to construct “certainty in social relations, but also [...] a degree of predictability in them that benefits the calculating individual.”⁵³ This was particularly important in British Columbia, Loo argues, where social relations were not mediated by traditional or cultural patterns evident in more settled and culturally cohesive locales, and “the bonds of community were not sufficiently developed [...]to allow for the informal settlement of disputes.”⁵⁴

Evidence suggests, however, that it was only with the greatest difficulty, and only at irregular intervals, that most of the people of Salt Spring Island were either willing or able to organize themselves into the type of collectivity or subjectivity required by the modern state. Tensions between the residents of Salt Spring Island and the official discourse of civic responsibility dominated the sporadic attempts at state formations in the time under study.

Department of Education reports, post office inspectors’ reports, and government correspondence chart the progress that Salt Spring Island residents were making toward the ideal of civic responsibility contained within the liberal discourse of improvement and nation-building. Governor Douglas had complained in 1861 that he could find no one on the island to perform the function of justice of the peace, “none of the resident settlers [...] having either the status or intelligence to serve the public with advantage in the capacity of local justices.”⁵⁵ Twenty-five years later, officials were still not impressed with the caliber of the locals. Postal Inspector Fletcher, for example,

writing to the Postmaster General about the advisability of making the Burgoyne Bay Post Office a money-order office in 1887, reported that the postmaster, "is not in my opinion able to carry on the duties appertaining to the money order office I doubt whether he could understand the system."⁵⁶

The failure of the Salt Spring Island population to live up to standards of appropriate behaviour is most consistently expressed, however, in the interaction between the Department of Education and the Salt Spring Island residents. British Columbia educational historians have noted how teachers and superintendents consistently complained about the failure of rural parents and children to conform to the rules of efficiency and responsible behaviour advocated by the new urban Boards of Education.⁵⁷ Although some Salt Spring Island residents were eager, as one of the first petitions requesting a school stated, "to express [...] our strong attachment to the throne of our illustrious and beloved Sovereign Nation" through the extension of services like public education, teachers and inspectors repeatedly noted the failure of community members to achieve appropriate standards of behaviour. School inspectors complained about the abilities of teachers to teach, of pupils to learn, and the general ineptitude of the island population to maintain acceptable standards of punctuality and regularity which, as Bruce Curtis argues, were key characteristics of the good citizen.⁵⁸

Many of the complaints made by the educational bureaucracy focused on the low rates of school attendance: "the people with children growing up

around them have repeatedly jeopardized the existence of the school by apathetic carelessness about attendance."⁵⁹ The community displayed other evidence of its failure to behave in a way conducive to educating children in the modern state. Quarrels between teachers and parents were common. In 1882, for example, amidst accusations of racism and political squabbling, the trustees fired the school teacher and closed the school entirely for a number of months, forcing the third closure since 1875.⁶⁰ As the School Inspector complained on this occasion:

Having been notified by the trustees that they had dismissed the teacher, and intended to close the school until there was a prospect of better attendance, I visited the school for the purpose of examining it before it closed. Although the teacher's services might have been utilized for a month after the notice of his dismissal was given him, the children ceased attending as soon as the fact became known.⁶¹

The discord between representatives of the new rational state and the majority of this rural population was not one sided: members of Salt Spring Island not only resisted some of the more cumbersome requirements of the educational system, such as regular attendance, but balked at other attempts to regulate and organize their behaviour. Notwithstanding the prestige that government posts brought to individuals, a number of people on the island refused or were unable to perform the duties as required. Mr. Foord, appointed justice of the peace in the early 1870s, was requested several times to send the returns of convictions and other matters, and had to be threatened

with the termination of his employment before he complied.⁶² In 1882, while he was the appointed postmaster of Vesuvius Bay Post Office, he “refused to render his accounts in accordance with the regulations of the Department.”⁶³ In 1872, Constable Sampson had to be removed from his office as constable because his failure to regularize his marital relations marked a departure from a new policy which “apart from all the moral considerations, it is necessary to enforce for the sake of maintaining the respectability of the Public Service.”⁶⁴

In a similar vein, Salt Spring Island residents showed considerable resistance to accepting the authority of state -appointed officials. When a new constable was appointed, one island resident wrote to the Provincial Secretary, expressing his concern:

The subject that I allude to is the appointment of Mr. W Anderson as Constable which is considered by many people here as decidedly hazardous and more likely to lead to breaches of the peace that serve the cause of order. Personally, I am by no means prejudiced with regard to colour but I do think that to set a coloured man to preserve order and make arrests amongst a large number of whites is very risky and likely to lead to serious results.

This feeling is shared by others here and I was informed today that the men threaten not to allow a colored man to arrest any of their number. This doubtless to a certain extent may be bombast but not unlikely to be fulfilled should the men be in liquor at the time.⁶⁵

Mr. Sampson, the police constable, was indeed exceptional in the context of the Salt Spring Island community in the assiduity with which he applied the rule of law, but his field of operation was not large: two of the three cases

where island residents brought to trial between 1860 and 1881 involved members of his immediate family.⁶⁶

Disorganization, incompetence, and petty backbiting seem to have provided the substance of most resistance to the rise of the modern state on Salt Spring Island, but these qualities were not reserved for agents of the state. The reluctance of island residents to work with each other in the interests of the common good can be seen in other areas. Bickering and squabbling within the school community was common. The schools were closed entirely for months at a time on a number of occasions throughout the 1870s and 1880s, not just as a result of disagreements between parents and teachers, but also because of quarrels between families.⁶⁷ The Cairns family, for example, complained about the fights that their children got into at school, but the teacher was unable to resolve the problem as Mrs. Cairns and "her husband are at loggerheads with nearly the whole community."⁶⁸ In 1870, Mr. Stark first asked the Land and Works department to intervene in the road building process on Salt Spring Island, and then complained that all of his neighbours had conspired to work while he was observing the Sabbath. As a result, his neighbours had diverted a common road away from his property, and directly toward a neighbour's barn.⁶⁹

Deep rifts within the community were also readily apparent in one of the few social organizations to have emerged on the island before 1891, the Hope of Salt Spring Lodge.⁷⁰ The Lodge was a branch of the Independent

Order of Good Templars, a temperance organization, and bi-weekly meetings were designed to confirm faith in God, promote sociability, stimulate debate on the important matters of the day, and advertise the virtues of sobriety. Almost from the first meeting of February 1886, however, relations within the Lodge were marked by discord, acrimony and suspicion.⁷¹ At meetings throughout 1887 and 1888, brief periods of harmony were broken by squabbles over money and supplies. Increasingly, accusations of impropriety were levied against Lodge members by Lodge members, for such things as refusing to pay dues, violating constitutional procedures, or using profane language.⁷² Investigations of suspected misdemeanors took up an increasing amount of the Lodge members' time and energy. By the time the society closed in September 1888 -- "in view of the want of harmony displayed at several meetings of this Lodge displacing the fraternal feeling that should prevail" -- out of a total of forty-nine members, ten had resigned, two had been expelled, and thirteen had been suspended.⁷³

