

AGRICULTURE - - (Sea Island)

Ralph McDonald,
14351 - 64 Avenue, Surrey

Interviewed: February 23, 1973.

Born - August 1899 on Sea Island. Father was Dunc McDonald, born Glengarry, Ontario, left as a young man with brother Hugh . . . logged in Wisconsin . . . then to San Francisco . . . by boat to Vancouver in 1874.

1875 bought 500 acres on Sea Island paying \$8.00 an acre . . . Dad and Hugh worked in Marpole area to earn money for buildings . . . borrowed money at 10% interest . . . later split farm so each had 250 acres . . . farm area: along McDonald Road up to Miller Road, on North Arm . . . milked 70 - 80 cows, employed 3 men until sons grew up.

. . . father married in 1886 Isabella McDowell from Shawville, Quebec. . . . uncle Alex Kilgour moved to Sea Island earlier than father . . . Kilgour in partnership with first Richmond reeve Hugh Boyd . . . Kilgour died when Ralph was seven, so that was his first funeral.

Ralph attended Sea Island School on father's property one mile away until he was 12 or 13 . . . then with the Laing brothers and others on Sea Island went to Bridgeport school for high school, by horse and buggy . . . crossed on old Lulu Island bridge by Grauer's store . . . recalls at 16 years one cold winter ice piled up between the two bridges so had to dynamite . . . ice was broken 10' to 12' high between Marpole Bridge and Lulu Island bridge . . . quit school before finishing high school because of World War 2, only one left on farm . . . was youngest of 6 . . . 3 brothers went to Peace River Country.

. . . farmed with Dad until Dad was gored by a bull. When brother Dunc came out of the army they did general farming, milked cows . . . 1954 sold $5\frac{1}{2}$ acres to Richmond School Board and school named after Dad, Duncan McDonald, also road McDonald which used to be called No. 12 Road. . . . farmed till 1958 then retired and rented the land . . . 1970 sold last land to Department of Transport for airport . . . and he moved to Surrey.

. . . first school teacher Miss McKenzie . . . earlier Mr. Barton, first teacher on Sea Island, boarded at their house . . . later Barton married Mrs. McCleery and went into hardware business as Clugston and Barton.

. . . before McDonald left Sea Island school half of students were Japanese . . . their families lived at Acme Cannery at end of Shannon Road on Middle Arm.

. . . at 10 years old McDonald worked two days at Celtic Cannery at foot of Blenheim St. and got \$2.00.

. . . as child (10 - 14 years) farm chores were milking, haying, helping grow crops of potatoes, hay, oats . . . farms usually 100 acres . . . neighbors helped each at threshing, or silo-filling for winter feed for the cattle . . . threshing outfit was 10 - 14 men fed by the women who put up good meals.

. . . when Dad died, had sold out of cows, brother Dunc and self decided to go into milking and bought calves and raised them . . . recalls milking 50 young cows a chore . . . go out at 5 a.m. and not return for breakfast till 11 a.m. . . . their farm first on Sea Island to buy milking machine "McCartney". . . . milk went into Marpole in 10 gallon cans once a day, left on a stand to be picked up . . . then on B.C. Electric freight car to Richmond Dairy, Vancouver

. . . later years dairies sent trucks to pick up milk at little stands close to farms on Sea Island.

. . . early days Sea Island saved rain water . . . time of second bridge between Eburne and Marpole his Dad made a tank out of lumber to store rain water from roof . . . the first Jake Grauer brought water from North Arm to his farm (later called Frasee^d farm) and farmers had free water . . . 40 years ago water from North Shore was brought down farm road in Sea Island in 4 inch pipes.

. . . his Dad liked Clydesdale horses, won fair prizes . . . as youngster drove horse and buggy to New Westminster exhibition and stayed with cousins, Kellys . . . attached horses to 'fancy' wagon to go to fair. Recalled Richmond fair, at end of Cambie and River Road, close to old Methodist Church . . . vegetables exhibited . . . someone showed Dad how to exhibit oats at fair . . . 1910 he got world prize and diploma and \$100.00 prize.

. . . Dad talked of 1905 story of man named Arnold, head of Dominion Trust who had visions of docks boat coming in by present Iona Island (used to be called McMillan Island) before sewage plant there . . . Mr. Arnold paid Dad and Mr. Laing option money to buy farm at rate of \$1500. an acre . . . idea failed . . . Arnold suicided . . . Dad received \$13,000. option money . . . Mr. Thomas Laing got enough to build a house and barn on Grauer Road.

. . . recalls first church and manse (Presbyterian) where Army and Navy Veterans Club is now . . . first minister Mr. Logan . . . later Mr. White . . . most of congregation came from Marpole over Marpole Bridge.

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1910-12 decided to build church in Marpole closer to most people.
. . . church built at 72nd and Hudson St. . . . when Presbyterian
and Methodist united most of congregation had to leave that church
. . . another church at 67th and Hudson, Marpole United . . . McDonal
recalls going by democrat each Sunday . . . Dad an elder . . .
later McDonald became a manager of the church . . . still later
a church was built on Sea Island and he transferred membership.
. . . married at age of 44 . . . wife died of TB three years
later . . . has two daughters, Mary in Steveston and Catherine in
Williams Lake.

Dellis Cleland