

AGRICULTURE

(2nd Tape)

Mr. R.I. (Bob) McDonald  
1433 Westminster Highway, Richmond

Interviewed - January 26, 1973.

. . . born 1891 on South West corner, Sea Island at home . . . parents house reached by extension of Miller Road and another road which led to the cannery.

. . . three canneries on south side of Sea Island at that time: Acme, Vancouver, Fraser River . . . when 12-14 years 'big dish' to work in cannery summers, piled cans, etc. when cooled . . . a good kid got 12 cents an hour . . . others 10¢.

. . . father, John McDonald, came as young man to Sea Island in 1885 . . . oldest brother born in old country . . . next one born on Sea Island.

. . . neighbors in early days were Tom Sairs, Tom Ray, Duncan Hugh McDonald farmer area a little earlier . . . the Mackies, Art Laing's uncles came same time as Dad but settled first on McCleery place (golf course today across from Sea Island, then moved to McDonald Road farm they sold to airport later . . . they were neighbors across McDonald Road . . . Art Laing's father came shortly after . . . Mr. and Mrs. Laing were married on Sea Island.

. . . centre of Richmond was old schoolhouse at Grauer Road corner with McDonald Road . . . McDonald home was meeting place, baseball, summers . . . later went to Marpole to play lacrosse . . . to reach Lulu Island walked or rode Lulu Island Bridge south of Grauer store . . . MacMillan family of 5 boys and 1 girl raised on Ione Island: when tide running out they walked across to John McMyn's and walked to old schoolhouse on centre of Island . . . if not running too hard they'd make it to Hugh McDonald's . . . if tide was running in they rowed their own boat up to Dunc McDonald. . . .

. . . McCready family farmed on Ione Island - sent milk across on boat (scow).

1920 - Bob McDonald started farming with brother Jim and father retired.

Hungry 1930's was peak year for cows . . . 100 head purebred Holsteins . . . with milk now up to 40¢ a qt. recalls when they sold it for 25¢ a lb. butterfat . . . that's \$1.00 for a ten gallon can. Had Clydesdale horses. 1944, 1945 their horses pulled the May Queen float in New Westminster.

No P.N.E. early days . . . so went to Westminster Exhibition to watch . . . drove horse and buggy or democrat for whole family . . . he was a baby when ferry went to N.W. . . . driving to N.W. took one hour or more if weather good, just 14 miles.

. . . depression days could get all to work for just board and room, but usually paid them something . . . needed help milking cows . . . Boeing only wartime industry on Sea Island . . . land was leased from William Nichol 210 acres on Sea Island . . . didn't sell land to airport.

1929 - city bought their leased land for the airport.

1930 - McDonald moved to Ewen Estate at LaFarge Cement area . . . full section of land 640 acres he farmed with brother . . . then had 100 head Holsteins.

[1948] 1947 - left Ewen Estate and bought 80 acres at #7 Road and Westminster Highway.

. . . Sea Island had 50 head cows, land was better for farming.

. . . saw bog fires as common occurrence . . . smoldering but train rails lifted . . . at Delta Rock at end of No. 6 Road and Fraser River is on top of some of old tracks.

Jim began to  
work on farm  
end of 1929

. . . first shipped milk to Fraser Valley Milk Producers, Vancouver,  
. . . 1932 switched to Twigg Island Dairy (Crawford Brothers) on  
Fraser St., . . . bottled raw milk nearly 100 gallon for 18¢ a gallon.

c.1893 or earlier - round barn on Ewen Estate built by Mr. Ewen  
. . . a novelty . . . held a lot of hay . . . hay chutes to  
knock down hay to young stock running underneath . . . barn still there.

At Ewen Estate their farm only one between Westminster Highway  
and River . . . often went to New Westminster to shop as only 4 or 5  
miles away . . . it was 43 years ago . . . saw more people there  
(daily visitors) than on Sea Island . . . boats (ocean liners going  
into New Westminster) would get stuck on sand bars and "hoot" all night  
. . . blew horn to keep fish boats away.

. . . Bob McDonald and wife were married in 1921.

. . . phones on Sea Island to some residents early if handy and  
McDonalds contracted for phone before leaving farm on Sea Island . . .  
it was one mile away each time . . . also at Ewen Estate contracted  
for phone and dug own post holes from 'Cap' Gilmore's place. . . .  
sand in River pumped out and hauled away dredges helped . . . fish  
boats got stuck if tide low but got off when tide higher.

. . . at 1948 flood lot of diking done to that area of S.Arm.

. . . on west side of Nelson Road, the Dyke runs into peat land  
with pressure of weight on dike, peat spread into the dredge ditch  
so main trouble in 1948 in sand bagging to keep water out.

. . . on Ewen Estate had 30 head Clydesdale . . . didn't show  
horses but others used six of his horses in yearly fair, drew May  
Queen. From 1948 for 3 years dairy farmed 80 acres at No. 7 Rd. and  
Westminster Highway . . . his brother had died in 1939. [J.M.] [LOWE]  
1951 - Moved to present house at No. 6 Rd. and Westminster Highway.  
Threshing: a few years before leaving Sea Island it was all steam

engines and big separators . . . but then had horses hauling in sheaves . . . talks about ripening oats, stooking, threshing not losing as much grain as when oats got too ripe with combine . . . sometimes combines handle oats a little tough (too green).

Savage farm grew 4 or 5 acres to give old threshing machine demonstration (usually buy feed) put it up for the winter.

. . . years ago waited for crew harvesting . . . if rained they hung around and housewife fed them 2 or 3 days . . . recalls all go in for beef cattle now instead of dairy cattle . . . not as much work. . . takes a lot of feed for these animals . . . McDonalds have 1/2 acre behind house, buy a young steer in May and run it there till fall . . . sent in from prairies as feeders to finish them off (fatten).  
"You have to be a smart cookie to be a farmer in these days" said Mrs. McDonald.

At end of Cambie Rd. Jackson Bros. have killing place, take elsewhere to have steer cut and wrapped. Feed companies put up feed pellets (50 lb. size) to feed.

NOTE: Medallions to Richmond residents. Mr. McDonald is the only man living in Richmond who was awarded the Dominion of Canada Medallion, awarded in 1967. Mrs. Harris is the only lady still living in Richmond who was awarded the Dominion of Canada Medallion in 1967. (Archie Blair is married to Mrs. Harris' daughter).

Dellis Cleland