The difficulties that Salt Spring Island people experienced in sustaining any type of formal organization can, however, be seen with greatest clarity in the breakdown of formal political organization. A.F. Flucke has provided an excellent analysis of the political situation on Salt Spring Island before 1891, but a summary here will suffice to reveal the very limited success that the discourse of liberal subjectivity enjoyed in its formal political manifestation.⁷⁴ The first colonial election was held just a few months after the first settlers

arrived on Salt Spring Island in January 1860. Setting the tone for political activity for years to come, those dissatisfied with the election results alleged that the returning officer, Jonathan Begg, had failed to give proper notice of the election. By nailing the notice of the election on a tree in the midst of the trackless wilderness, they maintained, Begg had kept away opponents, thereby fraudulently securing the election of the candidate that he favoured.⁷⁵ A similar fracas occurred in 1863 when a Court of Revision, called at the request of suspicious voters, was attended by none of the voters, due to the remote location of the court proceedings. Two years later, after the elected representative had declared bankruptcy, a similar court served to disqualify the subsequently elected member of council from the list of eligible voters for the island, thereby removing him from office.⁷⁶

After confederation with Canada in 1871, British Columbia passed legislation allowing the formation of municipal governments, but on Salt Spring Island, attempts to sustain this level of government fared badly. In 1873, a petition requesting that letters patent be granted to the Municipality of Salt Spring Island was accepted by the legislature. Almost immediately, however, an anonymous letter to the *Victoria Colonist* maintained that the petition had been obtained by fraudulent means, as many of those whose signatures appeared on the petition were in fact illiterate, and therefore unaware of what they were signing.⁷⁷ Later that year, a number of island

residents charged the municipal councilors with violating the Municipal Act in a number of ways, including by being in receipt of unlawful moneys.⁷⁸

The hostility to municipal government grew on the island until, following the 1881 election, a number of settlers on the island brought a suit against three of the councilors, accusing them of inappropriate behaviour during the election. The accusation was not disputed, and the officer was charged with the costs.⁷⁹ A month later, a petition was brought to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, condemning the behaviour of the Salt Spring Island councilors, and claiming that they were running the municipal affairs entirely for their own purposes and without any accountability, financial or otherwise. Further instances of election irregularities were cited. No action was taken at that time, but when, a year later, Reeve Booth was accused of retaining his position without holding an election, community members pressured the government to pass an act in the Provincial Legislature to “annul the Letters Patent establishing a Municipality on Salt Spring Island”⁸⁰ Although councilor Foord may have been correct in accusing island settlers of rejecting municipal government in order to avoid taxation,⁸¹ the rejection was certainly focused on limiting the power that accrued to the particular individuals who comprised the emerging elite on the island. In the case of municipal government, it seems to have succeeded.

It is difficult to differentiate between sheer incompetence and bloody-mindedness that, on the one hand, characterized the response of many

islanders to the nascent bureaucracies, and, on the other, organized resistance to types of power they did not recognize as legitimate. Taken together, however, these patterns of behaviour in the years under study served to undermine most forms of social organization, and the diverse forms of power they entailed. Indeed, in spite of its numerous problems, the system of public education proved the most enduring, and in this sense, successful, on the island.

Conclusion

Although Salt Spring Island was characterized by widespread landownership, not all members of the community had equal access to the advantages of landholding. Ethnicity, life course, and gender provided some of the categories by which people on the island constructed their own identity, and provided the axes along which access to wealth, and the negotiation of other relations of power were negotiated within the community. Gender and age created considerable disparities in wealth, political voice and status within the household, and were reflected in the poverty and circumscribed opportunities of island women. Some evidence suggests, however, that women's formal inequality may have been muted in practice by the failure of liberal and capitalist formations, which existed on the island in only a limited way, to privilege men. On the other hand, women may have been especially vulnerable to the threat of personal violence that remained unregulated because of the distance between the community and the liberal state.

By 1891, an elite characterized by gender, land size, wealth, and participation in bureaucratic functions, was emerging. The power that this group was able to wield within the community, however, was also limited by the marginality of liberal and capitalist structures. By owning their own land, and pursuing their own complex forms of economic survival, most island residents were sheltered from the structures of power that defined social relations in other areas, where the population was exclusively dependent on the opportunities for waged work or commercial activity controlled by a wealthy elite.⁸² By the 1880s, the majority of landowners on Salt Spring Island had rejected the legitimate rule of that elite -- and with it, much of the modern, bureaucratic, state-building apparatus -- in favour of a more unstructured, less regulated and untaxed government function. High levels of disorganization, violence within the community, the variability of economic activity, the predominance of unusual family structures and of racially mixed marriage all provide evidence of an alternative vision of rural life, and the community's resistance to being moulded into the type of rural dwellers envisaged by liberal reformers.

NOTES

¹ Glenda Riley, The Female Frontier: a Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988).

² Margaret Ormsby, ed., A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia: The Recollections of Susan Allison (Vancouver: UBC Press [1976]1991); R.Cole and Daisy Phillips, eds., Letters from Windermere, 1912-1914 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1984).

³ Evidence from inquests is particularly informative here. Drinking, as well as gambling debts, was probably involved in the accidental shooting of Charles Bird, file 84-1896, and was certainly involved in the case of Alfred Douglas, file 18-1907, and Mr. and Mrs. Brown discussed below. British Columbia Attorney General, Inquisitions, 1872-1937; roll B2375, GR 1327, BCA. Landing at Vesuvius Bay in 1887, "Charlie collected two gallons of scotch, Scovel two gallons of rum and Mansell two gallons of rye, all of which had been ordered for Christmas. These three took a shot of each all the way to Ganges.[...] It was a most curious experience for me as I was a teetotaler [sic] at the time. On entering the ward room, we were served sherry and Bitters and dinner consisted of bottled bass (ale) so you can imagine the results!" Leonard Tolson, typescript, 1941, SSIA.

⁴ This point is emphasized by Adele Perry, "Bachelors in the Backwoods: White Men and Homosocial Culture in Up-country British Columbia, 1858-1871" (unpublished paper, Dept of History, York University, 1997).

⁵ Paulette Yvonne Lynette Falcon, "'if the evil ever occurs' -- the 1873 Married Women's Property Act: Law, Property and Gender Relations in 19th Century British Columbia"(MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1991); Christopher Clarkson, "Liberalism, Nation Building and Family Regulation: The State and the Use of Family Property Law on Vancouver Island and in the United Colony/Province of British Columbia, 1862-1873" (MA Thesis, University of Victoria, 1996).

⁶ In 1833, British women lost their right to dower Clarkson, "Liberalism, Nation Building and Family Regulation," 42-49; on pre-emption rights and land ownership, Clarkson, "Liberalism, Nation Building and Family Regulation," 47, 81-2.

⁷ Clarkson, "Liberalism, Nation Building and Family Regulation," 42-49, 81-2.

⁸ Carole Pateman, The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 43.

⁹ Clarkson maintains that women's position within liberal capitalism was, nevertheless, improved, as a side effect of new definitions of companionate marriage and responsible womanhood, a point of view that Pateman would not accept. She argues that the discourse of the liberal state is premised on the gendered division of personal and private, within which women are marginalized. Clarkson, "Liberalism, Nation Building and Family Regulation," 96-100; Pateman, The Disorder of Women, 44-53. For other arguments about the incompatibility of the liberal state and gender equality, see Christine Ward Gailey, Kinship to Kingship: Gender Hierarchy and State Formation in the Tongan Islands (Austin: University of Texas, 1987); Mary Lynn Stewart, Women, Work and the French State: Labour Protection and Social Patriarchy (Kingston and Montreal: McGill -Queen's, 1989); and Nancy Fraser, "Talking About Needs: Interpretive Contests as Political Conflicts in Welfare-State Societies," Ethics, 99 (January 1989), 291-313.

¹⁰ In 1881, two of the fifty-one women eighteen and over (four percent) were landowners, while fifty-three of the eighty-one men (sixty-five percent) in the same age category were. In 1891 only four of the eighty-three women eighteen and over (five percent) were landowners, as opposed to eighty-four of the 154 men over seventeen (fifty-five percent). Only two women took out pre-emptions in the years under study, although a number inherited them from their deceased husbands.

¹¹ Single women in British Columbia were the first in the Dominion to be enfranchised at the municipal level. Single women got the municipal vote in 1873, if they met the property qualification and remained single. Clarkson, "Liberalism, Nation Building and Family Regulation," 100-108. Men in the province needed to own land valued at over \$250, or hold pre-emptions of more than 100 acres before 1876 in order to vote. After that date, universal male suffrage came into effect. Jean Barman, The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 101.

¹² Petition Submitted to the Provincial Government by the People of Salt Spring Island, 1890 (BCSP, 1891), 415. Similar petitions were made this year by the Presbyterian Church of British Columbia, and other groups. An important exception to women's exclusion from public organizations will be noted below: women participated actively in the Order of Good Templars temperance organization of the 1880s. A number of women were also teachers on the island before the 1890s.

¹³ Harriet Staff, who obtained her property from the pre-emption of her late husband, Ernest Harrison, owned 150 acres valued at \$1,000; Mary Broadwell, wife of the merchant and J.P. Joel Broadwell, owned 100 acres valued at \$400, which she had purchased outright. She also declared \$500 worth of personal property. She is listed in a business directory, listed as "store-keeper" in 1887. E. Mallandaine, British Columbia Directory (Victoria, E. Mallandaine, R.T. Williams, 1887), 133. Sarah Caldwell, a widow living with her son and his wife, owned 160 acres, valued at \$400, which she pre-empted. Sophia Kelly owned sixty-six acres, valued at \$300, that she had obtained from her husband's pre-emption. It is not clear if he died, or simply left. British Columbia Dept. of Finance, Surveyor of Taxes, 1892 Assessment Roll, Roll B 443, Gulf Islands Assessment District, BCA.

¹⁴ British Columbia Directory (Victoria: E. Mallandaine, R.T. Williams, 1887).

¹⁵ Forty-three of the fifty-eight women over fifteen (seventy-four percent) in 1881 were listed as wives of the household head, although forty-five (seventy-eight percent) said they were married. In 1891, sixty-eight of the ninety-two women fifteen and over listed themselves as married (seventy-four percent), although only sixty-one (six percent) were listed as wives of the household head. Of the women over twenty, forty out of forty-nine listed themselves as married in 1881, and sixty-five out of seventy-nine did so in 1891. Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

¹⁶ In 1881, there were three women household heads listed in the census, one widow, one abandoned wife and one unknown. In 1891, there were two, one a widow, the other's marital status is unknown. Census of Canada, 1881, District no. 191, Vancouver, Cowichan and Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal; Census of Canada, 1891, District no. 3, Vancouver, M2 --- S.D. 14, Salt Spring Island, Schedule no. 1 - Nominal.

¹⁷ Parish records on the island are not kept until the 1880s, and are not reliable throughout the period under study. However, before 1900 seven babies are listed as being buried in the Anglican and Methodist churchyards, and five women die in childbirth. [Anglican] Register of Burials, Diocese of British Columbia, and Burials on the Burgoyne Circuit, County of Victoria, Register of Burials, Methodist Church of Canada, SSIA.

¹⁸ For the account of Dr. Hogg's alleged murder, we have only the evidence of Mrs. Sylvia Stark, who believed that he was murdered by the same Native Bad Willie who, she maintained, was guilty of murdering William Robinson and Giles Curtis. See Marie Albertina Wallace (nee Stark), 1867-1966, Salt Spring Island, B.C. Xerox of Typescript, Add. MSS. 91, BCA. For information on Dr. Baker, see British Columbia Public Accounts for the fiscal year ended 30 June 1898 (BCSP, 1899).

¹⁹ For an overview of these, see Sandwell and Lutz, "Who Killed William Robinson? Race, Justice and Settling the Land," a website created by Ruth Sandwell and John Lutz, <http://web.uvic.ca/history-robinson/index.html>. Typical rates of violence in rural communities are difficult to establish, but studies indicate that rural societies were not the havens from social and personal conflict that so many urban dwellers crave. See, for example, Karen Dubinsky, Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario, 1880-1929 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); David Peterson del Mar, 'What Trouble I Have Seen': A History of Violence Against Wives (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Susan Lewthwaite, "Violence, Law and Community in Rural Upper Canada," in Jim Phillips, Tina Loo, and Susan Lewthwaite, eds., Essays in the History of Canadian Law (Toronto: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 1994), 353-386.

²⁰ Franklyn to Wakeford, 22 Sept. 1864, file 595/12-16, Microfilm reel B1329, Colonial Correspondence, GR 1372, BCA.

²¹ British Columbia. Attorney General, file 1866/25, box 6, GR 419, BCA.

²² Inquest of Mary Reaney, April 23, 1891, Vesuvius Court House, file no. 52-1891, British Columbia Attorney General, Inquisitions, 1872-1937, GR 1327, BCA.

²³ As we saw in chapter 6.

²⁴ For the importance of access to resources, as well as to production, as a measure of inequality within the household, see, H.L. Moore, "Household and Gender Relations: The Modeling of the Economy," in Sutti Ortiz and Susan Lees, eds. Understanding Economic Process: Monographs in Economic Anthropology (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992), 131-147.

²⁵ This is the conclusion also suggested by Peter Baskerville's work on enterprising women in Victoria in the nineteenth century, where, after the passage of the women's property act, relatively large numbers of women became entrepreneurs or landholders. Peter Baskerville, "'She Has Already Hinted at Board': Enterprising Urban Women in

British Columbia, 1863-96" Histoire Sociale/Social History, 26 (1993), 205-24.

²⁶ J.P. Booth to A.R. Robertson, 19 Sept. 1872 ; Provincial Secretary's Correspondence Inward, file 602/72, GR 526, BCA.

²⁷ Inquest into the death of George Purser, file 18-1885, British Columbia Attorney General, Inquisitions, 1872-1937, roll B2372, GR 1327, BCA. For a close look at the life of Mrs. Purser, see Jean Barman, "The Worth of an Everyday Woman: Maria Mahoi and Her Two Families," unpublished paper, Department of Educational Studies, University of British Columbia, 1996.

²⁸ This is Harriet Harrison, who went on to become Harriet Staff, and was probably the daughter of Abraham Copeland, one of the first settlers on the island. File no. 329, British Columbia, Supreme Court (Victoria), Probates 1859-1974, GR 1304, BCA.

²⁹ In 1901, she had apparently left her husband Joseph and was living with her son Edward and his wife. Census of Canada, 1901, District No. 3, Vancouver Electoral District, Polling Sub-division Salt Spring Island, Nominal.

³⁰ "Left her husband many years ago and lived with a White man. Now she claims to be married to a half breed by the name of Sheppard and when he is not out sealing lives with him at Saltspring. He is not a member of any band." Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, Ref/vol. RG10 vol 11,050; file: 33/3 part 7.

³¹ Louis Stark, box 67, British Columbia, Attorney General's Office, GR 419, BCA

³² Will included in Probate file no.1754, British Columbia, Supreme Court (Victoria), Probates 1859-1974, GR 1304, BCA.

³³ File no. 5-1892, British Columbia Attorney General, Inquisitions, 1872-1937, GR 1327, BCA. Darlington and Mrs. Brown were convicted of murder.

³⁴ Adele Perry has done an excellent job of articulating the colonialist discourse that identified mixed-race marriage and unorthodox marriage patterns as destructive to civilization in British Columbia. Adele Perry, "'I'm Just Sick of the Faces of Men': Gender Imbalance, Race, Sexuality and Sociability in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia" BC Studies, nos. 105-106 (Spring/Summer 1995), 27-44. For a wider discussion of gender, race and the colonialist discourse, see Margaret Jolly and Martha MacIntyre, eds., Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Margaret Strobel, Gender, Sex, and Empire (Washington: American Historical Association, 1993); Robert Young, Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race (London: Routledge,

1995); and Ann Laura Stoler, Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995). The relation between sexual/familial propriety and class and respectability have been more widely studied, particularly in the British literature. See, for example, Jane Lewis, ed., Labour and Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family (Cambridge: Blackwells, 1986); Mary Poovey, Uneven Developments: The Ideology of Gender in Mid-Victorian England (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Anita Levy, Other Women: The Writings of Class, Race and Gender, 1832-1898 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

³⁵ E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (New York: Pantheon, 1963); William Reddy, Money and Liberty in Modern Europe: A Critique of Historical Understanding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-33.

³⁶ Mick Reed, "'Gnawing it Out': A New Look at Economic Relations in Nineteenth Century Rural England," Rural History, 1, no.1 (1990), 83-94; Malcolm Chase, The People's Farm: English Radical Agrarianism 1775-1840 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). For an excellent Marxist analysis of rural life that explores the difficulties of that framework, see Ian Carter, Farm Life in Northeast Scotland: 1840-1914: The Poor Man's Country (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishing, 1979). Daniel Samson maintains that class relations are different in the country than in urban industrial areas, but that the concept of class simply needs complex revisions to accommodate rural society. Daniel Samson, Contested Countryside: Rural Workers and Modern Society in Atlantic Canada, 1800-1950 (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994).

³⁷ Thinking of the inadequacies of Marx's two class model, Asa Briggs's three-class model, and R.S. Neale's five-class model, William Reddy argues, [w]henver it becomes a question of linking political comportment with social or economic status, endless subtleties and the constant discovery of new exceptions and subgroups have taken the place of the simple schemas of class conflict." Reddy, Money and Liberty, 28. Although E.P. Thompson recommends holding on to the concept "not from its perfection as a concept but from the fact that no alternative category is available," in the endless and seemingly inevitable visions and revisions of class," Reddy maintains that its resemblance to the "old commonsense original is so faint that one can legitimately object to retaining the old word." Reddy, Money and Liberty, 105. E.P. Thompson, "Eighteenth Century English Society: Class Struggle Without Class," Social History, 3, no.

2 (May 1978), 149.

³⁸ For the difficulties of elaborating the inequalities within the household in terms of liberal economic and political theory, see R.W. Sandwell, "Reconstructing Rural: Towards a New Synthesis in Canadian History," Histoire Sociale / Social History, 27, no 53 (May 1994), 1-32; Gillian Hart "Imagined Utilities: Constructions of 'the Household' in Economic Theory" in Sutti Ortiz and Susan Lees, eds., Understanding Economic Process: Monographs in Economic Anthropology (Lanham: University of America Press, 1992), esp. 113-114; Nancy Folbre, "Hearts and Spades: Paradigms of Household Economics," World Development, 14, no. 2 (1986), esp. 247; Henrietta Moore, "Household and Gender Relations: The Modeling of the Economy," in Sutti and Lees, eds., Understanding Economic Process, esp. 132; Alicia Muszynski, "Structural Determinants in the Formation of the British Columbia Salmon Cannery Labour Force," in Greg Kealey, ed., Class, Gender and Region: Essays in Canadian Historical Sociology (St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1988), 103-120; Deborah Valenze, The First Industrial Woman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); and R.W. Sandwell, "Farmers, Peasants and Profit-Maximizers: The Farmers and their Markets: Conceptual Issues," panel presentation to the Canadian Historical Association Annual Conference, St.Catharines, Ontario June 2, 1996.

³⁹ As we have seen in earlier chapters, men who did not own land did not tend to stay for long on the island, which is certainly a factor in their failure to take up government positions on the island. Before 1871, Salt Spring Island did not have a resident Justice of the Peace, relying instead on Mr. J. Morley of Cowichan to perform that function.

⁴⁰ Hal S Barron, Those Who Stayed Behind: Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century New England(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 31.

⁴¹ Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds. The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality, with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁴² Bruce Curtis, "Preconditions of the Canadian State: Educational Reform and the Construction of a Public in Upper Canada, 1837-1846," Studies in Political Economy, 10 (1983), 342.

⁴³ Daniel Samson, "Industry and Improvement: State and Class Formations in Nova Scotia's Coal-Mining Countryside, 1790-1864" (Ph.D., Queen's University, 1997).

⁴⁴ Tina Loo, Making Law, Order and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

⁴⁵ 8 June 1869 and 4 April 1879, Salt Spring Islanders petition for better roads, "Petitions," file 1355, Colonial Correspondence, GR 1372, BCA.

⁴⁶ Thomas Lineker to James Douglas, 9 July 1860, file f1000,1 Colonial Correspondence, GR 1372, BCA; M. Franklyn, Magistrate to Colonial Secretary, 28 December, 1866, F602/27, Colonial Correspondence, GR 1372, BCA; Douglas to Newcastle, 8 January 1861, MS. quoted in Flucke, "Early Days on Saltspring Island," 183. See also 21 December 1868, petition regarding the murder of William Robinson, "Petitions," Colonial Correspondence, f1355, GR. 1372, BCA.

⁴⁷ See Frederick Lester to His Excellency Arthur Kennedy, May 1864, F988-1, Colonial Correspondence GR 1372, BCA; from John Booth, Thomas Griffiths and Abraham Copeland, to Colonial Secretary, 26 October 1869, GR 1372; from Fred Foord et al to His Excellency Lieutenant Governor Trutch, 20 July 1872, file 565-72, GR 526, BCA

⁴⁸ John Maxwell, Theodore Trage, Joseph Akerman, Joel Broadwell and Alexander McLennan show up repeatedly whenever an inquest needed jury members, whenever a special constable needed to be signed up, when school trustees were to be elected, and, as we will see below, when the municipal government was elected in the 1870s.

⁴⁹ See for example Mary Davidson, "The McLennan Family" Presentation to the Salt Spring Island Historical Society 1989, Interviews, SSIA; Bob Akerman, "The Akerman Family," Presentation to the Salt Spring Island Historical Society, 1987, Interviews. SSIA.

⁵⁰ See Fred Foord to John Morley, 26 July 1873, Add Mss 984.7.5, BCA.

⁵¹ Settlers began circulating a petition criticizing the way he sorted and distributed mail. Letter from Salt Spring Island petitioners to W.B. McInnes, 20 January 1897, and E.J. Bittancourt to Mr. Milock, 22 May 1897, Canada, Divisional Inspectors' Reports, National Post Office (Canada), British Columbia, 1897, RG3-D3, Series 6, vol. 9, reel 7232, #117, NAC. It was not only appointments which generated strong feelings: in 1872 Mr. Booth was so chagrined that he had not been asked to append his name to a petition requesting a school on the island ("I live at a considerable distance from them and I suppose they did not think it necessary"), that he sent off a letter of his own confirming his support. J.P. Booth to Charles Good, Assist. Provincial Secretary, 28 August 1872, file 565/72, GR 526, BCA.

⁵² George Mitchell, J. Akerman, J.C. Crane, J.C. Jones, Fred Foord and T.C. Parry were elected. Akerman, Mitchell, Foord and Parry owned extensive lands, with Foord and Akerman going on to be among the wealthiest on the land by 1891, the earliest date at which assessment rolls are available. 16 January 1873, box 1, file 2, British Columbia, Provincial Secretary, Salt Spring Island Correspondence and Bylaws, GR 1707, BCA.

⁵³ Loo, Making Law, Order and Authority, 9.

⁵⁴ "British Columbians actively sought the application of law and the construction and intervention of the courts. They did not see recourse to the courts as unnatural or as a sign of social breakdown, but as a natural outgrowth of human nature and the conflict that accompanied the pursuit of self-interest." Loo, Making Law, Order and Authority, 9.

⁵⁵ Douglas to Newcastle, 8 January, 1861, MS BCA cited in Flucke, "Early Days on Saltspring Island," 183.

⁵⁶ Inspector Fletcher to the Postmaster General, 23 June 1887, Canada, Divisional Inspectors' Reports, Correspondence, National Post Office (Canada), British Columbia, 1887, RG3-D3, Series 6, reel C-7227, no. 723, NAC. See also 14 January, 1895, where the competency of Mr. McFadden is questioned. Fletcher to Postmaster General, Canada, Divisional Inspectors' Reports, Correspondence, National Post Office (Canada), British Columbia, 1895, RG3, Series 6, vol.. 9, file no.198, NAC.

⁵⁷ See for example, Donald J. Wilson and Paul Stortz, and "May the Lord Have Mercy on You," BC Studies, no. 79 (Autumn 1988), 24-58; Donald J. Wilson, "Lottie Bowron and Rural Women Teachers in British Columbia, 1928-1934," in Veronica Strong-Boag and Gillian Creese, eds., British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1992), 340-363.

⁵⁸ Frederick Lester to the Governor of Vancouver Island, May 1864, F988-1, Colonial Correspondence, GR 1372, BCA; "Salt Spring Island" Second Annual Report of Public Schools for the Year Ending July 31, 1873 (BCSP,1874), 11; "Salt Spring Island School," Third Annual Report of Public Schools for the Year Ending July 31, 1874 (BCSP,1875).

⁵⁹ Sixth Annual Report on the Public Schools of the Province of British Columbia, 1876-77 (BCSP, 1877), 18.

⁶⁰ J.P. Booth Secretary, to SAG. Lewis, 10 February 1882, in British Columbia Superintendent of Education, inward correspondence, GR 1445, BCA.

⁶¹ "Central Settlement, Salt Spring Island," Public Schools Report, 1881-82 (BCSP, 1883).

⁶² BCSP, 1878, 711-713.

⁶³ from Postal Inspector Wallace to the Postmaster General, 28 December 1882, Canada, Divisional Inspectors Reports, Correspondence, National Post Office (Canada) British Columbia 1882-1884, RG3, Series 6, vol. 4, reel 7226, file no. 789, NAC.

⁶⁴ A.R. Robertson to John P. Booth, Salt Spring Island, 19 September 1872, British Columbia. Colonial Secretary, correspondence outward, January 1871 to December 1872, C/AB/30.1J/11, BCA.

⁶⁵ Arthur Walter to Hon. Mr. Smithe, Premier, 28 April 1885, British Columbia Premier's Office, correspondence inwards, box 1, file 3 GR 441, BCA.

⁶⁶ For Sampson's arrest of his daughter, see Regina v Whyms [sic] and Anderson, December 21, 1881, box 22, file 1881-18, British Columbia, Attorney General, GR 419. For his arrest of his wife, see Regina vs. Mary Anne McFadden and Mary Ann Sampson, file 24/66, British Columbia Attorney General, Documents, 1857-1966, GR 419, BCA; also Franklyn to Colonial Secretary, 16 November 1866, file F602.24 reel B1329, British Columbia, Colonial Correspondence, BCA. Lester did not involve Sampson personally. In other court cases in these years, island residents were not charged.

⁶⁷ In 1876, at the Burgoyne Bay School high rates of absenteeism were related to "local differences" while at the North End School, "local animosities have subsided; the teacher has overcome the prejudices that existed against him" Fifth Annual Report on the Public Schools of the Province of British Columbia, 1875-76 (BCSP,1877), 104. Island schools were closed for a number of months in 1875. Public School Report, 1875-76 (BCSP,1877), 104; in 1876, Public Schools Report, 1876-77 (BCSP,1878), and in 1882, Public Schools Report, 1881-82(BCSP,1883).

⁶⁸ G. Stainburn, teacher at Burgoyne Bay to C.C. McKenzie, Superintendent of Education, Burgoyne Bay, 4 October 1881, in British Columbia Superintendent of Education , inward correspondence, GR 1445, BCA.

⁶⁹ Louis Stark to Mr. Trutch, land agent, November 1869 and 22 November 1870, British Columbia Surveyor General, Correspondence Inward from Louis Stark, 1869, 1870 C/B/30.71K/S+s, BCA.

⁷⁰ Although the Women's Institute, the Sunshine Guild, the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, and the Islands' Agricultural and Fruit Growers Association

emerged on the island late in the nineteenth century or early in the twentieth, the only social or economic organizations on Salt Spring Island in the years under study were the Farmer's Institute, and the Salt Spring Island Lodge of the Independent Order of Good Templars. Only the Minutes for the latter are available before 1891.

⁷¹ In the second meeting, after passing a motion to draft a code of laws, "considerable argument then ensued which however took no definite effect," and members had to wait until the next meeting till cooler heads could prevail. Minutes for 10 February 1886, Minute Book of Independent Order of Good Templars, Hope of Salt Spring Lodge, Lodge No. 87, Vesuvius Bay, SSIA.

⁷² 11 August 1886; January 1887; 26 July 1887; 31 Jan 1888; 9 March 1887; 24 May 1887; 31 May 1887; Minutes, Hope of Salt Spring Lodge, SSIA.

⁷³ 1 September 1888, Hope of Salt Spring Lodge. For a delightful blow-by-blow account of the Lodge, see John Crofton, "The Rise and Sad Demise of Salt Spring's Lodge of Hope," British Columbia Historical News, 26, no. 3 (1993), 30-32.

⁷⁴ Flucke, "Early Days on Saltspring Island," 161- 199.

⁷⁵ Petition submitted to Jonathan Begg, Returning Officer for Salt Spring Island, by voters on Salt Spring Island, 13 January 1860. file 142, microfilm reel B1309, GR 1372, BCA.

⁷⁶ British Colonist, 2 and 9 April 1863.

⁷⁷ Colonist, 17 January 1874.

⁷⁸ J.I. Pimbury to J.W. Trutch, 15 January 1874, file B1-F2, , Salt Spring Island Correspondence and By Laws, 1871-1882, British Columbia, Provincial Secretary, Correspondence, GR 1707, BCA.

⁷⁹ Flucke, "Early Days on Saltspring Island," 197.

⁸⁰ Vict. 46, Chap. 22, Statutes of the Province of British Columbia.... 1883, Victoria, 1883, 89, quoted in Flucke, "Early Days on Saltspring Island," 199.

⁸¹ Fred Foord to Honorable Executive Council, In Answer to the Petition of Settlers of Burgoyne Bay, 1882, Box 1, file 2, Salt Spring Island Correspondence and By Laws, 1871-1882, British Columbia, Provincial Secretary, Correspondence, GR 1707, BCA.

⁸² J.I. Little suggests that the formation of an elite within a population seems necessary to mobilize successful operations of municipal governments. J.I. Little, Society and State in Transition: The Politics of Institutional Reform in the Eastern Townships, 1838-1852 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill - Queen's University Press, 1997), 13-14.

Conclusion

Rural societies in nineteenth-century Canada have most commonly been understood within the dual framework of the staples thesis and a generalized theory of progress that starts with pioneer settlements and ends either with intensive and specialized agricultural capitalism, or urban industrialization. The tendency of British Columbians to define the province in terms of resource extraction, rather than agricultural production, has encouraged historians to understand rural British Columbia as a resource or industrial frontier. As Cole Harris has summarized, the fur trade, the gold rush, and, "in the last decades of the nineteenth century, [...] fishing, logging and hard rock mining" created British Columbia's identity as a modern, industrial frontier:

All these activities relocated capital and labour close to new resources, far from markets, and, often, where no one had ever lived before. In British Columbia, the late-nineteenth century influx of capital and labour, accompanied by a pre-tested industrial technology, fueled by largely unregulated speculation, and cushioned neither by agriculture nor the past, had a particular intensity.¹

This dissertation has suggested that agriculture played a more important role in the settlement of the province than historians have generally allowed. In the first years of resettlement in what is now British Columbia, a discourse that associated rural with a cluster of values identified with the commercially-viable family farm became a significant force in shaping reformist policies. This vision

of rural life, manifested in the pre-emption system of land acquisition, was reflected in the behaviours of some Salt Spring Island families. For most, however, the suppression of land commodification that characterized the pre-emption system seems to have worked only too well: the majority of pre-emptors on Salt Spring Island in the years under study had neither improved nor paid for their land. The detailed analysis of land-related practices suggests that many islanders were considerably more interested in the advantages of deferred payment for land than they were in its commodification through improvement and purchase. Many were quick to recognize that the pre-emption system provided many advantages of landowning, without (for the moment) the necessity to pay. Most were slow to improve and purchase their lands --slow, in fact, to realize its capital potential in any way.

In these behaviours we can find the seeds of the most important failure of the pre-emption system on Salt Spring Island. The discourse of agricultural success that informed land policies and coloured the literature about the island succeeded in bringing settlers to the island, and provided a foundation for a land-based and household-centered rural society. But the system ultimately failed to create a thriving community based on petty-commodity production on the family farm. Indeed, land records contain some evidence that the pre-emption system itself discriminated against entrepreneurial farmers, and in favour of the majority of Salt Spring Island pre-emptors whose economic ambitions reached no further than the stability offered to

householders by a resource-rich environment containing cheap land on very easy terms.

The official discourse of rural in nineteenth century British Columbia shares with the frontier thesis and contemporary theories of under-development an evaluation of this type of economy and society as a failure. Nineteenth-century commentators tended to construct rural society in general as an enclave where petty-commodity production on the family farm would provide the stability and wealth required by the more dynamic and aggressively capitalist urban centers. When it became difficult to construct Salt Spring Island in terms of agricultural or social success, it was evaluated as a failed agricultural enterprise. Poor land, distance from markets, and incompetent farmers were held up by way of explanation for the otherwise incomprehensible distance between the island community and the normalizing rural discourse. Contemporary evaluations urge that similar societies be understood as products of the cultural breakdown characteristic of the isolation and abundant land of the frontier, and/or as the victims of the financial vulnerability characteristic of economically marginal areas.²

This dissertation has argued that when attention is paid to rural behaviours, the significance of this generalized and urban-centered official discourse of rural to the history of Salt Spring Island can be re-assessed. The detailed examination of the practices of land settlement and

community formation describes high rates of geographical persistence, a variety of land-related strategies, and the relative economic stability of those with families. These behaviours, it has been argued here, indicate that the majority were not failing to achieve universal goals articulated by policy makers; instead, they were often using the pre-emption system to facilitate their own extra-capitalist goals and non-profit-maximizing aspirations. Pre-empted land provided most families the economic “edge” -- both the flexibility and the stability -- that allowed them to participate intermittently in the capitalist, subsistence and commodities economies while concentrating on their main goals in life: raising their families and staying on their land. Such an examination reveals the crucial importance of specific land-related strategies to the formation of Salt Spring Island society. It also recommends understanding rural as a category of experience that was constructed and contested by those living inside and outside areas of low population density.

Although Salt Spring Island differed in many ways from the mobile, urban and wage-dependent societies associated with British Columbia, there is little evidence to support the contention (raised independently by a number of my colleagues) that there was a quality of ‘islandness’ that created or sustained this community’s identity. First, as noted in earlier chapters, the people of nineteenth century British Columbia depended on water to provide the best type of transportation, minimizing the insularity usually identified

with island life. Even after the Cariboo Wagon Road was built, the ease of transportation offered by water meant that those living on Salt Spring Island in the years under study were much closer to both the economic advantages and the normalizing effects of urban society, than, for example, were the people of the Interior, or northern Vancouver Island. Furthermore, many islanders participated in a wide variety of seasonal work off the island -- fishing, logging and the sales of agricultural produce -- and so were not entirely isolated from the influences of other areas.

Secondly, although the society on Salt Spring Island differed in some important ways from representations of urban life and the official discourse of rural, it differed in many of the same ways that other rural populations did -- populations from which islanders were even more isolated than they were from Victoria or Nanaimo. That particular combination of occupational plurality, political disorganization and resistance to the 'governmentality' of the modern state, that has been described on Salt Spring Island, has also been discovered in many areas outside of town and cities throughout Canada. Salt Spring Islanders were not the only nineteenth-century society where more people were interested in getting by than getting rich. As Daniel Samson has summarized in the context of rural Atlantic Canada:

What marked life for country people --and defined it as 'rural life'-- was their ability to exploit the land or the sea, to produce for themselves a major part of their subsistence either directly (as food, shelter or clothing) or indirectly through exchange, and

their ability to obtain some measure of independence ---derived from either their own resources or resources from which access was not restricted in this way -- at least deferring full dependence on wage labour. ³

The qualities that have been used here to distinguish Salt Spring Island from an urban-centered discourse of rural in British Columbia were not, therefore, specific to island life. Although it is possible to construct these behaviours as unusual anomalies in an otherwise coherent system of capitalism, individualism and the growth of the modern state, this dissertation is among a plethora of rural studies which, *en masse*, suggest instead that it may be time to re-evaluate the hegemony of liberalism, and to question the utility of its companion discourse of modernization, in our attempts to understand nineteenth-century Canada.⁴

On the other hand, high rates of inter-racial marriage, violence and the rejection of the normalizing effects of nascent bureaucracies may indeed indicate that a number of island residents found in the island a refuge from the more orderly and conventional urban societies springing up around them.⁵ Were these characteristics caused by the agglomeration of particular individuals who were drawn by the island's isolation? Did they instead mark the effects of living in a remote society that was prepared to encourage, or at least willing to tolerate, the high levels of social disorganization evident on the island? Generalized constructions of 'islandness' as 'isolation' provide blunt tools of description and analysis, for they cannot explain the important

differences occurring *between* isolated areas in general, or between islands in particular. Most islands -- including Salt Spring Island in the twentieth century -- were not, after all, characterized by inter-racial marriage, the failure of municipal government, or by high levels of violence.⁶ In sum, isolation, or 'islandness', are categories of analysis better suited to measuring the distance from the discursive centers of the dominant historiography than explaining different constructions of rural experience.

This dissertation has stopped short of presenting the Salt Spring Island community as one of self-conscious resistance to urban capitalism, the modern world, or the discourse of liberalism. There is little evidence, aside from the sustained protest to municipal government in the early 1880s, that islanders developed the organized political consciousness usually associated with resistance or revolt. The decisions that people made about their lives occurred in the context of a wide variety of factors -- family composition, ethnicity, gender, geographical persistence, date of arrival, the rich and temperate environment of the Pacific northwest, and, most particularly, access to land. These strategies argue that those who stayed on Salt Spring Island did so because the society, economy and culture of the island supported them in what they wanted -- or what they were prepared to settle for -- out of life: the economic stability needed to raise a family, or to just get by.

Geographical isolation from centers of trade and political power probably muted their exposure to the bureaucratic gaze of Victoria, and may

have supported patterns of marriage, family life, and economic activity that were often variable and unorthodox. But it was specific responses to particular elements within this rural society, and not a generalized response to either “rural” or “isolation” that provided the contexts of people’s lives, and directed the choices they made. The economic independence of landowners, no matter how marginal their activities were to the capitalist center, was a central component in these decisions. It was land ownership that sheltered them from the more familiar structures of power within capitalist society. It was land, situated in the rich environment of the Pacific coast, that provided the modest, but secure and flexible economic base upon which rural practice was built during these years. It was their secure land tenure that allowed families a marked indifference to the liberal discourse of rural life.

This dissertation has not tried to determine whether the marginality of farming and waged work to the households on Salt Spring Island will prove typical of rural nineteenth-century British Columbia, nor whether such land-based, family-centered economies will emerge as the norm. It has suggested, however, that until we start looking outside of town and cities, and more critically at the sources and concepts we use to construct the province’s history, we will not be able to observe the varieties of meaning that have shaped such categories as rural. As historians of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia have eloquently argued, until we look beyond the discourse of dominant

populations, and through the 'transparency' of primary sources, too many voices will remain unheard on the margins of our history. Until such insights are brought to bear on our understanding of rural populations, these voices too will remain outside of what we recognize as part of our past.

NOTES

¹ R. Cole Harris, "Industry and the Good Life Around Idaho Peak," Canadian Historical Review, 66, no. 3 (Sept. 1985), 315.

² See for example, R. Cole Harris, "The Simplification of Europe Overseas," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 67, no. 4 (December 1977); James Sacouman, "Semi-Proletarianization and Rural Underdevelopment in the Maritimes," Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 17 (3), 1980.

³ Daniel Samson, ed. Contested Countryside: Rural Workers and Modern Society in Atlantic Canada, 1800-1950 (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994), 26.

⁴ For a detailed explication of the need to re-evaluate the relevance of liberal economic and political theory to nineteenth-century Canadian history, see R.W. Sandwell, "Rural Reconstruction: Towards a New Synthesis in Canadian History," Histoire Sociale/Social History, 27, no.53 (May 1994), 1-32.

⁵ Jean Barman has suggested this with her study of inter-racial marriages in rural areas of the province. Jean Barman, "Invisible Women: Aboriginal Mothers and Mixed-Race Daughters in Rural Pioneer British Columbia," unpublished manuscript, Educational Studies Dept., University of British Columbia, 1997; Jean Barman, "Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power and Race in British Columbia, 1850-1900," Paper presented to the BC Studies Conference, 3 May 1997; Jean Barman, "The Worth of an Everyday Woman: Maria Mahoi and Her Two Families," unpublished paper, Department of Educational Studies, University of British Columbia, 1996.

⁶ Salt Spring Island has retained only its antipathy to municipal government. In spite of repeated referenda on the subject, the island refuses to become a municipality. This is not to deny the great appeal of islands, as the focus of academic research (witness the Institute for Island Studies in Prince Edward Island), or as a tourist destination. It is, however, to suggest that the discursive power of island to constitute "other" has been overstated. For a particularly clear articulation of this, contrast Catherine Anne Wilson's study of Amherst Island from 1820 to 1880. That population was an ethnically homogenous group of tenants. Catherine Anne Wilson, "Landlord, Tenants, and Immigrants: The Irish and the Canadian Experience" (Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, 1989).

Appendix A

Letter Granting First Pre-emptive Rights to Land in British Columbia, issued to Salt Spring Island settlers, 1859.

Joseph Pemberton to John Copland, Correspondence Outward, Land and Works Dept., CAA30.7J1, BCA.

July 26, 1859

Dear Mr Copland,

I acknowledge to have received from you the names of 29 persons, a list of whom is hereto annexed for whom you are agent and who apply through you for permission to settle on the unsurveyed land of Tuan or Salt Spring Island, their reason being want of funds to settle on surveyed lands elsewhere in which cases an immediate installment is required. The Permission asked for I am empowered to give and am further able to state distinctly that after the survey of the lands in question shall have been made, pre-emptive rights in those of the number stated who shall have effected most improvements in the way of Buildings, fencing, or cultivation on any government section shall be recognized, and that the section shall be laid out continuously with and as portion of the same network which extends over the adjoining Country at Cowichan. I am further empowered to delay the survey of that portion of Tuan Island on which these persons shall settle for [left blank] years or until requested at an earlier period to survey and issue titles by the majority of the holders at the future time alluded to. Provided that as soon as the lands are surveyed immediate payment at the rate and on the terms that shall then exist or immediate forfeiture of the same and improvements shall ensue.

Provided further that none of these persons shall occupy or allow other person to occupy lands in any way improved, fenced or cultivated or at any time occupied by Indians, which likewise would entail forfeiture similar to that above stated.

Provided lastly that Government will have the right to resume any portion of these Lnas required strictly for a government purpose such as dockyard, lighthouse, shurch school fail to paying [?]to the occupiers the actual value of improvements erected therein. signed, Joseph Pemberton.
[at the end of the letter:]

List of Settler for whom certificates are wanted

James Stephens	Armstead Buckner
Edward Mallandaine	E.A.Booth
Thomas Henry Linicker [sic]	James Chambers
Edward Henry Linicker [cis]	James R Gascoigne

William Isaacs
George Richardson
P.I.Adams
F.P.Gerry
Jonathan Begg
Joseph Frontin
Sam'l Francis Stephens
George Copland
Fielding Spott
William k Brown
George Richardson

George Kirkop
R.P Dombaine
Charles Renwalls
Thomas W Herron
Daniel McLean
James Terry [Tenny?]
John Tompkins
Edward Walker
James B Peterson
E. Hammon King

AppendixB
An Overview of PreEmptions, by Year, 1859-1891, Salt Spring Island

total number of pre emptions 541	average acerage per pre emption 138.2	total number of abandoned claims 370	improved? 171	purchased? 126	total number of acres in pre emptions 52,948
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Date	number of pre emptions taken out in this year	Of those pre emting in this year, how many people eventually:			total number of acres pre emptied	average acerage per pre emption
		abandoned?	improved?	improved then purchased?		
1859	153	147	6	2	2,506	192.8
1860	3	1	2	1	593	197.7
1861	39	25	14	5	6,017	162.6
1862	20	18	2	1	1,272	141.3
1863	16	14	2	1	1,907	127.1
1864	10	6	4	0	1,310	131.0
1866	6	3	3	2	824	137.3
1867	8	6	2	1	906	129.4
1868	6	2	4	1	525	87.5
1869	3	2	1	0	450	150.0
1870	7	3	4	1	709	101.3
1871	7	4	3	1	901	128.7
1872	15	8	7	5	2,114	151.0
1873	15	7	8	6	2,640	188.5
1874	8	4	4	2	1,032	129.0
1875	1	0	1	0	101	101.0
1876	1	0	1	1	170	170.0
1877	4	0	4	4	436	109.0
1878	13	4	9	8	1,317	109.8
1879	14	8	6	4	2,032	145.1
1880	5	1	4	4	599	119.7
1881	4	2	2	1	384	96.0

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An Overview of PreEmptions, by Year, 1859-1891, Salt Spring Island

total number of pre emptions 541	average acerage per pre emption 138.2	total number of abandoned claims 370	Improved? 171	purchased? 126	total number of acres in pre emptions 52,948
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Date	number of pre emptions taken out in this year	Of those pre emptying in this year, how many people eventually:			total number of acres pre emptied	average acerage per pre emption
		abandoned?	improved?	improved then purchased?		
1882	14	9	5	5	1,626	116.1
1883	11	6	5	5	1,237	112.5
1884	40	26	14	13	6,090	152.3
1885	35	17	18	16	4,897	139.9
1886	25	15	10	10	3,249	130.0
1887	14	10	4	4	1,880	134.3
1888	8	3	5	5	1,059	132.4
1889	4	4	0	0	420	105.0
1890	16	7	9	9	1,908	119.3
1891	16	8	8	8	1,838	114.9

Appendix C
An Overview of Outright purchases (not pre-emptions) by Date,
1859-1891, Salt Spring Island

total number of outright purchases	average acreage per outright purchase	total acreage in outright purchases
140	116.0	16,242.5

date of purchase	number of purchases	total acreage	average acreage per outright purchase
1876	1	160	160.0
1877	1	11	11.0
1878	2	133.5	66.8
1879	2	100	50.0
1880	2	203	101.5
1881	1	170	170.0
1882	2	178	89.0
1883	6	606	101.0
1884	8	1263	157.9
1885	52	5288	101.7
1886	42	4783	113.9
1887	5	1327	265.4
1888	3	754	251.3
1889	2	94	47.0
1890	7	965	137.9
1891	4	207	51.8

**Profile of Household Heads, 1881, By Categories of
Geographic Persistence**

Number of Household Heads	number of landowners	Average Age in 1881	average length of stay	average persistence to 1881
71	53	46.8	23.5	8.6

Total number of years on Salt Spring	Number of Household Heads	number of landowners	Average Age in 1881	average age at arrival	no. of families with children
1 year or less	12	0	43.3	43.3	6
2 to 5 years	3	2	48.0	45.3	0
6 to 10 years	3	3	45.3	44.7	1
eleven to 20 years	17	12	48.2	41.9	8
more than twenty years	36	36	47.3	33.3	22

Appendix E
Profile of Household Heads, 1891, By Categories
of Geographic Persistence

Number of Household Heads	number of landowners	average number of acres	Average Age in 1891	average age at arrival	average length of stay	average persistence to 1891
94	75	355.5	44.0	34.1	24.4	10.1

Total number of years on SaltSpring	Number of Household Heads	number of landowners	average number of acres	average age at arrival	Average Age in 1891	no. of families with children
1 year or less	11	1	2441.0	36.2	36.2	4
2 to 5 years	2	1	110.0	24.5	25.5	0
6 to 10 years	9	8	976.9	39.0	40.9	7
eleven to 20 years	15	13	250.3	38.5	47.1	8
more than twenty years	57	52	250.8	32.0	45.9	32

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